

Extract from the Council's website:

Honorary freemen, aldermen and officers

Freedom of Entry

Freedom of Entry dates from the Middle Ages. It allowed special armed forces inside the boundaries of other towns as a mark of mutual trust. Today, Freedom of Entry is granted to military units for noticeable service and who are closely associated with the town.

Guildford had its first permanent barracks after the army reforms of 1871 and 1881. It became home to the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment at Stoughton. The successor regiment - the Queen's Royal Regiment - was granted the Freedom of Guildford in 1945. It exercised its right to march through the town for the first time on 29 September 1945.

The Queen's and the East Surrey Regiment amalgamated in 1959. The civic honours granted to them were extended to the successor Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment. They marched through Guildford on 28 April 1960, and again in 1966 on the formation of the Queen's Regiment. It was continued in 1992 following the formation of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (PWRR).

On 22 June 1988, the Women's Royal Army Corps, based at Stoughton, was granted the Freedom of the Borough. The Corps was disbanded four years later.

On 6 March 2017, we granted the Freedom of the Borough to the Army Training Corps (Pirbright). Like the PWRR, they have the right to march through the town with "drums beating, colours flying, and bayonets fixed".

Honorary Freemen

As a council, we can give honorary titles to individuals who have made a contribution to the borough. In the past, the Freedom of the Borough of Guildford gave important privileges. For example, only freemen had a parliamentary vote and a tradesman had to be a freeman to set up a business in the town.

To become a freeman, a person had to be either:

- apprenticed to an existing freeman of the borough for at least seven years, or
- the eldest son of a freeman

Another way was by entry into the Corporation. This involved several years' unpaid service as a borough official or the payment of a fee. John Aylward, a London clockmaker, received freedom to trade in Guildford in 1683 by donating the Guildhall clock.

The Reform Act of 1832 and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 removed the benefits enjoyed by freemen. The Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act 1885 introduced awarding the Freedom of a Borough as an honour.

In 1972, the Local Government Act gave councils power to make 'persons of distinction and persons who have rendered eminent services' Honorary Freemen. The decision had to be made by two-thirds of councillors passing a resolution at a specially convened meeting.

In recent years, the council has awarded the Freedom of the Borough to:

- the late Bill Bellerby MBE - past Mayor (twice), and councillor from 1953 to 1995
- the late Doreen Bellerby MBE - past Mayor, and councillor from 1954 to 1995
- David Watts - former Chief Executive of the council from 1984 to 2002
- Andrew Hodges - past Mayor, former leader of the council, and councillor from 1976 to 2011
- Jen Powell - past Mayor, and councillor from 1987 to 2015

Honorary Aldermen

The title 'alderman' comes from the Old English word *ealdorman*, meaning 'elder man'. The ealdorman was chief royal representative and presiding judge of the Anglo-Saxon shires. Often related to the king, the ealdorman became known as the *eorl* or earl. However, the role of earl became a title rather than an appointment. As the government of the City of London developed, the Court of Aldermen became the main governing body. Most of its powers were later taken over by the Court of Common Council.

In 1835, local government reform led to the Municipal Corporations Act. The act adopted the City of London as its model for all English corporations. Before 1835, Guildford had no aldermen - except for the years 1686-1688. In 1686, James II issued new charters to boroughs, giving them a constitution of mayor, aldermen and councillors. The charters gave the king the right to dismiss any member who displeased him.

James's borough charters were revoked in 1688. Guildford then went back to its old corporation of Mayor and Approved Men. The scarlet gowns now worn by the Honorary Aldermen are inspired by the 1686 charter. After 1835, one quarter of the council were aldermen, elected by the council. They did not represent specific wards and served a six-year term. Half of them were elected every third year at the council's annual meeting. It was thought that the councillors would choose people from outside the council. In practice, aldermen were usually long-serving councillors.

The Local Government Act of 1972 did away with aldermen. But, Section 249 of the act states that a council may:

"by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting at a specially-convened meeting, confer the title of Honorary Aldermen on persons who have 'rendered eminent services to the council as past members.'"

Honorary Aldermen do not have the right to attend meetings of the council. They can take part in civic ceremonies as an acknowledgement of esteem.

Current Honorary Aldermen

- Mrs T Baker MBE, councillor from 1991 to 2007
- Mr K Childs, councillor from 1991 to 2007
- Mrs C Cobley, councillor from 1979 to 1999
- Mrs S Creedy, councillor from 2003 to 2015
- Mrs V Johnson, councillor from 1991 to 2007
- Mrs J D Marks, councillor from 1986 to 2007
- Mr T Patrick, councillor from 2003 to 2015
- Mrs L Strudwick, councillor from 1983 to 2007
- Mr N Sutcliffe, councillor from 1999 to 2015
- Mr M A H M Williamson, councillor from 1979 to 1995