

Records Indexes

Quarter Sessions

Quarter Sessions were set up during the Elizabethan period to fulfil a combined legal and administrative role for each county. This included looking after highways and bridges, granting permits, keeping lists of prisoners and dealing with crime. In 1889 many of their administrative functions were taken over by the newly-formed county councils but the Quarter Sessions continued to have a legal purpose until 1971. The Court of Quarter Sessions was held four times a year at:

- Epiphany (January)
- Easter (March/April)
- Midsummer (July)
- Michaelmas (September).

Worcestershire Quarter Sessions documentation begins in 1591 and is an assorted collection of papers relating to each case; a case is the term used for a matter under legal investigation which has been brought before the court. It could be for such things as stealing, assault or the building of a road. They contain statements from prosecutors, defendants and witnesses, examinations of paupers and certificates of good behaviour. These have been indexed from 1591 – 1850 Easter sessions. Indexes are available at both branches and the original session papers are held at the County Hall branch.

The index lists:

- Year
- Session (Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer and Michaelmas)
- Packet and document number, required if you wish to see the original
- Type of document:

R – Recognisance (a bond or obligation for the accused or a witness to appear before the court)

I - Indictment (details the charges being brought against the accused)

C- Conviction

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M- Miscellaneous (include bastardy cases and removal orders)

GP- General Papers (include juror's list and details of new footpaths and highways)

- Name (of those mentioned in each case such as defendant or witnesses.)
- Place (where crime or incident took place)
- Subject: (type of crime such as theft, drunkenness, assault, embezzlement, keeping the peace, or details of new road or footpath. Can also include victim's name and place of abode)
- Details: (any other details given such as person's employment and place of abode.)

A volunteer has been working to index subsequent sessions, and we are pleased to announce that the Midsummer and Michaelmas sessions 1850 are now available to search electronically. This is an ongoing project, so additional years will be added as they are completed.

- **Quarter Sessions index 1830, 1850-1852** is available to download at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/records