

My apprenticeship alternatives

Michelle Dennis returns to her London ancestors, to show how she found out about their work from different sources...

By Michelle Dennis



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Formal apprenticeship indentures for our ancestors are not always easy to find, unless passed down through the family, and alternative documents are not always held in the places you may expect. A case in point involves my London ancestor, surgeon Samson Davis, and his gunmaker brother Joseph Davis.

Joseph (1807–1884) and Samson (1818–1860) were born in Aldgate, London to parents Samuel Samson Davis, a gunlock maker, and Betty Holbrook. Joseph married Eliza Hodges in 1831 at St Leonard, Foster Lane. They had six children together, and

the baptismal abodes of his children were given as Great Prescott Street and Chamber Street. His Sun Fire Insurance policy - obtained from London Metropolitan Archives - confirms Joseph's residence as being 62 Chamber Street, Goodman's Fields, in 1835. Presumably Joseph learned his gunmaking trade from his father, possibly without any formal apprenticeship documentation being created. I therefore decided to look elsewhere to piece together his early training and career.

Firstly, I contacted the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers (www.gunmakers.org.uk), in the hope of membership or apprenticeship

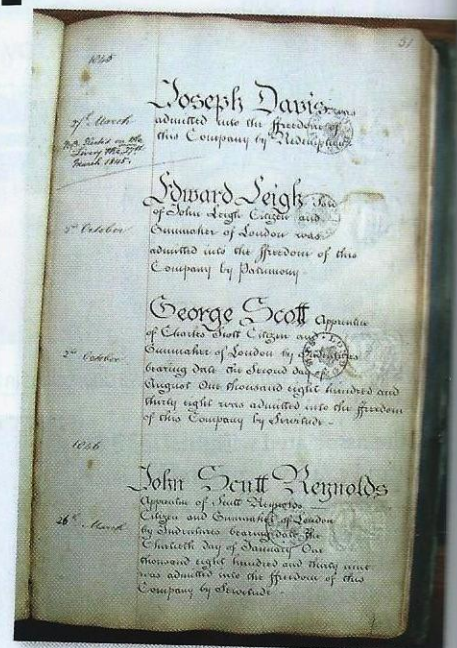
records. Success! In the guild membership admission register, Joseph Davis appears as being admitted into the freedom of the company by redemption (payment) in 1845. But unfortunately, no formal apprenticeship indenture was recorded.

IMPORTANT RECORDS

Despite not finding him in guild apprenticeship registers, there are two other important places to look that required their original document compilers to consult (and possibly copy) private apprenticeship indentures at the time. Firstly, court records were created to document

Joseph Davis was admitted into the Gunmakers' Company in 1845

the settling of apprentice/master disputes and can be a real bonus if your ancestor does appear. They may list the apprentice and father or master's name, trade and residence, term or length of indenture and other parties (such as the wife or business



Online apprenticeship sources

Michelle used a variety of online sources to find alternative records to official apprenticeship indentures

LONDON LIVERY COMPANIES

This free database includes the Bowyers' Company, Clothworkers' Company, Drapers' Company, Founders' Company, Girdlers' Company, Goldsmiths' Company, Mercers' Company, Musicians' Company, Salters' Company, Stationers' Company and Tallow Chandlers' Company. www.londonroll.org/

LONDON APPRENTICESHIP ABSTRACTS, 1442-1850

Find ancestors apprenticed to various livery companies in London between 1442 and 1850. The original records can be accessed from the Guildhall Library; the digitised versions are on Findmypast. <http://search.findmypast.com.au/search-world-records/london-apprenticeship-abstracts-1442-1850>

UK, REGISTER OF DUTIES PAID FOR APPRENTICES' INDENTURES, 1710-1811

This collection on Ancestry contains registers of the money received for the payment on taxes for an apprentice's indenture between 1710–

1811. http://search.ancestry.com.au/search/db.aspx?dbid=1851&oxid=49005&_lid=49005&_sch=External+List

APPRENTICES OF GREAT BRITAIN

Each record in this collection includes a transcript created by the Society of Genealogists from the original registers found at The National Archives. http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records-in-education-and-work/and_apprentices

LONDON, ENGLAND, FREEDOM OF THE CITY ADMISSION PAPERS, 1681-1930

This Ancestry record collection contains applications for 'Freemen' status. Freedom papers go back to royal charters granted for the privilege to market, trade, or conduct business. Livery Companies are associations of craftsmen whose members can earn Freemen status and who regulated their trade by controlling wages, labour conditions, and admission by apprenticeship.

<http://search.ancestry.com.au/search/db.aspx?dbid=2052>

partner of the master). They may discuss the conditions and responsibilities of the apprentice and master, and sometimes the failing of a condition may have provoked the apprentice ending up in court.

Also included may be the type of breach (marriage, absconding, misconduct or not completed the term of indenture) or that clothing or food was promised in the indenture, but not provided by the master. It will give the outcome of the court process, such as punishment or release, or signing over the apprentice to a new master. It may include a testimonial of character of the apprentice or master, and associated inquest papers if the apprentice or master died during the term.

Secondly, tax records such as the UK, Register of Duties Paid for Apprentices' Indentures, 1710–1811 can also give clues to our ancestors' trade. Apprenticeship Duty Registers were compiled by tax officials to record the duty paid on premiums. They will include information such as who paid the duty, the masters full name, residence and trade, the apprentice full name, the payment date when the indenture was registered, the amount of duty paid, and

Joseph Davis was mentioned in a case reported in the Morning Chronicle in 1842

LAWMETHENMENT
Charles Goswell and William Furg, the former 19 and the latter 10 years of age, were charged, before Mr. Norton with misconducting themselves, as apprentices, and playing at the Garrick Theatre, on the preceding night, the one in the character of Richard III., and the other that of Richmond, without the knowledge or sanction of their master. Mr. Joseph Davis, of No. 11, Coombe-street, Goodman's-fields, a respectable gun-maker, stated that the defendants, who were his apprentices, had for some time past become very negligent of their work, and devoted a great portion of their time to "spouting," talking of theatrical representations, and rehearsing plays. He had frequently remonstrated with them on the impropriety and folly of their conduct, but this appeared to have had little effect, and finding that they actually made an appearance at the Garrick Theatre on the night before, the one in the character of Richard, and the other in that of Richmond, without his knowledge or consent, he (Mr. Davis) felt it to be his duty to take them before his worship.

The apprentices for historical fame, who looked extremely sheepish, when asked by the magistrate what they had to say to the complaint made against them, said they had done; and pled they were very sorry for what they had done; and added that they got such a sickness of the stage on their first appearance, they should never attempt it again.

Mr. Norton expressed his surprise that the proprietors of the Garrick Theatre, Messrs. Conquest and General, who were respectable men, should allow the prisoners to appear under such circumstances.

Mr. Davis, the usher, here remarked that he observed by the Garrick bills the performances on the night before, were for the benefit of Mr. F. Ely, one of the actors at the theatre; and it was usual on such occasions that the persons taking a benefit also took the house for the night, so that management rested with him, and not the proprietors, and therefore he was accountable for this explanation.

Mr. Lavy, an officer of the theatre, corroborated the statement, and said that if the proprietors had been aware of the circumstances, they would not have permitted the youths to appear in character as they had done.

Mr. Norton, who seemed satisfied with this explanation, and he was glad to see the youths so penitent, and hoped they had seen enough of the stage not to attempt a repetition of their folly; and, as a preliminary act to the termination of their duty; and, as a preliminary act to the termination of the youth Goswell, he would advise his being taken on his discharge to the nearest barber's shop, and shorn of his flowing locks, which might be considered fashionable, but were not very seemly (laughter). The youth said he had no objection to comply with his worship's directions, and he and his companion were discharged.

sometimes the abode and occupations of fathers. But neither Joseph or Samson appeared in court or tax records, so I had to look elsewhere. I found three other alternative sources to formal apprenticeship indentures. Firstly, I obtained an Apothecaries' Hall document from the Worshipful Society

of Apothecaries (www.apothecaries.org) about Samson Davis. This provided a wealth of information – his full name and trade; street address; details of his guardian (his father was deceased, so a brother was named); his master's full name, address and occupation; his apprenticeship term (five years); his indenture date; a testimonial of moral character; his age and baptism date; details of his duties (such as attending University College Hospital lectures for 12 months, naming individual lectures and lecturers); the date of qualifying for Licentiate Society of Apothecaries; and records of admission into Freedom of the

City of London. Minute books may include enrolment of indentures, misbehaving or absconding apprentices, and new masters. I also found Joseph's 1845 Freeman papers on Findmypast (as part of the City of London Gunmakers' Company Freedoms and

Admissions 1656–1936 records). These contained information including the apprentice's full name, address, and trade; his father or guardian's name, trade and full street address; the company name, admission date and place; the type of entry - redemption (payment), patrimony (inheritance), servitude (apprenticeship), or presentation (distinguished service to the company or city); the premium amount (although my ancestor's father was a gunmaker in the Tower of London too, Joseph paid 46s 8d to become a freeman by redemption in 1845); and sworn statements by the applicant that he was over 21 and not an alien - including

his signature and witnesses. My third resource was the historic newspaper. Newspapers can contain accounts of court proceedings involving, for example, runaway apprentices; advertisements for new apprentices; adverts by a father or guardian seeking an apprenticeship for the child; inquests into the maltreatment of an apprentice leading to death; and local news articles that include mention of apprentices. I found a report about my ancestor, Joseph Davis, in an 1842 edition of the Morning Chronicle. He was complaining about the misconduct of his two apprentices. He stated, "they were negligent, devoted a great deal of their time to 'spouting' and talking of theatrical productions and rehearsing plays". Joseph took them to court as they both appeared in a play without his permission. The judge reprimanded the theatre owner for letting apprentices appear in his production. His Worship directed that they be taken to the nearest barber shop and be "shorn of their flowing locks" as punishment for their behaviour. The youths had no objections. ■



THE APPRENTICE'S WORK

