The Diocesan Church Court

Background

The church, or consistory, court was the bishop's court. Each Church of England diocese had one. The court dealt with church matters and 'moral issues'. Church matters included the upkeep of churches and the refusal to pay church tithes. Moral issues included adultery, heresy, witchcraft, drunkenness, failure to attend church, working on a Sunday, slander, sex outside marriage and much more! There is often also information about non-conformist meetings.

The records of the consistory court form the largest part of the Diocese of Gloucester's records. (reference: GDR)

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Court Books (Reference: GDR/[followed by a number])

The court books form part of the series known as the GDR volumes. The main volumes are called "Court Books" and "Depositions". However there may be information about cases in the "General Act books" and other volumes in the numbered series.

Court Papers

General Papers (reference: GDR/B4/1)

- These records are indexed by name. They are sorted by parish and then by year.

Probate Cases e.g. wills, inventories, administrations, etc. (reference: GDR/B4/2)

- Sorted, roughly, by surname

Church matters (reference: GDR/B4/3)

- Mostly cases concerning tithe payments and church buildings and maintenance.
- These records are indexed by name. They are sorted by parish and then by year.

Other Court Papers (reference: GDR/B4/4)

- Sorted by year

Other Court Records (reference: GDR/B)

Includes minutes of the Court

How to Find the Records

To view a list of records in these collections please use our online catalogue www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives. Use the references given above as your search terms. You can also try searching for specific names to find relevant material in the GDR/B4/1 papers, as these have been indexed. (But remember, many diocesan court records have not been indexed by name, and so can't be searched in this way).

For further guidance on using the online catalogue, please see the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch a short YouTube tutorial.