King Æthelberht grants land in Rochester to the church of St Andrew, 
Textus Roffensis, ff. 119r–119v 
Translated from Latin and Old English 
Dr Chris Monk

Abstract: 
‘Here begin the privileges granted to the church of St Andrew at Rochester, from the time of King Æthelberht who, having received the Christian faith from the blessed Augustine, caused the same church to be built...’

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Textus Roffensis, Rochester, Cathedral Library, MS A. 3. 5, f. 119r
Textus Roffensis, Rochester, Cathedral Library, MS A. 3. 5, f. 119v
King Æthelberht\(^1\) grants land in Rochester to the church of St Andrew, *Textus Roffensis*, ff. 119v–119v

Translated from Latin and Old English by Dr Christopher Monk © 2018

Date: likely after 1066\(^2\)

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HERE BEGIN THE PRIVILEGES GRANTED TO THE CHURCH OF SAINT ANDREW AT ROCHESTER, FROM THE TIME OF KING ÆTHELBERHT WHO, HAVING RECEIVED THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FROM THE BLESSED AUGUSTINE, CAUSED THE SAME CHURCH TO BE BUILT.

By our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ reigning perpetually, in the month of April, on the 4\(^{th}\) day before the May calends \([28^{th}\text{ April}]\),\(^3\) in the 7\(^{th}\) year of the indiction \([604]\),\(^4\) I King Æthelberht to my son Eadbald, a desired reminder of the Catholic faith.

To us it is always proper to examine how, by means of holy places, for the remedy of the soul and the steadfastness of our salvation, we ought to offer, a most devout wish, something from the share of our land for the relief of the servants of God.

And, therefore, to thee Saint Andrew and thy church, which is located in the city of Rochester and where Bishop Justus is seen to be head, I do hand over a small part of my land.

Here is the boundary of my gift: from South Gate, west along the wall as far as North Lane, to Street,\(^5\) and so east from Street as far as Doddinghyrne\(^6\) opposite Broad Gate. If any man wishes to increase this very gift, may the Lord increase good days to him. And if he presumes to diminish or oppose it, may he be damned in the sight of God and his saints, here and on into the worlds everlasting, unless he repents that which he has done unjustly against our Christian faith.

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\(^1\) King Æthelberht of Kent, often spelt Ethelbert, r. c.590–616.

\(^2\) This is a fraudulent document; see Nicholas Brooks, ‘Rochester, A.D. 400–1066’, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Rochester*, ed. Tim Ayers and Tim Tatton-Brown (Maney, 2006), pp. 6–21, at pp. 8–10. The purported date is 28\(^{th}\) April, 604 (see notes 3 and 4 below). 604 is the date for the foundation of Rochester Cathedral assigned by the monk-historian Bede: ‘In the year of our Lord 604 [...] Augustine also consecrated Justus as bishop of a Kentish city which the English call Hrofesceastir [Rochester] after an early chieftain named Hrof. This lies nearly twenty-four miles west of Canterbury, and a church in honour of Saint Andrew the Apostle was built here by King Ethelbert’. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, revised R. E. Latham (Penguin, revised ed., 1990), pp. 107–08. The document, as it appears in *Textus Roffensis* ( penned by the principal scribe about 1123), is a copy of an earlier forgery which was possibly written a few years after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The forger may have modelled the forgery on a much older charter, for it is skilfully crafted, but inserted the boundary clause to correspond exactly to land that was seized by William I to build Rochester Cathedral. Therefore, as Brook suggests, the cathedral would have been able to use this charter to claim compensation for their lost land.

\(^3\) ‘May calends’, i.e. the first of May; the fourth day before the May calends is therefore April 28\(^{th}\).

\(^4\) This is a fraudulent document; see Nicholas Brooks, ‘Rochester, A.D. 400–1066’, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Rochester*, ed. Tim Ayers and Tim Tatton-Brown (Maney, 2006), pp. 6–21, at pp. 8–10. The purported date is 28\(^{th}\) April, 604 (see notes 3 and 4 below). 604 is the date for the foundation of Rochester Cathedral assigned by the monk-historian Bede: ‘In the year of our Lord 604 [...] Augustine also consecrated Justus as bishop of a Kentish city which the English call Hrofesceastir [Rochester] after an early chieftain named Hrof. This lies nearly twenty-four miles west of Canterbury, and a church in honour of Saint Andrew the Apostle was built here by King Ethelbert’. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, revised R. E. Latham (Penguin, revised ed., 1990), pp. 107–08. The document, as it appears in *Textus Roffensis* ( penned by the principal scribe about 1123), is a copy of an earlier forgery which was possibly written a few years after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The forger may have modelled the forgery on a much older charter, for it is skilfully crafted, but inserted the boundary clause to correspond exactly to land that was seized by William I to build Rochester Cathedral. Therefore, as Brook suggests, the cathedral would have been able to use this charter to claim compensation for their lost land.

\(^5\) ‘May calends’, i.e. the first of May; the fourth day before the May calends is therefore April 28\(^{th}\).

\(^6\) i.e. in the year 604. The indiction refers to cycles of 15-year periods related to the Roman fiscal year. The indiction year referred to here is that beginning September 597 through to September 598. The seventh year of this particular indiction runs therefore from September 603 to September 604. As the date already given is the 28\(^{th}\) April, it follows that the year must be 604. For more information on indiction years, see: https://www.britannica.com/topic/indiction [accessed 30.04.2018].

\(^7\) The main thoroughfare at that time through the city, from Westgate to Eastgate, continuing on to Canterbury, and corresponding to the present-day (old) High Street in Rochester (not the bypass of the same name). See Tim Tatton-Brown, ‘The topography and buildings of Medieval Rochester’, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Rochester*, ed. Ayers and Tatton-Brown, pp. 22-37, at p. 23, fig. 1.

\(^8\) ‘Dodda’s corner/horn’, located at the crossroads in the centre of Rochester. See Brook, ‘Rochester, A.D. 400–1066’, p. 10, and Fig. 1
This, in counsel with bishop Laurence and all my principal men, I have confirmed by the sign of the holy cross and have commanded them in order that they might with me accomplish the same. Amen.

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7 Bishop Laurence, archbishop of Canterbury, c.604–619. He was part of the Gregorian mission sent to Kent to convert the English peoples and was, unusually, consecrated by his predecessor Augustine before the latter died.
Latin and Old English text, directly from *Textus Roffensis*

The digital facsimile of this text is located at:
http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/Man4MedievalVC~4~4~990378~142729?page=0.

Type ‘n245’ into the page search box. The text begins on the right-hand folio and continues overleaf as far as the rubric (red ink).

The layout approximates that of the manuscript: the large, historiated initial is represented but simplified. Single words which are split over two lines are hyphenated. Punctuation has been modernised. Word-division and capital letters have been normalised. Scribal insertions are indicated by > <. Scribal abbreviations have been expanded and are indicated by italics.

*incipit* priuilegia ecclesiæ sancti

Andreae Hrofensis concessa a tempore Æthelberhti regis, qui fide Christiana a beato Augustino suscepta, eandem ecclesiam construi fecit.

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EGNANTE

IN PERPETVVM DOMNO

nosto Iesu Christo salvatore,

mense Aprilio, sub die

iiii kalendas Maias, indicatione

vii ego Æthelberhtus rex

filio meo Edbaldo admonitionem catholice fidei optabilem. Nobis est aptum semper inquirere,

qualiter per loca sanctorum

pro animæ remedio

uel stabilitate salutis nostræ aliquid de portione

terræ nostræ in subsidiis seruorum Dei deuotissimam voluntatem debeamus offere. Ideoque tibi

Sancte Andrea tuæque ecclesiæ quæ est constituata in ciuitate Hrofiheiri ubi præesse uidetur

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8 A Latin annotation in a non-medieval hand appears above the rubric; it is not fully legible.
9 The bar of the letter ‘t’ is extended.
10 The bar of the letter ‘t’ is extended.
11 ‘EGNANTE...’. To the right, in the margin, there is a faint *manicule* (a pointing finger).
12 A later hand, probably early-modern, has underlined the date and the king’s name and made an annotation, perhaps in Latin, in the right margin; however, it is not fully legible.
13 The bar of the letter ‘t’ is extended.
Iustus episcopus, trado aliquantulum telluris mei.

ic est terminus mei doni. Fram Suðgeate west andlanges wealles oð Norðlanan to Strete, 7 swa east fram Stær-aste oð Dodding-

hyran ongean Bradgeat. Siquis uero au-

gere uoluerit hanc ipsam donationem, auge-

at illi Dominus dies bonos. Et si presumpsersit

minuere aut contradicere, in conspectu

Dei sit damnatus et sanctorum eius hic et in eterna

secula, nisi emendauerit ante eius transitum

quod inique gessit contra Christianitatem nostram.

hoc cum consilio Laurentii episcopi et omnium princi-

pum meorum signo sanctae crucis confirmavi, eosque

iussi ut mecum idem facerent. AMEN.15

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14 A later hand has inserted an asterisk with a corresponding annotation in the left margin, translating into early-

modern English the boundary clause: ‘[…] from Southgate West & along […] walls]s to north lane to street. & so east

from street to dodginghorn lane and then to brod gate.’ The last word of the boundary clause, ‘Brad[-]geat’, has also

been underlined.

15 The letter ‘N’ is stretched.