

Stockport appears to have been a Roman Station, and Agricola, whilst on a visit to Manchester in A.D. 74, recognised its strategical advantages and fortified it. At that time the adjacent country was woodland, dense forests extending for miles in every direction.

Upon the Norman Conquest the County of Chester was created a Palatinate and divided into a number of Baronies, Stockport being one. The limits of the ancient Manor and Barony of Stockport are indicated in many places by the boundary posts which remain at the present time.

In the early part of the 13th century Stockport must have attained some importance, as about the year 1220 the town received from the then Baron of Stockport, acting under authority from Randle III., surnamed Blundeville, the 7th Norman Earl of Chester, a Charter as a Free Borough.

As this is the only Charter ever granted to the Borough, and formed the code of local government for upwards of 600 years, its provisions are sufficiently interesting to set out in detail:—

“To all men present and to come, who shall see or hear this present charter, Sir Robert de Stokeport sendeth greeting.

Know ye that I have given, granted, and by this my present deed confirmed, that the vill of Stokeport shall be a free borough, according to the Charter which I have obtained from the Lord of Cheshire. And that the burgesses inhabiting therein, shall have and enjoy all the liberties under written.

First, that every burgess have one perch of land to his manse, and one acre in the field, and that there be paid for every burgage twelve-pence yearly, for all rents belonging to the said burgage. But if any chief officer of the vill shall implead any burgess of any plea, and the accused does not come at the day, nor any one for him, within the Portmanimote, he shall forfeit to me twelve-pence. Also if any burgess shall sue another burgess for a debt, and he acknowledge the debt, the chief officer shall set him a day, viz., the eighth, and if he come not at the day, he shall pay twelve-pence for the forfeiture of the day, and pay the debt, and four-pence to the officer. Also if any burgess shall in anger strike or wound another burgess, without shedding of blood, in the borough, he shall make his peace by inquisition of the burgesses, saving my right of twelve-pence. Also if any shall be impleaded in the borough of any plea, he shall not answer either burgess or my bailiff, or any other person, except in the Portmanimote, viz., concerning the pleas which belong to the borough. Also if any burgess, or other person, accuse a burgess of theft, the chief officer shall attach him to answer, and stand judgment thereupon in the Portmanimote, saving my right. Also if any one be impleaded of his neighbor, or of any other person, of such things as belong to the borough, and shall prosecute it for three days, if he have witness of the chief officer, and of his neighbors, that his adversary hath made default for those three days, he shall not give him any other answer concerning that plea, and the other shall fall into the amerciament of the lord. Also the aforesaid burgesses may choose a chief officer out of their own body, whom they will, and remove him at the end of the year, by the advice of the lord or his bailiff. Also any burgess may give, impledge, or sell his burgage to whomsoever he will, except to the capital lords, Jews, or religious men, but the next heir shall be at liberty to buy it,