



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
North Devon Record Office



BURGESSES OF BIDEFORD

1849

DRO Reference – 63/4/1/7(b)

DFHS Book Reference - N034

Bideford was an ancient borough and, like other incorporated towns, it had a long tradition of admitting many of its citizens to the freedom of the borough. Admission as a freeman entitled one to trade within the town, gave exemptions from various tolls, provided a vote in local elections and eligibility to serve on the borough council. In most towns, freedom was gained by inheritance, by serving a recognised trade apprenticeship within the town, by purchase, or by order of the mayor and corporation.

Many towns kept registers of their freemen, and some include details of date of admission, name of freeman and abode, name and occupation of father or master. Among the records of Bideford Borough Council held by the North Devon Record Office are lists of freemen going back to the 16th century, although records tend to be very patchy before the nineteenth century. In more recent times, admission to the freedom of a town or city became more of a ceremonial honour bestowed on" only a few noteworthy individuals or groups.

This register of freemen and burgesses of Bideford are in the series with the reference 63/4/1/7(b) and is held at the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple.