

# Charters

## The Making of Hull





## Plan of Hull c1540.

Made about the time of Henry VIII's visit of 1541, it shows the late medieval town: Edward III's walls, churches and monasteries, and the Old Harbour busy with shipping.

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- 1 North Gate
- 2 Carthusian Priory (Charterhouse)
- 3 Beverley Gate
- 4 Town Gallows
- 5 Myton Gate
- 6 Hessele Gate
- 7 Carmelite Friary (Whitefriars)
- 8 Pole Manor House
- 9 St Mary's Chapel
- 10 Holy Trinity Chapel
- 11 The Guildhall and Gaol
- 12 Austin Friary (Blackfriars)
- 13 South Battery
- 14 Chain across the entrance to the Old Harbour
- 15 St Peter's Church, Drypool







## Preface

During Hull's year as City of Culture 2017 we have the opportunity to show the world that Hull is a Community as well as a City. It has been functioning as a community for well over seven hundred years. Many of the institutions and organisations within which it functions have a long history and owe their origins to grants by Kings and Queens of England as far back as 1299.

Hull Fair, our proud maritime tradition and even the name of the City first appear in royal charters. The ancient office of Mayor and the more recent title of Lord Mayor, which I held in 2002, were given to the City in these documents.

Hull's royal charters are a jewel of the City's archives. We are fortunate so many of them survive. I am delighted that the History Centre has had the opportunity in 2017 to showcase these ancient, important and beautiful documents.

The Hull History Centre, a ground breaking partnership with the University of Hull, preserves our archives and makes them accessible. It is a great tradition of local authority archive services in this country to make historic documents accessible free of charge to anyone who wants to look at them, and this is a principle to which Hull City Council remains committed.

The history of Hull is the history of its people and its institutions. For over seven hundred years, royal charters have underpinned the development of our City. If much of what they say has been superseded, they still remain symbols of what it means to be citizens of Kingston upon Hull.

*Preface by Councillor Terry Geraghty, Chair of the Board of Hull Culture & Leisure Ltd, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure.*

# What is a Charter?

**A Charter is a public document addressed by a donor to a wide audience recording title to a piece of property. Charters have a long history; the earliest held at the Hull History Centre dates from as early as 1087 and records the confirmation by King William II of a transfer of land in Normandy, northern France.**

Charters were written on parchment, which is animal skin, usually from sheep or calves. Calf skin was called vellum – ‘veal skin’. The skin would be treated, stretched and scraped to produce a smooth writing surface. Even after paper started to be imported and then made in this country, parchment continued to be used for Charters, up until today.

Charters were written with ‘quill pens’, usually those of geese or swans, and the ink usually made from oak galls, iron sulphate and gum. The finest writing could only be done by daylight; mistakes were hard to put right.

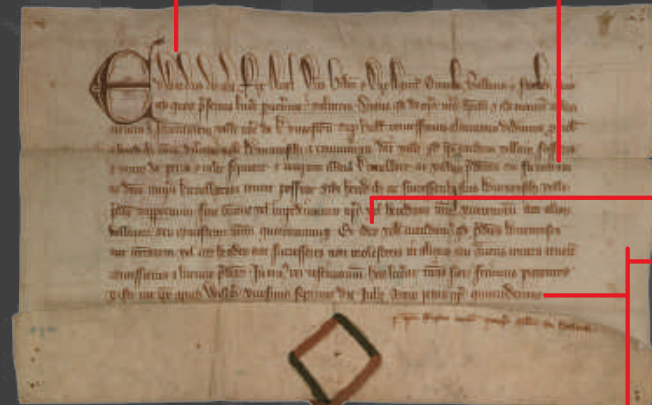
Like all formal legal records until 1733, Charters were written in Latin.

By the reign of Edward I a Charter was a routine government document. But it also carried with it a sense of importance that was more than its legal status. This was a carry-over from the Early Middle Ages when writing was rare, special and mysterious – even holy. A Royal Charter was a physical embodiment of the King, and had to be treated with respect.

Charters were public documents and Royal Charters later became known as ‘Letters Patent’. These are still used today. In 2012 the Queen granted Hull the right to revive the ancient offices of High Steward and Sheriff. The modern Letters Patent are very similar to the medieval Charters.

Over a period of five hundred years Hull was granted over forty charters. We can use them to tell the story of Our City.

**The monarch’s name, style and title –**  
“Edward, by the Grace of God, King of the English...”;  
“Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom...Queen...”



Charter of King Edward II,  
1321 (C BRC 3)

**Dating Clause:**  
Where the document was authorised and when. The date is given by the Regnal Year e.g the sixty first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.





Address –  
"To All to Whom These Presents  
Shall Come Greeting..."



Details of what  
is being given.

Letters Patent of Queen  
Elizabeth II, 1321 (C BRC)

Seal authenticating the Charter:  
The Seal, originally made of wax  
as in the 1321 Charter was the  
symbol of the monarch's power  
and majesty.



## Did You Know

Hull has an unbroken history  
as a port, a trading hub and a  
centre of population going back  
eight centuries.

# Whats in a Name?

**Before there was Kingston upon Hull, there was Wyke upon Hull.**

In the twelfth century, the monks of nearby Meaux Abbey established a port on land in their property known as the Manor of Myton, where the River Hull meets the Humber. The settlement that grew up by the harbour was called Wyke upon Hull.

The name 'Wyke' comes from an old word for 'creek' or 'inlet'. This was the mouth of the River Hull providing a safe and convenient harbour. By 1205 it was the sixth most profitable port in England in terms of customs revenue.

Although Wyke upon Hull may have been the settlement's full name, as early as 1217 the full name was being abbreviated to Hull.

When King Edward I acquired Wyke upon Hull in 1293, prior to issuing the first charter in 1299, he renamed it Kingston upon Hull, but the abbreviation remained in use.

Sometimes criticised today, the name Hull to mean the City is in fact older than the modern, formal name Kingston upon Hull.

Wyke upon Hull

Wyke  
Hull

Kingston upon Hull

## Hull before 1299

Meaux Abbey was part of the Cistercian Order which had major interests in the wool industry. Exporting wool was medieval England's main international trade. There was a need for a deep water anchorage where river craft from places along the Ouse and Trent such as York, Gainsborough and Nottingham could unload their cargoes of wool into cogs – large ocean-going vessels - for export to the Netherlands and the Baltic.

Meaux Abbey identified the mouth of the Hull as a suitable harbour for the transshipment of goods. By at least 1193 Wyke upon Hull was in existence at the mouth of the River Hull – but the river was in a different place to where it is now. The Hull followed an earlier route to the Humber: leaving the course of the present river near High Flags on Wincolmlee and meandering to the west before flowing into the Humber at what became known as Lime Kiln Creek at the site of Albert Dock. It only gained its current course in about 1253 when catastrophic floods shifted the main stream of the River Hull into a manmade drainage channel, creating the course of the river we know today.

The original settlement of Wyke was probably close to the old Holy Trinity Burial Ground in Castle Street, but left isolated by the shifting of the river it moved to the west bank of the diverted Hull along what we now call the High Street.

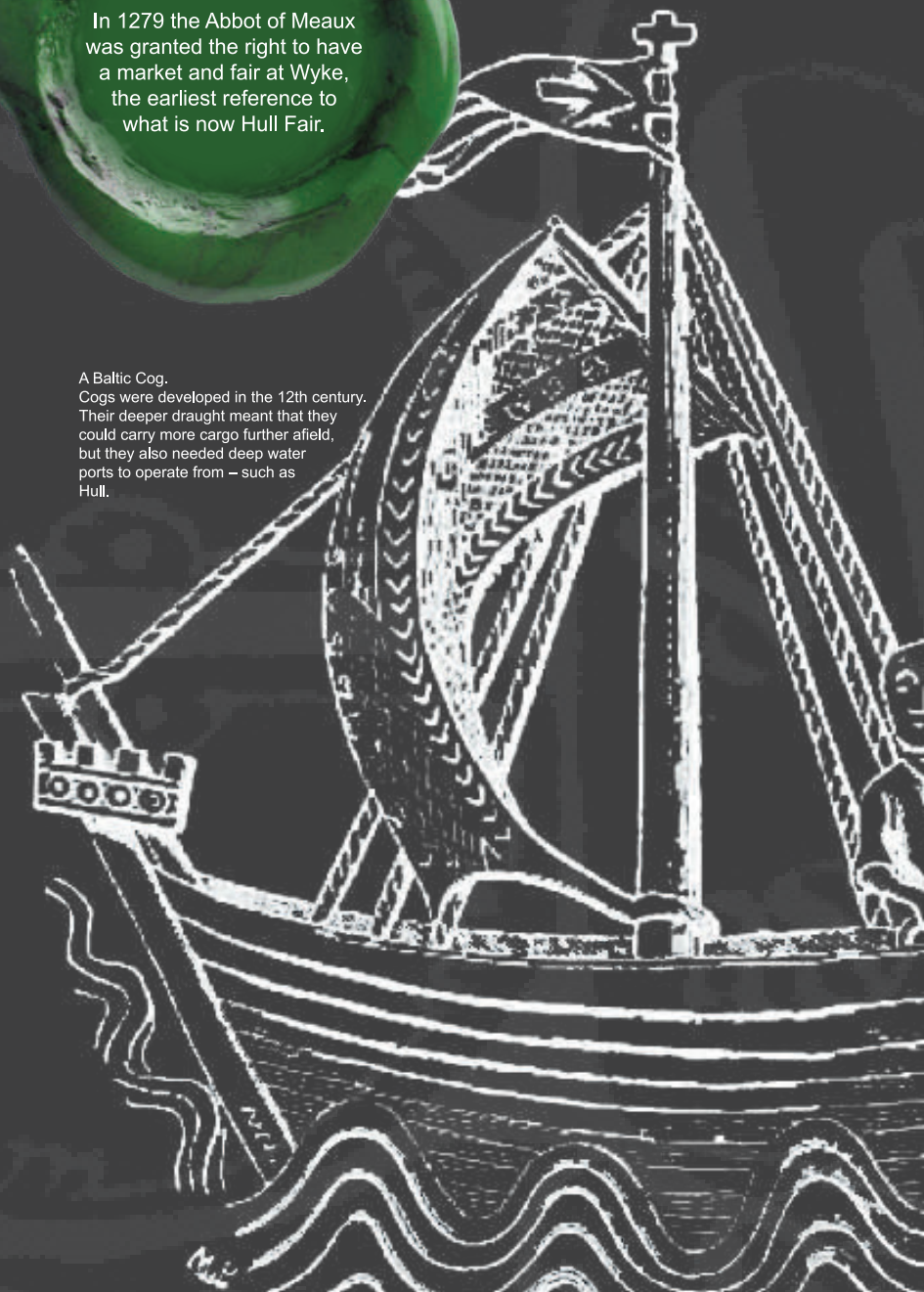
Both port and town prospered; in 1275 Wyke became the local headquarters for collection of customs dues, and by 1282 3000 sacks of wool were being exported annually through the port.

By 1293 Wyke upon Hull was one of the most important ports in the north of England; prosperous enough to attract the attentions of one of England's most ruthless and acquisitive monarchs: King Edward I.

### Did You Know

In 1279 the Abbot of Meaux was granted the right to have a market and fair at Wyke, the earliest reference to what is now Hull Fair.

A Baltic Cog.  
Cogs were developed in the 12th century. Their deeper draught meant that they could carry more cargo further afield, but they also needed deep water ports to operate from – such as Hull.







King Edward I  
(1272-1307)



## Did You Know

When Edward I acquired Wyke there were 55 occupied building plots (messuages), some sub-divided, and 55 undeveloped plots. The population must have been about 2000. Today it is over 250,000.

## Edward I and Hull

King Edward I was born in 1239 and reigned from 1272 until his death in 1307. His aim was always to enforce and extend royal authority. He conquered Wales, tried to do the same in Scotland in 1296 and was at war with France between 1293 and 1303. This was all very expensive and he took every opportunity to increase his revenues to fund his military plans.

So it is likely that Edward's acquisition of Hull had as much to do with gaining direct control of the lucrative wool trade of Wyke upon Hull, than as is sometimes said, from his need of a supply base in the north for his wars in Scotland. Once war had broken out in 1296, there is evidence that English armies in Scotland were indeed supplied from Hull.

Edward I was keen to acquire Wyke upon Hull, and Meaux Abbey was eager to sell as it faced severe financial difficulties. The acquisition of Wyke was a hard-headed business transaction. Edward's officials undertook a survey in January 1293 to check how much Wyke and Myton were worth - £103 (equivalent to nearly £4 million in terms of economic worth). On 31 January 1293, the monks of Meaux made over to the King all their property at Wyke, stating that they were "well content" with the transaction – although Edward was slow to pay the promised price.

Edward immediately started to develop his new acquisition. Roads were built towards Beverley, Hessle and York; a new quay was built; and a grid of new streets and building plots was laid out to the west of the High Street.

Edward also gave his town a new name, reflecting his ownership of it: Kingston upon Hull.

*ville nostre de Kingeston sup Hull*



# The 1299 Charter

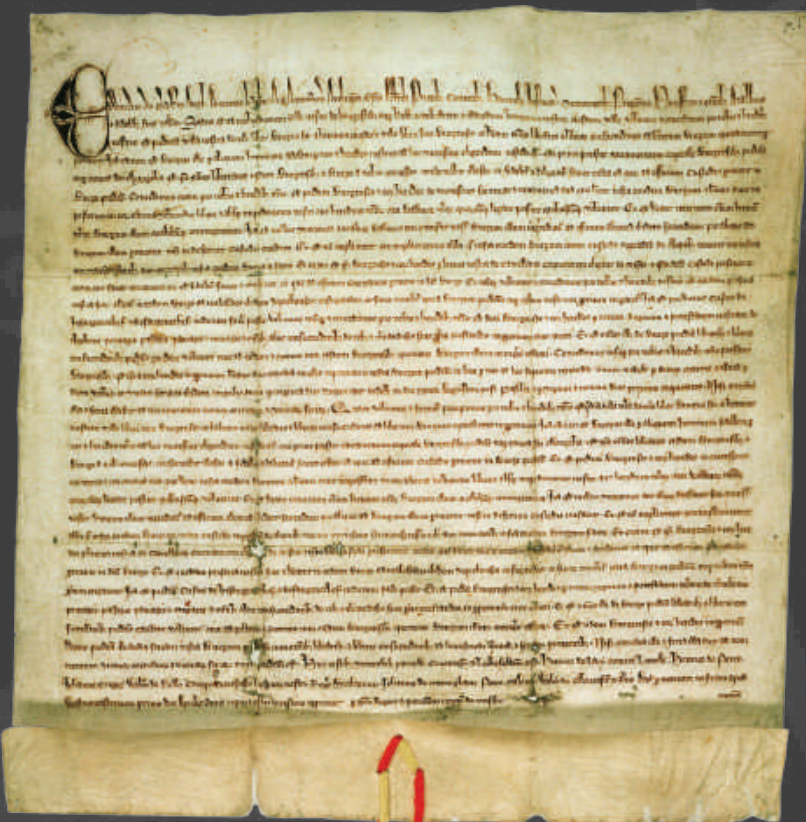
On 1 April 1299 King Edward granted Hull its first Charter. Hull received many charters over the following centuries, but this was the earliest; in some ways it is Hull's birth certificate.

Edward made Hull a 'Free Borough'. Borough status was worth having. The inhabitants of the Borough – the Burgesses - (or at least those of them who were commercially active and male) were given some rights to govern themselves. They answered to a Keeper of the Town, appointed by the King, but they had their own courts, and the right to sell or bequeath their property in Hull.

The King granted Hull the right to hold a market two days a week, and a thirty day annual fair. A right really worth having for the Burgesses was exemption from tolls and customs duties throughout England. They could buy and sell goods much more freely. Even better, the Burgesses could now control who else became a Burgess.

In return for these new rights and privileges, the Burgesses of Hull agreed to pay a fine of £66 (equivalent to £2.4 million today in terms of purchasing power).

With the 1299 Charter Hull was recognised as what it has remained ever since: a self-governing community. Hull as a community had no doubt begun earlier; but this Charter gave it a new sense of identity. This identity has developed over the years, but 1299 was when it was first defined.



Charter of King Edward I, 1299 (C BRC 1)

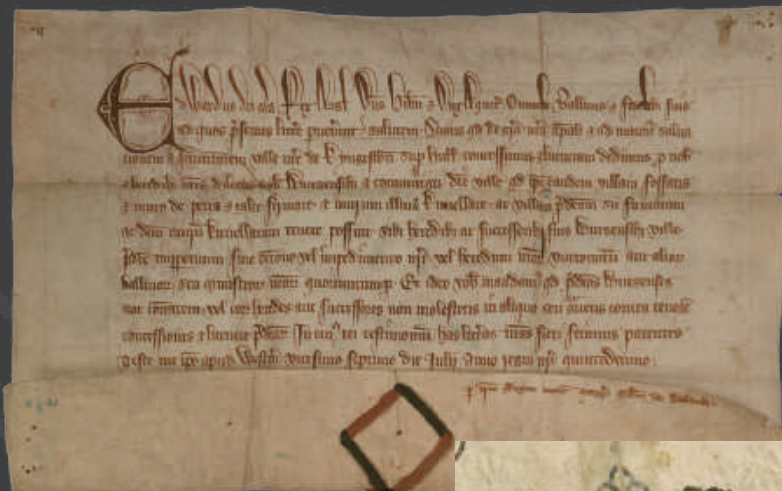


## Did You Know

The port of Ravenser Odd, further down the Humber near Spurn Point, became a Free Borough on the same day as Hull. However it was destroyed by a succession of tidal surges in the mid 14th Century, and Hull was able to flourish unchallenged by any local rival.

# 1299





Charter of King Edward II, 1321 (C BRC 3)



King Edward II (1307-27)

The medieval walls of Hull, taken from Wenceslaus Hollar's Birds-eye view of Hull c1640.



# The Charters of 1321 & 1327 Fortifications

Following the defeat of Edward I's son King Edward II at Bannockburn in 1314, the Scots raided deep into Yorkshire and Hull's exposed position, strategic importance and increasing wealth made it a potential target.

To defend the town Edward II issued a Charter in 1321 giving the Burgesses of Hull the right to fortify the town: to "enclose the same town with moats and with a wall of stone and lime."

Initially, an earth bank was built round Hull, topped with a wooden palisade. Stone to build walls, unavailable locally, was presumably too expensive for the Burgesses however, because in 1327 another Charter was issued which authorised them to build walls in brick.

Work probably began on the main gates of Hull: North Gate, Beverley Gate, Myton Gate and Hessle Gate. When the new King Edward III visited Hull in 1332 he was pleased with progress.

In 1341 work seems to have begun on replacing timber walls with brick. But it took sixty years for the walls to be completed.

The walls stretched round three sides of the town. On the fourth, the River Hull provided both defence and a sheltered harbour. Along with the four gates, there were two smaller gates, known as posterns (one of which is commemorated by Posterngate) and over thirty towers. Apart from York, Hull was the best defended town in Yorkshire.

## Did You Know

It has been estimated that 4,700,000 bricks would have been needed to build the medieval walls of Hull.

# The 1331 Charter The Mayor of Hull

An important step forward in Hull's progress towards self-government occurred in 1331, with the grant of a Charter by King Edward III.

Firstly the King surrendered to the Burgesses the rents due to the Crown from his property in Hull, in return for an annual payment of £70.

More significantly Edward granted the Burgesses the right to elect a Mayor once a year, replacing the former post of Keeper to which the King had made appointments. The new Mayor was supported by four Bailiffs. The Mayor and Bailiffs were to hear court cases, and govern the town on behalf of the King.

As the King's representative, the Mayor was the most important person in Hull. He had far more executive power than his successors today, whose role is largely ceremonial. He enforced the law, and his attendants, the serjeants, acted as a sort of police force. Anyone criticising the Mayor would be severely punished with heavy fines.

The current office of Lord Mayor owes its origin to the grant of Edward III, and for over 680 years there has been an unbroken line of Mayors and Lord Mayors of Hull.



Charter of King Edward III,  
1331 (C BRC 6)



King Edward III  
(1327-77)

# 1331

## Did You Know

In 1461 Mayor Richard Anson was killed at the Battle of Wakefield during the Wars of the Roses when in command of thirteen soldiers provided by Hull in support of the Lancastrian King Henry VI.





## Did You Know

The de la Pole family became very rich and powerful, and married into the royal family. One of the family, the Earl of Lincoln, was King Richard III's nephew and had Richard not been dethroned, might have succeeded him as King.



King Richard II  
(1377-99)

## The Charters of 1334 & 1382 Trading in Hull

**It was in the interests of both the King and the Burgesses of Hull to promote trade and ensure Hull was a safe place in which to do business.**

In 1334 King Edward III granted the right to administer 'Statute Merchant' which meant that contracts between merchants could be enforced locally. With greater legal protection, merchants could trade more securely.

The River Hull – the 'Old Harbour' – was crucial to the prosperity of the town. Legally this had belonged to the King but in 1382 Richard II granted to Hull "Sayer's Creek...from Sculcotegote [probably at High Flags on Wincolmlee] unto the middle...of the water of Humber." The all important harbour therefore passed into the control of the Mayor and Burgesses; it is still the property of Hull City Council today.

The largest volume of cargo passing through the Harbour continued to be wool. Large fortunes could be made, but the risks were great. Hull merchants sailing to the Baltic often risked attack by pirates, although they themselves sometimes had a profitable sideline in piracy.

The de la Pole fortune was exceptional. William de la Pole was the first Mayor in 1331, and he and his brother Richard were the most successful merchants in Hull in the early 14th Century. They became rich enough to found a monastery in Hull, the Charterhouse and their descendents became powerful aristocrats.

During the 14th Century the export of cloth woven upriver in Yorkshire became important, but it was overtaken by the export of lead. Lead mined and processed in the Pennines was brought downriver to Hull for transfer to sea-going vessels for sale overseas. But it was weighed to assess duty in a building that was still known as the Wool House.



Charter of King Edward III, 1334 (C BRC 7)



William de la Pole (died 1366)  
as imagined by a Victorian artist.

# The First Charter of 1440 Hull Becomes a County

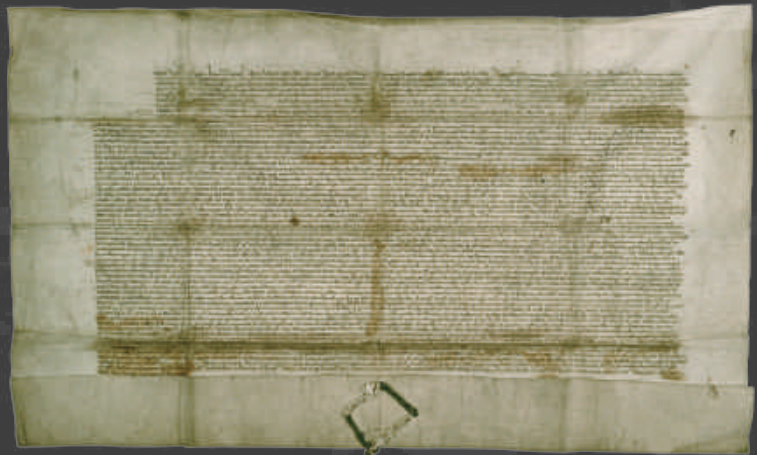
The first Charter granted by King Henry VI in 1440 marked the final stage on Hull's road to self-government. The King "incorporated" the Borough, giving it an independent legal identity. This is a status which Hull City Council still retains.

Hull obtained an additional significant privilege: it became a County of itself. This meant that it was separated from the jurisdiction of the magistrates of Yorkshire. It could elect its own Sheriff, to replace the previous posts of Bailiffs, and hold its own courts to hear all but the most serious cases. Apart from York, Hull was the only county borough in the region, and until 1974 the official name of the local authority was the City and County of Kingston upon Hull.

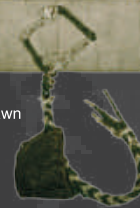
In 1440 the new County and the old Borough were one and the same – more or less the area of the current Old Town within the newly finished town walls. But in 1447 Henry VI extended the boundaries of the County of Hull to include North Ferriby, Swanland, Kirk Ella, Anlaby, Hessle and the area surrounding the Priory of Haltemprice.

Since 1402 Hull's fresh water supply had come from Julian's Well, where the old Springhead Waterworks stands. The water ran along a dike, and was later piped, along the line of Spring Bank into the town. However the monks of Haltemprice and the villagers to the West of Hull resented their water being taken by Hull, and frequently attempted to disrupt the supply. It was not until 1447 and the extension of the County that Hull's control of the villages to the West finally secured the town's water supply.

The extensive County of Hull, which was sometimes known as Hullshire, lasted until 1835 and the villages once again became part of the East Riding of Yorkshire.



Charter of King Henry VI, 1440  
A space has been left for an elaborately drawn capital letter. The plaited cord has been intertwined with gold thread. (C BRC 14)



King Henry VI  
(1421-61)



## Did You Know

Hull was a county from 1440 until 1974. Between 1975 and 1996 it was part of the County of Humberside, and then became a 'unitary authority'. So the City hasn't been part of Yorkshire since 1440!



## Did You Know

Hull has two ceremonial swords. The Second Sword is supposed to have been given to the town by King Charles I and is dated 1636.

The Sword of State.  
The cross-piece survives from the original sword and dates from 1440. The blade is 18th century in date. (Courtesy of the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull and Admiral of the Humber).

## The Second Charter of 1440 Civic Splendour

**Hull was eager to demonstrate its new status to the inhabitants and visitors to the town. Ceremony and civic displays of wealth and power were an important way of doing this in the Middle Ages.**

In a second Charter of 1440, Henry VI granted to the town the right for the Mayor to have a Sword of State carried in front of him on important occasions. The Sword symbolised that the Mayor had been delegated the Sovereign's authority. The Aldermen were granted the right to wear robes trimmed with fur, in the same manner as their opposite numbers in the City of London.

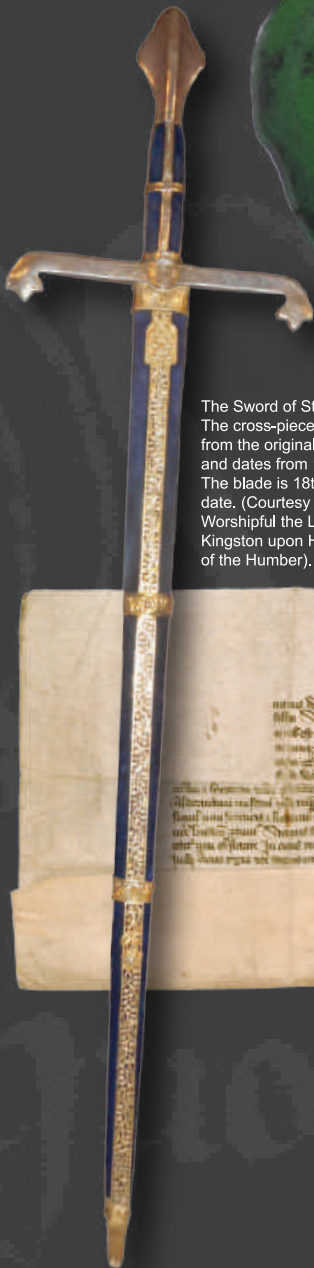
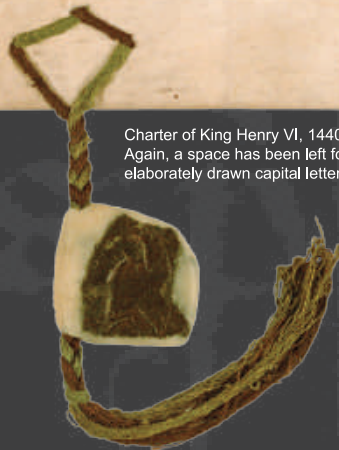
These were great privileges but it is probable that Hull had had help in securing the honour from some highly placed people. The town accounts record that 200 marks had been paid to the Duke of Suffolk, one of Henry's leading courtiers and the head of the de la Pole family which still maintained a connection with Hull.

Equipped with the Charter, the town immediately bought a Sword. No expense was spared. The surviving accounts show that the cost of the Sword was £7 10s and 1d, of which £4 7s 10d was for the silver-gilt decoration. Some of this original decoration survives on the scabbard, together with the original guard or cross-piece above the handle. The Sword originally had three scabbards: one made of cloth-of-gold for state occasions; one of blue velvet for ordinary use; and one of black velvet for solemn occasions including civic funerals.

The Sword of State is still carried before the Lord Mayor on the most important civic occasions, such as Royal Visits, another link between modern Hull and its medieval past.



Charter of King Henry VI, 1440  
Again, a space has been left for an elaborately drawn capital letter. (C BRC 15)



# The Charter of 1443 Embedding the Oligarchy

King Henry VI's Charter of 1443 is one of the best decorated of all Hull's Charters. For once the Mayor and Burgesses of Hull went to the expense of an 'illuminated' capital letter.

In the initial 'H' there is a drawing of the King himself, holding the charter in his left hand on which is written *Henric die gra*, an abbreviation of the Latin phrase for Henry by the Grace of God [King of England]. At the top of the initial is a scroll with *dieu et moui droit* on it, the French for 'God and My Right', the motto of the Royal Order of the Garter.

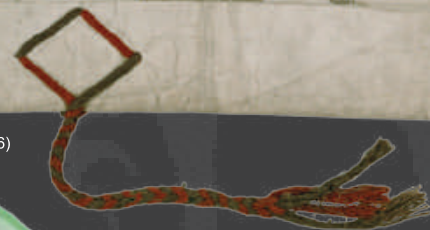
Hull was clearly wishing to express its loyalty to the Lancastrian dynasty, partly no doubt because the town's major landowners, the de la Poles, were very powerful at the court of Henry VI.

But perhaps this Charter was worth special expense to advertise Royal authority because of what it said. It laid down that from now on the Mayor was to be elected from a closed group of thirteen Aldermen, and that the Aldermen themselves could elect their own successors. From 1443 therefore the local government of Hull was in the control of a closed group of powerful merchants, many of whom were related to each other. Hull had achieved self-government, but that was now to be in the hands of a 'self-perpetuating oligarchy'.

It was an oligarchy which continued to govern Hull, with only a few brief interruptions, for nearly four hundred years.



Charter of King Henry VI, 1443 (C BRC 16)



## Did You Know

At the left of the 1443 Charter, an angel holds a painting of Hull's coat of arms, three gold crowns on a blue background. Unfortunately the crowns are wrongly pictured, arranged two above one, rather than in a vertical line.



Detail showing the wrongly drawn version of the 'Three Crowns', Hull's ancient coat of arms.



## Did You Know

Only two other English mayors hold similar titles: the Mayor of Chester is Admiral of the Dee and the Lord Mayor of London is Admiral of the Port of London.

## The Charter of 1447 The Admiral of the Humber

It is well-known that the Lord Mayor of Hull also holds the title of Admiral of the Humber. In 1447 King Henry VI, in the same Charter which extended the boundaries of Hullshire, gave the Mayor and Aldermen the right to elect the Admiral. The first serving Mayor to hold the office was John Dalton in 1488 and since then the offices have usually been held together.

The Admiral of the Humber was a judicial office rather than a naval command. The Admiral had the responsibility of hearing legal cases concerning "all maisters of shippys [ships], merchant menn and maryneres [mariners] with all other that do enjoye the Kynges streme with hooke nette or any other engine [equipment/machine]." He held sway "throughout the whole water of Humber."

According to regulations 1528 the sorts of crimes handled by the Admiralty Court included: theft of marine equipment; cutting cables of moored vessels and buoys; breaking into chests and coffers on board ship; breach of agreement with masters of vessels; and assault by mariners on each other.

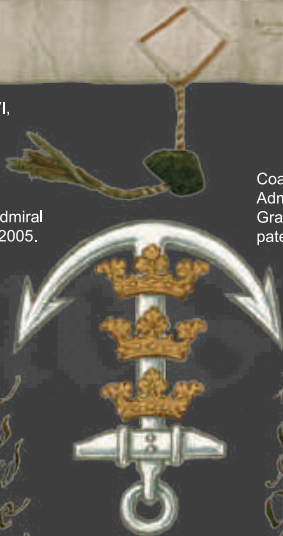
The regulations also stipulate the punishment for anyone who disclosed any legal secrets of the Admiralty Court: they would be taken to low water mark with hands and feet bound, their throat cut and their body thrown into the sea.

The Admiral's jurisdiction was abolished in 1835 but the title remains an important link with Hull's past.

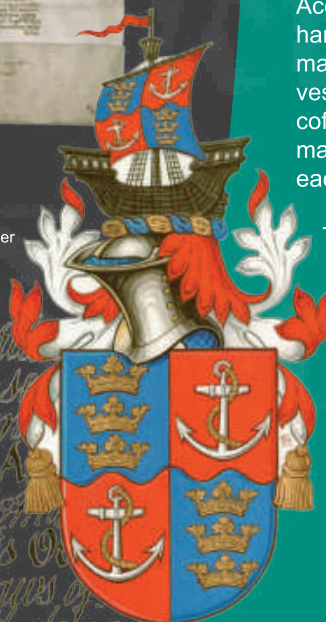


Charter of King Henry VI, 1447 (C BRC 17)

Heraldic badge of the Admiral of the Humber granted 2005.



Coat of Arms of the Admiral of the Humber Granted by letters patent 2005.



*incor Badge  
patent of  
HUMBER  
ad. quarters  
& Gules doubled  
nfling three  
le according  
's of Our severel Offices this Fifteenth day of  
Britain and Northern Ireland and of*

# The 1532 Charter

## How to get a Charter

At the beginning of the 16th century, Hull's trade was declining. According to a petition from the Mayor and Aldermen to King Henry VIII, "the haven of our town...has fallen into great decay by the rage of the sea."

The King's response was to strengthen the restrictions on outsiders buying and selling goods in Hull effectively giving Hull merchants a monopoly on trading in the borough. This, it was thought, would increase the wealth of resident merchants and the prosperity of the town.

The records include a list of the costs incurred to obtain this charter. As well as the expenses incurred by Alderman Edward Maddison during his 40 day stay in London, there were the fees paid to the government departments for each stage of the issuing of the charter.

The greatest expense was a "present" of twenty angels (a gold coin worth seven shillings and sixpence, and a total equivalent in purchasing terms to £4000 today), to Thomas Cromwell, the King's leading adviser. Cromwell was then at the beginning of his career but he was already a key person for Maddison to cultivate. We know from the accounts that Maddison was rowed to Greenwich Palace to see Cromwell four times; paid three shillings to Cromwell's servants to gain access to the great man; and presented him with a fresh sturgeon as well as the gold coins.

Obtaining a charter was an expensive business: Hull spent a total of £31 18s and 6d on the 1532 one, a sum the equivalent of £17,000 today.



King Henry VIII  
(1509-47)



Thomas Cromwell Henry VIII's most influential minister. Well worth the price of a sturgeon! (c1485-1540)

Charter of King Henry VIII,  
1532 (C BRC 20A)



"paid for the making of the great letters of the patent" – 6s 8d

"paid for the wrytting and drawing of the patent" – 6s 8d



"paid to the Clerk of the Green Wax" – 2s.  
The Great Seal was broken and the fragments were sewn into a green leather bag.

"paid for the lase that is at the patent" – 12d

## Did You Know

King Henry VIII visited Hull twice in autumn 1541. He decided to build major fortifications on the east bank of the River Hull.



# Tudor Charters

## King Edward & Queen Mary

The great religious changes of the sixteenth century impacted on Hull as everywhere else in England. With its two great churches, Holy Trinity and St Mary's, its three monasteries and a number of religious guilds (religious social clubs) the port-town was nonetheless influenced by European forms of Protestantism. During the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 Hull surrendered to Roman Catholic rebels, but when a later attempt was made to capture the town in January 1537, the mayor and aldermen rallied to the King and captured the rebel leader.

Hull's support for the reformed religion was rewarded by the Protestant child-king Edward VI, who granted the town, in a charter of 1552, the lordship of the manor of Myton, together with part of the dissolved monastery of the Charterhouse, and the fortifications Henry VIII had built on the Holderness bank of the River Hull.

When Edward's sister Queen Mary I came to the throne in 1553, her policy of restoring Roman Catholicism was probably less popular in Hull. However when it came to obtaining the usual charter confirming previous grants from the new monarch, expense seems to have been no object. One explanation for this may be that the authorities in Hull were keen to prove their loyalty to a new regime which had reason to doubt it.

Charter of Queen Mary I, 1553  
(C BRC 22)

The lead-based white pigment in the Queen's face has darkened with time.

The Cross of St George encircled with Order of the Garter

The Lion of England, holding a banner with a gold fleur-de-lis, the symbol of France. Kings and Queens of England also claimed to be rightful rulers of France.

The Coat of Arms of the Kings of England.

The Red Dragon of Wales, an important emblem of the Tudor family, holding a banner with the Cross of St George.

A Pomegranate, symbol of Spain. Queen Mary's mother had been a member of the Spanish royal family.



King Edward VI  
(1547-53)



Queen Mary I  
(1553-58)



## Did You Know

One of Queen Mary's supporters in Hull, Walter Flynton, actually reported the Mayor and Aldermen's Protestant sympathies to the government, and had his right to be a burgess ended by the Bench.

The 1553 Charter is the most magnificent in the collection, with colour and even gold used to illuminate the opening lines.



# Queen Elizabeth I's Charters

Despite its later reputation for defying royal authority, under the Tudor Kings and Queens Hull usually remained loyal to the Crown. This stood the town in good stead when it requested further financially beneficial rights and privileges to compensate it for slumps in trade and damage to the port by the sea.



Queen Elizabeth I  
(1558-1603)

In 1577 Queen Elizabeth granted Hull a further Charter in reward for the town's support during a rebellion in 1569 and to finance the repair of the harbour and fortifications.

The Charter tightened Hull merchants' control of all trade passing through the port; outsiders could no longer sell goods to each other without a Hull merchant's involvement. These privileged men were permitted to combine as 'The Society of Merchants' to police their monopoly. However this resulted in a boycott of Hull ships by merchants in York, Hull took reprisals and eventually the government had to intervene to prevent this local trade war.

However, further privileges followed to alleviate the decline in trade: Hull was given special exemption from an Act of Parliament banning the import of salted fish, always an important element in its economy, and in 1598 Hull merchants were given permission to continue unloading cargoes at their own private wharves, rather than at a designated 'legal quay' where customs officials could keep a close eye on what was landed. Until 1774 and the creation of the first dock (since transformed into Queen's Gardens) Hull merchants had a unique privilege which helped them avoid payment of customs duties.

The later 16th Century did see a growth in the prosperity of Hull, partly due to the support of the Queen. In 1583-85 the Old Grammar School was built, partly as a schoolroom but also as a meeting and trading place for the town's merchants: economic revival expressed in brick.



Charter of Queen Elizabeth I,  
1582 (C BRC 25)



## Did You Know

Queen Elizabeth I appointed her Secretary and spy-master Sir Francis Walsingham to be Hull's first High Steward in 1583. This honorary office is now held by Lord Mandelson.



Charter of Queen Elizabeth I,  
1598 (C BRC 26)



# The Stuart Charters

When King James I, first of the Stuart dynasty succeeded his cousin Elizabeth in 1603, Hull, as usual when regimes changed, obtained a charter confirming its rights and privileges. In addition, being “credibly informed” that the town was suffering an economic downturn, James granted some additional benefits including the right to levy a toll on all lead from Derbyshire passing through the port; and the ownership of the land called Trippett between the town walls and the Charterhouse.

However despite centuries of royal generosity, Hull generally supported Parliament against the King during the 17th Century, famously turning King Charles I away from Beverley Gate in 1642. After the monarchy was restored in 1660 Hull was subject to repeated attempts to control the town by Charles II and James II.

King Charles II granted a charter which was in effect a new constitution for Hull in 1661. However when James II, a Roman Catholic, succeeded and there was an armed revolt against him in the South West of England, he attempted to remove suspected supporters of the revolt from positions of power all over the country. In 1685 James issued a new charter, which specifically excluded named Hull citizens from local government.

By 1688, when James was trying to bring more fellow Roman Catholics into power, and hoped to do so with the support of more extreme Protestants (nonconformists) the position was reversed. A new charter was issued restoring some of the previously excluded aldermen.

All of this was to no avail. On 3 December 1688 Hull's Protestant population mounted a coup against James' garrison in support of the invading William of Orange. William soon became William III – or 'King Billy' and is commemorated with the statue in Market Place.

Charles II's charter once again became the Governing Charter, and provided the framework for how Hull was run until 1835.



Charter of King James I, 1610  
(C BRC 27)



King James I  
(1603-25)



Title of the Charter of King  
Charles II, 1661 (C BRC 29)

## Did You Know

One of the aldermen excluded as a Protestant opponent of the government in 1685 was Mark Kirkby, ancestor of the Sykes family of Sledmere. He was restored to the bench in 1688.



## The end of the Charters

The 1661 Charter of King Charles II continued to provide the framework within which Hull was governed for a hundred and fifty years through the 18th and early 19th Centuries, a period which saw huge changes to the town. Agricultural and industrial revolutions transformed the volume of trade passing through the port. The Old Harbour could no longer cope with increasing numbers of ships, especially after the whaling industry developed.

The first dock (later Queen's Dock, now the site of Queen's Gardens) was opened in 1778, on the site of a length of walls that had first been authorised in the Charter of 1321. Other docks followed, and other industries grew up, such as oil seed production and milling. To deal with the issues presented by a growing population and with which the Mayor and Aldermen (the 'Corporation') were not constituted to deal, other local agencies had to be set up by Act of Parliament, such as the Sculcoates Improvement Commission of 1801.

These problems mirrored similar issues in other towns and cities. Local government set up by medieval charters could no longer cope with the urban expansion of the 19th Century, and there was a greater expectation that more local people should have a say in the way their town was run. In Hull, journalist James Acland (1799-1876) led a populist campaign against the Mayor and Aldermen, even running his own Humber ferry to break the Corporation monopoly.

In 1835, the great Municipal Corporations Act introduced local councils much as we know them today, and the Charters were largely superseded and repealed. It was a decisive break from the medieval past represented by the confirmation of rights and privileges by kings and queens.



James Acland (1799-1876) (Lp 920 ACL)  
Journalist and campaigner. This portrait was published by Acland himself. The cartoons behind him, a dejected looking beadle (a civic official), and a dissipated Alderman with an upside-down three crowns, represent his attitude to the unreformed Hull Corporation.

Map of Hull Robert Thew, 1784  
This map dedicated to Members of Parliament Samuel Thornton and William Wilberforce shows the first dock, and the beginning of urban expansion outside the town walls.



## Did You Know

So unpopular had the old Mayor and Aldermen become in Hull, partly due to the campaigns of James Acland, that none of them were elected to the new Corporation.



# Modern Letters Patent

Although after 1835 the charters were no longer in force, documents known as letters patent continue to be issued in the name of the monarch in relation to ceremonial matters.

In 1897, to mark her Diamond Jubilee, Hull was elevated from the status of a borough, which it had first become in 1299, to that of a City. The document – known as letters patent – was very similar in format to the traditional charter. It authorised the new official name of 'The City and County of Kingston upon Hull'.

In 1914 the City was further honoured when the office of Mayor of Hull, first created by Edward III in 1331, became that of Lord Mayor. At the ceremony in which he opened King George Dock, George V declared that Hull's "high position on the roll of the great ports of My Kingdom" justified him in awarding it the title of Lord Mayor. Letters patent were issued to make this official.

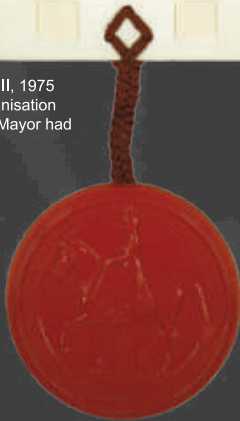
The 1972 Local Government Act abolished the City and County, and Hull's status as a City with a Lord Mayor was confirmed by Queen Elizabeth II in 1975 in much the most elaborate of Hull's modern 'charters'.

The most recent letters patent were those issued by Her Majesty the Queen in 2013 to mark her Diamond Jubilee by reviving the ancient offices of Sheriff and High Steward of Kingston upon Hull.

**For over seven hundred years, royal charters have underpinned the development of our City. Much of what they say has been superseded, but they still remain symbols of what it means to be citizens of Kingston upon Hull**



Letters Patent of Queen Elizabeth II, 1975  
Following local government reorganisation Hull's status as a City with a Lord Mayor had to be reconfirmed. (C TMD 5)



Letters Patent of Queen Victoria, 1897 (C BRC 32)



## Did You Know

One medieval survival which can be traced back to the 1299 is the 'hereditary freedom' of Hull which is awarded to members of a few families who can trace their ancestry back to burgesses of Hull.







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