

GUNS IN THE STREET

Part of the Local Government Act in the United Kingdom deals with the power given to councils to admit into a city zone persons of distinction and any persons who have given eminent service to the borough. (An English borough is a town that once had special privileges granted to it by the monarch.) It is called Freedom of Entry and is the highest distinction a council can grant to a group of people, usually a branch of the armed services.

On Monday, 30 June 2008, Winchester (UK) had an unusual parade. Traffic stopped because the Adjutant General's Corps paraded through the centre of Winchester, with bayonets fixed, and formed up on the main street, Broadway, to be received by the Mayor of Winchester and the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire.

The parade involved about 150 marching troops, together with veterans of the regiment. They set off from Peninsula Barracks at 1.45 pm, marched through the pedestrianised town centre with band playing, and formed up in the Broadway at 2 pm for an inspection and official speeches. At 2.30 pm, the troops moved off, turned in front of King Alfred's statue

and saluted as they returned past the Guildhall, then marched to Winchester Cathedral for a service.

The right of Freedom of Entry is an ancient privilege and allows a regiment to parade through the city with 'bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying'. It comes from a period in British history when only trusted units were allowed to carry arms within city boundaries. The Winchester parade continues this tradition, with a distinguished section of the Armed Services and the City of Winchester maintaining an enjoyable association.

The City Council awarded Freedom of Entry to the former Royal Army Pay Corps on 27 October 1970. The Pay Corps was later subject to amalgamation when the Adjutant General's Corps was formed. On 11 April 1996, the City Council formally transferred the Freedom honour to the new Corps.

The parade is an annual event and is arranged jointly by the Regiment and the City Council in celebration of their Freedom prerogative to carry arms through city streets.



Photo by Alan Horsfield