



Church Records and Archives in the Canterbury Diocese Guidance for incumbents and churchwardens

Introduction

Efficient care of the historic and modern records of your church is important for a number of reasons. Historic records make up an important part of the church's property, are irreplaceable, and can be of financial value. The evidence they provide forms part of the church's identity. More modern records contain information which can help support day-to-day ministry as well as the maintenance of the fabric and property of the church.

There are also legal requirements for record-keeping by church officials. The Parochial Registers and Records Measure (1978, amended 1992) specifies that older registers and records must be transferred to a Diocesan Record Office, and not kept within the church. It also provides guidelines for the keeping of any registers and records within the church. The Data Protection Act and financial regulations apply to more modern records. Requirements cover records in electronic format, as well as paper records.

Diocesan Record Offices

There are two appointed Diocesan Record Offices for the Canterbury Diocese.

If your church is in western Kent (ie before 2011, was in the then Archdeaconry of Maidstone) your Record Office is the ***Kent History and Library Centre***, James Whatman Way, Maidstone ME14 1LQ, tel 08458-247200; email historyandlibrarycentre@kent.gov.uk

If your church is in eastern Kent (ie before 2011, was in the then Archdeaconry of Canterbury) your Record Office is ***Canterbury Cathedral Archives***, The Precincts, Canterbury CT1 2EH tel 01227-865330, email archives@canterbury-cathedral.org

Both Record Offices can provide advice on issues relating to parish record-keeping and archives. Please contact the relevant Record Office before transferring any material. It should already hold collections of historic records relating to your church, and can provide listings of these on request.

What to keep within the church

For detailed guidance on which records should be retained by the church, which records should be transferred to the Record Office, and which records can be destroyed, see *Keep or Bin* (below).

Registers in which the earliest entry is 150 years old must, under the Measure, be transferred to a Record Office. It is advisable to transfer any records for which there is no administrative need in the church to the Record Office. They will be cared for to appropriate standards there, and will be made available to others for research as appropriate. Your

church will remain the owner of the records, and they can be borrowed back for particular occasions.

Further information

- 'Keep or Bin': <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/librariesandarchives/keeporbin/>
- *Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1993)*: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1978/2>
- *A Guide to the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (as amended at 1st January 1993*, available from Church House Publishing.
- www.kentarchives.org.uk and <http://archives.canterbury-cathedral.org>: online catalogues for the History and Library Centre and the Cathedral Archives, with listings of parish documents held in the Record Offices
- James Behrens, *Practical Church Management* (1998), chapter 24
- 'Building on history' project website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/> For guides on writing church and parish histories.

Examples of records which should be preserved at the church/Record Office

- Registers of baptisms, marriages, burials, banns and confirmations
- Register of services
- Orders of service for special services
- Documents relating to property, eg title deeds, inventories, terriers, plans
- Documents relating to the church fabric, eg quinquennial survey reports, log books, faculties, specifications, plans, photographs
- Union of benefice papers, plurality orders and pastoral schemes and orders
- Parish profiles, compiled during vacancies in benefices
- Vestry minutes
- Parochial Church Council minutes, detailed agenda, and reports
- Parochial Church Council account books and annual statements of account
- Parish magazines and church guides
- Minutes, accounts, etc. of auxiliary organisations, eg choir, bellringers, Mothers' Union, Sunday School

Examples of records which can be destroyed

- Marriage and baptism certificate counterfoils
- Banns, burial and disposal certificates
- Baptism and banns applications
- Parochial Church Council cash books, paying-in books, bank statements, bills, and other subsidiary financial records
- Correspondence regarding routine parish administration and routine financial matters
- Superseded insurance policies
- Circular letters sent out by other organisations
- Files relating to former personnel

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