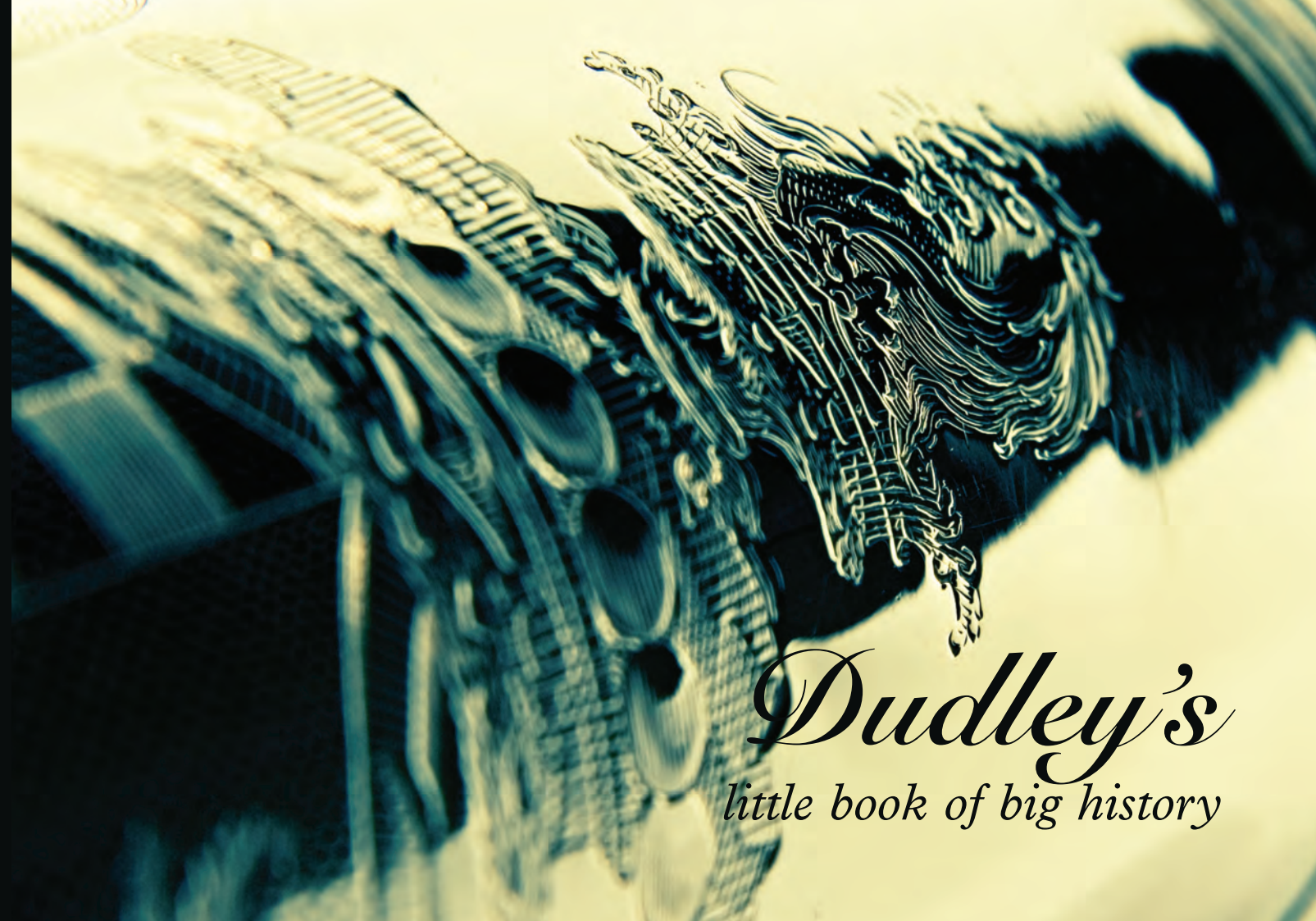




*[www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk)*



*Dudley's*  
*little book of big history*



# *Dudley's little book of big history*

Welcome to Dudley's little book of big history - your chance to take a look at the borough's fascinating past and civic history.

Looking at some of its most historically significant buildings and artefacts, including shields, crests, badges and mayoral and mayoress chains, this booklet gives a background into how the borough's council formed.

You can take a look at most of the artefacts and civic insignia mentioned in this book for yourself by joining Dudley Council's chamber and Mayoral educational visits. More information can be found at [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk).



*A silver teapot which is part of the Council House collection*

## *Items to find on your visit to the Council House*

These items are certainly worth a look at, so when you visit the Council House see if you can find them and learn more about their history.

A canteen of cutlery containing 516 pieces in total. Each of them is stamped with the Dudley shield and crest.

Candlesticks that are five and three with a 'rococo pattern' in silver on copper, engraved with an inscription as well as the Dudley shield and crest.

A tea tray in reproduction Georgian silver, engraved with an inscription.



# *The end is just the beginning*

Thank you for reading Dudley's little book of big history. Dudley's past, present and future is very important to us and we hope this book has inspired you to want to learn more about the borough's history.

Remember you can come and look at many of the artefacts and civic insignia mentioned in this book for yourself with Dudley Council's chamber and mayoral education visits.

More information on our historical educational activities can be found on our website at **[www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk)** .



*Dudley in the thirteenth century*

# *Introducing Dudley*

Situated on a ridge of high ground, Dudley began as a Saxon village. Back then it was called Dudda's leah, the word leah meaning a clearing in the forest. Since then its long and varied history has been greatly influenced and enhanced by its commanding position and its unusual wealth of natural resources.

Dudley is often referred to as the capital of the Black Country. The Black Country is a name given to the area including Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It played a very significant role in the industrial revolution during the mid nineteenth century. Dudley was at the very forefront of this industrial movement.





## *Seven centuries of local rule*

### **Dudley's beginnings**

Dudley's first historical record was in the Domesday Book back in 1086. William the Conqueror had ordered its production to record areas of settlement following his invasion in 1066.

*Dudley Castle in the spring*

## *Robes of office*

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have official robes of office to wear when they are on duty.

Robes of office dating back to the 1950s are also stored in the Council House.

### **Civic plate**

Much of the civic plate, or collection, was bought in 1954 and is now kept at Himley Hall.

The principal item is a dinner and tea service of Royal Worcester china for 48 persons. This is in the 'Royal David' pattern and each piece bears the shield and crest of the former Dudley County Borough in gold.

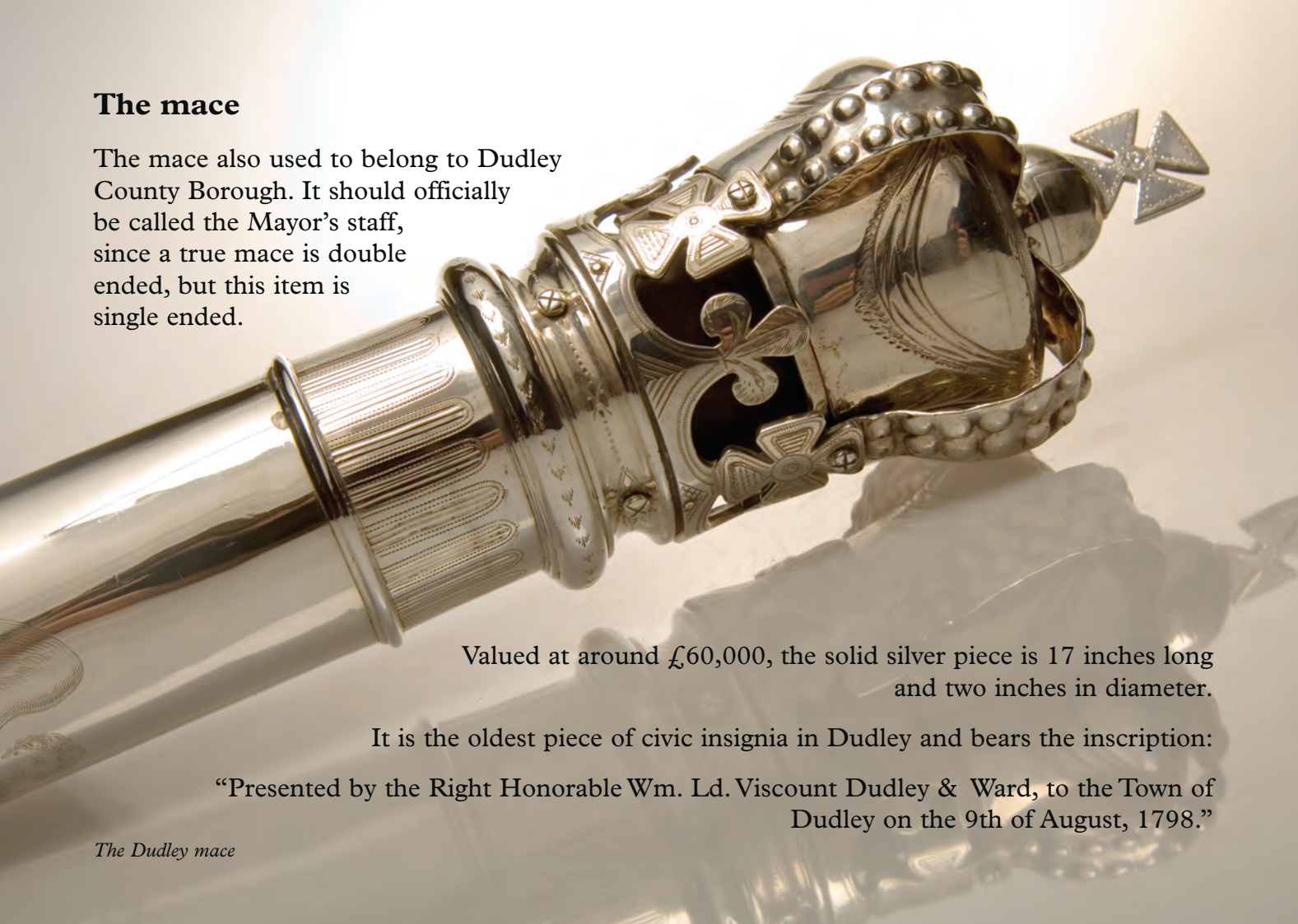
*The robes of office*





## The mace

The mace also used to belong to Dudley County Borough. It should officially be called the Mayor's staff, since a true mace is double ended, but this item is single ended.



Valued at around £60,000, the solid silver piece is 17 inches long and two inches in diameter.

It is the oldest piece of civic insignia in Dudley and bears the inscription:

“Presented by the Right Honorable Wm. Ld. Viscount Dudley & Ward, to the Town of Dudley on the 9th of August, 1798.”

*The Dudley mace*

In 1295, Dudley became a manorial borough. This meant the area had a main building that housed a local government. From here they probably managed administration over local issues such as land tenure and law and order.

The town's main building, Dudley Manor as it was known, housed officials that were well regarded in London. Two of its members were regularly sent to sit in Parliament. Records from around 1330 show these officials acquired what would have been significant privileges in those days, including a toll (or tax) free market.

## Early government and the courts

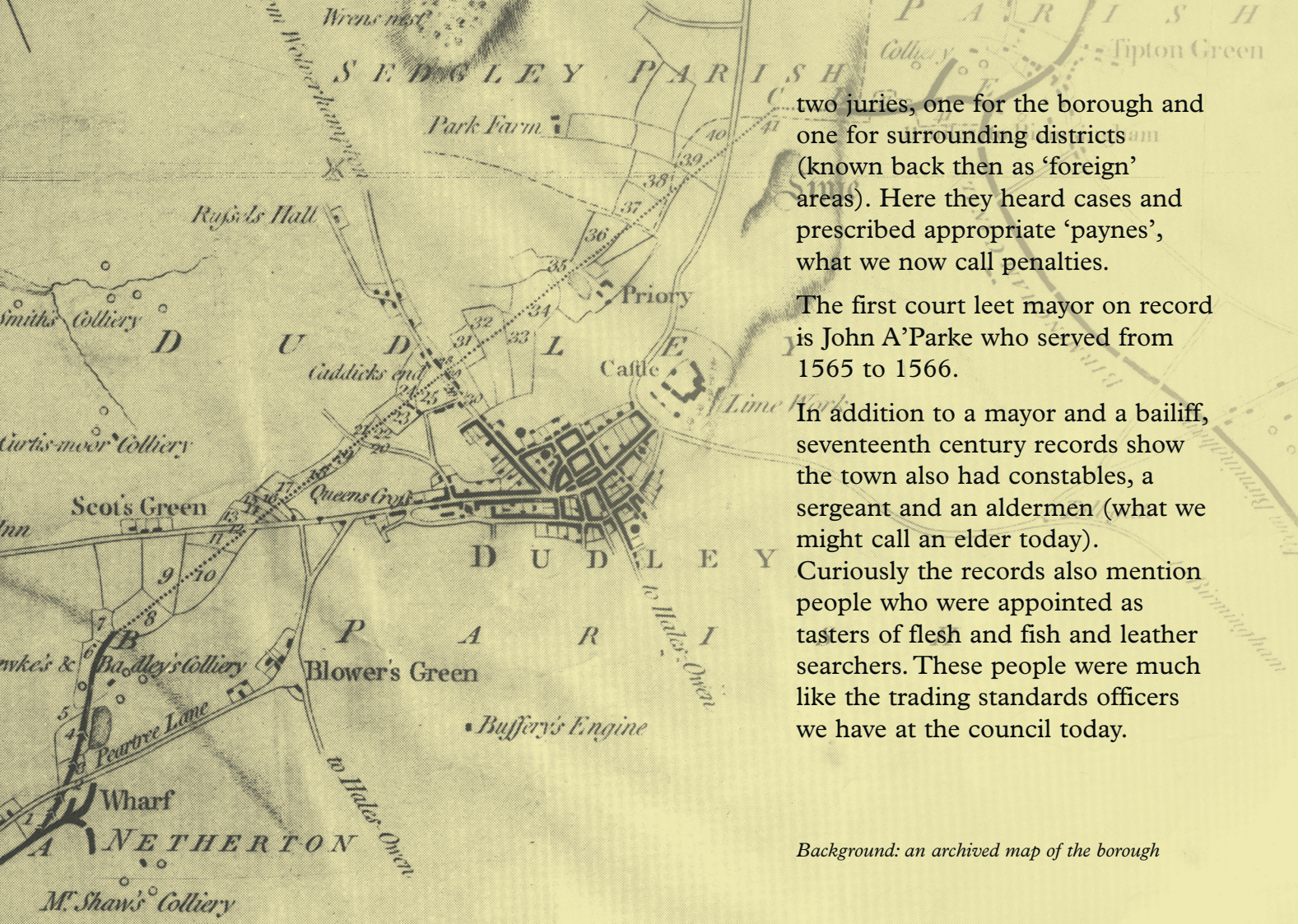
It is believed an English manorial court, known as ‘court leet’, governed Dudley borough from the middle ages. The earliest surviving record of the court leet, now preserved in the record office of the central library, is dated 1565.

The court leet would have exercised powers gained by lords of the manors and would have annually elected a mayor, a bailiff and other officers to serve the area. It also held



*Background and inset: Dudley Castle*





two juries, one for the borough and one for surrounding districts (known back then as ‘foreign’ areas). Here they heard cases and prescribed appropriate ‘paynes’, what we now call penalties.

The first court leet mayor on record is John A’Parke who served from 1565 to 1566.

In addition to a mayor and a bailiff, seventeenth century records show the town also had constables, a sergeant and an aldermen (what we might call an elder today). Curiously the records also mention people who were appointed as tasters of flesh and fish and leather searchers. These people were much like the trading standards officers we have at the council today.

*Background: an archived map of the borough*



## Mayoress badge and chain

Whenever the Mayoress is on civic business she wears a badge and chain.

The Mayoress badge and chain are those used by the former Dudley County Borough and is a smaller replica of the mayoral badge.

On the reverse of the badge is this inscription:

“This jewel was presented by Viscount Ednam, M.C., M.P. to the Corporation of the Borough of Dudley, October 15th, 1924.”

*Mayoress badge and chain*



## *Civic insignia*

Each symbol on the Mayoral badge represents a different icon of the Dudley Borough:

- The castle turrets at the top of the badge - representing the town
- The lion - representing the borough
- Castle and cross - representing the Priory
- Anchor and chain- representing the chain and anchor making industry
- The Dudley bug
- The Davey lamp - representing limestone and coal mining industries
- Salamander in the fire - smithy and iron industries
- Mace and Staff - representing justice and peace

*Mayoral badge with chain and robes*



## **Dudley's first town act**

Dudley's first official town act was passed in parliament in 1791. From the powers of the new act a body of commissioners was established. The commissioners were able to levy a rate for the improvement of water supply, maintain lighting, paving, civil order and other matters. While they did make many improvements for people living in Dudley the borough's growing population meant that problems of health and sanitation became too great for them.



*J M W Turner, Dudley in watercolour, 1832*

The Dudley Local Board of Health eventually succeeded the commissioners in 1852, following two outbreaks of the disease cholera. However, the court leet continued to exist until the incorporation of the municipal borough in 1865.

Municipal boroughs were a type of local authority which existed in England and Wales between 1835 and 1974. For Dudley, and indeed many areas across the country, the introduction of



municipality aided the development of an elected town council. This consisted of a mayor, aldermen and councillors to oversee local affairs.

In 1888 Dudley Council saw one of its greatest structural changes as it became a county borough and took responsibility for neighbouring towns and districts.



*Council Chamber*

### **To present day**

In April 1966, under the West Midlands order of the borough, Dudley was extended to take in former Brierley Hill and Sedgley Urban District Councils as well as parts of the Coseley Urban District Council.

The present Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council was formed as a result of further reorganisation of local government in 1974. incorporates the areas of Dudley, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Halesowen.



*Mayoral badge and chain*



## Deputy mayor

A new deputy mayor of the borough is elected every year at the council's annual meeting at the same time as the mayor is elected. They also serve in the role for a year. During this time the Deputy Mayor attends many civic and ceremonial functions and represents the Mayor in their absence.

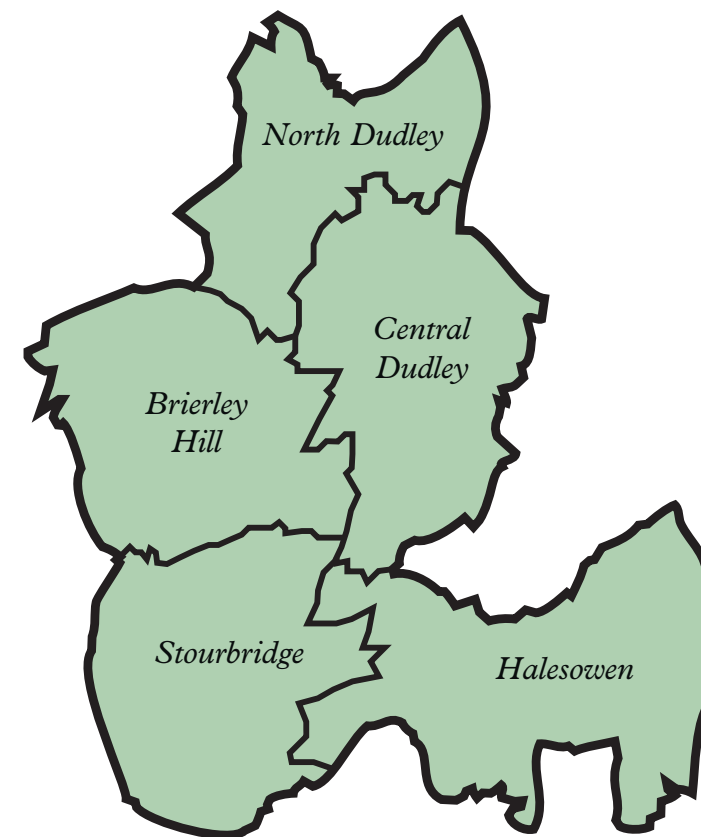
## Mayoress or consort

The Mayoress or Consort does not have a seat in the council chamber unless they are a councillor. It is an honorary position of a person appointed by each mayor for their period of service. While this person is usually his or her wife or husband it can be anyone the Mayor chooses.

*Deputy mayoral badge and chain*



The council's current area map looks like this:



## *Dudley timeline*

- 1086** In Domesday book
- 1295** Manorial borough
- 1330** Charter detailing rights
- 1565** Court leet and first known mayor
- 1791** Dudley Town Act
- 1852** Dudley Local Board of Health
- 1865** Municipal borough
- 1888** County borough
- 1935** Council House opened
- 1966** West Midlands order extends borough to include Brierley Hill, Sedgley and parts of Coseley
- 1974** Metropolitan borough created to include Halesowen and Stourbridge



# *Buildings*

## **Introduction**

The borough is home to a number of historically significant structures, including Dudley Castle and the Council House.



*Dudley Castle courtyard*

# *Elections and the Mayor*

## **The Mayor**

The borough Mayor is elected at the council's annual meeting in May each year. The elected person can be a man or a woman and they serve for the whole year until the next annual meeting.

In his or her capacity as the borough's first citizen, the Mayor represents the council at many civic and ceremonial functions and is a royal representative of Dudley. Anyone in this position upholds and promotes the purposes of the council's constitution and has a duty to promote public involvement in the council's activities.

The Mayor presides over meetings of the full council to ensure business is carried out properly and efficiently, with due regard to the rights of councillors and the interests of the community. They ensure the council meeting is a forum for debate on important matters of concern to the local community. The Mayor also ensures the council's decision makers are held to account.

*Mayoral badge and chain with coquette hat in the background*





## The Council House

This wonderful building is the most prominent and distinct of all those in the Dudley Civic Centre. Opened in 1935, it houses the Council Chamber, where elected councillors meet to discuss and make decisions on local issues.

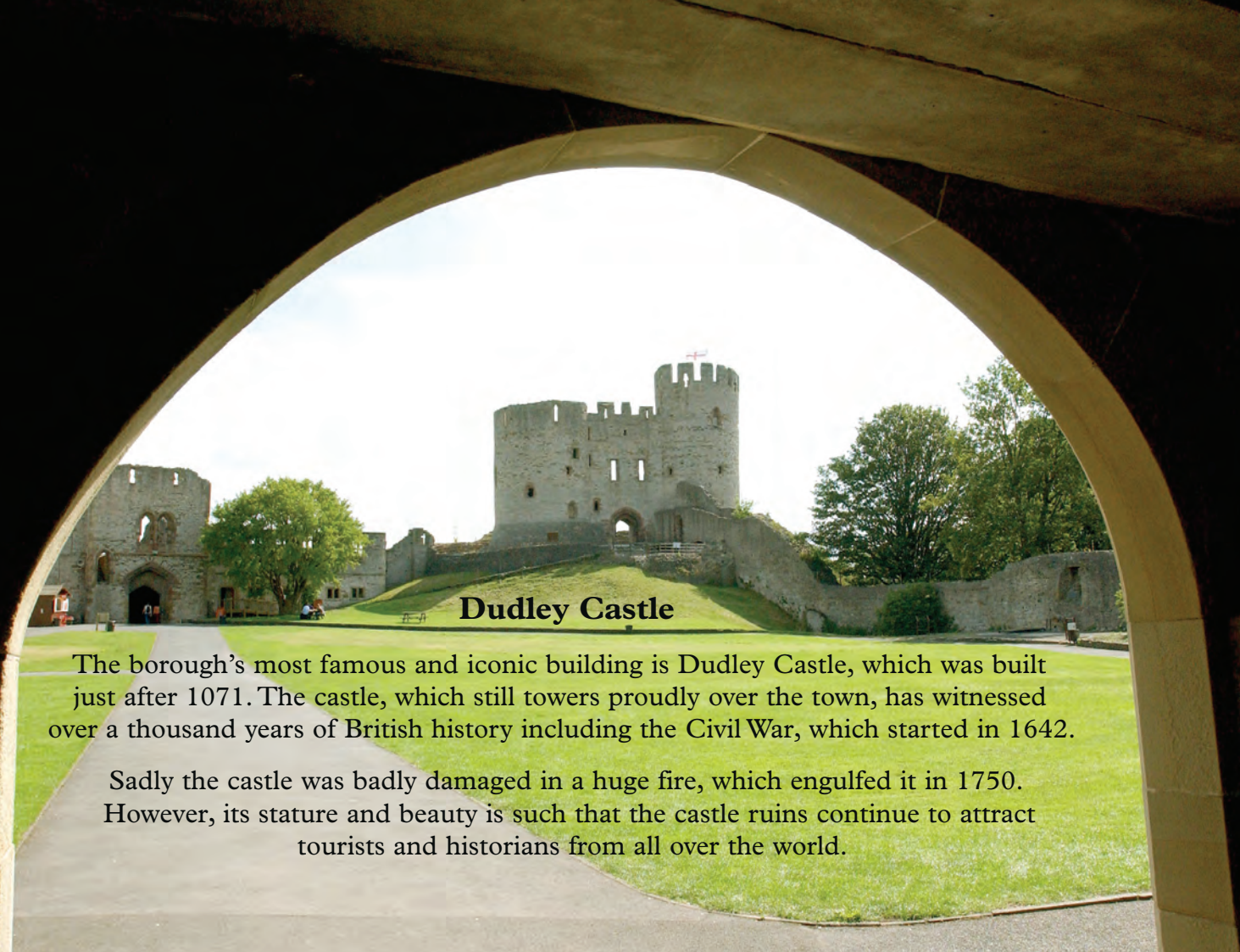
The Earl of Dudley at that time was William Humble Eric Ward. He was the third Earl of Dudley and took great interest in the building's design. He was particularly keen that those who served the council would always remember that they worked for the people of Dudley.

He asked that Dudley Castle should be viewable from the Mayor's chamber seat and, to this day, the Mayor can still see the ruins from where he or she sits. The Earl also paid for the chamber to be elaborately decorated with detailing in plush reds and golds.

Today, Dudley's Council House additionally provides office space for a number of council workers and acts as a meeting point for many groups and organisations that work in the area.



*Inset and background: The Council House in the snow*



## Dudley Castle

The borough's most famous and iconic building is Dudley Castle, which was built just after 1071. The castle, which still towers proudly over the town, has witnessed over a thousand years of British history including the Civil War, which started in 1642.

Sadly the castle was badly damaged in a huge fire, which engulfed it in 1750. However, its stature and beauty is such that the castle ruins continue to attract tourists and historians from all over the world.



# *Civic arms*

## Introduction

Dudley's coat of arms was designed in 1975. It symbolises each of the authorities that came together to form the present borough and features practices that were considered key to Dudley at that time.

## Parts of the civic arms

The Dudley civic arms consists of seven main parts. These are:

- Shield
- Crest
- Helm
- Mantle
- Supporters
- Badge
- Motto

## Geographical significance

Main geographical areas portrayed on the civic arms are:

- Dudley town centre and its castle
- Halesowen
- Brierley Hill
- Coseley
- Kingswinford
- Stourbridge
- Sedgley

Much of Dudley used to be surrounded by Staffordshire. The blue Stafford knot sits above the mantle on the civic arms to represent this. Pears contained within the shield's blue stripe also represent Worcestershire, which much of the borough used to be a part of.



*Borough coat of arms*

## Key themes

Key themes on the civic arms reflect the area's pride in its industrial past.

The intriguing image of a salamander in flames is said to reflect the work of the metal industries. It is claimed that salamanders were thrown into furnaces as a measure of good luck many years ago, although it's not known for certain whether this is true. A golden fleece from the Stourbridge Arms is also a portrayal of the local tanning industry.

The helmet from Dudley's coat of arms represents a municipal corporation, celebrating the democracy that exists in the borough.

The castle at the bottom refers to Dudley Castle which is a prominent feature of the town's landscape.

## Motto

The council adopted "Unity and Progress" as its motto in 1974. This expresses sentiments for the future that were and still are held by the local authority.

## Supporters

The two men either side of the arms are known as the supporters. They depict significant people who had a great influence on Dudley - the white Canon of Halesowen Abbey and the Earl of Dudley. Both men helped to build the borough we know today.