

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 17

The membership records of the Merchant Taylors Company



Important Access Information

Access to some of the records described in this leaflet may be at Guildhall Library. Please see our online catalogue or contact us for specific advice before making a special journey.

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 administered by London Metropolitan Archives 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.

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 1583-1933: consult the registers of apprentice bindings, 1583-1933 (Ms 34038/1-21). These give details of the apprentice's parish, and father's name and occupation, together with the start of the term (usually a quarter-day), and the date of the indenture. Unfortunately there is no composite index of these registers. It is therefore necessary to guess the likely date of apprenticeship (usually 7 years before the date of admission to the freedom), and to search within the binding register which covers the relevant date. Each binding register has a contemporary index, arranged

alphabetically. Note that volumes 2-3, 6 and 8 of this series each consist of two former volumes now bound together, each with its own contemporary index. 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, but are not indexed.

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].

List of Registers

Freedom Registers

Reference	Dates covered	Notes
Ms 34048/ 1	1398-1445	(Wardens' accounts; indexed 1398-1484 in Ms 34033 and from 1545 in Ms 34037)
Ms 34048/ 2	1453-1469	Wardens' accounts
Ms 34048/ 3	1469-1484	Wardens' accounts
Ms 34048/ 4	1545-1557	Wardens' accounts
Ms 34008/1	1486-1488	(Court minutes; indexed in Ms 34033)
Ms 34008/2	1488-1493	Court minutes
Ms 34010/1	1562-1575	('Ordinary' Court minutes; indexed in Ms 34037)
Ms 34008/2	1575-1595	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34017/1	1595-1607	('Ordinary' Court minutes; indexed in Ms 34037)

Reference	Dates covered	Notes
Ms 34017/2	1607-1618	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34017/3	1619-1630	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34017/4	1631-1642	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34017/5	1642-1648	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/3	[1648]-1651/2	('Ordinary' Court minutes; indexed to 1928 in Ms 34037)
Ms 34018/4	1651/2-1662	Ordinary Court minutes
Ms 34018/5	1662-1675	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/6	1675-1698	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/7	1698-1731	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/8	1731-1782	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/9	1782-1843	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34018/10	1843-1936	Ordinary' Court minutes
Ms 34032/1	1703-1761	(Stamp Duty books; unindexed) Very brief – use Ms 34037
Ms 34032/2	1761-1783	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/3	1783-1800	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/4	1801-1813	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/5	1813-1834	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/6	1835-1858	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/7	1858-1878	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/8	1878-1898	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/9	1898-1925	Stamp Duty book
Ms 34032/10	1925-1949	Stamp Duty book

Alphabetical Lists of Freemen

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

Apprentice Binding Books

Reference	Dates covered	Notes
Ms 34048/1	1398-1445	(Wardens' accounts; Unindexed)
Ms 34048/2	1453-1469	
Ms 34048/3	1469-1484	
Ms 34048/4	1545-1557	
Ms 34008/1	1486-1488	(Court minutes; indexed by Matthew Davies in The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486-1493 (2000))
Ms 34008/2	1488-1493	
Ms 34010/1	1562-1575	('Ordinary Court minutes: unindexed)

Reference	Dates covered	Notes
Ms 34010/2	1575-[1583]	
Ms 34038/1	1583-1593	(Indexed integrally)
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	
Ms 34041/1	1694-1732	(Orphans' Tax books Unindexed) Brief - Use Ms 34038)
Ms 34041/2	1762-1810	
Ms 34041/3	1810-1861	

Quarterage Books

Reference	Dates covered	Notes
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)

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London Metropolitan Archives
40 Northampton Road
London
EC1R OHB

Telephone: 020 7332 3820
Fax: 020 7833 9136
Email: ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk

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