

RESEARCH GUIDE

Membership Records of the Merchant Taylors Company

Research Guide 17: Membership Records of the Merchant Taylors Company

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Introduction

The Company has always had a large membership. For example, the total number of freemen and liverymen, excluding apprentices, in the 1630s has recently been estimated at 8,000 (Ian Archer, 'The Livery Companies and Charity in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in I Gadd and P Wallis eds, *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800*, 2002, p.24). The membership records are therefore extensive and complex. Note in particular that freedom admissions and apprentice bindings were dealt with at meetings of the Master and Wardens alone ('Ordinary Courts'), and not by the full Court of the Company, and that from 1595 the minutes of 'Ordinary Courts' were recorded in separate volumes from those of full Courts.

The surviving archives of the Merchant Taylors' Company contain membership information from 1398 at the earliest, but this is incomplete before the later 16th century. The most useful series are described below. Lists of these follow with the core material highlighted.

Although the records of the company are administered by London Metropolitan Archives, you must visit Guildhall Library to view the material.

Apprentices records

For apprentices 1398-1583: consult the Wardens' accounts, not indexed, which survive for scattered years only: 1398-1445 (Ms 34048/1), 1453-69 (Ms 34048/2), 1469-84 (the latter years are severely damaged) (Ms 34048/3), and 1545-57 (Ms 34048/4). For 1486-93 there are the surviving Court minutes (Ms 34008/1-2), which have been transcribed and indexed by Matthew Davies, *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486-93* (2000). From 1562 onwards there are the minutes of 'Ordinary Courts' (in Ms 34010/1-2), not indexed.

There are no other sources beyond these.

For apprentices 1583-1800: use the index by Michael Scott, 'The Merchant Taylors Company of London: apprentices 1583-1800' (LMA Library ref: 31.35 (MER)), arranged by name of apprentice.

This gives the volume number and page reference in the original registers of apprentice bindings (CLC/L/MD/C/018/MS34038/1-21). It also gives the date of apprenticeship and (if recorded) the name and trade or status of the apprentice's father; his parish; the name and residence of the master; the trade in which the apprentice was being trained and the term of years. There are separate indexes by master's name, place and trade. For apprentices 1800-1933 it is necessary to guess the likely date of apprenticeship (usually 7 years before the date of admission to the freedom), and to search within the two relevant binding registers (CLC/L/MD/C/018/MS34038/020 to 1819 and CLC/L/MD/C/018/MS34038/021 1819-1933). These have contemporary indexes, arranged alphabetically. Note that volumes 2-3, 6 and 8 of the binding register series each consist of two former volumes now bound together. Note also that many apprenticeships were never completed, i.e. the apprentice never took up the freedom of the Company.

Every new apprenticeship had to be 'presented' [ratified] at an 'Ordinary Court', and the entries in the binding registers were compiled by the Clerk in advance of presentment, and sometimes even before the indenture of apprenticeship had been executed by the parties. Some entries, therefore, which were never presented to the Ordinary Court, have been deleted or defaced in the register, and may lack particular details, such as the date of execution of the apprenticeship indenture.

Apprenticeships presented and ratified in the normal way were recorded in the 'Ordinary Court' minutes under the date that they were presented, but only very briefly. They therefore add little to the information in the bindings registers except the actual date of presentment. They can also be difficult to find, since presentment at an Ordinary Court could take place weeks after the date of the indenture. Occasionally the date of presentment is recorded in the margin of the bindings register.

The Orphan tax books 1694-1861 (Ms 34041/1-3) also record the names of apprentices bound between these dates, but very briefly. They should normally be avoided, though they may have some use for statistical compilations, or for searches across a large number of years.

Apprentices sometimes needed to be 'turned over' to new masters. Such 'turnovers' can be found in the minutes of Ordinary Courts, and have been included in Michael Scott's index as above.

Freemen records

For freemen 1398-1493: consult the modern indexes (Ms 34033) and associated biographical notes (Ms 34034). These are based upon the early Wardens' account books 1398-1484 (gaps) (Ms 34048/1-3) and the fragmentary Court minutes for 1486-93 (Ms 34008/1-2).

For freemen 1493-1530: there are no surviving sources.

For freemen, 1530-1928: consult Ms 34037/1-4, the index of freemen 1530-1928. This is in alphabetical order, gives the date of freedom, and indicates whether the freedom was by apprenticeship (with name of master), by patrimony or by redemption. It also shows the date of election to the livery, if appropriate. Entries in the index for persons admitted to the freedom 1530-45 are taken from Ms 34035/1 compiled ca. 1614 from sources which no longer exist. Freedom admissions 1545-57 are derived from the Wardens' accounts 1545-57 (Ms 34048/4). The accounts for 1557-62 do not survive, and freedom admissions for these years are again taken from Ms 34035/1, compiled ca. 1614 from sources then extant. From 1562, freedom admissions can be found in the 'Ordinary Court' minutes for 1562-95 (Ms 34010/1-2), 1595-1648 (Ms 34017/1-5), and 1648-20th century (Ms 34018/3-10).

The freedom entries in the 'Ordinary Court' minutes vary in detail. Those by patrimony or redemption tend to be relatively full, since no other record was kept. Those by apprenticeship tend

to be extremely brief, recording simply the names of the apprentice and his master. This was because the full details had already been recorded in the registers of apprentice bindings (Ms 34038) at the start of the apprenticeship.

The Stamp duty registers of freedom admissions 1703-1949 (Ms 34032/1-11) also record freedom admissions, but very briefly. They should normally be avoided, though they may have some use for statistical compilations, or for searches across a large number of years.

Livery and Court records

For the livery 1398-1493: consult the modern indices (Ms 34033) and associated biographical notes (Ms 34034). These are based upon the early Warden's account books 1398-1484 (gaps) (Ms 34048/1-3) and the fragmentary Court minutes for 1486-93 (Ms 34008/1-2).

For the livery and Court 1530-1928: persons admitted to the livery or subsequently to the Court appear always to have been a small minority of freemen. They are clearly indicated in the index of freemen 1530-1928 (Ms 34037/1-4), which gives the date of admission to the livery. Livery admissions can be found in the minutes of both full and 'Ordinary' Courts (Ms 34010, 34017-8), while various livery and Court lists survive from the late 17th century (Ms 34024-31) [see catalogue, not lists below].

Freedom Registers

Wardens' accounts; indexed 1398-1484 in Ms 34033 and from 1545 in Ms 34037

- Ms 34048/ 1, 1398-1445
- Ms 34048/ 2, 1453-1469
- Ms 34048/ 3, 1469-1484
- Ms 34048/ 4, 1545-1557

Court minutes; indexed in Ms 34033

- Ms 34008/1, 1486-1488
- Ms 34008/2, 1488-1493

'Ordinary' Court minutes; indexed to 1928 in Ms 34037

- Ms 34010/1, 1562-1575
- Ms 34008/2, 1575-1595
- Ms 34017/1, 1595-1607
- Ms 34017/2, 1607-1618
- Ms 34017/3, 1619-1630
- Ms 34017/4, 1631-1642
- Ms 34017/5, 1642-1648
- Ms 34018/3, [1648]-1651/2
- Ms 34018/4, 1651/2-1662
- Ms 34018/5, 1662-1675
- Ms 34018/6, 1675-1698
- Ms 34018/7, 1698-1731

- Ms 34018/8, 1731-1782
- Ms 34018/9, 1782-1843
- Ms 34018/10, 1843-1936

Stamp Duty books; unindexed

- Ms 34032/1, 1703-1761
- Ms 34032/2, 1761-1783
- Ms 34032/3, 1783-1800
- Ms 34032/4, 1801-1813
- Ms 34032/5, 1813-1834
- Ms 34032/6, 1835-1858
- Ms 34032/7, 1858-1878
- Ms 34032/8, 1878-1898
- Ms 34032/9, 1898-1925
- Ms 34032/10, 1925-1949

Alphabetical Lists of Freemen

- Ms 34033, Index of freemen, 1398-1493
- Ms 34034, Biographical notes, 1398-1493
- Ms 34037/1, Index of freemen, 1530-1928 - Surnames A-D
- Ms 34037/2, Index of freemen, 1530-1928 - Surnames E-J
- Ms 34037/3, Index of freemen, 1530-1928 - Surnames K-R
- Ms 34037/4, Index of freemen, 1530-1928 - Surnames S-Z

Apprentice Binding Books

Wardens' accounts; unindexed

- Ms 34048/1, 1398-1445
- Ms 34048/2, 1453-1469
- Ms 34048/3, 1469-1484
- Ms 34048/4, 1545-1557

Court minutes; indexed by Matthew Davies in *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486-1493* (2000)

- Ms 34008/1, 1486-1488
- Ms 34008/2, 1488-1493

Ordinary Court minutes; unindexed

- Ms 34010/1, 1562-1575
- Ms 34010/2, 1575-[1583]

Register of apprentice bindings, indexed integrally

- Ms 34038/1, 1583-1593
- Ms 34038/2, 1593-1594/5 and 1594/5-8
- Ms 34038/3, 1598-1601 and 1601-1602/3 ('N')
- Ms 34038/4, 1606-1606 ('O')
- Ms 34038/5, 1606-1609 ('P')
- Ms 34038/6, 1609-10/11 (Q') and 1610-12/13 ('R')
- Ms 34038/7, 1613-1616/17 ('S')
- Ms 34038/8, 1617-1619/20 ('T') and 1610-1612/13 ('R')
- Ms 34038/9, 1623-1628/9 ('W')
- Ms 34038/10, 1629-1635 ('X')
- Ms 34038/11, 1635-1639
- Ms 34038/12, 1639-1646/7 ('Z')
- Ms 34038/13, 1647-1654
- Ms 34038/14, 1654-1658/9
- Ms 34038/15, 1658/9-1669
- Ms 34038/16, 1669-1680 July
- Ms 34038/17, 1680 Nov - 1696
- Ms 34038/18, 1696-1718
- Ms 34038/19, 1718-1761
- Ms 34038/20, 1762-1819
- Ms 34038/21, 1819-1933

Orphans' Tax books, unindexed

- Ms 34041/1, 1694-1732
- Ms 34041/2, 1762-1810
- Ms 34041/3, 1810-1861

Quarterage Books

- Ms 34043, 1664-5 [1694-5?] (Alphabetical)
- Ms 34042, 1670-1677 (Alphabetical)
- Ms 34044, ca. 1720 - ca. 1730 (Alphabetical)
- Ms 34045, 1801 - ca. 1828 (Indexed)