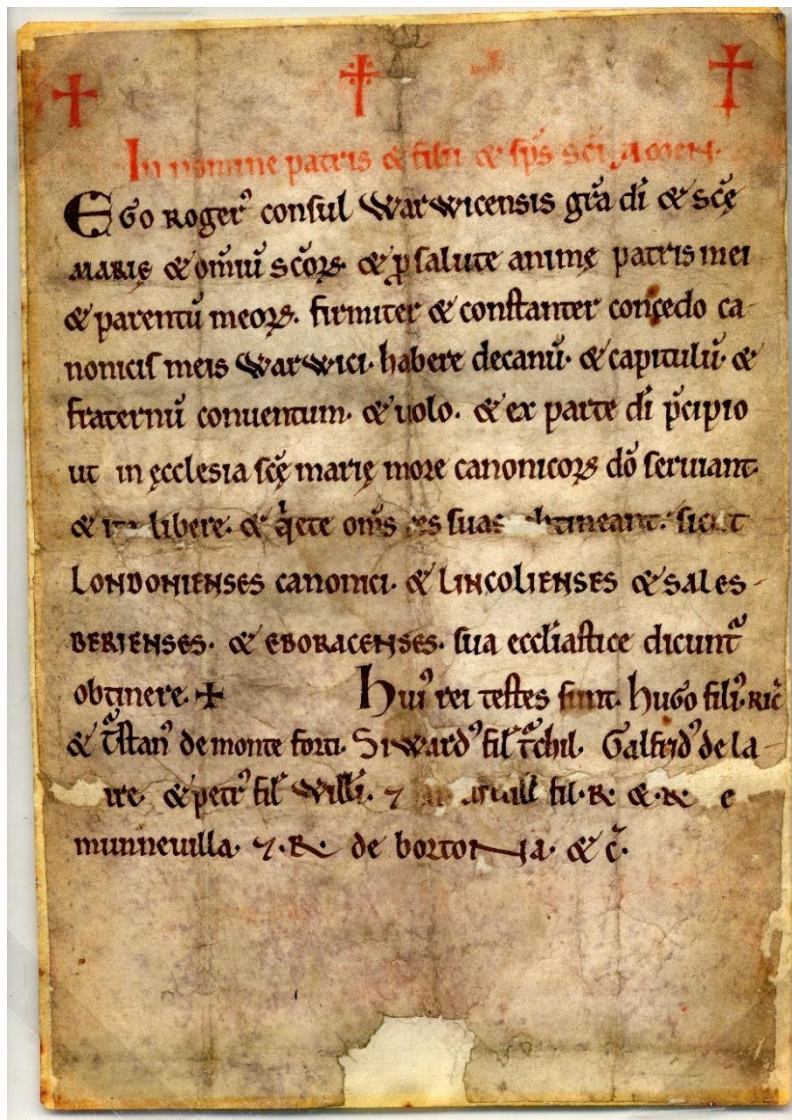


Charter of Roger, Earl of Warwick, founding the church of St Mary, Warwick

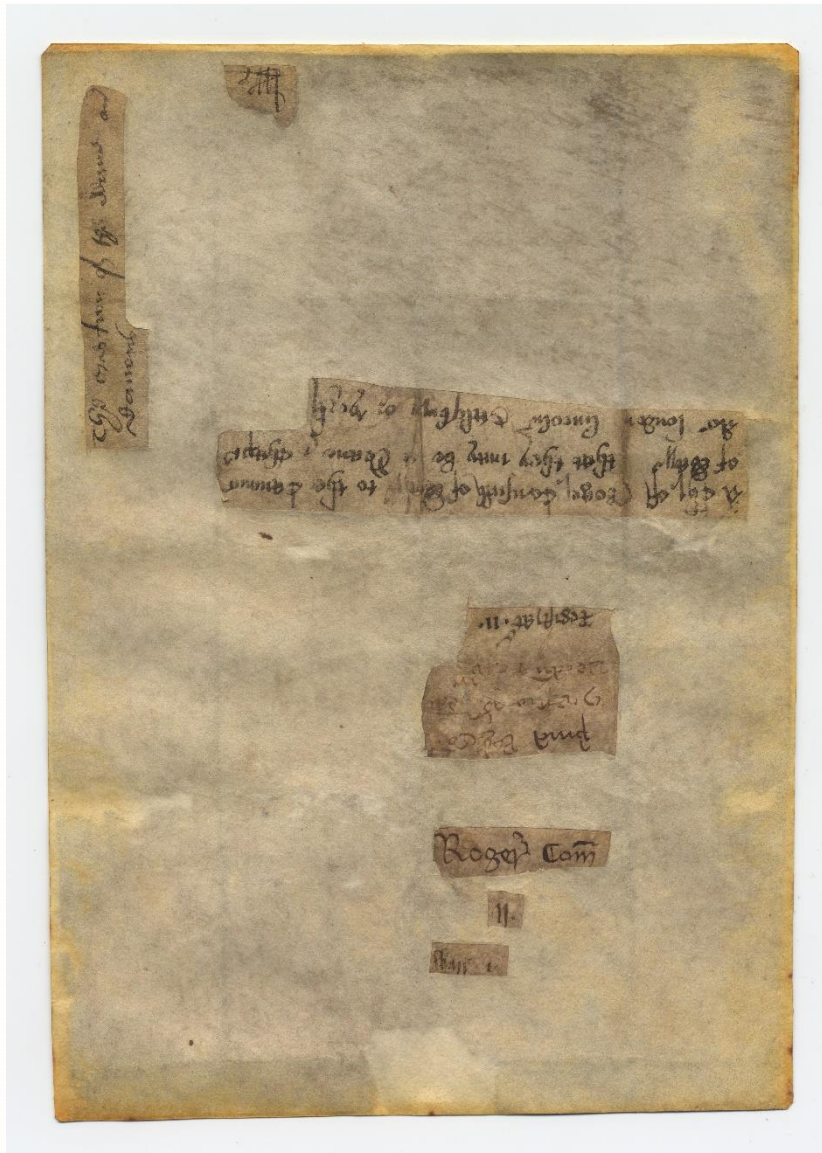
DR1146/1

The Document of the Month for April is a medieval charter authorised by Roger de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick, in 1123, making it the oldest document held at the Record Office. The charter grants the canons (members of the clergy) of Warwick the right to a dean and chapter, and to serve God in the church of St Mary. A dean and chapter typically form the governing body of a cathedral or a collegiate church such as St Mary's.¹



Charter of Roger, Earl of Warwick, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR1146/1

The deed was purchased by Philip B. Chatwin in 1933 from a Birmingham bookseller. It had previously been on display in the Beauchamp Chapel at St Mary's.ⁱⁱ A transcription and a translation of the document can be found in *The Charter of Roger, Earl of Warwick, Founding the Collegiate Church of St Mary*, at B.WAR.CHA (P) in our library.



Back of the charter, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR1146/1

The history of St Mary's, Warwick

St Mary's was in existence by 1071 but it was founded as a collegiate church in 1123. The mother church, All Saints, was situated in the grounds of Warwick Castle and was also collegiate. Henry de Newburgh, first earl of Warwick, is said to have planned that the two churches would be combined as St Mary's. However, after his death in 1119, his son Roger,

second earl of Warwick, carried out the merging of the two churches and established the rights of worship in this charter. This year marks the church's 900-year anniversary, which St Mary's is celebrating with a series of talks and a book launch.

St Mary's nave and tower were destroyed during the Great Fire of Warwick in 1694. Philip B. Chatwin states that Warwick residents who had been made homeless by the fire took shelter in the church, bringing what they could of their possessions. Some of the furniture was still smouldering and caught fire; subsequently, the building was set ablaze. However, this theory has been disputed over the years. Chatwin's account tells of the destruction, describing how "The whole of the nave, aisles, transepts and the tower were so badly damaged they had to be pulled down".ⁱⁱⁱ

Francis and William Smith, builder architects of Warwick, led the rebuilding work for St Mary's.^{iv} The Warwick Fire Court of Record created documents relating to aspects of St Mary's reconstruction, held in our collections under the records of Warwick Borough Council (CR1618). A detailed description of the church building, and its subsequent reconstruction can be found in *The Rebuilding of St Mary's Church, Warwick* by Philip B. Chatwin at B.WAR.CHA (P) in our library.

The church building

According to Chatwin, a Saxon church originally resided on the current St Mary's site, but there is no record of its architecture. The church was rebuilt as a collegiate church in 1123, and the chancel, vestry and chapter house were redesigned in the fourteenth century by Thomas Beauchamp, in the English Gothic style. After the damage caused by the Great Fire, many architectural elements were redesigned, a process in which the renowned architect Sir Christopher Wren is thought to have played a role.^v

The fifteenth-century chantry chapel survived, having been added to house the tomb of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, whose golden figure lies at the room's centre. The Beauchamp Chapel also contains the tombs of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, his brother Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, and Robert's son, who died at the age of three and is referred to as the "Noble Impe".^{vi} In this way, much of the church's architecture reflects the wealth and influence of Warwickshire's nobility.

Besides its own architectural significance, St Mary's is notable for housing the remains of one of the only surviving medieval ducking stools; the tumbrel held in the church crypt is a wheeled structure which would have been pushed into a body of water to duck the offender.^{vii}

ⁱ 'Dean and chapter', Clergy of the Church of England Database
<https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/glossary/dean-and-chapter/> (accessed 08/03/2023).

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- ii St Mary's Church, Warwick catalogue, Warwickshire's Past Unlocked, <https://archivesunlocked.warwickshire.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=00216%2f2%2f5%2f2%2f1> (accessed 08/03/2023).
- iii P.B. Chatwin, *The Rebuilding of St Mary's Church, Warwick*, Oxford University Press, 1949, Page 1.
- iv Information gathered from St Mary's History and Architecture, <http://www.stmaryswarwick.org.uk/index.php?stmarysredesign/history> (accessed 08/03/2023).
- v 'Church of Saint Mary including Beauchamp Chapel- Official list entry', *Historic England* <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1035500?section=official-list-entry> (accessed 08/03/2023).
- vi 'The Noble Imp's Armour at Warwick Castle' <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/noble-imps-armour-awkward-truth> (accessed 08/03/2023).
- vii 'A masterpiece of Gothic grandeur: the Church of St Mary, Warwick', *History Extra* <https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/masterpiece-gothic-grandeur-church-st-mary-warwick/> (accessed 08/03/2023).