

CONTRACT of 1343:

Notes by C. Cotton.

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Translation of a Contract for the erection of three columns and four arches, etc. on the South side of Birchington Church: 1343.

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This document is a rarity as well as being a most interesting contract deed. I have never seen an earlier one relating to a Parish Church and though it is only a copy, I think that there is no doubt that it is genuine, as it contains the usual phrases which would be expected in a deed of this kind: and the witnesses' names are correct.

It was copied from the original, which was in the possession of the Town Clerk of Margate in 1879, onto the fly-leaf at the back of Edward White's copy of Lewis's ISLE OF THANET, 1736, by the late William John Mercer of Margate, both members of the Kent Archaeological Society.

Its interest lies in its being a dated document for a definite kind of architecture, and in showing how a private individual added to the body of his Parish Church, at a time when small Chantries were uncommon, and in giving the neighbourhood from whence the stone was to be obtained¹.

"This Indenture made the Monday next after the feast of St Hilary (Jan. 13) in the sixteenth year in the reign of King Henry the third (1343) after the conquest of England and in the third year of his reign over France. Witnesseth that it is agreed between John Steed, Guardian of the work of Birchington in Thanet of the one part and William Goldwert of the Parish of Herne, plasterer, of the other part, namely, that the aforesaid William shall complete at his own costs four arches and three whole pillars and two pilasters with their capitals, all the stone from Folkestone, at the South side of the Church at Birchilton aforesaid after the design of the pillars on the North side of the Church of the Blessed Nicholas atte Wade (in Thanet) and also with the sub-bases disposed as is usual between the same with buttresses to said continued work on the west side of the same church before the feast of St Peter, as it is called ad Vincula (August 1) next ensuing after the date of the present indenture with all and singular the things requisite and proper to the work aforesaid except sand, lime and carpentry work. And he shall defray all the costs of carrying the said stone from Folkestone to Westgate in Thanet² for eleven marks and pence sterling to be paid to the said William by the aforesaid John Parishioner of Herne to be paid, namely

¹ My tutor, Andrew Butcher, is of the opinion that the word that has been translated 'guardian' is the Latin word meaning 'Churchwarden'. Thus the responsibility for the building venture was a joint affair, rather than an individual one.

² It would appear that the stone was to be transported by sea as far as Westgate.

..... of the Blessed Virgin Mary next to come four marks on the commencement of the erection of the work aforesaid three but the residue in process of time according to the expedition (speed) of the work. The same William shall likewise receive from the aforesaid John, for himself and his associates working with him in the work aforesaid one penny every day at Ston's hench (sic.)³. And the aforesaid John shall find the aforesaid William in a leader (?) (a horse as a leader to carry or draw?) for the aforesaid stone from Margate to Westgate if it shall be needed⁴ and shall carry the same into the aforesaid Church at Birchelton, and for the well and faithfully fulfilling the same Agreement as is aforesaid John and William have alternately pledged their faith, and for the lending the greater security to the aforesaid Agreement, the aforesaid William has taken his corporal oath. And to this end binds himself his heirs and executors and also all his goods wheresoever they may be found. In testimony thereof the aforesaid John and William have to these Indentures alternately affixed their seals.

Given at Canterbury the day and year abovesaid.
These being Witnesses;

Dom Richard (de Cantuar, 1321) Rector of the Church of Monkton in Thanet.
Dome William de Castro (1333-1349),

Rector of the Parish of Blessed Martin at Canterbury.

Dom Stephen de Slaughterre
Cherche

John ate

Thomas Mereworth
others."

John Greylinge

and

C. COTTON.

³ 'hench' as in henchman, means 'horseman'

⁴ Margate probably had the better landing place if the weather was bad.