

## RESEARCH GUIDE

# 38 - The Middlesex Deeds Registry, 1709-1938

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### Introduction

By an Act of Parliament of 1708 a registry was established for the registration of all deeds, conveyances, wills, encumbrances, etc, affecting freehold land and land held by a lease for over 21 years within the ancient county of Middlesex. The City of London was not included.

In 1862 a national land registry was established on a voluntary basis. Any land registered there was exempt from registration in the local registry. Only a few Middlesex registrations took place there (approximately 200-300 titles).

In 1899 compulsory registration in the national Land Registry was introduced in that part of the new county of London north of the Thames (formerly inner Middlesex). This considerably reduced the number of registrations made in the Middlesex registry but some deeds, mainly mortgages and leases for little more than 21 years, for land in that part of the county of London continued to be registered there.

In the remaining part of Middlesex, outside the county of London, registration at the local registry continued normally until 1 January 1937 when registration of all Middlesex land transactions at the national Land Registry was made compulsory. The last deed was registered in the Middlesex registry on 31 December 1938.

### Records

### Registers and memorials 1709-1938

Deeds and documents brought to the Registry for registration were initially copied onto pieces of parchment called memorials and then into large volumes or registers. The registers are now the main source used by researchers and exist for the period 1709-1938. The memorials from 1838 to 1890 were destroyed in 1940. From 1891 the original memorials were bound into volumes to form the registers.

The documents copied into the registers are not complete copies of the originals. Only certain information was abstracted from the original. This included the date of the transaction, the names of the parties and a description of the property. Covenants and other restrictions contained in the original document were not always recorded in the registered version. From the middle of the nineteenth century plans of the property concerned were frequently included in the entries and from 1892 a separate series of plan tracings of larger maps and plans bound into volumes was made.

The only index to places mentioned in the Middlesex Deeds Registry covers the years 1709-1717 only (MDR/TOP/IND/001-007).

### **Using the records**

Searches in the Registry involve the use of the indexes first and then the registers. To use the indexes you require the approximate date of the transaction and the name of the vendor or first party. Bear in mind that some deeds were not registered until several years after the original conveyances.

### **Indexes 1709-1919**

These consist of large volumes with entries arranged under the surname of the vendor or first party in alpha-chronological order until 1828 then in alphabetical order of surname. Against each index entry is a note of other parties and the location of the property. They were kept on an annual basis with at first one volume per year but increasing later to several. These indexes have been filmed. Consult the list in the Information Area for the relevant microfilm reference numbers. Microfilms are on open access in the Information Area.

### **Indexes 1920-1938**

These are in the form of a single alphabetised card index to the names of the vendors or first parties kept in a large number of small binders. Information is given on the location of the property, varying in its detail from a parish name to a street name and number. The original indexes which have to be ordered by completing an application slip. Consult the list in the Information Area for the relevant reference numbers.

### **To order registers of memorials**

Once you have the year, book number and memorial number for the transaction, check the list of registers available in the Information Area. Many registers have been filmed. Whether you are ordering a microfilm or an original register, fill out an application slip using the reference number given in the list. The microfilms are produced and consulted in the Information Area whereas the original registers are consulted in the Archive Study Area.

### **To order plan tracings**

Where the register indicates that a separate plan tracing exists for a particular memorial, use the list in the Information Area to find the reference number and fill out an application slip.

## Searches

It is not possible for the staff of London Metropolitan Archives to carry out searches in the Registry records. If you are unable to make a personal visit, we advise you to engage the services of a record agent.

## Legal Advice

The records of the Middlesex Deeds Registry have been preserved for their archival and historical value. London Metropolitan Archives is unable to give advice on the legal status of the records or to give legal advice on the contents.

## Copying

In order to avoid damaging the records, photocopying is not possible. We can however arrange for digital scans to be made of entries in the registers. As many of the registers have now been microfilmed, prints can be made from the films using the self service reader printers in the Information Area. Details on request.

## Additional records

Papers of John Ansell, Chief Clerk of the Middlesex Deeds Registry, 1889-c1921 including a report on the operation of the Registry 1891 (F/ANS).

## Reading List

The London Metropolitan Archives Library has the following works on the Middlesex Deeds Registry. Library references are given in brackets at the end of each entry.

- Darlington, Ida. *The Middlesex Deeds Registry*. Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, Vol.19, part I (1956), 52-56. (60.9 LMAS)
- Sheppard, Francis and Belcher, Victor. *The Deeds Registries of Yorkshire and Middlesex*. Journal of the Society of Archivists. Vol. 6, No. 5 (April 1980). 274-286 (60.8 SOC)
- Sheppard, Francis and others. *The Middlesex and Yorkshire Deeds Registries and the Study of Building Fluctuations*. London Journal. Vol. 5, No. 2 (1979). 176-217. (67.2 LON)

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