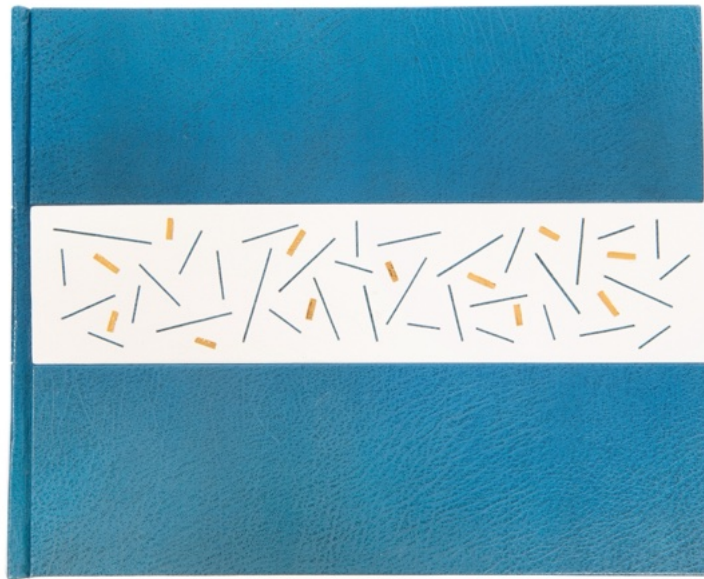


## ANTARCTICA #830/950

A unique, contemporary, custom binding by Lester Capon  
*description by Lester Capon*



A collated set of untrimmed pages, ANTARCTICA book block #830, had been purchased by the bookbinder Philip Smith. Unfortunately, he died before he started work on it. The family asked me if I could sell the unbound sheets for them. I found the perfect person – Roderick Wordie whose library I occasionally do restoration work on. His grandfather, Sir James Wordie, was the geologist on Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914 – 1917. Roderick suggested I do a design binding on the book. I readily agreed but it was daunting. It is a very heavy tome on heavy photographic paper.

We discussed the binding prior to my starting of course, but he kindly gave me carte blanche to do exactly what I wanted. We agreed that the book needn't be trimmed, so this is the only copy with signature identification keys still in place.

The book, of course, is full of the most wonderful photographs, scenic, detailed, humorous, dramatic, and more. I couldn't compete with all this in a leather binding so I opted for something with (hopefully) sympathetic simplicity. I was also influenced by Roderick's beautiful 'new build' home where the book was going to live, with its clean lines, fresh yet homely.



I chose a combination of blue and white leathers. There were several blue options but the one I used seemed to me the most suitable. I almost used a white leather which I happened to have in the bindery, but when I offered this up to the book it somehow looked rather grubby. So I found a pure white leather which was more appropriate.

Because of the size of the book I couldn't use a single skin so this was a factor in the design. Front and back each have an inner board to which are attached three leather covered panels. Two are blue sections with a white central block between them. I inlaid blue random leather lines scattered over this to suggest ice cracking and added gold tooling representing sunlight on the surface of the ice.



I was very glad and honoured to work on this book – it is very different to the usual type of volume that I design and bind, so it was a welcome challenge.

This is a brief outline of the various stages of making the binding:

- Sewing sections
- Sewing in multi-coloured double core headbands
- Gluing spine
- Lining spine with unbleached aero linen and handmade papers
- Making inner boards with acid free millboard
- Acid free millboard spine with induced curve
- Paring blue leather for spine area and pasting on
- Attaching binding to text block with linen tapes and aero linen
- Making outer parts of boards leaving central space
- Paring blue leather for upper and lower parts of the boards
- Covering outer boards in blue leather and attaching to inner parts
- Making board for central areas of front and back
- Paring white leather and covering central board
- Attaching central board
- Paring and applying blue inlays to central area
- Gold tooling central area
- Trimming out turn-ins inside the boards
- Filling in with acid free paper
- Putting down endpapers
- Gold tooling title on spine and adding white lines

And steps to make the full-cloth box

- Recess on front board and spine
- Gold tooled leather labels on front board and spine recesses
- Dark blue felt pads adapted for ease of removing book and with a text block support incorporated in lower wall pad to minimize the very heavy pages from dropping forward



Binding completed February 2025, England