

## ***Quick Guide to the Rowell Fair Charter***

Rothwell, or "Rowell", has an Ancient Royal Charter, dating from 1204, that allows a Charter Fair to be held in the streets for one week of every year. The Charter Fair is linked to the Feast of Holy Trinity with many families reuniting for the festivities, as has happened down the centuries.

Originally a trading fair, today it has evolved into a fun fair in the streets.

The key and unique tradition is the spectacle of the Proclamation of the Ancient Royal Charter on the Monday morning following Trinity Sunday. A heritage fair expert and historian Dr Ann Featherstone has said that the Rowell Proclamation of the Ancient Charter is the most unique.

It begins at 6 a.m. at Holy Trinity Church. The Bailiff to the Lord of the Manor, who is on horseback, reads the 1614 Charter. After paying respects at the War Memorial, the Bailiff, still on horseback, the ceremonial entourage, halberdiers and band visit every public house (and old sites) and after each Proclamation of the 1614 Charter, the National Anthem is played and a traditional drink of rum & milk is presented. Several hundred (or even more!) people follow the entourage around Town.

At most points, once the Bailiff, entourage and band have moved on, the halberdiers take part in a brief good-natured scuffle to prevent anyone else gaining hold of the pole each halberdier carries with pride.

The Bailiff's "Staff of Office" is over 200 years old and once would have been at least half as tall again. In the past, the Bailiff to the Lord of the Manor would collect rents with the staff of office giving him the authority to do so and as he was invariably on horseback the staff would have touched the ground as he sat in the saddle. On the staff there are coats of arms of the Monarch and the Lord of the Manor.

As the Bailiff collected rents he would have been accompanied by Halberdiers carrying halberds to protect him as went about his business as rent collection was not always popular! The short halberds carried today have metal heads and many were made locally in Balls Foundry and some are over 100 years old. The tips are now balls of metal and not points as they probably were originally.

An aim was to have one halberd per monarch since King John but as there have been 32 monarchs there were a few missing. In 2004, to commemorate the 800th year, several of the taller ceremonial halberds were commissioned by the Rowell Fair Society to try and complete the gaps and to give slightly more mature halberdiers the opportunity to continue to take part in our ancient traditions without the rough and tumble!

The Bailiff wears "top hat and tails" and the collaret was commissioned by the Rowell Fair Society with the badges engraved with the known names of past Bailiffs.

The rum and milk drinks were originally a drink that would have been given to those travelling by horse and coach as a warming drink when they stopped at hostleries along the way. A red hot poker would have been put into each cup to heat the drink. An unusual but tasty drink that is still enjoyed (without the red hot poker!) during Rowell Fair week.

Following the Proclamation, breakfasts are served around the Town.



***"God save the King and the Lord of the Manor".***

For more information visit [www.rowellfair.co.uk](http://www.rowellfair.co.uk)