

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its past chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those 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.

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, indeed my recommendation.

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.

Finally, for completeness, if inviting at least one prime warden, and the Weavers' Upper Bailiff, the dinner should be described in full as:

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

Apostrophe obsessives may find more at <http://www.apostrophe.org.uk>

Nigel R Pullman

6th September 2017

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