



## Chancery Division of High Court of Justice 1875-c.1980

The crucial information needed for a search in the archives

The National Archives holds records which might contain the information you require and we can:

- Either search for it on payment of a fee and supply you with the information (if found)
- or
- Enable you to search for the information in other ways.

Please send as much information as you can. The following details are particularly important:

- The full name of the plaintiff\* .....
- The full name of the defendant\* .....
- The full name/title of the cause\* .....
- Start and end dates of the case\* .....
- The cause number of the case.....

If you have all of the information marked with an asterisk\*, the standard charges for our searches will apply and these are shown on this leaflet. If you do not have this information, the standard charges will not apply, as the search time will increase by a large amount, and therefore the search will require a very high fee to be paid. Please contact us if you still want to proceed: [enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

It is not always easy to know whether a case was heard in Chancery or in one of the other divisions of the High Court (which have different record classes). The Chancery division includes administration of estates of the deceased, partnerships, mortgages and other charges on lands, trusts, real estate and the wardship of infants.

If you are not clear whether the case that you are interested in was heard in Chancery, please refer to point 1 and 2 below. If you are sure that the case was heard in Chancery, please proceed to point 3.

### 1. *The Times* Index

Standard charge: £30

This is available at many large reference libraries or online at The National Archives. If you are unable to access it we can search it for you for a fee of £30.

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Factors affecting success of a search:  
Only a minority of cases were reported.

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## 2. The Law Reports

Standard charge: £30

These are available on CD ROM at many large reference libraries and at The National Archives. If you are unable to access them we can search for you for a fee of £30.

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## 3. Cause Books

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: C 32 (1875-1880)  
J 89 (1880-1925)

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Information that this source should reveal:  
These books give the Cause number of a case. They also give the date of filing of pleadings and the date of any orders.

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Factors affecting success of a search:  
Only a minority of actions started came to a formal trial.

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## 4. Pleadings, 1876-1942 & c.1966-1980

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: J 54 (1876-1942)  
J 83-84 (c.1966-1980)

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Information that this source should reveal:  
These consist of statement of claim and other pleadings and the judgement order.

Factors affecting success of a search:

This search can only be carried out if you know the plaintiff's name and the date of the end of the case.

The files that exist in J 83-84 represent only a 2% sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 5. Decrees and orders

Standard charge: £60 (if specific dates of orders are provided)  
£120 (if the start and end date of the case are provided)

Catalogue references: J 15 (1876-1955)  
J 83-84 (1966-c.1980)

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Information that this source should reveal:

These contain interim and final procedural orders.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

This is a very lengthy search. The specific dates of the orders or at least the start and end date of the case are essential for this search.

The files that exist in J 83-84 represent only a 2% sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 6. Affidavits

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: J 4 (1876-1945)  
J 83-84 (c.1966-1980)

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Information that this source should reveal:

These can include certain sworn written statements by parties. May also include information relating to the serving of writs and production of documents.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

The many affidavits of a particular case may be difficult to piece together. The start and end date of the case are essential to make this search feasible.

The files that exist in J 83-84 represent only a 2% sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 7. Depositions

Standard charge £60

Catalogue references J 54 (1875-1880)  
J 17 (1880-1925 & 1960-c.1990)

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Information that this source should reveal:

These are written statements by witnesses used as evidence.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

The files that exist for the period 1960-c.1990 represent only a tiny sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 8. Petitions

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: J 53 (1876-1954)  
J 84 (1966-c.1980)

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Information that this source should reveal:

These were used to initiate Acts in some cases, usually under particular Acts such as the Companies Act and Charitable Trust Acts, or concerning the administration of estates.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

The files that exist for the period 1966-c.1980 represent only a 2% sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 9. Reports and Certificates

Standard charge £120

Catalogue references: J 57 (1876-1962)  
J 83-84 (1966-c.1980)

Information that this source should reveal:

These include Certificates by Masters in Chancery (court officials), admissions of facts, arbitration awards, reports of referees and schemes under charitable Trust Acts.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

The files that exist for the period 1966-c.1980 represent only a 2% sample of case files so the chance of success is small.

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## 10. Registrar's Minute Books

Standard charge £60

Catalogue references: J 56 (1875-1927 with a sample only after 1927)

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Information that this source should reveal:

These consist of notes taken during the proceedings.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

A sample only exists after 1927.

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## 11. Masters Records

Standard charge £60

Catalogue references: J 23-47, J 63-64, J 66-68 & J 90.

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Information that this source should reveal:

These include miscellaneous papers including some exhibits. Pedigrees are usually files in relation to wills.

Please note: Pedigrees and exhibits can be searched by the name of plaintiff/defendant or cause title on the online catalogue.

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## 12. Companies Proceedings

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: J 53, C 26 & J 13.

Information that this source should reveal:  
Includes records relating to the winding up of companies.

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