

Preserving the heritage of your parish

Diocesan Record Office

Manchester Archives & Local Studies is the appointed Diocesan Record Office for the Archdeaconries of Manchester, Bolton and Rochdale. Under the 1978 Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978, we are responsible for caring for the historical records and registers of parishes within the diocese, including those of redundant parishes.

This means providing safe, secure storage for records, and caring for them to ensure that they survive for the use of future generations. We have an obligation to make records available to members of the public who wish to consult them (for example, people researching local history or their family history). We also advise parishes on caring for their own records.

Parish records at the Diocesan Record Office

- Any records or registers which are either over 100 years old, or whose first entry is over 150 years old, must be deposited with the Diocesan Record Office, unless an exemption is obtained from the bishop.
- Other records, except for current registers, can also be deposited at the Diocesan Record Office. A catalogue for what we hold can be found on our web site at <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries/arls>

Keeping records in the parish

- You have a duty to allow researchers to consult registers, upon request and by appointment if necessary, within reasonable hours and under constant supervision to ensure that no harm comes to the records. Do not allow records to be taken away from the church, even for short periods.
- Registers and records which require permission from the bishop to be retained by the parish must be kept in a secure steel cabinet or fire proof room within the church. This storage area must be monitored to ensure that the temperature and relative humidity do not fluctuate or reach excessive levels as this is very damaging to records.
- Other records should be kept in a secure room or storage container, in dry, cool conditions. Try to keep records away from heating or water pipes, and areas that are damp or that have a history of flooding. It is very difficult to save records once they have been water-damaged, and mould can be a problem if records are stored in unsuitable conditions.
- Keep records, and especially photographs, away from natural light.
- Try to avoid making photocopies from your records, as this can be very damaging.
- Keep an inventory of records kept on church premises, showing which records are held and their location.

Which records should be kept for the future?

Here are some examples, but if in doubt contact the Diocesan Record Office for guidance:

'Official' records –

- Registers of baptism, marriage, and burial
- Registers of graves, banns, confirmations and services
- Minutes of meetings, including those of the Parochial Church Council, Vestry meetings, church meetings and AGMs, working parties and committees (signed originals, 1 copy of each)

- Financial records that summarise transactions such as account books and annual statements of account (rather than receipts and petty cash records, which should only be kept for 7 years)
- Correspondence – try to keep letters with other relevant correspondence, as the importance of a particular letter may only be clear when it is viewed in context
- Records relating to church membership such as electoral rolls
- Plans of the church premises and graveyard, and associated buildings (e.g. school, rectory)
- Faculties and associated information on building alterations
- Information relating to parish boundary changes
- Title deeds or plans relating to premises
- Records relating to groups associated with the church e.g. Sunday school, uniformed organisations, ladies' groups, choirs etc.

'Unofficial' records

- Photographs, films or videos of church premises, parish events etc.
- Notes on the history of your parish
- Commemorative programmes/orders of service (1 copy of each)
- Parish magazines and newsletters (1 copy of each)
- Scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings relating to events at the parish church

Advice

The **Diocesan Registrar** can give guidance on the Data Protection Act and the Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978:

Mrs Jane Monks
 Diocesan Registry
 Diocesan Church House
 90 Deansgate
 Manchester
 M3 2QH

Tel 0161 834 7545

The **Diocesan Record Office** can give advice on how to store records, and help with questions about specific items in your care.

Principal Archivist
 Manchester Archives and Local Studies
 Central Library
 St Peters Square
 Manchester M2 5PD

Tel 0161 234 1980

archiveslocalstudies@manchester.gov.uk
<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries/ars>