

EPITOME OF THE CHARTERS OF THE CITY OF CHESTER,
DATING FROM 1120 TO 1836.¹

By C. BROWN.

Before giving a short epitome of the Charters at present in the possession of the Corporation of Chester, I may be permitted to refer to the lamentable fire which destroyed the Old Town Hall on the evening of the 30th of December, 1861. Fortunately the greater part of the muniments were saved, together with the ancient Corporate Plate, and the Portraits of former Mayors, and Benefactors of the City.

The Records remained for several years in a state of disorder in the old City Gaol, but, in the year 1878 a sub-committee of the Council, of which I was a member, was appointed to endeavour to bring them into order. We fortunately obtained the services of Mr. John Cordy Jeaffreson, of the Public Record Office, who succeeded in doing so, and afterwards tabulated and arranged them in the Muniment room of this Town Hall, where they are opened to inspection under certain restrictions.

Mr. Jeaffreson in his report states, "few cities possess Archives so numerous and valuable as those which, after suffering severely from Fire, Damp, and other causes, have lately been arranged and deposited in the Muniment room of the Corporation. They consist of Charters, Municipal Books, Letters, Civic Grants, and Leases, and upwards of fourteen hundred sets of filed documents; the entire collection may be roughly computed to have in its several divisions more than 200,000 separate writings."

CHARTERS AT PRESENT IN THE MUNIMENT ROOM OF THE CORPORATION IN
THE TOWN HALL, CHESTER, JULY, 1886.

1. Charter of Henry II (1160) to the Burgesses of Chester to buy and sell at Durham, as they were wont to do in the time of Henry I.
2. Charter of Ranulph Earl of Chester to his men of Chester and their heirs (Randle the 1st was surnamed de Meschines and was Earl from 1120 to 1128).
3. Charter of Ranulph Earl of Chester to his citizens of Chester.
4. Charter of Ranulph Earl of Chester (Randle Blundeville 4th Earl) to the Citizens of Chester.
5. Reign of Richard I (1192) Charter of John Earl of Moreton (afterwards King John) to the citizens of Chester, for their protection, and freedom of trade with Ireland.
6. The same reign—a second Charter of John Earl of Moreton to the citizens of Chester with the same object.

¹ Read in the Historical Section at the Chester Meeting, August 13, 1886.

7. 3rd May 3 of John (1202) Charter of the King to the citizens of Chester, in which he styles himself King of England, and Lord of Ireland, and "requests all Justices, Constables, Bailiffs and faithful people in the whole of Ireland, to grant the citizens of Chester liberty to trade in Ireland as in the time of our Father King Henry I."
8. Reign of Henry III (1216 to 1272) Charter of John le Scot Earl of Chester and Huntingdon to the citizens of Chester. After the death of this Earl the title of Earl of Chester was conferred by Henry III on his infant Son, afterwards King Edward I, and has since been borne by the eldest Son of the Sovereign in addition to that of Prince of Wales.
9. 8th December 22nd, of Henry III (1238) Charter of Inspeximus and Confirmation by that Monarch to the citizens of Chester confirming the charter.
10. Same date—another charter to the citizens confirming the charter of Ranulph Earl of Chester.
11. 23rd of October, 23rd Henry III, another Charter by the King to the citizens confirming a previous Charter of Ranulph Earl of Chester.
12. 12th June, 28 Edward I. Charter of Edward I to the Citizens confirming the Charters granted by Henry III in the 22nd year of his reign. There is a duplicate of this Charter with the great seal attached to it.
13. 16th Edward II (1323) Indenture of the agreement between the Mayor and Citizens of Chester and John Clypeston for the building of the New Tower, now called the Water Tower, which still exists in a perfect state.
14. 1st December, 1st Edward III (1327) Letters Patent by Edward III of Inspeximus and Confirmation of the charter of the franchises and privileges of the Citizens of Chester dated by his Grandfather Edward I at York in the 28th of his reign (1300).
15. 25th of Edward III (1352) Writ by Edward Prince of Wales (the Black Prince) to the Mayor and Citizens of Chester on his grant for life to Richard Earl of Arundel of the fee-farm of one hundred livres yearly, coming from the said City to the said Prince.
16. 9th March, 28th Edward III (1355) Charter by Edward Prince of Wales, commonly called the Black Prince, of Inspeximus and confirmation of the Charter of his Father Edward III in the 1st year of his reign, confirmed at Worcester the Charter touching the liberties of the citizens of Chester dated by Edward I at York 12th June in the 28th year of his reign. This Charter is dated by the Black Prince at Chester and defines the liberties of the city of Chester.
17. Edward III Claims of Robert of Eton in respect to the Segeantry of the River Dee.
18. 10th April, 1st Richard II (1377) Charter for the remission for ten years to the Citizens of Chester of the yearly payment of £73 10s. 1½d. part of the £103 10s. 1½d. due every year to the King and his heirs, for the yearly fee-farm of £100, due from the same citizens by virtue of a Charter by Edward I.
19. 10th December, 3rd Richard II (1380) Letters Patent touching the

- liberties of the Citizens of Chester, and the boundaries of their city, dated at Chester by the King's Father, Edward the Black Prince 9th March 28th Edward III. Dated at Westminster "per manum nostram."
20. 25th July, 2nd Richard II (1379) Remission of the Murage hitherto paid to the King, and also the King's profits from the passage of the river Dee until the ruined Bridge over the same river shall have been restored.
 21. 31st March, 18th Richard II (1395) Letters Patent of a precept under the seal of the King's Exchequer of Chester addressed to all his Bailiffs, faithful subjects and tenants in the Counties of Chester and Flynt, enjoying them to pay all Murage for the repair of the City's Walls and Pavements. Dated at Chester.
 22. 19th July, 22nd Richard II Letters Patent confirming the Charter of 28th Edward III. This differs from other Charters by having the Seal of the Principality of Chester appended to it, instead of the Great Seal.
 23. 23rd February, 2nd Henry IV (1401) Letters Patent, in the form of a Writ, addressed to the Princes' Bishops, Abbots, and faithful men of his whole County of Chester by the Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester confirming the Charter of the 3rd of Richard II. "Dated per manum nostram apud Kenyngtyn."
 24. 3rd November, 5th Henry IV (1404) Pardon to all and each of the King's lieges of the City of Chester of all treasons &c. committed by them "cum Henrico Percy."
 25. 5th March, 8th Henry IV Grant for five years to the Mayor and citizens of Chester, by Henry Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester of all the Murage profits.
 26. 20th November, 4th Henry VI (1426) Letters Patent by Henry VI confirming previous Charters.
 27. 4th August, 23 Henry VI Letters Patent of release and quit claim for a term of fifty years to the citizens of Chester of the yearly payment of £50, being the half of the annual rent of £100.
 28. 20th November, 35th Henry VI (1457) Letters Patent of pardon and release to John Southeworthe and Henry Kyrn, late Sheriffs of the City of Chester and others, of the payment of the fee farm rent.
 29. 21st March, 1st Henry VII Letters Patent of remission for ever to the Citizens of Chester of £80 of the £100 annual fee farm rent due to the King.
 30. 6th April, 21st Henry VII (1506) The Great Charter of Henry VII to the Citizens of Chester, made out of pure affection &c., granting among other things that henceforth the whole land of the City (the King's Castle within the Walls being excepted) be exempt and separate from the County of Chester, and be henceforth styled the County of the City of Chester, that the citizens may henceforth yearly elect 24 Aldermen, and 40 Common Councilmen, that one of the Aldermen may be elected to the office of Recorder, that the Citizens may yearly elect two Sheriffs, that out of the King's presence the Mayor of Chester may have the Sword borne before him with the point erect, that the Sergeants of the Maces of the Mayor and Sheriffs, adorned with the Royal

- Arms, may be borne in the presence of the King &c. &c. That the Mayor for the time being, and the Alderman who have passed the Chair, be Justices of the Peace, without any other commission.
31. 4th May, 20th Henry VIII (1529) Letters Patent by Arthur Plantagenet Viscount Lisley K.G. Vice Admiral of England to the Mayor and Citizens of Chester confirming the Grants made by Hugh Lupus Earl of Chester, and confirmed by successive Kings, of all Lands and Ports within the liberties of the City of Chester, being exempt from the Lord Admiral's jurisdiction.
 32. 13th July same reign and year. Charter of a grant for ever by the Friars Minors of Chester of the Nave and three Aisles of their Church, to the Merchants and Sailors of Chester, for a place in which to store and repair Sails and other things requisite for their Ships.
 33. 20th February, 30th Henry VIII (1539) Copy of a grant of pardon to William Danyson, David Midelton. and others, Merchants of the City of Chester, for ignorantly shipping certain "Dikers of Leather," in violation of the King's enactment against such exportation of leather.
 34. 4th June, 38th Henry VIII (1547) Letters Patent by the King's Council in Star Chamber ordering the manner of electing a new Mayor in place of William Holcroft who died during his year of office.
 35. 3rd April 1562 Articles and Orders set forth by Mr. John Cowper, Mayor. Seven orders on a skin of parchment, signed "John Cowper, Mayor."
 36. 14th June, 16th Elizabeth (1574) Letters Patent of the Queen confirming the Great Charter of King Henry VII.
 37. 11th October, 20th Elizabeth (1578) Warrant of Edward Earl of Lincoln, Lord High Admiral, for the release from arrest of a certain Ship of the port of London named the Greyhound, now lying under arrest in the port of Chester.
 38. 3rd October, 28th Elizabeth (1586) Bond of John Robinson, Merchant, James Wilkinson, officer of Sir Francis Walsingham, and Robert Thornton, Gentleman, in the sum of £100 to hold the Mayor and citizens, and the Sheriffs, harmless in all suits respecting a seizure of a cargo of corn made on a warrant of the Earl of Derby in execution of orders for restraining the exportation of Corn beyond the Seas.
 39. 30th Elizabeth (1588) Warrant of Charles Lord Howard, Baron of Effingham, Lord High Admiral, to Vice Admirals, Sheriffs and others for the execution of a decree of Julius Cæsar, Doctor of Laws, and Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, in the suit of John Hendeman and Everard Shrowder against Roger Darwall and others.
 40. 30th May, 1590. Commission by the Archbishop of Canterbury appointing John Darbye, of the City of New Sarum, to be an apparitor of the said Court in Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Berkshire.
 41. 4th May, 44th Elizabeth (1602) Indented certificate that Owen Jones, Mercer and citizen of Chester, duly appointed by John Ratcliffe, Mayor, has received from Vincent Skyunner Esqr out of

- the Treasury of the Exchequer "one standard Bushell, Gallon, Quarter, and Pinte of brasse" and has paid the charges for the same.
42. 7th February, 2nd James I (1605) Letters Patent by the King confirming the Great Charter of Henry VII and granting further power.
 43. 25th May, 12th James I (1615) Indented Certificate that James Bingley of His Majesty's Exchequer has given to John Blanchard a Citizen of Chester, duly authorized to receive the same, "one standard brazen Bushell" to be used as a standard Bushell measure, in lieu of a certain other standard Bushell measure delivered out of Queen Elizabeth's Exchequer in the 44th year of her reign, no longer fit for use.
 44. 14th March, 15th James I Grant during pleasure by Charles Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, to Henry Harpur Gentleman of the Mastership of St. Giles's Hospital, Boughton.
 45. 19th September, 8th Charles I (1633) Commission to the Mayor and Sheriffs to collect contributions for the repair of St. Paul's Cathedral, London.
 46. 20th December, 9th Charles I another commission from the King for the same purpose.
 47. October 1635 Warrant of the Vice Admiral's Court to the Sheriffs, Bailiffs, and Constables, to cause all Seamen, Fishermen, and others to appear before the Judge of the Admiralty, or his deputy, at the Court to be holden at the house of John Tilston of East-gate Street on the 9th inst.
 48. 10th January, 17th Charles I (1642) Commission addressed to the Mayor and Recorder of Chester, for the time being, also to Charles Walley, William Gammell and Robert Harvey, Aldermen of Chester, authorising them to administer to all Commanders, Officers and Souldyers, which pass through the City to serve in the wars against the Rebels in Ireland, a certain Statute of the 1st of Elizabeth, and the oath of allegiance contained in an Act of the 3rd of James I.
 49. 23rd June, 1658 Grant by Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, of the patronage and care of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens.
 50. 6th June, 16th Charles II (1676) Letters Patent of Charles II to the Citizens of Chester for the renewal and confirmation of the liberties and powers granted by a Charter of the 21st of Henry VII.
 51. 26th November 1670 Indented Certificate that Thomas Willcoek Mayor of the City of West Chester has received from the Exchequer several measures of brass for the use of the people of Chester.
 52. 4th February, 37th Charles II (1697) Letters Patent of the King for the re-constitution of the Corporation of the County of the City of Chester, containing the following clause, no table for the names of the excepted persons.
 53. 16th September, 4th James II (1689) Letters Patent of the King for the re-incorporation of the Citizens and City of Chester, as a Corporation, to be henceforth styled the County of the City of

Chester, with a Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Common Councillors, and divers subordinate officers, and appointing Thomas Stanley, Bart. to be the first Mayor, and Richard Levinge the first Recorder—the names of the first Aldermen and Councillors are also stated. It might be stated here that the first Mayor of Chester (Sir Walter Lynnett) was appointed in 1257, and that from that date up to the present time there is an unbroken list of the names of the Mayors, painted on panels in the Town Hall.

54. 26th October same year Letters Patent of Pardon from King James II to the Mayor and Citizens in respect of an Indictment against them in Hilary term of the 36th of Charles II, with the remission of all pains and penalties thereon.
55. 5th September 1st William & Mary (1690) Commission to William Street, Mayor and others, to put in execution an Act lately made granting to their Majesties an aid of twelve pence in the pound for one year for the necessary defence of these realms.
56. 12th February, 8th William III (1697) Commission to Henry Lloyd, Alderman and others to be Commissioners for putting in execution an Act for an "ayd to His Majesty by levying a Land Tax."
57. 5th March 12th William III (1701) Commission of Gaol Delivery for the City of Chester addressed to William Earl of Derby, Chamberlain of the County Palatine of Chester, William Bennett Esquire, Mayor and others.
58. 24th July, 3rd Anne (1605) Commission by Hugh Lord Viscount Cholmondeley, Lord Lieutenant of the County Palatine of Chester to John Hurleston, Esq., to be a Captain of a company of Militia of the said County.
59. 20th October, 17th George II (1705) Grant to John Dutton of Englishcomb to Somerset of the custody of the person of Samuel Catherall late of Oriell College Oxford a lunatic.
60. 7th November, 44th George III (1804) Grant to the Mayor that he may appoint as his deputy any one of the Aldermen who shall have served the office of Mayor.
61. 27th February, 6th William IV (1836) Grant that a separate Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace may be holden in and for the Borough of Chester.

It will be seen that the above Charters cover a period of upwards of seven hundred years.

The foregoing epitome of the Charters of the City of Chester is chiefly compiled from Mr. Jeaffreson's report to the Corporation, to be found in the "Historical Manuscript Reports" at the Town Hall.