

Mayors and Sheriffs OF LONDON



SUNDAY OATHS AND TOWER OATHS

The first list below (A) provides the years from 1273 to 1558 when either 30 September (the usual Westminster presentation date for the newly-chosen sheriffs) or 29 October (the usual Westminster oath-taking date for the newly-chosen mayor) fell upon a Sunday, and what, if anything, the civic records say about a postponement or otherwise, accordingly, of inauguration ceremonial normally to take place on those dates. (No specific Sunday records involving individual years before 1273 have as yet been found.) Where the MS dates are the usual 30 September or 29 October, however, the scribe in the MS cited may simply be following in his report the usual formulae, and so correctness cannot be confirmed unless a number of other sources corroborate the first.¹ MS use of the word Sunday or Monday (reproduced in this list when in the MS) is more significant than merely a date (the normal date usually being given formulaically as the day after the feast of St. Michael [sheriffs]/Sts. Simon and Jude [mayor]). Corporation of London Repertories, Journals, and Letter Books are here regarded together as a single source, since information on shrieval and mayoral elections and inaugurations is normally copied from one of these civic series to another. Where the information is to be found in a Letter Book, that is the source cited here, as the official final source.

The second list below (B) provides the years when civic records note that the sheriffs and/or the mayor had their presentation/oath-taking at the Tower of London rather than at the Exchequer. Here too the Repertories, Journals, and Letter Books are handled as a single source, and the Letter Book is cited where it contains the relevant information.

Information for 30 September becomes more scarce after 1520, as it was decided in August 1521 that all the London companies would no longer accompany the sheriffs by water to their Westminster presentation in September but only the companies to which the sheriffs themselves belonged.² Only two companies each year therefore would have records of barge hire and the like for this occasion, from 1521 on; and for a number of these companies, pre-1559 accounts and court minutes are no longer extant.

¹Most other sources, of course, may also normally be using formulae. Note also that where a Grocers' Company MS gives a different date from that provided by other sources, a payment or recording date rather than an event date likely may be involved. In 1456, e.g., the Grocers paid on 13 November (GRA1 f 62v) the tailor who made hoods for the mayor's October oath-taking minstrels, and in 1554 they paid on 2 November (GRA5 f 478) the trumpeters at the October oath-taking.)

²See JL12 f 127/LBKN ff 164v--5.

A "--" indicates that no date information has yet been found for the year concerned.

A full explanation of Sunday postponements and of Tower oaths is provided at the end of the two lists, and is in turn followed by a listing of the full references for the abbreviations used both in the lists and in the explanation.

A. Years of 30 September/29 October falling on a Sunday

All years between 1273 and 1558 in which 30 September or 29 October fell upon a Sunday are listed, with information given where a presentation and/or oath-taking date has been specified in a MS source.

Shrieval presentation on:

1274 --
1285 --
1291 --
1296 --
1302 Sunday 30 Sep (LBKC f 70)
1313 --
1319 Sunday 30 Sep (LBKD f 5v)⁴
1324 Monday 1 Oct (LBKD f 6v)
1330 --
1341 --
1347 --

Mayoral oath-taking on:

1273 3rd or 4th day after 28 Oct (*M&S* p 167)
1279 --
1284 --
1290 [City in king's hand, with an appointed warden]³
1301 Sunday 29 Oct (LBKC f 62v)
1307 Monday 30 Oct (LBKC f 112v)
1312 Monday 30 Oct (LBKD f 3v)
1318 Monday 30 Oct (LBKD f 5v)
1329 --
1335 --
1340 --
1346 --

³ Wardens appointed by the king, rather than elected mayors, headed the city from 29 June 1285 to April/May 1298. (See main MASL listings.)

⁴Sharpe *Cal LBKD* p 29 mistakenly has Monday.

1352	--	1357	--
1358	--	1363	--
1369	Monday 1 Oct (LBKG f 236v; one sheriff ill and did not attend)	1368	29 Oct (LBKG f 216v)
1375	Monday 1 Oct (LBKH f 22)	1374	Monday 30 Oct (LBKG f 320v)
1380	30 Sep (LBKH f 125)	1385	29 Oct (LBKH f 196v)
1386	Monday 1 Oct (LBKH f 201v)	1391	29 Oct (LBKH f 261v)
1397	Monday 1 Oct (LBKH f 316)	1396	29 Oct (LBKH f 312)
1403	Monday 1 Oct (LBKI f 26v)	1402	29 Oct (LBKI f 19v)
1408	Monday 30 Sep [i.e. 1 Oct] (LBKI f 73v)	1413	29 Oct (LBKI f 126v)
1414	Monday 30 Sep [i.e. 1 Oct] (LBKI f 135)	1419	29 Oct (LBKI f 238v)
1425	30 Sep (LBKK f 32)	1424	29 Oct (LBKK f 22v)
1431	30 Sep (LBKK f 89)	1430	29 Oct (LBKK f 76v)
1436	30 Sep (LBKK f 162v)	1441	29 Oct (LBKK f 198)
1442	30 Sep (LBKK f 205)	1447	29 Oct (LBKK f 241)
1453	30 Sep (LBKK f 274)	1452	29 Oct (LBKK f 263)
1459	30 Sep (LBKK f 310v)	1458	-- ⁵
1464	30 Sep (LBKL f 33v)	1469	29 Oct (LBKL f 65v)
1470	30 Sep (LBKL f 71v)	1475	29 Oct (LBKL f 113v)
1481	30 Sep (LBKL f 164)	1480	29 Oct (LBKL f 157)
1487	30 Sep (LBKL f 236v)	1486	29 Oct (LBKL f 224)

⁵GRA1 f 93v has 30 October, but this may be a payment date; the Grocers' accounts have 30 October in all of 1455 (f 43v), 1456 (f 62v), and 1458 (f 93v), which seems improbable as referring to actual oath-taking dates.

1492	30 Sep (LBKL f 294v)	1497	29 Oct (LBKM f 4)
1498	30 Sep (LBKM f 13)	1503	29 Oct (LBKM f 80)
1509	30 Sep (LBKM f 163--3v)	1508	29 Oct (LBKM f 148v)
1515	30 Sep (LBKM f 247)	1514	29 Oct (LBKM f 228v)
1520	30 Sep (LBKN ff 139v--40)	1525	-- ⁶
1526	--	1531	Monday 30 Oct (LBKO f 237) ⁷
1537	--	1536	29 Oct? (BRA1) ⁸
1543	--	1542	29 Oct (DRA3 f 235v)
1548	--	1553	29 Oct (MTA4 f 304v; BRA3 1553--4 account p 17)
1554	--		

B. Tower Oaths

All years are listed for which a source specifies that the shrieval presentation and/or mayoral oath-taking took place at the Tower of London (or, in a few early years, took place at Westminster but before the Constable of the Tower/Tower warden).

Sheriff

Mayor

1278 Tower (*French Chronicle*, in *M&S*
p 238)⁹

⁶VIA1 p 25 records what seems to have been a barge reservation/cancellation payment on 30 October; the company apparently had arranged to hire a barge for the water procession with the mayor to Westminster, but then the mayor was sworn at the Tower rather than at Westminster. This payment date, however, is not necessarily the oath-taking date.

⁷VIA1 p 65 has a barge payment dated 29 October, but in this 3-year account (1528--31) the same date may simply have been repeated for all 3 years. LBKO specifies Monday.

⁸BRA1 1536--7 account p 17 specifies 29 October, but also Westminster, so is probably being merely formulaic, since LBKP f 105v and the records of several companies specify that the oath in 1536 was made at the Tower. The Tower oath records, however, do not provide a date.

⁹The mayor [unusually] was presented at the Tower to Sir Antony de Bek [Constable of the

1298 Tower warden at Westminster (LBKC f 25)	1298 Tower warden at Westminster (LBKC f 25)
	1299 Tower (LBKC f 36v); Constable of Tower (<i>M&S</i> p 217)
1300 Constable of Tower, but Tower not specified (LBKC f 50v)	1300 Tower (LBKC f 51); Constable of Tower (<i>M&S</i> p 217)
1301 Tower (LBKC f 62v; <i>M&S</i> p 220)	1301 Tower (LBKC f 62v; <i>M&S</i> pp 217, 221)
1302 Tower (LBKC f 70)	
1303 Constable of Tower, but Tower not specified (LBKC f 111v)	1303 Tower (LBKC f 111v) ¹⁰
1304 Constable of Tower, but Tower not specified (LBKC ff 111v--12)	1304 Tower (LBKC f 112) ¹¹
1319 Tower (LBKD f 5v)	1319 Tower (LBKD f 6)
1322 Tower (LBKD f 6v)	
1327 Tower (<i>CPMR</i> I.31)	1327 Tower? (<i>CPMR</i> I.31) ¹²
1328 Constable of Tower (<i>CPMR</i> I.69)	1328 Constable of Tower (<i>CPMR</i> I.72--3)
1392 Tower (LBKH f 275v)	1392 Tower (LBKH f 276; also 30 Oct to king at Westminster)
	1513 Tower (BKA1 f 59v, GRA3 f 67v, MCC1 f 225) ¹³
	1517 Tower (LBKN f 53v; several companies)
	1525 Tower ([BKA1 f 111v; BLA2 p 155; VIA1 p 25)
	1535 Tower (LBKP f 74; several companies)
	1536 Tower (LBKP f 105v; several companies)
	1540 Tower (RP10 f 178; several companies)
	1543 Tower (LBKQ f 93v)
	1548 Tower (COA1 f 134v; MTA4 f 146;

Tower], substituting for the king, as the king was [at war] in Wales (*French Chronicle*, in *M&S* p 238).

¹⁰*M&S* has Exchequer on p 218 but Tower on p 222.

¹¹*M&S* has king at Westminster p 218 but Tower on p 222.

¹²A writ commands the Constable of the Tower to receive the mayor and sheriffs into office; but although the sheriffs are recorded as received at the Tower on 30 September, there is no corresponding specific record for the mayor.

¹³LBKM f 213 has Westminster; but the companies' records are explicit, and the Drapers' records, which regularly show barge hire for Westminster oath-takings, show no barge hire in this year.

Replacement mayors and sheriffs recorded as sworn/presented at the Tower

1376--7	Saturday 21 March (LBKH f 59; <i>Liber Albus</i> p 24). Nicholas Brembre, mayor.
1484--5	Monday 26 September (LBKL f 212v). William Stokker, mayor.
1490--1	Wednesday 2 March (LBKL f 283v). Hugh Pemberton, sheriff.
1507--8	Wednesday 29 March (LBKM f 142). Lawrence Aylmer, mayor.
1532--3	Wednesday 12 or 19 March (LBKP f 6v, JL13 f 365v). ¹⁵ John Martyn, sheriff.
1532--3	Thursday 18 September (LBKP ff 22v--3). John Preest, sheriff.

SUNDAY OATHS AND TOWER OATHS: AN EXPLANATION

For most of the period covered by the above lists, the customary inauguration process for newly-chosen sheriffs of London involved the swearing of an oath at the Guildhall on the day before the feast of St. Michael, 28 September, and a presentation at Westminster before the king or the Barons of the Exchequer (as the king's representatives) on the day after the feast, 30 September. Similarly the newly-chosen incoming mayor swore an oath at the Guildhall on the feast of Sts. Simon and Jude, 28 October, and another oath at Westminster, before the king or the Exchequer Barons, on the day after the feast, 29 October.¹⁶ Both the sheriffs' presentation and

¹⁴MTA4 f 129 says Westminster.

¹⁵Both LBKP and JL13 note that the sheriff being replaced had died 8 March and that Martyn was elected 12 March. LBKP specifies assumption of office and Tower presentation on the same day as the election; JL13 puts both on 19 March. LBKP is almost certainly correct.

¹⁶These dates (other than 30 September) are provided by early fifteenth-century city clerk John Carpenter in *Liber Albus* pp 21--2, 39--40, and are confirmed (including 30 September) by the Letter Books from the late 13th and early 14th centuries. (See e.g. LBKC f 25 [1298] for 30 September and 29 October as the presentation/oath-taking dates.) *Liber Albus* does not deal with the sheriffs' Westminster presentation. In the early 13th century we cannot be sure of the exact dates used for the presentation/oath-taking processions, but for the mayor 29 October as the date of the oath to the Crown was apparently a norm before 1254, as in that year *M&S* (p 22) notes as unusual that the mayor was not presented on that day at the Exchequer; and in 1265 *M&S* (p 81) refers to 29 October as customary. (*M&S* p 62 also suggests that before 1261 the new mayor was not sworn at the Guildhall before he had taken his oath to the Crown.) In *M&S* 28 September is indicated in 1256 (p 25) to be the usual date for the new sheriffs to take office, and 30 September is indicated in 1270 (p 191--a MS addition) as the usual date for the Exchequer presentation (although the addition also indicates 29 September as the customary election day).

It is important to distinguish between election dates and Westminster oath-taking/presentation dates (although the two came close together); for the former, which varied throughout this period (although 13 October was standard for the mayor from 1368 to 1545 inclusive, and 21 September for the sheriffs from 1325 to 1526 inclusive), see Beaven II.xxviii (mayor) and xxxiii (sheriffs). In some periods (to the early 14th century, and again in

the mayor's oath-taking involved formal processions to and from Westminster, normally with music. The new sheriffs were fully installed in office once they had taken the Guildhall oath (although occasionally, in early days, the king refused to accept one of them and a new sheriff had to be chosen); the incoming mayor did not formally replace the outgoing mayor until the Exchequer oath (to the crown) had been taken.¹⁷

Two major variants could occur in relation to both the shrieval and the mayoral inauguration appearances at the Exchequer. The first variant involves Sundays. When 30 September or 29 October fell on a Sunday, at least in some time periods the procession to the Exchequer would be postponed for (usually) one day, until 1 October (for 30 September) or 30 October (for 29 October). But although the civic records show this kind of postponement occurring in some years, they do not invariably show it. Scribes, of course, tended in official MSS to repeat inauguration formulae from one year to the next, and so a formulaic statement that, for example, the mayor took his oath at the Exchequer on the day after the feast of Sts. Simon and Jude cannot be relied upon for accuracy when the 29 October in question was a Sunday. Sometimes, however, the statement includes the identifying of 29 October--or, for the sheriffs, 30 September--as a Sunday, in which case one might expect the scribe to have realized that he was making a mistake, and to have corrected himself, if Sundays were invariably avoided for Exchequer oaths/presentations. Presumably, therefore, they were not always avoided. Avoidances of Sunday are recorded once in the 13th century (although here the cause of the date change is not certain), a good number of times in the 14th century, and 3 times in the early 15th century, but only once,

1365 and 1367, according to Beaven) the mayor was elected on 28 October (see e.g. *M&S* p 12 for 1245); and *M&S* states for 1239 (p 8) that the sheriffs were elected before the feast of St. Michael (29 September), and for 1244 (p 9) that they were elected the 3rd day before the feast of St. Michael. Until 1253 the new mayor and new sheriffs had to be presented each year to the king himself or his justices, and the presentation/oath-taking dates are somewhat unpredictable (in 1245 e.g. the mayor was not sworn until 16 November because the king was in Wales [*M&S* p 12]); but in a charter of 12 June 1253 Henry III specifically granted that the mayor could be admitted by the Exchequer barons at Westminster when the king himself was unavailable (although the mayor also then had to be presented to the king himself later). For King John's charter of 1215, granting Londoners the privilege of choosing their mayor and requiring him to be presented to the king, and for Henry III's 1253 charter, see Birch *Historical Charters* pp xvi, xviii, 19-20 (1215 charter), 34--5 (1253 charter), and 43 (1298 charter).

¹⁷For the mayor, see *Liber Albus* p 22; *Liber Albus* for the sheriffs deals only with the Guildhall oath. In the early 14th century the city and the Exchequer Barons argued over whether the sheriffs, like the mayor, had to swear an oath at the Exchequer or whether they were simply to be presented there; the Barons seemed to have won the debate in 1324--6, but in 1327 (6 March) a charter of Edward III (Birch *Historical Charters* p 56) confirmed that the sheriffs were not to be compelled to take an oath at the Exchequer except when yielding up their accounts. (See Sharpe *Cal LBKF* p 227 and n 2; also *Cal LBKD* pp xii--xiv for a discussion of the situation from the 13th century to 1326, and *LBKF* f 194v for a 20 September 1329 king's writ to the Exchequer Barons on this matter). This website consistently refers to the sheriffs' presentation, rather than oath-taking, at Westminster.

definitely, after 1414: for the mayoral procession in 1531.¹⁸

Very occasionally a moving of the Guildhall oath to another day is recorded when 28 September or 28 October fell upon a Sunday; but such recorded moves are so few that it seems that the Guildhall oath was not normally moved.¹⁹

The second major variant involves the Exchequer. From 1298, if the king or the Barons of the Exchequer were not available on the customary dates for shrieval or mayoral inauguration processions to Westminster, the sheriffs or the mayor would be presented instead at the Tower of London, to the Constable of the Tower as the king's representative.²⁰ Here too it is possible that scribes sometimes repeated the Westminster formula instead of accurately indicating that the sheriffs or mayor went to the Tower of London; but from 1435 for the sheriffs and from 1453 for the mayor--the dates from which invariably their processions to Westminster were made by water rather than by land²¹--company records explicitly not just of the Tower or Westminster but also of the hiring or not of barges (since the Tower involved a land procession) can often serve to confirm or to contradict the Westminster/Tower information found in the civic Letter Books, Journals, and/or Repertories.²² Also no scribe would presumably break from the formulae to

¹⁸John Carpenter in *Liber Albus* p 22 notes Sunday avoidance, for the mayoral oath-taking, as a norm; so either he is writing only of earlier times, or a change took place in the early 15th century, or the 15th century civic records after 1414 are entirely formulaic and do not record Sunday-caused postponements.

¹⁹See 1515 (mayor's Guildhall oath on Saturday 27 October because 28 October was a Sunday: LBKM f 258), 1516 (sheriffs' Guildhall oath on 27 September because 28 September was a Sunday: JL11 f 265v), 1526 (mayor's Guildhall oath on [probably] Saturday [27 October]; LBKO f 18 records on Thursday 25 October a decision to move the oath, because 28 October was a Sunday, to Saturday next, the vigil of All Saints; but this is probably an error for the vigil of Sts Simon and Jude (27 October), as the vigil of All Saints would have been Wednesday 31 October. The Grocers in 1526 do pay a bargeman for the mayoral oath-taking on [Saturday] 3 November (GRA4 f 248); but the dates in various Grocers' accounts may sometimes be payment rather than occasion dates. *Liber Albus* says nothing about avoidance of Sundays for Guildhall oaths.

²⁰For the mayor, see *Liber Albus* p 24, and Edward I's 1298 charter granting this privilege for mayoral oath-takings (Birch *Historical Charters* pp 43--4). The Constable initially may not have administered the oath at the Tower (LBKC f 25 places the Tower warden at Westminster for the 1298 oath), but the Tower seems almost certainly invariable thereafter.

²¹See Anne Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2002), pp 145--7.

²²In 1513 company records explicitly of a Tower oath contradict the Letter Books' recording of Westminster. Dependence on barge-hiring records is complicated, however, throughout the reign of Henry VI (1422--60), by the companies' annual water journey to Westminster--and therefore annual hirings of barges--for a commemorative dirge for Henry V. (See e.g. GRA1 f 119v, with barge hirings--here with the occasions explicit--for all 3 of the shrieval and mayoral inaugurations and the king's [Henry V's] dirge.) Also boats (though not usually barges) might be

note a Tower presentation/oath except when the Tower had actually been substituted for the Exchequer; and so we can rely upon records that specify the Tower in the place of the Exchequer. Tower presentations/oaths are recorded in the late 13th century (for the mayor), a number of times in the 14th century (for both sheriffs and mayor), and (again for the mayor only) several times between 1513 and 1548; but none are entered in the civic MSS from 1393 to 1512 (inclusive).

Replacement sheriffs and mayors, admitted to office when the original sheriffs and mayors died during their terms or were removed from office by the king, might be admitted (after their Guildhall oaths) either at the Exchequer or at the Tower, depending on the availability at Westminster of the king or Exchequer Barons at what were non-standard inauguration dates. No admission of a replacement seems to have occurred, as far as the records show, on a Sunday.²³

ABBREVIATIONS USED:

- Beaven. Alfred B. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London*. 2 vols. London: Corporation of London, 1908--13
- Birch *Historical Charters. The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London*, ed. Walter de Gray Birch. London: Whiting, 1887.
- BKA1. The Worshipful Company of Bakers: MS audit books, vol. 1. (MS CLC/L/BA/D/001/MS05174/001)
- BLA2. The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths: MS wardens' accounts, vol. 2. (MS CLC/L/BD/D/001/MS02883/002)
- BRA1, 3. The Worshipful Company of Brewers: MS wardens' accounts, vols. 1, 3. (MS CLC/L/BF/D/001/MS05442/001, 003)
- COA1. The Worshipful Company of Coopers: MS wardens' accounts, vol. 1. (MS CLC/L/CI/D/001/MS05606/001)
- CPMR. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls, 1323--1482*, ed. Arthur H. Thomas (vols. 1--4) and Philip E. Jones (vols. 5--6). 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1926--61.
- DRA3. The Worshipful Company of Drapers: MS wardens' accounts, vol. 3. (MS WA3)
- GRA1, 3, 4, 5. The Worshipful Company of Grocers: MS wardens' accounts, vols. 1, 3, 4, 5. (MS CLC/L/GH/D/001/MS11571/001, 003, 004, 005)
- JL 11,12, 13. Corporation of London Journals 11, 12, 13. (MS COL/CC/01/01/011, 012, 013)
- LBK. Corporation of London Letter Book. A--I, K--S. (MS COL/AD/01/001--018)
- Liber Albus. Liber Albus: The White Book of The City of London*, ed. and trans. Henry

hired for separate occasions such as the presentation of the mayor to the king when the king had not been present at the mayor's oath-taking.

²³One possible exception is in 1467, when LBKL f 52 records replacement sheriff John Stokton as going to Westminster on the Monday following Saturday 20 June but LBKF f 234v provides the date of [Sunday] 21 June. Given the practice otherwise of avoiding Sundays, however, LBKL, which specifies the day of the week, is probably correct.

- Thomas Riley. London: Richard Griffin, 1861.
M&S. Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London, A.D. 1188 to A.D. 1274, ed.
and trans. Henry Thomas Riley. London: Trubner, 1863.
- MCC1. The Worshipful Company of Mercers: MS court minutes, vol. 1. (MS Acts of Court 1)
- MTA4. The Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors: account books, vol. 4.
(MS CLC/L/MD/D/003/MS34048/004)
- PEA2. The Worshipful Company of Pewterers: MS audit books, vol. 2.
(MS CLC/L/PE/D/002/MS07086/001)
- RP10. Corporation of London Repertory 10. (MS COL/CA/01/01/010)
- Sharpe *Cal LBK*. Reginald R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Letter-Books Preserved among the
Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall*. 11 vols.
(A--I, K--L.) London: Corporation of London, 1899--1912.
- VIA1. The Worshipful Company of Vintners: accounts 1522--82.
(MS CLC/L/VA/D/002/MS15333/001)

All company MSS cited, other than the Drapers' and the Mercers', have been catalogued by the London Metropolitan Archives but may be consulted at the Guildhall Library. The Journals, Letter Books, and Repertories are held at and accessed at the LMA. The Drapers' Company and the Mercers' Company both keep their MSS at their halls. My thanks to all of the companies, and to the Corporation of London, for generously-provided access to their MSS.

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