

This document forms one of the set of Reference Documents detailing practices and guidelines for West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting (WWESAM). A master copy is held by the Area Meeting (AM) Custodian of Records, and other copies are distributed to each Local Meeting (LM).

Trustees ask the Custodian of Records to keep this document under review and suggest revisions, at least according to the schedule in the *Index of WWESAM Reference Documents* (RD 0-1).

General

Quaker faith and practice (4.40) states quite clearly that Area Meetings are responsible for the records of their constituent meetings “ensuring their timely transfer to the custodian of records”.

Area Meeting (AM) appoints its own Custodian of Records who maintains a catalogue of records whether kept in meeting house safes, strongrooms or elsewhere and checks the contents of these at least triennially. Older records which are no longer in use are deposited on loan by the Custodian in the Wiltshire County Record Office (the “History Centre”, in Chippenham), where they remain the property of AM while benefiting from the care of professional archivists. The Custodian, with the guidance of AM, specifies which of such records can be made available for use by students.

The Library Committee at Friends House maintains a central catalogue of local meeting records and is notified of any change in the place where they are deposited. This Committee also issues notes of guidance on the creation, care and custody of records.

Such records fall into three categories:

1. **Minute books of both the AM and its local meetings, minute books of elders and overseers and of standing committees of meetings for church affairs, official registers of members, printed lists of members and attenders, marriage registers, registers of burials, burial ground plans, registers of properties and trusts and such other documents as it is reasonable to expect may be needed for future reference**

At a practical level, holders of minute books and registers, especially where these are kept on a computer’s memory, should ensure that they are duplicated or backed up in some form so that, in the event of an accident to the original, the records will not be lost. They must also ensure that data protection requirements are met (see RD 6-2 *Data Protection*).

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2. Account books and other financial records

- 2.1. Accounts should be attached to the minutes of the Meeting at which they were presented. It is recommended that Cash Books are filed with Minute Books.
- 2.2. Deeds of covenant, and invoices for capital items of expenditure should be kept for 10 years.
- 2.3. Bank statements, bank reconciliations, petty cash books, and any tax certificates and related correspondence should be kept for seven years.
- 2.4. Beyond these, invoices, receipts, schedule forms and correspondence, cheques, and paying-in slips need to be retained for three years.

3. Deeds of properties, Land Registry certificates, etc.

In practice Friends Trusts Ltd, as custodian trustee of the Area Meeting, retains documents relating to title. These and any which are held locally are entered in the property registers in 1 above together with their locations.

Particular points to note

4. Formal minutes should be used for all Quaker business meetings (i.e. *not* meeting notes).
5. Minutes should be numbered sequentially within the year, using the form 'yyyy/mmm', where 'yyyy' is the year number and 'mmm' is the minute number. If using the format 'yyyy-mm-dd/mmm', where 'yyyy-mm-dd' is the date of the meeting, the document should identify the last minute of the previous meeting before starting the minutes of the current meeting.
6. Full names should be used to identify people in formal minutes (i.e. *not* just forenames).
7. Confidentiality:
 - 7.1. There may be conflict between the principles of
 - 7.1.1. Confidentiality, and
 - 7.1.2. Completeness of the record
 - 7.2. The test for sharing sensitive information (primarily personal in nature) is "does this person or group of people need to know this?".

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7.3. Consider:

- 7.3.1. Phrasing minutes to avoid unnecessary breaches of confidentiality.
- 7.3.2. Restricting the sharing of documents containing confidential information.
- 7.3.3. Preparing an edited version of a document for sharing more widely, where this is essential.

- 8. Paper *must* be used for the formal archive of records. There is no other reliable recording medium for storing in the long term.
- 9. Take extreme caution with the retention of computer-based records. We must ensure that records are not shared beyond the intended audience within the Religious Society of Friends.
- 10. Archival (acid-free) paper and laser printing of documents are preferred – but these are less essential than that a paper record is preserved. Use of staples, paper-clips, treasury tags, etc., should be avoided (metal can corrode and affect the paper record). Spring back binders are recommended for filing minutes and associated papers.
- 11. Formal minutes should be signed as correct by the clerk or clerks of the meeting they relate to.
- 12. Area Meeting has decided, following guidelines from BYM and the Charities Commission on the retention periods detailed in “Appendix: What to keep, how and for how long” on page 4.
- 13. Clerks of Meetings (at all levels) are responsible for ensuring that all documentation in their possession, prior to it being handed to the Custodian of Records, is kept reasonably secure, and in particular unavailable to non-authorised persons.

The current custodian of records maintains close liaison with the History Centre staff responsible for church records. This is intended to ensure that only those who have our permission have access to our records.

- 14. All clerks should ensure that records for which they have a responsibility are up-to-date and catalogued. Where there is a rotating clerkship, it is the responsibility of the previous clerk to ensure the timely and secure handover of minutes and minute books.
- 15. It is recommended that indexes are maintained of sets of minutes, where possible, so that it is easy to find minutes relating to particular subjects.

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Appendix: What to keep, how and for how long

Record title	Description	Regulatory retention period and source	Recommended retention period	Public access conditions	Form to be kept in	Share/store via Cloud?	Reasons and remarks
Minutes	All finalized, (preferably signed) minutes for Area and Local Meetings, and Premises Committees, etc.. Trustee (Finance and Property) Meetings.	Charity Commission guidance BYM business decision Life of company (Companies Act, 1985)	Permanent	50 year closure period	Paper	Yes, but not only copy	Minutes should preferably be printed onto acid-free paper. Cyclical transfer to place of deposit (after approx.10 years).
Supporting papers	Papers supporting minutes		Permanent	50 year closure period	Paper	Yes, but not only copy	
Elders & Overseers Minutes	Minutes and papers	BYM business decision; safeguarding	Permanent	Closed for 100 years from creation (DPA 1998)	Paper	No	Closed for 100 years as may contain sensitive personal information about children and adults.
Sufferings	Records of sufferings by members of meetings (e.g. criminal convictions, etc.)	Historical reference Moving forward (e.g. reconciliation)	Permanent	Case by case, closed for up to 100 years from creation (DPA 1998)	Paper	No	Potentially closed for 100 years as may contain sensitive personal information about children and adults.

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Record title	Description	Regulatory retention period and source	Recommended retention period	Public access conditions	Form to be kept in	Share/store via Cloud?	Reasons and remarks
Membership registers	Lists of members		Permanent	50 year closure period	Paper	No	
Membership records	Reports of visits, applications for membership, details of terminations of membership, certificates of removal	Clarity Future reference Historical record	Permanent	Closed for 100 years from creation (DPA 1998)	Paper	No	Closed for 100 years as may contain sensitive personal information about children and adults.
Finance committee minutes	Minutes and papers	Historical	Permanent	50 year closure period (unless indexed personal information about donors that should be closed for longer under DPA (1998)).	Paper	Depends if confidential in nature	
Financial records	Invoices statements, etc.	Limitation Act (1980)	7 years		Paper and electronic	Depends if confidential in nature	
Premises records	Plans, approved planning permission, premises committee minutes.		Until disposal of property		Paper		Public record

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Children's summer event records	Attendance lists, incident logs, etc.	Safeguarding			Paper		
Correspondence	Internal and external correspondence on various issues.						

Notes:

1. Meetings will have to continue the above schedule depending on their specific requirements, for example some meetings may be involved with recruitment of paid employees and therefore need to be aware of their obligations under the Equalities Act (2010).
2. For guidance see http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/sched_info_management.pdf
3. Also be aware that legislation affecting recordkeeping such as Data Protection law, Freedom of Information law, recruitment law, building regulations etc are subject to change, and that we are impacted by UK and EU legislation and regulations, therefore schedules and access to records will need to be reviewed every few years.
4. If you want advice on any issues around retention of meeting records, contact the Archivist or Deputy Archivist at Library of Society of Friends on library@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1135, or the current AM Custodian of Records.

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