

DUNDEE TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 1553-61

Compiled by Damian Smith, a volunteer with the Friends of Dundee City Archives. As no page numbers were present in the minutes indexing was carried out by date.

One date given as the last day of February 1561 is entered as 28th February as the leap year system was not introduced until 1582.

The Scottish New Year commenced on Lady Day, 25th March, and ended on 24th March of the succeeding year, so dates before 25th March would be in the following year to that stated by our reckoning.

Accounts

All officials to make their accounts and pass the relevant money to George Lowell by the feast of Michaelmass (8th January 1553).

Acts

Act concerning selling beef and mutton at the market (2nd October 1553)

Act forbidding anyone from selling or lending his firlet (2nd October 1553)

Act concerning disobeying magistrates

Penalties include: 24 hours in the stocks, banishment and begging forgiveness from the offended party at the market cross, the stool of repentance used for women (8th January 1553)

An act preventing any freeman from being a factor to unfreemen (8th January 1553)

An act concerning persons entering and leaving the town without paying the duties, offenders to be placed in the tollbooth or outlawed (1st October 1554)

Due to a slate shortage in Dundee, persons only permitted to buy enough slates for their own immediate needs, none to be taken to Leith or Edinburgh (3rd January 1555) [slates might be wooden shingles]

An act concerning Council Members who are found guilty of misconduct, the most serious offences to result in removal from office, all punishments at the Provost's discretion (1st October 1554).

An act against blasphemers of God's name, first offence punished by a 5 merk fine, further penalties the same as for drunkards (10th January 1561)

An act concerning the selling of cloth (28th February 1561).

See also Vice

Bellman

Fees for the bellman set (5th October 1556).

Big Biggins (to build)

A building for the flesh trade to be built on the paved area to the west of the Castle Burn where the middens and scald market now stand. The stone from the Greyfriars to be used (14th October 1560).

Blasphemy

Act against blaspheming the name of God (4th October 1560).

Bulwark

The bulwark to be repaired (4th October 1560)

Branks (Similar to Stocks)

Any person leaving filth in any area of the town to be put in the branks for 24 hours (2nd October 1559)

Brewing Illegal Alcohol

See Wobbis

Castle Burn

Act on the people living in the Castle Burn area, no pests or any unlawful thing to be kept in the closets. In addition, no filth or pests to be thrown in the Marketgate Wynd or Vennel (2nd October 1559).

Claims

An act on judges to hear claims made by poor people and not to dismiss them (10th January 1561).

Cloth

An act against fraudulent cloth dealing, specifically cutting and colouring the cloth (10th January 1557).

A mark to be sewn into the genuine cloth (10th January 1557).

Thomas Gardyne appointed seller of cloth (10th January 1557)

Only black or green cloth allowed to be sold (10th January 1557).

Common Kist

Not to be opened without a baillie, three Council members and the three keyholders present (1st October 1554).

Council

The Council to meet every Thursday before noon in the Council house (10th January 1561)

Drunkards

An act against drunkards, for first offence, a show of open repentance, for second offence banishment for a year and a day (10th January 1561).

An act against drinking during preaching or prayer time on Sunday (10th January 1561).

Fornication

Act against fornication, for the first offence being admonished in front of the congregation, for the second offence to be put in the branks (restraints) (4th October 1560)

A further act against fornication, penalties include two days and two nights in prison, repentance or a year's banishment (10th January 1561).

Greyfriars

See Biggins (14th October 1560).

Kirkmaster

A godly and well-known man to be made kirkmaster (10th January 1561)

Kirkyard

The kirkyard to be kept tidy, all trees and stones to be removed (10th January 1561).

Fines or dunkings in the sea to be used to enforce the above act (10th January 1561)

Bell ringing to be organised (10th January 1561)

Loading

No loading or handling of tackle allowed in the Burgh during the night (4th October 1560)

Locked Book

Not to be opened except in the Tollbooth with the Council present (1st October 1554)

Measures (Quantity in a Bowl and Peck)

Measures at the market and fisheries to be brought in line with the Edinburgh measures (10th January 1561)

Middens

Any person in town owning a midden to clear it away by Wednesday. No further middens allowed in the Burgh (2nd October 1559)

A daily patrol started to find anyone breaking the act against middens. Offenders to be held in the steeple until fines are paid. (24th September 1561).

Multure

The measure of multure wheat from the common mylnes set at 2 bowls 1 peck (4th October 1551)

Office

No office bearer to be appointed in secret or private, only by vote in the Committee meeting (5th October 1556)

Piermasters

John Fotheringham and Andrew Annand the elder to be piermasters (4th October 1560)

Petty Customs

A table to be made of the petty customs (10th January 1561).

Privy Seal

To be kept by the treasurer (1st October 1554)

Pupil's Money

An act concerning money for hiring tutors for the school pupils, the money to be kept in a locked cupboard and the keys to be given to respectable members of the Council (28th February 1561).

Salmon

The recent act of parliament regulating the size of salmon barrels to be enforced (2nd October 1559)

An act concerning salmon and herring fishing (10th January 1561).

School

No children to be taken on at the school without a testimonial (2nd October 1559).

Ship

Any ship arriving at the pier to report the cargo to the piermasters. Fines for laying to be enforced (4th October 1560)

No ship to cast off ballast without the piermasters permission (4th October 1560)

Ships at the shore to make way for newly arrived heavily laden ships (4th October 1560)

Act against ships that block the passage of other ships (4th October 1560)

Act against ships being parked too close together and damaging the pier (4th October 1560)

Shore

A shore officer to be appointed, to keep a permanent watch on the ballast of ships and to keep an account of goods coming in (10th January 1561)

Slates

Act forbidding any sailors taking slate out of town as it is needed to repair the damage done in the recent English invasion (5th October 1556)

Stipend

The ministers' stipend set at 150 merks annually (24th September 1561).

Stone

Only one type of stone allowed to be brought sold or used for building in Dundee (10th January 1557).

Tax

The baillies to set tax levels for the inhabitants; they choose when a tax or stent demand is sent to the town (1st October 1554).

Testament

Due to persons being tricked into making false wills and testaments two honest men to be appointed. These men to visit the sick and ask if a will is required (10th January 1561).

Tollbooth

Act concerning defendants who speak without leave in the tollbooth (2nd October 1559)

Act against persons failing to appear before the magistrates in the tollbooth on the required day (4th October 1560)

All cases to be heard before noon, measures to be taken against defendants who refuse to appear (10th January 1561)

Timber

Timber lying on the pier for longer than arranged to be charged extra (4th October 1560)

Vagabonds

The act against vagabonds to be enforced, prosecutions to take place every quarter. Persons taking vagabonds into their homes to be also prosecuted (10th January 1561).

Vice

Acts to reduce vices in the town.

- (a) Act against slandering honest women
- (b) Act against running a brothel
- (c) Act against vagabonds
- (d) Act against beggars
- (e) Act against children crying/playing during church sermons
- (f) Act against night walking after 10 pm

All offences punishable by banishment (10th January 1558)

Further acts

- (a) Act against adulterers
- (b) Act against fornicators
- (c) Act against servants who commit fornication
- (d) Act against blasphemy of the elders
- (e) Act against drinking in the presence of the provost
- (f) Act against blasphemy - blasphemer to make amends
- (g) Act against trading/opening of stalls during sermon times on Sunday (2nd October 1559)

Wages

Because of past extortion by Council Officers, namely the robbing of widows and orphans, wages for Council Officials to be set at 2p annually. (10th January 1561)

Walkers

All walkers forbidden from selling or delivering any cloth unless the seal of the town is on it. (2nd October 1559).

Wobbis (Brewing Illegal Alcohol)

The act against this to be enforced on pain of banishment (5th October 1556)

Wool

Act against buying or selling wool in private houses, wool to be sold in the Marketgate on Wednesdays and Saturdays (5th October 1556).