

Friendly Societies

Introduction

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries groups of workers formed mutual and friendly societies as a means of saving. Some friendly societies were specifically aimed at saving for funeral costs, insurance against illness or unemployment, or to provide a source of income in old age. They were generally arranged on a local basis, with members contributing a small sum which was invested for the future and paid out to members when required.

Friendly societies are a form of benevolent society: there are entries relating to other benevolent societies in the 'Miscellaneous' section of this guide. There are also records relating to friendly societies in the following entries in other sections of this guide (sections given in brackets):

- Middlesex Sessions of the Peace (Occupational schemes section)

COAL METERS' COMMITTEE: COAL METERS' SUPERANNUATION PENSION SOCIETY (CLC/B/052)

The Coal Meters' Committee set up a society for forming a fund to pay 10s per week for life to Meters who become members of the Society and were unable to work due to old age or mental or bodily incapacity. The Coal Meters' Superannuation Pension Society was run by a Protective Committee and was dissolved in 1862.¹

Protective committee minute and letter book of the superannuation fund The book contains copies of letters regarding the establishment of this society, the minutes of the Protective Committee of the Coal Meters' Superannuation Pension Society (1839 - 1859) and a list of pensioners at the rear of the book	1838-1859	CLC/B/052/MS10176A
Meters' Philanthropic Committee minute book	1843-1862	CLC/B/052/MS10160

See also: Provident Funds, Widows' and Orphans' Funds.

COURTS GENERAL: SMALL COLLECTIONS: AMICABLE AND BROTHERLY SOCIETY (CLC/309)

The Amicable and Brotherly Society was a mutual benefit society established 1738 by a group of tradesmen at the Ship Tavern, Leadenhall Street.

Papers relating to an action brought in the Exchequer of pleas: Brown v Allen and others, the latter persons being steward, treasurer and committee of the Amicable and Brotherly Society, for debt owed by them to, and allegedly wrongful expulsion from the society of, the aforesaid Bowman Brown. File also includes copies of the society's by-laws, extracts from minutes and lists of members "on and off the chest"	1778 - 1783	CLC/309/MS09383
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See also: Individual pensions.

¹ A notice in the London Gazette on the 8 Dec 1862 (available at <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/22688/pages/6273/page.pdf> [accessed 3 Apr 2013]) suggests that it was a Friendly Society and was dissolved in 1862.

HUGUENOT FRIENDLY BENEFIT SOCIETY (CLC/144)

The Huguenot Friendly Benefit Society was founded in 1687 as the Society of Parisians. It met at the Norfolk Arms in William Street in the parish of St Matthew Bethnal Green and the membership was limited to 61 persons.

Minutes, lists of members, and financial records	1797 - 1912	Whole collection
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MIDDLESEX SESSIONS OF THE PEACE

Quarter Sessions were responsible for regulating Friendly Societies. Acts of 1833 and 1836 meant that Friendly Societies had to be approved by the justices in the Quarter Sessions and a copy of the Society's rules and regulations deposited with the clerk of the Quarter Sessions, the Clerk of the Peace.

LMA holds the records of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions, which are split into several collections based on the various functions the Quarter Sessions carried out. These include: the records of the Sessions' Clerk of the Peace (MC), enrolment, registration and deposit for official non-sessions records (MR) and courts in session (MJ).

List of rules of friendly societies allowed and confirmed at General Quarter Sessions for Middlesex and filed with the rolls of the said Sessions Giving name of society, place of meeting, date of allowance	1829 - 1843; 1836 - 1845	MC/R/001
Register of Friendly Societies; supplemental List of Bonds of Friendly and other Societies found subsequent to list. Gives number of Bond, name of society and date of receipt	1843 - 1847; 1830 - 1843; 1838 - 1866; 1843 - 1862	MC/R/002
List of Friendly Societies enrolled in the office of the Clerk of the Peace (gives number, name of society and date of enrolment, covering numbers 1-2110) and list of Rules of Friendly Societies and other Societies lodged in the office	1794 - 1830	MC/R/005
The following sessions papers (loose administrative papers relating to the business happening in the Quarter Sessions court, both judicial and administrative, accumulated by the Clerk of the Peace) relate to friendly societies: - Committee Appointed to Inspect the Rules and Orders of Friendly Societies: notice that a meeting of the committee is to be held, list of members, adjournment and report, 1793 (MJ/SP/1793/10/219,224, MJ/SP/1793/11/001 and MJ/SP/1793/12/089) - Members of the society 'de Picards A Wallons', whose meetings are held at the house of Louis Provo, at the sign of The Turkish Slave, Brick Lane, Bethnal Green, declare that it is a Friendly Society and not a political society, 1799 Aug 24-1799 Sep (MJ/SP/1799/09/108) - Thomas Poole: letter requesting information on the number of friendly societies in Middlesex, 1804 Jul (MJ/SP/1804/07/056) - Ann Hadden, Elizabeth Brewer and Mary Wright: dates set for their appeals against an order made concerning their friendly society, order to readmit Jane Griffiths into their friendly society and petition against this order, 1804 Sep-Oct (MJ/SP/1804/09/030,033,034 and MJ/SP/1804/10/052)		MJ/SP

MIDDLESEX SESSIONS OF THE PEACE (continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thomas Poole: letter requesting information on rated rental, rack rental and friendly societies in Middlesex, 1804 Oct (MJ/SP/1804/10/065) - List of rules and orders for the friendly society for Women called the Third Monday Union, 1804 Oct, (MJ/SP/1804/10/076) - Members of the Friendly Society called the 'Sons of Albion', the sign of the Black Jack, Portsmouth Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields: appeal for their rules to be confirmed and allowed, 1831 Oct 17 (MJ/SP/1831/10/049) - Correspondence and a return from the Clerk of the Peace to G. Lamb, Whitehall, concerning Friendly Societies filed from 1 January 1793 to October 1831, 1831 Oct 10-15 (MJ/SP/1831/10/106) <p>The session papers are different from the sessions rolls, the official documents used in the legal process; and the sessions books - the minutes of what went on in the court, although the sessions rolls and sessions books may hold more information about the business associated with friendly societies listed above.</p> <p>Please note that this list is based on a keyword search within the Sessions Papers series, and therefore does not include the years which are not listed to file level (i.e. 1708 - 1728, 1751 – 1759)</p>		
<p>Amendments and additions to the rules of the Amicable Society decided in a general meeting on 6 Dec 1820</p>	1821 Jan 16	MR/S/BF/001
<p>Proposed rules of the Friendly Union Society for Officers of the Clerkenwell House of Detention.</p> <p>Established 21 Jan 1859, an investment society where members (officers and their husbands or wives) pay 6 pence per week</p>	1859 Jan	MR/S/BF/002
<p>Draft minutes of meetings of the Committee on Friendly Societies</p>	1793 Nov	MR/S/BF/004
<p>Prospectus or pamphlet for a proposed national establishment to relieve poverty.</p> <p>The prospectus criticises investment societies, which 'inculcate bad habits {and} encourage drunkenness, idleness and vice.' The institution will provide pay for sickness and retirement and cover burial costs</p>	1819 Oct 27	MR/S/BF/005
<p>Swiss Society, providers of pensions and burial costs for members. Open to Swiss Protestants or English-born sons of Swiss members only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rules and regulations of the society with a list of founding members and Society prayer (1703) and draft of the same - Record of the founding meeting, updated information concerning rules and regulations (in French), and Society prayer (1823) 		MR/S/BF/006-008
<p>Draft of rules for members of the Masonic Benefit Society for Relief and Support of Free and Accepted Masons and Their Families with a list of trustees and founders. Also includes a draft membership form</p>	1799 Jan 1	MR/S/BF/009

See also: Individual Pensions, Miscellaneous (Annuity and Tontine), Occupational Schemes.