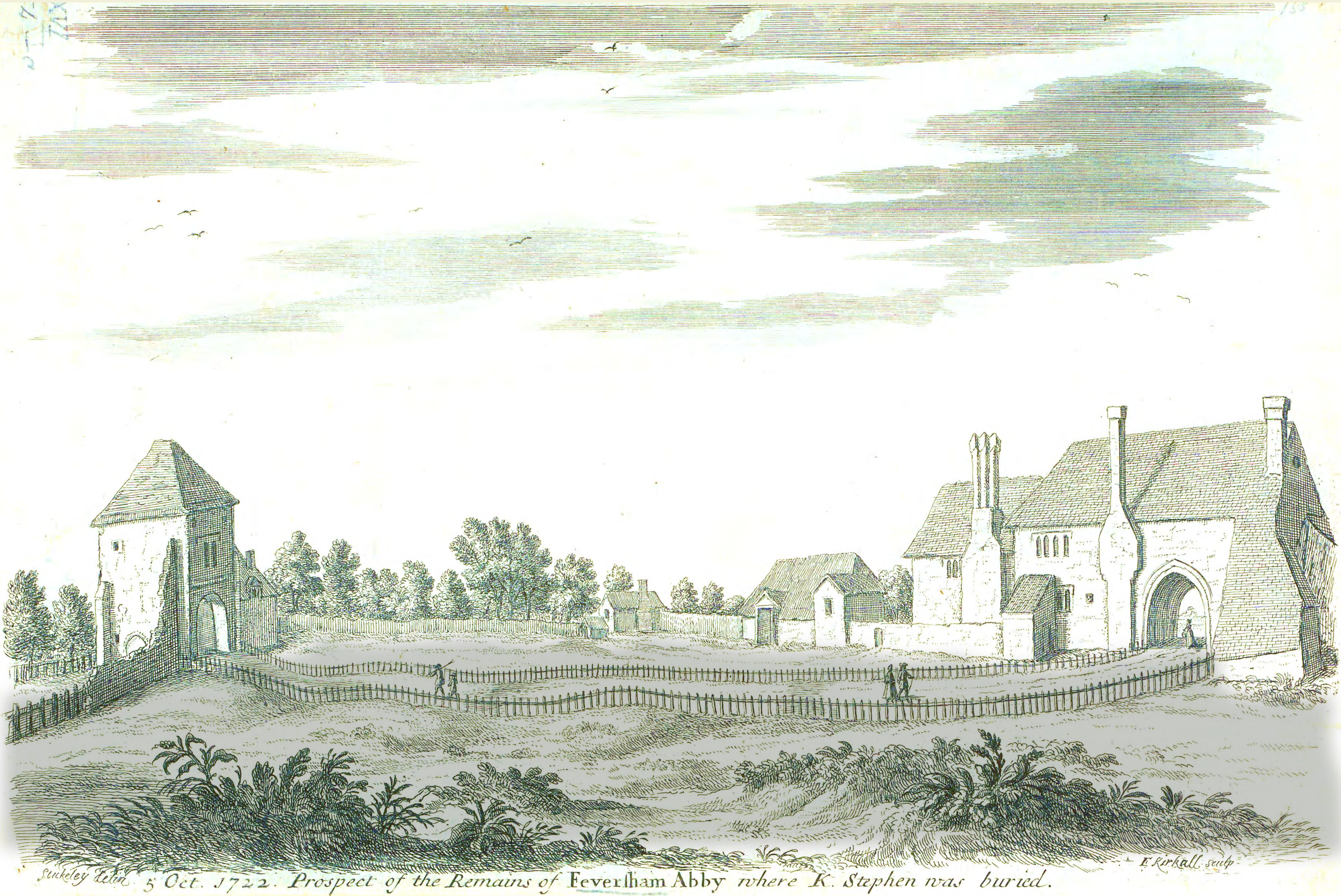




Welcome to 'Medieval Faversham'

A Free Heritage Hub Pop-Up Exhibition

We hope you will feel inspired to visit the many heritage sites in and around Faversham – the Market Town of Kings



London, British Library, Maps K Top 16.54.a

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The Faversham Magna Carta: Law Liberty and Legacy

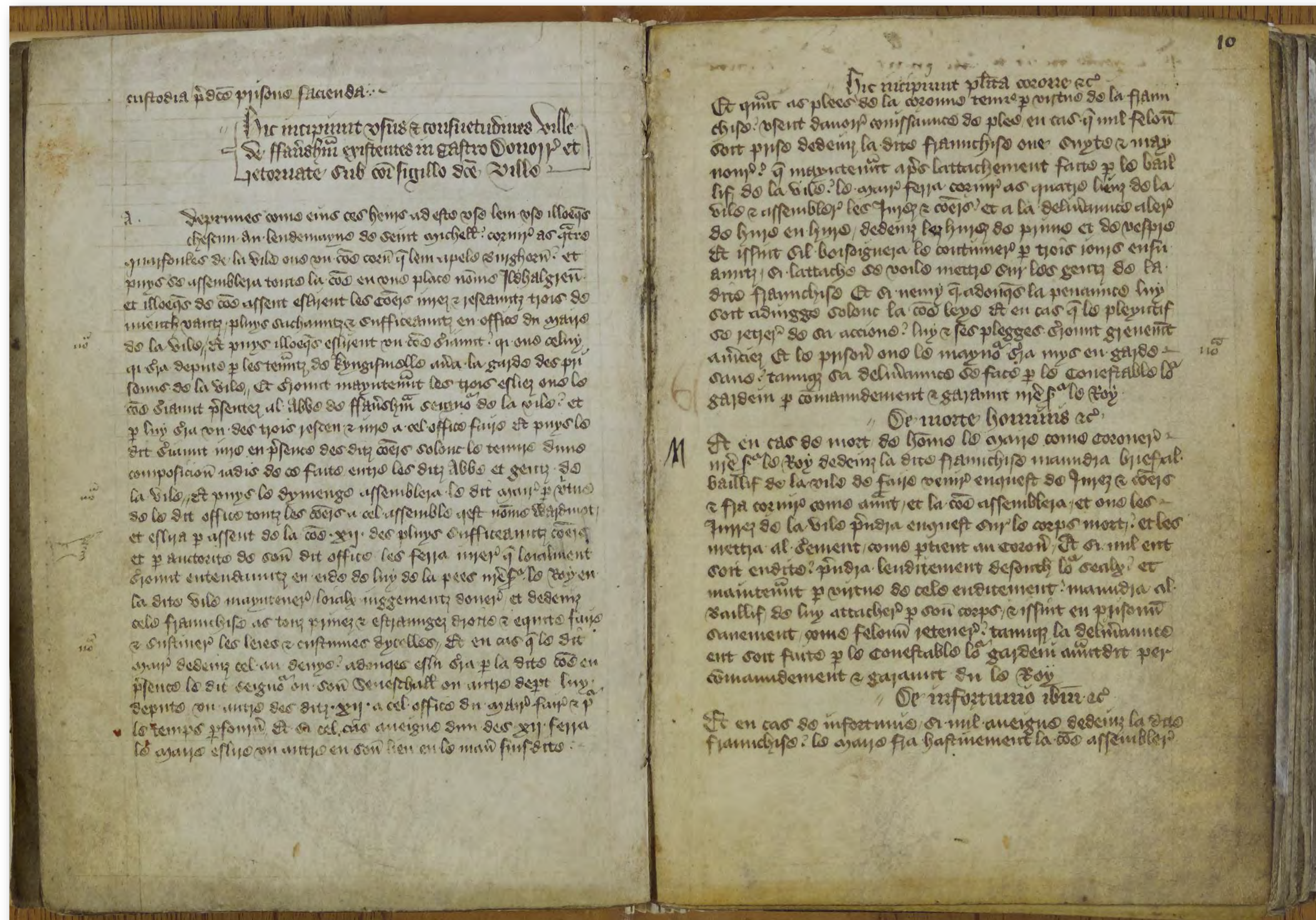


'For the barons of the port of Faversham'

Magna Carta, or the Great Charter, was originally issued by King John on 15 June 1215 at Runnymede. The charter established that the king was subject to English law and it is widely believed that *Magna Carta* was a foundation for democracy and liberty.

The charter was reissued on multiple occasions throughout the thirteenth century including 1216, 1217, and 1225. The 1225 issue became the definitive version and was later reissued in 1297 and in 1300 by Edward I. The Faversham *Magna Carta* is one of just seven surviving copies of this last issue, which is why it bears Edward's great seal and it was among the last to be drawn up by the royal chancery, making it even more significant. At the foot of the document you can see the charter was intended for 'the Barons of the Port of Faversham' and it was issued on 28th March 1300.

The Faversham Custumal



'Here begin the uses and customs of the town of Faversham . . .'

A 'Custumal' is a written account of the customs of a town, manor, or a community, such as a monastery. The Faversham Custumal was a very important part of a town's archive records and it was kept in a large chest with other town documents.

The Custumal contained the town's regulations and procedures, covering how Faversham was governed by those in authority. Civic custumals often include by-laws and copies of documents relating to the town such as charters, records about important decisions concerning the town, and material about how it should be run.

Today, only one copy of the Faversham Custumal still exists and it is in a small parchment book. A single writer produced the longest section of the book, written between about 1382 and about 1405, which contains the Custumal. Further material, including copies of agreements between Dover and Faversham, was added by perhaps nine other writers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The men who wrote this book were well educated, maybe having trained as royal clerks, and this is probably a reflection of Faversham's close links to London.

Apart from the Latin heading, the Faversham Custumal is written in French and begins by describing how the town officials shall be chosen. It then outlines their duties in terms of law and order, good government, and includes copies of types of document that could provide useful examples for later clerks. Within the Custumal is a 'perambulation' – a description of the boundaries of Faversham that could be walked by the town officials.

Faversham and the Cinque Ports



This is the Corporate Seal of **Faversham** from the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). It is similar in design to other Cinque Port seals, with its ship and royal lions on the obverse. The origins of the Cinque Ports may pre-date the Norman Conquest.

The five towns or Head Ports were Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, Romney and Hastings. Together they linked up to offer defence along England's southern coast, providing the king with 57 ships in total, crewed by 1197 men and 57 boys, for a set number of days each year, receiving in return valuable tax and trade privileges, including 'den and strand' at Yarmouth – the right to dry their fishing nets on shore. To aid the Head Ports, other ports provided ships and crews as required. Faversham was one of three ports or members linked to Dover. Thus, Faversham became a member of the Cinque Ports in 1229 when it was expected to provide 1 ship. It received the same privileges as its Head Port, as detailed in the General Charter of 1278. The king's officer who acted as the head of the Cinque Ports was the Lord Warden and at first his court was held at Shepway, near Hythe. The Lord Warden helped Faversham in a dispute with the local abbot during Edward I's reign and was given a gift of fish. Later Lord Wardens also expected such gifts – 2,000 herring and 100 'grayling' or salted fish – from the town each year.

The last year the Cinque Ports were required to undertake naval service was 1596 and today Faversham's role as a Cinque Port is purely ceremonial, but the mayor still attends the coronation. This is a legacy from medieval times of one of the Cinque Ports' most jealously guarded privileges, the right to carry the canopy over the king at his coronation. From 1978 until her death in 2002, the Lord Warden was Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother.

King Stephen and Queen Matilda Founders of Faversham Abbey

FAVERSHAM ABBEY was founded in 1147-8 by King Stephen and his wife, Queen Matilda of Boulogne.



Designs for Statues of Stephen and Matilda for Westminster Palace, *Illustrated London News*, 1855. Faversham Abbey on Matthew Paris's map, *Chronica Maiora* c. 1250 (Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 26, fol. 1r).

The abbey was dedicated to St. Saviour and was initially home to a group of Cluniac monks, although in the thirteenth century it had become a Benedictine house. It is likely that Faversham was chosen as the site for a royal abbey as it occupied an important place along the River Swale, a major shipping route to the capital.

The construction of Faversham Abbey began at a point in the civil war when Stephen and Matilda believed they had defeated the rival claimant to the English throne, Empress Matilda, and achieved peace. In 1148-9 Matilda of Boulogne spent some time living in nearby Canterbury at St. Augustine's Abbey to help supervise the construction of the royal Abbey at Faversham. This silver penny, which shows Stephen and Matilda as joint rulers, dates from around this time.



As originally intended, Faversham Abbey became a royal mausoleum and was the burial place of Queen Matilda in 1152, her son Eustace in 1153, and King Stephen in 1154. Yet it was also on the pilgrimage route from London, as this mid thirteenth-century map by Benedictine monk and chronicler Matthew Paris demonstrates.

The Abbey played an important and controversial role in the town's history for nearly four hundred years until it was dissolved during Henry VIII's Reformation in 1538. Stephen's tomb was stripped of its lead, and it is traditionally believed that his bones were cast into Faversham Creek together with those of his wife and son.

Faversham Church and Pilgrimage



The murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket by four of King Henry II's knights in 1170 inside Canterbury Cathedral is an infamous event in medieval history.

In 1220, Becket's body was moved from the Cathedral's crypt to the Trinity chapel. The translation of Becket's bones was commemorated by a jubilee celebration every 50 years and great swathes of pilgrims made the journey to Canterbury to visit Saint Thomas' shrine. Whilst some pilgrims made the journey for purely religious motives, others travelled with the hope of a cure for their maladies or to seek pardon for their sins.

The parish church of St Mary's, Faversham, housed an altar of Saint Thomas in the north chancel aisle. Pilgrims often stopped off at the church to pay their devotions to Thomas at this altar before undertaking the final stretch of their journey to Canterbury. There was probably a wall painting of the saint's martyrdom. A wall painting that does survive in St Thomas's chapel features St John the Evangelist disguised as a pilgrim beggar, who was said to have received a gold ring from King Edward the Confessor as an act of charity. St John is shown carrying a pilgrim's bag with a staff in his left hand. The painting is no longer visible but these Victorian drawings record the medieval pilgrimage scenes.

Faversham's Moot Horn



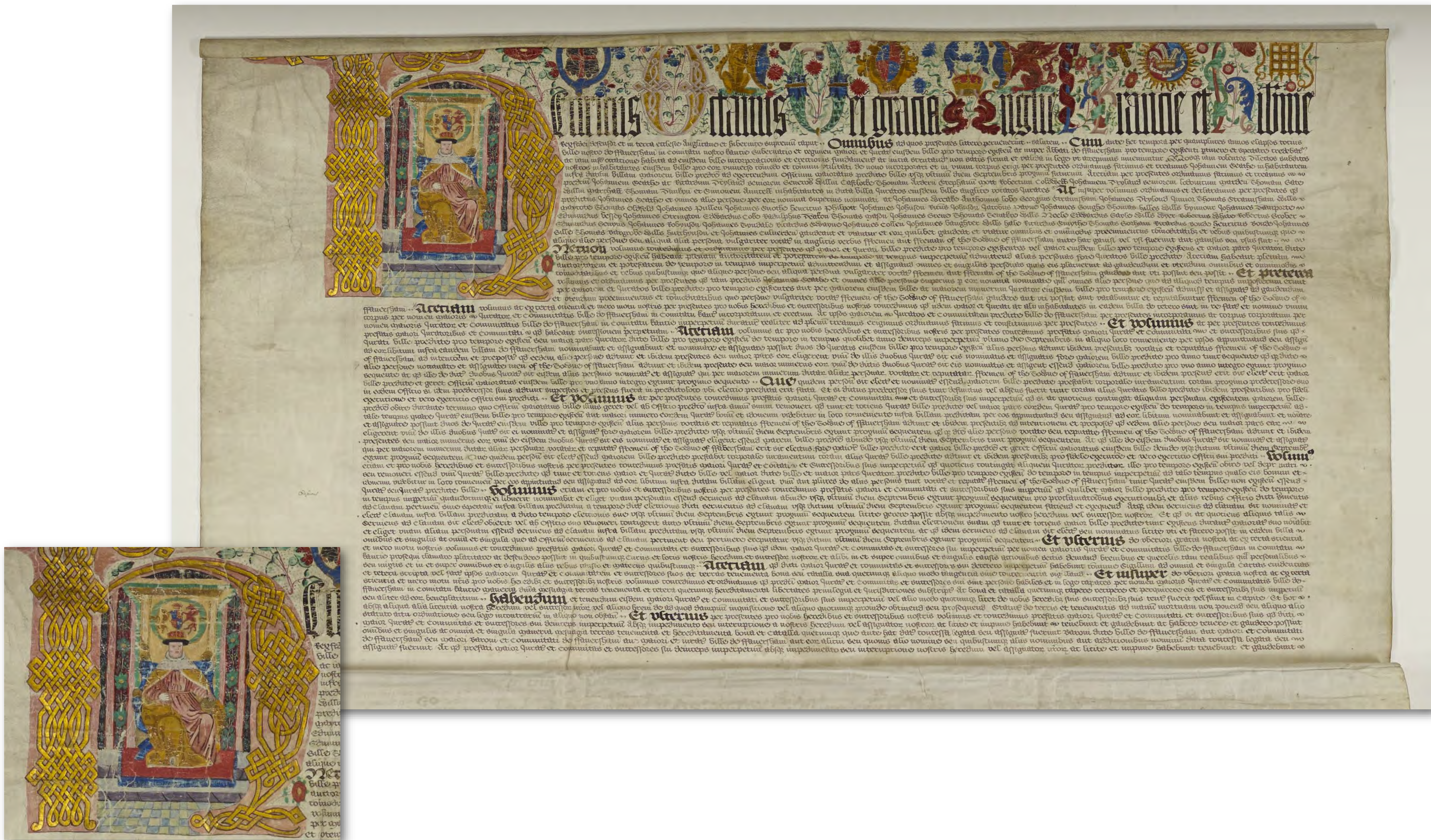
Dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, Faversham's moot horn is unusual because at one time it was encased in a leather cover. As the leather aged it affected the copper alloy horn underneath. In the sixteenth century it had to be repaired at least four times.

As a group these metal, mostly bronze, moot horns from the Cinque Ports are an important collection. They vary in shape and size. There are also others in Kent, including Canterbury's fourteenth-century horn, which is another one of the earliest in England. The moot horn was used to call the citizens together. For example, in medieval Faversham the custumal says that:

the people there are to be summoned by one common horn called a Burghorn to be sounded at the crossroads of the town the day after Michaelmas, 30th September, and then all the people shall assemble at a place called Ildhalgren and there by common assent shall select three praiseworthy and trusted men sworn and approved for the office of mayor of the town.

Such official occasions were not the only time the moot horn was blown. During a dispute in 1301 between the mayor, the vicar and their followers, and St Augustine's Abbey, which appointed the vicar at St Mary's church, the townsmen responded to the sounding of the horn and a scuffle took place between the townsmen and the monks in the church and churchyard over the burial of a local citizen.

Henry VIII's Charter

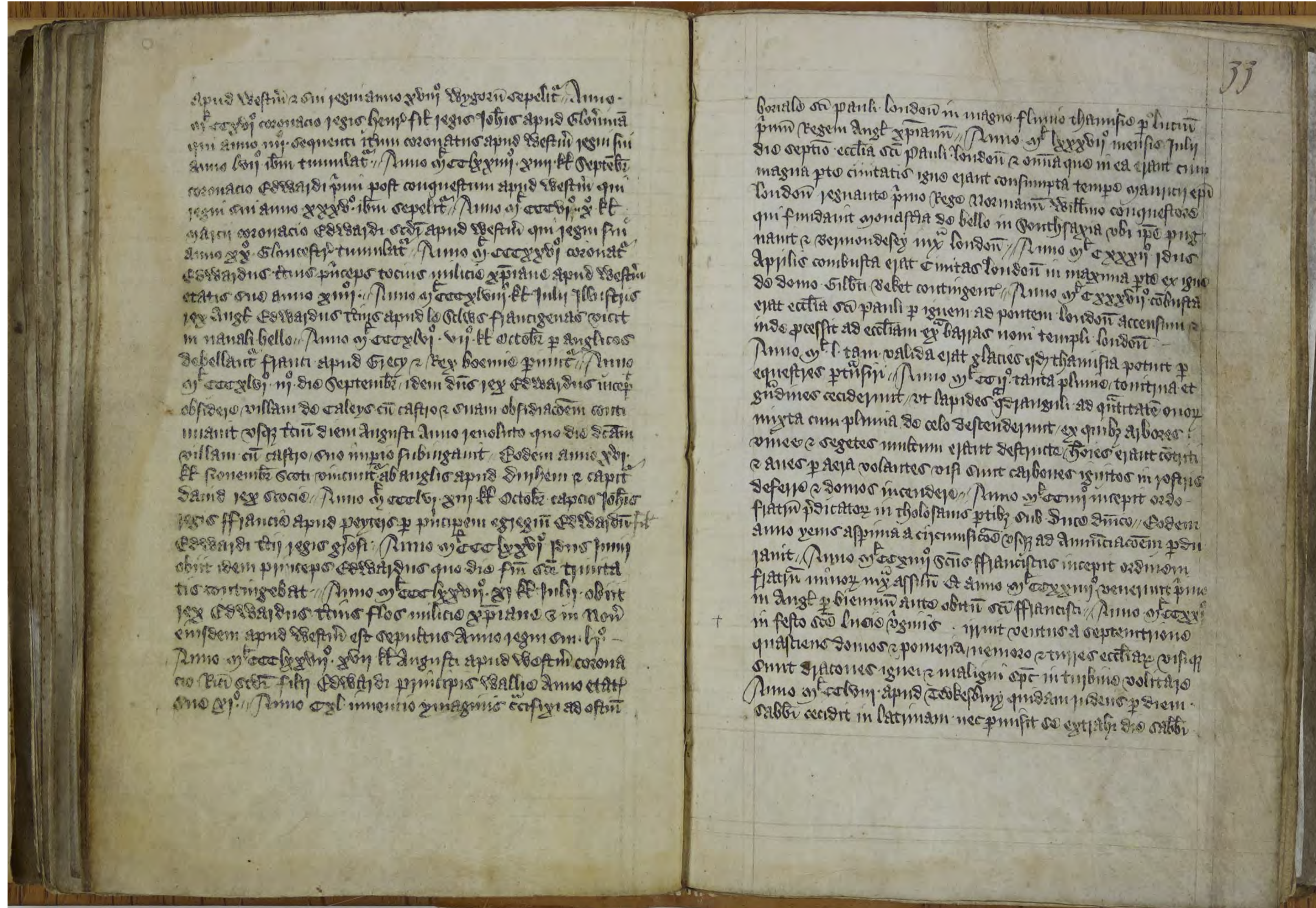


In 1546, a year before his death, King Henry VIII granted Faversham its Charter of Incorporation. The charter re-established the administrative structure of the town following the dissolution of Faversham Abbey.

Faversham's civic government comprised a mayor who was to be elected each year, eleven jurats and, initially, fifty-six freemen. The man appointed as the first mayor of Faversham after the charter was John Seath, who took his oath at Westminster before the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The charter laid down the procedures of appointing men to these positions, how they were to be replaced, and the rights they held.

By this charter the town's tenurial, jurisdictional and mercantile rights and privileges were renewed. Henry VIII also granted various other corporate privileges including a common seal, portmote (borough) court, a market three times a week and a fair in February and August. The king also allowed Faversham to create its own byelaws, a right enjoyed by many of the other Cinque Ports.

The charter itself is written on parchment and measures an impressive 91x104 centimetres. The first line of the charter is beautifully illuminated with the initial 'H' featuring a depiction of an enthroned Henry VIII. The charter also has an illuminated top border of heraldic symbols, including a scarlet dragon.



Medieval towns rarely produced chronicles, which means Faversham's Chronicle is an important document in the town's archive. It begins with the creation of the world and ends in 1382, the year a great earthquake shook the whole of England – a momentous event.

As Faversham is a royal town, the writer compiled a list of English kings and the date of their respective coronations. He was also interested in their place of burial and for King Stephen this brought together national and local events. For the chronicler wrote that 'in the year 1135 was the coronation of King Stephen at Westminster. This king in the 19th year of his reign was interred at Faversham.'

Military history similarly caught his attention, and as Faversham was a Cinque Port that helped to provide Ship Service for the Crown, he recorded victories relating to the Scottish wars – the defeat and capture of King David of Scotland at Durham in 1346; and military campaigns in France such as the Battle of Crecy in September 1346. This mix of international, national and local was also captured in his reference to the arrival of plague in England in 1348, as well as to further major outbreaks in 1361 and 1368.



Woodcut of a hurricane
Olaus Magnus, *Historia de
Gentibus Septentrionalibus*

Moreover, this sense of awe and fear is also evident in his recording of weather events, such as 'hailstones the size of eggs' and 'fiery dragons and evil spirits flying about in a whirlwind' on St Lucy's Feast in 1222.



St Mary's Hospital on Watling Street at Ospringe gave overnight shelter to poor pilgrims. It was also called the 'Maison Dieu' or 'House of God' and was one of three hospitals in Kent on the main pilgrimage routes to St Thomas' shrine, all dedicated to Our Lady, Christ's mother, St Mary.

The Maison Dieu at Ospringe was ideally suited for poor pilgrims before they travelled the last ten miles to Canterbury. The other hospitals were at Strood, near Rochester Bridge, and at Dover, and they were all founded in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries. Henry III was a major benefactor of the Ospringe hospital and royal patronage continued, for it was in Ospringe's royal chamber that King John of France stayed in 1360.

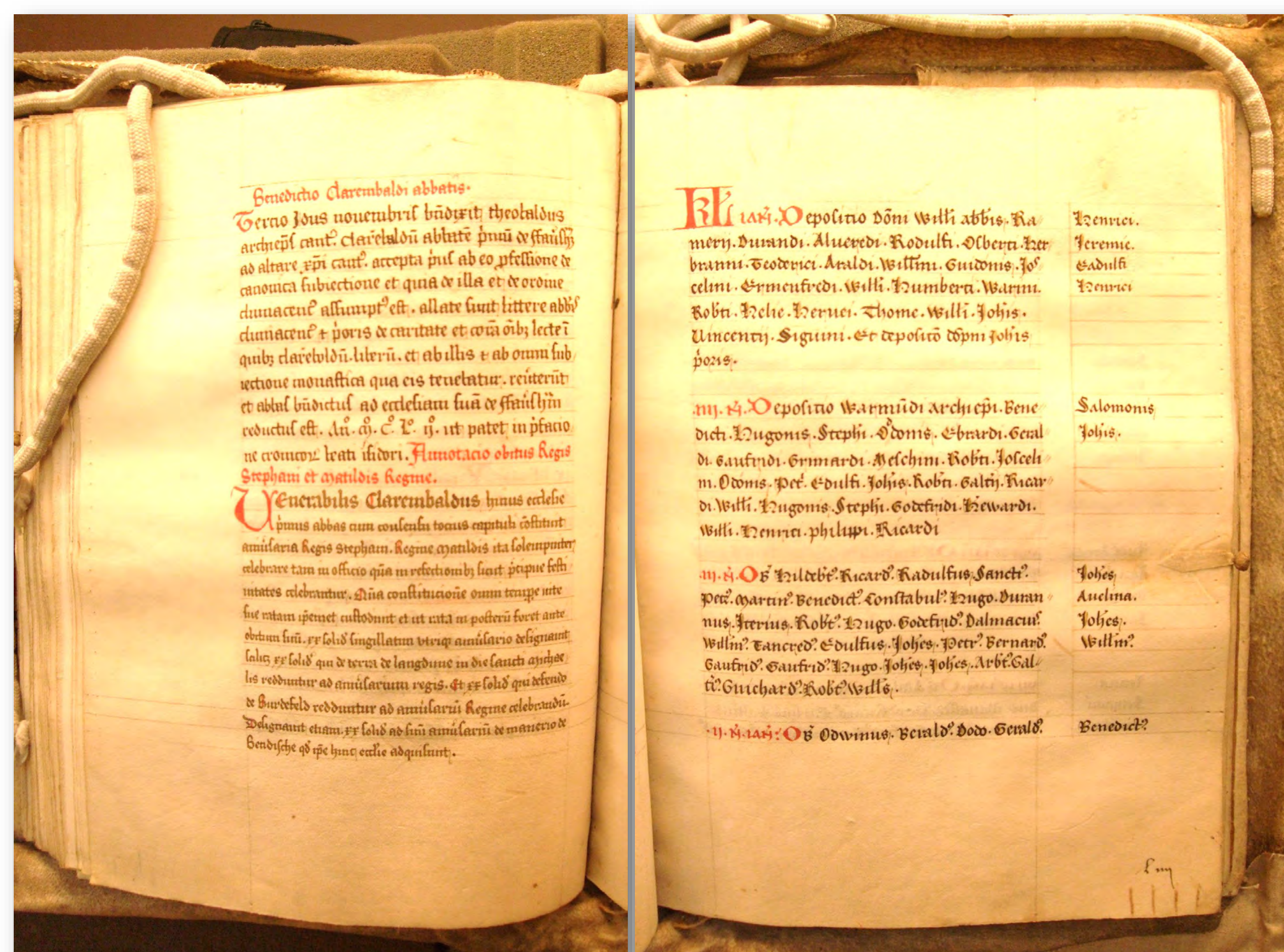


Drawing of the Maison Dieu before its alteration in 1894.
Archaeologia Cantiana XXX

Many ordinary people from Faversham and the surrounding area also supported the hospital. St Mary's received numerous small grants of land and rent, including an annual rent of 3d from William Palmer of Faversham to pay for a candle in the hospital's chapel.

Chaucer mentioned Ospringe in his *Canterbury Tales* but his wealthy pilgrims stayed at local inns. In the Jubilee year of 1420 there was confusion about the papal indulgence pilgrims would receive. Master Lawrence Barry, the master at Faversham's grammar school, fixed a note in English to the Ospringe hospital saying that pilgrims who truly confessed might receive the indulgence at any time throughout that year at St Thomas' shrine.

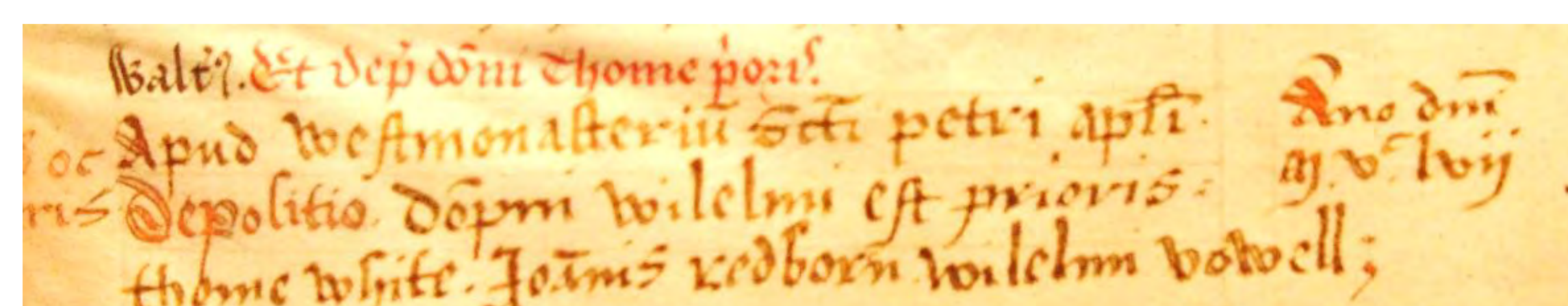
Faversham Abbey's Book of the Dead



This beautiful book is the key to the spiritual culture of Faversham Abbey.

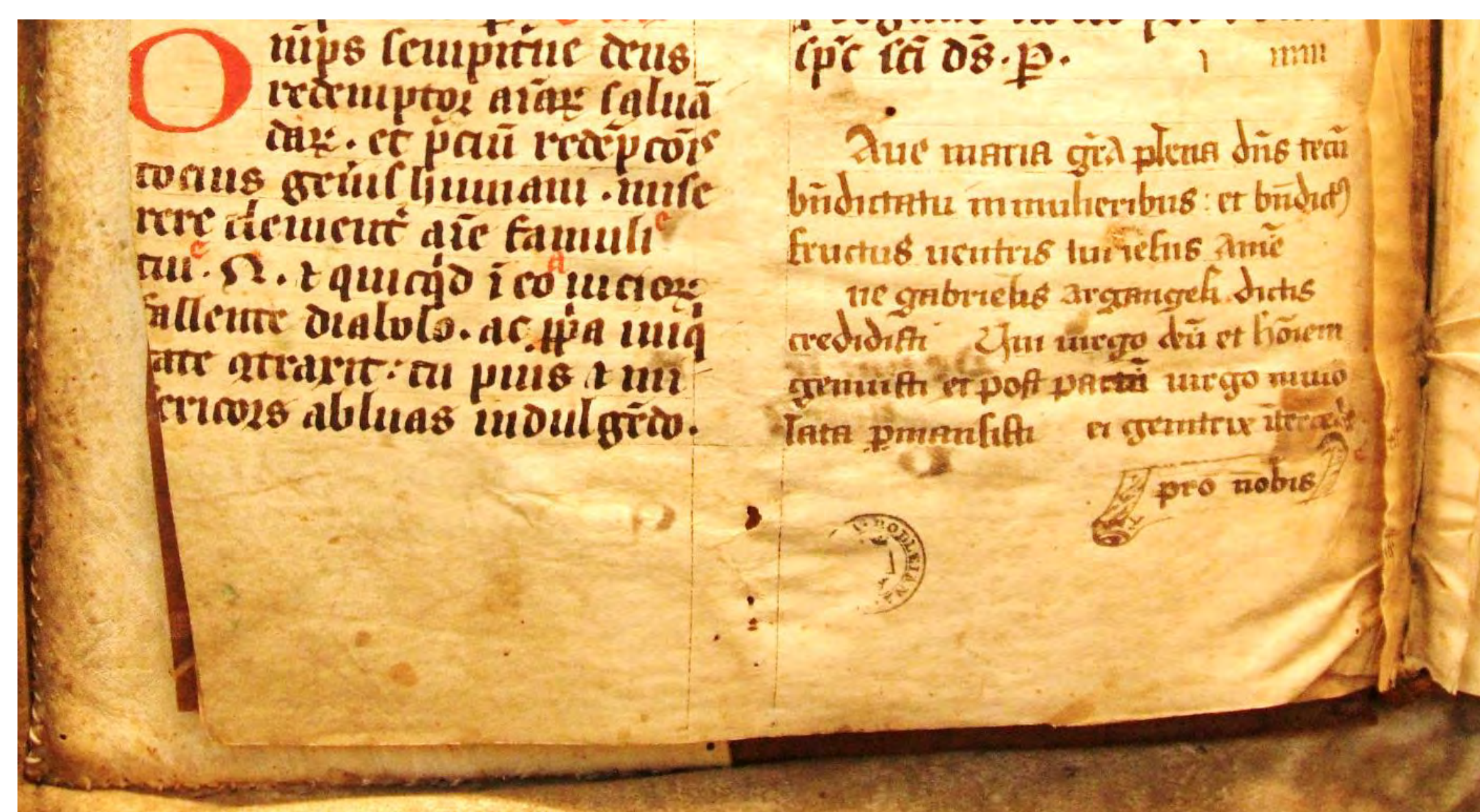
The Abbey's *Martyrology* is a book that lists the death days of all the saints and martyrs and how they died. They were remembered in the prayers of the monks on each anniversary of their death. These saints were not only heroes and heroines of persecution, they were imbued with the Holy Spirit. To their stories of miracles, piety, and bravery were added a calendar with the names of local people who had supported the Abbey, investing their names with blessings simply by being written in the same book as the saints and commemorated with them each year.

The page above reveals how the Abbey remembered its first Abbot Clarembald who was appointed by Archbishop Theobald in 1152. His name is in red and he is called 'blessed'. This page also records the deaths of the Abbey's founders, King Stephen and Queen Matilda and their generous bequests to the Abbey, where they were once buried. On the next page the book records the deaths of Faversham Abbey abbots and monks with the names of local people added in the margins.



Last entry dated
1557: m.v. lviij

The final folio has a note that the last four members of the Faversham Abbey community were housed at Westminster monastery in 1557 after it was re-founded by Queen Mary I. This Faversham Abbey book shows the beginning and the end of the Abbey and how Stephen and Matilda enjoyed over five hundred years of monastic remembrance of their generosity.



Back flyleaf
re-using earlier pages
with added Ave
Maria.

Made between 1350 and 1400, this Martyrology is now Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Jones 9. It is in excellent condition with original medieval covers and leather tabs. Its original flyleaves, used to protect the book, were re-used from a twelfth-century liturgy, a communal prayer book, with the *Ave Maria* added, so this treasured book of prayers for the dead is also bound with prayers.