

Further information

History:

The word "Mayor" and "Major" come from the same Latin word, Magnus, which means great. The office of Mayor, the Domesday Book and the feudal system, were brought to this country by the Normans. Mayors had existed on the continent since at least the fifth century.

The office of Head of the Corporation is as old as our Borough, in many towns the name of "Mayor" is an idea introduced by the Municipal Corporation Act 1835.

1199:

The first "Mayor Town" in England, Thetford, established (although the City of London Mayoralty dates from 1192).

Middle Ages:

Position of the Mayor was similar to today's, i.e. acknowledged as "First Citizen" of the town. The Mayor would normally preside in the Borough's civil and criminal courts.

Tudor:

The powers of the Mayor as Chief Magistrate (sometimes the sole Magistrate) largely increased. Magistrates in this period were the "maids of all work" therefore their personal importance grew.

17th Century:

In many Boroughs the Mayor had complete power.

19th Century:

The Mayor could be the centre of all political activity with the terms of office lasting two to four years. The political role of the Mayor, rather than the social and ceremonial role, was more important in this era than it is today.

20th Century:

The political role of the Mayor diminishes and the social and ceremonial role becomes more emphasised.

1974:

It became compulsory for Mayors to be selected from members of the Council.

Duties of the Mayor:

The Mayor is the Borough's first citizen, recognised as being second only to Royalty and The King's Deputy, the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey. Within the Borough our Mayor takes precedence over all except The King.

The office of Mayor is the highest honour the Council can bestow upon a councillor and recognises a high level of public service.

The role and duties of the Mayor, which are undertaken on behalf of the borough, are varied and cover many aspects, but include:

- acting as an ambassador for the borough
- upholding civic pride
- representing the Council at civic, social, cultural, charitable, religious/faith and many other wide ranging functions and events
- supporting national and local charities, appeals and community groups
- chairing Council meetings
- receiving official visitors

It is customary for the Mayor to adopt charities during the Mayoral year. Fundraising events will be held and proceeds from these occasions will be donated to the charitable causes.

The Mayor is a non-political post.

In accordance with the Local Government Act, the Council must appoint from amongst its Members a Deputy Mayor. Similarly, the Deputy Mayor may chair meetings of the Full Council in the absence of the Mayor and also attend events on the Mayor's behalf if unavailable.

Mayor Regalia and Insignia:

The Mayor wears the Robe on appropriate civic and ceremonial occasions throughout the year.

The Robes of Lord Mayors, Mayors, Aldermen and Councillors plays an important part in civic life. The discipline, orderliness and freedom of the British Nation for centuries have been held in the highest regard. The Civic Robes symbolises these qualities. The Robes originated with the Priests, who were the early "dispensers of justice".

The Robes of Office worn by Mayors consisted of a sable-furred scarlet robe and tricorne hat and were first initiated by the antiquarian, George Grant Francis, during his mayoralty in 1853-4.

Today, our Mayoral Robe is traditionally designed and is made from scarlet wool trimmed with full-length facings of faux fur. The sleeves are also trimmed with faux fur, together with a band of black velvet. When creating the Robe, the Council made the conscious decision to use "faux" rather than real animal fur.

The Mayoral hat changes shape depending on the gender of the Mayor. If the Mayor is female a tricorne hat is worn, and if the Mayor is male, a bicorne hat is worn.

To complete the "uniform" the Mayor wears a lace stock or "jabot" which is an ornamental frill or ruffle on the front of a shirt or blouse.

Chain of Office

The Chain of Office consists of two parts, the Chain and Badge.

The Mace

The Mace was, and is, a weapon of war, the oldest and most universal weapon produced by man. However, the ceremonial Mace of today is a highly ornamental descendant of the prehistoric club or bludgeon.

With the introduction of armour among fighting men, the wooden club or bludgeon became bound with iron, and then was made with just iron or steel. By the 11th and 12th centuries it developed into a stylised weapon of a formidable nature.

The war Mace of the days of chivalry, that is of close-fighting armoured men, was about two feet long and made of iron or steel. At the hitting end there was a bole fitted with four or more spikes or flanges with sharp points. It was capable, when used with force, of penetrating or cracking contemporary helmet or armour; at the other end was some sort of hand grip with a knob at the end to prevent it slipping out

of the hand.

This was given as the peculiar or special weapon to the Serjeant-at-Arms which Philip II of France (1180-1223) appointed to guard himself from suspected assassins when he returned to France after deserting the cause of the Crusaders. It is thought a similar bodyguard was instituted by Richard I of England, Coeur-de-Lion.

The Mace was possibly adopted as the weapon for the nearest bodyguard as it was handy both day or night and comparatively silent. Another curious point is that the Mace was also the peculiar weapon chosen by a Bishop or Churchman when going to the field in war. Although it was not considered right for a man of God to shed a fellow creature's blood with a sword or battle-axe, to crack his skull was allowable - a fine distinction!

Quite naturally it became custom for the King's Serjeants-at-Arms to have the Royal Arms inscribed or engraved on the knob at the handle end and decorate it with gold and silver inlay etc.

Over time the King's Serjeant-at-Arms and similar Officers gradually had less emphasis as the armed personal bodyguards but employed more messengers or ambassadors to communicate Royal orders to local authorities. When carried the Mace with the Royal arms inscribed on it became the obvious and visible passport to show Royal Authority.

Therefore over time the end of the Mace fell out of use and the handle increased in importance. First the knob with the plate or button with the Royal Arms was enlarged, and the Arms finished in silver or enamel, and then later the Mace sprouted a coronet. At the same time the Mace became entirely covered with and eventually wholly made of precious metal. This resulted in the Mace no longer being a weapon of offence but rather a symbol of authority; the sharp hitting flanges dropped off, the coronet expanded into a full sized crown and the whole weapon swelled to proportions too large to be wielded to strike. By the end of the Tudor period the Ceremonial Mace was fully fledged.

The Maces mostly seen today were standardised by the Royal decree of Charles I (Parliament Order of 1649, Instructions for Cities and Towns to obey Maundy's 'forme and patterne of Maces') confirmed under the Commonwealth (but substituting an acorn for the orb and cross) and restored under Charles II.

A curious point about the evolution of the Mace is that it was also a revolution; the hitting head became a safe base and the handle knob became the head so today, so the Ceremonial Mace is carried upside down.

The Mace should precede the Mayor when entering and leaving the Council

Chamber, and should always rest in front of the Mayor when the Council is sitting. When the Mayor is seated, the Mace rests horizontally before him/her with the crown to his/her right hand or in the more important direction. For example, if the Mayor has a seat the choir of a church, the crown of the Mace should point towards the Altar. However, in the presence of Royalty the Mace should always be reversed. This is because the Mace is a symbol of the Mayor's position as representative of the Sovereign; so a symbol is not required in the actual presence of Royalty.

The Mace usually has a Royal crown or other Royal insignia, which means it is a token of Royal authority. Only those local authorities that are created Corporations by Royal Charter are entitled to such a Mace and therefore granted authority to carry the Mace before the Mayor. A newly created Borough without a Charter may not use such a Mace without Royal permission, but a Mace without Royal Insignia does not need permission for use or possession.

In Epsom and Ewell, the Mace in use today was presented to the Borough Council in 1937.