

Alehouse (Pub) Licensing Records

Background

Alehouse is another name for a pub (public house) or inn. Before an alehouse can sell alcohol, it needs to get a license. The licensing of Alehouses began in 1551. Licences were given out by the Justices of the Peace, who met at the court of the Quarter Sessions¹. A fee called a surety had to be paid by another person. This would be lost if the publican broke the terms of the licence, such as allowing unlawful games. Registers of licences were not kept until the Licensing Act of 1753 ordered Clerks of the Peace to do so.

The system of licensing was changed in 1828. A surety was not needed anymore. However, there were no rules about how licensing records should be kept. So, few records survive between 1828 and 1872. In 1872 the responsibility passed to the Petty Sessions². A Licensing Committee was established in the Quarter Sessions to confirm licences granted by the Petty Sessions.

The Licensing Act 1902 and The Licensing Act 1904 introduced the rule that all applicants for new licences should submit plans of their premises to the licensing Justices.

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Quarter Sessions Records (References beginning with Q)

Alehouse Licensing Records held in the Quarter Sessions are held under the reference Q/AV..

Only two records before 1872 have survived for the county (as opposed to the city- see below) Quarter Sessions. They are:

- **Alehouse recognizances for the year 1755 (Reference: Q/AV/2)**
Only covers part of the county.
- **Alehouse recognizances for the year 1781 (Reference: Q/AV/3).**
Only covers Bisley, Miserden, Painswick, Stroud, Sapperton and Winstone.

These documents list the name of the publican ("victualler"), where they were from and the name of the person paying the surety. The name of the pub is sometimes given.

Other relevant records in the county Quarter Sessions include:

- Maps showing public houses in some parts of Gloucestershire, and plans for building and changes to public houses, 1872-1948 (Reference: Q/AV/1)
- Licensing committee minutes, 1874-1933 (Reference: Q/AV/5)
- Licensing Papers, 1905-1963 (Reference: Q/AV/10)

Gloucester City Quarter Sessions (References beginning with GBR/G3/AV)

The city of Gloucester held its own Quarter Sessions. More records for this session have survived. These are held under the reference GBR/G3/AV. The collection includes:

- Registers of alehouse licences 1674-1836, with gaps (Ref: GBR/G3/AV/1-5)

¹ For more information on Quarter Sessions see Research Guide: Quarter Sessions

² For more information on Petty Sessions see Research Guide: Petty Sessions

- Appeals against orders relating to licensed premises 1904-1910 (Ref: GBR/G3/AV/9)

Petty Session Records (References beginning with PS)

After 1872 the Petty Sessions took over responsibility for granting Alehouse Licenses. You will find these records under the reference PS. This is followed by a two letter reference for the Sessions district, e.g. DU for Dursley and NE for Newent³. Alehouse Licenses then have the reference RL1. So a register for the Dursley Petty Sessions will begin PS/DU/RL1.

There are a few relevant pre-1872 registers in the PS collections. They relate to the divisions of Cotswold (CO), Fairford (FA), Nailsworth (NA), Tewkesbury (TW) and Wheatenhurst (WH)

How to Find the Records

To view the relevant records in these collections please search our online catalogue <https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/> using the following references:

- **Q/AV** for Quarter Sessions licencing records collection
- **GBR/G3/AV** for Gloucester City Quarter Sessions
- ****PS –**** see Research Guide: Petty Sessions for details

There are also two published lists, one for 1891 and for 1903 of “All Licensed Houses in the County of Gloucester with names of occupiers, lessees, owners, etc”. These are sorted by Petty Sessions Division and are available onsite³.

Other records relating to Pubs and Alehouses

Directories

Kelly's and other trade directories for Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud and the whole county will show the proprietor of a particular alehouse/public house. A street directory may show where the property was located. County directories often have a trade section at the rear – look under 'Public Houses'. If you are looking for a person, it is helpful to know that the general section lists individuals by name.

Some directories are available on the open shelves in the searchroom and others can be viewed on service microfiche.

General History of Pubs and Inns

Darrel Kirby's book *Gloucester Pubs* has a good overview of pubs in the City of Gloucester. Gwen Hart's *History of Cheltenham* has details about some pubs in Cheltenham.

For books and pamphlets about pubs in general or specific public houses, search the online catalogue.

Websites

For information about pubs in Gloucestershire see: www.gloucestershirepubs.co.uk

If you are interested in a building which used to be a pub, see

<http://www.buildinghistory.org/buildings/inns.shtml>.

³ For a list of Petty Session Divisions see Research Guide: Petty Sessions