

DAVID RAMAGE JUNIOR : A DISCHARGED APPRENTICE

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In my article for BNJ 88, 2018¹, offering a full transcript and discussion of the last will and testament of David Ramage (died 1661), the moneyer, engraver and coining equipment proprietor who played a principal role in the manufacture of the mid-seventeenth-century token coinage, I drew attention to the fact that his eldest son, David Ramage junior, was apprenticed to Martyn (or Martin) Johnson, goldsmith, for a seven-year period commencing on 9 November 1655.

I also noted that “David Ramage junior never took up the freedom of the Goldsmiths’ Company, to which he would have been entitled on completing his apprenticeship, and it may be that by the time of his father’s death he had either left his apprenticeship with Johnson or was planning to do so”.

The early stages of David Ramage junior’s career deserve investigation, for the discovery by the late Robert Thompson that David Ramage, the father, had died at some date between 6 October 1661 and 2 November 1661, rather than in 1662 as had previously been supposed, has shown that an order dated January 1661/2 that David Ramage should surrender the house and buildings in the Tower of London wherein he ‘doth now inhabit and work” must have been intended to target David Ramage junior and not his father. An incidental conclusion to be drawn from this, endorsed by Thompson, was that David Ramage junior was at that date endeavouring to carry on his father’s existing business, and he has thus emerged as a person of some consequence for those specialising in the study of seventeenth-century tokens.

What I and others interested in the subject have so far failed to notice is entry 10289 in Michael Scott’s edition of *Apprenticeship Disputes in the Lord Mayor’s Court of London 1573-1723*², published in two volumes by the British Record Society in 2016.

It is simplest to explain the significance of the entry by recording it verbatim and by then unpicking its principal elements :

10289. RAMAGE, David s. of David, moneyer, Tower of London, Lnd appr. To Martin Johnson, cit. + goldsmith, 9 Nov.1657 for 7 years as engraver. Petn : E 30 Jun 1657; WL, MK, NA, D. Note: The year of binding is likely a clerical error. 125.

The opening words in the entry, recording the name and place of residence of David Ramage junior’s father, the identity and occupation of the master to whom he had been apprenticed, and the commencement date and intended term of the apprenticeship, add nothing to previous knowledge, although it is appropriate to state that the date of ‘9 Nov.1657’ given here is indeed, as the editorial note at the end of the entry suggests, a clerical error for 9 November 1655. What was not previously known was that his master, Martin Johnson, had taken him on as an “engraver”, and this reinforces in a small degree the possibility, as suggested in my 2018 article,

¹ H.E.Pagan, ‘The last will and testament of David Ramage, farthing maker in the Tower’, BNJ 88, 2018, 105-12.

² The entry appears in Scott, ed., vol.2, p.795.

that Martin Johnson was the individual of that name whose principal business was as a seal engraver.

The entry goes on to record that a petition was submitted on 30 June 1657 claiming that Ramage junior had not been enrolled as an apprentice, 'E' standing for 'non-enrolment'. What this means is that Johnson had failed to register the indenture by which Ramage was bound to him as an apprentice with the office of the City of London's Chamberlain at Guildhall. This was the most frequent reason given in similar petitions for release from apprenticeships, and there are a variety of possible causes why his employer might have failed to perform the registration, although a petition on the grounds of non-enrolment dated 18 August 1657 and therefore close in date to the present one, summarised by Scott elsewhere in his volumes, cites a master's failure to instruct the apprentice and the fact that the master concerned deliberately did not enrol the apprentice so that the apprentice might easily be put out of his service³. It would seem that the need for the petition in Ramage's case would have been that despite Johnson's failure to register the indenture, Ramage would still have been bound by it, and that it was only by bringing a complaint to the Lord Mayor's Court that the indenture could be set aside and Ramage released from his apprenticeship.

The initials that follow record that a warning was left (WL standing for 'warning is left'); that the warning was made known to the defendant (MK standing for 'made known'); that this was notified to the apprentice's attorney (NA standing for 'notified to attorney'); and that the apprentice was discharged (D standing for 'apprentice is discharged').

What this shows is that at some date probably not long after 30 June 1657 David Ramage junior was freed from his apprenticeship, and it may be presumed that he would then have been available to help out in his father's business, thus bearing out the tentative suggestion that I made in 2018 that by 1661 he might no longer have been in Johnson's employment. Whether he was formally apprenticed to his father after he had parted company with Johnson remains uncertain, for, if that had been the case, it might have been expected that he would have been regarded in the winter of 1661/2 as one of the apprentices attached to the Company of Moneyers, and that does not seem to have been the case.

The present note is of an interim character, because all that Scott provides is a basic summary of the information that can be extracted from the surviving documents relating to this dispute, and some researcher with ready access to the London Metropolitan Archives, where the records of the Lord Mayor of London's Court are held, may well be able to amplify what is said here.

Readers of these remarks should also be aware that the probable post-1661/2 career of David Ramage junior has recently been discussed, on the basis of previously overlooked contemporary documentation, by Adrian Marsden in his very informative article, 'The story of David Ramage Junior, token maker turned taverner, and the Norwich Corporation farthings', *Token Corresponding Society Bulletin*, vol.13, no.8, Supplement, September 2021, pp 3-20.



³ Scott, op.cit., vol.1, p.79.