

Thomas Astle  
A charter of Withred king of Kent for the church of St Mary  
at Liming, circa A.D. 693  
The Antiquarian Repertory, vol. 2, pp. 131–3  
London  
1779

THE  
ANTIQUARIAN REPERTORY:

A  
MISCELLANY,  
INTENDED TO PRESERVE AND ILLUSTRATE  
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REMAINS  
OF  
OLD TIMES.

ADORNED WITH ELEGANT SCULPTURES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, and Sold by F. BLYTH, No. 2. Queen's-Head-Passage,  
Pater-noster-Row; J. SEWELL, No. 32, Cornhill; and T. EVANS, No. 32,  
Pater-noster-Row.

1779.

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To the EDITOR of the ANTIQUARIAN REPERTORY.

SIR,

HEREWITH I send you the Charter of Withred, King of Kent, whereby  
he gave Lands to the Church of Liming in that County.

IN times preceding the seventh century, property was usually conveyed  
without any Writing or Charter, by oral declaration, made by the Grantor  
in the presence of a great number of respectable Witnesses; and the better to  
perpetuate the memory of the transaction, it was customary upon those oc=  
casions for him to deliver to the grantee a cup, a horn, a sword, a helmet,  
or some other valuable moveable, which was known to be his property.

Sir Henry Spelman in his Discourse upon Ancient Deeds and Charters /<sup>\*</sup>,  
says, anciently, where the Saxons gave or sold lands absolutely, they usually  
did it without Deed, but when they gave them in a special or limited manner,  
then they did it by Writing.

Many Charters of more ancient date than the present, are entered in the  
Leidger Books of Religious Houses, but the authenticity of several of them  
hath with reason been doubted.

This Charter of King Withred, may be accounted one of the most ancient  
original Charters or written Instruments now extant, whereby property in  
this kingdom was conveyed. The characters much resemble those of the  
four Gospels written about the year 686, now in the Cottonian Li=  
brary, (Nero D. 4.), and called St. Cuthbert's Gospels; and are very similar  
to the Gospels preserved in the church of Durham, which was written about  
the same time. Other instances might be produced of the similarity of the  
characters in which this Charter is written, to the MSS. of the seventh cen=  
tury, but let it suffice to observe, that the present Charter is written in the  
hand which was used in England at the time it bears date.

This Charter is not only mentioned in the annals of the church of Canter=  
bury, but by most of the authors who have written concerning the affairs and  
possessions of that church; in Chronico Gervasii Dorobernensis MS. in Bibl.  
Cotton. sub titulo, Donationes Manerium & Ecclesiarum Ecclesie Christi

clesiæ concessis; sic continetur. "Anno Domini 693 Withredus Rex Cantiaë dedit terram quatuor aratorum, pro amore Dei & Brithwaldi Archiepiscopi Ecclesiae beatæ Mariæ, quæ sita est apud Liminge, quæ terra vocatur Nunhelmestun."/\*

There is in the Cottonian Library (Galba E. 3.) a catalogue of the benefactors to Christ Church, Canterbury, which mentions at what time commemorations were made for each benefactor. From this MS. it appears, that King Withred was annually commemorated upon the day of his death, for having given the lands conveyed by the present Charter:† the words are, "9 Kal. April. obiit Withredus Rex Anglorum, qui dedit Wyelmestone."

With respect to the church or convent of Liminge /‡, in favour of whom this Charter was made, it appears that in the year 633, Ethelburga, daughter of King Ethelbert, the first Christian King, after the death of her husband Edwin, King of Northumberland, returned into Kent, and by the favour of her brother King Eadbald, built a monastery at this place, which she dedicated to the Virgin Mary, placing therein Nuns; but afterwards, this house came under the government of an Abbot, and continued till about the year 964. But having suffered very much by the Danes, it came soon after, with all its possessions, into the hands of the Archbishop or Church of Canterbury, by whom they were enjoyed till the reign of King Henry VIII. in the twenty-ninth year of whose reign Archbishop Cranmer exchanged them for other lands with the crown; and King Henry VIII. in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, granted the manor of Liming, &c. to Sir Anthony Aucher.

The CHARTER is as follows:

+ In Nomine Dn'i D'i nostri Ih'u Xp'i, Ego Uihredus Rex Cantuariorum, providens mihi in futuro, decrevi dare aliquid omnia mihi donanti, et Consilio accepto, bonum visum est conferre, Bassilicæ beatæ Mariæ genitricis Dique quæ sita est in loco qui dicitur Limingæ. Terram iiii. Aratorum quæ dicitur Wieghelmestun, cum omnibus ad eandem Terram pertinentibus, juxta notissimos Terminos, id est, Bereueg et Meguines Pæð, et Stretleg. Quam donationem meam volo firmam esse in perpetuum: ut nec Ego, seu heredes mei, aliquid minuere praesumant. Quod si aliter temptatum fuerit a

/\* See more concerning this Charter in Mon. Angl. Vol. I. p. 19. Hickeys's Thes. Vol. II. p. 263. An ancient Copy is preserved in the Cotton Library, Aug. 2. 83.

† This King built the Monastery of St. Martin in Dover, and was buried at Canterbury within the porch, on the south-side of the church of St. Mary, which had been built by his great grandfather King Eadbald.

‡ This place was called Nunsborough, from its being the habitation of the Nuns.

qualibet persona, sub Anathematis interdictione sciat se praevaricari, ad cujus confirmationem, *pro Ignorantia literarum* + Signum Sc'ae Crucis expressi et Testes idoneos ut subscriberent rogavi, id est Berichtualdum Archiepiscopum /\*, virum venerabilem.

- + Ego Berichtualdus Episc. rogatus consensi et subscripsi.
- + Signum manus Uihtredi Regis.
- + Signum manus Aechtburgae Reginae.
- + Signum manus Enfridi.
- + Signum manus AEðilfridi.
- + Signum manus Hagana.
- + Signum manus Botta.
- + Signum manus Bernhaerdi.
- + Signum manus Theabul.
- + Signum manus Frodi.
- + Signum manus Aehcha.
- + Signum manus Aessica.
- + Signum manus Adda.

