

The Brotherhood of Blackheads

Behavior codes

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The Blackheads Society

- *The Blackheads Society was founded in the 13th century as a gentlemen's club for wealthy single merchants and their journeymen. The society's members were mainly young and unmarried German, but there were also English, Scottish, Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian members.*

The Blackheads Society



- Towards the end of the 14th century, the guilds uniting Riga's merchants and craftsmen were joined by a brotherhood of banquet caterers to upper classes which quite significantly called themselves Blackheads.
- In 1416, the Blackheads Association was officially founded in Riga

The Blackheads Society



When travelling and supplying exotic goods from overseas, they managed to protect their ships and caravans from pirates and robbers. The Blackheads chose St. Maurice as their patron saint, who traditionally was depicted as a black soldier in knight's armour. The society's not so politically correct name originated from one of their patron saints; St Maurice was supposedly a black African Christian Roman commander who died as martyr after refusing to kill fellow Christians. St Maurice's head was depicted on the Blackheads coat of arms, thus giving them their name.

The Blackheads Society

- *After obtaining their tenant's rights and entering holy wedlock, members of the brotherhood become part of Riga's patrician elite, serving as councillors, members of the Great Guild and respected members of the city's community.*

The Blackheads Society



House of the Blackheads was built in 1334 as a venue for meetings and banquets held by Riga's various public organizations. The building was destroyed by bombs in the Second World War but was fully rebuilt in 1999. The prophecy that was once written on the building's doors: "If I am destined to ruination, I will be rebuilt by you!" has come true!

The Blackheads Society



The Blackheads were known for their festivities which they organised, not only for themselves but also for the citizens of Riga. They held many different festivals, carnivals and tournaments. The Balls organised at the House of the Blackheads were famous all over Europe, but were of course, only for members and other aristocrats. It is well known that Russian tsars and tsarinas often frequented such balls.

The Blackheads Society

- *The Blackheads Society had strict rules of internal order, that is, its activities were governed by statutes or drafts adopted in 1416.*

The Blackheads statutes

- *These statutes strictly regulate not only the code of behavior, duties, but also stipulate that blackheads should be unmarried traders and sailors of German origin.*
- *For not obeying statutes blackheads were punished, it could be covered either in cash or in grain.*

The Blackheads statutes



- *Joining the brotherhood, the new companion gave it some silver item on which was engraved his name and the date of the gift.*
- *Blackheads were one of the main organizers of social and cultural life in the city. In Blackhead House there were held festivities in honor of the election of new officials or visits of important persons.*

The Blackheads statutes



*The Blackheads were neither modest nor mean; therefore they held a wide-range of traditional festivals that took place not only in their own house, but also in Town Hall Square and the city streets. Of course, the Rigans were invited! And the celebration under the head of blackheads meant not only festive processions, feasts and dances, but also horseracing tournaments. The Vastlāvji were a holiday cycle, which started preparing for Christmas, which was celebrated for several days. The top of the celebration was evening and the night before the Ash Wednesday, followed by the Great Feast before Easter. *Ļoti svinēti tika Maija Grāfa svētki pavasarī.**

The Blackheads statutes

- *There was a rule that during the feasts no one of blackheads could get drunk, the drunk had to be pay fine.*
- *Entrance in Blackhead House only to unmarried people*
- *The blackhead, who had decided to marry, called together his companions and placed a barrel of beer and a good ham on the table. After that, they held a luxurious wedding, on which the other blackheads came with their beer cups.*
- *After the wedding, the blackhead had to leave the Blackheads Association.*

Rules

- preservation of cultural and historical traditions and monuments,
- mutual respect, honesty, justice, help,
- respect for other virtue norms at all levels of society,
- a high culture of work, behavior, language and communication,
- material and spiritual well-being of members of the organization, of all inhabitants,
- good physical and emotional state,
- financially support their members and their relatives if necessary,

Rules

- to ensure modernization and compliance of legislation in all spheres of life,
- to ensure the quality of goods and services,
- support for real producers and service providers,
- to achieve the growth of the business of its members,
- organize production outlets,
- represent their rights and their members' rights and interests

Sources

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Thank you for your attention!