

This note is one of a series placed in the Almanac for the guidance of livery masters, wardens, and their clerks, especially new ones, seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them. Most are written by a past chairman of the Livery Committee, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page.

Patrimony, as applied to women

As explained at the note elsewhere in this Freedom folder, patrimony is one of the three traditional methods of obtaining the Freedom (of City or Livery company) [the other two being Servitude and Redemption].

The basic rule to be eligible to receive the freedom by patrimony is that the applicant must have been born *after* their “father” was made free.

Both the word patrimony (with its male gender implied meaning “*property inherited from one's father or male ancestor*”), and the fact that historically it has almost invariably been the liveryman father who introduced his child (again, usually a son in days gone by), now give rise to the question as to how these rules affect mothers and daughters?

Happily, it is already well established in the great majority of companies which both admit women, and accept new freemen by patrimony, that daughters are equally as eligible as their brothers.

The slightly trickier question arises in the case of a *mother* introducing her son/daughter through ‘patrimony’.

There is no doubt in this writer’s mind that this would be wholly allowable, and indeed it might even be breaking equality law to veto such an application. However, as far as I am aware, there is no woman liveryman of any company who was made free of their company* a sufficient number of years ago (>21) that their offspring was both born *after* their “mother” was made free, and that the child is now old enough to apply for the freedom. (*I am thinking here primarily of those ancient liveries who customarily welcome new freemen through patrimony. Modern companies, who no doubt admitted women from their creation, tend not to recruit new freemen by patrimony anyway.)

Hence, the interpretation of the forgoing is yet to be tested. I would especially welcome feedback on this topic from those who have direct relevant experience. Who will be the first mother to introduce her child to the freedom by patrimony?

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Two loosely connected thoughts:

My reference to >21 implies that new freemen must be over 21 years old. In fact the reduction of the age of majority means this age should now correctly be 18. However I'm unaware of any company that has reduced its minimum age of entry (indeed I believe one or two are increasing it), but the Freedom of the City is now available to 18 year olds, though not for those introduced by their livery company.

A question often asked is how to term women in the various "ranks" in the livery world? It seems generally accepted that men and women are correctly described as freemen, liverymen, and masters. Both female Lord Mayors to date have been *Lord Mayors*. The first, Lady (Mary) Donaldson, imposed fines on anyone who addressed her as Lady Mayoress. The term *free sister* has been used in the past, but no longer as far as I know, but never, to my knowledge, *freewoman*.

Nigel R Pullman

(whose daughter was admitted to the freedom by patrimony)

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