

D/D Cow/Charter 1

BOROUGH OF COWBRIDGE

COWBRIDGE BOROUGH CHARTER, 1421

Inspeximus and Confirmation given by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Worcester, Lord le Despenser and of Abergavenny. Dated at Kaerdiff [Cardiff], 1 May, 9 Henry V [1421]

Witnesses to the 1421 charter: William, abbot of Morgan [Margam], Lleisant, abbot of Neeth [Neath], Sir John Stradelyng, then sheriff of Glamorgan and Morgan, Sir John St. John, Sir Oliver St. John, Sir Gilbert Denys and Sir Edward Stradelyng, John Lauerence, Robert Walsse and Walter Moreton, esquires, and many others [not named]

The charter of 1421 recites and confirms:

- (1) The charter given under the seal of the Chancery of Kerdiff [Cardiff] by Thomas le Despenser, Lord of Glamorgan and Morgan (father of Isabella, wife of Richard Beauchamp). Dated at Kerdiff [Cardiff], 16 February, 20 Richard II [1397]

Witnesses to the 1397 charter: Lord John St. John, then sheriff of Glamorgan, Lord William Stradelyng, knight, John Basset and Robert Walsse, esquires, and others [not named]

The charter of 1397 recites and confirms the charter of confirmation of Edward le Despenser of 1358

- (2) The charter given under the seal of the Chancery of Kerdiff [Cardiff] by Edward le Despenser, Lord of Glamorgan and Morgan (father of Thomas le Despenser). Dated at Kerdiff [Cardiff], 18 June, 32 Edward III [1358]

Witnesses to the 1358 charter: Henry, abbot of Morgan [Margam], Thomas, abbot of Neeth [Neath], Sir Richard Turburville, Sir Oliver St. John, Sir John le Norreys, Sir Edward Stradelyng and others [not named]

The charter of 1358 recites and confirms the charter granted by Hugh le Despenser in 1340

- (3) The charter given under the seal of the Chancery of Kerdiff [Cardiff] by Hugh le Despenser, Lord of Glamorgan and Morgan (uncle of Edward le Despenser). Dated at Kerdiff [Cardiff], 19 April, 14 Edward III [1340]

Witnesses to the 1340 charter: Henry, abbot of Morgan [Margam], William, abbot of Neeth [Neath], Sir John Aven, Sir Roger Berkerolles, John le Norreys, Mathew le Soore and others [not named]

In the charter of 1340, Hugh le Despenser grants to the burgesses of Cowebrugg [Cowbridge] the following liberties:

they are to enjoy immunities from toll, murage, pontage, panage, terrage, quayage and picage and other customary dues throughout his lordship in both England and Wales;

they are to choose yearly from among themselves the lord's bailiffs, i.e. three reeves from whom his constable shall receive one at will, three catchpoles from whom the reeve shall receive one at will, and two ale-tasters who must be received and sworn before the constable;

the reeve and the catchpole are to be free of the rent of one burgage for the year;

all merchandise coming to the town or passing through shall be shown to the reeve before being sold or removed under penalty of forfeiture;

no burgess shall be imprisoned in the town, as long as he can find bail or pledge, except in cases of felony with mainour;

when inquisition has to be made concerning things done within the town touching the burgesses, their tenements or chattels, it is to be determined by the burgesses of the town only;

the burgesses shall not be receivers of the lord's moneys, except those issuing from the bailiwick of the reeve of the town, nor shall they be compelled to buy corn, meat, wines or other victuals from the lord against their will;

the burgesses shall be free to sell without hindrance, throughout the town;

the burgesses may freely bequeath all burgages, tenements and rents;

burgesses cannot be constrained to go beyond the ancient boundaries of the town, namely, from the highway from Cowebrugg [Cowbridge] to Seynthillary [St. Hilary] and to Bewreper [Beaupre] on the east as far as the bridge called Cowebrugg [Cowbridge] on the west, and from the land called Milleforlong on the south as far as the fulling-mill on the north;

no outsider shall buy merchandise from an outsider within the boundaries of the town (except at the fair or market) but only from the burgesses (besides the gentlemen of Glamorgan for victuals, not for reason of merchandise), nor shall any keep a stall or shop or make a Corff;

the burgesses may form a Guild for their profit;

no bailiff or minister of the lord's shall make summons or attachment or take distraint within the boundaries of the town, except the constable and the bailiffs of the town chosen by the burgesses;

[the following entry has been crossed out, apparently at the time when the charter was drawn up: the burgesses shall have timber sufficient for housebote and haybote within the lord's forest at Glyntaff]

all merchants who live by selling and buying within the lordship of Glamorgan and Morgan must dwell in the towns of Burgh and not Upland, and make sale of their wares in fairs, market-places and towns of Burgh only;

merchants shall not travel other than by the highways through the towns of Burgh so that the lord lose not tolls and customs due to him;

the burgesses shall not do any watch nor keep any fugitive in any church outside the walls of the town;

by the ordinance of the constable, the burgesses may freely make orders and proclamations concerning the assizes of bread and ale and other matters at their will;

the burgesses shall not be bound by proclamations made in the lord's county of Glamorgan at any time;

the burgesses shall have their prison in the town for keeping and punishing malefactors and rebels, and fulfilling and keeping the law, and making execution before the constable, with plea or without plea, of all things touching the town;

the burgesses shall hold one fair in the town, as they did in the time of the lord's ancestors, namely, the fair which begins on the Eve of Holy Cross Day [13 September] and lasts 15 days, in which fair the reeve shall take the toll and other customs due to the lord, and in the same fair he shall hold all pleas of the crown concerning all manner of felonies committed within the town during the fair, and other pleas concerning trespass, debts, agreements and other divers contracts wherever made;

all pleas and complaints shall be tried in the hundred court of the town, except pleas of the crown, forestall, homesoken and pleas of land;

the constable of Kaerdiff [Cardiff] or his lieutenant shall hold the hundred court monthly, and the court called Pipoudrez [Piepowder] daily, and all other matters concerning the liberties of the town shall be determined before him;

all pleas of the crown, forestall and homesoken within the town shall be determined before the sheriff of Glamorgan and Morgan in the king's court

- (4) The charter given by Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford (ancestor of Richard Beauchamp). Dated at Lantrissan [Llantrisant], 13 March, 38 Henry III [1254]

In the charter of 1254, Richard de Clare granted to the burgesses of Longa Villa [presumably Cowbridge] all liberties held by the burgesses of Kerdiff [Cardiff] and Novus Burgus.

The charter of 1421 was sealed at the Chancery of Cardiff.

The seal carries the following coat of arms:

Quarterly, I and IV, BEAUCHAMP: a fess charged with a crescent, between six cross crosslets; II and III, DESPENSER: quarterly, in the second and third a fret, over all a bendlet.

The reverse of the seal shows an equestrian figure bearing on his left shoulder a shield of the same arms.

[1 parchment; Latin; seal pendent on parchment seal tag]

[Apart from the charter to Cowbridge, Richard Beauchamp granted three other charters to boroughs in Glamorgan in the spring of 1421, all of which are now held in the Glamorgan Record Office. These were the charters to:

Cardiff,	20 Apr.	1421	(G.R.O. ref.: B/C 1/7)
Kenfig,	1 May	1421	(G.R.O. ref.: B/K 2)
Neath,	1 May	1421	(G.R.O. ref.: CL/BRA 236/160)]

Glossary

Aletaster: an official who tested the quality of ale and beer sold within the borough and ensured that they were sold to the proper weight and measure

Constable: the constable of the lord's castle at Cardiff

Haybote: the right to take wood to make or repair fences

Housebote: the right to take wood to make or repair houses

Mainour: stolen goods found in the possession of a thief on his arrest

Murage: a tax to pay for the upkeep of the town walls

Panage: payment made by tenants to their lord for the right to pasture their pigs in the lord's woods

Picage: payment for the right to break ground for erecting a stall

Pontage: a toll paid to cross a bridge

Quayage: quay-dues

Terrage: charge for occupying ground at a fair or market

Toll: dues levied at markets and for the upkeep of roads and bridges