

Church of England parish records: guidance for retention and transfer of records to archives

Record storage

- There are certain records created by a Church of England parish church that must be kept.
- It is vital that these records are kept safely and securely to ensure they can be accessed when needed.
- It is also important to keep the records in good storage conditions.
- When the records have reached the end of their administrative use, it is recommended that the retention guidelines (below) are consulted to see what needs to be kept and what should be destroyed.
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives (WSA) will safely store any records that are to be kept permanently and catalogue them where possible.
- These records will be held on deposit, so the church retains ownership as well as copyright (where applicable).
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives is not a records management service, so please ensure that where possible you only deposit items no longer required by the church. However, the church may withdraw records temporarily for anniversaries and other special events (such as Heritage Open Days).

How to store paper records

Please try and store your paper records in as good condition as possible:

- Store records in a cool, clean and dry environment.
- Keep records out of direct sunlight.
- Avoid using files with metal parts, plastic bags, rubber bands, adhesive tape and metal staples/clips.
- Keep records in strong boxes and do not overfill them.
- Make lists of what is in each box so you can easily find what you need.
- Keep the storage area locked if possible.
- If possible, keep the records in a secure place in the church (such as a safe in the Vestry) rather than someone's home.

How to store digital records

Digital records can be easily damaged or lost if proper care is not given to their storage.

- Keep digital records secure using passwords.
- Avoid storing digital records on tapes or disks as the ability to read these is quickly becoming obsolete.

- Back up records on a server or the cloud.
- Keep metadata with the records so other people can understand what it means (for example, noting the file format, date of creation, name of person creating).
- Keep more important digital records as PDFs rather than Word.

Record retention and transfer

Where appropriate, it is completely acceptable to retain records permanently as archives, to preserve our nation's memory and provide public accountability for decision-making. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do **not** mean that **all** records containing personal data should or need be destroyed, redacted or removed.

Article 5 of the UK GDPR states that personal data must be:

b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; **further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes;**

e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; **personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes** subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals; and

f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including **protection against** unauthorised or unlawful processing and against **accidental loss, destruction or damage**, using appropriate technical or organisational measures."

Article 9 states that special category data (ie sensitive data eg relating to race, sexuality, health, beliefs, etc) can only be processed under strict conditions including:

"(j) processing is necessary for **archiving purposes in the public interest**, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) (as supplemented by section 19 of the 2018 Act) based on domestic law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject."

Churchwardens are required by the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 (which came into force on 1st March 1993) to compile and maintain (in the form recommended by the Council for the Care of Churches) a terrier and inventory and a logbook giving details of alterations, additions and repairs to, and other events affecting the church or the articles or land belonging to it, and with a note of the location of any other relevant documents. The churchwardens must send a copy of the inventory to the person designated by the bishop as soon as practicable after it has been compiled, and it would be wise also to send a copy to the Diocesan Registrar if they are not the designated recipient. They must notify the designated recipient of any alterations at

intervals laid down by the bishop. The terrier and inventory and the logbook must be presented by the churchwardens to the parochial church council at the beginning of each year, together with a signed statement to the effect that the contents are accurate. Mention should be made of new items, losses or disposals.

The following table provides our guidance for the retention and transfer of records:

Type of record	Minimum retention period	Final action	Notes
Church services			
Baptism registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Marriage registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Burial registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Banns registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Confirmation registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Service registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Marriage blessing registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Funeral or interment registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Baptism and marriage certificate counterfoils	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Intercession lists	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Service sheets (regular services)	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Service sheets (special services)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	1 copy only as sample
Photographs of services, events, clergy and congregation	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Church buildings and property			
Terriers, inventories and logbooks	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Faculties and accompanying papers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA may destroy any that duplicate

			deposited records from the Diocesan Office
Quinquennial reports	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Minutes, plans, correspondence, accounts, contracts and photographs relating to major repairs or alterations to church, churchyard, church hall or vicarage	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Minutes, plans, correspondence, accounts, contracts and photographs relating to minor works to church, churchyard, church hall or vicarage	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Reports on church by conservation organisations	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA may destroy any that duplicate deposited records from these organisations
Organ specifications, contracts and papers	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Churchyard plans, photographs and drawings	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Churchyard maintenance correspondence and agreements	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
General parish administration			
PCC minutes (signed)	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
PCC minutes (draft)	5 years from end of file	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if signed minutes do not survive
Committee minutes	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
PCC correspondence	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation

			of a representative sample
Parish profiles (prepared for new incumbent appointments)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Maps of parish and parish boundaries produced for church purposes	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA may destroy duplicates if already held
Incumbent's correspondence: major parish developments; parish audits	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Incumbent's correspondence: routine administration	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Benefice papers, including pastoral schemes and orders; plurality orders; establishment of team or group councils; joint PCCs; correspondence	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Electoral rolls	6 years from end of file	Destroy	
Copies of replies to Articles of Enquiry	5 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Visitors' books	3 years from end of file	Destroy	
Sequestration records	6 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA to review
Circulars and leaflets	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Minutes / reports / correspondence: Mother's Union, youth clubs, bell ringers, choir etc	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Finance			
Annual audited accounts	6 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	
Cash books	6 years from end of file	Destroy	

Bank statements	6 years from end of file	Destroy	
Vouchers	6 years from end of file	Destroy	
Planned giving schemes	6 years from end of file	Transfer to WSA	WSA will restrict access if not anonymised
Gift Aid declarations	6 years from end of administrative use	Destroy	
Insurance policies: employers' liability	40 years from end of policy	Destroy	
Insurance policies: other	6 years from end of policy	Destroy	
Finance: Mother's Union, youth clubs, bell ringers, choir etc	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Parish publications			
Bibles, communion books, hymn books, prayer books, psalters, service books, Common Worship, Book of Common Prayer	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Church guides	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	For Local Studies library
Parish histories	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	For Local Studies library
Parish magazines	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Pastoral and safeguarding			
Accident reporting sheets or books (adults)	Date of incident + 20 years	Destroy	
Accident reporting sheets or books (children)	Date of child becoming an adult + 20 years	Destroy	
DBS/CRB certificates or letters of disclosure (clear, unblemished)	1 year	Destroy	
DBS/CRB unclear: correspondence, risk assessment recommendations etc	50 years after end of employment	Destroy	

Correspondence, reports, risk assessments etc relating to safeguarding adult or child protection incidents in which the parish was involved	50 years from end of file	Destroy	
Children's activities, Sunday Schools, youth club records	50 years from end of file	Destroy	
Personnel records: employees not working with children and vulnerable adults	6 years from end of file	Destroy	
Personnel records: anything relating to contact with children and vulnerable adults	50 years from end of file	Destroy	
Legal documents			
Deeds, including title deeds, purchase orders, charity deeds and papers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Statutory documents including notices and orders	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Legal correspondence	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Other records			
Scrapbooks, news cuttings	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Choir registers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Condolence books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Ephemera	End of administrative use	Destroy	

Depositing records with Wiltshire & Swindon Archives

We encourage potential depositors to make an appointment prior to bringing in any material. Please email us at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk or phone 01249 705500 to make an appointment.

We accept deposits during our open hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:30-5pm. If these times are difficult, an archivist will explain alternative days and times.

We are easily accessible by car and public transport and have a free car park onsite. Our address is the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham SN15 3QN.

When we arrange your appointment, we will ask you how much material there is to bring in. There is no need to be specific, but it is useful for us to have an idea of how much to expect. We will also try and get an idea of what is being deposited or donated. Again, there is no need for detail or a box list, but it is helpful for us to get a sense of the complexity of the material being brought in. If there is a lot, it may be that we allow more time to process your material before the next appointment we make.

If there is a sizeable amount of material, or if we think it might be a good idea to appraise it prior to it being brought in, we may offer to come to you to have a better look at the items. We can also come to you to collect material if you find it difficult to get to us.

If you would like more information regarding onsite appraisal and collection, please contact our archives team at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk; who will be more than happy to discuss this with you.

When you bring in the records, we will ask you to fill out a form that specifies what you would like done with anything we decide not to keep. There are three options: dispose of unwanted items responsibly; return unwanted items to you; transfer unwanted items to another service.

We will process the material and send out a formal receipt, which we ask you to sign one copy of and return to us for safekeeping. Depending on the amount of material, this may take a few months.

We do not charge for storage of items at Wiltshire & Swindon Archives. However, if the material is in bad condition (for example if it is mouldy or severely damaged) we may discuss for the church to contribute towards conservation work to repair.

Sources consulted:

[Records management guides | The Church of England](#)

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August 2023