

Apprenticeship indenture, Vero and Everitt Ltd. (CR 1793)

For February's Document of the Month, we have chosen this apprenticeship indenture of James Sweet to the hat making company Vero and Everitt Limited, dated 29th October 1912.

Apprenticeship indentures are records of agreements whereby the master would enter into a legal agreement to offer the apprentice training in a trade for a set amount of time, and a set amount of money. They can provide a wealth of information to researchers. More information about them can be found on the Gen Guide website¹.

This indenture of apprenticeship is between John Sweet, his son James, Vero and Everitt Limited, and the trustees of the William Symonds Charity. It details the terms of which James Sweet, aged sixteen, would be apprenticed to the Atherstone based hat making firm as a hat and felt maker. James, by the permission of his father, was to be bound by the terms of this apprenticeship for seven years. The indenture details how James was expected to conduct himself throughout his term as apprentice, as well as the wages he could expect to be paid during his term. It is a fascinating insight into working life at the turn of the twentieth century.

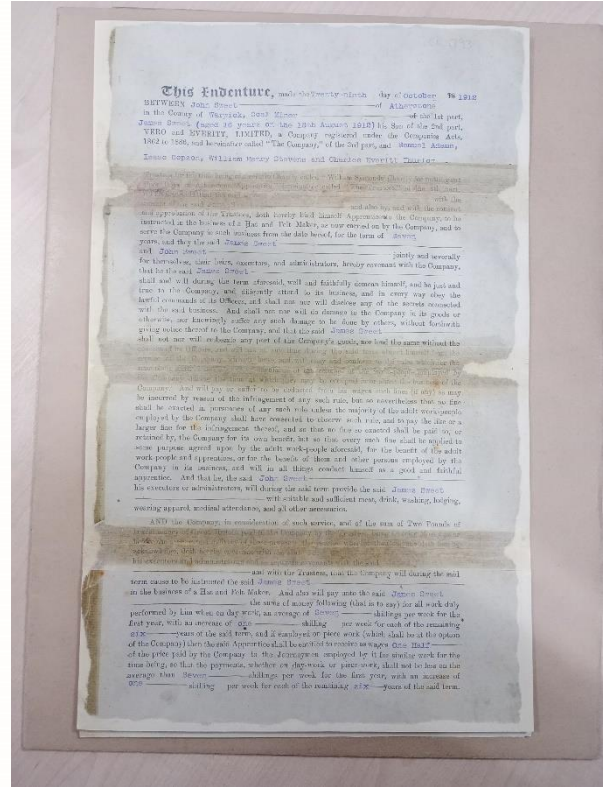
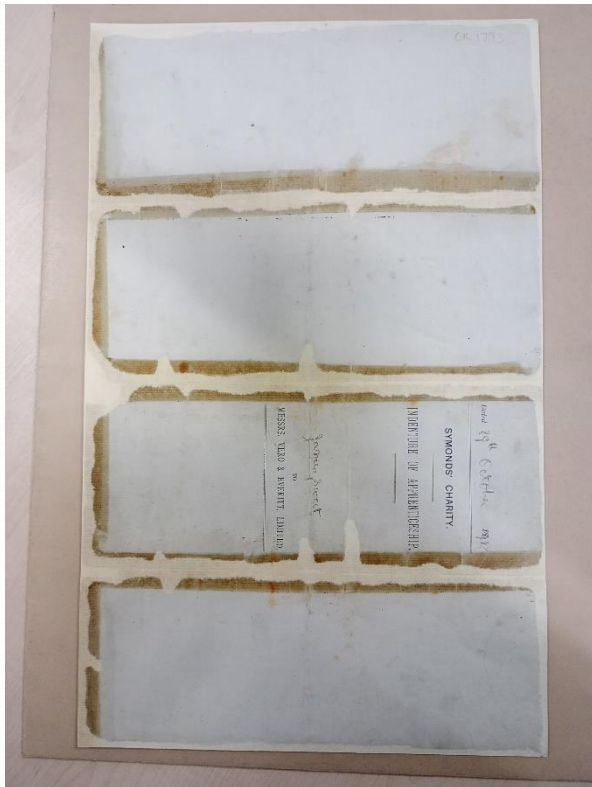
Vero and Everitt Limited

Vero and Everitt Ltd. was founded by master hatter Charles Vero and tallow chandler James Everitt. After a brief period running a hat shop in Melbourne, Australia, the pair began leasing land in Atherstone and, over several years, built a factory to manufacture hats.

The company went on to supply military and uniform hats and helmets globally, particularly during the First and Second World War. However, after the wars, hats became less popular, and the industry started to decline. Vero and Everitt Ltd. was

¹ Gen Guide, <https://www.genguide.co.uk/source/apprenticeship-agreements-trade-occupations/> (accessed 08/01/2025).

absorbed into Wilson and Stafford, who were the last surviving hat manufacturers in Atherstone, until they eventually closed in 1999².



Apprenticeship indenture, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR1793

James Sweet

James Sweet was born in the July quarter of 1896 in Atherstone, Warwickshire, to parents John and Sarah Ann. His father is listed as a collier on James' baptism entry in 1897. He appears on the census in 1901 and 1911 with a total of ten siblings³. By the time of the 1921 census, he is listed as a Felt Hat Cleaner at Vero and Everitt, so we can say for certain that he stayed with the company after his apprenticeship ended. Interestingly, one of his younger sisters, Florence, also worked at Vero and Everitt as a Hat Trimmer⁴.

² Information taken from Warwickshire's Past Unlocked, <https://archivesunlocked.warwickshire.gov.uk/calview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=05975> (accessed 03/01/2025).

³ Information Gathered from Ancestry.com (accessed 04/01/2025).

⁴ Information Gathered from Find My Past (accessed 04/01/2025).

James married Nellie Elizabeth Lapworth in 1924, and they are listed together on the 1939 register. They had three children in 1927, 1933 and 1936, respectively. James died on 23rd September 1958 in Nuneaton, leaving his widow with £1,227 0s 8d⁵. According to the National Archives Currency Converter, this figure would be worth £29,283.64 in 2017⁶.

William Symonds Charity

According to Volume II of White & Co.'s Commercial and Trades Directory of Birmingham, William Symonds, a gentleman who resided in Atherstone, ordered by will in 1687 that monies gained from lands in Twycross (Leicestershire) and in Mancetter should be used to provide apprenticeships to "poor men's male children of inhabitants of the towns of Atherstone, Tamworth, and Nuneaton"⁷. The terms set out by Symonds also included that the child should be able to read the Bible, and one would subsequently be purchased for them at the start of their apprenticeship. The proceeds of the charity were received by the Overseers of Atherstone and distributed accordingly⁸. Some surviving accounts for the charity can be found in the Charity Commission collection here at the Record Office⁹. According to the accounts for the year 1912, James Sweet's apprenticeship cost the charity £2 5s.

In our collections here at the Record Office, we also have a collection of earlier apprenticeship indentures for the William Symonds Charity in the parish collection for St Mary's, Atherstone¹⁰.

⁵ Information Gathered from Ancestry.com (accessed 04/01/2025).

⁶ Information gathered from the National Archives Currency Converter, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result> (accessed 04/01/2025).

⁷ White & Co.'s Commercial & Trades Directory of Birmingham, Vol. II, 1875, page 211, accessed via University of Leicester Special Collections Online, [White & Co.'s Commercial & Trades Directory of Birmingham, Vol. II, 1875 - Historical Directories of England & Wales - Special Collections](#) (accessed 04/01/2025).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Charity Commission Collection, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2249/94/19.

¹⁰ Charity of William Simmonds or Symonds: apprenticeship indentures, Warwickshire County Record Office, DR322/87/1-417.