

The Church Property Register, Terrier and Inventory

The legal requirements

Section 4 of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 requires churchwardens to compile and maintain a full terrier and inventory of all land and articles appertaining to their church. The Church Property Register is a clear and accessible pro-forma with sections dealing with all aspects of a church building and its contents to enable churchwardens to comply with the law. It is produced on quality acid-free paper and is designed to complement the Church Log Book.

There is the requirement to maintain:

- Terrier - a list of lands belonging to the Church,
- Inventory - a list of all the items belonging to the church
- Log book - a detailed record of all the alterations, additions and repairs to the church, its land and contents
- Ensure the location of such documents is known and offsite copies kept.

The Terrier and Inventory are published together as the [Church Property Register](#), in loose-leaf format. The Log Book is published separately, also in loose-leaf format. Copies can be obtained from the Church House Bookshop.

The Register is to be completed in permanent ink, preferably the Stationery Office Record Ink used for registers of baptisms, weddings and burials. It is acceptable to the Church Buildings Council for the documents to be generated on a computer but hard copies must be produced for storage following the given format and using archival-quality paper or good-quality photocopier paper.

One full copy of each document is to be kept in the church safe and a second (paper) copy s to be deposited with a person designated by the Bishop. The Pastoral & Advisory Secretary at the Diocesan Office is designated for this purpose.

What is the purpose of the Church Property Register?

The register and the system of annual checks have the following purposes:

- to provide a bank of information about the church for legal enquiries and other purposes (especially sections 1-5)
- to ensure that items of value are properly recognised and cannot simply "disappear as the churchwardens and others concerned with the life of the church change (especially sections 6 & 7)
- to provide details of items of value in case of loss by theft or fire (especially sections 6 & 7)
- to provide the basis for the report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and for the annual Inspection by the Archdeacon
- to provide a historic record as a research tool for present and future generations

Format of the Church Property Register

The following section headings are used:

1. The Church Building — Structure of the Church Plan, building history, listing, chancel repair liability, etc.
2. Other Buildings in the Parish
3. The Churchyard and Churchyard Monuments
4. Schedule of Benefactions connected with the Church
5. Schedule Of Registers and Records
6. Including church services registers, parish administration, church property and buildings, parish finance
7. Schedule of Church Plate
8. Schedule of Furnishings and Fittings
Altars, pulpit, lectern, font etc; Stained glass; Wall paintings; Monuments; Sculpture; Bells; Paintings; Metalwork; Woodwork; Architectural features; Textiles; Books; Organ; Electrical equipment; Miscellanea

What should be covered within sections 6 & 7?

Historically all items relating to the church building would be included. Questions now arise, however, about items found within the envelope of the church building but which do not have a liturgical function, for example equipment in a kitchen or office, furniture in a church hall or multi-purpose building, etc. It's also difficult to see for what purpose it is helpful to record minor changes in the number of different hymn books held, the details of catalogue items of plain plate or furniture or the number of choir surplices. Throughout all sections of the Register, but particularly in sections 6 and 7, it may be helpful to use the following criteria:

1. Facts and information of legal or financial record should be included
2. All items of monetary, historical or artistic value or given to commemorate a person or event should be included
3. Minor items relating to the church (chairs, hymn books, linen, etc.) should be noted in each full inventory but changes need not be recorded annually
4. Items relating to ancillary areas (kitchen, office, hall) need not be included in the Register but equipment should be noted in the parish's financial records (capital assets, maintenance, depreciation etc.). Items belonging to other organisations using the church building should be included in the records of those organisations.

What needs to be updated?

Generally, the information about the church and churchyard, benefactions, etc. will remain unchanged (i.e. the information in sections 1-4). The section on Registers (section 5) should be amended whenever registers are closed and deposited at the County Record Office. The Schedules of Church Plate and Of Furnishings and Fittings (sections 6 and 7) will be amended as items are introduced or removed. A separate record of such changes should be available in the faculties and Archdeacon's letters relating to each item held within the Log Book.

A full inventory should be made out afresh every 10 years. In the years between, annual update sheets should be added to the copy of the inventory in the church and any additional copy stored off-site within the parish.

Keeping and archiving the Church Property Register

In addition to the copy of the inventory and the terrier and the log book held in the church safe, one full copy of the inventory (annually updated, with photographs and plans) should also be held off-site in a secure location. This is to ensure that access to the information is easily obtained if the safe Contents are stolen or damaged by fire. The copy deposited at the Diocesan Office fulfils this requirement but an additional copy may be held off-site in the parish as well.

Copies of the Church Property Register and the Log Book can be obtained from:

Church House Bookshop
31 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BN
Tel: 020 7799 4064
Fax: 020 7340 9997
Email: bookshop@chbookshop.co.uk
Website: www.chbookshop.co.uk

Further guidance may be found in [*Keep or bin; the care of your parish records*](#), published by the Church of England Record Centre.