

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 67

The County of London Sessions

(from 1965 the Inner London Sessions)



Introduction

This leaflet is a brief guide to some of the more used series of records of the County of London Sessions.

Until 1971 the Justices of the Peace for each county and many boroughs were responsible for holding Sessions of the Peace where criminal cases were tried before a jury. These were usually known as the Quarter Sessions because originally they were held four times a year, but in London they were held every month. More serious cases such as murder, rape, blasphemy, bigamy, libel, certain types of bribery and forgery, and offences under the Official Secrets Acts, were referred to the Central Criminal Court or outside London, to the assizes. The Justices also had other responsibilities including the confirmation of new licences granted to public houses, the stopping up and diversion of highways, and the registration and deposit of maps and documents for public record.

The County of London was a new county which was formed in April 1889 from part of Middlesex north of the Thames and parts of Kent and Surrey south of the Thames. The Local Government Act 1888 which created the County of London also provided for a new court of quarter sessions which was given jurisdiction over the whole of the new administrative county except for the City of London which retained its own quarter sessions, the City of London Sessions, whose records are held by London Metropolitan Archives (CLA/047).

London Metropolitan Archives also holds the records of the Middlesex Sessions which until March 1889 had jurisdiction over the whole of the ancient county (MJ, MA, MR, MSJ, etc.) as well as those of the Middlesex Sessions 1889-1971 (MXS) which covered the remaining part of the county known as the Administrative County of Middlesex.

In 1965 the London County Council was abolished and the County of London became part of the Greater London area. The County of London Sessions were renamed the Inner London Sessions. The Sessions of the Peace were abolished by the 1971 Courts Act which set up the Crown Courts to replace both the sessions of the peace and the assizes. London Metropolitan Archives does not hold any records of Crown Courts. Enquiries about older Crown Court records should be addressed to The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

Separate Sessions for North and South London 1889-1909

On the creation of the County of London the newly established London County Council (LCC) became responsible for the provision and maintenance of a sessions house for London. It took over the existing Middlesex Sessions House at Clerkenwell

Green as well as the Newington Sessions House in Newington Causeway from Surrey. Both the Clerk of the Peace for Middlesex (Sir Richard Nicholson) and the Clerk of Peace for Surrey (Sir R. Wyatt) were retained based at Clerkenwell and Newington respectively. Initially separate sessions were held each month for cases from north of the River Thames at Clerkenwell and for cases south of the River Thames at Newington. For the scheme of the London County Council dated March 1892 for regulating the holding of Courts of Quarter Sessions for the County of London and the Standing Orders see ILS/B/14/001. Two sessions were held each month at Clerkenwell for North London and one sessions was held each month at Newington for South London. In practice all the assessment appeals under the Valuation (Metropolis) Act 1869 were held at Clerkenwell.

Separate series of records were kept for the judicial business of the sessions for North and South London. The North London Sessions appear to have adopted the record keeping practices of the Middlesex Sessions while the South London Sessions continued the record keeping practices of the Surrey Sessions. In 1892 it was ordered that whereas 'All depositions, recognizances, notices, and other documents and things relating to cases triable, or business to be disposed of at Quarter Sessions, and required by Law to be transmitted to Quarter Sessions, or to the Clerk of the Peace, shall, in respect of all cases and matters arising north of the River Thames, be transmitted to the Clerk of the Peace for the County of London; and, in respect of all cases and matters arising south of the River Thames shall be transmitted to the present Clerk of the Peace for the County of Surrey, and upon his ceasing to hold office, shall be transmitted to the Clerk of the Peace, for the time being, of the County of London' (ILS/B/14/001 p.17).

The Clerk of the Peace for Surrey, Sir R. Wyatt, died in 1904 and his duties in relating to the Quarter Sessions for the County of London devolved on Sir Richard Nicholson as the Clerk of the Peace for the County of London. In 1908 the London County decided to hold quarter sessions for the whole county at one central court house. The Clerkenwell Sessions house had insufficient accommodation and no room for extension and the arrangements there 'cannot be regarded as other than discreditable'. The state of the building was such that for the last few months the North London Sessions had been heard at Newington (LCC minutes 8 Dec 1908 p.1305).

By 1909 the LCC decided to demolish the Newington Sessions House and to build on the site a new court where all the County of London Sessions could be heard. From February 1909 joint sessions for both north and south London were held at Newington. The sessions were temporarily moved to Clerkenwell in 1912 so demolition and rebuilding could start, but work on the new Newington Sessions House was delayed by the First World War. The last trial at Clerkenwell took place in December 1920, and the rebuilt Newington Sessions House finally opened in January 1921, incorporating a Jacobean chimneypiece originally part of Hicks Hall in Clerkenwell. The Clerkenwell Sessions House was sold in 1923.

Newington Sessions House

The Newington Sessions House was badly damaged by bombing during World War Two. Though it was temporarily repaired, in 1953 the LCC decided to make permanent repairs to the two existing courts and to build two new courts to replace the temporary third court and to accommodate the increasing business dealt with by the court. Marylebone Old Baths, 181 Marylebone Road, were acquired and adapted to become a temporary Sessions House from 1954. Newington Sessions House reopened in early 1958. Additional temporary courts were built in the 1960s. The Inner London Crown Court now occupies the Newington Sessions House.

Call Numbers and Catalogues

The records of the Inner London Sessions (formerly the County of London Sessions) have the following call numbers:

- ILS (the bulk of the records) – most of these are included in the computerised catalogue. Paper list kept behind counter in Information Area.
- LJ/EA estreat papers 1891-1964 – not in computerised catalogue. Paper list can be made available by request (with interim lists in 2nd floor office).
- LJ/EB estreat books 1945-1957 – included in computerised catalogue. Paper list can be made available by request (with interim lists in 2nd floor office).
- LJ/SR sessions rolls 1889-1945 - included in computerised catalogue. Paper list in courts binder 1 on open shelves.
- LR/HD highway diversion and stopping up orders 1895-1972 – not in computerised catalogue. An index can be made available on request (with interim lists in 2nd floor office).
- LSJ/CR registers of summary convictions 1889-1915 – included in computerised catalogue. Paper list kept behind counter in Information Area in same binder as ILS.
- ACC/2385 printed calendars of prisoners 1889-1961 - not in computerised catalogue. Paper list kept behind counter in Information Area in same binder as ILS. Another copy is under 'Various Sessions' in courts binder 130.

Administrative Records

These include:

- Standing Orders and the Scheme of the London County Council 1889-1892 – ILS/B/14/001.
- County of London Standing Joint Committee minutes 1889-1890, 1909-1965 – ILS/C/08/001-042.

- County Day Minute Books (recording administrative business) 1889-1939 – ILS/B/32/001-008.
- County Day rough minute books 1889-1941 – ILS/B/46/001-005.
- Miscellaneous committee minutes 1890-1957 – ILS/C/09, ILS/C/12-13.
- Committee files 1950s-1970s – ILS/C/14/001-011.
- Committee files 1960s-1970s – ILS/C/11/001-013.
- Copies of Acts of Parliament 1839-1939 – ILS/D/04/001, ILS/D/07/002.
- Reports from the Commissioners of the state of the roads 1840 – ILS/D/08/001.

Justices and Staff

- Official Lists of Justices 1924-1963 – ILS/A/04/001-034.
- Staff Books 1907-1972 – ILS/C/01/001-002.

Newington Sessions House

See also the archives of the London County Council and the Greater London Council and the LMA Photograph Collection.

- Files relating to building of new sessions house 1878-1917 – ILS/C/10/001.
- Report of Sub-Committee on plans of new sessions house 1913 – ILS/A/09/019.
- Papers relating to building of additional temporary courts 1966 – ILS/D/20/001.
- Plans for Sessions House 1963-1964 – ILS/D/20/002-004.

Judicial Records

Calendars of Prisoners 1889-1961

Until 1909 separate sessions were held for cases from north of the Thames at Clerkenwell and for cases from south of the river at Newington. Thereafter the sessions were held the same day but divided into North Side (prisoners names prefixed 'A' in printed calendars) and south side (prisoners names prefixed 'B' in printed calendars).

Printed Calendars of Prisoners 1889-1961 - ACC/2385/018-259

The archives of the County of London Sessions include uncatalogued printed calendars of prisoners tried at the sessions 1913-1959. Another duplicate series of printed calendars of prisoners tried at the County of London Sessions 1889-1961 and other courts listed as ACC/2385 has been transferred to LMA by The National Archives at Kew. LMA has additional copies of some of these calendars amongst the records of Holloway Prison 1903-1937 (CLA/003/PR/05/001-052). Although none of the series held by LMA is complete, they are by far the easiest way to search for information about the trial of an individual as they include an index for each sessions. They give the defendant's name, age and occupation, previous convictions, from where committed, when received in prison or bailed, the charge, and the verdict and sentence.

North London Sessions 1889-1909

- Manuscript calendars for the north London sessions listing indictments, examinations and other business 1889-1907 - ILS/B/45/001-002.
- Orders of Court Books include calendars of prisoners sent to Pentonville, Millbank, Holloway, Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs Prisons 1889-1909 - ILS/B/30/001-025.

South London Sessions 1889-1908

- Process book listing cases heard at Newington giving date, name of defendant, charge, verdict and sentence 1889-1904 – ILS/B/07/001.
- The Minute Books include calendars of cases heard 1889-1908 - ILS/B/10/001-009, ILS/B/11/001-007.
- The Orders of Court Books include calendars of prisoners sent to Wandsworth, Millbank, and Holloway Prisons and discharged 1889-1905 – ILS/B/36/001-002.

Sessions Rolls 1889-1971

These are the formal record of trials. They contain indictments detailing the defendant and the charge which have been annotated with the plea, verdict and sentence in each case, which have been bundled up into rolls or files for each sessions. However they give little more information than can be found in the printed calendars.

The sessions rolls for North London like the earlier Middlesex Sessions rolls contain calendars of prisoners and summary convictions at the London Police Courts as well as the indictments. The sessions rolls for South London some of which are missing contain only indictments like those for Surrey which are known as 'indictments' rather than sessions rolls. The Surrey 'sessions rolls' for 1889 to 1915 comprise bundles marked as 'recognizances' which also contained writs to the sheriff, jury lists

and oaths of justices and mayors etc. and from 1889 to 1895 certificates of summary convictions in petty sessions courts which had resulted in an appeal. Similar bundles of 'recognizances' for the years 1801 to 1888, which probably also contained the additional documents described above, were destroyed before 1953. If similar sessions rolls were kept for the South London Sessions 1889-1908, these have not survived.

The sessions rolls for the County of London have been listed as follows:

- North London Apr 1889 – July 1889 – ILS/B/02/001-003.
- North London Aug 1889 – Jan 1909 – LJ/SR/001-452.
- South London Feb 1890 – Dec 1890 – ILS/B/02/004.
- South London Jan 1892 – Dec 1899 – ILS/B/28/001-006.
- Joint sessions for the County of London Feb 1909 – Dec 1945– LJ/SR/453-697.
- Joint sessions for the County of London Jan 1946 – Dec 1971 – ILS/B/13/001-276.

Court Books 1889-1972

Continuing the practice of the Middlesex Sessions, these provide a brief summary of court proceedings in each court for North London and then for the combined sessions. They include the defendant's name, offence, plea, verdict, and sentence.

- Court 1 1889-1971 – ILS/B/03/001-067.
- Court 2 1889-1972 - ILS/B/04/001-050.
- Court 3 1947-1971 – ILS/B/05/001-019.
- Courts 4-15 1952-1971 – ILS/B/47-58.

Minute Books for South London Sessions 1889-1908

Minute Books for the first and second courts for South London containing calendars of cases heard as well as a record of appeals, Poor Law cases, and stopping up orders. These appear to continue the practice of the Surrey Sessions which kept minute books recording the judicial business of the court (including the granting of licences and appeals).

- Minute Books of the 1st Court 1889-1908 – ILS/B/10/001-009, ILS/B/03/008.
- Minute Books of the 2nd Court 1889-1908 – ILS/B/11/001-007, ILS/B/04/009.

Orders of Court Books 1889-1970

These include Highway Proceedings, appeals from Police Courts, rewards to witnesses, orders for committal to prison, and orders committing habitual drunkards to inebriate reformatories.

- North London and combined sessions 1889-1970– ILS/B/30/001-071.
- South London 1889-1905 – ILS/B/36/001-002.
- South London July-Dec 1904, 1906-1908 - ILS/B/30/017, 020, 022, 024.

Estreats

The Clerk of the Peace had to compile lists of all fines imposed and recognizance bonds forfeited at the sessions which were paid to the Exchequer twice a year by the Sheriff. These records give the name of the person fined, the amount, and whether it was a fine on conviction or the forfeiture of a bond.

- Estreats (North London) 1889-1890 – ILS/B/41/001.
- Estreats 1891-1964 (North London and combined sessions) - LJ/EA/001-338.
- Estreats (South London) 1889-1908 – ILS/B/21/001.
- Estreat Books 1945-1957 – LJ/EB/001-011.

Deposition Books 1932-1972

These are registers of documents in relation to specific cases which were deposited with the court. In most cases the actual documents are not held by LMA.

Deposition Books 1932-1972 - ILS/B/06/001-026

- Sample of case files including witness statements 1963 & 1967 – ILS/B/34/001.

Miscellaneous

- Correspondence with LCC Children's Department relating to children sent to approved schools and with the Home Office relating to the deportation of aliens 1958-1960 – ILS/D/03/001.

Summary Jurisdiction 1889-1915

The Criminal Justice Act of 1855 and the Summary Jurisdiction Act 1879 required copies of convictions and depositions from police courts and petty sessions to be returned to the next general court of general or quarter sessions to be kept amongst the sessions records. LMA holds the Middlesex Sessions records to which convictions and depositions from police courts north of the Thames were returned until 1889.

From 1889 to 1915 copies of convictions in London Police courts were returned to the County of London Sessions. Some convictions from North London may be found on the sessions rolls (ILS/B/02/001-003, LJ/SR), but those for South London appear not have survived.

The Registers of Convictions 1889-1915 provide an index to convictions sent from the police courts to the clerk of the peace. They record the name of the defendant, the nature of the offence, and the name of the court. There are separate registers for North and South London and for different types of cases:

- Registers of convictions returned from courts south of the Thames 1889-1915 – LSJ/CR/001-003.
- County of London (South) Registers of rogues and vagabonds, juvenile offenders and miscellaneous convictions 1889-1915 – ILS/B/27/001-002.
- Registers of convictions (felony) returned from courts north of the Thames 1889-1915 – LSJ/CR/004-007, ILS/B/27/003.
- County of London (North) Register of miscellaneous summary convictions 1910-1915 – ILS/B/27/004.

Registers of Appeals

These include appeals against convictions in Police Courts, removal orders and refusals to grant licences.

- Appeals 1888 – ILS/B/01/001.
- Registers of Appeals (Court 1) 1889-1940 – ILS/B/15/001-008.
- Registers of Appeals (Court 2) 1923-1958 – ILS/B/16/001-008.
- Registers of Appeals (Criminal Appeal Act 1907) 1908-1970 – ILS/B/17/001-007.
- Registers of Appeals (Summary Jurisdiction Appeals Act 1933) 1934-1950, 1964-1968 – ILS/B/18/001-002.
- Indexes to Appeals 1962-1971 – ILS/B/19/001-009.

Probation Records

- Lists of Probation Cases 1939-1949 – ILS/C/03/001.
- Registers of probationers 1940-1951 – ILS/B/24/001-004.
- Discharge, probation and conditional discharge orders 1954-1964 – ILS/B/31/001-011.
- Probationers' Fund cash books 1910-1963 – ILS/C/04/001-003.

- Probationers' Fund grants 1948-1965 – ILS/C/05/001-010.
- Probationers' Fund reports, correspondence, papers and accounts 1950-1963 – ILS/C/06/001-011.
- Probation Case Committee and Probationers' Fund minute book 1946-1959 – ILS/C/07/001-002.

Mental Deficiency Acts

Under the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 (3&4 Geo.V, cap.28) 'to make further and better provision for the care of feeble-minded and other mentally defective persons', institutions certified by the newly established Board of Control might receive those deemed idiots, imbeciles or, if under 21, suffering from a lesser degree of mental deficiency, on application of their parents or guardians supported by medical certificates. Other mental defectives might be admitted under a reception order of the judicial authority. As an alternative to being placed in an institution a mental defective might be placed under guardianship.

Visitors of mental defectives in institutions or under guardianship were to examine each defective at periodic intervals (one year from the reception order; thereafter, if the order was continued a further year, at the end of that year; thereafter at five yearly intervals) and were to report to the Board of Control whether the defective was 'still a proper person to be detained in his own interest in an institution or under guardianship'. Those persons originally placed in an institution or under guardianship when they were under 21 were also to be examined on reaching that age to determine whether they should continue to be detained.

Under the Mental Health Act 1959 visitors were superseded by Mental Health Review Tribunals from Nov 1960.

Most of these records are not available for consultation because they contain confidential information relating to named individuals.

- Visitors' minute books 1914-1960 – ILS/B/35/01/001-005.
- Records of Visits: reports and correspondence 1946-1957 – ILS/B/35/02/001-0016.
- Reports and correspondence 1914-1953 – ILS/B/35/03-04.

Licensing Records

From 1872 to 1965 in inner London licensing was the responsibility of the Petty Sessions. While most of the business was carried out at a local level in these licensing divisions, a County Licensing Committee was set up by Quarter Sessions to confirm the granting of all new licences. After 1889 similar committees were formed for the

newly constituted counties of London and Middlesex respectively. Two other pieces of legislation, namely The Licensing Act 1902 and The Licensing Act 1904, obliged applicants for new licences to submit plans of the premises to the licensing justices and allowed for the payment of financial compensation to persons who were refused renewal of a licence on the grounds that the licence was unnecessary. This was in response to public pressure to reduce the number of licensed premises.

- Minutes of the County Licensing Committee for Middlesex 1872-1886 – ILS/C/16/01/001.
- Minutes of the County Licensing Committee for the County of London 1889-1951 – ILS/C/16/01/002-012.
- Reports and papers 1828-1945 – ILS/C/016/02-03, ILS/D/13/001.
- Ledger 1905-1934 – ILS/D/01/001.
- County of London Licensing Planning Committee minutes 1947-1956, accounts 1946-1954 and applications 1946-1971 – ILS/C/17/01-03.
- County Confirming and Compensations Committee: reports 1938-1954, confirmation fees 1905-1959, and copies of original licences 1953— ILS/C/18/01-03.
- Calendar of Licensed Victuallers for Newington Petty Sessional Division arranged by parish with notes of convictions and by parish and by type of licence 1898-1899 – ILS/B/44/001.
- Court registers 1907-1956 – ILS/D/09/001-011.
- Registers of licences referred 1905-1936 – ILS/D/10/001-041.
- Licensing Compensation Cases – Valuation files 1931-1939 – ILS/D/11/001-009.
- Plans of showing location of licensed premises 1903-1921, 1956 – ILS/D/12/001, ILS/D/17/001, ILS/D/25/001.

Indexes of records deposited with the Clerk of the Peace

Records ordered to be deposited, filed (enrolled) or registered 'by statute' with the Clerk of the Peace. These include inquisitions, parochial and other accounts, waterworks accounts, and records of loan societies and literary and scientific societies.

- Indexes 1894 – ILS/E/05/001-003.

Parliamentary Deposited Plans

Under a Standing Order of the House of Commons in 1792, plans accompanied by books of reference had to be deposited with the Clerk of the Peace and available for inspection for all schemes of public utility requiring an Act of Parliament, such as canals, docks, railways, gas works, and bridges across and tunnels under the Thames. They also include plans for the acquisitions of commons by local authorities, improvement schemes, and private estate acts. The plans give details of land required for these schemes and the books of reference list the owners of the land.

From 1930-1931 the Standing Orders of Parliament were changed to require the plans and books of reference to be deposited with the Clerk of the County Council and not with the Clerk of the Peace.

Very few deposited plans can be found amongst the records of the County of London Sessions apart from those noted below. An 'Index to plans deposited with the Clerk of the Peace 1889-1936' (ILS/E/06/001) lists an extensive series of Parliamentary deposited plans which were deposited with the Clerk of the Peace for the County of London 1889-1930, but a note at the front of this volume states 'All Plans are Transferred to Lord Chancellor's Dept., Public Record Office, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex' and should therefore presumably now be in the care of The National Archives (Incidentally this volume also lists Highways Plans for south of the river 1807-1941 including Stopping Up Orders).

- Index to plans deposited with the Clerk of the Peace 1889-1936 – ILS/E/06/001.
- Deposited plans for arterial roads from Little Heath, Ilford to Gallows Corner, Romford 1921 - ILS/D/19/001.
- Deposited railway plans and books of reference 1890-1914 - ILS/D/21-24.

Other copies of Parliamentary Deposited Plans

The records of the London County Council Clerk's Department include copies of plans and books of reference relating to the County of London as follows:

- Plans in connection with bills promoted by the LCC 1890-1930 - LCC/CL/PARL/1.
- Plans relating to both LCC and non LCC bills 1930-1965 - LCC/CL/PARL/2.
- Plans relating to non LCC bills 1890-1933 - LCC/CL/PARL/3.
- Books of reference for all three series of plans - LCC/CL/PARL/4.

There should also be another copy of these plans and books of reference in the Parliamentary Archives.

Other Plans

- Plans showing petty sessional divisions 1906-1921 – ILS/D/15/001.
- Plans showing borough boundaries 1895-1922 – ILS/D/16/001.
- Correspondence relating to borough maps 1922-1967 – ILS/E/03/001.
- North Lambeth and Southwark redevelopment plans with insert relating to Hackney Wick 1945 – ILS/D/26/001.

Highway Diversion and Stopping Up Orders

- Highway Diversion and Stopping Up Orders are recorded in Orders of Court Books 1889-1970 (ILS/B/30/001-071) and in the Minute Books for South London 1889-1905 (ILS/B/36/001-002).
- Highway Diversion and Stopping Up Orders 1895-1973 – LR/HD/1895/1 – LR/HD/1973/1 (an index can be made available on request).
- Closing orders made under the Metropolitan Paving Act, 1817 1905-1962 – ILS/B/29/001-004.

Electrical Lighting Provisional Orders

- Electrical Lighting Provisional Orders 1890-1899 – ILS/B/33/001-003.

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