

Apprenticeships

Background

In England in 1563, an Act of Parliament was passed that meant that anyone who wanted to ply certain trades had first to take an apprenticeship. It was stipulated that the apprenticeship must last for at least 7 years and fines could be imposed upon anyone who practiced such crafts without proof that they had done so.

The Master was paid to apprentice the lad – girls only very rarely served apprenticeships back then – by the boy's parents or Guardians and in exchange for this payment, promised to not only teach the boy the trade, but also to clothe, feed and provide accommodation. This agreement was laid out fully in an indenture, some of which survive to this day. These beautifully scripted documents included the name of the Master and his trade, the apprentice's name (plus sometimes his date of birth and birthplace) and also the name and residence of the boy's father. Many of these apprenticeships were recorded in registers where the Master's name and trade, the boy's name and that of his father were recorded.

Between 1710 and 1804, the Master paid a stamp duty for taking on the apprentice. This was sixpence for every pound that the Master received for taking on the apprentice between £1 and £49 and one shilling for every pound that he received of £50 and over. Some payments were made until 1811 as payment of the stamp duty could be paid up to one year after the end of the apprenticeship had been served. Records of these stamp duties still exist.

As time went on, many informal apprenticeships were set up where a father taught his son or even his nephew his trade. This was more prevalent in rural areas than the towns and cities.

Where are the records?

The indexes of Apprentices and Masters can be viewed at the National Archives and some commercial companies also provide access, for a fee. The London Metropolitan Archives have some records, as does the Guildhall Library whilst there is an indexed collection of over 1,500 indentures from the 17th to the 19th century held at the Society of Genealogists. Some local County Archives also have records.

~~~~~

If you are having problems in finding a particular apprenticeship, someone else might be able to help you. Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and post details of your ancestor. The members will be more than happy to help you find the record that you are searching for or offer advice as to where else you might look.

If you would like to discover more about Apprenticeships, listed below are some products that will certainly help you to understand, and all of them are available from [www.paritychest.com](http://www.paritychest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details:

- My Ancestor was an Apprentice Ref: SR-SR02
- Board of Stamps Apprenticeship Books Ref: ARB-1337
- Reassigned Apprentices 1688-1908 Ref: DAL-trmcdreassigned

Parish Chest has many locally-specific items that relate to Apprenticeships. Log on to [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com) and pop the word Apprentice into the search box to see the items that appear.