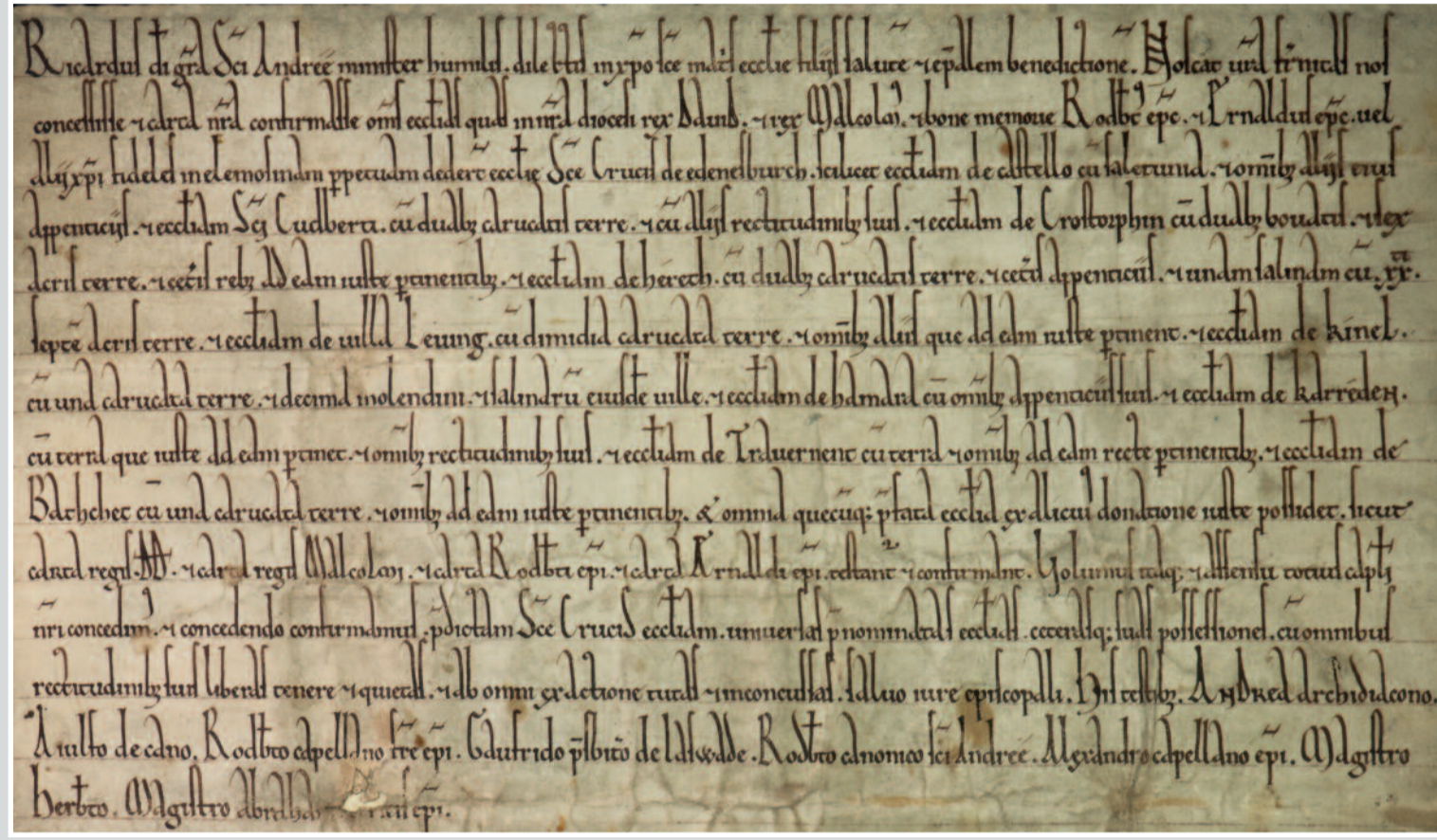




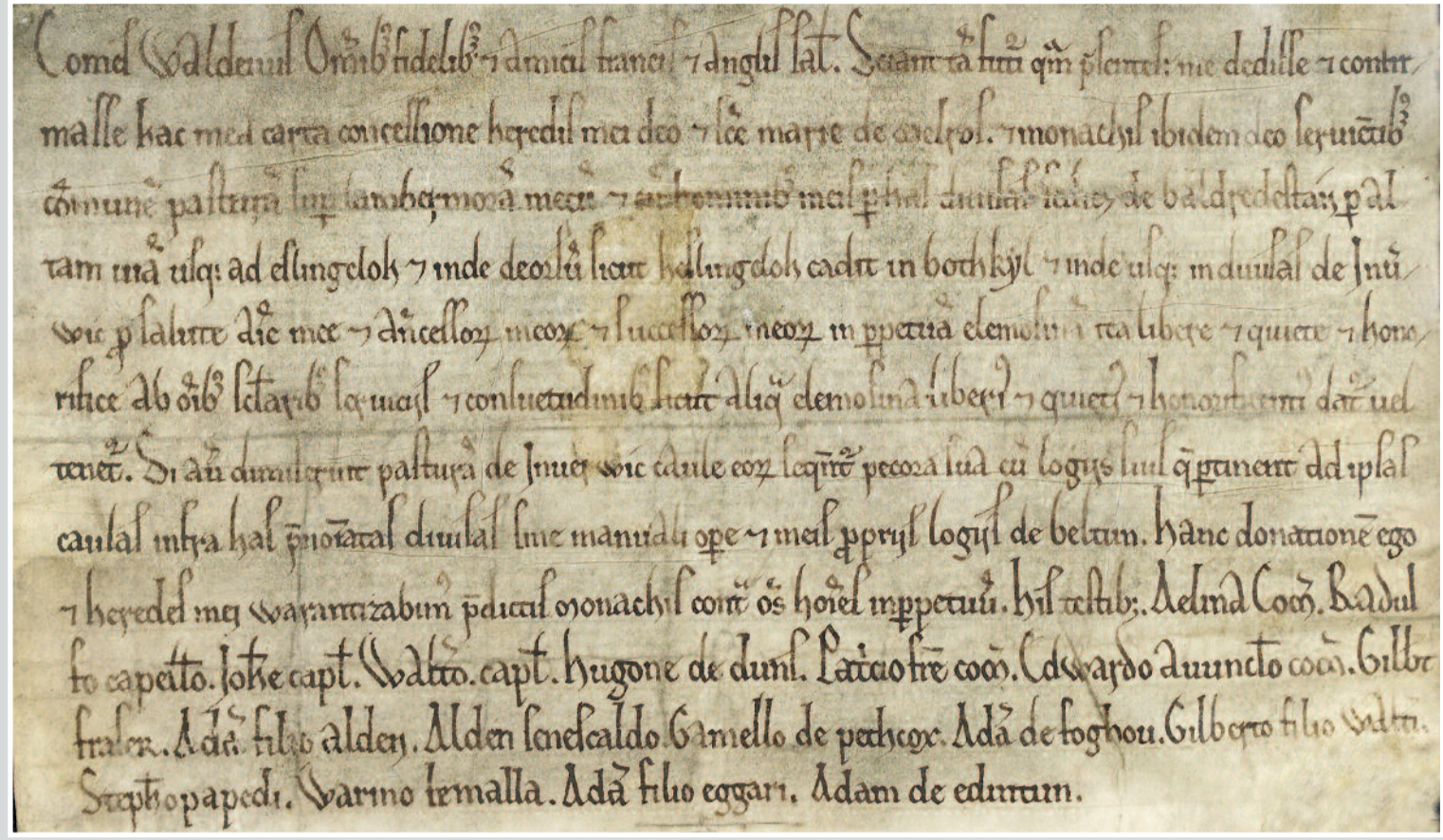
The creativity of monastic scribes

Monks in monasteries only occasionally wrote charters. They preferred to use a broader nib rather than the narrower nib used by royal scribes. Even so, monastic scribes began in the 1150s to imitate the general appearance of documents written by royal scribes. They had complete freedom in how to do this (or whether to do it at all). The examples below are from Holyrood Abbey, Melrose Abbey and St Andrews Cathedral Priory.

In these early examples, the monastic scribes have modified the letter-forms in ways reminiscent of documents written by royal scribes, for instance by stretching or elaborating elements of the letters.

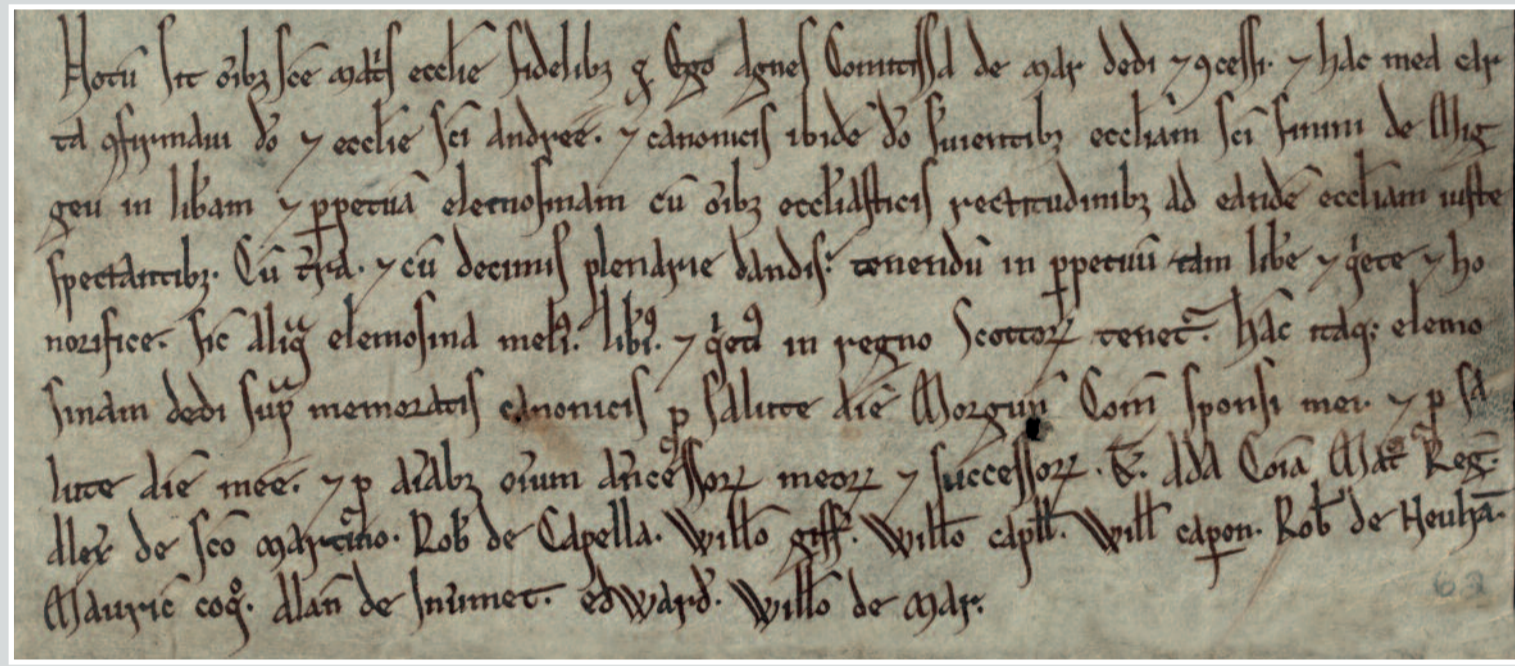


Charter of Richard, Bishop of St Andrews, for Holyrood Abbey (between 1165 and 1167)

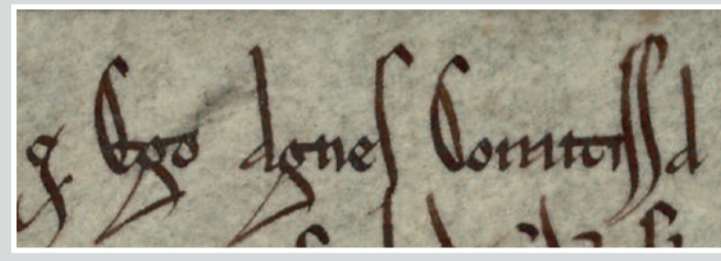


Charter of Waldef, Earl of Dunbar, for Melrose Abbey (between 1166 and 1179)

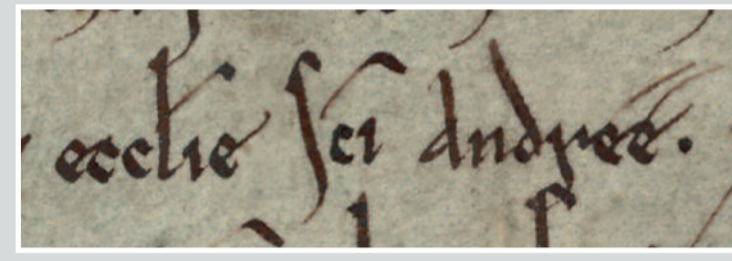
At St Andrews Cathedral Priory, some scribes went the whole way by adopting the narrower nib and hurried appearance of royal documents. They also used innovative forms of words (for instance, a new expression that St Andrews should hold its property 'as any gifts to the church are best, most freely and most quietly held in the kingdom of the Scots').



Charter of Agnes, Countess of Mar, to St Andrews Cathedral Priory (between 1163 and 1178)



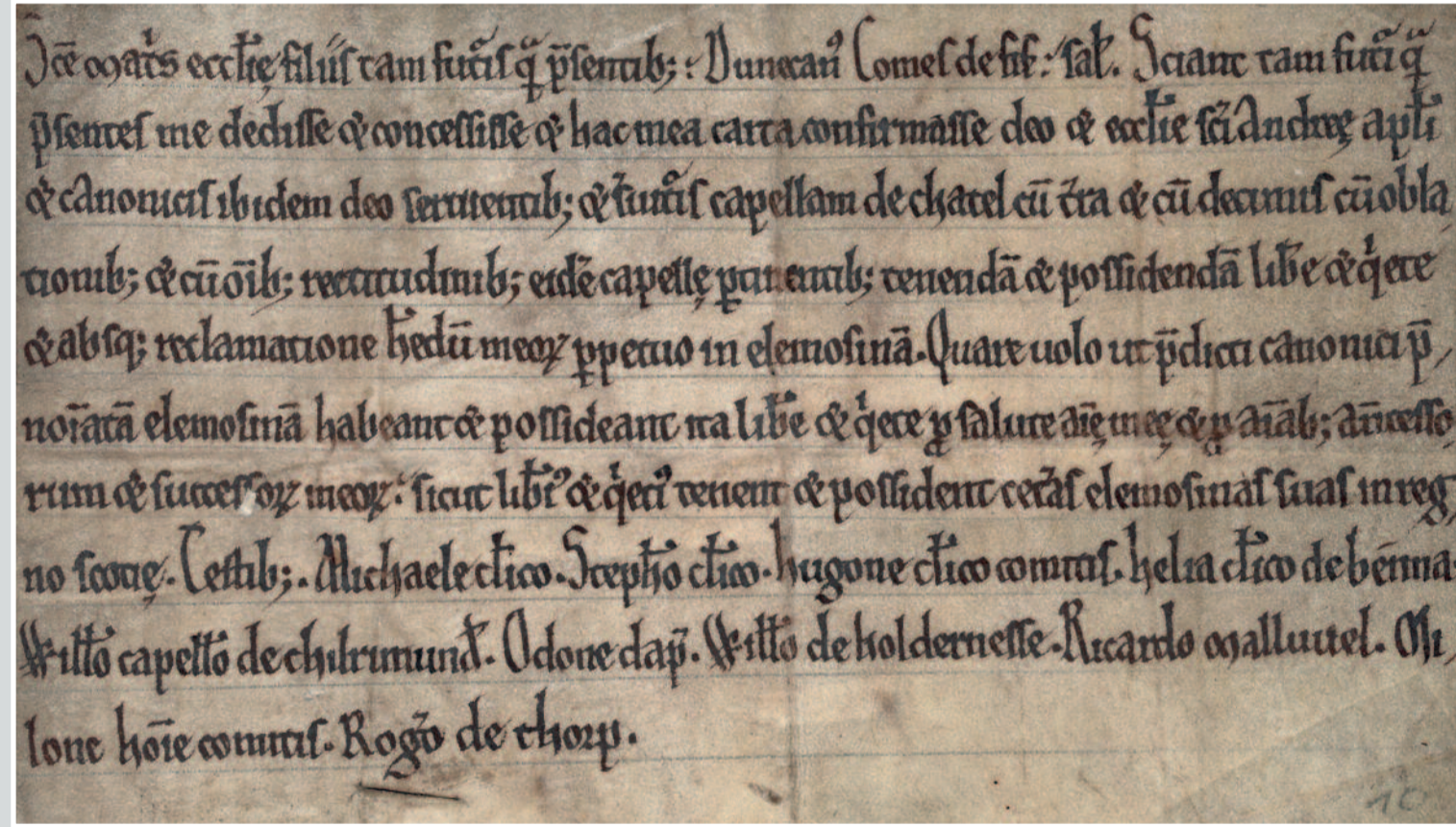
Ego Agnes Comitissa (I, Countess Agnes)



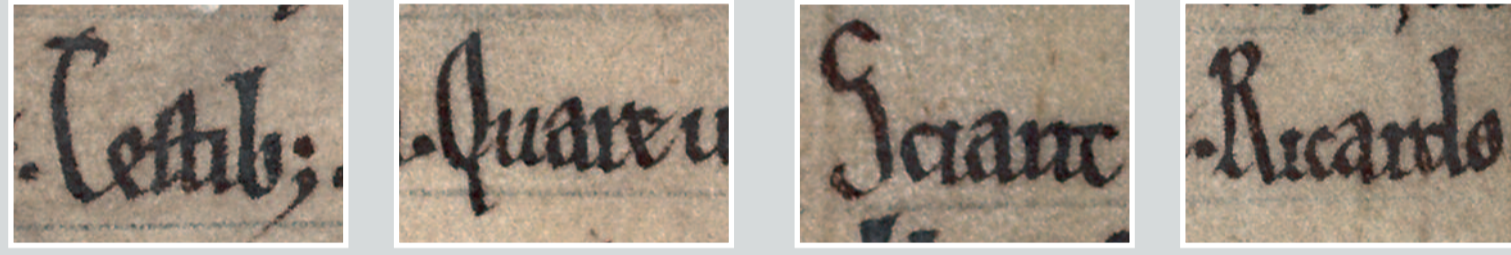
ecclesie sancti Andree (the church of St Andrew)

Above are examples of narrow strokes, stretched elements and hurried writing.

Monastic scribes did not necessarily have to modify their handwriting for charters. In the example below, the scribe from St Andrews has not tried to alter the appearance of his handwriting, except in his stretching of capital letters. However, he has been as innovative in his choice of words as the scribe of Countess Agnes' charter.



Charter of Duncan, Earl of Fife, to St Andrews Cathedral Priory (between 1154 and 1178)



Examples of the scribe stretching capital letters.

