

# Apprenticeship: Scottish Stonemasons' Indentures, 1573–1740

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Little investigation of the history of trade apprenticeships in Scotland has been undertaken, and the work that has been done has concentrated mainly on burgh registers of apprentices as sources. The present study is based instead on analysis of the texts of forty indentures related to the trade of masons. Though the study was initiated out of interest in the history of freemasonry, only a few indentures were found to contain references to this esoteric aspect of the trade. However, seen in wider contexts, the indentures reveal a perhaps surprising degree of flexibility in the terms agreed between apprentices' parents or guardians and their masters. Some texts seem standardised, but in others it is clear that the details were individually negotiated between the parties, often taking into account individual material and family circumstances – such as the death of apprentices' fathers. Indentures signed outside burghs, and thus free from rules imposed by craft incorporations show most variety. Taken together, the indentures bring to life the experiences of many Scottish youths setting out on their careers in the early modern period.

The majority of those who became master craftsmen and burgesses in late medieval and early modern Scotland qualified for their status and monopoly rights in one of two ways – by heredity (being the sons or sons-in-law of masters), or by apprenticeship. The sons (and sons-in-law) of men who were themselves craftsmen burgesses had the right to that status after training by their fathers and being tested in their skills by the appropriate craft incorporation (guild) through an 'essay' – the 'masterpiece'.

However, the second method of recruitment to the crafts is by far the better known – recruitment through apprenticeship, whereby a boy served a master for a set number of years, and was trained by him, according to terms set out in a contract known as an indenture.<sup>1</sup> Forty such contracts have been identified, and this article is based on an analysis of them. They are listed in Table 1 below, and cited in the text by the numbers there assigned to them. The analysis reveals that though the essentials of indentures were simple and stereotyped (specifying names of master and apprentice and length of service), they could be surprisingly flexible, catering for a range of circumstances and needs. Incidentally, a study

<sup>1</sup> Strictly, the documents were not 'indentures', the term having originally referred to documents in which two copies of a contract were written on the same sheet and then separated by a unevenly cut line. Each party retained a copy, and their legitimacy could be validated if the two copies were brought together and the jagged edges matched perfectly. Later the term came to be used loosely for other types of document – but one of those studied below (19) has a jagged line at the top, indicating it was a true indenture.

of two Edinburgh records, the register of apprentices and the roll of burgesses, indicates that about half of the burgh's master stonemasons qualified through serving an apprenticeship and half through heredity.<sup>2</sup>

Insofar as the careers of Scottish craftsmen have been studied, attention has focused on the largest burghs, which kept records listing apprentices and the subsequent promotion of some of them to burgh-ship. It has long been recognised that such records are far from perfect, but checking them against surviving indentures emphasises how defective such records are. Eight indentures were signed in Edinburgh: five of the masters can be identified as burgesses, but only two out of eight apprentices were registered with the burgh.<sup>3</sup> It is clear the register is very incomplete, though allowances should be made for some indenture agreements being broken before masters had registered them. In other cases it may be that masters avoided registration because they knew that some of the terms of the indenture were not acceptable, for example specifying too short a term of service. Or indeed, knew that they were not qualified to take apprentices: Alexander Christie in 1636 called himself an 'indweller' in Edinburgh, not a burghess (6).

Aberdeen's burgh records present a rather different problem from Edinburgh's. From 1541 onwards no masons became burgesses,<sup>4</sup> and when a register of apprentices was begun in the early seventeenth century, no mason apprentices were registered in it. The masons, it seems, had opted out of the burgh structure of incorporations and burgh-ship, and sought to organise their trade through an autonomous lodge.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, though apprentice registers can provide useful information to historical geographers about migration into burghs,<sup>6</sup> they do not provide a

<sup>2</sup> H. Carr, *The mason and the burgh. An examination of the Edinburgh register of apprentices and the burgess rolls* (London, 1954).

<sup>3</sup> *Register of apprentices of the city of Edinburgh, 1583–1666*, ed. F. J. Grant (SRS, 1906); *Register of apprentices of Edinburgh, 1666–1700*, ed. C. B. B. Watson (SRS, 1929); *Register of apprentices of Edinburgh, 1701–1755*, ed. C. B. B. Watson (SRS, 1929); *Roll of Edinburgh burgesses and guild-brethren, 1406–1700*, ed. C. B. B. Watson (SRS, 1929); *Roll of Edinburgh burgesses and guild-brethren, 1701–1760*, ed. C. B. B. Watson (SRS, 1930).

<sup>4</sup> 'Register of Burgesses of Guild and Trade of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1399–1631', ed. A. A. M. Munro, *Miscellany of the New Spalding Club*, i (1890), 57.

<sup>5</sup> 'Register of Indentures of Apprenticeship of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1622–1878', ed. A. M. Munro, *Scottish Notes and Queries*. 1622–1750 is covered in the first series, x–xii (1896–1900) and second series, i (1900–1).

<sup>6</sup> A. A. Lovett, I. D. Whyte and K. A. Whyte, 'Poisson Regression Analysis and Migration Fields: The Example of the Apprenticeship Records of Edinburgh', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, vol. 10 (1985), 317–33 recognises that apprentice registers only list indentured apprentices. But at one point in I. D. Whyte and K. A. Whyte, 'Patterns of migration of apprentices into Aberdeen and Inverness during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 102 (1986), 81–92 (p. 82), it is assumed that registers list all recruits to the crafts, thus ignoring the fact that they omit all those recruited through heredity.

	<b>Signed</b>	<b>Reg</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Sin</b>	<b>Trades</b>	<b>Esoteric</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1	1573, 6 Aug	1573, 6 Aug	Aberdeen	7	2		M		D mason	R: sec note <sup>1</sup>
2	1617, 27 Apr	1618, 11 Apr	Falkland	6	1		M		D in	R: RD1/270, pp. 376-7
3	1631, 14, 21 May	1637, 1 July	Linlithgow	9		3	M		D mason	R: RD1/507
4	1635, 26 Dec	1637, 24 June	Alva & Dunfermline	9		3	M		mason	R: RD1/504
5	1636, 27 May	1638, 4 Dec	Aberdour	3			M		mason	R: RD1/516
6	1636, 14 Oct	1637, 12 June	Edinburgh	5	1	2	M		quarrier	R: RD1/504
7	1649, 27 Nov & 9 Dec	1652, 27 June	Edinburgh & Dundee	7	1	3	M	*	'in Dundee'	R: RD1/56
8	1660, 28 Nov	1661, 19 July	Ayrton	7			M	*	in	O: RD13/427/1661; R: RD3/1
9	1663, 25 Oct	1663, 13 Aug	Swinscote	4	1/3 <sup>2</sup>		M&W		in	O: RD13/593/1663; R: RD3/6
10	1667, 31 Oct	1672, 22 Aug	[Forres]	6			M		at	O: RH15/52/2, Papers of Lord Salen
11	1670, 28 Jan	1672, 24 June	Huntingbush	6			M		in	R: sec note <sup>5</sup>
12	1670, 2 Feb	1678, 8 June	Edinburgh	8½		3	M		'in Galtross'	O: RD12/679/1678; R: RD2/46 <sup>4</sup>
13	1670, 12 Feb	1677, 20 June	Strathaven	7			M&W		D in	R: RD2/43, pp. 752-3
14	1671, 26 Jun	1691, 8 May	Mill of Auchmedden	3			M		servitor	R: RD3/75, pp. 450-2
15	1672, 20 Nov	1675, 7 Jan	Edinburgh	8	1		M		D mason	O: RD13.23/1675; R: RD3/38
16	1673, 18 Apr	1673, 26 Jul	Linlithgow	4			M		servitor	O: RD12/678/1673; R: RD2/35
17	1674, 19 Feb	1675, 1 Jan	Linlithgow	4			M		in	O: RD12/4/1675; R: RD2/38
18	1675, 4 Oct	1683, 28 Aug	Galthous of Stoct	5	1		M		D landowner	O: RD12/983/1683; R: RD2/61
19	1679, 30 Oct	1680, 8 Oct	Ceres	6			M		in	O: SC20/36/1; R: SC20/33/4
20	1683, 27 Feb	1684, 29 Aug	Kinross	3			M&W		portioner	O: RD12/887/1684; R: RD2/64 <sup>3</sup>

## SCOTTISH STONEMASONS' INDENTURES

	<b>Signed</b>	<b>Reg</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Sin</b>	<b>Trades</b>	<b>Esoteric</b>	<b>Father</b>	<b>Reference</b>
21	1685, 9 Nov		Edinburgh	6		3	M	*	D in	O: see note <sup>6</sup>
22	1694, 30 Apr	1697, 3 Feb	Preston Milne	3			M&W		landowner	O: see note <sup>7</sup>
23	1694, 5 Apr	1700, 26 Aug	Edinburgh	7		3	M		in	R: RD4/87, pp. 463-5
24	1695, 7 Jan	1696, 15 Nov	Edinburgh	7		3	M		merchant	R: RD2/92, pp. 817-28
25	1696, 21 Nov	1704, 6 May	Lawfield	4			M		grieve	R: SC20/33/7, pp. 399-400
26	1696, 17 ?	1696, 22 July	Letham	3			M		D in	R: SC20/33/6
27	1699, 11 Nov	1703, 23 June	Forncie Milne	3			M		in	O: SCC20/36/1; R: SC20/33/7, pp. 342-3
28	1710, 19 July	1716, 4 May	Edinburgh	6		2	M		boatman	R: RD3/148
29	1711, 13 May	1715, 18 Jun	?				M		?	O: RD13/1/2
30	1712, 15 Feb		Kinross	3	1		M	*	in	O: see note <sup>8</sup>
31	1712, 27 May		Edinburgh	6		3	M		D writer	O: see note <sup>9</sup>
32	1712, 1 Dec		Rutherglen	5			M&W		writer	O: see note <sup>10</sup>
33	1718, 31 Mar	1731, 8 Jun	Aberdeen	6			M	*	merchant	R: RD4/149
34	1721, 20 Feb		Rutherglen	5		T	M&W		D hammerman	O: see note <sup>11</sup>
35	1721, 3 Jun	1722, 10 Aug	Digluirg	5		T	M&W		in	O: SC1/61/65
36	1722, 23 Jul	1724, 27 May	Moffat		2		M		in	R: RD4/135/2
37	1723, 6 Apr	1731, 8 Jun	Aberdeen	6			M		weaver	R: RD4/149
38	1730, 29 Apr	1731, 20 Feb	Abbeyhill	4		2	M		D farmer	R: RD2/129
39	1735, 15 Jun	1738, 16 Feb	Cellardyke	7			M		cook	O: SC20/36/6
40	1738, 26 May	1740, 5 Aug	Brachead of Cathcart	4			M&W		in	R: RD3/201

Table 1 Indentures of mason apprentices in Scotland, 1573-1740. See p. 60 for key and notes.

**Key**

- Signed: date of signing  
 Reg: date of registration in court books  
 Place: where indenture was signed  
 Term: length of service as apprentice, in years  
 Ext: extension, term of service as wage-earner after apprenticeship, length in years; sometimes optional  
 Sin: number of years extra service to be exacted if apprentice guilty of fornication or adultery  
 Trades: T = the whole term of service to be served again  
 M = mason  
 M&W = mason and wright  
 Esoteric: Indenture refers to the mason word and/or lodges  
 Father: Status of father of apprentice.  
 D = deceased before indenture signed  
 'In' and 'of' are fathers' designations, followed by place-names  
 Reference: all to mss in the National Archives of Scotland, except where referred to footnotes  
 O = original indenture, usually kept by court in which it was registered, as a 'warrant'  
 R = registration of text in the Register of Deeds ('Books of Council and Session') or in other court records

**Notes**

- 1 Aberdeen City Archives, CA/2/2/1, Register of Contracts belonging to the Burgh, 1569–75, 95, with transcript in *Scottish Notes and Queries*, series 1, i, no. 2 (July 1887), 24–5. Partial transcript in [A. M. Munro], 'Notes on the History of Masonry in Aberdeen', *The Book of the Mason Craft* (Aberdeen, 1896), [12], copied in H. Carr, 'Apprenticeship in England and Scotland up to 1700', *As Quatuor Coronatorum. Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*, 69 (1956), 65–6.
- 2 Extension for just meat and drink.
- 3 Register of Deeds of Perthshire Sheriff Court, <http://burrelton.com/Burrelton/Parish%20Records%201660-89.htm>, 18 March 2010.
- 4 Extracts in Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 66.
- 5 Extracts in Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 66.
- 6 Edinburgh City Archives, Moses Bundle 184. Transcript in Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 67.
- 7 Paraphrase in: *Kirkcaldright Sheriff Court Deeds, 1676-1700*, (ed.) C. Armet (Edinburgh, 1953), ii, 599.
- 8 Edinburgh City Archives, Moses Bundle 184. Transcript in Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 67–8.
- 9 National Library of Scotland, Ms. Acc.8617, in bundle 19.
- 10 Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections, RU.9/3/3/1.
- 11 Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections, RU.9/3/3/2.

reliable overall picture of recruitment to crafts. They ignore the large numbers of hereditary recruits, and are likely to be far from complete in listing indentured recruits – and anyway, they only exist in a few burghs.

From the historians' point of view, indentured apprentices are far more visible than those recruited through heredity through the survival of many original indentures, and through copies of these indentures as registered with civil courts. Such registration was 'for preservation and execution'<sup>7</sup> and was often required by the indenture itself, making it legally binding on both parties. Usually registration took place fairly soon after the indenture was signed. The purpose of some very late registrations is unclear. Why were two indentures featuring William Sangster as master, signed in 1718 and 1723 (33, 37), registered on the same day in 1731, long after the apprentices would have completed their terms of service?

Indentures survive, but have been very little studied, though Diane Baptie has produced a most useful study based on indentures relating to north-east Scotland.<sup>8</sup> Harry Carr found five Scottish mason indentures – but alas published his results in a masonic periodical generally ignored by academics.<sup>9</sup>

Building on Carr's nucleus I have collected references to stonemasons' indentures whenever I happened to find them over many years. Moreover, both Diane Baptie and John Bannatyne have been very generous in passing on relevant references they have come across in their archival labours. A. J. Campbell's listing of Fife indentures provided a number of further references.<sup>10</sup>

A basic object of each indenture was to define the length of the apprentice's service to his master. The English Statute of Artificers of 1563 had laid down seven years as the term to be served by apprentices, based on much older practices. As the ideal age for beginning an apprenticeship was taken to be about fourteen, a standard seven-year indenture would lead apprentices to finish their service at the age of twenty-one.

The Scots generally agreed that seven years was the proper length but in practice, in the mason craft at least, over the country as a whole seven-year terms seem to have been unusual. They are only specified in seven of the indentures under review. However, the Edinburgh register of apprentices shows that most mason indentures there *were* for seven years,<sup>11</sup> and the surviving Edinburgh indentures support the idea that this was seen as a minimum term. Though only three are for seven years, two are longer periods (eight and eight-and-a-half years), and three for slightly shorter periods (five and six years). Thus the

<sup>7</sup> A. D. Gibb, *Students' Glossary of Scottish Legal Terms* (Edinburgh, 1946), 74.

<sup>8</sup> D. Baptie, 'Apprentices in the north east of Scotland', *Scottish Archives*, 9 (2003), 37–44.

<sup>9</sup> H. Carr, 'Apprenticeship in England and Scotland up to 1700', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum. Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*, 69 (1956), 46–85.

<sup>10</sup> A. J. Campbell, *Some Fife apprentices and freemen, 1524–1899* (2 vols., typescript in Special Collections, St Andrews University Library).

<sup>11</sup> Carr, *Edinburgh*, 20–7.

burgh sought to enforce the seven-year term, elsewhere it was generally found impractical.

However, long terms were occasionally seen elsewhere. Indentures in the 1630s, in Dunfermline and Linlithgow laid down nine year terms (3, 4). In two of the four cases in which over seven years service were imposed, it is probably relevant that the apprentices' fathers were dead (3, 15). It seems likely that family circumstances could lead to boys being indentured at unusually young ages. This was probably also the case in the ten and eleven-year terms found in the Edinburgh apprentice register.<sup>12</sup> In England craft indenture terms of up to seventeen years have been found, suggesting occasional recruitment of very young children.<sup>13</sup> Chimney-sweeps could be indentured at four or five, and some other trades at seven,<sup>14</sup> but the mason trade did not recruit boys so young – not surprisingly, given that it was one that required physical strength.

In the mason craft in Scotland, outside Edinburgh at least, most indentures were for fewer than seven years and this seems to have also been the case in other crafts.<sup>15</sup> In this Scotland differed markedly from England, for in spite of the wide range of terms found there, the great majority of indentures were for seven years.<sup>16</sup>

The less than seven-year mason indentures range from two to six years. These shorter term indentures were usually signed in smaller towns or rural areas, where supervision by burgh authorities and incorporations was weak or non-existent. But sometimes even royal burghs compromised. Lanark set the minimum term for a mason or wright indenture at three years.<sup>17</sup> Length was clearly negotiated according to the extent of the training the apprentice wanted, his age, how much his parents wanted to pay and how long a master wished to commit himself to supporting an apprentice.

In most indentures the master bound himself comprehensively to teach all that he knew, not hiding any secrets or skills, but in the single two-year indenture listed (36) the master only bound himself to teach the youth the arts of building and hewing and whatever else he could learn within his term, thus limiting his obligation. The term was too short for a full craft training.

Usually apprentices began their service a set period of time after the date of the indenture, and very commonly at one of the two legal term days at which many servants of all sorts were recruited – Whitsunday and Martinmas (15 May and 11 November). However, sometimes apprentices were to start service immediately, suggesting a sense of urgency – both of the cases cited above in which the apprentices' fathers were dead come into this category. In

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 27.

<sup>13</sup> J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914* (London, 1956), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 15–18.

<sup>15</sup> Baptie, 'Apprentices', 37–44.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 16–18.

<sup>17</sup> R. Renwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Lanark* (Scottish Burgh Records Society, 1893), 195–8.

two cases, though, service was deemed to have begun a month or so before their indentures were signed – presumably the masters had taken on boys to check their suitability before formally taking responsibility for them (14, 39).

Indentures stress the power the master had over the apprentice who, from one point of view, sounded like his temporary slave, his servant, bound to obey him in all things at all times. Day and night, work days and holy days, as it was sometimes put. A more kindly way of looking at the situation is to see the master as having the authority of a father. In most instances the apprentice lived in his master's house with the family. The master was a substitute father; the apprentice a member of his household. The master provided bed and board and training; the apprentice repaid this with his unskilled (and later semi-skilled) labour. However, unlike a real father, a master's power was limited by the terms of the indenture. If parents kept an eye on their apprenticed son they could intervene to deal with neglect or other mistreatment.

Occasionally masters sought to limit their obligations to provide maintenance. When John Overwhite (mason in Abbeyhill, Holyrood) signed on David Melvin as an apprentice in 1730 he was not bound to provide board for the boy, but to give him ten shillings sterling a month for his maintenance ('each year containing thirteen months', oddly enough) plus 3*s.* 6*d.* for shoes. But if Overwhite could not find work, or could not work because of bad weather, maintenance would not be paid (38). In this instance Melvin's father had died, and his apprenticeship was being sponsored by an Edinburgh journeyman mason, Alexander McClean. Melvin lived in the latter's household, McClean being responsible for clothing, bed, board and washing (laundry).

Similarly, in 1695 James Smith agreed to pay his apprentice James Baillie for 'entertainment' (24). Smith was a highly successful architect, appointed surveyor and overseer of the royal works in Scotland in 1683, and no doubt did not wish to share the table at his country house with a mere apprentice.

About a quarter of masters insisted that even after completing their terms apprentices should move out of their house but continue to serve them for a further period for 'meat and fee' – food and wages – before moving on to seek employment as journeymen (wage earners). Such extra terms ranged from four months to two years, but sometimes there was flexibility. In Kinross in 1712, John Lyall agreed to serve three years, plus one extra for meat and a fee of 20 merks. But if Lyall could afford it, he could cancel that fourth year by paying his master 20 merks (30). Such arrangements were presumably profitable for masters. Indeed one indenture openly states that a former apprentice serving such an 'extension' would receive only half the fee he 'deserves', presumably meaning half of what he could earn if he was a journeyman free to sell his own labour (14).

Many masters would, no doubt, have liked to limit their responsibilities to their apprentices when bad weather or lack of trade meant no work could be done, but only in this unusual instance in which the apprentice was non-resident did one get away with it. In a closely related building trade (slaters), however, one master managed to impose a winter break. His apprentice was

to be 'free' between Martinmas and Candlemas (11 November to 2 February) each year.<sup>18</sup>

A day's absence from work without permission usually brought a two-day increase in the length of time to be served under the indenture – though two Rutherglen indentures allowed the apprentices to pay their masters instead half a merk, if they could afford it (32, 34). But often in rural areas absence was allowed at a crucial season of the year for the economy – harvest time. A 1738 indenture specified (unusually) that the apprentice could be absent through 'sickness', and also have 'time to shear throw any ordinary harvest' yearly (40). James Inglis in 1663 was to get one month a year off for harvest (9). In 1674 James Muir was to have four weeks off each year at harvest 'to doe any work or service he pleass' (17). Charles Sturgeon in 1694 was promised to have his first two harvests to himself for shearing corn and barley but not the harvest of the third year of his term (22). John Lyall, mentioned above, was to get half the harvest off for the three years of his service – and the whole harvest in his extension year if he served it (30). Two indentures, both from Rutherglen, gave another sort of relief from the daily grind, allowing the apprentices to have Saturdays from six to ten at night 'for working of his owne worke to his own use'. These two indentures have an unusual amount of detail in common, no doubt reflecting the fact that James Parkhill, the apprentice in the earlier text, was the master in the later one (32, 34).

Indentures specify that masters were to receive, in addition to the apprentices' labour, 'prentice fees'. In a 1573 instance £10 Scots was payable, in two instalments (1). A century later, in the 1670s, fees of £40, £60 and 100 merks were specified (11, 16, 18) – the rise partly being accounted for by inflation. Sometimes in the countryside shortage of cash made it most convenient to pay fees partly in kind. In 1694 Charles Sturgeon's father and two uncles agreed to pay £20 (in three annual instalments) and half a stone of wool (22). Rhoderick Ross's father paid out £24 Scots, a boll of meal, and an ell of linen in 1721. In addition, parents or sponsors were often bound to provide clothing, shoes, bedding or tools. Ross's father provided boots, shoes, a pair of bed blankets and a set of 'work looms' or tools (35). Andrew Shade in 1710 was to be provided with 'a good feather bed', blanket and sheets (28). John Stevin, son of a Linlithgow mason who had died, came to his master with clothing, blankets and his father's tools (3). Lack of work on other trades' 'prentice fees' makes it hard to know where such fees place masons in the hierarchy of desirable trades, but in 1615 a master smith received £24 Scots,<sup>19</sup> suggesting mason and smith were similar in status. In elite trades those masters with a good reputation could charge far more. The famous Edinburgh goldsmith George Heriot received a fee of £100 in 1586,<sup>20</sup> and an apprentice fee of 350 merks was paid in 1721

<sup>18</sup> Baptie, 'Apprentices', 39.

<sup>19</sup> NRS, GD112/55/3/5.

<sup>20</sup> NRS, GD421//1/2/2.

for training in merchandising and candle making.<sup>21</sup> Right at the top of the scale is the remarkable £150 sterling (£4,200 Scots) fee charged in 1671 by a Scots merchant working in Rouen.<sup>22</sup> In all three of these cases of high fees, the fathers of the apprentices were landowners, indenturing younger sons but expecting them to have better economic prospects than 'ordinary' tradesmen.

Indentures often showed a concern that masters teach diligently – but they in turn often insisted on balancing clauses pointing out that there might be limits to what some apprentices could be taught. William Fulton promised to 'teach lairn and instruct' Alexander Robesone in the 'trade and art of meason craft in the hail poynts, practiks engines [knowledge] thereof sua far as he knowes or dayly practises himself nor shall not hide nor conceall any part therof *in sua far as his capacity can conceave the same*' (21; my italics). Similarly James Mories undertook to teach all the points of masonry to John Lyall 'as far as he is capable to uptake and conceive' (30). Masters were not to be blamed for the limited abilities of their pupils.

One unexpected feature that mason indentures reveal is that in many rural areas and smaller burghs some apprentices were trained simultaneously in two trades – that of wright (carpenter) and mason. Only in the largest burghs was separation universal. Thus, though Edinburgh had a single incorporation (generally known as the masons and wrights) bringing together most of the building trades in a single guild, within that guild each craft tested and admitted its own former apprentice recruits separately, and a man could qualify and work only in a single craft. But in the smaller burgh of Lanark the council, when renewing old regulations in the mid-seventeenth century, agreed that men could qualify in both the trades of mason and wright – provided they had submitted essays to each craft and had them accepted.<sup>23</sup> Rutherglen, Dumbarton and Kinross were other burghs which allowed such dual craft arrangements. Of the forty indentures studied, eight are for training in both mason and wright crafts. All are dated 1660 or later, which may indicate the breakdown of craft exclusiveness over time. Robert Mershall, mason wright burghess of Dumbarton went further than just teaching dual craft skill. He undertook in 1663 to teach his apprentice James Inglis both these crafts 'and in all and utheris his treddis' (9). A Jock of all Trades.

Working hours per day are not specified in indentures of apprenticeship, for that was a matter for the masters to settle, but generally craftsmen and their apprentices were expected to work all daylight hours in winter, and virtually all in summer (except for short meal and rest breaks) every day apart from Sundays. A manuscript of 1537 makes this clear. The document ('This indentit charter party') is an indenture between George Boiss, mason, and the burgh of Dundee, and is well known as it contains the earliest known references to stonemasons' lodges in Scotland. Boiss was to work 'as the ald uss and

<sup>21</sup> NRS, GD34/791.

<sup>22</sup> NRS, GD157/1271.

<sup>23</sup> *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Lanark*, 197–8.

consuetud of our lady luge of Dundee had and usit befor' and be paid 'efer the ald uss of our lady luge.' The indenture also obliged Boiss to take apprentices on seven-year terms, and specified that they were to work the same hours as their master. In summer this was a fourteen-hour day (5AM to 7PM) with two half-hour breaks and one one-hour break. When days were shorter, they were to work from when it was light enough to see until it got dark.<sup>24</sup>

Stories and folktales – as well as legal sources – in many societies frequently reveal tempestuous relationships between masters and apprentices. Masters denounce apprentices as lazy, idle, stupid and immoral; apprentices blame masters for oppression, violence and failing to teach them properly.<sup>25</sup> Boys growing from childhood through adolescence to manhood are far from the most docile of groups in a society, and the submission necessary to serve a master throughout these transitions without offence was doubtless seldom found. Indentures sought to impose discipline – and the society of the day took it for granted that teaching and learning involved punishment and suffering. Physical punishment was a necessary part of teaching, whether of a school child or an apprentice. But it was the potential behaviour of apprentices when not working that most worried masters. They were the heads of the households in which the apprentices lived, and were responsible for their moral behaviour as well as work discipline. It is no surprise therefore that many indentures contain lists of forbidden activities. Thus Andrew Miller in Kinross in 1683 found himself bound not to be an 'awayrunner, cartor [card player], dycer, furnicator, druncard or player at idle games' (20). Rhoderick Ross in 1721 was also banned from carding, dicing, excessive drinking, night walking and keeping scandalous or debauched company (35). One Edinburgh indenture (23) deals specifically with a wider category of keeping bad company. The apprentice was banned from being accessory to any 'tumults, combinationes or insurrectiones whatsoever' in the city. This was in 1694, just a few years after the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688–9 had overthrown James VII and II, and religious and politically inspired disorder was a real fear.

However, it was the potential sexual behaviour of apprentices that most haunted masters. Apprentices were in the age group most liable to sexual straying, and they were even banned from the only lawful sexual relationship – that of marriage. Economically the ban made sense – the great majority of apprentices lived with and were maintained by their masters, and were at their fulltime disposal. There was no room or role for wives. Very occasionally exceptions might be made – in rural areas at least. Andrew Mackie was bound by an indenture (to an English mason) in 1711, but it was revised the following year to allow for his wish to get married (29).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Dundee City Archives, Town Charter Chest I, no. 48, with transcript at *Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis* (Bannatyne Club, 1856), ii, 317–19. Boiss signed with his hand led at the pen, an indication that he could not write.

<sup>25</sup> Lane, *Apprenticeship*, 187–227.

<sup>26</sup> One indenture (27) refers to an apprentice as being a 'son in law' but this is not evidence

Even if an occasional master might have allowed marriage, in large burghs councils sometimes issued blanket bans. In Edinburgh it was decreed that if an apprentice got married his indenture would be cancelled and he would lose all his rights in the burgh. But it was the alternative sexual outlets through fornication or adultery that aroused the greatest wrath. A number of indentures threatened that such filthy and abominable behaviour would be punished by extending the sinner's term as an apprentice by one, two or three years. Some indentures went further – such sinners would have to go back and start their apprenticeships from the beginning again. Even when this penalty was not specifically mentioned in indentures, in some burghs all apprentices were liable to it. Did it not occur to anyone that this gave masters strong motives for enticing their apprentices into sin – and thus gaining extra years of cheap labour from them? However, whether in practice such draconian penalties were imposed is unknown.

In listing forbidden activities – gambling, keeping bad company, etc. – English and Scottish indentures were similar. The threat of 'doubling' – having to start off a partly served term again from the beginning – is sometimes found as the punishment due to apprentices fornicating. Indeed an early English indenture of 1396 threatened doubling for defaults of any sort.<sup>27</sup> More bizarrely, in England in 1531 a master threatened doubling if the apprentice slept with his wife or daughter.<sup>28</sup> In the real world the last thing a master would want would be to keep such an offender in his own household, yet the same threat of doubling for sex with the master's wife or concubine can be found in the *Regius Manuscript*, an early fifteenth-century account of masons' lore and regulations.<sup>29</sup>

Enforced sexual abstinence must have weighed heavily on apprentices' minds and bodies. It was one of many reasons for apprentices to long for the day their indentures ended:

But when my seven long years are out  
O then I'll marry Sally,  
O then we'll wed, and then we'll bed ...<sup>30</sup>

But freedom brought burdens – the need to find employment as a journeyman, and then the struggle to become a master in his own right, with luck (whether times were good or bad) as well as with skill and commitment. Every apprenticeship was a gamble, and it is to be suspected that the terms of a high proportion of indentures were never completed. An apprentice or his master might die – though occasionally indentures make implicit provision for the death of masters, in that apprentices were bound to serve their master

that he was married as the term was used to mean step son.

<sup>27</sup> Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 61.

<sup>28</sup> Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 71.

<sup>29</sup> Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 71.

<sup>30</sup> H. Carey, 'Sally in our Alley', written in 1717.

or his wife (3, 21). Probably in these instances the masters were ageing or in poor health. Other indentures could be broken when the master went out of business, or when a complete breakdown of the relationship between master and apprentice took place, and the latter was thrown out or ran away.<sup>31</sup> Registering indentures with courts of law was intended to make it easier for either party to enforce their terms, but how often legal sanctions were invoked remains obscure.

Discussion so far has focused upon the terms on which apprentices were recruited. Moving on, where did they come from? What sorts of families?

About half of their fathers are described simply 'in' or 'at' some place. Where this is the name of a fermtoun, they were doubtless small tenant farmers; where they are town names, the fathers were presumably inhabitants below the level of merchant or craft burgesses. Three apprentices were the sons of servants or servitors, one of a grieve (farm overseer), and one of a boatman. For most of these recruits apprenticeship, providing a craft qualification, must have offered the opportunity of a small step up in the world. Ten fathers were themselves craftsmen – four of them masons. In three of these four cases, the fathers had died so obviously could not teach them their trade themselves. Apprentices from craft backgrounds presumably hoped to maintain their fathers' positions in society – though in some cases moving from country to burgh may signal hopes of upward movement economically.

Two apprentices were the sons of merchants. Though generally merchants were regarded as being of higher status than craftsmen, there was a good deal of overlap. In one case (33) a poor merchant may have thought a craft training would bring his son a better life. In the other (24), as already mentioned, a son of merchant stock might hope for great things through apprenticeship to a 'mason' who was a famed architect with royal connections.

Two or three apprentices had land-owning fathers, though very minor ones. Robert Grierson was the 'natural' son of the late John Grierson of Bargatoune in Kirkcudbrightshire. 'Natural' of course meant illegitimate, as opposed to 'lawful' (born within marriage). In this case the legitimate family arranged for their bastard kinsman Robert to be apprenticed – a caring for bastard kin which was far from universal (18). John Sturgeon, elder, 'of Toterie' was also a landowner, if the 'of' is to be trusted (though as he was given three years to pay his son's apprentice fee he must have been of very limited means) (22) while the designation of Alexander Miller as 'portioner' of Kinross indicates that he was a smallholder (20).

One thing that exactly a quarter of the forty apprentices had in common was that their fathers had died before the indentures were drawn up. Family

<sup>31</sup> In 1778 a stray reference reveals a mason in Gullah in Banffshire attempting to pursue a runaway apprentice. His chances of getting him back were slim, as he was said to have reached London – and his master admitted his own 'drunken passion' had caused his flight (NRS, GD44/43/203/3, Gordon Castle Muniments).

upheavals caused by death made a good, perhaps an essential, time to provide for children's futures. Two of the apprentices listed were illegitimate – and in both cases their fathers had died (1, 18).

From the point of view of the elites of society, apprentices might seem pretty lowly individuals, bound by necessity to be servants, but to their parents or sponsors they had status and should be treated accordingly. Alexander Robesone's indenture of 1685 specified that he should be treated and maintained 'honestly conforme to his rank quality and as uyther prentises in the said art used to be entertained (21).<sup>32</sup> When James Parkhill became an apprentice in 1712, his master was bound to keep him 'in house and familie with himself', which sounds like an insistence that the boy be treated as family (32). Nine years later Parkhill, by then a master, bound himself to treat his own apprentice in the same way (34). Both these indentures also specify that the apprentice only work 'he being in health of body', doubtless implicit in other cases but here carefully spelt out. In two Fife indentures the masters were bound to provide bed, meat and drink honestly and sufficiently according to the apprentices' 'Estate' (25, 27). Even – or perhaps especially – towards the bottom of the social scale, proper recognition of status was important.

Two indentures merit detailed discussion – one because of the career of the apprentice involved, the other because its terms are so extraordinary. In the case of most indentures little is known about masters and apprentices other than their names. Some can be traced in burgh or (in the case of Edinburgh<sup>33</sup> and Aberdeen) lodge archives, but their careers remain obscure. A remarkable exception to this generalisation is by far the earliest indenture identified (1).

On 28 March 1573 William Jamesone, mason, master of the bridge and kirk works of Aberdeen, died.<sup>34</sup> He was clearly a prominent local figure, with elite connections, for the future of his illegitimate son Andrew was arranged by Gilbert Menzies of Cowlie. The Menzies family had dominated the burgh for most of the century, providing nearly all of its provosts and many of its baillies. Cowlie as a member of this elite had been granted the property of the Trinitarian Friary of Aberdeen in 1561, following the Protestant Reformation the year before.<sup>35</sup> He had Andrew Jamesone apprenticed to Andrew Bethleam, mason and freeman of Aberdeen, for seven years, plus two for 'meat and fee'. Of Bethleam nothing more is known – except that he could not write, signing the indenture with his 'hand led at the pen' by a public notary.<sup>36</sup>

However, subsequent events showed that this was no fobbing off of an

<sup>32</sup> Carr, 'Apprenticeship', 67.

<sup>33</sup> H. Carr (ed.), *Minutes of the lodge of Edinburgh, Mary's Chapel No. 1, 1598–1738* (London, 1962).

<sup>34</sup> W. Cullen, 'The chronicle of Aberdeen', *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, ii (1842), 40.

<sup>35</sup> I. B. Cowan and D. E. Easson, *Medieval religious houses. Scotland* (London, 1957), 108.

<sup>36</sup> Even in 1721 masons were not universally literate: an indenture of that year is signed by both master and apprentice with their initials only (35).

inconvenient bastard onto some obscure mason. Andrew Jamesone might have been illegitimate, but he was evidently his father's only son, and had powerful patrons in Aberdeen who furthered his career. He became one of the best known masons in the burgh – and was eventually appointed to his father's old position as master of the bridge and kirk works. He was responsible for designing and constructing several prominent buildings – including that known in later times as Provost Ross's House (which now houses Aberdeen's Maritime Museum). One of his sons was George Jamesone, Scotland's best known portrait painter of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> Illegitimacy could blight a life, but having the right connections could take you far.

The second indenture to merit detailed examination does so because of the remarkable circumstances of the apprentice concerned (8). It begins reading very much like any other indenture. James Temple, a former indweller in Eccles, became apprentice to John Johnston, mason freeman in the Canongate of Edinburgh in 1660, for seven years. But later in the indenture it is revealed that Temple was in fact fully 'trained and learned to work in his craft of meason readie', and he was to be paid £4 Scots a week by his master. And he was to eat and drink with his master, not be treated as a juvenile servant. This is a most peculiar apprentice – already trained, presumably already in his twenties and expecting to be treated as an adult, and being paid wages by his master.

Why would a man in such a position volunteer to serve an apprenticeship? The answer seems likely to be that Temple had strong reasons – personal or economic – for wanting to work in the Canongate (which was then a separate burgh from Edinburgh), but was finding that he could not get work because of the incorporation and/or the masonic lodge did not recognise his qualifications. He may have served an apprenticeship elsewhere, or his training may have been informal, but he must have been refused the right to work in the Canongate.<sup>38</sup> So, though a skilled mason, he decided to start again, and serve an apprenticeship.

James Temple's indenture is also remarkable in another way. Five of the forty mason indentures refer to the esoteric side of the mason craft, and Temple's does so at greatest length.<sup>39</sup> His master, John Johnston, undertook

<sup>37</sup> D. Thomson, *The life and art of George Jamesone* (Oxford, 1974), 13–16, 129.

<sup>38</sup> The incorporation in the Canongate which included masons was unusual in that it licensed 'cowans' to work in the burgh, whereas usually qualified masons refused to work with them. Cowans were semi-skilled men specialising in drystone building. Perhaps in this case the incorporation was ready to let Temple work as a cowan, but the lodge was not, which is why the indenture stresses the importance of lodge membership. See D. Stevenson, *The First Freemasons. Scotland's Early Lodges and their Members* (Aberdeen, 1988), 36–7. The indenture indicates that a lodge already existed in 1662, though otherwise the earliest known lodge in the burgh was Canongate Kilwinning, which emerged in 1677.

<sup>39</sup> For an introduction to the beginnings of Scottish freemasonry, see D. Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Scotland's century, 1598–1710* (Cambridge, 1988).

to purchase procure and give to the saide James Temple his prentise the mason word which he heath himselfe and shall get the saide James in Rolled and installed amange the Rest of his fellowe craftsmen in that Lodge which the saide John belongs to himselfe That the saide James shall be as sufficient and as frie a workman in his craft of mason craft and be a fellowe brother workman as any that shall be in the saide Lodge or in any other Lodge in Scotland And that betwixt the dait heiroff and Saint Johne day [1662].

In Canongate, it seems, the monopoly power of the lodge over stonemasons was strong enough for Temple to want to make sure he would be admitted to it.

The four other indentures that make references to the esoteric side of the stonemasons' craft do so more briefly. In 1649 John Lunand from Dundee became apprentice to Robert Aldersoun [Alesone?], mason burgess of Edinburgh, his master agreeing to get him 'entered to the craft according to the oudour of prentiesses' within four years (7). The junior grade of members of masonic lodges was that of 'entered apprentice', and Lunand wished to be one. Similarly in 1685 when Alexander Robesone became apprentice to William Fulton, mason burgess of Edinburgh, the latter promised 'to enter his said prentise at Mary's Chappell' within three years (21). Mary's Chapel was the building in which both the incorporation of masons and wrights and the lodge of Edinburgh met, but the reference to 'entering' the apprentice makes it clear that it is the lodge that is meant in this case.<sup>40</sup> A 1712 indenture bound the master, James Mories, 'to enter the said John Lyall [his apprentice] free of all expenses at the masson Loudge of Dunfermline' (30).

Finally, a rather negative reference. When William Sangster, mason in Old Aberdeen, took William Herriss as an apprentice he promised to 'teach, learn and instruct his said apprentice in the haill heads parts [and] points of the Mason Arts' as far as he knew them – 'the Mason Word only excepted' (25). The 'mason word' was not a single secret word, but the term used for the lore and secrets of stonemasons about the antiquity and high status of their craft, and a 'catechism' of questions and answers whereby stranger masons when meeting could check that each had been properly initiated. A William Sangster had become a master in the lodge of Aberdeen in 1685, so if this was Herriss's master, he did not feel it was his business to talk to him about the word.<sup>41</sup>

Why do only five of the indentures studied refer to the esoteric side of the craft? Various scenarios can be envisaged. Did no lodges exist in some parts of the country, or existed but were ineffective in enforcing craft regulation? Or in most cases was it just assumed that stonemasons would be initiated in

<sup>40</sup> Though the incorporation and the lodge both met in Mary's Chapel, and even shared some officials (the incorporation's mason deacons also serving as the lodge's deacons), the records of one institution never mention the other. In some sort of implicit compromise, in the lodge masons expressed their claim to autonomy, while through the incorporation they acknowledged their role in, and submission to, the burgh.

<sup>41</sup> Aberdeen Mark Book (in possession of the lodge).

lodges, but only specifically mentioned in those cases in which the parties were particularly concerned about the matter? It is simply impossible to know.

An indenture of 1712 consists of a printed form, with blanks filled in by hand providing names, length of service and craft to be taught. It is a soulless thing, standardised, bureaucratised (31). In some ways it is surprising that it took so long for such a text to be produced – legal documents tend over time to settle into rigid formulae repeated time after time without regard to individual circumstances. But though indentures of apprenticeship often have some wording in common, at least up to the mid-eighteenth century each text tends to be distinctive. Some degree of copying might appear, and local characteristics become established (as seen in the two Rutherglen texts), but much variation remained as the drafters of the documents sought to meet the requirements of the parties concerned. Indentures might be indentures, but they reflected individual concerns of masters and apprentices and parents. With a bit of imagination, it is possible to conjure up images of the parties involved, haggling and bargaining over indenture terms: ‘Look, I can’t pay that fee in cash, but if you halve it I’ll also give you a boll of oatmeal.’ ‘I want to be sure you feed my boy right, he’s not a mere vagabond.’ Superficially these are dry legal documents, but study in detail reveals the life and humanity in them.