

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.

Quit Rents

The ancient Ceremony of the Rendering of the Quit Rents to the Crown by the City of London Corporation takes place at the Royal Courts of Justice in early October before the Queen's Remembrancer.

The Ceremony is nowadays combined with the presentation of their Warrants to the two new Sheriffs of the City, and receipt by them of the Sovereign's writ of approbation of their election.

The note below is a transcript of an undated document written by the Queen's Remembrancer. Wikipedia and Google have more.

The Queen's Remembrancer (not to be confused with the City Remembrancer) is a judge who sits at the High Court as a Master of that court, aside from his ceremonial duties.

Ceremony of the Quit Rents and Services

The annual Ceremony of the Rendering of the Quit Rents by the Corporation of London to the Queen's Remembrancer on behalf of the Crown, is an ancient, time-honoured and traditional Ceremony which may be the oldest surviving Ceremony next to that of the Coronation itself. It is feudal in origin and character since it represents the rendering of service in lieu of rent in respect of the tenure of two pieces of land, one being a piece of wasteland called 'The Moors' near Bridgenorth in Shropshire and the other being a Tenement called the 'The Forge' in the parish of St Clement Danes, probably on land close to Tweezer's Alley off Milford Lane. The services rendered by the original tenants of these pieces of land enabled them to avoid paying a money rent. This is why they are called Quit Rents, since thereby the tenant goes 'quit' and free of the normal obligation to pay money for his tenure of the land.

The Quit Rent in respect of the Tenement called 'The Moors', consists in the presentation of a blunt knife and a sharp knife. The qualities of these instruments are demonstrated by the Comptroller and Solicitor of the City of London who will bend a hazel rod of a cubits' length (one year's growth) over the blunt knife and break it over the blade of the sharp knife. Cubits varied in length but in this case it is the length between the Queen's Remembrancer's elbow and his forefinger – 19 inches. Hazel rods were used as tallies to record payments made to the Court of Exchequer by notches made with a sharp knife along their length and split length-ways with a blunt and pliable bladed knife,

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one half being given to the payer as his receipt and the other half being retained by the Court to vouch its written records. This Quit Rent has been rendered for over 800 years, the earliest recorded notice being the Shropshire Sergeantries in 1211, during the reign of King John, where it was recorded that the tenant was Nicola de More. [*four years before Magna Carta*]

In respect of 'The Forge', the Quit Rent consists of six horseshoes and 61 nails which the Comptroller and City Solicitor count to demonstrate that the numbers are correct before rendering them to the Queen's Remembrancer on behalf of Her Majesty. These shoes are over nine inches wide. This Quit Rent has been rendered for nearly 800 years, the grant of the Forge having been made by Henry III and being first entered in the Great Roll of the Exchequer in 1235 when a forge on the site was granted to an itinerant farrier, Water le Brun. The six horseshoes and the 61 nails themselves probably date from the 1360s. After being rendered to the Queen's Remembrancer, they are preserved in his Office and, with the permission of the Crown, they are loaned to the Corporation of London to be rendered again the following year.

These ceremonies were formerly performed before the Cursitor Baron of the Court of Exchequer. When that Office was abolished in 1854, the Queen's Remembrancer took the place of the Baron (Judge) of that court and to signify the connection with the old Court of Exchequer he wears, on top of his full-bottomed wig, the tricorne hat of a Baron of the Court of Exchequer and the chequered cloth of the Court is spread out before him. The Ceremony is nowadays combined with the presentation of the two new Sheriffs of the City to the Queen's Remembrancer and the receipt by them of their Warrants signifying the Sovereign's approbation of their election.

NRP Footnote - there is no real connection between the Quit Rents ceremony and the receipt of the Warrants by the new sheriffs. Other than they are both performed by the Queen's Remembrancer, and at the same time.

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