

ORDINANCES OF THE DRAPERS

Beverly (Yorkshire), 1572

Whereas of old and ancient time without memory of man, the Drapers of this town of Beverley have had and used certain godly and good orders for the preservation and maintenance of the said occupation in this town, and now by laws and statutes of this Realm part of the same orders are abolished and extinguished, nevertheless for that the said occupation are mindful to have good rule and order kept amongst them hereafter;

Therefore Richard Bullock, Thomas Settrington, Robert Fairer, Christopher Thornaby, John Johnson, Christopher Rosdall, Thomas Walker, Richard Garbrey, Thomas Cowlinge, John Fletcher, Raiphe Knaggs, and George Gwye, 12 Governors and Keepers of the Town and Commonalty of Beverley, in the year of our Lord God 1572, at the petition and humble suit and request of John Bead, Alderman of the said occupation, and all the brethren of the said Drapers, have granted to the said occupation these ordinances and constitutions hereunder written, to be registered and kept forevermore in form following.

Moreover, it is ordained by the foresaid Drapers and their brethren, by the consent of the Governors of the town, that they shall upon Tuesday in Rogation week¹ choose and elect among themselves a discrete man to be alderman, and two stewards to rule and govern all the ordinances and liberties of the said craft for one whole year. And whosoever shall be chosen alderman and it refuse shall pay 20s, the one-half to the occupation and the other to the Commonalty. And if the stewards refuse being chosen by their brethren, shall pay 10s apiece of them, in manner and form above-said.

Also, they shall have among theme yearly two congregations, called prime guilds. That is, to wit, one in the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist in Christenmas² and the other the second Sunday after Easter. And every brother of the said craft being absent at any of the said days, if he have a reasonable warning overnight, he shall pay 2s, the one-half to the occupation and the other half to the Commonalty, without any pardon except he have a reasonable excuse, to be very sick, or otherwise in serving the prince.

Item, it is ordained by the aforesaid 12 Governors, by the consent and assent of the said alderman, that every man, whether he be burgesse or no burgesse, that now occupies, or hereafter shall occupy, buying and selling of cloth by retailing in his open shop or market shall pay the first year of his upset 6s 8d to the said occupation.

Item, it is ordained that every brother of the said Drapers' craft, when he is new-made brother, shall pay, at his first entering to the Drapers, at the discretion of the said alderman and his two stewards, to six poor folks, 6d.

Item, that every man of the said craft, whether he be burgesse or no burgesse, shall obey all honest and lawful commandments and ordinances of his alderman and stewards for the time being, and their commandments and ordinances lawful obey and fulfill without any gain-saying, upon the pain and forfeiture of 6s 8, to be divided as before is written.

Furthermore it is ordained that yearly upon the Sunday next after the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John Baptist, the alderman that shall occupy for that year, with his stewards, shall make his account in one honest place, by the alderman to be assigned. And he to warn all his brethren to come and hear his account. And whosoever is absent without cause reasonable from the said account, or will not there abide, shall pay 3s 4d, equally to be divided. And if the alderman make not his account then, and does not his duty to his brethren nor makes due satisfaction, he shall pay 10s in form above-said to be divided. And yet nevertheless he shall make his account afterward.

And furthermore, it is ordained by the aforesaid 12 Governors that every burgesse that occupies, or shall occupy, any open shop in retailing of any cloth belonging to the Drapers above the value of four marks by year, and is

¹ **Rogation week** — the week beginning 35 days after Easter

² 27 December

not in clothing nor brother with the said Drapers shall pay yearly for a contribution 3*s* 4*d*, equally to be divided as is aforesaid.

Item, it is ordained that if any strife or debate happen betwixt one brother and another of the same craft that he that thinks himself to have wrong, first to show his grief to the alderman and his stewards and to stand to the award and ordinance of the said alderman and the stewards, and of four other of their brethren by both parties to be chosen. And if they or either of them refuse and will not stand to their award and agreement, he shall pay 5*s*, equally to be divided as is aforesaid.

And also whosoever occupies, or shall occupy, an open shop within the town of Beverley in retailing any clothe and is not burges, and able to be burges and brother and will not, and so presented by the alderman of the Drapers to the 12 Governors and by their discretion be found able to be both burges and brother and will not, shall pay yearly for his contribution to the alderman of the Drapers for the time being 4*s*, and to the Commonalty of Beverley another 4*s*, until such time as he be both brother and burges.

Provided also that there shall no brother amongst us Drapers come to any prime guild without his gown, his cap, his hose, and doublet decent. According to the same for every fault so taken by his brethren, he shall pay to the occupation 6*d*.

Also it is ordained and statuted in the year aforesaid that the aforesaid Drapers of themselves yearly shall choose two honest men, commonly called searchers, to search all yardwands¹ and all other defaults and injuries to the foresaid craft and science of the Drapers belonging, and yearly before the Governors of the town by the alderman to be presented, and there, according to the custom of the town to be sworn, that all injuries and defaults by them found, as well by any contributors as by any brother, to show the 12 Governors. And if any brother or contributor repeal or dispraise the searchers in there office doing with any words of wrath or dishonesty, shall forfeit to the Commonalty of the said town 6*s*, and to the expenses of the craft, equally to be divided, as oft as any shall be found guilty.

Provided always that the said merchants shall not occupy within the town of Beverley buying and selling of any woollen cloth belonging to the Drapers' craft, or women's hose, upon pain and forfeiture yearly—for cloth 3*s* 4*d*, for hose 12*d*—equally to be divided as is aforesaid, or any other kind of woollen cloth that might be hurtful to the said Drapers.

Arthur F. Leach, ed. *Beverly Town Documents* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1900):106–108. [modernized]

¹ **yardwand** — yardstick