

Coroner's Records

Background

The office of Coroner was first established in 1194 as part of the administrative reforms of Henry II. The Coroner formed part of the network of royal officials who were responsible for administering the law throughout the country. Originally the Coroner had the assistance of a jury made up of between 12 and 23 people. He and his jury were responsible for enquiring into any unexpected death whether of unknown cause, or through an accident, suicide or murder.

Later the Coroner acquired other responsibilities, including responsibility for confiscating the property of outlaws and determining ownership in cases of Treasure Trove or wreck. Despite the level of responsibility of the role of Coroner the requirements for the role were relatively small. The Coroner was required to be a landowner, but no legal or medical qualifications were needed until the twentieth century.

Coroners' Records and Data Protection

Coroners' Records are closed for 75 years. If you wish to look at an inquest less than 75 years old you will need to obtain the permission of the Gloucestershire Coroners' Office, Corinium Avenue, Barnwood, Gloucestershire, GL4 3DJ (E-mail: coroner@gloucestershire.gov.uk; Telephone: 01452 305661).

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Pre-1844 Records

The earliest surviving records were not retained locally but were sent to the Court of Kings Bench. These specific records are indictments where an individual is accused of a crime by a jury. Where this includes an unexpected death, the records may include a Coroner's report. Records relating to Gloucestershire can be found in the National Archives at Kew, references KB9-KB12. For more information see the National Archives' [Research Guide](#):

Before the Coroner's Act of 1844 the Gloucestershire Coroners were responsible for the whole of the county except Gloucester City and Tewkesbury. These ancient Boroughs each had their own Coroner. There are some limited early records from the Coroners of Gloucester and Tewkesbury amongst the respective Borough collections as follows:

- Gloucester : inquisitions, 1642-1660 (Ref: **GBR/G2/1**)
- Tewkesbury: inquest files, 1688-1778 (Ref: **TBR B4**)

Other early records have survived amongst the personal papers of the coroners:

- William Joyner of Berkeley, register of inquests, 1790-1823 (Ref: **D260**)
- Daniel Willey of Gloucester, inquisitions, 1797-1818 (Ref: **D1406**)

After 1844

From 1844 each Coroner had his own district. Gloucestershire was divided into four districts plus Gloucester and Tewkesbury. On the 25th July 2013, the Gloucestershire and Cheltenham coroner's districts were amalgamated to form the Gloucestershire coroner's area (CO11) under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The divisions are as follows:

	<u>1831-1966</u>	<u>1966-1974</u>	<u>1974 onwards</u>
District and Reference Number	CO1 Lower (1855-1966)	CO8 Lower/Avon (1961-1974)	Held by Bristol City Council – For approved access contact Bristol Archives
	CO2 Upper (1917-1966)	CO7 Cotswold 1966-1974)	CO7 Cheltenham (1974-2013)
	CO3 Stroud (1831-1966)		
	CO4 Forest (1868-1966)	CO9 West Glos (1966-1974)	CO10 Gloucester (1974-2013)
	CO5 Tewkesbury (1890-1965)		
	CO6 Gloucester (1921-1966)	CO6 Gloucester (1966-1974)	CO11 Gloucestershire Area (2013-2017)

The survival rate of records is varied. For some districts we hold no inquest papers before the 1920s. Records were also sent for paper salvage during the war years. You may be able to find:

- Inquest Papers
- Minutes of Inquests
- Registers of Deaths
- Correspondence

Treasure Trove

Since the position of Coroner was first established, they have been responsible for investigating material considered as Treasure Trove. The main purpose of such an inquest was to try to discover the owner of the treasure or their descendants and/or who the finders of the treasure were. There are files relating to treasure troves in CO7 Cotswold/Cheltenham division 1974-1995 and CO10 Gloucester division 1997-2001.

Other Records

Some administrative records relating to the Coroners are held in the Quarter Sessions Collection (Ref: **Q/FSC**). These records do not relate to individual inquests but are useful if you are researching the work that Coroners did.

How to Find the Records

To view a list of records in these collections please use our online catalogue, available here: [Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Catalogue](#). Use the references given above as your search terms. You can refine your search, for example by date.

Some inquest files have been name indexed by volunteers (CO1 Lower 1855-1875 and CO3 Stroud 1857-1883). These will have a full document reference. Other files are sorted by date, so to order the relevant file you will need to use the district code along with the month and year of the inquest.

For more guidance on using our online catalogue please see the Help page and FAQs. Or you can watch our YouTube tutorial.

What else can I try?

Coroner's Inquests were often reported in local newspapers. These reports often contained more information than the coroners' files and can be useful if no records survive.

Gloucestershire Archives holds copies of the Gloucester Journal (1722-1992) and the Gloucester Citizen (1876-2004) on microfilm, along with some other local newspapers.

See our *Research Guide: 'Newspapers'* to find out more.