

PAROCHIAL REGISTERS AND RECORDS

Changes in the law from 1st January 1993

1st January 1993 sees the coming into force of a number of important amendments to the law on parochial registers and records, as set out in the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978. These changes, which are made by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992, will affect all those who have the care of the Church's records, but will be of particular importance to parishes, who will have to implement the new legal requirements on a day-to-day basis.

The purpose of this leaflet is set out the new provisions as regards registration of burials; to outline the other main changes; and to explain where further information can be found. It is being sent to all parochial clergy paid through the Church Commissioners, as well as to archdeacons and others; clergy are asked to draw their churchwardens' attention and that of parochial church council secretaries to the new legislation, and to keep the leaflet itself (or a copy) with the current registers for reference.

BURIAL REGISTERS

At present the form of registration of burials in parish churchyards and burial grounds (after the heading) consists of six columns: Entry No.; Christian Name and Surname; Address; Age; Date of Burial; and Officiating Minister. The 1992 Measure adds three further columns: *Date of Death* (after Address); *Date of Disposal of Cremated Remains* (after Date of Burial); and *Plan Ref No* (before Officiating Minister). These entries will need to be added for all registrations on and after 1st January 1993. Registers in the new format have already been published by SPCK and are available from SPCK and other bookshops price £16 for a 48 page register or £22 for a 128 page register (both prices including VAT). In case of difficulty the registers can be obtained by mail order from SPCK Mail order, SPCK Bookshop, 36 Steep Hill, Lincoln LN2 1LU (Telephone 0522 527 486), who will supply details of post and packing charges on request.

As explained below, parishes whose burial registers were begun more than 150 years ago will need to close them, and can begin 1993 with a new register. Parishes may also wish to close existing burial registers if they are in poor condition, if the paper is of poor quality or if the register is nearly full. However, parishes which have registers in good condition and with a substantial number of unfilled pages may wish to continue using them by adding the new columns in manuscript as shown on page 4 of this leaflet.

As regards the completion of the new entries:

Date of disposal of cremated remains. This is an alternative to Date of Burial; "N/A" should be entered in the appropriate column. Under the 1992 Measure, all disposals of cremated remains in the parish churchyard or burial ground must be entered in the burial register and not in a separate register. However, where a funeral service takes place in the church before the deceased person's body or cremated remains are buried or deposited elsewhere, the service should continue to be entered in the register of services.

Plan Ref No. It is strongly recommended that, as a matter of good practice, parishes keep plans showing the location of new burials and grave spaces reserved by faculty. The plan reference number should then be shown in the register. It is expected that keeping a record of the location of burial and

reserved grave spaces will be made mandatory in the near future by Rules under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991.

OTHER NEW PROVISIONS

1. From 1st January 1993, *institutions* such as hospitals, schools, colleges and prisons which have their own chaplains licensed under the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967 will be required to maintain their own registers of baptisms carried out in the institution and, where they have burial grounds, of burials. These will no longer be registered in the register relating to the parish church.

Inspections of parochial registers and records, which at present should be carried out every six years, will in future be carried out on a five year cycle, which can be tied in with that applying to the inspection of the church itself, and will be under the supervision of the archdeacon. The date of the inspection must be entered in the parish log-book and the record of the inspection must be inserted in or annexed to the inventory.

A register (other than a marriage register begun after June 1837) must be closed as soon as its oldest entry is 150 years old, and must be deposited in the Diocesan Record Office (unless the parish has special permission to keep its old registers) after the next inspection.

Where a parish has special permission to retain registers or records which would otherwise have to be deposited in the Diocesan Record Office, the detailed requirements governing the conditions under which they must be kept in the parish have been modified.

Subject to certain conditions, searchers may now be required to use properly authenticated photocopies of registers (other than post-1837 marriage registers) instead of the originals, although they can ask to see the original if there is reason to think that the copy is not accurate or if the quality of the reproduction is unsatisfactory, and they have a right to appeal to the archdeacon if this is refused.

EXAMPLE OF AMENDED BURIAL REGISTER

Burials

in the Parish of _____
in the Diocese of _____
in the _____ of _____
(Insert appropriate local government area)

Entry no.	Christian name(s) & surname Surname in block capitals	Address	Date of death	Age	Date of burial or disposal of cremated remains	Plan ref. No.	Officiating Minister

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Any problems regarding the legal requirements should be referred to the diocesan registrar. In addition, Church House Publishing has published a revised edition of the Guide to the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 which gives full details of the law on the subject, including the new provisions coming into force on 1st January 1993. The Guide also contains detailed sections on the practical aspects of caring and for and preserving records and on records management for parish officers, including suggestions on matters such as deciding what material to preserve, storing, protecting and

repairing documents, security, photocopying and transcription, and the use of parish computers. It is available from local religious booksellers, or by mail order from Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN, price B.50 plus 60p postage and packing.