

CHARTER of 14th March 1556 (2 & 3 Philip and Mary)
at Westminster.

NOTES

Grant of a new Charter for faithful adherence to the Crown and resistance to the rebellion of the Duke of Northumberland.

1. The Corporation to be known as "The Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough and Parish of Higham Ferrers" with power to hold land to sue and be sued and to have a common seal.
2. The boundaries of the Borough defined.
3. Power to choose 7 Aldermen.
4. The Aldermen to choose 13 Chief Burgesses.
5. The Common Council to consist of Mayor, Aldermen and Chief Burgesses.
6. Mayor to be elected by Council on Monday after St. Luke and his Oath taken by the Steward.
7. Power to fill vacancies.
8. Mayor to nominate a Sergeant at Mace.
9. Other Officers to be elected by Mayor and Aldermen.
10. Power to make byelaws.
11. George Jenkyns to be Mayor until Monday after St. Luke next.
12. The first Aldermen named.
13. The Chief Burgesses named.
14. Grant of two markets one on Mondays and one on Saturdays.
15. Grant of Four fairs as follows:—
 - Eve, day and morrow of St. Thomas (24 Feb).
 - St. Botolph (17 June).
 - St. Michael (29 Septr).
 - St. Katherine (25 Nov).
16. Together with a Court of Pie-powder and the profits thereof. Power to hold a Court before Mayor 2 Aldermen and 2 Chief Burgesses every 3rd Monday for civil pleas up to £5. With powers of attachment and imprisonment.
17. Law Days and Views of Frankpledge to be held twice a year.
18. Mayor to be Clerk of the Market.
19. One of the Aldermen to be elected a J.P.
20. Rights of forfeiture, the assize of bread wine and ale and the profits of the Courts and Market to belong to the Borough.
21. Borough Rents to be as in previous 10 years plus 2/-.
22. Power to buy land up to £10 annual value.
23. Power to elect one Member to Parliament.
24. Power to nominate 2 curates, one schoolmaster, 12 bedesmen and one laundress under the Chycheley Charities.

T E X T

PHILIP AND MARY BY THE GRACE OF GOD etc. to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting. Since our loved and loyal subjects the Mayor, Burgesses, and Community of our Borough of Higham Ferrers part of our Duchy of Lancaster in our County of Northampton have been endowed from ancient times by our predecessors by letters patent with many diverse privileges and jurisdictions, and have enjoyed the same from time before memory, which letters partly by lack of safe and sure custody and partly by bad fortune have now been lost and are perished, to the great harm of the whole Borough and Community. We, knowing of the faithfulness and service of our said subjects the Mayor and Burgesses not only by report but also of our certain knowledge especially when in the rebellion which was attempted by John, late Duke of Northumberland, now attainted of high treason, and his confederates against us the Queen, our crown and dignity, they most faithfully adhered to us and manfully resisted the same rebellion at great cost and trouble, and considering our inward feelings, and that the same Mayor and Burgesses may know more fully of our royal love and favour which for the said reason we have for them, and not doubting but that they will for ever in due obedience keep and observe faith and service towards us and our successors, of our special grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion WILL AND GRANT to the said inhabitants that the town or Borough of Higham Ferrers shall be a free, corporate borough in deed and name forever, with one mayor, seven aldermen, and thirteen burgesses, by the name of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough and Parish of Higham Ferrers in our said County of Northampton, and that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses be a corporate politic body and one perpetual community, and to have perpetual succession, and we erect and create the same Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, to be one corporate politic body and one community for ever by these presents, and we will and order the same Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses to be so called and that they by the same name be suitable and lawful persons to have and to hold lands, tenements, and hereditaments for themselves and their successors in fee and perpetuity, and to do all other things, and that by the same name they be able to plead and be impleaded, to answer and be answered, to defend and be defended in any court before any judge in any case as do our other lieges, and to have a common seal for their business. AND we will and order that the said Borough should extend in length from the south edge near Rushendenfelde to a certain cross near Mallarde's close beyond the north edge with all places within the said bounds, and that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses may make perambulations to have better knowledge thereof whenever they please or it is seen to be necessary, without seeking any writ or warrant from us.

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AND we will and by these presents order and grant to the said

Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses that in the said Borough there shall be seven of the better and more worthy and discreet inhabitants who shall be called Aldermen of the Borough, and those
4 Aldermen shall have the power to elect and associate with themselves thirteen of the better inhabitants who shall be called Chief
5 Burgesses of the same Borough, and the Mayor, Aldermen, and Chief Burgesses shall act as and be called the Common Council of the said Borough in all matters of the Borough and touching its
6 government. AND the Aldermen and Burgesses or the greater part of them for the time being shall have the power to elect and nominate each year on Monday next after the feast of St. Luke one of the Aldermen to be Mayor of the Borough for the whole year next following, and he so elected to the Office of Mayor for one whole year shall be sworn before and by the Steward of the said
7 Borough for the time being or his deputy. AND if any Mayor in the year after his election happen to die or be removed from Office then it shall be lawful for the Aldermen and Chief Burgesses or the greater part of them to elect a Mayor in his place, and he so elected shall have and exercise the Office of Mayor during the remainder of the year. And we will, order, and grant that if it happen to any Alderman to die or be removed from Office it shall be lawful for the Mayor and other Aldermen or the greater part of them to elect one of the Chief Burgesses to the Office of Alderman. And if any of the Chief Burgesses happen to die or be removed from his Office, it shall be lawful for the Mayor, Aldermen, and surviving Chief Burgesses, or the greater part of them to elect another good and worthy man from among the inhabitants
8 of the Borough. AND we will, order, and grant to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, that there shall be in the said Borough an officer who shall be called sergeant-at-mace to be nominated and elected from time to time by the Mayor for the execution of
9 processes and orders and other business, and that the sergeant of the Borough, the balliff, and two constables, and all other necessary officers shall be elected to their offices from time to time by the Mayor and Aldermen or the greater part of them.
10 AND we will, order, and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses that it shall be lawful for them or for the greater part of them from time to time to grant and order sound and reasonable laws both for the better government of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Chief Burgesses, and other officers and inhabitants of the said Borough, that they may bear themselves for the public good, and for the better preservation of the lands and possessions of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the said Borough, or those to be granted to their successors, and for other causes and business of the Borough, which laws we will and order to be well and truly observed, in manner that the said laws to be made by the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses are not repugnant or contrary to the laws and statutes of our Kingdom, and that all and singular the
11 premises take full effect. KNOW THAT we assign and constitute George Jenkins to be the present Mayor of Higham Ferrers, to

remain in that office until Monday after the feast of St. Luke next if he shall so long live, and from that day until some other person
12 be elected and sworn to carry out the office, WE also assign and constitute John Coxe, Nicholas Steare, William Dyck, the said George Jenkins, Nicholas Lane, Robert Saunderson, John Jackson, and John Griffyn to be present Aldermen of Higham Ferrers during good behaviour and their residence within the Borough.
13 WE also assign and constitute William Rudd, Francis Dyck, Richard Shote, Richard Hall, Thomas Eldershawe, Thomas Wryght, Nicholas Angell, William Kendall, William Mayes, Thomas Chycheley, Robert Mayes, Nicholas Wylkynson, and Thomas Swayne to be the present Chief Burgesses of Higham Ferrers during good behaviour and their residence within the Borough.
14 AND we will and grant to the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses to
15 have two market viz. on Monday (and Saturday) and four fairs to be held each year, one on the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle and on the eve and morrow of the same feast, another on the feast of St. Botolph, and on the eve and morrow of the same feast, another on the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, and on the eve and the morrow of the same feast and another on the feast of St. Katherine the Virgin, and on the eve and morrow of the same feast, together with a court of pie-powder and, during the fairs, all kinds of shops and stalls in and around le marketsted, with stallage, pickage, fines, amercements and all other profits arising from such markets, fairs, and courts, with all liberties and free customs appertaining unless those markets and fairs are to the hurt of neighbouring markets and fairs. Wherefore we will and enjoin that the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses shall have the said markets and fairs with all commodities and free customs appertaining, unless they be to the hurt of neighbouring markets and
16 fairs. AND we will and grant that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses shall have a Court of record before the Mayor, and two Aldermen, and two Chief Burgesses and the Steward of the Borough or his deputy, in some common hall or other place, to be held on every third Monday of all and singular pleas and actions, debts, breaches, and contempts etc. within the said Borough arising provided that the said debts etc. do not exceed five pounds, and that these pleas etc. be heard and determined according to the law and custom of our Kingdom, and according to the liberties privileges and customs of our borough of Bedford, and that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses shall have cognisance of these pleas and execution according to the custom of the laws and the liberties aforesaid, and that the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, should have the fines etc. to their use without any payment to us. AND further we will and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses that they shall have power to attach and imprison by themselves and their ministers any insufficient persons in any pleas etc. within the Borough which are brought before the Mayor in the said court, according to the law and custom of our Kingdom, and according to the liberties, privileges, and customs of our said

borough of Bedford, without any disturbance on the part of us, our Justices, Escheators, Sheriffs, Coroners, Bailiffs, or other officers, and that the serjeant-at-mace shall carry out all duties in connexion with, juries, inquests, attachments, orders, etc. or other business of the said Borough, according to their orders, and the exigency of the law, and as is used in the said borough of Bedford in similar cases. AND further know that we will and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses that they shall forever have and enjoy law days and view of frank pledge of all inhabitants and residents within the said Borough and the limit of its jurisdiction, with all thereto appertaining, to be held twice a year, once within a month after Easter, and once within a month after the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, before the Mayor and two Aldermen and two Chief Burgesses and the Steward, or his deputy. AND we will and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, that the Mayor shall be Clerk of the Market and carry out all the duties belonging to the Office, and that no other Clerk of the Market shall enter to do what belongs thereto that Office. WE also will and order that one of the Aldermen shall be elected each year by the rest of the Aldermen and the Chief Burgesses as Justice of the Peace of the said Borough to enquire within the bounds of the Borough as other Justices of the Peace can and are accustomed to do in any county in our Kingdom. AND further know that we give and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses all goods and chattels forfeit, waifs, strays, chattels of felons, fugitives, outlaws and felons of themselves, and assize and assay of bread, wine, and ale, and amendment and correction of the same and other victuals, and also all our profits etc. which arise annually or from time to time of the said fairs and markets held in the said Borough. TO HAVE, hold, and enjoy for ever, to their own use, Rendering to us and our heirs and successors in right of the said Duchy of Lancaster all such sums of money as they have been accustomed to render within the space of the last ten years, rendering in addition two shillings of increase each year for all other rents, services, and demands whatever. AND further we give licence to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, having first obtained and returned a writ of dampnum in our Court of Chancery, to acquire lands and liberties lying within the Borough, which are not held of us in chief or by Knight-service, or of any other by Knight-service, and do not exceed ten pounds in annual value, WE will and grant also to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses, that upon receipt of a writ for election to Parliament they shall have the power to elect one man to be Burgess in Parliament for the same Borough, and to send the same Burgess to Parliament at the expense of the Borough in the same manner as has been used in other Boroughs of our Kingdom, which Burgess we will to remain at Parliament at the expense of the Borough during the time the Parliament is held, and to have an affirmative and negative voice and to do all other things that other burgesses do. AND since in the said

Borough there was once founded by Henry Chycheley sometime Archbishop of Canterbury a college now dissolved called 'Higham Colledge' endowed with property to the annual value of three hundred marks for the sustenance of one warden, seven fellows, four clerks, and six choristers, and after its dissolution Henry VIII reserved the appointment of two curates, one schoolmaster, twelve poor men, and one laundress, know that we have granted that the Mayor and Aldermen or the greater part of them should have the appointment of the said curates, schoolmaster, and poor men in the almshouse whenever there is a vacancy. We will also and grant to the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses that they shall have these letters patent under our great seal without fine or fee. Notwithstanding that no express mention of the true annual value or of any other value of the above, or of other grants has been made and notwithstanding any statutes etc. to the contrary. In testimony whereof we have made these our letters patent, WITNESS ourselves at Greenwich on the fourteenth day of March in the second and third years of our reign.

MARTEN

By writ of privy seal and the authority of Parliament.