CAMBRIDGE MAYORS: 800 YEARS

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

CAMBRIDGE IN THE PAST

EARLY LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Formally, from 1317, the Mayor of Cambridge was obliged to "maintain the customs and liberties" of the University. This obligation was brought to an end with the passing of the Cambridge Award Act, over five hundred years later, in 1856.

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 required members of municipal corporations in England and Wales to be elected by ratepayers and required councils to publish their financial accounts.

The Local Government Act of 1888 resulted in the Senate of the University of Cambridge appointing two Members of the Council annually and colleges appointing four other Members of the Council.



The Senate House.

THE "TOWN AND GOWN" RELATIONSHIP

The fractious relationship between the corporation and the university authorities, in Oxford as well as in Cambridge, is well attested.

Edmund Lister is a name that has gone down in Mayoral infamy. Lister was a Bailiff in 1352 and again in 1364. He became Mayor in 1365 and again, fifteen years later, in 1380. On the fifteenth of June, 1381, the rebels involved in the Peasants' Rising in East Anglia entered Cambridge. The next day they vented their frustrations on the University and on the Colleges. A bonfire was lit in the marketplace and charters and letters patent, which had been seized by the mob, were tossed upon it. Margaret Starre has gone down in local history as the old woman who grabbed the ashes from this fire, flung them into the air and cried, "Away with the learning of the clerks! Away with it!" Consequently, the University and each of the Colleges were obligated to relinquish their privileges and to submit to the jurisdiction of the Borough.

Then, on the seventeenth of June, a rabble of about one thousand people assembled in front of the Guildhall, demanding to speak with the Mayor. Lister duly appeared. The crowd claimed warrant for their actions in the name of the King and threatened Lister. When Lister asked them to produce a warrant from the King, the crowd declined to do so. However, they successfully intimidated Lister into becoming their "leader". To many, this was a moment of weakness on the part of Lister.



As a consequence of these riots, the royal charter which had been gifted to the town was declared by the Crown to have been forfeited. The town was deprived of other precious privileges, and these were transferred to the University. Lister was arrested, and then tried by Parliament. His pleadings proved unconvincing and Lister was incarcerated. He was later released on bail, in order to return to his Mayoral responsibilities. He was fortunate to elude the gallows.



The royal charter.

Above: Salt and pepper table condiments presented to Cambridge City Council to commemorate the representation of the University and colleges, 1889-1974.

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE

Corpus Christi College is distinct amongst the colleges of the University of Cambridge, being founded not by a royal personage, or other dignitary, but by the townsfolk of the borough, in 1352. Over the centuries since its foundation, the close relationship between Corpus Christi College and the City has been maintained. This continuing association is marked annually in the holding of the Queenborough Feast, at which the Mayor and Members of the City Council are invited as the guests of the Master, Fellows, and Scholars of the College.



Corpus Christi College.