



COUNTRY  
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TREASURE

# EDEN WORKSHOPS

## A BOOKBINDERS RESOURCE



Thank you for taking an interest in this Book Arts E-book published by myself, Richard Norman of the Eden Workshops here in our home in South West France.

Several other e-books and manuals on the subject of the Book Arts and Gilding in particular are available for free download from the Eden Workshops website.

<http://www.edenworkshops.com>

For nearly 20 years my wife Margaret & I ran a system of craft workshops devoted to the exploration of the Book Arts.

During that time we worked in almost total isolation and seclusion in the grounds of a very private monastery in rural England. As you may imagine we learnt a great deal about the Book Arts during our tenure.



In 1997 we were nominated National Living Treasure by Country Life Magazine for our collective contributions to the Book Arts. At the comparatively young age of 43 I considered this an honor I received on behalf of all those who had inspired me and taught me over the years.

A few years ago we closed our workshops and studios on a high note, and I took early retirement out here in rural South West France with my dear wife and beloved daughter Eden.

## **Make Your Own Imitation Vellum Or Parchment Paper.**

**Parchment paper and imitation vellum have been made by untold generations of inventive bookbinders by simply painting suitable papers with varnish or lacquer.**

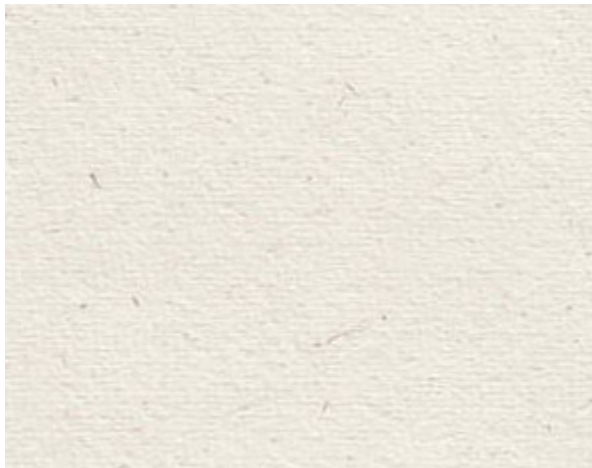
**I was a professional binder for most of my adult life and I have used these methods myself on numerous occasions.**

**What paper you choose is important, I have used many papers, but over time I have come to stick with two, depending on if I want an imitation vellum or a parchment paper.**

**The type of paper you use is important and affects the finished result.**

**I use a paper made by a specialist paper maker called Hahnemühle; they make two papers in particular, a heavy version of 130gsm and a lightweight version of 90gsm. These papers are mould made and of very high quality, they are acid free and will last for centuries. The papers have small flecks of neutral debris in the paper which further help to give the impression of age. The paper is called Medieval Laid; you can purchase it from any good art paper supply shop, or from [here](#) in A4 sheets.**

**This is a picture of the surface of the paper.**



**What is the difference between an imitation vellum and a parchment paper?**

**Essentially the difference is one of weight, a genuine vellum is heavier than a genuine parchment, and this fact is reflected in the papers.**

**Both oil and spirit based varnishes have been used to make these vellums & parchments, I use a spirit based shellac varnish, it dries very quickly and with a harder finish than an oil varnish, this hard finish further imitates vellum.**

**The alcohol used in this recipe does give off fumes; if they bother you make sure the room you use is ventilated.**

**This is the recipe for the lacquer I use.**

**In a screw topped jar mix four parts of methylated spirits (denatured alcohol) with 1 part blonde de waxed shellac, it is important to get this particular type of shellac as each type of shellac has its own colour.**

**Leave the mixture for 36 hours stirring occasionally, until the shellac flakes have dissolved.**

**When all the flakes have dissolved the lacquer is ready to use.**

You will need some sheets of waste paper, newspaper is fine, and a 3 inch paint brush.

Simply lay your paper onto the waste paper and give it a good coat of varnish, immediately the paper will soak up the varnish and change colour, leave the paper to dry, and that's it.

You can use the imitation vellum paper to cover books, or you can print onto it before you apply the varnish and you have something that looks like an authentic vellum manuscript.

This shows the colour change that takes place when the lacquer is applied to the heavy 130gsm paper.

On the left is an untreated sheet of paper.



Below is the result, what cannot be shown in a picture however is the feel of the paper. By applying the shellac lacquer we have changed the characteristics of the paper dramatically, It is stiff and handles in the same way as a genuine vellum.



Shown below is the lightweight 90gsm paper after being given a coat of shellac.

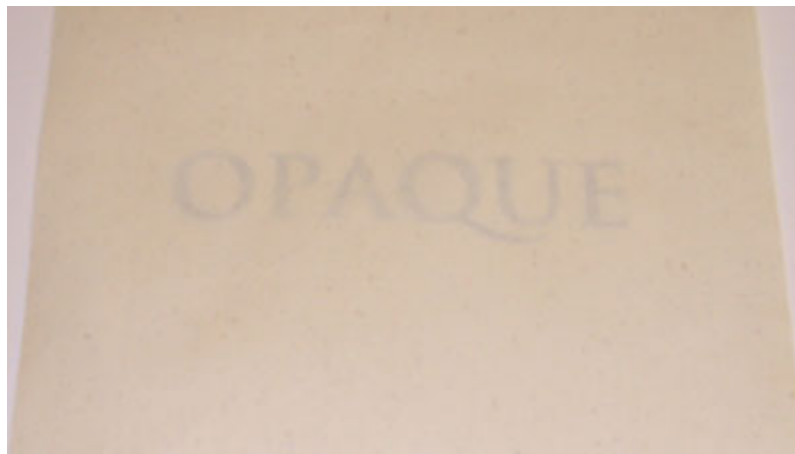
The colour tone is different as the amount of shellac, which acts as a colourant, is less.

Less shellac in the paper also makes the paper handle differently, in this case the paper is not so hard to handle.



In the picture below is the finished sheet placed on top of some white paper with printing on it.

You can see that the paper is slightly opaque, just like genuine parchments and vellums which often have areas of the skin which are opaque. In some cases vellums and parchments are deliberately made opaque, even transparent.



So that's it, nothing could be simpler and the results you get from this simple method are very pleasing.

You can easily purchase the two ingredients you need over the counter in most countries; you can purchase small amounts of shellac from [here](#).

