

# Conservation of the Goddard Swindon Market Charter

The generous donation from the Goddard Association of Europe has enabled conservation work to be conducted on the Swindon market charter, a key document in the history of the town of Swindon. This charter was issued on 20 July 1626, the second year of the reign of Charles I under and has a Great Seal attached (attached to the official documents of state that require the authorisation of the monarch). It is a beautiful document with half portrait of Charles, holding the orb and sceptre with decorative marginalia.

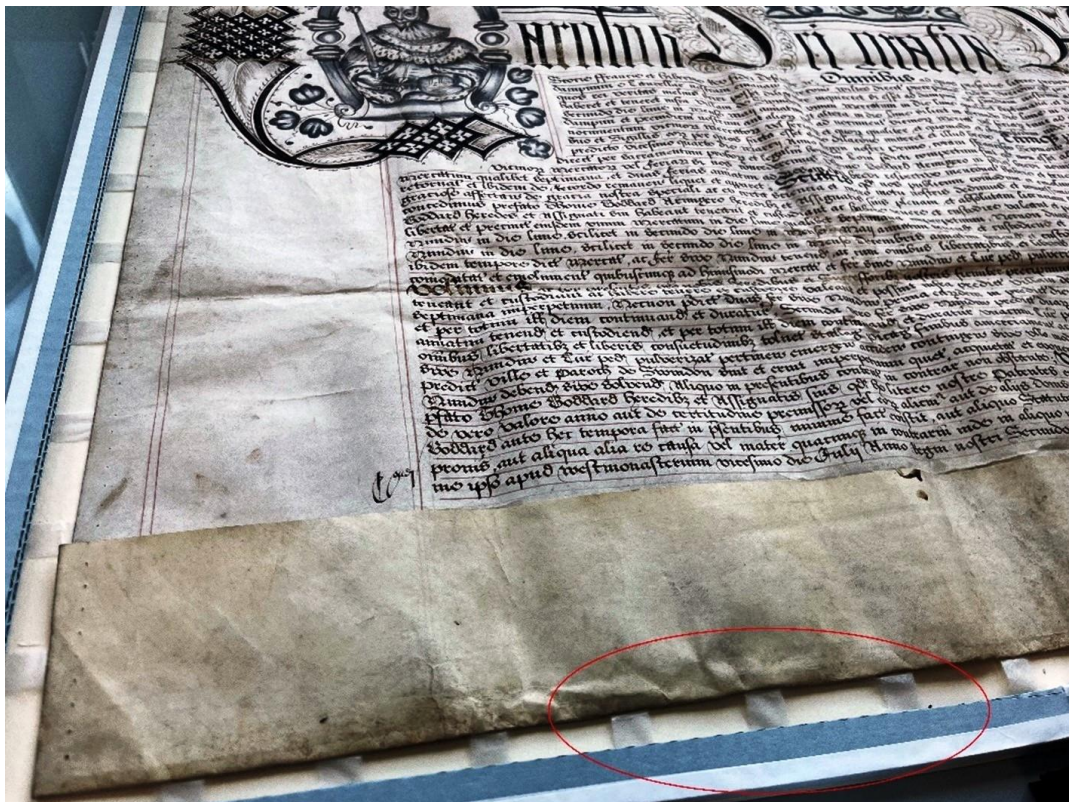




The royal authority set out by this Charter allowed Thomas Goddard to hold regular and continuous markets: “to have & to hold within the town of Swindon one Market every Monday in the week” for ever “& two Faires there yearly.” This would have been of enormous benefit to Swindon, benefiting all the inhabitants of the town who wished to sell at the market as they would be free of charges linked to offering their wares at the market such as stallage, picage and other tolls. The ability to hold a market would have had a positive impact on the development of the town.

As a valuable document in the history of Swindon, we were delighted to acquire the charter through auction and now to be able to conserve it. The charter was originally folded and stored inside its own box (we think this is original but are not certain). Due to the nature of the document with illustrated illumination and ink text, its importance within our collection, and the intention to have it on display in Swindon, it was decided that it should be stored flat rather than folded. This will prevent damage to the ink around the fold lines which would otherwise be exacerbated through repeated unfolding and handling and also for ease of handling and display. In addition to this, its accompanying storage box was not suitable as a storage container due to the materials it is made of and also historical damage to its edges.

To reduce the fold lines the document was carefully humidified and then tensioned. This is a common method used for parchment as it is animal skin and so requires very specific treatment to work with the nature of the skin. Once tensioned and dried it is then mounted in a way that maintains the tension but without putting undue pressure on the document for permanent storage and occasional display. You can see the tensioning mount strips circled in this close-up image.



The large great seal also requires protection during storage and display which you can see with its new protective surround and cover in the below image.



The mounted document, accompanying box and two paper documents that came with it were then all put together in a bespoke box that protected the document for long term archival storage within the archive whilst also enabling ease of handling and easy access for display without causing further damage.



The charter has been archived alongside its documentary relatives within the Swindon Borough Council records and (excepting when it is being exhibited) is available for the public to view at the History Centre under reference G24/001/2ms.

We are grateful to the Goddard Association of Europe for making the conservation and preservation of this important document possible.

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