

# Official Publications

## LOCATION

All current Government and Parliamentary material is housed on the Gallery in bays 144-185. Older materials are kept in the Basement. Lincoln's Inn Library specialises in Parliamentary materials, and has a more comprehensive collection, which members of Middle Temple are entitled to use.

Many publications are now freely available online through various government websites, and the Library subscribes to additional databases to supplement these materials. Remember to search the online catalogue to view the Library's full print holdings, or speak to a librarian if you have any questions about where to find a particular document.

## LEGISLATION

The Library holds copies of primary legislation from 1235 onward, with Local Acts from 1801 onward. Secondary legislation in the form of Statutory Instruments are held from 1890-2009. Bills are held from the Commons from 1919-2015 and from the Lords from 1862-2015. From 2002 onwards, bills are freely available online: [www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/)

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

Rules, Regulations and Orders all come under the heading of Statutory Instruments.

Rules and Regulations are issued to update parts of an Act so that a new Act need not be passed.

Commencement Orders are issued to bring into force whole or part of an Act that has not come into effect immediately upon Royal Assent.

The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple  
The Library, Ashley Building  
Middle Temple Lane  
London EC4Y 9BT



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## CONTACT

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library-and-archive/library](http://www.middletemple.org.uk/library-and-archive/library)



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## PRIMARY LEGISLATION

There are several alternatives for finding legislative commentary and amended versions of Acts. In addition to a range of textbooks and regularly updated looseleaf encyclopaedias covering legislation related to specific topics, the following titles are particularly useful.

*Halsbury's Statutes* provide a comprehensive annotated record of all Acts of Parliament currently in force and is organised by subject. It has regular looseleaf releases and supplements to ensure coverage is fully up-to-date.

*The Justis database hosts pdf versions of all Public General and Local Acts in their original form.*

### LOCAL ACTS

To determine whether a Local Act has been amended or repealed, search the *Chronological Table of Local Legislation* (available online: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)).

The tables are not completely current, so it is necessary to follow up by checking a resource like the *Current Law Legislation Citator* for recent changes.

*Current Law Statutes Annotated* (1948 onwards) provide a means of monitoring legislative change in the UK by way of tables of statutes and bills, lists of SIs, details of white and green papers and references to Hansard. It is annotated by experts offering analytical commentary on the legislation and has an updating service for material not yet covered in the bound volumes.

*Butterworths Annotated Legislation* provides authoritative commentary on Acts, with informative explanatory notes written by experts in relevant fields.



**UK Parliament Buildings.** Image reproduced with the permission of Parliament.

## BILLS

Bills generally fall into two categories: public and private.

Public bills relate to matters of public policy or general application. They may be government bills brought forward by Ministers or private Members' bills. Private Members' bills seldom pass into law, since Standing Orders strictly limit time for their debate in Commons. Bills can begin their life in either House, and have three readings in each House (reported in *Hansard*). Between readings bills are sent to Standing Committees for debate and scrutiny (Standing Committee Reports are held at Lincoln's Inn). If a Bill begins in the Lords the debate and scrutiny is of the whole house and is entirely reported in *Hansard*.

Private bills are directed at the interests of an individual, corporation or local authority. Historically they were promoted by the rich seeking divorces or special treatment for their wealth, or by commercial promoters of roads, canals and railways. More recently they were introduced by local authorities or statutory undertakers wishing to take special powers. The 1992 Transport and Works Act reduced the amount of private legislation by requiring that proposals for the construction of large infrastructure projects be promoted by way of inquiries and ministerial orders. At the Committee stage the procedure for private bills is judicial and the promoters or petitioners against a bill may be legally represented, usually by counsel. Evidence is called and subject to cross-examination before the Committee votes on whether the bill will go forward to Third Reading.

## HYBRID BILLS

A third type of bill, hybrid bills, are comparatively rare.

These are promoted by the government but affect private interests. Examples include the Channel Tunnel bills of the 1970's and Crossrail bill of 2005-07.

## TREATIES ONLINE

*Flare Index to Treaties*  
Searchable database of significant multi- & bilateral treaties. Hosted by IALS. [ials.sas.ac.uk/library/flag/introtreaties.htm](http://ials.sas.ac.uk/library/flag/introtreaties.htm)

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office*  
Information on tracking treaties, database of UK treaties & enquiry service. [www.gov.uk/uk-treaties](http://www.gov.uk/uk-treaties)

*Law Library of Congress*  
Information on researching treaties & links to treaty texts. [www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/treaties.php](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/treaties.php)

*United Nations Treaty Collection*  
Full text, information on ratification & status of treaties deposited with UN since 1946 & League of Nations Treaty Series 1920-1944. [treaties.un.org](http://treaties.un.org)

## TREATIES

Treaties ratified by the UK have been officially published as Command Papers since 1892. Dates of signature, ratification and entry into force are appended to the texts. Some treaties are issued in the Miscellaneous Series of Command Papers prior to ratification.

International treaties are published in the *United Nations Treaty Series*, which includes all treaties in force

recorded with the UN Secretariat since 1946. The *League of Nations Treaty Series* covers 1926-1946 and includes selected treaties back to 1818. The library's print holdings cease in 2000, but the series is available online [[treaties.un.org/pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=1](http://treaties.un.org/pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=1)].

The library also holds some older treaties in various historical collections.

## WHITE & GREEN PAPERS

White papers always appear as Command Papers. They are statements of intent or policy by the Government. The paper usually outlines proposals for changes in legislation and a Bill will always follow a white paper.

Green papers are consultation papers and do not necessarily lead to a bill. Green papers are published by individual Government Departments as a consultative or discussion paper, and they invite comments from the public. Some green papers are issued as Command Papers.

## HOUSE PAPERS

House of Commons Papers include many documents such as: reports from Select Committees of the House of Commons, annual reports and accounts, supply estimates, and reports of government departments or commissions. House of Lords papers, meanwhile, include reports from Select Committees of the House of Lords, Acts of Parliament, and Bills.

The library holds House of Commons papers from 1862-1981, and Lords papers from 1862-1980.

## PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

Debates are cited by reference to the House, volume number, year, and column number. For example: HC 239 (1907) col.1356.

The official report of the House of Commons or Lords (*Hansard*) is a full, although not verbatim, report of the proceedings of the Houses as recorded by reporters. It is published in daily, weekly, and fortnightly editions. The library keeps the bound volumes, which incorporate any corrections. A sessional index in the final volume covers all debates, motions, and questions recorded, with the names of all Members contributing to business.



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*The Library holds bound volumes of Hansard (Houses of Parliament debates) from 1660-2016.*

## COMMAND PAPERS

The library holds all Command Papers from 1861-2009, and selected papers from 2010-2015.

There are five series of Command Papers. These are cited as:

- C. 1870-1899
- Cd. 1900-1918
- Cmd. 1919-1955/56
- Cmnd. 1956-1986
- Cm. 1986-onward

Command Papers are formally presented to Parliament by command of

the Queen, although in practice the responsible government department presents the paper.

Command papers encompass several types of documents, including: annual reports of certain bodies, treaties, Government replies to Select Committee reports, reports of Royal Commissions, state papers, white papers, some green papers, and reports of some major Committees, Commissions, and non-Parliamentary bodies.



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## SUBSCRIPTION DATABASES

The Library subscribes to several databases that provide access to various official publications and to related commentary.

**JUSTIS**

**LAWTEL**

**LEXIS**

**WESTLAW**

These databases are only accessible from computers in the library, and their coverage of primary and secondary legislation is outlined on the last page of this guide.

*Subscription databases are available from any Library computer terminal.*

### PARLIAMENTARY ONLINE

*British History Online* - Primary & secondary sources of British history by the Institute of Historical Research, University of London.

[www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)

*Digitised Historical Parliamentary Material* - Links to legislation, debates, papers, proceedings, journals, judgments, devolved parliaments & archives.

[www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/archives-electronic](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/archives-electronic)

*Hansard* - Hosted by Parliament. Searchable Hansard from 1803-2005.

[hansard.millbanksystems.com](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com)

### LEGISLATION ONLINE

Many official publications are freely available in official and unofficial formats online.

*BAILII* - Statutes, SIs & other legislation. [www.bailii.org](http://www.bailii.org)

*Government* - Legislation & information on local government, political parties & government departments, offices & agencies.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

*Law Commission* - Reports & Consultation Papers since 1996.

[lawcommission.justice.gov.uk](http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk)

*Legislation.gov* - Legislation, SIs & selected legislation from Scotland, Wales, & Northern Ireland. [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

*UK Parliament* - Information about the Houses of Commons & Lords, Hansard & Statutes from 1988, Private Acts from 1991, Weekly Information Bulletin from 1995, Standing Committee debates from 1997 & public bills. Live broadcasting from Parliament.

[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)



**Public Entrance to the Scottish Parliament.** Image © Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body – 2012. Licensed under the Open Scottish Parliament Licence v1.0.

## DEVOLVED PARLIAMENTS

For questions relating specifically to Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales, it may be necessary to see materials produced by the relevant devolved Assemblies or Parliaments. Selected print resources from these jurisdictions are held at the library, but for specialist collections see either Inner Temple's library (for Scotland) or Gray's Inn Library (for Northern Ireland).

Some materials and information about the devolved Parliaments are freely available online.

*National Assembly for Wales* - Publications from committees, Plenary sessions & records of proceedings. [www.assemblywales.org](http://www.assemblywales.org)

*Northern Ireland Assembly* - Legislation, End of Session Reports, Order Papers, Official Reports, & Standing Orders. [www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)

*Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* - Searchable database produced by Scottish Parliament Project researchers at the School of History, University of St Andrews. Includes proceedings of the Scottish parliament from 1235-1707. [www.rps.ac.uk](http://www.rps.ac.uk)

*Scottish Parliament* - Publications from Parliamentary committees, bills & official reports. [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

*Stormont Papers* - Parliamentary Debates of the devolved government of Northern Ireland from 1921-1972. [stormontpapers.ahds.ac.uk/stormontpapers/index.html](http://stormontpapers.ahds.ac.uk/stormontpapers/index.html)

## PARLIAMENTARY ONLINE

*The History of Parliament* - Parliamentary & political history from 1386-1868.

[www.histparl.ac.uk](http://www.histparl.ac.uk)

*Online Historical Population Reports (OHPR)* - Population reports of Britain & Ireland from 1801-1937. Includes censuses, registrar general reports, essays, legislation, a bibliography & national archive documents.

[www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org)

*Parliamentary Publications & Records* - Recent Parliamentary documents including Hansard, Commons & Lords business papers, committee publications, research briefings, agendas, minutes & links to historical materials.

[www.parliament.uk/business/publications/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/)

*Official Documents* - Papers presented to Parliament by outside bodies. Includes Command Papers & departmentally sponsored House of Commons Papers from 2005 onward.

[www.official-documents.gov.uk/](http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/)

## ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

See the tables to the right for coverage of primary and secondary legislation freely available through [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk), and through the Library's subscription databases: Justis, Westlaw, and Lawtel.

THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF  
THE MIDDLE TEMPLE  
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Web:  
[www.middletemple.org.uk/  
library-and-archive/library](http://www.middletemple.org.uk/library-and-archive/library)



PUBLIC GENERAL ACTS							
TITLE	DATES	AS ENACTED	POINT IN TIME	AMENDED	LINKS TO AMENDMENTS	COMMENTARY & CASES	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Justis	1235 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Legislation.gov	1267 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Free. Incomplete 1267-1987.
Westlaw	1949 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Includes all Acts that were in force as of 1991.
Lawtel	1984 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Lexis	Currently in force		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Historic versions from 1998-

LOCAL ACTS						
TITLE	DATES	AS ENACTED	POINT IN TIME	AMENDED	AMENDING/ED LEGISLATION	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Justis	1797 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Legislation.gov	1857 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Free. Incomplete 1857-1990.
Lawtel	1991 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Westlaw	1991 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Incomplete amended coverage.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS							
TITLE	DATES	AS ENACTED	POINT IN TIME	AMENDED	LINKS TO AMENDMENTS	COMMENTARY & CASES	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Justis	1671 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Legislation.gov	1948 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Free. Incomplete 1948-1986.
Westlaw	1948 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete 1948-1991.
Lawtel	1984 - present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Lexis	Currently in force			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	