

Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 21

Great Yarmouth Borough Charters

There are sixteen royal charters and letters patent to the borough of Great Yarmouth, they are described briefly here. Coloured copies of charters numbered 1, 10, 12 and 14 in the list below are on public display in the Town Hall corridor. There are detailed descriptions of charters 1-15 in C.J. Palmer, *Continuation of Manship* (1856). They are transcribed in full, with full English translations of the Latin ones, in H. Swinden, *The History and Antiquities of Great Yarmouth* (1772). This volume is on the searchroom shelves.

- Y/C 2/1 Charter of King John granting the Borough to the burgesses in fee farm (that is, they had to pay the King a fixed amount every year), constituting it a free borough, and granting it toll (that is, the right to hold a market and charge the traders fees). 18 March 1207/8.
- Y/C 2/2 Edict of Edward I adjudicating between the men of Yarmouth and the barons of the Cinque Ports following disputes relating to their respective rights during the autumn herring fair at Yarmouth. Mutilated. With Great Seal. 20 May 1277.
- Y/C 2/3 Fragment of letters patent of Edward III following disputes between men of Yarmouth and John of Brittany and his tenants concerning the shipping of goods at Little Yarmouth (Southtown) and Gorleston. 10 July 1332.
- Y/C 2/4 Charter of Richard II annexing Kirkley Road to Yarmouth and prohibiting the handling of herring and other merchandise within an area of seven 'leuks' outside the town. Coloured portrait of the King within the initial letter. Fragments of Great Seal. 28 November 1386.
- Y/C 2/5 Letters patent of Henry V confirming the town's privileges. Second membrane missing. Fragment of Great Seal. 20 May 1414.
- Y/C 2/6 Charter of Henry VII granting return of writs, a separate sessions of peace for the borough, and the right to appoint two borough coroners. Fragment of Great Seal. 16 May 1494.
- Y/C 2/7 Letters patent of Henry VIII remitting £400 in tenths and fifteenths. 10 March 1540/1.
- Y/C 2/8 Letters patent of Queen Mary confirming the town's privileges. Uncoloured portrait of the Queen. Fragment of Great Seal. 14 February 1553/4.

- Y/C 2/9 Letters patent of Philip and Mary remitting 50 marks a year of the fee farm for 40 years because of the poverty of the town. 14 March 1555/6.
- Y/C 2/10 Letters patent of Elizabeth I granting a local court of admiralty (for maritime jurisdiction), appointing the bailiffs of the town to be the clerks of the market and conferring other privileges. Coloured portrait of the Queen and border of royal arms and badges interspersed with flowers. 26 May 1559.
- Y/C 2/11 Letters patent of Elizabeth I remitting 50 marks of the fee farm for 40 years and granting the power to hold lands to the value of £300 a year to enable the town to meet the expenses of harbour works. Uncoloured portrait of the Queen. With Great Seal. 16 April 1594.
- Y/C 2/12 Letters patent of James I incorporating the borough, extending its admiralty jurisdiction from Winterton in Norfolk to Easton in Suffolk, granting the power to try pirates, and granting and confirming other privileges. Coloured portrait of the King and highly decorated borders. Fragment of Great Seal. 22 July 1608.
- Y/C 2/13 Letters patent of Charles II granting and confirming various privileges. Engraved portrait of the King and engraved borders. 8 January 1663/4.
- Y/C 2/14 Letters patent of Charles II substituting a mayor for two bailiffs, granting the right to hold two fairs yearly, allowing a sword and sword-bearer, and granting and confirming other privileges. Coloured portrait of the King and borders of coats of arms and foliage. 22 July 1684.
[The 1684 charter was annulled by general proclamation of James II in 1688.]
- Y/C 2/15 Letters patent of Queen Anne again substituting a mayor for the two bailiffs, allowing a sword and sword-bearer, revising the borough jurisdiction, and granting and confirming other privileges. Engraved portrait of the Queen and engraved borders. Fragments of the Great Seal. 11 March 1702/3.
- Y/C 2/16 Letters patent of William IV granting a court of Quarter Sessions under the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act. Engraved border with portraits of the King and Queen. 4 March 1836.

Two Yarmouth borough charters are held within the Colman Collection.

- COL 6/1 Confirmation by Henry III of ordinances issued by the borough, 1272.
- COL 6/2 Letter Patent of Elizabeth I granting leave to thirty Flemings and their families to settle in Great Yarmouth, 1570.

One Yarmouth borough charter is held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford:

Confirmation by Henry IV of earlier charters, 1399, is at the Bodleian Library, Oxford [MS Charters Norf. a. 5, No. 596-7].



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