

Historical notes

By the first charter of Incorporation granted to the Burgesses by King Charles I in 1626, "The Borough of Leedes in the County of York" was constituted and the corporate body was styled "The Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Leedes in the County of York". The Council consisted of one Alderman, nine Principal Burgesses and twenty Assistants and the Charter named Sir John Savile as the first Alderman. The use of owls as supporters and crest in the Armorial Bearings of the City is a compliment to him, there being three owls in his personal coat of arms.

Thirty five Aldermen succeeded Sir John Savile until the second Charter, granted by King Charles II in 1661, gave Leeds its first Mayor. The corporate body was then styled "The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Leedes in the County of York" and the Council consisted of a Mayor, twelve Aldermen and twenty four Assistants. Thomas Danby was named in the Charter as the first Mayor and he, too, is honoured in the City's Armorial Bearings, the three mullets argent on a chief sable (three silver stars on a black band which appear at the top of the shield of the Leeds Arms) being taken from the Danby achievement.

Leeds had 240 Mayors until 1897 when, in her Jubilee Year, Queen Victoria declared and ordained by Letters Patent that the First Citizen should be "styled, entitled and called 'Lord Mayor of Leeds' and be authorised and empowered to enjoy and use all the rights, privileges, pre-eminencies and advantages to such degree duly and of right belonging". The title of City had been conferred upon the Borough by Royal Charter on 13th February 1893 and the Leeds Corporation Act of 1899 and declared the style of the corporate body to be "The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Leeds".

As from 1st April 1974, by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, the former County Borough of Leeds, the Boroughs of Morley and Pudsey, the Urban Districts of Aireborough, Garforth, Horsforth, Otley and Rothwell and parts of the Rural Districts of Tadcaster, Wetherby and Wharfedale were amalgamated to form a new Metropolitan District. The Act enabled the Metropolitan District Council to decide by what name the area it administered should be known and it agreed that the entire district be known as "Leeds". The Act also enabled the Council to present a petition to the Queen praying for the grant of a Charter preserving certain privileges rights and status. The Charter granted by Her Majesty authorised the use of the style "Lord Mayor" by and for the Chairman of the Council and conferred the status of City upon the district.