



## Guide No. 2 Meeting records and their retention and disposal

1. [Introduction to records retention and disposal](#)  
[Example of retention schedule](#)
2. [Types of Quaker records and how long they need to be kept](#)
3. [Destruction of records](#)
4. [Deposit of archives with appropriate repositories](#)
5. [Further advice](#)  
[Guides in this series](#)

This handout provides an overview of the different types of records a Quaker meeting is likely to produce and keep. It includes advice on how long these records need to be kept for administrative, business, financial, accounting and legal reasons, and provides guidance on which records should be kept permanently as archives of the meeting.

### Summary of guidance

- It is good records management practice to draw up a retention schedule for records based on legislation and best practice.
- Identify records of legal and historical importance which need to be kept permanently as archives; records which need to be kept for a fixed period of time; and records which can be destroyed.
- Mark files either 'Review', 'Destroy' or 'Permanent'.
- At the end of the retention period, records should be subject to a formal review and appraisal as to whether they should be reviewed again in the future, preserved as archives of the meeting, or destroyed.
- Retention schedules should be checked annually.
- It is advisable to arrange secure destruction for confidential papers, such as by shredding or pulping.
- Archives of the meeting should be deposited with an appropriate repository.

## 1. Introduction to records retention and disposal

The Religious Society of Friends creates a variety of records throughout its work, but it does not follow that it is necessary for them all to be kept permanently. Therefore, Custodians of Records need to identify:

- records of historical importance which need to be kept permanently as archives of the meeting;
- records which need to be kept for a fixed period of time;
- records which can be destroyed.

It is good records management practice to draw up a retention schedule, copies of which are held by the Clerk and Custodian of Records. A retention schedule is a list of the types of records produced and the length of time they must be retained. At the end of the retention period, records should be subject to a formal review and appraisal as to whether they should be reviewed again in the future, preserved as archives of the meeting and transferred to a suitable repository (See *Guide No. 9 Depositing archives with appropriate repositories*), or destroyed (See section 3 of this guide). The retention schedule should be amended as necessary and checked annually. See over for an example retention schedule. Much time can be saved by marking files either 'Review', 'Destroy' or 'Permanent', for example, 'Review 2015', 'Destroy 2015'. Records should not be destroyed without consulting the Custodian of Records.

**Example Records Retention Schedule****Larkfield Local Meeting Records Retention Schedule**

Originator of Records	Record Description	Regulatory retention period and source	Recommended retention period	Form be kept	Reasons and remarks
Meeting House Fund Committee	Minutes	Life of company (Companies Act, 1985)	Permanent	Paper	Minutes should be printed onto acid-free paper and entered in a minute book. Use 'springback' binders. Cyclical transfer to place of deposit.
Meeting House Fund Committee	Draft minutes		Destroy: Year of meeting + 1 year	Paper or Electronic	For reference purposes/to correct errors in official minutes
Meeting House Fund Committee	Tax and VAT records	6 years from year of records (Taxes Management Act, 1970) (Value Added Tax Act, 1994)	Destroy: End of Financial Year + 6 years	Paper	Retain for 7 years for statutory and audit reasons.
Meeting House Fund Committee	Banking records (paying-in slips, transfer instructions, bank statements, cheques, standing orders, direct debits, account administration)	6 years from year of records (Taxes Management Act, 1970) (Value Added Tax Act, 1994)	Destroy: End of Financial Year + 7 years	Paper	Retain for 7 years for statutory and audit reasons.

## 2. Types of Quaker records and how long they need to be kept

### Minutes and minute books

Retention: Permanent

Minutes of Yearly, Area and Local Meetings should be kept permanently, as should the minutes of elders and overseers and of other standing committees of meetings for church affairs, for example, Nominations Committee; Warden and Premises Committee (where an Area Meeting is the employing body); Trust Property (or Finance and Property) Committee (where the Area Meeting owns property); Children and Young People's Committee; and Outreach Committee.

For further information about minutes and minute books, see *Guide no. 5 Minutes and supporting papers*.

### Rough Minutes

Retention: Destroy 1 year

Once the rough minutes have been correctly transcribed and the fair copy has been **signed by the Clerk**, the rough minutes are no longer needed. However, it is best practice to retain them at least until the next meeting and probably for one year in case a transcription needs re-checking and the rough minutes need to be referred to.

### Supporting papers to minutes

Retention: Permanent

Those papers essential for future reference, if the minute is to be understood, should be kept permanently. These are often called 'supplementary papers' or 'attached documents' or 'committee documents'. Where directly connected to the minute, file them separately with the date of the meeting and minute number clearly in the top right-hand corner. Their existence should be noted at the end of the minute, or in the margin of the minute book. Eventually when the minutes are bound, the supporting papers should be bound in with them.

For further information about supporting papers, see *Guide no. 5 Minutes and supporting papers*.

### Clerks' correspondence

Retention: Varies depending on the type of record.

Correspondence, circulars and other material not permanently required will need to be kept for varying lengths of time:

- a. Incoming letters and documents essential for future reference, but not required permanently, for example, letters and reports concerning transfer of membership, reports from Area or Local Meeting committees, terms of

reference of committees, etc., should be held separately and filed in date order with the latest first. Apologies for absence and the like can be thrown away immediately.

- b. Letters written by Clerks to appoint and release from service, letters acknowledging applications for membership, requesting reports, etc., are not usually held permanently.

Some duplicated material can be thrown away when it is not longer required for reference.

### Membership records

Retention: Permanent

Official registers of members are to be kept permanently. A register which includes details of how and when membership was acquired, and how and when transferred or lost, will remove the need to keep a great deal of correspondence relating to transfer of membership. Only correspondence relating to unusual cases will need to be kept for more than 5 years.

Books of certificates of transfer of membership and of acceptance should be kept until the register of members containing this information is completed and safely deposited with an appropriate repository.

### Printed lists of members

Retention: Permanent

Although not possessing evidential value of the same order, printed lists of members should be kept permanently. These will usually contain information (perhaps even names of attenders for example) not easily to be found elsewhere. With the central membership database (ThankQ) it is no longer necessary for meetings to send multiple copies of the printed lists of members to Friends House. However, each time a new list is produced two copies should still be sent to Friends House Library to be added to the permanent collections.

### Registering officers papers

Retention: Permanent unless correspondence then 5 years

Registers of marriages and burials, and scattering of ashes should be kept permanently. Handbook of registering officers (London, 1999), p. 28: 'In general it is unnecessary to keep marriage papers and related correspondence for more than 5 years. Registering officers will save themselves and their successors trouble if envelopes or parcels are clearly marked (e.g. 'Destroy 1 Jan 20XX). However, papers should be retained for a longer period (and should be marked by the registering officer) when the preliminaries caused particular anxiety, demonstrated unexpected problems, or established precedents, such that the registering officer or successors might be helped by reference to the papers on a future occasion.'

## Property documents

Retention: Permanent

Trust property registers and deeds should not be kept separately from other meeting records except by specific arrangements with Friends Trusts Ltd. and/ or the meeting's solicitors. The meeting's Treasurer, Custodian of Records or Clerk of Property Committee should have a list in any case.

Records of historical interest may be at risk when property is sold by Friends. Papers of any historical value (such as pre-Registration deeds of disposed properties) ought not to pass to the purchaser, but be kept with the meeting's records, and any claim to their ownership by the purchaser should not be ceded without negotiation. If the negotiation is unsuccessful, such records (and any post-Registration documents applicable up to the sale or disposal) should be copied before release to the purchaser. Custodians of Records should be warned that original pre-Registration deeds and records may be copied by the Land Registry in the process of Registration, and then destroyed. Any faults in the Land Registry's copying process discovered later cannot then be remedied; this is further reason to retain such records if possible.

Other property records such as reports, surveys, inspections, plans and photographs should be retained permanently.

## Financial records

Retention: Accounting records: 6 years after the end of the Financial Year; Accounts, properly audited: Permanent; Tax certificates and related matters: 6 years after the end of the Financial Year.

Accounting records must be kept for at least six years after the end of the financial year to which they relate. The meeting's accounts, property audited or examined, should usually be kept with the minutes or as supporting papers. Tax certificates and related matters should be kept for six years.

## Staff records

Retention: Termination of employment + 6 years, unless records contain pension then review 75 years after employment date

Records of the employment of caretakers, wardens and other staff should be kept for 6 years from the year employment is terminated. If records contain pension information, then review 75 years after date employment commenced.

## Legal records

Retention: Permanent

Papers of a legal nature must be kept permanently or at least as long as the legal rights conferred in them apply.

## Other records

Papers whose retention is required by statute must be kept either permanently or for the specified number of years (see *Guide No. 3 Legislation affecting records and record-keeping*).

Other papers that document the origin, functions and development of a meeting or committee, are evidence of their creation and growth, and therefore must be kept permanently.

One set of all newsletters produced by or about the meeting should be kept permanently.

Although not official records of a meeting or committee, Custodians of Records may want to think about accepting photographs and reminiscences of members and attenders.

Generally, duplicates, photocopies and copies of papers known to exist elsewhere can be disposed of.

### **3. Destruction of records**

Methods of destruction vary depending on the amount of material to be destroyed, the level of confidentiality required and cost. It is advisable to arrange secure destruction for confidential papers, such as by shredding or pulping.

For the destruction of electronic records see *Guide 6 Electronic records*.

### **4. Deposit of archives with appropriate repositories**

A separate guide in this series deals with deposit of archives to appropriate repositories. See *Guide No. 9 Depositing archives with appropriate repositories*.

### **5. Further advice**

For further advice on managing records and archives you can either write to Friends House Library, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, telephone 020 7663 1135 or send an email to [library@quaker.org.uk](mailto:library@quaker.org.uk)

### **Guides in this series**

- Guide No. 1 The job of the Custodian of Records
- Guide No. 2 Meeting records and their retention and disposal
- Guide No. 3 Legislation affecting records and record-keeping
- Guide No. 4 Creation to curation of records
- Guide No. 5 Minutes and supporting papers

Guide No. 6 Electronic records  
Guide No. 7 Preservation and storage of records and archives  
Guide No. 8 Use and access to records and archives  
Guide No. 9 Depositing archives with appropriate repositories  
Guide No. 10 Disaster preparedness  
Guide No. 11 Creating exhibitions and displays  
Guide No. 12 Records equipment and suppliers  
Guide No. 13 Glossary  
Guide No. 14 Frequently Asked Questions

All guides can be downloaded from the Britain Yearly Meeting website  
[www.quaker.org.uk/Library](http://www.quaker.org.uk/Library) on the Support for Meetings page or requested from the  
Library.

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