

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](#).

The Masters' and Clerks' Dinner, and where should the apostrophes go??!!

This email question from an assistant clerk arrived recently:

“I was taking a look on the Livery Companies website with a question in mind and I wondered if you could help regarding how a specific event that takes place across Companies is titled. In a variety of correspondence and invitations I have seen this event listed as; Master and Clerks Dinner / Masters and Clerks Dinner / Masters' and Clerks' Dinner / Master's and Clerk's Dinner / Master & Clerk's – and so on!”

And this was my answer:

“My own livery go for **Masters & Clerks'**. The logic, I believe, is that it is the single possessive of the combination of the Masters & Clerks. Hence the apostrophe after Clerks serves as the possessive of the whole phrase, and I would be content with that.

However I have no pretence at being an authority on English grammar, and I acknowledge that others may have different views/logic. But most would agree that the guests are certainly in the plural, and so any apostrophes (one or two) belong *after* the plural S.”

Later: Further research has now led me to <http://dreaded-apostrophe.com> and the accompanying book *Apostrophe Catastrophe* (see Library). Its authoritative author asserts that the correct answer is in fact **Masters' & Clerks'** and I have no wish to argue.

Hence, for completeness, if inviting more than one prime warden, and the Weavers' single Upper Bailiff, the dinner should be described in full as:

The Masters', Prime Wardens', Upper Bailiff's and Clerks' Dinner.

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Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email nrpullman@btinternet.com