

GRIMSBY'S TIMELINE

– from first Charter to the present, our town's civic history



image Milsom 2024

a large depiction of Grimsby's Seal, surrounded by mosaic
Harold Gosney (b.1937)
Grimsby Central Library, George Street

This document also available from: <https://www.grimsbycleecivsoc.com/about/about-us>

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This Grimsby Timeline charts the progress of the town from its first Royal Charter to the present day. In history, a Royal Charter was a document by which reigning monarchs granted rights to, in this case, a town. Today, such changes are mostly ruled by Act of Parliament, with the granting of a Charter made by the Sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council.

The seal depicted, is that which sealed the first Charter and is called the Grimsby Havelok seal and includes an image of our town's namesake: Grim, the fisherman.

Pre-1201 Grimsby was already a *borough*, meaning a settlement with some self-governance, the word probably deriving from the *burghal system* of Alfred the Great.

11th March 1201 King John and his royal entourage witnessed the sealing of the borough's first Royal Charter, enabling it to govern itself and pave the way for local democracy and societal systems, as well as hold markets. This was *14 years* before the signing of the Magna Carta at Runnymede!

Responsibility of the town was handed to the 'burgesses' – local people who became the 'free men' of the town. Today, direct descendants of the original burgesses, are known as the Enrolled Freemen of Grimsby. A second Charter allowed an annual fair of no more than 15 days from the 25th May.

1202 first Mayor installed

1227 issued by Henry III, King John's son, a Charter granting Grimsby as a town with *demesne and manor in fee farm* (the annual payment to the Crown).

1256 Henry III a Charter which, among other things, reduced Grimsby's contribution (*fee farm*) to £50.

1286 a 'common hall' mentioned in relation to Burgesses

1319 Edward II, a Charter extended to include trespass and debt, but no jurisdiction over criminal acts

1329 King Edward III awarded Grimsby the right to alter the course of the River Freshney to avoid further silting up of the river. In the 1340s a dock was excavated known as the West Haven which is the current day Garth Lane area of Grimsby town centre.

1363 Edward III *Letters patent* exemplifying an earlier Charter of 1319

1391 a Charter granted by Richard II

1395 'common hall' replaced by Town Hall in old market place



- 1439** Henry VI *Letters patent* which inspected and confirmed the earlier provisions. (these were open letters issued under the Great Seal of the King and cover a huge diversity of subjects such as grants, lands, privileges and pardons)
- 1510** Henry VIII Royal letters allowing Grimsby to hold judicial sessions and the types of offences that could be dealt with
- Also, *Letters Patent* which inspected and confirmed the provisions from the Charter of 1256 and letters patent of 1439
- 1547** Edward VI Royal pardon issued to Grimsby's Mayor and Burgesses
- 1555** Philip and Mary: an *Inspeximus* (beginning with "We have inspected...")
- 1562** Elizabeth I: an *Inspeximus*
- 1592** The arms were officially recorded at the visitation of 1592.
- A coat of arms is a heraldic visual design and used by cities, towns and boroughs as a symbol of authority.
- The term "coat of arms" in modern times, describes the heraldic design, but originally was the entire medieval chainmail "surcoat" garment used in combat. A distinctive symbol (or 'coat of arms') aided identification – or intimidation!
- 1688** James II's Charter of incorporation made Grimsby's Mayor and Burgesses into a Corporation with all the privileges of a recorder, aldermen, coroners, common councilmen, bailiffs etc.

17th Century: 1st Coat of Arms of the Borough



That the boars' heads allude to a right of the Mayor and Aldermen to hunt boar in Bradley Woods is disputed, but the story prevails – as in the Town Hall mural. However, the medieval Mayoral Seal, appears to depict a boar hunt and several families connected with Grimsby had similar charges on their arms. A family of de Grymesby bore chevrons on their arms, and a Member of Parliament for Grimsby elected in 1762, William Broxholme of Barrow bore a chevron between three brocks' (badgers') heads.

The earliest surviving impressions of the Corporation Seal using the arms date from the mid-seventeenth century, and when the largest of the town's three maces was remodelled in 1645 the arms were included.

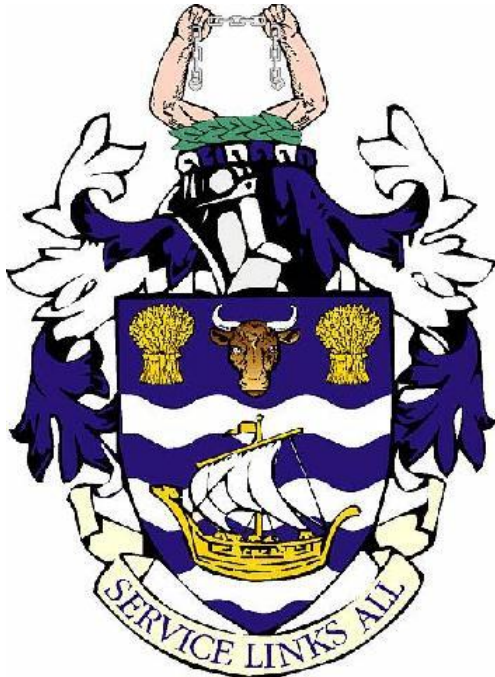


- 1780** Town Hall rebuilt in old market place again
- 1801** The population number of about 1,524 hadn't altered much since the Middle ages
- 1830** smallpox outbreak
- 1832** cholera killed 246 people
- 1835** Grimsby is formed as an ancient Borough within the North Riding of Lindsey which itself, was a division of the Lindsey part of Lincolnshire. The North Riding of Lindsey was the north-eastern part and included the Bradley-Haverstoe, Ludborough, Walshcroft and Yarborough *wapentakes* (subdivisions of certain northern and midland counties of England; a hundred. *wapen*= weapon, *taka*= voting (by show of weapons) SEE LAST PAGE]
- 1836** Grimsby's first street lighting – by gas
- 1837** the first Police force
- 1848** the Railway (Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway) arrives in town
- 1851** population number: 8,860
- 1854** piped water provided - to those who could afford it – and sewers dug
- 1863** Town Hall built in its current position; old Town Hall not demolished till 1868
- 1871** Grimsby's first newspaper – and smallpox struck again
- 1874** Grimsby's *Highway and Public Works Committee* sits
- 1875** Grimsby replaces Lincoln as the largest town in Lincolnshire
- 1881** first trams appear - horse-powered
- 1887-8** typhoid outbreak; Town Hall include a Police Station and Magistrates' court
- 1891** over 50,00 population: achieves 'County Borough' status and independent administration
- 1899** population number: 75,000
- 1919** Grimsby's *Housing and Town Planning* records the building of Corporation housing estates. The 1919 Housing Act promised 500,000 houses nationally within three years. A following Housing Act of 1924 gave further substantial grants to local authorities to provide new housing. A further Act in 1930 obliged local councils to clear all remaining slum housing and provided further subsidies to re-house residents.
- Nationally, the various inter-war Housing Acts, ensured that local authorities constructed around 1.1 million homes.



1931 Population number: 92,000

1935 The Lincolnshire – parts of Lindsey - arms officially granted on October 2, 1935.



The two main economies of the area were portrayed by distinct symbols: the modern and historic ports of the County evidenced by a Viking ship on a wavy background, and agriculture by a chief with a bull's head between two garbs.

The crest also had two arms holding a chain. This is a heraldic pun on the county name - Lincs – with a metal chain referring to the steel production believed to replace the traditional industries shown in the shield.

1937 Planning Committee takes over the functions of the Health Committee

1972 Due to Local Government Act, Grimsby is created a District Council with status of Borough

1974

Elizabeth II Charter granted Grimsby the status of a borough. Although Great Grimsby Borough had used arms since before 1592, no Grant of Arms had been received until 1974.



Under the Local Government Act 1972 Great Grimsby became one of nine non-metropolitan district councils within Humberside County Council, based at County Hall in Beverley.

The Humberside shield consisted of two Yorkshire roses, a pair of gold fleur-de-lis for Lincolnshire and a gold *ducet* (crown?) for Hull. The crest depicted a blue eagle - from the old East Riding arms – with



droplets on its wings representing north sea oil. A sword represented Scunthorpe

steel; a dolphin, anchor, waves and globe represented the docks and shipping of the Humber; and agriculture was represented by the Roman goddess, Ceres.

1979 Gains the name **Great Grimsby Borough Council**

1996 Humberside abolished on 1 April 1996 and replaced with four unitary authorities: North Lincolnshire, **North East Lincolnshire**, Kingston upon Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire.



The former Great Grimsby district merged with that of Cleethorpes to form North East Lincolnshire when Humberside County Council, Great Grimsby Borough Council and Cleethorpes Borough Council, were all abolished. A unitary authority, with the combined powers of both a county council and district council, the borough of North East Lincolnshire continues to straddle the parliamentary constituencies of Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes.

A Council's official 'statutory' logos must appear where there is a legal requirement, and nowadays there is the added consideration of electronic usage' Centre for Governance and scrutiny

Correctly, being Charter Towns, both Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes have Charter Trustees as opposed to town councils. North East Lincolnshire's Mayor, though a politically neutral ceremonial role with no direct power and not elected by the people., is an important one as the first citizen of North East Lincolnshire.

2021 Population number: 87,311

2025 1st May: *Greater Lincolnshire mayoral election* for the inaugural mayor of Greater Lincolnshire.

The election covers the entire county of Lincolnshire. The three councils: Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, and North East Lincolnshire Council, will remain in place, but the new mayoral position will have some powers transferred to it. Lincolnshire's flag was launched in 2005 with the Fleur-de-lys representing the City of Lincoln and its colours representing:



Red for England and the Saint George's Cross

Yellow for the crops grown in Lincolnshire and the nickname "Yellowbellies"

Blue for the sea and wide skies of Lincolnshire

Green for the rich fields of the fenland

Gold for the crops grown in the county



2025 www.grimsbycleecivsoc.co.uk

Sources

Thanks to NEL Archives for their input.

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Following page: an Administrative map of Lincolnshire in 1832 showing Wapentakes and Divisions. [*wapen*= weapon, *taka*= voting (by show of weapons)]

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Administrative-map-of-Lincolnshire-in-1832-showing-Wapentakes-and-Divisions-Also-showing_fig1_347762069



