

PUBLIC AND PRESENTATION RECORDS: COURTS, HOSPITALS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES¹

Public records are defined by the Public Records Acts 1958 & 1967 as records of departments or agencies of central government. Most of the records of central government which it decides are important enough to preserve as archives are to be found in the Public Record Office in London. These include the archives of the railway companies and of the coal industry since nationalisation. However, archives of institutions which are thought to be of local rather than of national importance are deposited in approved local offices, of which Doncaster Archives is one. However, the pre-nationalisation archives of local collieries in South Yorkshire are held at Sheffield Archives by long-standing national arrangement.

Consequently, Doncaster Archives holds local public records of several types, including those of courts (coroners, magistrates and county courts) and hospitals.

Readers should be aware that access to public records is governed by statutory rules under the Public Records Acts. Records are routinely closed to access until thirty years after the last entry in them but in three cases more extended closure periods apply. For coroner's records and those of the advisory committees on justices of the peace the period of restriction is seventy-five years. For hospital records, those relating to personnel are closed for seventy-five years and those relating to patients for one hundred years.

COURTS: CORONER, COUNTY, MAGISTRATES AND QUARTER SESSIONS

CORONER

Coroners were responsible for holding inquests into sudden or suspicious deaths and into certain other matters, the most common of which is treasure trove. Under the Doncaster borough charter of 1467, the mayor exercised the office of coroner within the borough and soke of Doncaster. Outside the borough, coroners were appointed by the West Riding of Yorkshire County Council up to its replacement from 1 April by the South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council.

Coroner for Doncaster Borough, later County Borough [[AB/5 /4 and CR/1; CR/DCB]

Inquisitions 1625-1700, 1890-1930 (not all years)

Coroner's daily record book 1936-1973; other records 1951-1966, including treasure trove inquest 1966. (Preserved inquest papers from the borough coroner's court were inherited by the South Yorkshire East District Coroner,

¹ This account is adapted and updated from Brian Barber, *A guide to Doncaster Archives* (2nd ed, Doncaster, 2006)

as described below.)

Coroner for the Doncaster District of the West Riding [CR/WRD]

Coroner's daily record book 1932-1972; other records 1931-1974, including treasure trove inquest 1964; inquest papers relating to Bentley Colliery explosion 1931; other selected inquest papers 1963-1973

Coroner for the Rotherham District of the West Riding [CR/WRR]

Register of deaths reported to the coroner 1953-1974

Coroner for South Yorkshire (East District) [CR/SYE]

Coroner's daily record book 1972-1977; deaths index for Doncaster Borough and the South Yorkshire (East District) 1963-2001; inquest papers relating to disaster at Cadeby Colliery 1912 and rail accident at Balby Bridge 1947; papers for almost 400 selected inquests 1954-1991 (more than 350 dating from 1954-1962)

Coroner for the Strafforth and Tickhill Division [CR/MARR]

Abstracts of inquisitions 1859-1862

COUNTY COURTS

A civil court, known as the court of pleas, dealt with cases of debt, contract and other matters essential to the commercial life of the borough. This court is first mentioned in the charter of 1467, but is probably of much earlier origin. A local Act of 1763 created a small debts court, in which proceedings were cheaper than in the court of pleas. This court and the court of pleas were effectively superseded by the Doncaster County Court created under the County Courts Act, 1846 but were not formally abolished until the Local Government Act, 1972 (schedule 28). The county courts take their name from the ancient county court, whose principal function had dwindled into a small-debts court by this time. Two county courts were established in the area, serving the Doncaster and Thorne districts respectively. Each was based on the boundaries of the poor law unions.

Court of Pleas

[AB5/1 and 3] Court books 1571-1572, 1583-1601; lists of suits 1591, 1596-1597, 1603-1706, 1720-1727; cause papers 1584-1737; writs 1699-1739; affidavits 1727-1749; affidavits of debt and associated writs 1772, 1776-1806; other records 1835, 1840

Court of Requests

[AB/5/6] Minute book 1764-1788

Doncaster County Court [CCD]

This court replaced both the small debts court for the borough created by the local Act of 1764 and the court of record created under the borough charter of 1467.

Minute book 1868-1870; plaint and judgment books 1886-1890, 1897-1969; judgment summons books 1967-1970; registrars' minute books 1962-1970; cause books 1940-1970; Workmen's Compensation Acts, registers 1912-1981 and case papers 1907-1955; deeds of arrangement index, c1887-1958; registers: equity suits 1952-1971, tithes 1953-1978, bankruptcy 1967-1982; ledgers 1947-1965; notebooks, judges 1943-1984 and registrars 1981-1983; solicitors' roll book 1872-1935

Thorne County Court [CCT]

This court replaced the Hatfield court of requests, established by a local Act of 1839. Its area of jurisdiction was identical with that of the Thorne poor law union, which included places in Lincolnshire.

Hatfield court of requests register 1840-1847; plaint and minute books 1847-1969; registers: equity suits, 1869-1966; bills of sale, 1883-1982; deeds of arrangement, indexes etc, 1880s-1925; Workmen's Compensation Act 1920s-1965; ledgers 1930-1965; notebooks, judges, 1915-1987, and registrars, 1963-1987

MAGISTRATES' COURTS

Before 1972, there were two types of magistrates' court. Quarter sessions, in which the magistrates sat with a jury, dealt with the more serious crimes and with important administrative business required by a variety of Acts of Parliament. Doncaster borough held its own court of quarter sessions under its borough charter of 1467. The area outside the borough lay within the jurisdiction of the West Riding of Yorkshire court of quarter sessions, which convened at different towns within the West Riding in the course of the year, including Doncaster. Quarter sessions courts were replaced by Crown Courts in 1972

In petty sessions, (known in recent time as magistrates' courts) magistrates dispensed justice for minor offences by 'summary jurisdiction', that is, without a jury. Doncaster borough had its own petty sessions, and the area outside it was served by two West Riding courts, one based at Doncaster and one at Thome.

Doncaster Borough Magistrates' Court [AB/5, MC/3 and MC/8]

The borough charter of 1467 created the mayor sole justice of the peace. The charter of 1505 authorised three of the aldermen to act as justices as well,

and gave the borough jurisdiction in criminal matters entirely independent of the county (West Riding of Yorkshire) justices.

Sessions of the Peace [AB/5/1 and 2] Court books 1533-1583, 1637-1638, 1725-1730, 1795-1823; sessions rolls 1616-1617, 1623-1626, 1755-1793; indictments 1607-1654, 1690-1701, 1732-1786; informations and examinations 1614-1651, 1690, 1730-1731 and associated records 1610-1734 (many gaps)

Poor law: apprenticeship 1663-1799, bastardy 1654, 1689-1742, settlement and removal 1700-1752, other records 1723-1757

Licensing: lists of recognisances 1631, 1635; recognisances 1802-1809

Constables: returns to quarter sessions 1625-1729, with returns of 'strangers' and others, early 17 cent and 1686-1720; memorandum book of the chief constable 1799-1817; accounts of gaol fees 1820-1821

Registration by the clerk of the peace relating to game duty 1785-1807; vessels plying waterways in the Doncaster area under an Act of 1795, 1795-1803; book of reference [no plan is extant] of a turnpike road from Doncaster to Thorne 1824

Oaths of office and sacrament certificates 1685-1742

West Riding Quarter Sessions, Lower Strafforth and Tickhill division, miscellaneous records, 1795-1806, including settlement 1796-1806 and bastardy 1796-1808 and 1829.

Doncaster Borough Magistrates' Court MC/3 and MC/8]

The magistrates had jurisdiction within the boundaries of the borough alone. Other parts of the area, which since April 1974 have been within the metropolitan borough, fell under the authority of the Lower Strafforth and Tickhill division of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The division held courts at Doncaster and Thome.

The Doncaster Magistrates' Court came into being in 1974 when the borough court and the Doncaster Court for the Lower Strafforth and Tickhill division of the West Riding were amalgamated. The Thorne court was absorbed in 1983. There are records here inherited by the Borough Magistrates' Court from its predecessors.

Court registers 1889-1983; juvenile court registers 1933-1983; matrimonial court minute books 1938-1949; registers of clubs 1903-1931, of licences 1872-1997, of music and dancing licences 1911-1981; minute books of the justices' clerk 1853-1950; probation officers register of offenders, 1914-1949;

accounts 1914-1972; bail registers 1978-1980

These records have a continuing importance for the police, who often have no means of verifying past convictions other than through the magistrates' court registers

Lower Strafforth and Tickhill Division: Doncaster Magistrates' Court [MC/1]

Court registers 1884-1974; juvenile court registers 1933-1973; matrimonial court minute books 1936-1960; register of clubs 1903-1959, of licences 1886-1959, of music and dancing licences 1918-1964, of securities 1899-1918; licensing papers 1940-1974; minute books of the justices' clerk 1906-1959; magistrates: attendance registers 1893-1949, *West Riding Magistracy* 1891-1949; probation: registers of offenders 1908-1945, case committee 1926-1957; child neglect report book 1946-1950; newspaper cuttings books 1904-1958; bastardy orders 1930-1969; other records 1880-mid 20 cent.

Lower Strafforth and Tickhill Division: Thorne Magistrates' Court [MC/2]

Court registers 1880-1983; juvenile court registers 1933-1982, and minute books 1933-1947; minute books of the justices' clerk 1868-1958; accounts 1948-1960; bastardy orders 1914-1931

Doncaster Borough Quarter Sessions [QS]

In 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act separated the magistracy from the corporation and this necessitated the grant of a separate commission of the peace to the borough. Doncaster continued to have the right to hold courts of quarter sessions, where the most serious criminal cases not dealt with by the assizes were tried. However, no records survive for this re-established court from 1835 to 1853. The courts of quarter sessions were superseded by the courts created under the Courts Act, 1971.

Letters patent of William IV granting a court of quarter sessions to the borough 1836; sessions rolls 1919-1971; indictment and order books 1842-1853; minute books 1849-1971; gaol sessions 1851-1858; appeals 1931-1971; Lunacy and Mental Deficiency Acts minute book 1931-1952; recorder, minute books 1857-1971 and assistant recorder minute books 1963-1971; legal aid 1931-1971; jurors, register 1964-1971; accounts 1963-1971; Dun Drainage Act, 1873 duplicate map of the drainage district 1873; footpath diversion Chequer Fields 1892; freemasons lodge returns 1931-1953; clerk of the peace 1878-1974

Doncaster Borough Magistracy [MC/6 and MC/7]

Commissions of the Peace 1836 and 1878, which has a schedule of justices updated by fiat to 1973 Doncaster County Borough Advisory Committee *Report of the Royal Commission on the Selection of Justices of the Peace* 1911; correspondence 1928-1952

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION [AHA and HR]

For further information see Ian Ramage, *A Guide to Archives and Records for the History of Medicine and Health Care in South Yorkshire and the North Midlands*, (Sheffield, 1997).

Conisbrough Hospital [HR/9]

This hospital, situated at Common Lane, Conisbrough, was established by the Doncaster and Mexborough Joint Hospital Board (for the records of which, see below) in 1904.

Admission registers 1940-1989; tuberculosis case files 1949-1955; premises 1972-1982

Denaby Main, Fullerton Hospital [HR/5]

In September 1903, a public meeting resolved to build a cottage hospital for workmen at the Denaby and Cadeby Main collieries supported by weekly contributions from the employees and the hospital opened on 6 July 1905.

Minute books 1903-1941

Doncaster, Balby Isolation Hospital [HR/7]

This was a smallpox isolation hospital built on Weston Road, Balby, to supplement the accommodation already provided at Carr House, for which no records survive.

Admission register 1899-1927

Doncaster Royal Infirmary [HR/2]

A dispensary for the 'sick poor' of the town and neighbourhood was founded by public subscription in 1792, and the first dispensary building opened in Frenchgate in the following year. A new building, housing both a dispensary and a twenty-three bed infirmary was opened on a new site in 1867 and extended in 1905. The infirmary moved to its present site in Thome Road in 1930.

The history of the hospital is the subject of G. Swann, *The Doncaster Royal Infirmary, 1792- 1972* (Doncaster, 1973) and H. Marsland, 'The Provision of Medical Treatment for the Sick Poor, the Doncaster Dispensary 1792-1867' (University of Warwick, unpublished MA dissertation, 1980). Both are available in the departmental library at Doncaster Archives.

Minutes of the Dispensary Committee and subsequently the Infirmary General and other committees 1792-1966; new infirmary building estimates, bills of quantity etc 1925-1930; annual reports 1812-1946 and drafts 1928-1947; newspapers cuttings books 1923-1963; nursing records 1923-1971

Doncaster Western Hospital [HR/3]

This building in Springwell Lane was originally the Doncaster poor law union workhouse, opened in 1897. It was subsequently used as a hospital for maternity and geriatric care.

The archives of Doncaster Poor Law Union are believed to have been almost entirely destroyed (see page 25) and those which survive are noticed here.

Registers of inmates 1930-1940; creed 1911-1958; patients 1919-1973; admission and discharge books 1934-1953 and 1964-1970; staff registers and other records 1928-1968; mental deficiency 1929-1962; maternity registers 1955-1967; operations registers 1928-1959; registers of births 1893-1964, and of deaths 1893-1971; report books of senior staff 1948-1967; ward report books 1961-1972; inventories etc 1927-1969

These records make up to some extent for the destruction of all of the Doncaster Union's poor relief applications. Family historians rely to a very great extent on these workhouse records, since so many of the people whose lives they are looking into fell upon hard times.

Doncaster, St Catherine's Hospital [HR/4]

The hospital was established as by the South-West Yorkshire Joint Board for the Mentally Defective, which decided to purchase the St Catherine's estate, on the south-western outskirts of Doncaster in 1928. Other records relating to the board are to be found amongst the records of Doncaster Health (see page 31). The signed minutes of the board are held at Rotherham Archives (reference 272/C).

Minutes, copy, 1928-1948 and staff committee, signed, 1951; annual reports 1931-1948; log book 1933-1935; patient registers: removal, discharge, & death 1920-1968; general register 1931-1972; admissions 1920-1956; admission & discharge 1956-1980

Mexborough Montagu Hospital [HR/8 and DZMZ/51]

A hospital of fourteen beds, the gift of Andrew Montagu of High Melton Hall, was opened in Bank Street in 1890. It moved to Adwick Road in 1905, with the aid of a substantial gift from F. J. O. Montagu. The early history of the hospital is outlined in DM Wilson, *A Short History of the Montagu Hospital, Mexborough*, 1889-1925 (Mexborough, 1926), a copy of which is available at Doncaster Archives.

Annual reports (microfilm, see page 128); minutes of the board of management and committees 1927-1948 and copy minutes 1948-1973; nursing staff 1923-1970; medical registers 1923-1973

HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Doncaster Area Health Authority [AHA]

The transfer of public health responsibilities from local authorities to the National Health Service was effected by the National Health Service Act, 1973. In the course of the transition, the Doncaster Area Health Authority deposited the records of the former local Medical Officers of Health to Doncaster Archives.

Medical Officer of Health [AHA/1]

Although the borough adopted the Public Health Act, 1848 in August 1851, the appointment of a medical officer was optional until the Public Health Act, 1875. Doncaster appointed its first Medical Officer of Health in January 1865, following promptings from the board of poor law guardians.

There are regular annual reports from 1882, which contain invaluable surveys on the public health of the town from year to year. In addition, the archives of the MOH include registers of deaths from 1875 to 1939 and of births from 1910 to 1966, which appears to be unusual when compared to other local authorities.

Register of deaths for the borough of Doncaster 1875-1939, for Balby with Hexthorpe Urban District 1903-1914, and for Wheatley Urban District 1903-1914 (*Note: there is an index for the years 1875 to 1928.*)

Register of births notified for the borough of Doncaster 1910-1966

Register of births and vaccinations for the borough of Doncaster 1920-1943

Register of lunatics and mental defectives 1920-1970

Registers of notifiable diseases 1912-1956

Annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health 1882-1966, and of the School Medical Officer 1908-1967 and monthly reports to the health committee 1943-1972

Accounts 1931-1971

Staffing and establishment 1936-1973

Subject files etc 1928-1972, including midwives' report sheets 1949-1960 and files on atmospheric pollution 1950-1954, maternal mortality 1935, 1937-1946, and health of the elderly 1968-1971; newspaper cuttings book 1957-1960

Annual reports of the Local Government Board 1900-1907, of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health 1906-1928 and the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education 1908-1937

The Doncaster MOH's registers appear to be unique: other local authorities' MOHs simply did not attempt this sort of record-keeping. Out of all our holdings, these registers are the most highly regarded by the AFCL family history tutor

West Riding County Council: Divisional Medical Officers [AHA/2-/4]

The divisions numbered 27, 29 and 30 of the County Council health service lay within the area of the Doncaster Metropolitan District created in April 1974 and the archives of these were deposited by the Area Health Authority with Doncaster Archives.

Annual Reports of the Medical Officer for Adwick le Street UDC 1942, 1945-1972; Bentley with Arksey UDC 1944-1972; Conisbrough UDC 1921-1970; Mexborough UDC 1922, 1946-1971; Tickhill UDC 1945-1972; Doncaster RDC 1931-1972; Thome RDC 1897-1971; West Riding County Council, 1910-1972

Division 30 (Conisbrough, Dearne and Mexborough UDCs): photograph album of socio-medical conditions 1949-1952

Doncaster Health [DH]

Doncaster Health was established in the early 1990s through a merger of the Doncaster District Health Authority and the Family Health Services Authority, formerly the Family Practitioner Committee.

Press cuttings books 1963-1974

South West Yorkshire Joint Board for the Mentally Defective: copy minutes 1928-1944; deeds and contracts 1930-1983, including copy of conveyance of the St Catherine's estate 1930; other items 1931-1949

Doncaster and Mexborough Joint Hospital Board [HR/I]

The board was established by an order of the Local Government Board in 1900 under the Isolation Hospitals Act, 1893 and was responsible for the administration of Conisbrough Hospital.

Minutes 1900-1945; ledgers 1901-1943; inventories 1932-1948; specifications and tender 1938; financial statements 1901-1936; other records 1900-1948

BOARD OF TRADE

Marine maps [15] of the Board of Trade and its successors relating to waterways in the Doncaster area 1877-1964 [BT /356]

INLAND REVENUE

Doncaster: Inland Revenue Survey District No.1 Register of boundary alterations 1881-1931 [IR]

Don Valley Assessment Committee Minutes 1927-1950 [ASSESS]

Land Tax Assessments [LTA]

These are land tax assessments for townships in the Doncaster area within the division of Strafforth and Tickhill, almost exclusively for the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Returns are not available for every year, but in the list below, only gaps of ten or more years are noticed. Duplicate returns for the the West Riding of Yorkshire for the period 1781 to 1832 are to be found amongst the West Riding quarter sessions records available at the West Yorkshire Archive Service Headquarters. Those for the borough of Doncaster are to be found amongst the Doncaster borough records.

Adwick le Street 1803-1909; **Adwick upon Dearne** 1869-1870; **Armthorpe** 1801-1841, 1916, 1925-1926; **Austerfield** 1801-1819, 1829-1916, 1926-1926; **Barnby Dun** 1802-1926; **Bawtry** 1801-1916, 1925-1926; **Bentley with Arksey** 1807-1916, 1925-1926; **Bilham** 1801-1859; **Billingley** 1801-1909; **Bolton upon Dearne** 1834-1916; **Brodsworth** 1803-1819, 1834-1907; **Cadeby** 1798-1916, 1925-1926; **Cantley** 1801-1916, 1925-1926; **Clayton with Frickley** 1801-1908; **Darfield** 1801-1819, 1829-1916; **Fishlake** 1798-1823,1834-1926; **Great Houghton** 1801-1916, 1925-1926; **Hampole** 1810-1819,1833-1916, 1925-1926; **Hatfield** 1802-1818, 1834-1926; **Hickleton** 1801-1818, 1834-1916, 1925-1926; **Hooton Pagnell** 1801-1819, 1829-1916, 1925-1926; **Kirk Sandall**1801-1819, 1829-1916, 1925-1926; **Langthwaite with Tilts** 1802-1819,1829-1916,1925-1926; **Little Houghton** 1801-1819, 1835-1916, 1925-1926; **Marr** 1801-1819, 1829-1916, 1925-1926; **(High) Melton** 1801-1819,1829; **Mexborough** 1798-1819,1829-1916; **Scawsby** 1801-1819, 1829-1854; **Sprotbrough** 1801-1819, 1829-1916, 1925-1926; **Stainforth** 1781, 1799-1819, 1829-1926; **Stancil, Wellingley and Wilsic** 1803-1819, 1829-1915,1925-1926; **Stotfold** 1798-1916, 1925-1926; **Sykehouse** 1801-1819, 1829-1926; **Thorne** 1802-1926; **Thorpe in Balne** 1801-1926; **Thurnscoe** 1803-1916; **Tickhill**1799-1819, 1829-1916, 1925-1929; **Wadworth** 1801-1819, 1834-1915, 1925-1926; **Warmsworth** 1798-1818, 1829

Land tax records represent an invaluable source of information for the family and local historian, supplying not merely the name of the owner of a property, but also the occupier

Motor Taxation [AB/MOTOR]

The county borough was allocated the letters 'DT' for vehicle registration. The West Riding of Yorkshire County Council undertook vehicle registration for the borough (as for the surrounding area) prior to the creation of Doncaster as a county borough in 1927. The Wakefield office of the West Yorkshire Archive Service holds these pre-1927 records.

Register of vehicle index marks 1927-1974; vehicle index cards 1960s-1970s; statistics and traffic censuses 1926-1976; forms etc 1921-1966; Acts of Parliament and statutory instruments 1861-1976

These records are of continuing interest to motor enthusiasts from all over the country who happen to own pre '74 Doncaster-registered vehicles. A steady and remunerative trickle of enquiries (c. one every two months) shows no sign

of abating.

MINES AND QUARRIES INSPECTORATE [MQ]

This district inspectorate appears to have acted for the Yorkshire and the North Midlands division up to about 1923, the Yorkshire division until the 1940s and the Yorkshire number 4 division thereafter.

Registers: fatal accidents 1914-1959; non-fatal accidents in coal mines 1911-1959; dangerous occurrences in coal mines 1946-1959; fatal and non-fatal accidents in quarries 1919-1958; fatalities and injuries in metalliferous mines 1919-1939, and other records 1914-1955

Official reports on colliery accidents outside Yorkshire (10) 1885-1917, and in Yorkshire (12) 1912-1957, including Cadeby Main 1912; Barnburgh Main 1942 and 1957

Royal commissions and parliamentary committees, reports 1886-1957

Bentley colliery explosion, 1931: papers of the divisional inspector of mines 1931 - 1933 and transcript of the proceedings of the official inquiry 1931-1932; photocopy of final report 1932

This is Doncaster Archives' only significant and authoritative body of records relating to the coal industry

NATIONAL SAVINGS COMMITTEES [NSC]

Minutes and correspondence for Doncaster County Borough 1928-1973; Doncaster RDC 1940-1975; Adwick UDC 1942-1975; Bentley UDC 1954-1975; Conisbrough UDC, 1939-1975; Goole MB and RDC 1956-1968; Mexborough UDC 1934-1975; Thorne RDC 1936-1975; Tickhill UDC 1940-1975; West Riding: East District 1946-1971; South East District 1967-1973; Other records 1943-1974

TITHE REDEMPTION COMMISSION [TRC]

Enclosure Acts Armthorpe 1773; Barnburgh 1819; Bentley with Arksey 1827; Brodsworth 1815; Burghwallis 1813; Cadeby 1809; Frickley with Clayton 1814; Hatfield, Thorne and Fishlake 1811; Rossington (confirms an award) 1810; Drainage Act Hatfield Chace 1813

Ordnance Survey sheets 25-inch scale, various, 1930-1932, 1937