

## A TRANSCRIPTION EXERCISE

### CHARTER OF KING EADGAR – 969 CE

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This exercise involves identifying a medieval manuscript and transcribing it. The document selected for this purpose is a charter executed by King Eadgar<sup>1</sup> of England in the year 969 granting land to Alfwold, his thegn. The manuscript is currently in the possession of the British Library where a digital copy may be accessed<sup>2</sup>. An annotated version is also available<sup>3</sup> and a facsimile copy is shown on pages 14 and 15 below.

The methodology I intend to employ to effect an accurate transcription is to follow these basic steps:

1. Identify the language(s) in which the document is written.
2. Ascertain the date or approximate date of the manuscript.
3. Determine the script(s) used and the materials used and If possible attempt to identify the scribe or scribes.
4. Identify from the original manuscript alphabetic letters, ligatures, numerals and punctuation and determine words even if some words are joined without spaces.
5. Resolve any abbreviations used.
6. Allow for the possibility of errors or omissions by the scribe.
7. Produce a version of the original manuscript in typescript including notes on any potentially questionable transcriptions or assumptions made.
8. Comment on the value of the manuscript as an archive source.

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<sup>1</sup> I intend to use this spelling of the name although the modern version of the name is 'Edgar'. There is some inconsistency because his brother is generally referred to as 'Eadwig', his father as 'Edmund' and his son as 'Edward'. All these names share the same prefix 'ead' which means wealth or prosperity.

<sup>2</sup> The British Library, *The British Library*, < [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ch\\_19793\\_f001r#](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ch_19793_f001r#) > [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].

<sup>3</sup> Folio: BL Additional Ch. 19793: face, *DigiPal: Digital Resource and Database of Manuscripts, Palaeography and Diplomatic* (London, 2014). Available at <<http://www.digipal.eu/digipal/page/318/>>, [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].

## Historical Context and significance

The reign of King Eadgar (959-975) was a time of relative peace and prosperity and for this reason the contemporary sources are of limited value. Simon Keynes comments that 'it is not possible to construct a coherent narrative of Edgar's reign from the disjointed scraps of information provided in the available versions of the ASC [Anglo Saxon Chronicles].<sup>4</sup> He continues by commenting about the significance of the charters from Eadgar's reign to complement the various codes of law.<sup>5</sup>

The charters contain detailed information regarding the granting of land or other rights. A large number (more than 160) are still available from the reign of Eadgar and these are listed in the catalogue produced by Peter Sawyer<sup>6</sup>. Specific charters are referenced by a 'Sawyer' Number and are now available on the website known as 'The Electronic Sawyer'<sup>7</sup>. The charter which is the subject of this study is catalogued as S 772 and is a grant of lands to his faithful thegn (thane) Alfwold. Henceforth, this charter will be referred to as 'S772'.

It is dated 969 CE which is three years before Eadgar's coronation in Bath Abbey and towards the end of his reign. It is important because it gives information as to the method by which land was distributed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the script used to produce the document is important as a relatively early example of English scripts because after the Norman Conquest the influence of the French influence had an important effect.

S772 is written partly in Latin and partly in Old English and it is apparent that there were two different scribes involved. The charters were of several different formulations the most common of which is known to historians as 'Edgar A'. Until about 963, these were thought to be the work of the same scribe however none existed between 963 and 966 when the type reappeared, probably the work of a different scribe.<sup>8</sup>

S772 is of this type consisting of a single sheet of parchment leaf including a preamble, a disposition clause, a bounds clause, a dating clause and finally a witness list. The bounds clause, identifying the boundaries of the land being granted including several place names, is written in Old English. The remainder of the document is in Latin (apart from names).

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<sup>4</sup> S.Keynes, 'Edgar Rex Admirabilis', in *Edgar King of the English 959-975*, ed by Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2008), p9.

<sup>5</sup> Keynes, pp12-14.

<sup>6</sup> P.Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8 (London 1968).

<sup>7</sup> The Electronic Sawyer, *Online catalogue of Anglo Saxon Charters*, S772, < <https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/charter/772.html#>>, [Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021]

<sup>8</sup> S.Keynes, pp14-17.

There is a reliable provenance indicated on the British Library web page describing this document which indicates that it originated in the Cathedral Priory of St Mary the Virgin, Worcester<sup>9</sup>.

The script (for the Latin text) appears superficially to be Carolingian Miniscule as this is a script used for manuscripts at this time. This script originated in the court of Charlemagne, founder of the Holy Roman Empire. He felt it was important to establish a single script recognisable throughout the empire which would be easy to read and write. Apparently, Charlemagne himself never did master spelling and writing!<sup>10</sup> After Carolingian Miniscule emerged in England, scribes slowly changed from the so-called 'insular' styles to the new standard. This led, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, to some hybrid scripts known now as Anglo-Caroline Miniscule. One of these (classified as type III) was described as 'a low quality type linked to the scriptorium of Worcester Cathedral Priory towards the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>11</sup> The Old English portions are written in English Vernacular Miniscule<sup>12</sup>. The allograph<sup>13</sup> of the letter 'a' is written in the form of Insular Miniscule even in the Latin text. For example:  (Carolingian Miniscule would look like this: .

It is interesting to note that in the preamble to S772, Eadgar is described as 'King of all Albion' (including Scotland and Wales). This claim was reinforced according to William of Malmesbury who reported that Eadgar summoned to his court at Chester three Scottish kings and five Welsh kings who were bound to him by a lasting oath and were exhibited on the river Dee where '...putting them all on board the same vessel he compelled them to row him as he sat at the prow: thus displaying his regal magnificence, who held so many kings in subjection'<sup>14</sup>. This story is confirmed (in part) in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle and dated to the year 973 shortly after Eadgar's coronation<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> The British Library, < [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_Ch\\_19793](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_Ch_19793)>, [Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].

<sup>10</sup> M.Drogin, *Medieval Calligraphy*, New York: Dover Publications inc, (1980), p125.

<sup>11</sup> University of London, *Post Graduate Online Research Training*, < <https://port.sas.ac.uk/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=1121>>, [Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].

<sup>12</sup> The British Library, < [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_Ch\\_19793](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_Ch_19793)>, [Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].

<sup>13</sup> An alphabetic letter in a particular shape.

<sup>14</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, Translated by J.A.Giles, London: Henry G Bonn (1847), Chapter VIII, p147.

<sup>15</sup> *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, Ed and Translated by Benjamin Thorpe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1861), digitally reprinted 2021, p96. The date indicated in the ASC is 972 but there is ample evidence that the coronation was in 973. Also it states that there were only 6 kings being rowed.



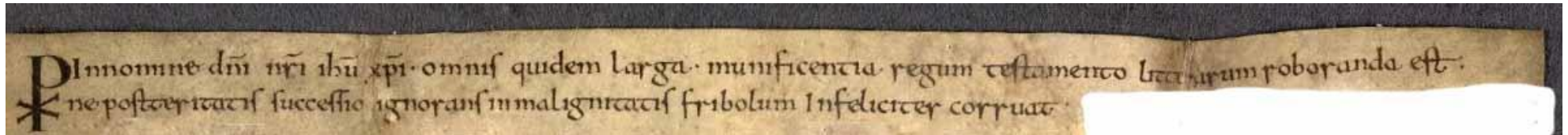
King Eadgar being rowed on the river Dee by 8 kings, By James William Edmund Doyle<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Doyle, James William Edmund (1864) 'Edgar the Pacific'; in A Chronicle of England: B.C. 55 – A.D. 1485, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, pp. p. 69, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12039424>, [Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021].

## MANUSCRIPT TRANSCRIPTION

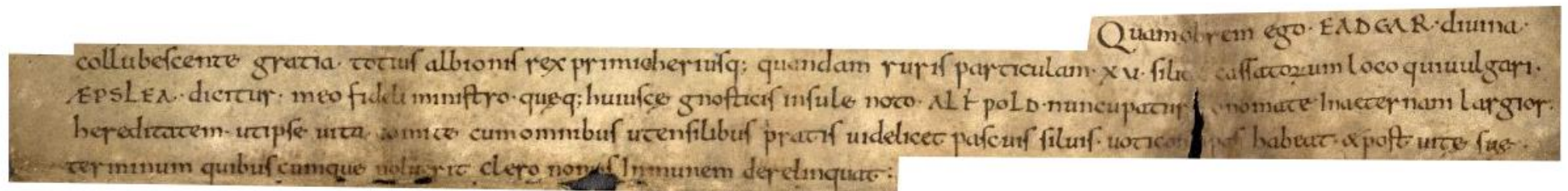
### Preamble



In[ ]nomine d[omi]ni n[ost]ri ih[esu] x[r]isti . omnis quidem larga . munificentia regnum testamento litterarum roboranda est  
ne posteritatis successio ignorans in malignitatis fribolum infelicitet corruat.

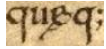
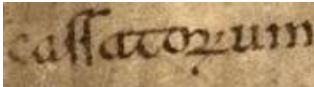
NOTE: The symbol  at the start of the manuscript is a Christogram known as 'Chi Rho' being the first two letters of the name 'Christ' in Greek . It was a symbol of acknowledgment of Christ and the Christian Church since the time of Constantine (306-337 CE). This is followed four standard abbreviations.

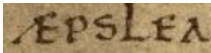
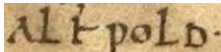
### Disposition Clause



Quamobrem Ego EADGAR divina collubescence gratia totius albionis rex primicheriusq[ue] quandam ruris particulam  
xv cassatorum qui[ ]vulgari ÆPSLEA dicitur meo fideli ministro qu[a]eq[ue] huiusc[a]e gnosticis insule noto Alfwold

nuncupatur onomate in aeternam largior hereditatem. Ut ipse vita comite cum omnibus utensilibus pratis videlicet pascuis silvis voti compos habeat et post vitae suae terminum quibuscumque voluerit clero nomis immunem derelinquat.

NOTES : The abbreviation 'q ;' is used for the suffix 'que' and the special form of 'e' including a diagonal descender indicates 'ae' thus,  is transcribed as 'quaeque'. I believe that the scribe might have made an error with the word 'cassatorum' because it is written as  The symbol 3<sup>rd</sup> from the end, looking rather like the numeral '2' with a diagonal slash through the base, is an abbreviation for 'um'<sup>17</sup>. The final two letters of the word which are 'um' should therefore have been omitted.

This section contains two names. Firstly the name of the location  and secondly the name of the beneficiary . These are both written in the English vernacular as can be evidenced by the first letter of the former which is The Old English 'Ash' character rather than a ligature between A and E. Also, in the name (Alfwold) the middle letter Is the Old English 'Wyn' character which somewhat resembles a 'P' but is pronounced like the modern 'W'. These letters are not known in the Latin language.

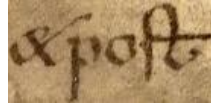
This is a technique known as 'code-switching' where two or more languages are mixed in the same manuscript.<sup>18</sup>

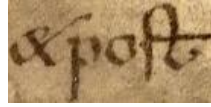
A later section of the manuscript dealing with the bounds of the land being granted is entirely written (by a different scribe) in Old English.

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<sup>17</sup> Lancaster University, *Carolingian Miniscule: Abbreviations*, <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/yorkdoom/palweb/week10/palwk10c.htm>, [Accessed: 23rd December 2021].

<sup>18</sup> H.Schendel, *Aspects of Code Switching in Old English Charters*, Section 2, 2005, <[https://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/hsl\\_shl/code%20switching%20in%20oe.htm](https://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/hsl_shl/code%20switching%20in%20oe.htm)>, [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021].



The words 'et post' are written like this: . The first symbol is an ampersand which is generally an abbreviation for 'et'. The final two letters show an example of an 'st' joined (a ligature).



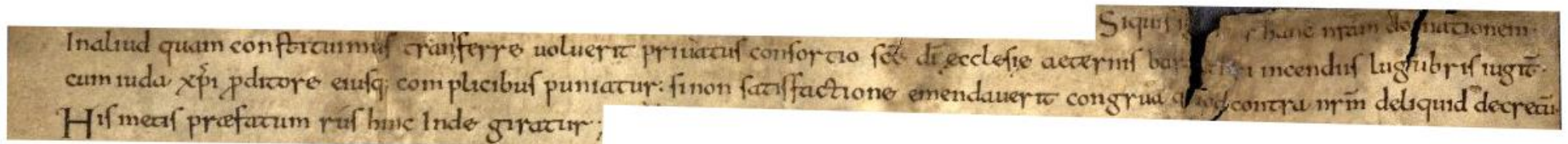
Sit autem praedictum ru[ri]s [ ]eum terrern[e] s[???]tis iugo liberum tribus exceptis ruta videlicet expeditione pontis arcis sue restauratione.

NOTES: This section has suffered some damage, and some of the words are barely visible and cannot be transcribed with certainty. There is an example of a ligature in the third word (praedictum) where the 'c' and 't' are joined . Another can be seen in the 'st' of the word 'restauracione' .

This is an enlarged image of the damaged section. The first word begins with 'ru' and ends with 's' but may or not be part of the next word which appears to end 'eum'. The next word certainly begins 'terre' and ends with an 'e' which appears to have a horizontal line over it suggesting an abbreviation indicating possibly a missing 'm' or 'n'.



The penultimate word is 'arcisue' which possibly makes more sense if it is two words 'arci sue'. I do not believe that a better transcription can be done without a translation which I do not propose to attempt.



Si quis igitur hanc nostram donationem in aliud quam constituimus transferre voluerit privatus consortio sancte dei ecclesiae aeternis barathri incendiis lugubris iugiter cum iuda Christi perditore eiusque complicitibus puniatur. Si non satisfactionem emendaverit congrua quod contra nostrum deliquit decretum. His metis praefatum rus hinc inde giratur.

#### NOTES :

A number of abbreviations here. The word 'igitur' is partially obscured by the damage to the parchment but it is the only word which makes sense in the context. Interesting to note that when writing the word 'transferre', the scribe had omitted the 's' which he had



to superimpose. Sancte Dei are standard abbreviations



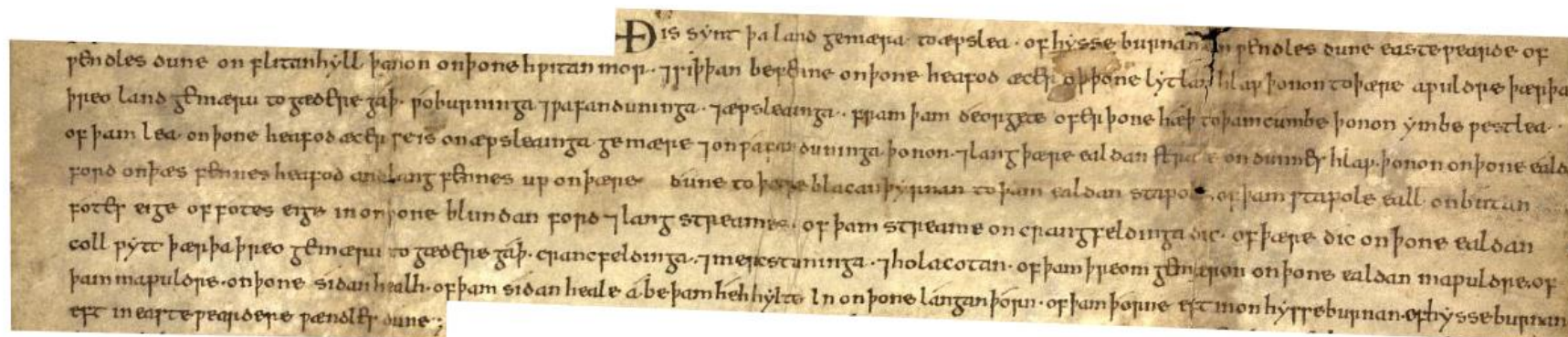
word 'ecclesiae' is spelt thus by reason of the form of the first and last 'e':



diphthong 'ae' (not the Old English letter 'ash'). The word 'iugiter' used the horizontal line over the final 't' representing 'ter'.

These abbreviations and their use in Carolingian Miniscule (and thence to Anglo Caroline Miniscule) can be seen on this web resource<sup>19</sup>. Similar for the final word where the final 'u' has the horizontal line indicating the missing 'm'.

### Bounds Clause (English Vernacular)



This is the 'bounds' clause which indicates in some detail the land being granted. It was written in English, presumably by a different scribe, and used the standard English Vernacular Miniscule.

Dis synt þa Land gemæra to æpslea of hysse burnan on pendles dune eastwearde of pendles dune on flytanhyll þanon on þone hpittan mor . [and] sippan be fenne on þone heafod æcer of þone lytlan hlap þanon to þære apuldre þær þa þreo land gemæru to gædere gaþ. poburninga [and] pafanduninga. [and] æpsleainga fram þam deorgæte ofer þone hæþ to þam cumbe þanon ymbe pestlea of þam lea on þone heafod æcer se is on æpsleainga gemære [and] on pafanduninga þanon [and] lang þære ealdan stra[?t]e on dunnes hlap. þanon on þone ealdn ford on þæs fennes heafod and lang fennes up on þære dune to þære blacan þyrnan to þam ealdan stapole or þam stapole eall on butan fotes eige of fotes eige in on þone blundan ford [and] lang streames of þam streame on crangfeldinga dic. Of þære dic on þone ealdan coll pytt þær þa þreo gemæru togædre gaþ cranefeldinga [and]

<sup>19</sup> UCLA Digital Library, *The Carolingian Libraries of St Gall and Reichenau (Abbreviations)*, < [http://www.stgallplan.org/en/read\\_carol\\_mss.html](http://www.stgallplan.org/en/read_carol_mss.html) >, [Accessed: December 24<sup>th</sup> 2021].

merc tuninga [and] holacotan of þam þreom gemæron on þone ealdan mapuldre of þam mapuldre on þone sidan healh of þam sidan heale a be þam heh hylte in on þone langan þorn of þam þorne eft mon hysseburnan of hysseburnan eft in eastepeardere pendles dune;

#### NOTES:

In this transcription I have retained the special alphabetic characters from Old English which are as follows:

|   |         |                    |   |       |                    |
|---|---------|--------------------|---|-------|--------------------|
| þ | 'thorn' | th (as in 'thing') | Ð | 'eth' | th (as in 'that')  |
| æ | 'ash'   | a (as in cat)      | ƿ | 'wyn' | w (as in 'window') |

The 'wyn' character is very similar to 'p' and the scribe seems to have made little distinction between the letters. For example, this letter:  is a 'p' but this:  is a 'p' (wyn). Sometimes the context has had to be the guide for the correct transcription.

Common use is made of the shorthand character representing 'and' which looks like this: . Some vowels are accented with an 'acute' accent (diagonal line top right to bottom left). Although this accent is often used to indicate a long vowel sound, it has been said that 'the function of acute accents ... is uncertain. They are more often than not found over long vowels, but they also appear over short ones. They are especially common on one-syllable words.'<sup>20</sup> The ligature of a long 'e' attached to several consonants

 which appears several times in this section is a feature of Insular Miniscule but not found in Carolingian Miniscule<sup>21</sup>. The text in this section is mainly a point by point tracing of the boundaries of the land being transferred. A translation of this has been

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<sup>20</sup> P.Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) 2012, p161.

<sup>21</sup> M.Drogin, P116.

attempted by Bedford Borough Council on their archives services website for the village of Husborne Crawley<sup>22</sup>. Some of the place names have not been translated but I believe they can all be found on modern maps.

| Place Name from S772 | Modern name                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Æpslea               | Aspley Guise ('ps' has become 'sp')                                                  |
| Hysseburnan          | Husborne Crawley (or may refer just to the stream [burn] now known as Crawley Brook) |
| pendles dune         | Wednesden Hill                                                                       |
| flytanhyll           | Flitton                                                                              |
| hpittan mor          | Flitton moor (the white moor)                                                        |
| poburninga           | Men of Woburn                                                                        |
| pafanduninga         | Men of Wavendon                                                                      |
| æpsleainga           | Men of Aspley                                                                        |
| cranefeldinga        | Men of Cranfield                                                                     |
| merctuninga          | Men of Marston                                                                       |
| holacotan            | Men of Hulcote                                                                       |

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<sup>22</sup> Bedfordshire Archives Service, *The Parish of Husborne Crawley (Administrative History)*, <  
<https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/HusborneCrawley/TheParishOfHusborneCrawleyInGeneral.aspx>>, [Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021]

Anno ab incarnatione dñi nři ihu xpi. dccccxxiiii. Scripta est huius donationis singrapha  
his testibus consentientibus quorū inferius nomina caraxantur;

This is the dating clause dating the charter to DCCCCLXVIII (969)

|                                                                                     |                     |                      |                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| † Ego eadgar rex anglorum in consensu doctorum meorum consignosco et ratum roboram. |                     |                      |                                           |
| † Ego dunstan archiepiscopus douernensis ecclesie xpi possedi et subscripsi.        |                     |                      |                                           |
| † Ego ælfstan episcopus                                                             | † Ego ælfeg abb.    | † Ego ðeðel          | † Ego ðeðel episcopus consensi celeriter. |
| † Ego ælfwald episcopus                                                             | † Ego ofgar abb.    | † Ego ælfere dux.    | † Ego ðeðel episcopus m.                  |
| † Ego ofulf episcopus                                                               | † Ego ælfstan abb.  | † Ego ælfere dux.    | † Ego ðeðel episcopus m.                  |
| † Ego pynfige episcopus                                                             | † Ego ælfstan abb.  | † Ego ofgar dux.     | † Ego ðeðel episcopus m.                  |
| † Ego ofwald episcopus                                                              | † Ego ælfstan abb.  | † Ego ælfstan dux.   | † Ego ðeðel episcopus m.                  |
| † Ego ofwald episcopus                                                              | † Ego ælfstan abb.  | † Ego byrhtnoth dux. | † Ego ðeðel episcopus m.                  |
| † Ego ofwald episcopus                                                              | † Ego cýneþeas abb. | † Ego ofulf m.       | † Ego ofulf m.                            |
| † Ego ofwald episcopus                                                              |                     | † Ego ofulf m.       | † Ego ofulf m.                            |

This is the witness list from which one can see that apart from the king and the donee, there are two archbishops, 6 bishops, 6 abbots, 5 described as 'dux' which were known in English as Ealdormen (precursor to earls) and 6 described as 'm' which in Latin means minister but known probably in English as thegns (minor aristocracy landholders). This section is another good example of code switching as the names are written in Old English but the text in Latin. The Archbishop of Canterbury is described as:

Ego Dunstan archiepiscopus douernensis (Durovernum being the old Latin name for Canterbury).

## Closing Statement

The accurate determination of the scripts used for this manuscript add to our understanding of the development of scripts during a time of transition from the 'Insular' scripts used in England until about 850 CE at which time according to Professor Peter Stokes, 'scribal practices seem to have collapsed' He also refers specifically to the handwriting of the cartulary of Worcester Priory as being later than Anglo-Saxon Square miniscule (used up to the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century) but distinct from Caroline Miniscule.<sup>23</sup>

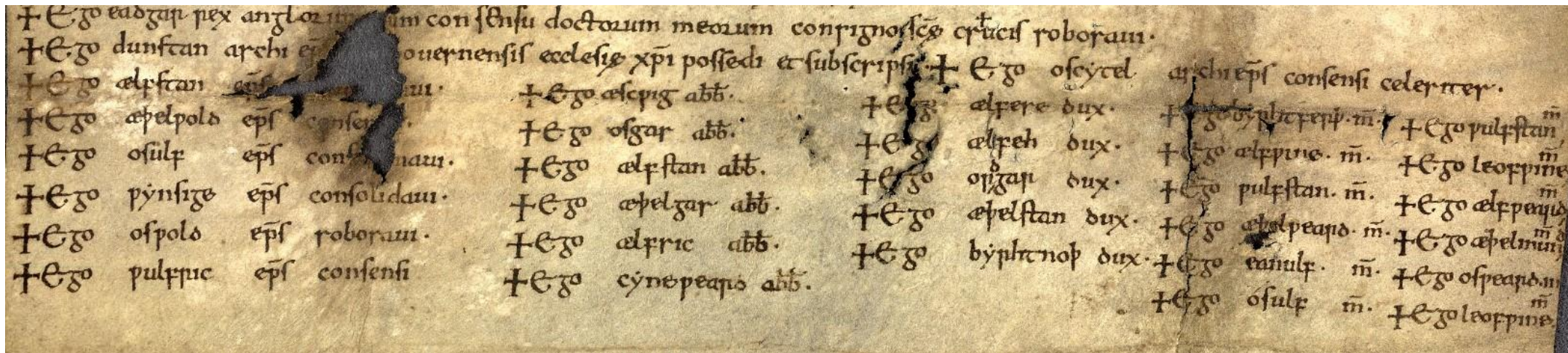
The manuscript provides an example of code switching (more than one language on a single document) with different scripts being used for the sections in Latin and that in the English vernacular. The formal structure of the document, Pre-amble, Disposition, Bounds, Dating and Witness list reveals the detail of how land boundaries were described by identifying boundary marker points although these are sometimes potentially temporary (the text refers to an apple tree [apuldre] and a maple tree [mapuldre]). The witness list shows how important these charters were regarded because of the exalted rank and number of the witnesses. The text is important to give examples of abbreviations, punctuation and ligatures (two letters joined).

From a historical research standpoint, it is notable that King Eadgar describes himself (King of All Albion), and also to have a useful list of Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Ealdormen (Dux) and Thegns (M[inisters]) as witnesses.

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<sup>23</sup> Digital Resource and Database of Palaeography, *Manuscript Studies / English vernacular Miniscule* (adapted from P.A.Stokes, *English Vernacular Miniscule*, (Cambridge: 2014 pp7-8 and 10-12), < <https://www.digipal.eu/about/the-project/english-vernacular-minuscule/> >, [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022].

**I**n nomine dñi nři ihu xpi. omnis quidem larga. munificencia. regum testamento litterarum roboranda est.  
 ne post hereditatis successio ignorans in malignitatis fratribus infelicitate corruat. Quamobrem ego. EADGAR. diuina.  
 collubescence gratia. totius albionis rex primobheriusq; quendam ruris particulam. xv. silio. cassatorum loco qui uulgar.  
 EPSLEA. dicitur. meo fideli ministro. queq; huiusce gnostici insule noto. ALTPOLD. nuncupatur. in omni aeternam largior.  
 hereditatem. ut ipse uita. comite. cum omnibus utensilibus pratis uidelicet pascuis siluis. uoticis. post habeat. & post uite sue.  
 terminum quibuscumque uoluerit. clero non. Inmunem derelinquat. Sic autem predictum po.  
 iugo liberum tribus exceptis rata. uidelicet expeditione portis arcibus restauratione. Si quis. hanc nram donationem.  
 In aliud quam conseruimus transferre uoluerit priuatis consortio. scilicet de ecclesiis aeternis baptis. incendis lugubris iugis.  
 cum iuda xpi pditore eiusq; complicibus puniatur. si non satisfactione emendauerit congrua. contra nrm deliquit decreta.  
 His metas prefatum rus hinc inde giratur; **H**is sunt paland gemæ. toepslea. of hysse buynan. pendles dune eastpeapide. of  
 pendles dune on flitanhyll. panon on pone hpitan mor. trippan beþine on pone heafod æth. of pone lyctas hlaf. panon to þære apul dne þær þa.  
 þreo land gemaþu to geodre gā. poburninga. 7 papanduninga. 7 æpsleamga. þam þam deorgeras of þi þone heaf to þam cumbes þonon ymbe pestlea.  
 of þam lea on þone heafod æth. reis on æpsleamga. gemære. 7 on papanduninga. þonon. 7 lang þære ealdan stipe. on dunnby hlaf. þonon on pone ealdan  
 forð on þas fennes heafod and lang fennes up on þære. dune to þære blacan byman to þam ealdan stapol. of þam ptaþole eall. on bitan  
 forð eige of forðes eige in on þone blundan forð. 7 lang streames. of þam streame on cranfeldinga. 7 of þære dic on þone ealdan  
 coll pyt þær þa þreo gemaþu to geodre gā. cranfeldinga. 7 megestanunga. 7 holacotan. of þam þreo gemaþu on þone ealdan mapuldne. of  
 þam mapuldne. on þone sidan heall. of þam sidan heale abe þam heh hylt. In on þone langan þor. of þam þore. 7 in on hýrre buynan. of hysse buynan.  
 eft in earde peapide. penolþ dune; Anno ab incarnatione dñi nři ihu xpi. deccc. lxxviii. Scripta est. huius donationis singrapha.  
 his testibus consentientibus quorū inferius nomina caraxantur;



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