

17th-Century English Research

Student Notes Class 4

Guild and Freemen Records In and Out of London c 1600-1750

The records relating to those who became freemen of guilds and livery companies in the City of London and the “outwith guilds” in other towns and cities around the United Kingdom provide a remarkable opportunity to research ancestors’ lives through the 17th and 18th centuries (earlier in some instances). They show the trades and crafts they practiced, the networks of co-workers and employers they associated with, and often their parentage and spouses. Freedom of a Guild might lead to Freedom of the City whereby one gained the right to vote, to trade, and to pay rates and taxes.

Guilds (or gilds) of craftsmen dominated life in many towns and developed in the middle ages for commercial, religious and social reasons. There were three types of guilds. The guild merchant (a guild that embraced several different trades and crafts) emerged in towns in the 12th century. Prior to the Reformation, there were religious guilds that were founded primarily for charitable purposes, such as the endowment of schools or hospitals. Specific craft guilds (such as those for weavers or tailors), originated in the 13th and 14th centuries to regulate each craft or trade. These soon displaced the guilds merchant. John West in his work *Town Records* likens guilds to “chambers of commerce, monopolies, insurance companies, friendly societies, family trustees, religious foundations, burial clubs, institutes of good practice and quality control and, to a very limited extent, trade unions”.

The craft guilds were originally voluntary associations of craftsmen according to a hierarchy of the Master craftsman, the Journeyman (who hired himself to a master daily), and the Apprentice (trainee). The guilds usually controlled rights to practise that trade and admission to their guild (and therefore practise the trade). Most men had to serve an apprenticeship (usually seven years) to be admitted to the guild. The guilds provided for their members in sickness or old age and for members' widows and children. Some large towns had many guilds for the different crafts. Newcastle had 46 guilds, including butchers, shipwrights, tanners and weavers. Richmond in Yorkshire had 13 guilds. However smaller towns that were dependent on only one or two crafts might accordingly have only one or two guilds. Gradually the guilds’ powers and authorities declined and most of them had ceased to operate by the late 18th century. London was the main exception. The most famous guilds were those of London, which were known as livery companies because of the distinctive livery that was worn by senior members of each company and these companies retained influence and regulation of trade until the 19th century. Some guilds survived in other places, generally as charitable bodies. As the guilds declined, the trade that was actually undertaken by a member became less important, so that a son might follow his father into a particular guild or livery company even though he practiced a different trade (so that a baker may not have joined the bakers' company). This can make it difficult to find the records of an ancestor. Women did participate in the Guild system, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries but in far smaller numbers.

London Companies

About a sixth of the ancient London Livery companies have records which pre-date 1400, about a third have records which pre-date 1500, about two-thirds have records which pre-date 1600, and the remainder have records which date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most of the records are held at the Guildhall Library in London but several companies retain and maintain their own archives and usually have a website. The published Guildhall Library Guide *City of London Livery Companies and Related Organisation: A Guide to their Archives in Guildhall Library* (4th edition, 2010) is invaluable. The archives are essentially records of the self-government of associations of individuals and are most important in that they record how freedom or admissions into the company was obtained – by serving an apprenticeship, by patrimony (being the son of a freeman of the company, by marrying the daughter of a freeman of the company or by purchase/redemption (paying a fee). Records relating to company apprentices, members and officers contain records of entry into each category, by binding, presentment or indenture (apprentices); admission or election (the 3 levels of membership, i.e. freedom, livery, assistantship); and appointment or election (officers); registers of declarations or oaths of loyalty and obedience made by those admitted, elected or appointed; quarterage (i.e. subscription) books, recording membership fees paid or due. The most useful records are those concerning apprenticeships or admissions to the freedom of a company. For example, the records of the Cordwainers' Company include livery lists (1596- 1904), freedom admissions (1595-1676 and 1706-1901), apprenticeship bindings (1595-1802); property records (1316-1931) and copies of benefactors wills. There are similar records for the Bakers' Company: Typical entries from the bakers' register of admissions are:

May 7th 1787: George Kennerley who was apprentice to John Francis was admitted a freeman of the Bakers' Company by servitude

July 2nd 1787: Richard Hale was admitted a freeman by redemption

Sept. 3rd 1787: Richard Houlditch was admitted a freeman by patrimony

London Guilds and Livery Companies Apprenticeships and Freemen records

The registers of apprenticeships or bindings for each London guild generally survive from the 17th century, but some are earlier. Many have been transcribed by Cliff Webb and published in some 40 volumes for about 60 of the smaller companies by the Society of Genealogists. These volumes are held at the Society's library and found by searching for the company's name in the SoG library catalogue. The contents of Cliff's transcribed apprentice volumes have also been added to Findmypast website.

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/london-apprenticeship-abstracts-1442-1850>

The apprentice registers record the name of the apprentice, his master, and company and the date the apprenticeship was registered. Often a parent's name is noted. Sometimes the registers show an apprentice being "turned over to another master" by his master's widow after the master has died. This Findmypast dataset has a drop-down list of the livery companies included in the dataset and in addition the website separately indexes the Ironmongers' Company, Apprentices and Freemen 1511-1939; the Gunmakers' Company Freedoms and admissions, 1656-1936 and the Haberdashers, Apprentices and Freemen 1526-1933. The Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO). Website <https://www.londonroll.org/> is an academic website providing records of Apprentices and

Freemen in the City of London Livery Companies between 1400 and 1900. Currently, the free database includes information about apprenticeship bindings and freedom admissions for ten of London's Livery Companies (Bowyers, Clothworkers, Drapers, Founders, Girdlers, Goldsmiths, Mercers, Musicians, Salters, Stationers, and Tallow Chandlers with the records of further Companies to follow. Along with the Findmypast website, this considerable resource is the first place to start looking but of course, the apprenticeship and freedom records of the larger companies have yet to be tackled and there are many more records than just apprenticeships and freedoms to consider. It's always worth checking the catalogue of the library of the Society of Genealogists as the Society occasionally has unpublished manuscript transcripts and records for London Guilds and City Livery Companies as well as published histories, records and related works. The London Metropolitan Archives Catalogue includes a very useful online research guide *Searching for members or those apprenticed to members of City of London livery companies*

https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/RESEARCH_GUIDES/web_detail_rg/SISN+85?SESSIONSEARCH

Other London Guild Records

Mark Herber in his work *Ancestral Trails* gives examples of what might be found in the early records of various Guilds and Livery Companies.

The Carpenters Company includes the Court Book of 1533-94, the Wardens' Accounts of 1438-1614 and some apprenticeship bindings. These have been published with copies at the Society of Genealogists. Those who offended against the rules of a company were brought before its Court and might be fined. Thus, on 17 March 1553, Richard Atkinson was fined 40 shillings for working with a carpenter who was not a member of the company. On 16 July 1568, Thomas Marcam was fined three shillings and four pence for failing to notify the company that he had taken a new apprentice. The Court was also responsible for managing the company's property and so the minutes include information about tenants of the property (members of the company or third parties) and their rents. The Wardens' payments included the expenses of dinners and pensions or alms paid to poor members of the company, their widows or dependents. Thus the accounts note that 2s. 2d. was received in 1553/4 from Thomas Stalker for presenting his apprentice, Thomas Rede, for binding. One year's rent of 20 shillings was received from Richard Logstone and 3s. 4d. was paid as alms to each of Walter Owen, Richard Jonson and Mrs Maxwell.

London livery company records also have a much wider historical value, particularly before the eighteenth or nineteenth century: they provide social and biographical details of a large proportion of City inhabitants; they document the development of numerous trades and crafts, sometimes nationally as well as locally; they contain records of many charitable foundations, including schools and almshouses or hospitals founded by the company, ; they relate to many localities outside London where the company held properties and investments England and Wales and also in Ulster; they are fundamental to the City's constitutional and political history, since before 1835 only livery company members qualified for admission to the City Freedom and the rights to vote for or be elected as its Common Councilmen and Aldermen, and to enjoy various other civic privileges.

The poll books for the City of London (below) show that the freemen of guilds and livery companies were entitled to vote and who they voted for . It is arranged alphabetically by company and gives addresses. Poll books are often the first indication of what livery company your ancestors may have been associated with if not that connected with his actual trade.

[2]		H.	L.	G.	B.	T.	P.	W.
COMPANIES.	NAMES AND PLACES OF ABODE.							
Coiners.	Abbot William, <i>Windsor</i>							
	Adkins Oswald, <i>Little Square Street</i>							
	Adkinson Caleb, <i>David Street, Berksly-square</i>							
Cook.	Aulin George, <i>Barnet Street, St. Sep</i>							
	Astell Samuel, <i>St. Sep</i>							
Cuppers.	Adams George, <i>Railoffe</i>							
	Adams James, <i>Mining-lane</i>							
	Adams John, <i>Whitechapel</i>							
	Adams Joseph, <i>Princes-square</i>							
	Addington William, <i>Cross-lane, St. Mary-hill</i>							
	Allen Thomas, <i>Dalton</i>							
	Allen William, <i>Holborn</i>							
	Allout Moses, <i>Spaer Street</i>							
	Allout Richard, <i>Mining-lane</i>							
	Amey William, <i>St. John's Street</i>							
	Ansell James, <i>Water-lane, Tower Street</i>							
	Aucott Joseph, <i>Spencer</i>							
Cordwainers.	Arnold Latham, <i>Newgate Street</i>							
	Ashew Edward, <i>St. Paul's Church-yard</i>							
Carriers.	Adams John, <i>Silver Street</i>							
	Adkins John, <i>London-wall</i>							
	Avery John, <i>St. Bride's-lane</i>							
	Avery William, <i>College Street, Lang-acre</i>							
Cutlers.	Allen Henry, <i>Lang-acre</i>							
	Ayres William, <i>Hemphill</i>							
	Arnold Cornelius, <i>Hammersmith, Surrey</i>							
Drapers.	Addington John, <i>Stepney</i>							
	Anderson John, <i>Coventry Street</i>							
	Avin Seth, <i>Hemphill</i>							
Dyers.	Allam Francis, <i>Old Fish Street</i>							
	Amy Joseph, <i>Colman Street</i>							
	Angel Richard, <i>St. John's, Southwark</i>							
	Arkeley John, <i>near Doghouse-bar</i>							
	Arnold Matthew, <i>Wapping</i>							
	Atkinson Christopher, <i>Mark-lane</i>							
Farriners.	Alder Luke, <i>Whitechapel</i>							
	Allen Matthew, <i>Hemphill</i>							
	Arnold Richard, <i>Whitechapel</i>							
Fishmongers.	Adams John, <i>Fleet Street</i>							
	Alexander Daniel, <i>Maze, Southwark</i>							
	Arnold Robert, <i>Leaden-hall</i>							
	Adams Henry, <i>St. Margaret's-hill</i>							
	Andrews John, <i>Baberg-hill</i>							
	Alfild John, <i>Grays-in, Leaden-hill</i>							
	Alfild John, <i>Shoreditch</i>							
	Alchouse William, <i>Leaden-hill</i>							
	Allen John, <i>Chick-lane, Tower-hill</i>							
	Allen William, <i>Tower Street</i>							
	Aulin John, <i>Red and-mouth Street</i>							
	Alcock George, <i>Wapping Street</i>							

[3]		H.	L.	G.	B.	T.	P.	W.
COMPANIES.	NAMES AND PLACES OF ABODE.							
Frame-work-knitters.	Alford James, <i>Noble Street</i>							
Fruiters.	Annball Richard, <i>Three-cranes</i>							
Glovers.	Atkinson Joseph, <i>Mark-lane</i>							
	Alexander Edward, <i>Tower Street</i>							
	Abbot James, <i>Bride-lane</i>							
	Abbot John, <i>Borough</i>							
	Akerman Isaac, <i>Fenchurch Street</i>							
	Alderley Thomas, <i>St. Olave, Southwark</i>							
	Alderley William, <i>Hemphill</i>							
	Appleby George, <i>Crosschurch Street</i>							
	Archer Benjamin, <i>Barnet</i>							
	Archer William, <i>Old-lane</i>							
	Ardidge Edward, <i>George Street, Fetter-lane</i>							
	Alderhead John, <i>Bishopsgate without</i>							
	Aylcomb Ralph, <i>Langate Street</i>							
	Aickland Thomas, <i>Whitechapel</i>							
	Adams George, <i>Fleet Street</i>							
	Andrews William, <i>Hackney</i>							
	Atley Richard, <i>Southgate</i>							
	Atkinson William, <i>Shoreditch</i>							
	Andrews Lancelot, <i>Gray's-inn</i>							
	Abbey John, <i>Newgate Street</i>							
	Abbot John, <i>Fleet Street</i>							
	Adams Richard, <i>College-hill</i>							
	Archer Paul, <i>Canon Street</i>							
	Allen Peter, <i>Spurrow-courts, Tower-hill</i>							
	Atkins Henry, <i>Chancery</i>							
	Atkinson Thomas, <i>St. Paul's Church-yard</i>							
	Avery John, <i>Leaden-hill</i>							
	Allen Esquire, <i>St. Dunstons</i>							
	Arnott John, <i>Golden-square</i>							
	Aikin Christopher, <i>Fish Street, Cripplegate</i>							
	Adams John, <i>Hemphill</i>							
	Allop Robert, <i>Edg. Ald. Manby-lane</i>							
	Alexander William, <i>Katherbush</i>							
	Allen Edmund, <i>Bull-courts, Fleet Street</i>							
	Allop Henry, <i>Newgate Street</i>							
	Amos Stephen, <i>Kingsbridge</i>							
	Archer Richard, <i>St. Dunstons in the East</i>							
	Adams Edward, <i>David Street, Gracechurch-square</i>							
	Abley James, <i>Langate-hill</i>							
	Anderson Edward, <i>Chelfin</i>							
	Annis James, <i>Chancery Street</i>							
	Atkins John, <i>St. Martin's in Grand</i>							
	Atcock James, <i>St. Paul's Church-yard</i>							
	Allen James, <i>near Bishopsgate</i>							
	Allen John, <i>Thames Street</i>							
	Allen Nathaniel, <i>Happing</i>							
	Anderson William, <i>Gracechurch Street</i>							
	Atkinson James, <i>Sauze-hill</i>							

Provincial or "Outwith" Guilds

Although most works on guilds and livery companies concentrate on the London companies it is important to remember the guilds of other cities and towns. Local custom meant each varied from the other in practice and governance as well as records. A useful gazetteer of "Gilds and Borough Ordinances" can be found in John West's *Town Records* which also gives an overview of the history and activities of provincial guilds. It's worth looking for the short guide *The Outwith London Guilds of Great Britain* by R F Lane. Tom Hoffman gave a very useful paper to the Guildhall Historical Association in 2006 on the *Rise and Decline of Guilds*. He also compiled a four volume *Bibliography on the Guilds of Great Britain and Ireland* which is published on the website of Birkbeck College. Part 2 covers the provincial guilds <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/library/downloads/guilds-part-2.pdf>

TIP The Victoria County History or local antiquarian history will usually indicate if there are local guilds. These can often be found on the British History Online website

The surviving records of the provincial "outwith" (i.e. outside London) companies, recording the names of many masters and apprentices, can be found in local City or Corporation record offices as well as in county archives. The National Archives Discovery Catalogue lists the holdings of many such local archives and is a good place to begin looking. For example, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Cheshire Record Office holds original records of 20 city guilds in Chester including the local Bakers; Barbour Surgeons; Brewers; Butchers; Coopers; Cordwainers and Shoemakers; Drawers in Dee; Wet and Dry Glovers; Goldsmiths; Innholders, Cooks and Victuallers; Joiners, Carvers and Turners; Saddlers and Carriers; Smiths, Cutlers and Plumbers; Tanners and Merchant Taylors. Typically, there may be company books, minutes and account books, apprentice enrolments, order books, and much more often dating back to the 17th century and earlier. In Buckingham about 36 guilds were combined

into four companies each with a like trade. Some records have been published and again it's worth looking at the Society of Genealogists Library catalogue as this is the sort of thing the library collects, such as those *Records of the Company of Shipwrights of Newcastle 1622-1967* in the Surtees Society vol 181 including company accounts from 1674 (noting many members' names) and the company's orders or resolutions since 1622, including entries such as:

13 July 1818. Alesander Doeg, a free brother of this company, demanded the serviced the following apprentices: Thomas Mennam, George Flock (later left his master), Stoddard Blair, Thomas Doeg, Matthew Grey, who agreed to serve the said Alexander Doeg.

As another example, the register of admissions of the Company of Merchant Tailors in York from 1560-1835 has been published. The members' names and dates of admissions have been supplemented by the author with other information from the company's records, such as a members' parentage or details of his apprenticeship and any offices that he held in the company.

For example, this is the entry for Richard Crosthwaite:

Son of Thomas Crosthwaite, late of Stoneraise in Threlkeld, Cumberland, Gent. Apprenticed on 17 September 1630 for 8 years to William Allanson of York, Gent, then to George Chater (on 22 March 1633/4) for the rest of his term. Admitted member 31 January 1637/8; searcher in 1641 and warden 1669-71.

Freedom of the City in and out of London

In some 200 towns or boroughs, being a freeman gave you certain rights and responsibilities including the right to vote.

Freeman Boroughs were constituencies where all freemen—not necessarily residents—could vote. Usually, these boroughs had a restricted electorate because a man had to be made a freeman of the borough. Often the poll books will list not only the names of those who voted but a complete list of the freemen who were entitled to vote. The 18th Century City of London had 7,000 voters but at the other extreme, Camelford had only twenty. There were several ways that a man may become a freeman of a borough or city; certain local customs and traditions might influence the arrangement of these ways.

Generally, a freeman might serve an apprenticeship in the borough. He might be the son of another freeman (the right is known as freedom through Patrimony). He might marry the daughter of a freeman (i.e. through Matrimony, although many cities including London did not give freedom in this way). He might purchase the right (i.e. through Redemption). The origins of such freedom rights might stem from the membership of early local merchants' guilds that governed trade. Charters for such guilds can date back to Norman or even earlier times and may be amended by later charters over the years. In cases where there was no specific local craft guild or the influence of the early guild had waned or there are few surviving early records then the city freemen records are invaluable. The records of those who became Freemen of the City can often be found in local record offices however many boroughs in towns and cities maintain their own corporation archives often in town halls distinctly separate from the county system. Records of towns and cities often include lists of their freemen, some lists dating back to the 13th century. Freemen rolls usually record names, dates of admission and perhaps a man's trade and parentage.

The records relating to those admitted as Freeman of the City of the City London are held in the Corporation of London (CLA) records at the London Metropolitan Archives. There is an extensive research guide available on the LMA website

https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/RESEARCH_GUIDES/web_detail_rg/SISN+18?SESSIONSEARCH

Before 1835, anyone who wished to become a Freeman of the City of London first had to become a Freeman of one of the City Livery Companies (as the successors to the medieval trade and craft guilds are known). The Freedom, or ordinary membership, of a Livery Company, is a separate Freedom from the Freedom of the City. A person wishing to become a Liveryman (i.e. a senior member) of a Livery Company must first be a Freeman both of that Company and of the City of London. A person who is a Freeman of both the City and a Livery Company is referred to as "Citizen and [Livery Company name] of London". Freeman of the City voted in parliamentary and civic elections.

London Freedom of the City of Admission Papers, 1681-1930 are available on Ancestry.

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2052/>

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Search > Wills, Probates, Land, Tax & Criminal

London, England, Freedom of the City Admission Papers, 1681-1930

Search Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Lived In Day Month Year Location
e.g. London, England

Any Event e.g. London, England

Add family member: Father Child

Father First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Child

Keyword
e.g. teacher or "Tower of London"

Admission Date Day Month Year

Search Clear search

Source Information
Ancestry.com, London, England, Freedom of the City Admission Papers, 1681-1930 (database on-line). Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Freedom admissions papers, 1681-1930. London, England: London Metropolitan Archives. COL/CHD/FR/02.

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Related data collections
[UK, Register of Duties Paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710-1811](#)
These are registers of the money received for the payment on taxes for an apprentice's indenture between 1710-1811. The records include sum received, name, address, and trade of master, name of apprentice, dates of articles of apprenticeship, and names of apprentice's parents.

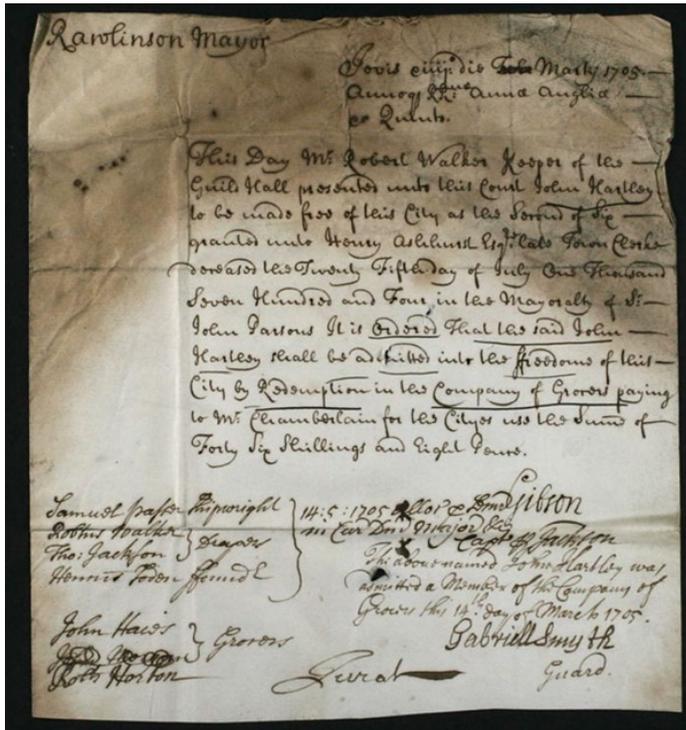
All Wills, Probates, Land, Tax & Criminal in the Card Catalogue

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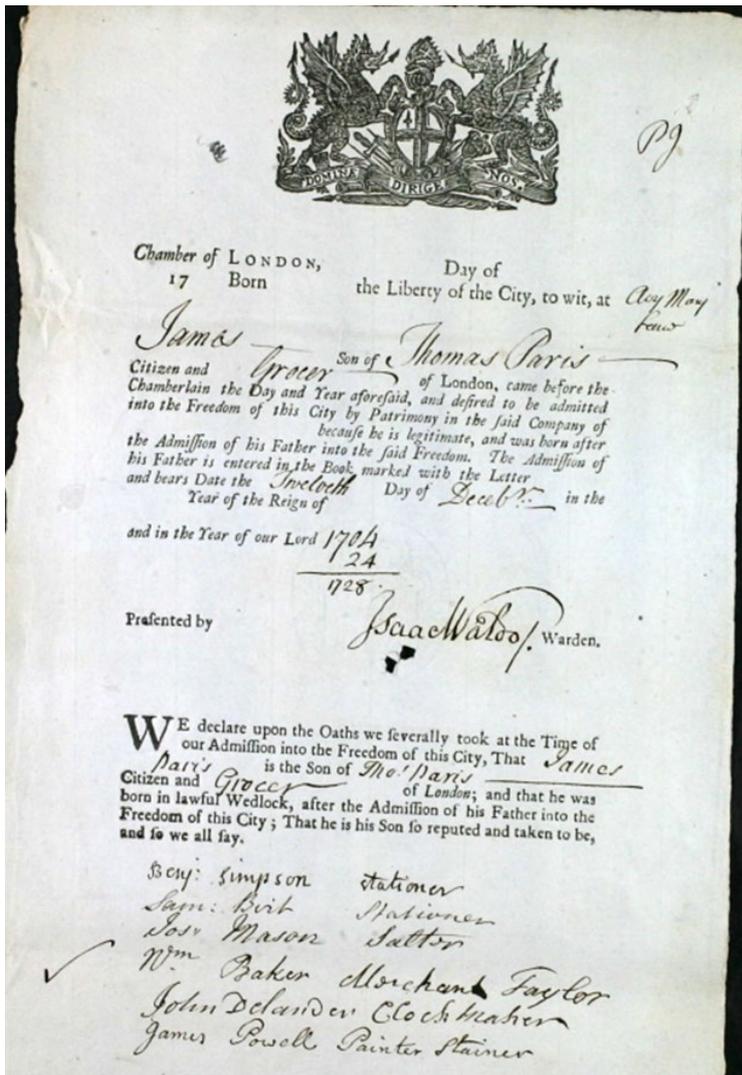
These can be useful as not only do they show how the Freedom was obtained but will indicate the Guild or City Livery Company that the Freeman was a member of. Often City Freedoms gained by apprenticeship will have the guild's apprentice records as evidence. To vote in the City London you had to be admitted as freeman of the City and you gained your freedom after serving an apprenticeship within a guild or livery company or by patrimony, redemption.

The London City Freedom Admission registers from the Corporation(CLA) records at LMA on Ancestry is a good place to start as it will show you how the freedom was gained. If by apprenticeship a copy of the apprenticeship indenture may be in the records as evidence. These admission papers also indicate which livery company a person was associated with.

Document Case Studies



Freedom by Redemption for John Hartley of the Company of Grocers made free after paying redemption of 46sh and 8d in 1704



Freedom by Patrimony for James Paris son of Thomas Paris Citizen and member of Grocers Company admitted to the Liberty of the City of London by Patrimony 1746, his father Thomas having been admitted 1704 (CF1/697/44)

Care needs to be taken with the dates of the admissions as indexed by Ancestry. The date shown on the image title gives a better indication of the dates covered by a particular admission register rather than the dates given in the online index. The online index dates this admission for James Paris as 1704 which is the date noted on the admission paper when his father Thomas was made free.



Matthews Beechcroft was a merchant and grocer and tea dealer. However, he served an apprenticeship to an uncle (also a merchant) but who was a member of the clothworkers company. His apprenticeship in 1774 is recorded in the clothworkers company records and was presented as evidence when he became free of the city. Interestingly his apprenticeship started in 1774. The online Ancestry index to the admission states the admission date as 1807 but it's clear from the online image that the register is for the period November 1814–April 1815 which ties in with the date of his freedom of the Clothworkers company in 1814 just before he took on an apprentice of his own—having to be free of the company to become a master

WORCESTER

Town Records by John West provides an overview of the development of Domesday and Medieval Boroughs and an insight into municipal government prior to the Great Reform Act 1832 which started to increase the franchise and the way people were entitled to vote. He gives as a typical example the city of Worcester, which was an ancient, incorporated borough which survived from the medieval times with a small self-selecting common council that elected councillors who in turn could elect the mayor and aldermen. The medieval guilds included a Guild Merchant and various city companies such as the glovers and clothiers companies with associated minutes and orderbooks, apprenticeships, etc. By the 19th century the clothiers company was undertaking charitable relief of the poor issuing bread tickets and doles to named individuals. Only freemen were eligible for election to the councils and

freedom of the borough was restricted by right of birth, apprenticeship or purchase for £20. Of course only freemen of the City might also elect their members of Parliament and hence be listed in the published parliamentary poll books. Worcester's chief officers were a Mayor, a Recorder "learned in the law" and a Town Clerk merely "skilled in the law". These officers kept the records and managed the legal business of the corporation also acting as magistrates in the administration of justice. They appointed functionaries such as auditors, chamberlains, coroners, surveyors, water bailiff or coal weighers etc. to administer the city. The fees for those admitted as freemen contributed to the corporation's income, but it was also in the Mayor's gift to appoint honorary freemen of the city—often to gain political influence during parliamentary elections. Once admitted a freemen could claim ancient privileges such as the exclusive right to trade in the city; to be exempt from market tolls and to vote in parliamentary elections. A Commission in 1835 into these ancient borough rights and freedoms commented on the high costs or fines levied on non-freemen who wished to trade in the town and the high price set upon the purchase of the right to trade. This penalised not only small traders who had insufficient capital to set up a business in the city by becoming freemen, but also those who owned property. It was claimed that landlords could easier rent their property if the privileges of trading in the city as a freemen not been so onerous and costly. The traditional glovers trade in Worcester was said to have declined due to such burdens. Nevertheless between 1800 and 1831 some 2,503 freemen were admitted, 1856 by birth or apprenticeship, only 647 by purchase of gift; the population of Worcester at that time being 27,000. By the 18th century the municipal boroughs had inherited or appropriated the ancient functions of local government from the medieval manor and guilds, and it was the corporation that now provided the "watch and ward", maintained the local courts of justice, regulated trades, repaired and maintained the high street, market place and bridges and provided for the city's poor. All of which generated local finance and of course name rich administrative records. For the genealogists perhaps the most important of these are the lists of freemen and the information therein on how that freedom was gained.

The Freemen Registers for the City of Worcester are held by Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service. These have been transcribed and are online amongst the name indexes available on their website <https://www.explorethepast.co.uk/services/archive-advice-information/our-collections/>

Bedford archives catalogue gives an excellent overview of the Bedford Borough records held in the record office. This included apprentice registers and freemen and burgess lists for various periods.

https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/Using_Our_Collections/Collection-Guides/Local-Government-Records/BedfordBoroughRecords/BedfordBoroughRecordsIntroduction.aspx

TIP 1. Freemen records often link into other records and resources. Had the borough freemen and burgess lists themselves been online it would be interesting to compare the names in the Bedford Freemen lists around 1830 with the names shown in the 1832 Bedfordshire poll book available in the library of the Society of Genealogists or indeed the extracts from the surviving 1831 census of and the 1830 directory. Freemen would pay local rates and taxes. They would be eligible to serve as jurors. They would be expected to swear Oaths.

TIP 2. Women did participate in the Guild system, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries but in far smaller numbers. They do very occasionally appear in City Freemen records but will not be accorded the right to vote in Parliamentary elections, though of course they may well be ratepayers and pay taxes. They may be apprenticed but are more likely to be noted as widows in apprentice registers turning over their husband's apprentice to another master. They may well be noted in court books and accounts as receiving support from the guild.

TIP 3. Many of the freemen's records for towns and boroughs are published and can be found at the SoG library. In fact, an advanced search in the SoG library catalogue on the website www.sog.org.uk brings up 144 hits for many places with published freemen records or poll books showing freemen who voted. Useful search terms when looking for freemen might also be burgess or burgesses.

TIP 4. Medieval and early Scottish burghs were controlled by a minority of residents known as burgesses and these are listed in the Findmypast website's Scotland, *Burgess & Guild Brethren Index*

The burgesses were merchants and craftsmen of the burgh, they had the right to elect the Town Council, and the merchants were more influential. The other residents of the burgh were 'unfree' and had no vote of special privileges from living in a town. Affluent householders such as chamberlains and lawyers were often 'unfreemen', although many were awarded the status of burgess 'gratis', this conferred citizenship but little else. Widows who were respectable, may also be awarded this citizenship. There were several ways in which a person could become a burgess. They could pay a fee and prove that their name was listed in the town's apprenticeship books. If a son's father was a burgess, they could pay a smaller fee and serve a shorter apprenticeship than the sons of a non-burgess. A son in law of a Burgess were able to avail themselves of the same privilege.

The freeman records for the City of Canterbury 1392-1800 and 1800-1832 have been published. This example (below) showing the original entries and an index from the printed book edited by Joseph Meadows Cowper in 1903 lists the freemen alphabetically and shows how each became a freemen after Apprenticeship, Matrimony, or Redemption. In Canterbury they noted the date the apprenticeship was first enrolled or began [EA] and the date the date that someone became a freeman after having completed an apprenticeship [A]. An example of the original manuscript records held at Canterbury Archives is also shown. The entry showing that Peter Lampert, barber became a freemen in 1719/20 after marrying Elizabeth daughter of John Hamilton barber and gentleman supplements the marriage entry in the parish registers which does not record the Bride's father's name. We see Peter himself taking on an apprentice in 1733.

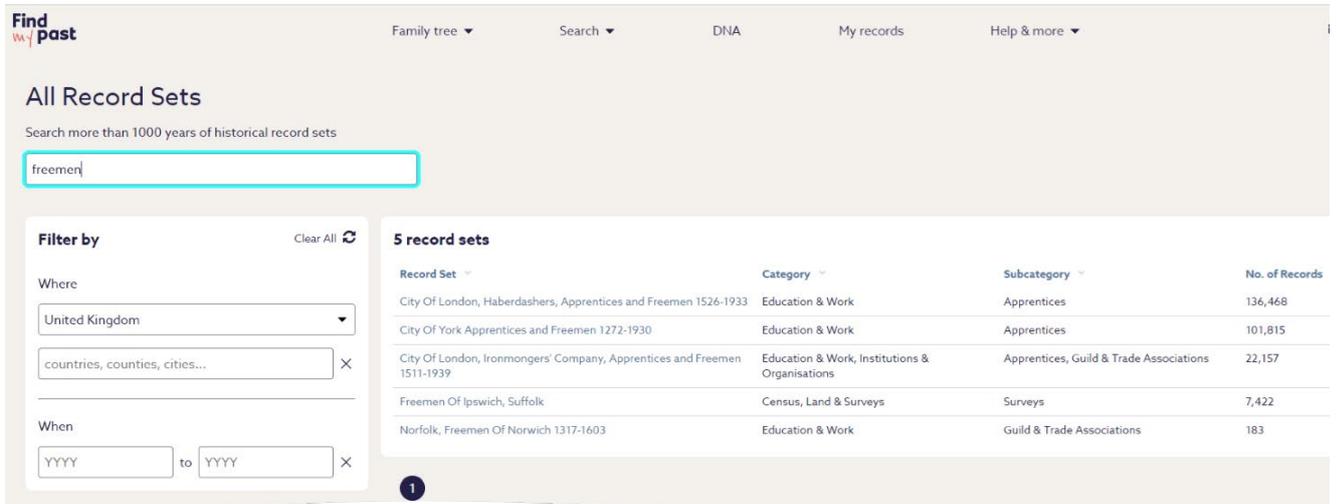
Lambart see Lambert			
Lambert, John	EA	1733/4	20 Feb
s app Peter Lambert, barber			
FA34, 162			
LAMBART, John, barber & perukemaker	A	1740/1	27 Feb
s app Peter Lambert, barber & perukemaker			
AC8, 1005; FA35, 13			
LAMBERT, Peter, barber	M	1719/20	18 Mar
s Elizabeth, d John Hamilton, barber/gentleman			
AC8, 623; FA32, 378			see also
Lambert, John, 1733/4			
Lambart, John, barber & perukemaker, 1740/1			
LAMBERT, William, victualler	R	1720	12 Dec
bondsman: Francis Jolley, baker			
AC8, 636; FA33, 13			
Lambin, Richard	EA	1728	4 Nov
app William Botting, carpenter & alderman			
FA33, 373			
LAMBIN, Richard, carpenter, Shellness, Sheppey	A	1741	20 May
app William Botting, carpenter			
AC8, 1032; FA35, 23			
LAMING, Thomas, silkweaver	M	1726/7	19 Jan
s Anne, d Thomas Barret, clocksmith			
AC8, 735; FA33, 271			
LAMPARD, John, glover	P	1726/7	23 Feb
s Matthew Lampard, cordvainer			
AC8, 737; FA33, 272			
LAMPARD, Joseph, cordvainer, London	P	1741	20 May
s Matthew Lampard, cordvainer			
AC8, 1029; FA35, 23			

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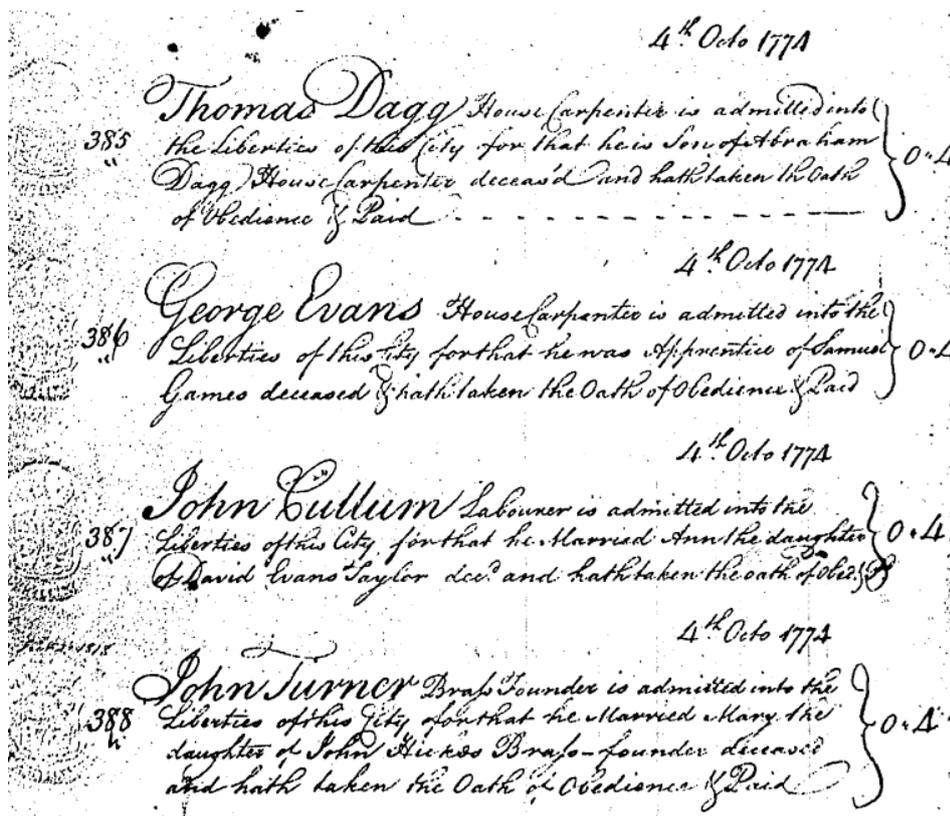
*Item Decem: ber 12th 1720 William Lambert of this City
 virtually was admitted and received his self bo:lon
 and freedom of this City for his payment of five pounds
 down and giving his own Bond with Francis Jolley of
 this City Baker for the payment of five pounds yearly
 until his sum of fifteen pounds more be paid with
 proviso that he said do not stand to make his son or
 daughters free but himself and apprentices only. For
 this he comptant for yett himself with the sume of* 05 00 00

The Canterbury City Freemen were typically not confined to the more affluent classes. Quite a few were labourers who had acquired freedom by birth and most were craftsmen or traders. Freemen had trading rights as well as voting rights, but these came at a price. Thomas Roche a cabinet maker became a freeman in 1745 on payment of a £20 fee but was also required to pay £4 for membership of the City's Company of Builders and Carpenters. While guilds had traditionally protected trading interests in Canterbury, by the eighteenth century their role as a trade body had singularly declined and was more recreational and Roche argued in print that they did little for their members and the fees were spent on feasting and drinking!

Freemen records for York 1272-1820 are online through the Institute of Historical research's website British History online and on Findmypast which also holds freemen records for Ipswich and Norwich.

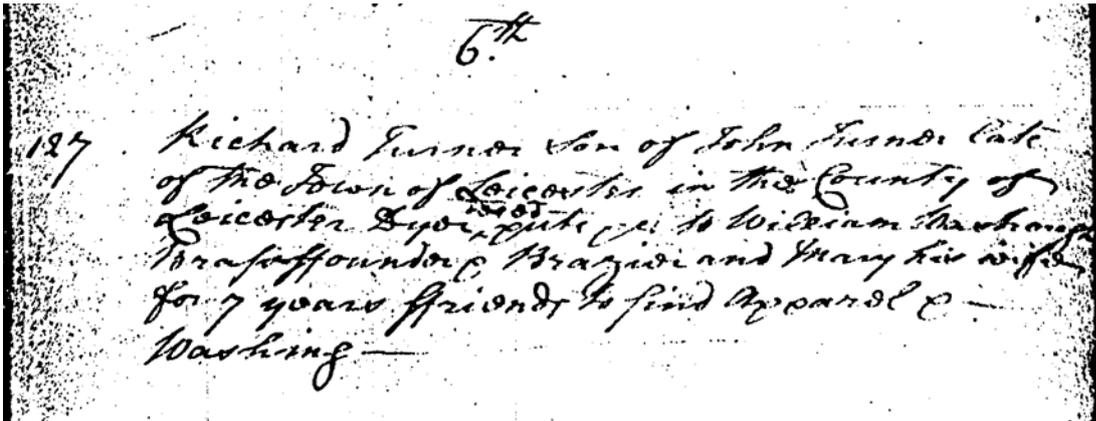


The records of show how a man might gain his freedom through Apprenticeship, Matrimony, Patrimony or Redemption/Purchase.



Here we see from the manuscript freemen records for Bristol there is John Turner, a brass founder gained his freedom by marrying Mary the daughter of John Hickes Brass founder deceased.

The freedom records will often have information about when the apprenticeship began and ended including the name of the apprentice, his father and the name and trade of the master. Many young men were attracted to towns to serve and train as an apprentice.



And here the apprentice rolls for the city of Bristol show that Richard Turner the son of John Turner, late of the town of Leicester, a dyer was apprenticed to William Beachough, Brassfounder and Brazier and Mary his wife for 7 years (Intriguingly it says friends are to find apparel and washing!). This young man had come some distance to learn his trade

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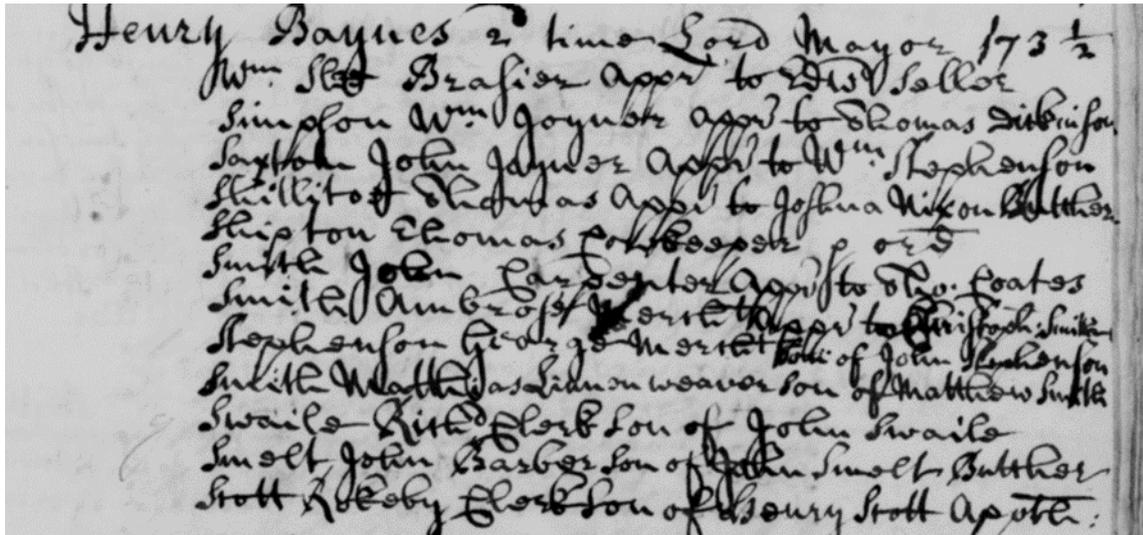
Ambrose Smith in 1731-32
City Of York Apprentices And Freeman 1272-1930
York, Yorkshire, England

View original record Add to tree Print More actions

Transcript of Ambrose's record Copy to clipboard

First name(s)	Ambrose	Country	England
Last name	Smith	Document type	Admission Register of Freeman of the City of York
Occupation	Merchant	Year range	1651-1743
Event year	1731-32	Archive	Explore York Libraries and Archives
Means	Servitude	Record set	City Of York Apprentices And Freeman 1272-1930
Master's name	Christophr Smith	Category	Education & work
Place	York	Subcategory	Apprentices
County	Yorkshire	Collections from	England, Great Britain

Index to York Freeman records on FMP for Ambrose Smith who became a freemen by servitude, i.e. having served an apprenticeship in the city



Line 2 Simpson William joyner {gained his freedom of City of York having served as } appr to Thomas Dickinson

Line 5 Skipton Thomas bookkeeper [gained his freedom of City of York having] paid

Line 7 Smith Ambrosine Merchant [gained his freedom of City of York having been] appr to Christopher Simpkins

Line 9 Smith Mathias linen weaver [gained his freedom of City of York having been] the son of Matthew Smith

Boyd's Inhabitants of London

One way in which many people first discover that their ancestors were freemen of the City of London or of one of its livery companies is through Boyd's Inhabitants of London (238 volumes) held at the Society of Genealogists and available online in the Society's digital collections and on Findmypast. It is often found cited in older reference works under its former name of Boyd's Citizens of London, a name no longer used, as the Inhabitants of London is much more wide-ranging in its contents than just freemen (implied by the word 'citizens) of London. The Inhabitants of London was begun in 1935 by Percival Boyd, who intended to draw together on 'unit sheets' details of family groups from all kinds of different records for the London area, for which Boyd produced in his own lifetime some 59,389 family group sheets, containing information gleaned from an immense number of sources, both printed and manuscript. The Inhabitants of London is fullest for the 16th and 17th centuries, although contains entries from the 15th to the 19th centuries

The family sheets can be extremely informative and lead to other documents and references as shown in the example below.

James Clutterbuck a citizen and draper married 1657, became a freeman in 1631 and the warden of the draper company in 1662. Ann Huxley stood as surety or sponsor for his apprenticeship [which according to the drapers company apprenticeships on Londonroll.org was in 1624. Perhaps his widowed mother had remarried?]. The entry names his parents and children and wife's father.

The reference to a 'Com Serj Index' is one which occurs fairly frequently throughout the sheets and refers to the indexes to the common serjeants' books in Corporation of London records at the London Metropolitan Archives. The common serjeant presided over the court of orphans, which administered the personal estate of deceased freemen and produced inventories of their personal property (not land, or real property).

In the case of James Clutterbuck, Boyd has used the indexes to common serjeants' book 2, folio 302v ('Com Serj Index II 3026) at LMA, which names James Cloterbuck, his widow Margaret and his no underage daughters Anne and Dorothy. The original record also gives an address for James Clutterbuck ('Broad Streete, in Adam Court'). Clutterbuck's orphans' inventory at CLRO [orphans' inventory 825] contains a full inventory of his household goods, room by room, and debts owed and owing at the time of his death. Another reference which turns up repeatedly in Boyd's Inhabitants of London is to 'LB', which stands for the letter books, also held in the Corporation The letter books 1275-1498 have been edited by RR Sharpe and published by the Corporation of London in 11 volumes.

CLUTTERBUCK	
James	
1657	
18197	
Name	James Clutterbuck
Father	Richard Clutterbuck C. 10 of S. Peter West chard 12978
Mother	Anne Brand of S. Martin h. found.
	daughter of John Brand and
Born	1657 at
Married	1687 June 20 at Saffron Walden Essex + 9 th Chertford.
Wife	Margaret Reynolds of Helms Bunting Essex
	Born at Died at
	daughter of James Reynolds and
Educated	
Profession etc.	citizen & draper from 1681 Jan 11 by John Clutterbuck
	warden 1688 surety for J. C. off Anne Husley 1700
	Com Serj Index II 3026 widow Margaret orphans Anne Dorothy
Died	1672 Dec 24 Buried at S. Vedent
Will	Admon P. C. C. 1672 Jan 10 to widow Margaret
Children	
	Anne 1658 mar 1677 Anthony Leach 54610
	Dorothy 1658 mar 1680 James Hussey 18191

Useful books, articles and websites

Ancestral Trails by Mark Herber

My Ancestors were Freemen of the City of London by Vivienne E Aldous

Town Records by John West

City of London Livery Companies and Related Organisations: A Guide to their Archives in the Guildhall Library

London citizens by John Beach Whitmore in *Genealogists' Magazine* Vol. 9 (March 1944) p. 385

The Records of London's Livery Companies Online (ROLLCO). <https://www.londonroll.org/>

The English Craft Guilds, studies in their progress and decline by Stella Kramer

The Outwith London Guilds of Great Britain by R F Lane.

Guilds and Mutual Protection in England by Patrick Wallis. London School of Economics and Political Science – Economic History Working Paper No 287

Rise and Decline of Guilds by Tom Hoffman (paper presented to the Guildhall Historical Association in 2006

Bibliography on the Guilds of Great Britain and Ireland by Tom Hoffman Part 2 covers the provincial guilds <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/library/downloads/guilds-part-2.pdf>

The Roll of the Freemen of the City of Canterbury from 1392-1800 by Joseph Meadows Cowper

The Chester Companies of the 17th Century: Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire vol 156

The Coventry Guilds and Trading Companies, with special reference to the position of women in Essays in Honour of Philip B Chatwin : Birmingham Archaeological Society vol 78

The Roll of Burgesses at the Guilds Merchant of the Borough of Preston. Co Lancaster 1392-1682 : Records Society of Lancashire and Cheshire vol 9

Directory of Historic Dublin Guilds edited by Raymond Rafeusse

Edinburgh guilds and Crafts: A sketch of history of Bugess-ship, guild brotherhood and membership of the crafts in the City : Scottish Burgh Records Society vol 21

The burgess rolls of Fife 1700-1800, part 1 : Auchtermuchty 1736-56, Crail 1755-1808, Cupar 1754-1814, Kirkcaldy 1765-1803, Newburgh 1740-42 ed David Dobson