



ORIGIN OF THE MAYORAL ALLOWANCE
AT LIVERPOOL AND CHESTER.

By John Elton.

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THERE is little doubt that some, if not all, of the early Plantagenet mayors of the kingdom enjoyed only small and very precarious grants for meeting official expenses. It would be a great step in advance for a Corporation to pass, from a habit of settling bills already paid on the mayor's account, to a custom of voting him a fund to be expended at his own discretion, for the benefit of his borough at large ; but, this change once achieved, we have before us the literal origin of the mayoral allowance of the present day. Unfortunately there seem to be no direct records existing of any such early custom prevailing : and at Liverpool the only allusion to its existence at all appears to be that incidentally made in a resolution of the port-mote at as late a date as 6th September, 1630. This mentions "the fines formerly allowed to the mayor and bailiffs," to cover mayoral expenditure. The

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resolution is quoted in a later paragraph of this paper. But to pass to more definite ground, and deal with the circumstances from which the modern custom more directly was developed. These circumstances at Liverpool and Chester, and probably at other towns dating back to manorial times, comprised the granting of the toll on corn exposed for sale in the market place: the toll being taken in kind by officials of the corporation, and sold for "the benefit of the town" and actually on behalf of the mayor. The corn toll is thus distinguished from the ingate and outgate tolls, the dues on vessels, the general stallage rents of the markets, and other sources of income accruing to the corporation but not specially to the mayor.

At Liverpool, in the "Precedents" of 1524, transcribed in the *Record Book* for 1558, we find the corporation then holding manorial jurisdiction over the corn-market and the corn-toll; and directing that the latter was to be sold at the close of the market each week, obviously to ensure its being sold equitably to all parties at current prices. In 1555 the corporation directed the disposal of a portion of the receipts from the corn-toll in part payment of the salary of the minister at the corporation chapel of St. Nicholas:—

1555. 12 Aug. Sir W. Norres, Mayor.

It is ordered that those persons whose names are here written, every two persons for their streets, shall move their neighbours for the Clerk's wages: that is to say wages for Nicholas Smythe our Clerk of the Chapel, and teacher of their children: who have concluded that a book be made of good and lawful money of England to be made good and paid to the said Nicholas during his life: and also a moiety or one dimidium of the corn market: and thereof indentures made and sealed as well with the Common Seal as also with his seal, remaining in the common coffer. And, for want of having the one dimidium of the corn market, he to have thirty shillings by the hands of the officers for the time being in that behalf.

The last clause in this order shews the toll to be valued by the corporation at £3 per annum. This arrangement was made by the corporation as lords of the manor, at a period when Sir Richard Molyneux and themselves were at loggerheads as to which of the two should exercise the rights of that lordship. Molyneux was the actual lord of the place, but had disposed of certain rights to the corporation, and the progress of their dispute brings the corn-toll again into view:—

1556. 18 Oct. Thos. More, Mayor.

On New Year's Day, 1555, was served with injunctions in the chapel of Liverpool, master Mayor, the bailiffs, &c. by Nicholas Rigbye and others servants to Sir Richard Molyneux. Saturday being the 4th day of January, Hugh Danbie and his son John Danbie took upon them to receive [on behalf of Sir R. Molyneux] the corn of the market contrary to the laudable use and custom &c. And for the taking of the which corn, scarcely worth in estimation 1^l. obolus, master Mayor aforesaid put Hugh Danbie in ward and therein kept him night and day until Saturday in the ensuing days of Lent which was the 22nd of Feby. On which day came Nicholas Rigbye and others servants of Sir R. Molyneux and shewed commandment from the Chancellor of the Duchy in Westminster for the deliverance of the said Danbie. In which meanwhile the Clerk of the Chapel gathered the Corn of the market, for the town, quietly. On the said 22nd day order was taken between Master Walker, then eldest alderman in the town, and Sir R. Molyneux that Gilbert Robinson should gather the said corn and keep it indifferently until further proofs were known of Master Mayor's doings, as then not returned from London. And so did.

In the following January, Robinson was still in the exercise of his duty, but on behalf of the corporation, who decided how the corn-toll was to be appropriated:—

1556/7. 9 Jany. Thos. More Mayor.

It is agreed that Gilbert Robinson shall have one half of the

corn of this market for the repair and maintenance of all the streets about the town: and the other half of the grain shall remain to Nicholas Smyth parson of the church, as it did before the present time by gift of the mayor, aldermen and burgesses in the manner appearing in an indenture made under the common Seal in that behalf.

Robinson soon gave up his duties to Hugh Brodhed, and he again to Christopher Hatton; who, as town's customer, keeper of the Customs book, collector of the customs, collector of fee farm rents, and collector of tolls and toll-corn, received a grant of twenty shillings a year: "which "xx^s. Hugh Brodhed had for his pains" in discharging the same duties previously. Like Brodhed, Hatton soon tired of the post; and in 1571 the corporation endeavoured to thrust the work and the twenty shillings per annum upon the parson of St. Nicholas'. Smythe had passed away, and the new cleric and pedagogue was John Peile, who stood upon his dignity and "refused the aforesaid twenty "shillings for gathering the said tolls, but gathered "his money from house to house throughout the "town." The poor parson's perigrinations through the borough, collecting his salary by the goodwill of his people, must surely have been regarded as a scandalous reproach to the corporation, and we hear no more of their misdirected economy in the matter. Thomas Hitchmough was appointed collector of all tolls; his accounts being annually audited in so curt a form that we can gather no estimate of the value of the corn toll. *E.g.*:—

1584. Accounted with Thomas Hitchmough, Town's Customer, whose receipts and payments being accounted and allowed, in all things concerning his office of Town's Customer, the said Thomas Hitchmough is found due to have of the town the sum of three pence ob.

On 24th October, 1585, during the mayoralty of Ferdinand Le Strange, the corporation resolved that "the toll-corn shall be brought into the Common Hall and sold for the most advantage of the town every week: there shall be two dishes for taking the toll, one for a wyndle another for half a wyndle"; and (on Nov. 19th) "the two toll dishes shall be made before Christmas." This order was confirmed at the next annual general assembly, on October 24th, 1586, with the addition that the corn was to be sold "at the sight of the bailiff": and at the same time the hitherto immaculate Thomas Hitchmough was presented by Port Mote as fineable for not making out his accounts and not bringing the toll-corn into the Common Hall for sale. The rate of the toll nor yet its aggregate value per annum can up to this date be gathered; and the latter first appears in the accounts for 1590: the best example of the yearly statement at this period being the following:

1594. Oct. 30. Accounted with Peter Starkie late Customer of this said town; whose receipts touching his office of the Town's Customer aforesaid for the said last year do arise unto as followeth, viz., for Ingates xiiij^{li}. v^s.; for Outgates vii^{li}. iiij^s. ix^d.; and for Corne iiij^{li}. vj^s. ij^d.; in toto xxij^{li}. xv^s. xj^d.: Paid and delivered over to Mr. Bailiff Ball to the towne's use: And so the said Peter Starkie thereof discharged for ever.

For forty years from this period the precious toll-corn was regularly gathered and sold every week, almost without incident to be recorded. In 1597 the corporation ordered that "the two leave-lookers shall attend the corn market one hour before the market bell rings [9 a.m.] to see the gathering of the toll-corn, and see it safely laid up in the Common Hall, and they shall carry halberds"; and in 1612 no less a personage than Richard Tyrer,

the sexton of St. Nicholas', was presented at Port Mote "for selling his corn upon the market day "without paying toll"; no doubt having presumed to dispose of it without taking it to the market at all. But though much information regarding the corn-market itself remains, nothing more occurs regarding our special subject till the year 1630, with the important exception that in the interval we are enabled to ascertain, from some of the annual statements of accounts, the yearly value of the toll. This appears as "corne money," as follows:—

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
1590...	3	4	11	1600...	6	13	10	1616...	7	11	8
1591...	7	6	8	1601...	10	6	6	1617...	10	17	4
1593...	3	13	5	1602...	6	0	6	1620...	6	5	4
1594...	4	6	2	1603...	7	19	1	1621...	5	2	4
1595...	7	19	7	1608...	7	13	0	1623...	17	14	0
1596...	8	13	7	1610...	7	14	2	1624...	12	6	0
1597...	11	2	9½	1611...	2	6	8	1625...	7	6	10
1598...	13	19	0	1612...	6	6	2	1628...	7	19	8
								1629...	5	4	0

the average for the twenty-five years being only £7 16s. 6d. per annum. These sums, or a portion of their number, we now find had for some time been devoted neither to paving the streets nor paying the parson, but to covering the civic expenses of the mayor. When the change was, precisely, made cannot apparently be traced. The original order of the corporation to that effect does not seem to be in the *Record Books*, and the first intimation of the change only appears incidentally:

1630. 6 Sept. Robert Williamson Mayor.

It is agreed that whereas it is formerly ordered and agreed that the mayor and bailiffs for the time being should have the Toll Corn for and in lieu of the fines formerly allowed unto them and that the fines and amerçements should redound and

come unto the use of the town and be gathered and collected at the town's charge, and the bailiffs only upon request to assist them; It is this day ordered that for ever hereafter the bailiffs for the time being shall gather the said fines and amercedments; or, if they refuse, then the said Toll Corn to come to the Town again, and the mayor and bailiffs take what course they please for the gathering of the same. The bailiffs are exempted for the present year.

The effect of this was that, whereas by the former order the toll-corn was granted to the mayor and bailiffs in consideration of the bailiffs assisting in gathering the toll for the mayor when required, now the services of the bailiffs for collecting were rendered compulsory. Our present interest in the entry is, however, comprised in the facts that (1) the mayor and bailiffs had been in receipt of certain fines, (2) that now they were in receipt of the toll from the corn-market. From this date the borough accounts contain no reference to the receipts from toll-corn, but for the next century and a quarter this small if stable concession yielded an annual official allowance from the corporation to the mayor of Liverpool.

For even those days of modest expenses the amount of the grant could not be said to err on the side of extravagance, and in 1707 the corporation endeavoured to eke out its narrow limits from another source; resolving that "present and future mayors shall be allowed the two best fines of freemen admitted during his year." (*Record Book*, vi, 175.) A fair number of freemen at about this period were enrolled every year, and though the ordinary fines were but 3s. 4d. for the sons, and 6s. 8d. for the apprentices of burgesses already free, yet there were occasionally available some little "plums," in the way of exactions upon applicants from outside the town. On this class of aspiring freemen the corporation imposed arbitrary fines,

varying according to the desirability or the reverse of the candidate being added to the traders and voters of the town. Some few years before 1707 fines of £20 were not infrequent. In 1698, Samuel Shaw, merchant, of Devonshire, was fined forty guineas as an admission fee; the corporation obliging him, on his application for the sum to be reduced, by making it forty pounds. In 1705 and 1706 the highest fines seem to have been £10 or £12; and during the ensuing fifty years no larger amounts seem to occur, while the average is very much smaller. Probably the mayors received from this additional source of revenue at most £10 per annum.

On this basis matters progressed till 1755, when the inadequacy of the allowance was recognised, and a change made on the election of Lawrence Spencer to the mayoralty:—

Resolved, That as the entertainment of the two Fair Dinners [25 July and 11 Nov.] since the building of the New Exchange must of necessity be considerably increased, from the entertainment to be provided and furnished for tables suitable to the rooms, therefore the present and future mayor and bailiffs shall be allowed and paid by the Corptⁿ. any sum not exceeding the sum of 120 guineas for defraying the expense of the two said dinners: And that in lieu or aid thereof the present and future mayor and bailiffs give up to the Corptⁿ. all their right, title and interest in the Tolls commonly called the Corn Tolls: so that the Corptⁿ. are from henceforth during this agreement to receive the Corn Tolls, as also the Ingate and Outgate Tolls, payable or arising within this borough or Corptⁿ.

In 1757, during a period of extreme dearth and general distress among the people, the two fair dinners were abandoned, “and the money laid out “in the purchase of corn by the Corn Committee”: the mayor, who made the suggestion, evidently foregoing the allowance for that year. Nor were

the dinners resumed ; but some monetary allowance to future mayors was continued (though we have no details of the amounts), and the corporation continued to lease out to the highest bidder the whole of their tolls.¹ Of the corn toll we hear nothing further, and in 1806 the right of taking it was comprised in the concessions made to the proprietors of the first Liverpool Corn Exchange.

The early procedure at Chester, as gathered from the city *Record Books*, was similar to that at Liverpool, and need not be followed more closely than will demonstrate the point. At Liverpool the principal events mentioned above commenced in 1558 ; at Chester the corn toll first tangibly appears in 1589, in connection with the vicissitudes of Randle Eaton, one of the four sergeants-at-mace. In that year, "for sundrie offences by hym committed," Randle was not only deprived of his freedom of the city, but also of his "fourthe parte of the toll " corne in the corne market," which constituted a part of his income as a sergeant ; the said fourth part being ordered to be devoted to the repair of the city walls. Nevertheless, in 1591, Eaton is discovered in receipt of a pension of five marks per

¹ These tolls were to be advertised in 1755 for lease for three years. How they were let does not appear, but at the expiry of three years it was resolved that one Stephen Tillinghast "shall have the Corptn. Tolls for " this year and that for the future the mayor and bailiffs and the Corptn. " Comttee be empowered to settle it before the year is out." In 1760 it was agreed that "Stephen Tillinghast have the Tolls commonly called " the Ingates and Outgates, the Corn Tolls, Stallage rents, &c. for four " years at the rent of £280 per annum." For 20 years Tillinghast continued to farm these tolls ; but in 1780, the collector having "represented " his inability to pay £532 15s. arrears now due," and the Corporation having accepted a bond for the amount ("as he is totally unable to pay " and is in the decline of life") the leasing system was discontinued, and the tolls were collected directly by the Corporation, their official collector in 1803 receiving a salary of £73 10s. per annum.

annum from the corporation which had lately disfranchised him : and in that year he petitioned to give up the pension in exchange for "the fourth part of the Tolle Corne by him formerly taken, for a reasonable rent; and the rather for his wyves frends sake." Whereupon, thanks to the influence of the latter, it was decided, 16th July, 1591, that his pension should cease, and that he should "receive and enjoy the saide fourth part of the said Tolle corne from yere to yere—paying therefor yerely to this incorporation viij^{li}. vj^s. viij^d.: the rather for his wyves frendes sake who have been well willers and benefactors to this citie." This naively confessed bit of "jobbery" discloses the fact that in 1591 the annual value of the corn toll at Chester amounted at least to the large sum of £33 6s. 8d., as compared with the yield of £7 6s. 8d. at Liverpool in the same year, or with the average of £7 16s. 6d. per annum on 25 years between 1590 and 1629. Randle Eaton scarcely seemed worthy of his good fortune, as in 1596 he was ordered to pay "teyne poundes rent unpaid for the parte of the Tolle Corne market to him demysed." In 1610, "by reason of age and being in great infirmity of body and unable to perform the duties devolving upon him, and having no means," he petitioned that the fourth part of the toll corn might be granted to him as a pension, and this was agreed to. Down to this date, therefore, the corn toll generally continued to be granted to the sergeants-at-mace, in consideration mainly of their keeping the corn market-place clean.

It seems to have been shortly before 1636 that the toll was devoted to other purposes, apparently to meet the official expenses of the mayor; for in that year the sergeants complained to the assembly

of their rights, as measurers of corn, being invaded by outsiders; reminding the corporation that they then enjoyed no other benefit than the measuring of corn for keeping their several wards clean. Whether or not the mayor as yet was allotted the corn toll which they had lost does not appear, though it is clear that some such change was then made. In 1749, however, the payment of corn toll to the mayor is found to be declared a custom prevailing "time out of mind." :—

1749. 15 Nov^r. Whereas it manifestly appears to this House that all corn, grain, malt, flour and meal brought into this city by land or water and laid down there in the market or left or lodged in the kilns, or warehouses of either freemen or foreigners, ought, and time out of mind hath been accustomed to pay tolls for the same *to the mayor of this city for the time being* (unless the same be the property and at the risk of a freeman, before the same be brought and delivered in this city or the liberties thereof) . . . It is therefore ordered by this House that the said customary toll shall from henceforth be paid for the same to the mayor of this city for the time being, anything in the said recited order [8 Oct., 1595] contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

By this resolution we definitely reach the fact of the corn toll constituting a specific income to the mayor "time out of mind"—the usual phrase covering the duration of about a century, and apparently in this case dating back to a period very shortly before 1636, as already suggested. The toll remained assigned to the mayor for a further period of about fifty years. The order which introduced the final change seems to be not now traceable, but it was passed only shortly before 5th March, 1799. At this date a resolution of the assembly recited the fact that, "By orders of this Assembly the mayor has [at some date not given] "been allowed a salary in lieu of the aforesaid

“Toll Corn”—a statement which brings the foregoing discursive incidents into a focus, and at the same time closes our little enquiry.²

² The further record of the corn toll is very brief. On granting a monetary allowance to the mayor, the Corporation had directed the treasurer to collect the toll, but “lately it had produced only four guineas a year,” and it was apparent the treasurer’s collectors had been imposed upon. It was therefore recommended (March, 1799) that the ordinary collectors of toll should undertake the duty; but, as these persons farmed their tolls, “for which they are to pay great advanced rent,” it was decided that “during their term in the tolls at the bridge and gate they should have the toll of the aforesaid corn without being charged any additional rent.” Thus was the ancient corn toll finally given away for the mere collecting of it.

