Wells Cathedral Archives

The collection at Wells Cathedral comprises three separate archives, those of the Dean and Chapter, the College of Vicars Choral and Wells Old Almshouses. All three have been catalogued in detail, but are not currently in the form of a searchable database, which would enable them to be made available on our website. These brief outline catalogues will at least give guidance as to what records exist among our holdings. Some of the most recent records may not yet be open for public inspection. The Dean & Chapter archive also contains an extensive collection of plans and photographs.

It should be noted that we hold very few personal papers of any of the cathedral canons and none of vicars choral. Records of parishes within the diocese of Bath and Wells are held at the Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton.

Further enquiries should be directed to the Archivist: archives@wellscathedral.uk.net

It would be helpful if enquirers could cite the relevant reference to the records in which they are interested in the form: DC/CF/3

Records of the Dean and Chapter
Dates listed are covering dates only and do not imply a complete run between the dates given.

DC/CF Cathedral Foundation

1. Statutes, 15th cent. – 2000
3. Charters, 958 – 1812
4. Seals

5. Appointments of bishops, deans, chapter, prebendaries, officials, 1536 – 1994


7. Chapter Minutes, 1831 – to date

8. Services: preaching rotas and registers of regular services, 1832 – to date


10. Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, 1664 – to date

11. Liturgical procedures, 1488 – 1980

12. Chapter and Vicars Choral, 1553 – 1936 see also Vicars own archive


**DC/ADM Administration**


2. Chapter Clerk’s Office: Legal 1595 - 1965

3. Chapter Clerk’s Office: Administration 1729 - 1990

4. Cathedral Secretary/Administrator 1979 - 2003

5. Prebends and Livings 1550 - 1955


7. Treasurers’ papers, incl. Inventories 1846 - 1981

8. Chancellors’ papers 1661 - 2005

9. Archdeacon of Wells 1760 - 1905

10. Virgers and Sacristy 1877 - 1997

11. Publicity: Services: Events etc 1937 – to date
**DC/FAB**  
**Fabric**  
*For Plans and drawings, see separate heading; see also Financial: Fabric*

1. Fabric Letters and Papers; subjects include restorations, bells, organ, clock, glass, 1713 - 2000
2. Fabric Record Books 1821 - 1917
4. Architects’ Reports 1897 - 2004

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**DC/F**  
**Financial**

1. Communar’s accounts 1327 - 1894 (from 1730 incorporates Fabric and Escheator’ accounts)
2. Fabric accounts 1390 – 1849
3. Escheator’s accounts 1372 - 1822
4. Original Bills 1643-1900
5. Financial miscellanea 1496 - 1994
6. Fees and Regulations 1811 - 1935
7. Accounts Department 1917 - 2003
1. Surveys of chapter manors, 1571-1864

2. Manorial Court Records, 1413-1713

3. Manorial Courts: draft copies of court rolls (vols.) 1620-1826

4. Copyhold Leases: stewards’ proposal books, 1615-1866

5. Copyhold Leases: steward’s notebooks (draft entries), 1588-1866

6. Proposals for Leases & Copies of Court Roll 17th to 19th cents.: entries for individual manors of Allerton, Bicknoller, Biddisham, Bishops Lydeard, Buckland Abbas, Burnham, Chard, Churchland (Wedmore), Combe St Nicholas, Congresbury, East Curry, East Lambrook, Kingsbury Episcopi, Knapfe, Newport Boro’, North Curry, Pucklechurch, Shipham, Stogumber, West Hatch, West Meare, Whitchurch Canonicorum, Winscombe, Wells or Canon Grange, Wrantage

7. Manorial Accounts and Rentals: rentals for various manors, 1523-1865; accounts ditto 1306-1865


9. Ledger books: registers of leases: 1535-1813, 12 vols., indexed

10. Estate record books: successors to ledger books, 1837-1941; from 1872 these are general scrapbooks.

11. Renewals of leases: 1843-1866, annual bundles of proposals for leases, rentals, surrenders etc.

12. Estates: Miscellaneous papers, 1365-1870, arranged by manor

13. Parsonages and Farms: 17th cent. -1870, arranged by parsonage

14. Liberty of St Andrew: Deeds etc.: grants, leases, 1494 -1949, arranged by date

15. Liberty of St Andrew: Poor Rate books and registers of electors etc.: 1830-1926

16. Ecclesiastical Commissioners: papers relating to the transfer of chapter estates, 1832-1866
17. Estate Management (post 1860) of property in the Liberty, 1874-1997; tenancy agreements, correspondence etc.

**DC/MUS Music**

1. Service books and music: 12th cent. onwards.


3. Appointments: Priest vicars, organist 1858-1961


5. Vicars Choral: papers, personal files, 1969-2004

6. Organists, Organ Scholars: 1871-1994, appointments, correspondence, papers

7. Services: programmes for special services including enthronements, 1977-1993

8. Concerts: given by the choir and visiting choirs in the cathedral, programmes, papers, 1971-1995


12. Photographs, both formal and informal of choir 1930s-1970s and organ restoration 1973/4


15. Miscellaneous choir papers, 1975-1987

16. Wells Orchestral Society: minutes, papers, accounts 1904-1930

17. Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society: programmes, papers etc. 1948-2003

DC/SCH Cathedral School
Cathedral Grammar School: papers 1548-1950; accounts 1884-1909

DC/FWC Friends of Wells Cathedral
Reports 1952 to date; minutes 1935-1979, accounts and financial papers 1956-85

DC/COM Committees and other Cathedral Organisations
1. Guild of Needleworkers: minutes 1938-1946
2. Dean Malden Memorial Committee: minutes 1952
3. Confraternity of St Andrew: minutes 1951-1982
5. Works Progress Committee: minutes 1979- to date
6. Catering Committee: minutes and accounts 1982-1999
7. Wells Cathedral Enterprises: minutes of AGM 1985-1996
9. Wells Cathedral Festival 800, 1982: minutes, programmes, services, publicity, balance sheet
10. Wells Cathedral Festival, 1992: minutes, financial statements programmes, brochures etc.

DC/PUB Published Material
1. Cathedral Guides: c. 1903-2000
2. Guides to specific aspects of Cathedral: 1948-2006

Non-Dean & Chapter Material
1. Wells Theological College: ephemera, 1896-1971; the College archive is held at the Somerset Heritage Centre
2. Diocesan records: Miscellaneous 1818-2000; the main archive is held at the Somerset Heritage Centre


4. Personal papers of officials: 1833-1990