

## Doncaster Borough Charter of King William IV, 24 June 1836

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By 1836, the government of Doncaster, and 178 boroughs like it, had been changed out of recognition. This had been achieved by the Municipal Corporations Act which the government had passed in the previous year. There were still councils composed of councillors and aldermen. (The government had intended to abolish the office of aldermen, but the Conservative opposition refused to let this happen, so this reform waited until 1974.) However, in place of council members chosen by a few freemen and then, potentially, sitting on the council for life there were members elected by the local tax payers and serving for three years at a time. An element of democracy and accountability had been introduced into local government.

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 also changed the way in which local magistrates were chosen in boroughs. Previously, the corporation had chosen its own magistrates from its aldermen. From 1835, the borough no longer had any control over the magistrates. They were in future to be appointed by the Crown, as they were in the counties and, indeed, still are. Boroughs also lost their right to hold 'quarter sessions' courts, which were the magistrates courts in which the more serious cases were tried by jury. (Quarter sessions courts were replaced by Crown Courts in 1971.) Boroughs which previously had had the right to hold quarter sessions courts could petition the Crown to have the right granted to them anew.

Doncaster had previously been entitled by its charters to hold quarter sessions courts and successfully petitioned to have its right to do so restored. The borough charter of 1836 was issued to allow the borough a separate court of quarter sessions in which the borough recorder was the judge.