

William the Conqueror's Lost Writ for London Rediscovered

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Abstract

William the Conqueror's writ for London has long been recognised as one of the key sources for the Norman Conquest of England, and has been discussed at length and printed many times. Yet the archives of the Corporation of the City of London contain another, hitherto unpublished, text of a writ of that king in favour of the citizens of London. In the later middle ages, it was set alongside its better-known companion as one of the fundamental texts of the City and its jurisdictions, but the original had disappeared by the seventeenth century. This essay sets out an edition of this text, and argues that it is a Latin translation of a lost Old English writ. It further argues that the underlying text was of 1067 or 1068, and that it shows the City of London's involvement in the process whereby English landowners were required to redeem or buy back their lands after the Norman Conquest. The document has a double significance. The process of redemption has hitherto been understood through Domesday Book and narrative sources, but this text shows how the process of redemption was carried out to an extent that has not been possible before, thus exposing one of the key phases of the Conquest. The text also shows the developing relationship between London and the Conqueror, and undermines some of the exceptionalist views on how London survived the Conquest itself.

I

In 1428, someone wrote out a summary of the City of London's legendary and quasi-historical past into the volume now known as Letter-Book K, which records the day-to-day business of the City in the early fifteenth century. The account noted some of the key documents the City used to substantiate its understanding of its history, and it referred to two charters of William the Conqueror:

The said true charter by which the said Lord Conqueror confirmed to the citizens of London all process and laws which they had in the time of the said holy king, together with a certain other charter by which the same lord, immediately after the Conquest, gave the whole waterfront¹ and land of the City of London of which he was then possessed in his lordship to the men

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¹ On this term and its translation see footnotes 30–1 below.

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of the said City, can be seen and remain under the seals of the said king in the custody of the chamberlain in the treasury of the said chamber, which charters are contained and incorporated into the great charter of liberties and customs of the City of London² and confirmed by the same king and his descendants; and the meaning of these charters can be seen in the Latin tongue on folio 238 of the Liber Ordinationum.³

The first document noted here is clearly the well-known writ about laws in London which has been cited and discussed repeatedly.⁴ Here, it is paired with another charter of that same king, of equal or greater importance, which has not received comparable historiographical attention. The account states that it was written right after the Conquest, and that in it the Conqueror returned the land of the City to its people.

This was not the only time when someone acting on behalf of the City of London noted the existence of a second significant charter of William the Conqueror. In 1321, the City authorities were challenged to justify their exercise of jurisdiction over the lands and liberties of the college of canons of St Martin-le-Grand, on the north-western edge of the City. Here, the aim of the City's lawyers was to undermine the legitimacy of William the Conqueror's diploma in favour of the canons, and they did so by citing two charters, and by arguing that both were issued very early in the reign of the Conqueror, and so had precedence over the canons' 1068 diploma.⁵ Here, the order of documents in 1428 was reversed. The second, with its reference to laws and the time of the Confessor, corresponds to the surviving writ. The first, meanwhile, is here built up to even greater significance. Where the 1428 account reported that it granted to its people the territory of the City, in 1321 the grant was described as one of the City itself and all its rights, privileges and customs, including the rights to manage the disputed jurisdictions of the canons of St Martin's-le-Grand:

² Both the regulations for the government of the City granted by Edward II and the first charter of Edward III can be referred to in this way: An Antiquary [Walter de Gray Birch], *The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London* (London, 1884), 45–50, no. XXII, 52–8, no. XXIV.

³ 'Dicta vera carta per quam prefatus dominus conquestor confirmavit civibus London' omnes ritus et leges quas habuerunt tempore dicti sancti regis et simul cum quadam alia carta per quam idem dominus immediate post conquestum totam hidam et terram civitatis London' unde tunc possessionatus fuerat in dominico suo dedit hominibus dicte civitatis patent et remanent sub sigill(is) ipsius regis sub custodia camerarii in thesauraria dicte camerarie, que quidem carte in magna carta de libertatibus et consuetudinibus civitatis London' continentur et incorporantur ac per dictum regem et progenitores suos confirmantur; tenores vero earumdem cartarum patent in lingua latina in folio CCXXXVIII^o libri ordinationum': London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/AD/01/010 (Letter Book K), fol. 60v; digitised version available via <https://search.lma.gov.uk/>; calendared in Reginald R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter-Books, Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall: Letter-Book K* (London, 1911), 90–1.

⁴ T. A. M. Bishop and P. Chaplais, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs to A.D. 1100 Presented to Vivian Hunter Galbraith* (Oxford, 1957), plate XIV; edition and notes in David Bates, (ed.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I (1066–1087)* (Oxford, 1998), no. 180; Nicholas Karn, 'William the Conqueror's writ for the City of London', *Historical Research* 96 (2023), 3–16. The reference to 'omnes ritus et leges' in the 1428 account is taken from the Latin translation of the writ and confirms that the surviving one was indeed what was meant here; see footnote 14 below.

⁵ Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 181.

And they said that the said Lord William the Conqueror, before the foundation of the said church [i.e., St Martin's-le-Grand] and the making of its charter which was mentioned earlier, by the authority of his parliament and by two of his charters which the said mayor and citizens presented; that is, by one of them he demised to the then citizens of London all the said City and shrievalty of London with all its perquisites, matters and customs and appurtenances of any kind, whence the liberty makes all distrains and attachments and other executions of all kinds whether within the soke where the recently mentioned close and church are situated, or elsewhere through the whole City where there are parcels of land, as was set out before; and through the other he conceded and by the above-mentioned authority confirmed to the same citizens and their successors that they have the said and all their other liberties and free customs undamaged, which they had in the time of the said saint King Edward, his ancestor, and which they should peacefully enjoy and pass on through the reason of the same custom and charters.⁶

What these two passages demonstrate is that, in the later middle ages, the functionaries of the City of London believed that they had two charters in the name of William the Conqueror which dovetailed to protect the City's rights and customs, and its control over the territory on which it stood and the offices through which it operated. The detailed interpretations offered are clearly anachronistic – most obviously, there was no mayoralty in London or anywhere else in the British Isles in the eleventh century, let alone a parliament – and inflated. Yet, regardless of the somewhat exaggerated readings of the documents seen here, the more important point is surely that, in later medieval London, there were two original writs in the name of William the Conqueror which were both sealed, and that both concerned the rights of the City itself.⁷ This emphasis on two writs is surprising in the light of the historiography on Conquest-era London, which emphasises the writ about laws in London but which does not recognise the other one.

⁶ 'Et dicunt quod prefatus dominus Will(elmus) conqestor ante fundacionem ecclesie predictae et confeccionem carte sue de qua superius fit mencio, auctoritate parliamenti sui et per duas cartas suas quas dicti maior et cives hic proferunt, scilicet per unam earum dimisit tunc civibus London' totum dictum civitatem et vicecomitatem London' cum omni[bu]s appendiciis, rebus et consuetudinibus eius qualitercumque pertinentiis; unde libertas fac(eret) omnia districciones et attachiamenta et alias execuciones quascumque tam infra solu' [*sic*, Sharpe suggests plausibly soke] ubi dictum nunc clausum et ecclesia situantur, quam alibi per totam civitatem ut premititur fuerunt parcella; et per alteram concessit et auctoritate supradicta confirmavit eisdem civibus et successoribus suis quod haberent predictam ac omnes alias libertates et liberas consuetudines suas illesas quas habuerunt tempore dicti sancti regis E(dwardi) progenitoris sui et quod pacifice utarentur et tranderent [*sic*, for traderent] pretextu quorum quidem usum et cartarum'. London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/AD/01/010 (Letter Book K), fol. 120v; digitised version available via <https://search.lma.gov.uk/>; calendared in Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter-Books, ... Letter-Book K*, 153–4. A slightly shortened version was printed in Edward A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England, its Causes and its Results*, IV: *The Reign of William the Conqueror* (Oxford, 1871), 37, from letter-book K.

⁷ The first mayor appears in the 1190s: Christopher Brooke and Gillian Keir, *London 800–1216: The Shaping of a City* (London, 1975), pp. 245–8.

II

The first of the passages quoted above, that from 1428, includes a cross-reference from Letter-Book K to another of the records of the City of London, the *Liber Ordinationum*.⁸ It is one of many books made to assist in the governance and management of the later medieval City. The original part of the book comprises numerous statutes and similar authoritative texts, and seems to have been completed during the reign of Edward I.⁹ It amounts to much less than half of the manuscript as a whole. The rest of the book consists of additional material, incorporated into the book through the fourteenth century, up to late in the reign of Edward III.¹⁰ Much of this consists of the same kinds of statutory and legal material seen in the original quires of the book. Yet the additions to the book include a great deal of material specific to London itself, including pleas concerning the City and many charters about the government of the City issued by Edwards II and III. These items have been added in many different hands, and there is no particular organisation to them.

Letter-Book K's reference to fol. 238 of this book is not quite right, for the two writs of William the Conqueror can instead be found on fol. 246v. They follow a long section from fol. 240v to the upper part of fol. 246v which contains transcripts of charters of Edwards II and III with confirmations. The latest of these is of 1376.¹¹ These fourteenth-century additions are not written in one hand, but in at least three similar main ones, with comments and additions by others. Following on from them, the lower half of fol. 246v contains texts of two writs of William the Conqueror in Latin:

Will(el)m(u)s rex salutat Will(elmu)m episcopum et Godefridu(m) portigravium et omnes burgi valentes infra London' franciscos et anglicos amicabilem. Et ego notum vobis facio quod ego volo quod vos sitis omni illa lege et ritu digni quibus fuistis Edwardi diebus regis. Et volo quod omnis puer sit patris sui heres post diem patris sui. Et ego nolo pati quod aliquis homo aliquam iniuriam vobis inferat. Deus vos salvet.

Will(el)m(u)s rex salutat Will(elmu)m episcopum et Spegn' [*sic*] vic(ecomitem) et omnes dilectos meos London' anglicos et saxonicos amicabilem. Et ego notum vobis facio quod ego donavi vobis intrinsecis hominibus meis totam hidam et terram meam quam superhabitatis ibidem.

⁸ Now London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CS/01/005; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries: I, London* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 35–41, catalogues the larger items contained in the book, though the shorter items are not identified separately.

⁹ The original parts of the manuscript are those numbered by Ker as articles 1–36. Edward I was the last king named in the chronology (Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I, 36), and the last datable element in that first phase of the book is of 1298 (Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I, 37). It may have been compiled by Hugh Waltham, common clerk of the City; see Jeremy Catto, 'Andrew Horn: law and history in fourteenth-century England', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 367–91, at pp. 380–1.

¹⁰ Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I, pp. 38–41.

¹¹ [de Gray Birch], *The Historical Charters ... of the City of London*, 65–6, no. XXVIII, of 1376.

Et nolo pati quod aliquis franciscus uel anglicus inde vobis molestiam inferat.¹²

The two writs are in what looks like a leftover space at the end of the transcriptions of the Edwardian charters. The hand in which they are written is distinct from the hands which precede it. Its distinctiveness is emphasised by the way in which this writing has been cramped and constrained by the small size of the space available. The lines are much more closely packed than on the preceding pages, giving this section a denser aspect than its predecessors and suggesting that these texts were added after the others. The hand is consistent with work of the middle and later fourteenth century. The translations of the two writs of William the Conqueror are presented without any commentary or rubric, so that there is no specific guidance on the significance of their inclusion in this manuscript. That they were included at all implies a general message; someone thought that they were in some sense comparable to the other royal charters, such that there was some benefit into copying them into a book which overwhelmingly comprised legal texts. There is a hint that later readers approached the document in that sense. A marginal note of the seventeenth century, written in the bottom margin of fol. 246v, reads: 'I never saw the originall of this last, and I doubt the interpretation is mistaken'. That reader at least was apparently accustomed to linking the transcripts in the *Liber Ordinationum* with the collection of originals at Guildhall.

III

So, how should we interpret the two texts in the *Liber Ordinationum*? The first is much the less problematic. It is clearly a translation into Latin of William the Conqueror's writ about laws in London, which survives as an original through the archive of the Corporation of the City of London.¹³ The persons named, the structure, the sequence of ideas used, all show that this must be the case. There is a well-documented Latin translation of this writ which survives in multiple manuscripts surviving from later medieval London, and which is dated to 1314 in the rubric that accompanies it, but it is notable that this text in the *Liber Ordinationum* differs from that translation in various matters.¹⁴ The 1314 translation leaves the term *burhwaru* in the address clause untranslated, where the *Liber Ordinationum* version gives *omnes burgi valentes*, 'all the strong

¹² London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CS/01/005 *Liber Ordinationum*, fol. 246v. For a translation of the first writ, see Karn, 'William the Conqueror's writ for the City of London', 3; for a translation of the second, see the conclusion to this essay.

¹³ On this see footnote 4 above.

¹⁴ Printed in Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), *Munimenta Gildhallæ Londoniensis; Liber Albus, Liber Custumarum, et Liber Horn: II.I, Liber Custumarum, with extracts from The Cottonian MS. Claudius D. II* (London, 1860), 247, from the *Liber Custumarum*, London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CS/01/006, fol. 187r. On the Latin translations of the writ about laws in London see Karn, 'William the Conqueror's writ for the City of London', 10, footnote 43.

of the borough'; the 1314 translation has *lege*, 'law', where the Liber Ordinationum version has *lege et ritu*, 'law and process'. There is much correspondence between the terms of the writ here and the summaries in Letter-Book K, even the inclusion of *lege et ritu*, which shows that Letter-Book K must have drawn on this version rather than the 1314 translation. These differences mean that the two translations may well have been prepared separately.

The second one cannot be characterised so straightforwardly. It does not obviously match to any surviving original document, for the only other original in the name of William the Conqueror which survives through the archive of the City of London is that in favour of Deorman, which does not tally with the content of this document.¹⁵ Deorman's writ is a grant to him of land at *Gyddesdune* in Essex, and all of those details are omitted from this Latin version. So, this cannot be a translation of the Deorman writ. The contents of this second William the Conqueror writ in the Liber Ordinationum do not match anything much in the historiography, for it has never been printed, and it has not been much used by commentators on the Norman Conquest. There are only a few passing references to it in the historiography. Edward Augustus Freeman had noticed the passage in Letter-Book K that referred to this document, but missed the other passage that provided the cross-reference to the Liber Ordinationum.¹⁶ Reginald Sharpe calendared the 1321 and 1428 passages in his calendar of Letter-Book K, and noticed the cross-reference and the text in the Liber Ordinationum, though he made nothing of it and his comments seem not to have been used.¹⁷ H. W. C. Davis accepted it into his catalogue of the Conqueror's charters, but characterised it as 'Apparently an unintelligent translation of an O[ld] E[nglish] original', and summarised it in the blandest and most literal terms.¹⁸ Unusually, he did not print the text. He attributed his knowledge of it to Mary Bateson, but it seems that she did not discuss it in her own writings. David Bates excluded it from his edition in 1998 on the grounds that he thought it was 'not a text based on a document written in William's reign'.¹⁹ Of these, only Reginald Sharpe linked the passages in Letter-Book K with the text in the Liber Ordinationum, and so understood how the text was read and interpreted in later-medieval London. It has not been included in any recent narrative history of the Norman Conquest.

H. W. C. Davis recognised more than a century ago that the text of this writ was a translation from a lost Old English original, not what the

¹⁵ Bishop and Chaplais, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs*, plate XV; Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 107; David A. E. Pelteret, *Catalogue of English Post-Conquest Vernacular Documents* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 60–2, no. 23.

¹⁶ Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, IV, 37.

¹⁷ Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter-Books, ... Letter-Book K*, 90–1, esp. p. 91 footnote 4; also p. 153.

¹⁸ H. W. C. Davis and R. J. Whitwell, (eds.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066–1154; I: Regesta Willelmi Conquestoris et Willelmi Rufi, 1066–1100* (Oxford, 1913), 22, no. 85.

¹⁹ Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, p. 8.

Conqueror's scribes actually produced.²⁰ There are clear indications that he must be right. The address clause ends in *amicabiliter*, 'in a friendly manner', which does not otherwise appear in the address clauses of the Conqueror's Latin charters, but which is a translation of the *freondlice* which ended the address clauses in Old English writs.²¹ Likewise, the spelling *Spegn'* is nonsense and must be based on a misreading of the Old English *wynn* (p) for w, which was read as a p; the name should be *Swegn'*. The first few words of the writ, *Will(el)mus rex salutat ...*, 'King William greets ...', are a direct translation of the usual opening phrase *Willelm kyng gret ...* seen in Old English writs, and this form is different from what appears in Latin writs, where *salutem* appears at the end of the address. William is titled merely as king, without any further designation; this is characteristic of writs in Old English, for Latin documents consistently used fuller forms of the royal title. There is no list of witnesses, just as was the consistent practice on all Old English writs. Collectively, these points create a strong presumption that this was translated from an Old English original, for many of these features would have been hard to get right without access to a substantial corpus of texts, which was not possible before modern editions. This excludes the possibility that it is an outright forgery.

Yet, unlike the other translation, this second one is not simply a translation. There are elements in it which stand out as unusual and impossible for a writ of the eleventh century. The address includes the Angles and Saxons among the groups to which the writ was destined, and this is clearly problematic. There are no other writs from the eleventh century which include these terms in the address clause. Instead, the writ about laws in London includes reference to the French and English, and this pair appears towards the end of this writ in the prohibition clause; the pair of French and English appears often in William the Conqueror's writs. This anachronistic phrase naming the Angles and Saxons has to affect how the text of the writ is assessed. By itself, it does not invalidate the document, for there is much more in the text which supports the idea that it was translated from an authentic original. Yet, any evaluation of the writ must take account of both the markers of authenticity and these impossible words. There are a few means of doing so, but the argument offered hereafter is that the evidence of the text best supports the idea that this is based on an authentic writ which was modified and interpolated, presumably before the translation was made, and that the modifications suggest when and how it was updated.

IV

Usually, the analysis of a writ has to start with the address clause, because this identifies the people who put the terms of the writ into effect, in

²⁰ Davis and Whitwell, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, 22, no. 85.

²¹ For instance, Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, nos. 1, 11, 12, 32, 34, 36, etc.

this case Bishop William of London and Swegn the sheriff.²² The address also identifies the jurisdiction where the writ was effective, and so is key to identifying places; the choice of addressees defines how the writ was meant to be used. An address to a landholder implies a transaction very different from an address to a sheriff. In the case of this writ, this method of analysis is somewhat unhelpful, for the address clause is the most problematic part of the text, and has probably been tampered with in transmission. Thus, the reading of the writ here is based on the substantive or dispositive clauses of the writ, and the information derived from them can then be used to control the likely interpolation in the address clause.

The most important point is that this is a grant, which conveys something to the beneficiaries. Its status as a grant is proven by the inclusion of the term *donavi*, 'I have given'; this is in contrast to the writ about laws in London, which has *volo quod vos sitis*, 'I will that you be', to define its main transaction. This is significant, and the Londoners' late-medieval interpretation of the two writs has somewhat obscured that significance. This writ is trying to change something, where the writ about laws in London is a command that things should stay as they are or how they should be. Even though they were later treated as a complementary pair, their original purposes as shown by their wording were distinct. As this writ is concerned with a gift or grant, there are some matters which need to be defined carefully because they were intrinsic to the transaction. The first is the least problematic; the grantor was William the Conqueror himself, because the writ is in his name, and the verb of donation is first-person. The second is the identity of the beneficiary, those who received the grant named in the writ. The third is the asset which was granted to the beneficiary. Finally, the fourth is the manner in which the asset was transferred to the beneficiary and how they were meant to hold it.

The beneficiary of the writ is somewhat hidden behind the Latin word choices of the anonymous translator. The most important phrase here is *vobis intrinsecis hominibus meis*, 'you, my men within the boundaries'.²³ This can only be interpreted contextually. In relation to London, the most obvious boundary would be that of the City itself, which in the eleventh century closely matched the surviving Roman walls, and so the beneficiary here is most likely those of the Conqueror's subjects who belonged within the walls.²⁴ The residents of London were usually called *burhwaru* in

²² On these see footnotes 36–40. The approach to and assumptions about eleventh-century writs used here is that in Richard Sharpe, 'The use of writs in the eleventh century', *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2003), pp. 247–91.

²³ Richard Ashdowne, David Howlett and Ronald Latham, eds., *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, 3 volumes (Oxford, 1975–2013), *sub verbo* *intrinsecus*, sense 5; online at <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/intrinsecus>. Davis and Whitwell, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, 22, no. 85, has 'those who live therein'.

²⁴ The laws VI Æthelstan repeatedly mention the boundaries (5, 8.4, 8.5) and land (8.2–5) of the City (ed. Felix Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 volumes, Halle, 1903–16), I 173–83). The bounds were based on the Roman walls but also included a killing zone of 200–300 metres beyond the walls on the landward sides: Derek Keene, 'Alfred and London', in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 235–49, at 246.

William the Conqueror's Old English writs, but that was probably not the case here; the original of the writ about laws in London has *burhwaru*, but its translator gave *omnes burgi valentes*, 'all the strong of the borough'.²⁵ That the translator did not use that phrase suggests that it was not the underlying phrase in this writ. It is worth noting that the townsfolk of London were not here conceived as an institution, for there is no structure of agents or representatives who might manage the grant in the writ; the grant was conceived by the Conqueror as a grant to all the Londoners without any mediation. There are other writs which are set out in these terms. The Conqueror's successors issued writs to towns which exempted their people from the payment of royal tolls. These did not entrust the claiming of this freedom to a functionary, but rather granted it to the townsfolk directly, presumably so that any of them could claim it from any royal officers they encountered on their travels.²⁶ Something similar seems to have been in mind here, that it was a grant to the Londoners so that any of them might claim it separately. It is also worth noting one very obvious point; the beneficiaries were, as a result of this document, entitled to hold land, and, as the townsfolk of London, were protected by its customs. The beneficiaries were therefore free and of sufficient status to hold land in their own rights.

The description of the Londoners has one notable feature shared with the writ about laws in London. The grant is to *vobis intrinsecis hominibus meis*, 'you, my men within the boundaries', so that the beneficiaries are addressed directly. This is unusual; in most writs, the beneficiaries are named but not addressed, because most writs were meant to command a royal official to carry out some act or convey some asset to the beneficiary, and were concerned with ensuring that that happened rather than with creating a certificate about that transaction. This feature was probably due to how London was organised in the eleventh century. It lay in Middlesex, and so any royal commands involving the transfer of lands or assets would necessarily go to the sheriff of Middlesex as the custodian of those assets, and to the shire court of Middlesex as the provider of testimony about those assets. Moreover, in London there was another royal official, the portreeve, and a court which could provide testimony, the folkmoot, and kings directed writs to portreeve and folkmoot if those writs were about matters internal to the City.²⁷ These arrangements explain the presence of *vobis*. Townsfolk from London would have been present in the Middlesex shire court and so would have heard this writ proclaimed; but the writ might also have been proclaimed in the London folkmoot, and so would

²⁵ Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, nos. 78, 180.

²⁶ For instance, C. Johnson and H. A. Cronne, (eds.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066–1154*; II: *Regesta Henrici Primi, 1100–1135* (Oxford, 1956), no. 1275, 'Precipio quod burgenses mei Wiltone de gilda mercatoria et de consuet(udine) mea Wiltonie habeant omnes quietat(iones) et libertates de tel(oniis) et pass(agiis) et omni consuetudine ita bene et plene sicut burgenses mei Lundon(ie) et Wint(onie) melius et liberius habeant'.

²⁷ As in Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 180; on which see Karn, 'William the Conqueror's writ for the City of London', pp. 7–9.

have been heard by the Londoners. These patterns are important for thinking about what the original address-clause might have contained and how it might be restored.

The writ grants *totam hidam et terram*, and previous readers have interpreted that to mean 'the whole hide and land'.²⁸ At first glance, this is problematic. Where was there a hide in London? The area of the City is much larger than the conventional 120 acres of a hide. The hide was principally a unit for the assessment of taxation by this date, and the City was probably hidated as many other towns were, but its hidation is not known and was presumably quite high, involving hundreds of hides.²⁹ The interpretation of this word as hide cannot give a plausible meaning for this document. Yet *hida* is not only the Latin form of hide. *Hida* can also stand for *hithe*,³⁰ which means a quay or waterfront, and which is a much more acceptable meaning in a document concerned with London. Indeed, some documents from London use *hida* for *hithe*.³¹ *Hithes*, quays or waterfront, are entirely plausible in a document about London, because the Thames was widely used for shipping and waterborne trade, and had facilities to support those activities. Presumably much of the waterfront of the City could in some sense be called a *hithe*, but the name was applied specifically to the docks facilities at the mouth of the River Fleet, to the inlet known as *Queenhithe*,³² and perhaps other places on the Thames. The asset granted in this writ can therefore be identified as the waterfront of the City, including the quays and whatever other facilities stood on the Thames, and the land of the City, which must mean the solid land within the Roman walls where the townfolk of London actually lived. The interpretation suggested here, that the writ is about the waterfront and land of the City, fits with other early City documentation which suggests that the distinction between the two was meaningful. Some early charters and statements of London customs distinguish between the port and the town, and indicate that some tolls were levied at different rates

²⁸ See footnotes 16–19 above.

²⁹ Discussion of the hidation of Middlesex is based on the twelfth-century *Hidagium comitatus totius Middlesexie*, on which see J. H. Round, *The Commune of London and Other Studies* (Westminster, 1899), pp. 257–60, and Martin Weinbaum, *London unter Eduard I. und II.: Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Studien* (Stuttgart, 1933), pp. 85–7, no. 32. London is not included in this survey. For more recent analysis see J. S. Cockburn, H. P. F. King and K. G. T. McDonnell, (eds.), *Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, I (London, 1969), pp. 80–88; Keith Bailey, 'The hidation of Middlesex', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 39 (1986), pp. 165–186, <http://www.lamas.org.uk/transactions-archive/Vol%2039.pdf>.

³⁰ Ashdowne, Howlett and Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, *sub verbo* *hitha*; online at <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/hitha>, which shows considerable variation in spelling, many including *d*.

³¹ For instance, 'Precipio quod recognosci faciatis per probos homines de warda in qua est hida illa de Fleta quam Henricus arborarius tenet ubi naves sancti Pauli solent cum petra applicare an illa hida sit sancti Pauli an Henrici et naves sancti Pauli solent et debent ibi esse quiete de theloneo et consuetudine': Marion Gibbs, (ed.), *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London*, Camden third series LVIII (1939), 27, no. 34; Johnson and Cronne, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, no. 1843.

³² Brooke and Keir, *London 800–1216*, pp. 20, 156, 158.

in the two places, and that there were rules about how some goods had to be displayed at the waterfront before they could be taken into the town. Similar distinctions may have applied in other towns as well.³³ The division between waterfront and City does not appear in later documents and is an important confirmation that this text is an early one.

The final key question about this document is the manner in which the grant was made, because both the wording of the writ and its context show that it was not at all standard. The beneficiaries were not granted new property, but rather they, as the townsfolk of London, were granted the territory of the City which they already occupied. This, clearly, could not have been a normal transaction, and that unusual nature is recognised in how the relationship between beneficiaries and land was described. The word chosen was *superhabitatis* rather than the more conventional *inhabitatis* or *habitatis*, as though there were something distinctive about the way in which the people there lived.³⁴ This is more than a rare word, it is apparently a unique one, a *hapax legomenon*, which only appears once in Anglo-Latin literature.³⁵ It suggests that the relationship between the land and the people was not a standard one, and that it differed in some ways from the usual. The lack of comparators means that certainty is impossible, but it might be ventured that *superhabitatis* implies a different, perhaps more distant relationship than *inhabitatis*. Overall, the grant is cast in very different terms from the other grants of land among William the Conqueror's writs. Most such grants allowed that an elite individual or institution would come into possession of some kind of property which they had not held before, but that is not what is intended here. Here, William granted to the Londoners land which they already used, so that the effect of the transaction was to change the Londoners' relationship to the land, not to receive an entirely new asset.

V

The address clause is the most problematic part of the writ, as noted earlier, for it includes the anachronistic terms Angles and Saxons while also having features which would be expected in an Old English writ of

³³ On this see Neil Middleton, 'Early medieval port customs, tolls and controls on foreign trade', *Early Medieval Europe* 13 (2005), 313–58, at 333–8; Keene, 'Alfred and London', 243–4; and Jeremy Haslam, 'The development of London by King Alfred: a reassessment', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 60 (2010), 109–44, at 113–16, <https://www.lamas.org.uk/images/documents/Transactions60/109-144%20Alfred%20reassessment.pdf>. The comments on the compilation known as IV Æthelred should be modified in the light of the more recent analysis of this in Rory Naismith, 'The laws of London? IV Æthelred in context', *The London Journal* 44 (2019), pp. 1–16.

³⁴ Ashdowne, Howlett and Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, *sub verbo* *habito*, sense B; online at <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/habito>; Ashdowne, Howlett and Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, *sub verbo* *inhabitare*, sense 2; online at <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/inhabitare>.

³⁵ Ashdowne, Howlett and Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, *sub verbo* *superhabitare*; online at <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/superhabitare>.

the mid-eleventh century but which would be unconventional in a later Latin writ. The argument offered here is that the address clause has been modified, so that some words were removed, and others substituted.

The most certain elements of the address clause are the names of the two dignitaries at the start, Bishop William of London and Sweyn the sheriff. William served as bishop of London from 1051 to 1075 and is well-documented as active in ecclesiastical and royal administration within London and its hinterland.³⁶ Sweyn was presumably Sweyn of Essex, son of Robert fitz Wimarc and thus of Norman descent, who was sheriff of Essex for parts of William the Conqueror's reign.³⁷ In this writ, he cannot have been acting as sheriff of Essex, for London was not within Essex; it instead suggests that he acted as sheriff of Middlesex. He is not otherwise recorded in this role, but there are many gaps and high turnover among the sheriffs of Middlesex, and shrieval offices were often combined in one person, so his appearance in Middlesex is not inherently implausible.³⁸ The presence of a sheriff, and especially of one who is named as sheriff, gives an important indication about how the writ was meant to be used. It suggests that it was not of concern only to those living within the walls of London who were addressed as *vobis*, but also to those outside, in the extramural suburbs and out into Middlesex. For, among the many writs destined for London in the second half of the eleventh century, those concerned with matters internal to the City were addressed to the portreeve alone as the royal agent within the walls;³⁹ those with relevance outside or those about land were sent to the sheriff instead, for sheriffs were custodians of royal land.⁴⁰ They were presumably read not only at the folkmoot within the walls of London but also at the Middlesex shire court. That the writ was addressed to the sheriff of Middlesex and concerned land creates a strong presumption that it was addressed to the Middlesex shire court, for shire courts provided testimony about the possession of land, as in Domesday Book. The surviving address to the Angles and Saxons probably represents a partial overwriting of an address to the Middlesex shire court and the Londoners.

The mention of Angles and Saxons is the most flagrant problem here, but it is not the most telling. The addressees in London are described as *dilectos meos*, 'my beloved', and this does not appear in genuine eleventh-century writs. Attendees at assemblies are most commonly described as *homines*, 'men', *fideles*, 'loyal/sworn men', or as *barones*, 'barons'. In writs

³⁶ Julia Barrow, 'William (*d.* 1075), bishop of London', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

³⁷ Judith A. Green, *English Sheriffs to 1154* (London, 1990), p. 39; Ann Williams, 'Robert fitz Wimarc [called Robert the Staller] (*d. c.* 1070)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

³⁸ Green, *English Sheriffs to 1154*, p. 56.

³⁹ Florence E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (second edition, Stamford, 1989), no. 51; Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 180, perhaps no. 182; Davis and Whitwell, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, no. 444a.

⁴⁰ Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, nos. 78, 187, 188, 316, 327, 332; Davis and Whitwell, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, no. 415 is a duplicate of Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 187.

meant for London, the term *burhwaru*, ‘town-dwellers’, appears as well.⁴¹ All these terms described the people who attended assemblies, identifying one key marker that distinguished them from the rest of the population. The terms drew attention to the oath of loyalty they had sworn to the king, or to their status as the great men of their districts, or to their position within the town. These attributes qualified them for participation in the assemblies. Yet *dilectos*, ‘beloved’ does not refer to an attribute as such, but rather to a relationship, that those described as such were trusted and valued by the sender of the writ. This kind of descriptor cannot be found in royal writs of the eleventh century, but it was common enough in documents of the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, where the Londoners were often described by kings of England as *dilectos*, ‘beloved’.⁴² The term showed how later kings felt it useful to show a high level of trust and respect for the Londoners, so that they were not merely the king’s subjects, but special. Within the political culture of the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the recognition of such a close relationship was meaningful and powerful. The introduction of this term into the writ therefore allows some inferences to be made about when the writ reached its current form, and how translation might have altered it. It suggests that the interpolated words were added at a point when *dilectos* was current as a term to describe the king’s perception of the Londoners, which points to the decades immediately before the copying of this text into the Liber Ordinationum. It shows that there was a capacity and willingness to rewrite the writ in terms which matched contemporary norms. Perhaps most importantly, it shows that whoever made the translation and introduced this term was interested in the status of the Londoners and their relationships with external powers.

Unless another manuscript copy appears, it cannot be known for certain what lies behind these problematic few words. It may be that they are a restoration, an attempt to create a plausible replacement for words which had been lost on a torn or water-damaged original. Alternatively, these words might represent an attempt to erase something which was problematic for the City, and replace it with words that were more politically acceptable.⁴³ The paragraphs above build a case that these words replace what would once have been an address to the shire court of Middlesex and to the folkmoot of London, of a kind that appeared in other documents concerning the City and its environs. It

⁴¹ Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, nos. 78, 180.

⁴² For instance, [de Gray Birch], *The Historical Charters ... of the City of London*, 44 no. XXI (Edward I), 45, no. XXII (Edward II), 52, no. XXIV (Edward III) Kathleen B. Neal, *The Letters of Edward I: Political Communication in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2021), chapter 5, on how Edward I used letters to suggest trust and shared purpose.

⁴³ For a likely parallel see Alison Hudson and Christina Duffy, ‘Under the impression: multispectral imaging of Lord Frederick Campbell Charter XXI.5’, *The Antiquaries’ Journal* 102 (2022), 111–33, and Bishop and Chaplais, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs*, plate III. The same process might lie behind Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 66, Bishop and Chaplais, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs*, plate IV (a).

showed that business concerning the City could be heard by the sheriff and shire court of Middlesex, and this was a problematic idea at about the time the writ was copied into the *Liber Ordinationum*. By the thirteenth century, the City's ambition to dominate Middlesex meant that its sheriff had been subordinated to the mayor of London, and the City obtained guarantees from the king that Middlesex itself would not be farmed by contractors as other counties were.⁴⁴ London's domination of Middlesex by the later thirteenth century was such that the terms of the writ would have looked quaint and anachronistic, and perhaps threatening to the City's liberties and privileges. The City's relationship to Middlesex was therefore a point of potential contention, and the writ might have been seen as problematic for, if the reconstruction here is correct, it would have shown the Londoners under the jurisdiction of the sheriff of Middlesex. There are no other early documents which show this within the archive of the City of London. This concern with Middlesex could have inspired an attempt to rewrite the problematic address to this writ in forms more compatible with the expectations of Londoners in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, or might have shaped how a damaged document was rewritten. The source of *dilectos*, 'beloved' might be sought in many of the later thirteenth- and fourteenth-century royal charters for London, while the reference to Angles and Saxons was presumably inspired by one or more of the histories of the British Isles.

VI

The writ as a whole can therefore be summarised in these terms; William the Conqueror granted to the townsfolk of London the waterfront and land of the City itself, and implied that they occupied it rather than held it before the granting of the writ. This meant that he was giving them something they might have considered was theirs already. In this sense, the writ's meaning is not far from the meanings imputed to it by its late-medieval users. The transaction is an unusual one and cannot be paralleled among his other surviving writs, but there is a fairly obvious context where a transaction of this nature almost certainly occurred. Domesday Book records many instances where William the Conqueror regranted lands to English landholders not long after the Conquest of England, where the regrantee acknowledged that they regained title to their lands.⁴⁵ These regrants took place in 1067–8, and represented the

⁴⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, *Medieval London, from Commune to Capital* (London, 1963), pp. 29–30, 87–8, 234–5, remains the most recent analysis of the constitutional relationship of London to its immediate hinterland in the thirteenth century. On the earlier history of that relationship see C. N. L. Brooke, G. Keir and S. Reynolds, 'Henry I's Charter for the City of London', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 4 (1973), pp. 558–78; also, one portreeve may have been identical with a sheriff of Middlesex in the mid-eleventh century (Rory Naismith, 'The Origins of the Husting and the Folkmoot', *History* 104 (2019), pp. 409–24, at 419).

⁴⁵ David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (New Haven, 2016), 270–1, 284–8; Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 8–10; George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession and Tenure, 1066–1166* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 22–4.

Conqueror's attempts to manage members of the English elite and to validate their claims over their assets. When he did this, the Conqueror exacted a recognition of his position as king, and also demanded payment from the English elite as a condition of the regrant. These payments could be substantial; one of the Peterborough chronicles reports that the abbot paid £240 as a fine for the regrant of the abbey's recent acquisitions only, not its lands as a whole.⁴⁶ Moreover, Domesday Book notes many instances where regrants were made, and occasionally specifies the sums of money paid for them; it also sometimes notes that the process used royal writs.⁴⁷

The practice of regranting was clearly a common one, for, even where there is no specific reference to a writ, Domesday Book in some counties records values for property on the day when King Edward died, at the time when the Conqueror regranted the land, and at the time of the survey itself.⁴⁸ Valuations at the time of regrant appear widely in the Middlesex Domesday, as though this was a particularly common event in that shire. If other landholders in Middlesex, including even the bishop of London and the abbot of Westminster, had to obtain regrants, then presumably the townsfolk of London would have been in the same position. They had lost some part of the title to their lands as a result of the events of the Conquest, and so had to get it back from the king. This position might explain that unique term, *superhabitis*; the townsfolk of London were in a changed position regarding their holdings in the City, but nevertheless still lived within their houses within the walls, and so were occupying them without having a stronger interest in it. Presumably they offered money to recover their rights, though how much this cost, and who negotiated it, are entirely unknown. If the Londoners had to buy back their lands, then that has to affect how their developing relationship with William the Conqueror is understood; they were not the recipients of his special favour and protection. It is notable that the Londoners dealt with the Conqueror as a group, whereas at Bedford burgesses obtained writs individually.⁴⁹

If the link to the 1067–8 regrant of lands is accepted, then the writ gives considerable new information about how this happened, and the mechanics which supported it. The problematic term *superhabitis* indicates that, before the regrant, the Londoners were still in occupation of their land, even if their link to the land on which they lived had changed. In later terms, they still held seisin over the land, even if their claim to it had altered. If this writ is a reliable guide to the process more generally, it did not include any widespread resumption of land into the

⁴⁶ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, 9; W. T. Mellows and Alexander Bell (eds.), *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus, a Monk of Peterborough, with La Geste de Burch* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 76–7; Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 216.

⁴⁷ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, 9; Garnett, *Conquered England*, 22, note 176.

⁴⁸ In Middlesex, Domesday values are given for 1086, 'when acquired' and in the time of King Edward. This practice is common across the shires of Wessex and East Anglia; Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, p. 8.

hands of the king or his agents. It may have been different with rural landholders who did not live on estates, for the limitation of their claims over their lands would not have involved evictions. The writ also indicates that the circumstances of the regrant and the events leading up to it involved more people than just the king and English landholders, and in this it confirms and supplements the information provided by Domesday Book. The address clause notifies the regrant to the bishop of London and to the sheriff of Middlesex, and presumably once to its shire court. This shows that the Conqueror used the traditional structures of local assemblies to witness to the change in tenure, and to provide testimony about it over time.⁵⁰ The reliance on local assemblies perhaps explains why there are so many references to the regrant in Domesday Book, but so little in terms of surviving written evidence about it. The address to the local functionaries and assembly also implies that they had earlier been notified about the resumption of claims into the king's hand; otherwise, there would be no change for them to witness, and the *superhabitatibus* would be redundant in their eyes. That sheriffs and shire courts were closely involved in this is implied by the way in which Domesday Book provides valuations for the time when lands were regranted, but that implicit role is made clear here. The process of resumption of claims and regrant thus probably included multiple stages, and the use of royal writs to local assemblies as a key driver of the process.

If this reading and contextualisation of the writ is correct, then it also helps to date it. The internal evidence of the document does not allow it to be dated with much precision. It must have been written after William was crowned king on Christmas Day 1066, and before the death of Bishop William of London in 1075.⁵¹ That it was originally in Old English suggests that it was more likely that it was written in the 1060s or very early 1070s. These are quite wide dating limits. If the contextual dating of the writ is accepted, then it can be dated much more precisely. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle indicates that the process of resumption and regrant took place after the Conqueror returned from Normandy on 6 December 1067, and then carried on through 1068. This writ thus attests in new detail to a short but significant phase of the Conquest.⁵²

VII

The discussion above has set out why this document is very probably a Latin translation of a lost Old English writ of William the Conqueror, has defined the likely meaning of the original document, and has made points which allow the interpolations to be identified. There is a measure of

⁵⁰ Sharpe, 'The use of writs in the eleventh century', pp. 247–91, sets out how local assemblies testified to landholding and how kings would renew some grants at the start of each reign.

⁵¹ Barrow, 'William (*d.* 1075), bishop of London'.

⁵² Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'E' manuscript, s.a. 1067, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, trans. Dorothy Whitelock, David C. Douglas and Susie I. Tucker (London, 1961), p. 146; Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, p. 76 for the itinerary.

uncertainty because the text is interpolated, but the interpretation here is based not just on the text but also its later-medieval use and interpretation as described in Letter-Book K, and recent scholarship on writs and how they were used. This means that it is now possible to offer a conjectural reconstruction of the meaning of the Latin translation of the lost text:

King William sends friendly greetings to Bishop William and Swegn the sheriff and all [his men of Middlesex and London]. And I make known to you that I have given to you, my men who live within the boundaries, all my waterfront and land there upon which you live. And I do not want to learn that anyone, French or English, does damage to you thence.

Will(el)m(u)s⁵³ rex salutat Will(elmu)m episcopum et Swegn⁵⁴ vic(ecomitum) et omnes [homines suos Middlesexie et London']⁵⁵ amicabiliter. Et ego notum vobis facio quod ego donavi vobis intrinsecis hominibus meis totam hidam et terram meam quam superhabitatis ibidem. Et nolo pati quod aliquis franciscus uel anglicus inde vobis molestiam inferat.

The problematic elements in this writ are actually very few. They amount to six words, *dilectos meos London' anglicos et saxonicos*, which have been replaced by an address to the shire court of Middlesex and the folkmoot of London (*omnes homines suos Middlesexie et London'*) because such an address reflects how transactions involving land in London would have been heard by the locals, so that they could provide testimony to the transaction thereafter. Such addresses could have small verbal variations, and the one chosen here was selected for its simplicity. However, another phrase of similar length could easily be substituted. With this emendation, the writ appears entirely conventional as a Latin translation of an Old English writ, and thus comparable to many others. The existing corpus of pre-Conquest writs contains numerous texts which survive by a similar route, and it is likely that some of the Latin writs attributed to the Conqueror are also translations derived from lost originals in Old English.⁵⁶

The text survives only as a Latin translation rather than as an original, yet the sealed original was known in later medieval London. The 1428 discussion notes that this document and the writ about laws both then survived as sealed originals, and that the Latin translations reflected the meaning of the originals.⁵⁷ For the writ about laws, this is unproblematic,

⁵³ This text is based on the sole manuscript, London, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CS/01/005 Liber Ordinationum, fol. 246v.

⁵⁴ Liber Ordinationum Spegn': corrected to Swegn'

⁵⁵ Liber Ordinationum dilectos meos London' anglicos et saxonicos: corrected to homines suos Middlesexie et London'

⁵⁶ For instance, Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, nos. 56–8, all from Ramsey Abbey; Bates, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, no. 10, has features which suggest it is a later translation from Old English.

⁵⁷ See footnote 3 above.

for the Latin compares well with the Old English original. Yet, for this writ, the 1428 statement indicates that the original contained all the points in this writ, presumably including the problematic elements of the address clause. It might have been that the writer of the 1428 statement had not compared them, or lacked the linguistic skills to do so; perhaps more plausibly, the text on the sealed original might have been tampered with and modified. An argument was made above that the reference to the sheriff of Middlesex having power over London would have looked surprising in the fourteenth century, and so there was a motive to modify the address clause.⁵⁸ It is therefore possible, perhaps probable, that the lost original had been interpolated to update its contents, as seen with a handful of other royal documents of this period.⁵⁹ If the original was visibly altered, then it might explain why this writ was never presented to the king's clerks for making an *inspeximus*, so there is no other version of the text; yet London only started using the *inspeximus* process quite late, in 1400, so the lack of copies from this route may not be meaningful. It seems that the original had been lost by the seventeenth century.⁶⁰

William the Conqueror's charters and writs are not numerous, so any addition to the corpus of material is valuable. Since the publication of the 1998 edition by David Bates, very few additions to the corpus have emerged.⁶¹ The recovery of this document therefore has some value in terms of rarity, but that is the least significant consequence. Its identification and the analysis of its meaning set out above have substantial consequences for thinking about London in the central middle ages. Much of the analysis of London's experience of conquest has tended to depict it as exceptional, as though William the Conqueror specially favoured London and protected it.⁶² Yet this document shows that the Londoners were required to buy back their legal claims to land like other landholders were, and presumably had to spend a very large sum to buy back the City from the Conqueror's claims over it. The document also has a broader significance for thinking about that process of repurchase. This has been known for a long time, but mostly through later references in

⁵⁸ See footnote 44 above.

⁵⁹ For a detailed case study which shows multiple layers of modification see Hudson and Duffy, 'Under the impression', pp. 111–33. The document is otherwise Bishop and Chaplais, *Facsimiles of English Royal Writs*, no. III, from Canterbury.

⁶⁰ The pattern of *inspeximus* charters for London can be seen in the notes to Pelteret, *Catalogue of English Post-Conquest Vernacular Documents*, pp. 47–51, no. 8; Nicholas Vincent (ed.), *The Letters and Charters of Henry II, King of England 1154–1189* (six volumes so far, Oxford, 2020), III, 268–71, no. 1638.

⁶¹ David Bates, 'A charter of William the Conqueror and two of his sons', *Tabularia* (2005), <https://journals.openedition.org/tabularia/2500>; Richard Allen, "'A proud and headstrong man": John of Ivry, bishop of Avranches and archbishop of Rouen, 1060–79', *Historical Research* 83 (2010), pp. 189–227; Richard Allen, 'Un nouvel acte de Guillaume le Bâtard, duc de Normandie (18 June 1066)', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 171 (2018), pp. 517–36, prints a newly discovered charter from just before William became king.

⁶² Rory Naismith, *Citadel of the Saxons: The Rise of Early London* (London, 2019), pp. 190–5; Christopher Brooke and Gillian Keir, *London 800–1216: The Shaping of a City* (London, 1975), pp. 28–9; Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London, 2000), p. 48.

Domesday Book or in narrative sources. For the first time, the process of regrant is illuminated by a document which was part of the process, and so exposes how it was done. It shows that, even at this very early date in his reign, William the Conqueror had sufficient faith in the operation of the communal courts to make them the main vehicle for recognising his resumption of land and then the repurchase of it. This newly recovered document is therefore a significant and rare addition to the sources for William the Conqueror's first years as king.