



COLONIAL PUBLISHING COMPANY

RESEARCH LABORATORY

By B.W. Morris

Historical Accounts of Prominent Families, part of a larger research study and publication into the Morris Family of London. This Account serves as a preview of Morris's forthcoming book: *Morris Family of London*

Alderman John Morris

John Morris (c. 1625 – February 1682) was a prominent English merchant banker, lawyer, estate agent, Member of Parliament for Bletchingley, and Alderman for Cheap Ward in the City of London. Known for his significant contributions to London's financial sector, Morris also maintained influential ties with the City of London's political and commercial elite. He is best remembered as a partner of Sir Robert Clayton.

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

John Morris was born around 1625, the second son of Robert Morris, a yeoman of Abingdon, Berkshire and his wife Frideswide, sister of Henry Avery of Radley, Berkshire. John had several siblings, including three brothers, one named Robert, and at least one sister, Frieswilde. In 1641 he attended the Abingdon School.¹

Morris inherited £100 under his grandfather's will and was apprenticed to Robert Abbott, a leading London scrivener, following his father's death. Although senior in the livery to (Sir) Robert Clayton, another of Abbott's clerks, Morris eventually became Clayton's junior partner in the banking firm of Clayton & Morris Co., the most important of its day. The

¹ Clayton and Morris Co. Bank". archives.lse.ac.uk. Retrieved 2024-12-23.



firm's innovative practices and influence played a key role in modernizing London's banking industry.

Morris's expertise in commerce and finance earned him membership in the prestigious livery company, the Scriveners. He became a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners in 1658, served as its Assistant from 1669 until his death, and was Master from 1670-1671.

ALDERMAN OF CHEAP WARD AND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE

On January 19, 1669, Lord Mayor (and Alderman) Sir William Turner and Sir G. Waterman nominated Morris to serve as Alderman for Cheap Ward.² On May 26, 1669, Morris was sworn in as Alderman for Cheap Ward, one of the City of London's most important commercial districts. However, he stepped down on June 10, 1669, and paid a significant fine of £720 to avoid serving the full term. His replacement, John Man, a tallow chandler, was sworn in on June 24, 1669, with Morris continuing to serve as his vice. His portrait was painted by John Riley.

Morris's political career extended to House of Commons, where he was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Bletchingley in October 1679 during the second Exclusion Parliament.³⁴ Classified as a "*country*" candidate, Morris left no significant legislative record during his tenure. Despite this, his influence within the borough of Bletchingley and London's political circles remained notable. Sir Robert Clayton, his business partner, nominated Morris for the seat, showcasing the strength of their professional and personal alliance.

² Beaven, Alfred B. (Alfred Beaven); City of London (England). Court of Common Council. Library Committee (1908). The aldermen of the city of London temp. Henry III.-1908. With notes on the parliamentary representation of the city, the aldermen and the livery companies, the aldermanic veto, aldermanic baronets and knights, etc. Cornell University Library. London : E. Fisher & company, limited.

³ Morris, John (c.1625-82), of Old Jewry, London and Hambleden, Bucks. | History of Parliament Online". www.historyofparliamentonline.org. Retrieved 2024-12-23.

⁴ "Discharged aldermen in Parliament, etc. | British History Online". www.british-history.ac.uk. Retrieved 2024-12-23.



BUSINESS ENDEAVORS AND LEGACY

As a partner in Clayton & Morris Co., John Morris played a pivotal role in the firm's success.⁵ He and Clayton acquired extensive properties in Surrey and Buckinghamshire, which they divided amicably in August 1678. Morris retained the estate at Hambleden, while Clayton became lord of the manor of Bletchingley, one of the trustees for the transaction was friend and counterpart John Evelyn.⁶ Among Clayton & Morris's more notable clients were the 2nd Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Peterborough. In 1677, the manor of Bletchingley was sold to Sir Robert Clayton under a private act of Parliament, Mordant's Estate Act 1677 (29 Cha. 2. c. 3 Pr.), steered through committee by Thomas Neale, further cementing their business interests in the region.⁷ Morris also served as an Assistant of the Royal African Company from 1672 until his death.

In addition to his business ventures, Morris held civic roles as a Commissioner for Assessment for London and Surrey (1679–1680) and as a Deputy Lieutenant of London. He was also a member of the Honourable Artillery Company.

FAMILY LEGACY AND DEATH

John Morris's influence extended beyond his professional achievements. His nephew, Sir William Goulston, married Frideswide, the daughter of John's brother Robert Morris.⁸

John Morris died in 1682. He devised his estates for his business partner and lifelong friend, Sir Robert Clayton. Substantial legacies were also

⁵ The Clayton Family Of Marden Park, Bletchingley, Godstone And Tandridge: Family And Estate Papers. Clayton family, baronets, of Marden, Surrey. 1459–1838.

⁶ "Parishes: Blechingley | British History Online". www.british-history.ac.uk. Retrieved 2024-12-23.

⁷ Surrey Archaeological Society (1858). Surrey archaeological collections. Surrey Archaeological Society. Guildford [etc.]

⁸ "GOULSTON (GULSTON), Sir William (c.1641-87), of Whitechapel, Mdx. and Fairfield, Kent. | History of Parliament Online". www.historyofparliamentonline.org. Retrieved 2024-12-23.



Released in the public domain on 23 December 2024 through consent of Colonial Publishing Company
by *uvhistory1* on Wikipedia.org (available at: [wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Morris_\(died_1682\)](https://wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Morris_(died_1682)))

left to two nieces who had married Abbott's grandson and Clayton's brother. Additionally, he bequeathed £200 each to the Abingdon Corporation and a local hospital where his brother Robert served as governor.