

to such value as by the said 12 Brethren or most of them assembles in the said Town House he shall be assigned and adjudged if so be the party can prove the wrong to be done within the hours of the Watch and that the Wakeman and his servants did not their duty at the time....

It is ordered that whosoever dwelling within the said town of Ripon shall at any time misuse, or bycall the Wakeman or his brethren with any scornful or opprobrious or slanderous words, shall be punished in the stocks by the space of one day and one night, and if he offend again, to be further punished....

The Wakeman shall not flitt out of the town to dwell or sojourn elsewhere during his term of office, unless God do visit the said town with pestilence.....'



CIVITAS RIPONENSIS

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The Ripon Hornblower



THE HORNBLowing CUSTOM



Every night of the year without fail, a horn is blown at the four corners of the Obelisk in Ripon Market Place to set the 'watch' and then outside the house of the Mayor. This ceremony commemorates the time in the Middle Ages when Ripon's first citizen, the Wakeman, was responsible for crime prevention in the city from 9 p.m. until dawn and had to compensate victims of burglary.

The Wakeman had constables to patrol the streets, and also had the right to levy a rate on houses according to the number of outside doors, 4d a year for two doors and 2d a year for one door.



The city has 4 horns, the oldest of which is known as the Charter Horn, since according to ancient tradition it symbolised the granting of charter rights to Ripon in A.D. 886. Whatever the truth of this legend, the horn is many centuries old, and is kept in the Town Hall where it can be seen on application. It hangs on a baldric, a broad belt studded with silver badges bearing the emblems of Wakemen and Mayors up to 1886.

A second horn, now used as the reserve, was acquired in 1690, and a third horn, purchased by the Mayor in 1865, is the horn normally blown today. A fourth horn, given to the city in the festival year of 1886, came from the Chillingham herd of wild cattle in Northumberland. Like the Charter Horn, it is displayed on a baldric in the Town Hall.

Though the office of Wakeman became that of Mayor in 1604 and the maintenance of law and order became the responsibility of the police force in the 19th century, the

importance of the horn in the civic life of the town continues. In addition to the nightly blasts it was ordered that it should be carried in front of the Mayor (in order that townsfolk might see it) to church on five Horn Days: Candlemas, Easter Monday, Wednesday in Rogation week, the Sunday after Lammas and St Stephen's Day, and it is still borne in front of the Mayor when he attends the Cathedral on great festivals.

References to expenditure for the repair and beautifying of the horn and the baldric (the wide belt from which the ceremonial horn hangs) occur repeatedly in the town records. A representation of the horn was long ago adopted as the town's unofficial coat of arms - it has become the symbol of Ripon, a talisman for the good governance of the town.

So it remains today: citizens of Ripon are jealously proud of the horn, its unique tradition, and the civic treasures which accompany it. Night by night the past lives, and by so doing, reassures and strengthens our concern for the present wellbeing of this old City. 'Except Ye Lord Keep Ye Citty' - the evening blasts give cause for gratitude and are a charge laid upon our integrity as upon the Wakeman of long ago.

EXTRACTS FROM THE TOWNE BOOK OF RIPON (1598)

'An order that concurs the said Wakeman his charge....

It is condescended concluded ordered agreed and established as aforesaid that the said Wakeman for the time being according to ancient custom shall cause a horn to be blown every night during the time he is in office at nine of the clock in the evening at the four corners of the Cross in the Marketstead and immediately after to begin his watch and to keep and continue the same until three or four of the clock in the morning. And if it happen any house or houses to be broken on the Gateside within the Town of Ripon aforesaid and any goods to be taken away or withdrawn out of the said houses or any of them then according to old custom the Wakeman for the time being shall make good and satisfy unto the party so wronged in such manner and