

Licensed River Thames Watermen & Lightermen

By Robert John Cottrell

No doubt many of you present today have studied and searched the various census returns and come across the occupations of Waterman or Lighterman. It is surprising how many people ask me exactly what these professions are. Many think the trades are connected with what we now term today as “utility occupations” supplying water and lighting to the general public, so before proceeding further it is important to be aware what exactly Licensed Thames Watermen and Lightermen are. First, you must be made aware of the fact that they are two completely different professions, indeed the Lightermen up until 1700 were members of the Woodmongers Company and only joined forces with the Thames Watermen after successfully petitioning Parliament.

So what is a waterman? The 1960 wording of a licence granted by the Port of London Authority stated that he was a highly skilled boatman licensed by the Authority to work as a waterman in the navigation of row boats, sailing boats, steam boats, and vessels on all parts of the River Thames between the landward limit of the Port of London and Lower Hope Point near Gravesend in the County of Kent and in or on all Docks, Canals, Creeks and Harbours of, or out of, the said River, so far as the tide flows therein and has been granted a number for his licence, which Licence and Number have been duly registered as required by Law. His Licence was liable to be revoked, suspended or cancelled at any time, by the Port of London Authority for misconduct or incompetency. If anyone acted as a waterman without a licence or after his licence had expired he was liable to a penalty of £50.00p. If a licensed waterman failed to produce his license to an officer of the Port of London Authority, or to another waterman producing his own licence, he was liable to a penalty of £5.00p. Originally his duties would have been to row fare paying passengers across or up and down the River Thames between the numerous plying places, usually stairs or steps situated along the length of the River. His duties in latter years have greatly changed, but we will come to that later.

So hopefully we are aware of the duties of a River Thames waterman, but what were the lighterman’s duties? Again according the Port of London Authority he was a person licensed by the Authority to work as a lighterman in the navigation of barges or craft, used or to be used for the carrying of goods, wares or merchandise, without passengers, on all parts of the River Thames, between the landward limit of the Port of London and Lower Hope Point near Gravesend in the County of Kent and in or on all Docks, Canals, Creeks and Harbours of, or out of the said River, so far as the tide flows therein and has been granted a number for his Licence, which Licence and Number was duly registered as required by Law. Again the licence was liable to be revoked, suspended or cancelled at any time, by the Port of London Authority, for misconduct or incompetency. If anyone acted as a lightermen without a licence or after his licence had expired he was liable to a

penalty of £20.00p. Similarly he was liable to a penalty of £5.00p if he failed to produce his licence to a fellow lightermen producing his own licence or to an officer of the Port of London Authority. In earlier times lightermen rowed their own barges up and down the reaches of the river carrying goods from place to place, ship to shore or shore to ship.

Today the trade has all but died out. Probably one of the few commodities to be carried by barges today is London's rubbish being towed out by tugs to landfill sites downstream. Certainly you will never see lightermen rowing their barges, except in specially organised races.

If you are still confused, I suppose the easiest and most straightforward definition is to state that watermen were the taxi drivers and the lightermen drove the juggernauts.

But what of the history of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen. From earliest times there has always been a need to convey passengers and carry goods across or up and down the Thames. Up until the mid-eighteenth century there was only one bridge crossing the tidal river in London. The only other recognised crossing was a ford at Westminster but weather and local conditions would affect this. The roads of medieval England and through centuries to the 19th century were in a poor state generally, and in the winter months often impassable. There was always a danger of being attacked and robbed by highwaymen and footpads sometimes not only of goods and possessions but also of life itself. Only the rich and important could afford any form of protection as they travelled around whether to do their work and duty or purely for pleasure. The court and the nobles often built their palaces and houses besides the Thames, there were residences at Hampton Court, Westminster, Lambeth, The Savoy, The Tower of London and Greenwich; so water borne transport was always of great importance and considered safe and reliable forms of travel. The nobility, the Church and most of the London Guilds all had their official barges, manned in colourful regalia by Thames watermen. For the ordinary people there were two or four oared skiffs, and for goods there would be heavier craft powered both by oars and by sail. Merchants and traders would also have made great use of the river both for transport of their goods and their own use to keep in touch with their business. For all of these services the skills of London watermen and lightermen were well suited. However, suitability and trustworthiness are not the same, and human nature being what it is there was often discord and disorder. Quarrels would break out, fares disputed and violence was commonplace. There would be fights among watermen to secure well off customers – watermen were acknowledged as a rough crowd with colourful language. It was not unknown for watermen once they had their passengers in the boat to demand more money than the agreed fare threatening to tip their unfortunate customers into the river unless their demands were met. There have been recorded instances where these threats were carried out. So in the year 1514 in the reign of King Henry VIII parliament introduced an act to regulate the fares of London watermen. Certainly prior to 1514 there does not appear to be any surviving documents of any governing body previously being in charge of the watermen. Unfortunately the act of 1514 did not sort out all of the problems and it appears that many unskilled men and young untrained boys were working as so-called "watermen". In 1555 during the reign of Henry's daughter (Queen Mary) another act was passed to cover the apprenticeships,

complaints, and fares of watermen. The act required the appointment of a governing court of overseers and rulers consisting of eight highly respected watermen who would be appointed annually. The newly founded court was responsible for the training of its members together with the liability of watermen and apprentices to impressment into the Royal Navy. So the year 1555 is the year that The Watermen's Company was born, you had to wait another 145 years before it became The Company of Watermen and Lightermen. The Company claims to be the only ancient City Guild formed and controlled by Parliament.

So we now have for the first time the mention of an apprenticeship system whereby a young lad was bound to an approved master. In 1555 an act specified the apprenticeship period to be one year, although thirty years later this was increased to five years with a provisional licence granted after two years. In 1603 the act was again revised to alter the apprenticeship period to seven years. It has been suggested that the length of the apprenticeship period was to "install social discipline rather than the acquisition of rowing skill". Today the apprenticeship period is five years with the provisional licence after two years remaining.

In 1827 it was decided to replace the eight rulers of the Company by a Court of twenty-six persons, including a Master and four Wardens.

In days gone by it was not unusual to sight many watermen in their skiffs at the numerous appointed stairs or public landing places waiting for passengers to take across the river, or sailors and merchants to take them back aboard their vessels which were moored off stream. As already mentioned in the early days fights used to break out amongst the watermen to see who could get the best fares (probably an early form of river rage) the act of 1555 certainly prevented much unpleasantness but this still probably, to some degree still existed.

Each waterman had to have his boat numbered and carry a fare list. Watermen were known as above bridge or below bridge men depending on the recognised plying place that they served. Many of the official plying places, or stairs as most of them were known were named after waterside taverns such as Horseshoe Alley, Falcon Stairs and Cupid's or Cuper's Stairs above bridge and Fountain Stairs, King Stairs, Elephant Stairs and Swan Stairs below bridge. Many of the stairs still exist today, albeit hidden behind new river walls. Upon checking fares I was very surprised by the charges made, especially if you consider I am talking about the early 1700's. The horseferry at Westminster manned by a licensed waterman named "Cole", together with two or three others charged 2 old pennies for a man and a horse to cross the river. A coach and two horses were charged one shilling and six pence. A coach and six horses two shillings and six pence, and a loaded cart was charged the same fare. In the mid 1500's the fare from London to Greenwich was two pence, and from Richmond to Greenwich one shilling.

The watermen appear to have had a close association with London's theatres. Many of the theatres, like The Globe and The Swan were sited close to the riverbanks and the audiences had to rely on the Thames watermen to row them across the river to see the

latest plays and comedies. Most of us are probably aware of the Irish comedian Thomas Doggett. Legend has it that Thomas Doggett was standing by a set of stairs one night after a play, waiting for a waterman to row him back across the river to his lodgings. Being a foul night and the tide being very strong he could not find a freeman to take him, but one young waterman at last agreed to row him. Thomas Doggett later found out that the young waterman was just out of his apprenticeship and as a way of showing his appreciation to the young man and others like him he set up a rowing match for six watermen in the first year out of their apprenticeships. They should row between The Old Swan tavern at London Bridge and The New Swan tavern at Chelsea, (a distance just short of five miles). The winner should receive an orange coat and in the early days at least a solid silver badge. It is not certain which year the first race took place, but it is either 1715 or 1716, and although a picture of the winner hangs in Watermens Hall the identity of the winner remains unknown. In his will Thomas Doggett gifted a sum of money to ensure that this race should continue to be rowed "for ever". Thomas Doggett died on 22nd September 1721 and is buried at St. John's Church, Eltham. However, the remarkable fact is that the race still takes place in August to this day, making it the oldest race in history. You note I mentioned the word "legend" for others state that the race was founded to celebrate the anniversary of the accession of the House of Hanover to the English throne for indeed the prize of the silver badge displays the "wild horse of Hanover". River contests, like those on land, were reasonably common on the river, other races and regattas have been held at Gravesend, Greenwich, Westminster and Erith and other areas, some surviving many years, but the famous Doggett Coat and Badge race has outlived them all.

Six first year freemen row the race every August, but as the race and the honour of winning gained in popularity, heats had to be held to reduce the rowers down to the final six. It would appear that this was very time consuming and a system of drawing lots was introduced whereby the contestants were chosen. Some lucky contestants actually sold their right to race to the highest bidder. Strangely the organisation of the event was given to the Fishmongers Company with the Clerk of the Watermen's Company only required to put forward a list of first year freemen. Besides winning the famous "Doggett Coat and Badge" the winner became a Royal waterman required to carry out royal and ceremonial duties. These are still carried out to this day and the uniform worn with much pride.

The rules for binding an apprentice were that he had to be between fourteen and twenty when bound, with an affidavit or birth proof being produced. There have been occasions where a boy older than twenty has been discharged and similar cases where a boy was too young to start an apprenticeship had to be re-bound after his fourteenth birthday. When bound the apprenticeship document was cut in half by means of a "wavy" line (hence the term "indentures"). The reason for this was to make it difficult for Master or boy to cheat at examinations - the two halves of the apprenticeship paper had to marry-up. Masters were severely reprimanded if the court considered any form of cheating was taking place. The apprentice was not allowed to drink or gamble without his master's consent. He certainly was not allowed to marry whilst being apprenticed, under the penalty of a heavy fine. I understand that the fine was £10.00p and this probably represented a whole year's wages back in the 1800's. The master was responsible to house, clothe and feed his

apprentice within his own household, however it was written that “he may not feed the boy salmon more than three times a week” – how times have changed! After two years training, the boy and master were called to the court to satisfy their examiners of the boy’s competence, thereby obtaining a provisional two-year license permitting the boy to ply for hire. At the end of the apprenticeship the master and his charge were again called to prove the boy’s worthiness and once proved to be granted his full licence. The binding book was signed with the wording “I have no objections to this freedom”. It is an unfortunate fact that no more than half the boys apprenticed gained their freedom. Losses were due to; death, drowning being very common; the high mortality rate of the young, running away from the harsh conditions of the work and the severity of the master; all taking their toll. For various reasons some boys were just not capable of getting through the apprenticeship. But by far the greatest loss must be attributed to impressment into the Navy. The constant drain on River Thames watermen to serve in the Royal Navy had existed from medieval times; the situation became far more demanding after the end of the Declaration by the American Colonies on the 4th July 1776. After the end of the American War of Independence, other wars were soon to follow and impressment for the watermen and lightermen remained. In 1801 2000 watermen were summoned to the court for naval duties, leaving the river to be attended by the very old, the very young or those watermen who were granted protection from the press, normally those who were retained by nobility. I am reliably informed that members of a City Livery Company were exempt from the press, but the Watermen’s Company was a City Guild and therefore its members were not exempt unless a protection notice was granted. One reason for this may be due to the fact that many watermen did not work in the City, perhaps working in the Gravesend, Erith, and Woolwich or Richmond areas. The area covered by the court overseers was between Windsor and Gravesend. Another reason why the Watermen’s Company remained a Guild and not a Livery Company may be due to the fact that the Navy urgently required highly skilled men to man their warships, and Thames watermen would have been just that workforce. Some lightermen bringing their barges downstream, after receiving their wages left their lighters at Kingston or Richmond to avoid being caught by the press gang. Although it was agreed that time spent in the navy would not affect the apprenticeship period, there are many cases where boys took far longer than the normal seven years to gain their freedoms, with time in the navy being the most likely reason for this. It was not until 1859 that the Thames watermen and lightermen were free of the attention of the press gang. We may well wonder how many Watermen’s Company men and boys lost their lives manning the ships of His Majesties’ Navy.

One interesting story among many is about Samuel Shillingford. He was Admiral Nelson’s favourite coxswain and was killed at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent in 1797 where Nelson lost his right arm. Samuel was a Greenwich waterman made free in 1792; and after his death his widow and family were looked after by the watermens charities. His widow was one of the first inmates into the watermen’s almshouses in 1841 where she died in 1849. Whilst the records surrounding Samuel’s death and the fate of his widow, show the surname as being “Shillingford” the binding book for August 1782 clearly shows his surname as “Shillingsworth”. Genealogists be careful!

A still earlier story dating from 1720 concerns a sum of money being voted for at Watermen's Hall for Thomas Fletcher, bound in 1712, a captive in Sallee, which is a seaport on the western coast of Morocco.

The average yearly intake of newly made apprentices during the 1700's was around 400-450 this figure drops down to around 300-350 in the 1800's; today the figure is around fifteen, which includes a small number of girls.

A survey of river employment in 1799 shows a total in excess of 130,000 men working afloat, of these just over 8000 were freemen of the watermen's company, 2000 men are quoted as not free, 2000 apprentices, 200 pilots and 155 bumboatmen. A bumboatman was in charge of a bumboat, which carried all kinds of goods, clothing, provisions, rope, and tackle and sometimes offered the services of "ladies" to seaman. On the 20th June 1844, proceedings were taken before the court of Excise, against a person named Frederick Rayner, for retailing spirits on the river without a license, Mr. Pelham on behalf of the defendant, maintained that he was authorised under his licence from the Watermen's Company under the bumboats act of King George II. The license was as follows. I hereby certify that Frederick Rayner, of the Parish of Stepney, is this day registered in a book of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames kept for that purpose, for the purpose of selling, disposing of, or exposing for sale, amongst the seaman or other persons, employed in or about any of the ships or vessels upon the said river, any liquors, slops or other articles whatsoever, between London Bridge and Limehouse Hole, but the said boat is not to be used on the said river, for any other purpose than the aforesaid. This at Watermen's Hall, 1841. Whilst the defendant also produced a certificate from the Trinity House dated 1835 by which he contended he was authorised to pursue his calling; a Mr. Mayow, on the part of the commissioners, maintained that section 28 of an act made law in the reign of King George IV, provided that no person should hawk or sell spirits, in streets, highways, or in any boat or other vessel in the river. It would appear that there was a conflict of legal paperwork with both Watermen's Hall and Trinity House finding for Mr. Rayner, the end result was that Mr. Rayner was fined £2.00p, several stewards of steamboats were summoned and fined £2.00p each for similar offences. I have checked my own index for Frederick Rayner, and whilst I am certain that he was never bound or gained his freedom from the Company of Watermen and Lightermen, it appears that the Company registered his bumboat.

The watermen and lightermen were always close-knit communities; fathers apprenticed sons, brothers apprenticed brothers and husbands apprenticed in-laws. Many watermen and lightermen can trace their ancestor's back over many generations.

You may note that within the apprenticeship binding books that instead of a master an apprentice were bound to a female. You may well ask why this should be. In some circumstances a son could be bound to his widowed mother, the terms of reference between master/mistress and boy stated that the apprentice was taught or caused to be taught by -----, therefore it was in order for a mother, grandmother or aunt to bind an apprentice. If the widow remarried, as long as the new husband was a licensed

waterman or lighterman the former widow could continue the apprenticeship, but if the widow married outside the trade she had to re-assign her charge to another licensed man.

Back to the early days. In 1585 Queen Elizabeth granted arms, crest and heraldic supporters to the Watermen's Company. The coat of arms depicts two dolphins as the heraldic supporters, flanking a skiff floating on the water and the tools of the trade, crossed oars and two cushions for the comfort of customers. The Company motto is "At command of our Superiors".

Every City Company had to have its own Hall and according to the Waterman historian Henry Humphreus the first mention of Watermen's Hall comes in 1603 at Cold Harbour, Waterside Quay, Upper Thames Street, however, others place the first hall further upstream at Three Cranes Wharf which was directly south of the Guildhall was the starting point for mayoral water processions. I leave you to make your mind up on the location of the first hall, but if we go for Cold Harbour this original hall was destroyed, along with most of the Company's records in the Great Fire of London in 1666. The replacement hall, together with a school was originally to be built at Christchurch, Southwark, for some reason this did not happen and the estate in Christchurch was sold to Mr. John Everard on the 12th August 1720 for £500.00p. Eventually the second hall was built in the City; this again was destroyed by fire. Just prior to this period a major change occurred. The lightermen who were members of the Woodmonger's Company petitioned Parliament to join with their watermen associates. In 1700 they were successful and the Company of Watermen and Lightermen was born.

The present hall at St. Mary at Hill was completed in 1780 and despite the damage sustained during the blitz it stands today much as it did in the 18th century and is reputed to be the only Georgian Hall in the City of London. The earliest records appertaining to the hall at St. Mary at Hill was a court of complaint held on 6th April 1780 against lightermen bringing two or more craft through London Bridge at one and the same time. The lightermens case appeared to rest on the difficulty of obtaining licensed men for each barge due to the impressment of many of their colleagues.

I have also previously mentioned that the watermen were the water taxi drivers, but what of the land carriages? You can imagine that when the hackney carriage was introduced to London in 1588 and licensed to carry members of the public in 1637 there was uproar within the waterage fraternity. Laws were introduced to protect the watermen whereby the licensed hackney carriages could not pick up fares within a certain distance from the riverbank. Over the years this protection had been eroded. More sinister to the watermen was the building of Thames bridges. Up until the mid 1700's there was just one bridge crossing the Thames in London, but with an ever-increasing population the necessity for more bridges to be built was overwhelming. In 1750 Westminster Bridge was completed and others soon followed. Although the watermen were compensated for loss of earnings and plying places were built at each end of the bridges, the Watermen's power was ebbing.

The Watermen's Company fiercely opposed the building of many bridges, most to no avail; however, there are records of some successes. In 1828 a proposal was made for erecting a stone bridge from the Palace at Lambeth to the Horseferry, Westminster, to be called the Royal Clarence Bridge. A petition to parliament was presented on the 2nd February, for leave to introduce a bill for the purpose. A petition was also presented on the 14th for a bill for erecting a chain suspension bridge there. On the 24th March, the watermen of the Horseferry, against both bills, presented a petition to the house and on the 28th April, a similar petition from the watermen of Lambeth stairs was presented, but the bills were not further proceeded with.

Perhaps the last nail in the coffin was introduced in the Victorian era when we saw for the first time the day trip paddle steamers plying their trade up and down the Thames and even around to the seaside towns of Margate, Ramsgate, Southend and Clacton. Many of you today may recall the "Royal Sovereign" and the "Crested Eagle" etc-taking passengers from Tower Pier to the seaside piers. Whilst the immediate problems for the watermen's survival looked bleak, over the years watermen turned the passenger boat services to their favour, after all they had the skill and the knowledge already. Today, every boat taking passengers from the various London piers to Hampton Court, Kew, Greenwich and the Thames Barrier etc. are manned by Thames watermen. Even the principal crewmembers of the Woolwich Free Ferry are Freemen of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen.

It has been calculated that by 1850 there were no more than 1500 watermen left working from fewer than 80 plying places. The end was near for the watermen or he had to change. Some had already changed or adapted to other trades still related to the water, some of the most obvious being watermen custom officers, and the Thames fire brigade, the latter being formed through the actions of City insurance companies. Both of these trades prevented impressment into the navy by an act passed in 1707 during the reign of Queen Anne. The act states "That the watermen for the time being, belonging to each Insurance Office within the cities of London and Westminster and limits thereof, not exceeding thirty for each office, shall be free from being impressed, or liable to be compelled to go to sea, or serve as marines, or as soldiers at land; their names and places of abode being registered and entered, with the secretary or other officer of the Admiralty office. I understand an article has already been written on the subject of waterman fireman with reference to insurance companies.

Lightermen however, appear to have been busier. With the building of the various docks, cargoes had to be transported to and from barge and ships to the various wharves and jetties that crammed London's waterside. The lighterman was responsible for the safe stowage and unloading of his cargo, and sometimes sleeping aboard his barge overnight to protect his cargo. All these barges were manned by licensed men, which kept them far busier than their brother watermen. I am told that the heyday of the lighterage trade was between the two world wars with the employment of around 4000 lightermen. Many watermen became lightermen, but other watermen gained knowledge in other skills. I quote from the book "Thomas Doggett Deceased" written in 1908. "It would be unfair to give the impression that the waterman is merely competent to take a passenger ashore, or

to row him out to a ship. He has not served a seven years' apprenticeship merely in order to qualify himself to do that. The truth is these watermen are experts in all matters appertaining to the River Thames. As river pilots their knowledge is as thorough as it well could be, whilst in warping a ship into or out of dock, or in making her fast to mooring buoys in the stream, they display extraordinary skill." Another passage written in this book states, and again I quote "We might remind our readers also that if the present Government has its way and passes the Port of London Bill, the Watermen's Company, the system of apprenticeship, and the whole thing will be ended." The modern day waterman has kept pace with modernisation and is just as much at home with steel workboats, vhf radios, radar and mobile telephone as his ancestor was with his wooden boat and oars.

Finally, what records remain? The apprenticeship records from 1688 to 1908 still survive in twenty-three volumes and have been deposited at the Guildhall Library, London (Ref: MS6289). These binding books, together with many other records of the Company have been microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah and are available in their reference libraries and at the Guildhall Library. As I have already mentioned, an apprentice had to be between fourteen and twenty when bound and proof was required. This proof was entered into the affidavit books and these records survive from 1759 onwards (Ref: MS 6291). The information they provide is heaven for in them you will quickly find the boys date of birth and/or baptism, together with his place of birth. Unfortunately in some circumstances the entry may just state "over fourteen and under twenty" and be signed by one of the court officials as knowing the lad to be telling the truth. In many cases the reason for this was that the boy was a son of a freeman and known to the court. Some years, especially in the 1770's, the Clerk of the Court failed to keep full records, with many pages remaining blank or at best just stating the boy's name.

From 1868 onwards, possibly to increase the dwindling number of apprenticeships, it was decided to give a limited license, known as a contract license, to boys too old to serve an apprenticeship (i.e. over twenty one years old). These men were articulated to a freeman for a two-year period and if successful received their license (Ref: MS 19,548A). The fully licensed watermen and lightermen nicknamed them "dog licence holders" and looked down on these men. The practice of giving nicknames was reasonably common amongst the waterage fraternity and genealogists need to be aware of this. The name a man was known by throughout his working life need not be the one his parents gave him. One example could be that a youngster from an exceptionally poor background with clothing to match may be known as "Fred", not down to the fact he was christened Frederick but due to the threadbare state of his clothing. Nicknames would certainly last throughout the mans working life.

Other records that survive include "Quarterage books" which date between 1764 and 1917. The watermen and lightermen had to keep up their licenses by paying a license fee on a quarterly bases. These records (Ref: MSS 6402 and 6819) include many interesting pieces of information, sometimes noting if the individual went into the watermen's almshouses and even a date of death.

After the birth of the Port of London Authority in 1908 much of the power of Watermen's Hall faded, all they were left in control of being apprenticeship training and overseeing the charities. Almshouses had been built at Ditchling and Penge, later to be joined by Hastings; to house destitute watermen and their wives. During the 19th century many of the inmates were watermen returning from the Napoleonic Wars, probably maimed and unfit to continue working afloat, whilst others had been made redundant by the building of London's bridges. The almshouses still continue today housing many retired lightermen and watermen.

Also at the Guildhall Library you can view the microfilms regarding records concerning "regulation and discipline" of company members. This book, known as the "black book" includes the records of the Court of Complaint, which dealt with complaints against watermen for infringing regulations and using abusive language etc. Records of ferry services, recording names of ferrymen, together with plying places and money earned; and register of lighters, barges and passenger boats, giving names and addresses or moorings, can also be viewed.

Records from 1908 onwards remain under safe lock and key at Watermen's Hall. However, I have had the privilege to index the affidavit book covering the years 1898 to 1949, which besides showing the date and place of birth also gives the date of apprenticeship.

Perhaps this makes the most complete list of watermen and lightermen bindings my own set of indexes. These cover the years between 1692 and 1949 and are available in microfiche format. The index is in nine volumes and is in alphabetical order for apprentice surname, followed by Christian names; dates of binding, location, and master's full names and finally dates of freedom (if granted). Occasionally the clerk entered interesting notes within the binding books, such as if the lad was re-assigned to another master, discharged, married, died whilst in apprenticeship, run away from his master, was transported or executed. I have once noted that an apprentice failed to finish his apprenticeship due to the fact that his master had killed his wife. All of these facts are recorded within my indexes helping to put flesh on the bones of our watermen and lightermen ancestors.

Finally, I have often been asked what books researchers should read when checking out the life style of watermen and lightermen. I would certainly recommend The History of the Watermen's Company written in three volumes by a former clerk to the Company, Mr. Henry Humpherus. A fourth volume has been completed and available to purchase, by a former beadle of the Company, Mr. Barret G. Wilson. I am also aware of an excellent web site that gives an interesting insight into the lives and working conditions of Watermen & Lightermen (<http://www.geocities.com/thameswatermen>) a site well worth the visit.

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Amended 2002.