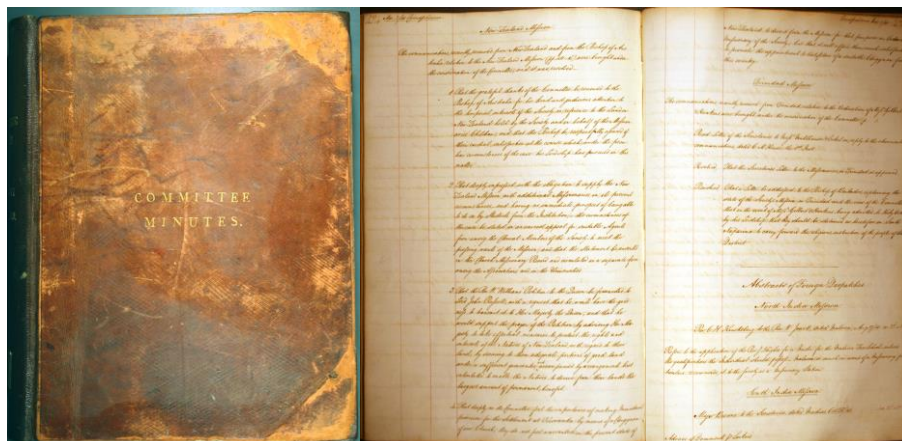


Guide to the committee records of the General Secretary's Department of the Church Mission Society

The General Secretary's Department is one of the UK based administrative departments of the CMS, under the charge of the General Secretary. The General Secretary was the 'first amongst equals' of the Secretaries responsible for the administration of the Society's work. The Department grew out of the work of the General Committee (also referred to as 'the Committee'; now the General Council), one of the first two committees established at the foundation of the CMS in April 1799. The Committee and its Secretary have continued to have ultimate authority over the work of the Society including key strategic and policy decisions.

What would I find in the committee records?

- The Department's records include a series of committee minutes, papers and correspondence created and compiled by CMS committees and sub-committees. These committee records are a key primary source not just for understanding the work of the General Secretary's Department, but for the home and overseas work of the Society as a whole. **Finding Number:** [CMS/G/C](#).
- The series includes an unbroken sequence of the Society's principal minute books 1799-1953 and accompanying indexes 1799-1966, minutes of general meetings of the Society 1799-1823 and papers for General and Executive Committee meetings 1934-1949. It also includes additional records of committees appointed to deal with different branches of the Society's work, to consider procedures, regulations and the Society's administrative structure, to review the Society's finances, to consider ecclesiastical issues and its relationships with other organisations, to deal with appointments to Secretary posts and honorary positions. Appended to this guide are lists of the main committees whose minutes and/or papers make up this series.
- The principal minute books are a particular highlight ([CMS/G/C 1](#)). They comprise 107 volumes of signed minutes of the main CMS committees with some reports, circulars, memoranda, regulations and constitutional papers inserted.



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The volumes give an overview of the organisation's administrative history, including the nature of its correspondence with affiliated organisations and the reciprocal relationship between the CMS, the British Government and overseas administrations. The Society's proactive intervention in political and business interests and discussion of correspondence received from its missionaries mean that the minutes provide an ongoing commentary on contemporary issues in the UK and overseas. In the 19th century there is much concerning slavery and the slave trade, including the part played by the Society and its members in the sponsoring and education of freed slave children, CMS involvement in controversies over land settlement in New Zealand, evidence of the CMS role as an active petitioner of both Houses of Parliament on the rights of indigenous populations and observations on the actions and impact of European traders and settlers in the Colonies and the Society's stance on the splitting away of members of the Free Church of Scotland from the Church of Scotland. The 20th century minutes include references to missionaries' work with the YMCA amongst the British forces during World War I, the impact of evangelical work amongst Muslim populations, post war nationalism and diocesanisation.

For research into named individuals, the volumes can be searched by name for committee decisions regarding appointments, transfers, personal grants and allowances, marriages, retirement and in memoriam tributes (some of the latter giving considerable detail even in the 1950s minutes). There are records of committee interviews with missionaries on furlough from the early 19th century until the mid-1920s, records giving names and ages of children admitted to the Church Missionaries' Children's Home 1850-1930s, and lists of students in training from 1826 (some with additional details regarding grades, date of entry and departure). For much of the 19th century, the minutes include summaries of prospective missionaries 'offer of service' letters and testimonials.

Why should I consult the minutes in the records of the CMS General Secretary's Department?

- The minutes record committee decisions on all aspects of the Society's work at home and overseas making them a potentially useful source of information and evidence whatever the research topic.
- The principal minute books ([CMS/G/C 1](#)) span the full length of the Society's history and can help to compensate for gaps in other record series. For example, the minutes of the CMS Candidates Department suffered bomb damage in the 2nd World War but, as the Candidate committees reported to the Committee of Correspondence and its successors, the minutes of which are recorded in the CMS/G/C1 minute books, brief notes relating to Candidate committee business can be found in the CMS/G/C 1 volumes.
- Minutes and committee papers provide contextual information that can help, for example, to clarify the reasoning behind decisions to initiate, decline or close particular areas of work overseas or to trace the history behind the establishment of different home departments.
- Some of the committees whose records are in this series compiled material relevant to their areas of enquiry, particularly the centenary and review committees. The committee papers are now a useful source for anyone trying to locate papers and correspondence

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now missing from the overseas (missions) series (CMS/B/OMS). This is indicated at file level.

- The indexes accompanying the principal minute book series mean that they can be searched relatively easily for names of people, places, institutions, subjects etc.

What problems might I encounter?

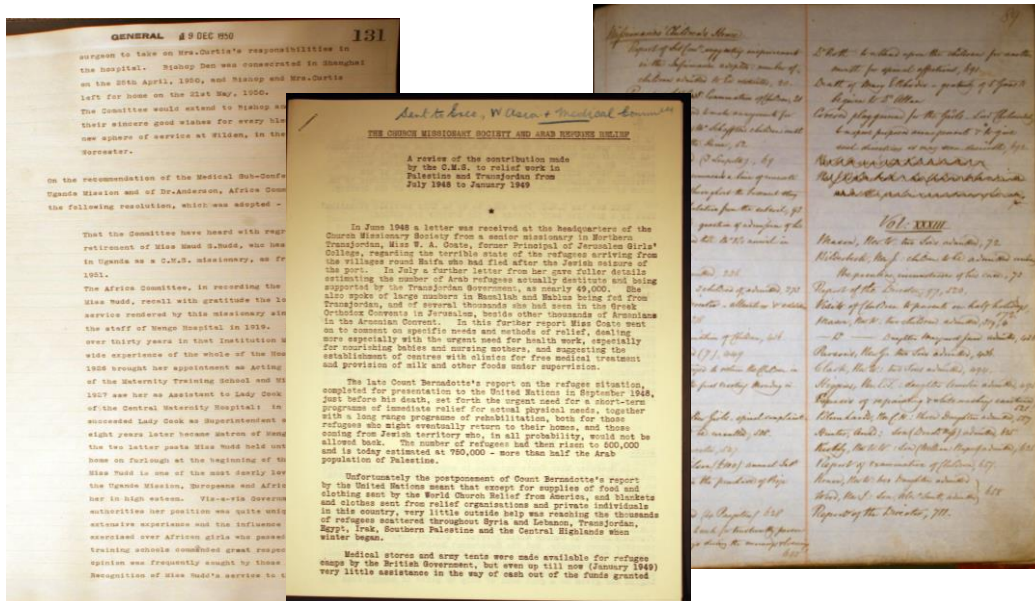
- The minutes of some committees are split across different sequences. For example, researchers interested in minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, Patronage Committee or Committee of Accounts will find them at different dates in the principal minute books or the sub-committee papers ([CMS/G/C 1](#) and [CMS/G/CS](#)). As far as possible, the existence of related records has been noted in the online catalogue at sub-series or file level.
- The names and remit of committees changed over time. For example, the Committee of Correspondence was renamed the Foreign Committee which was one of the predecessors to the Home and Foreign Committee. Particularly when using the principal minute books, researchers are recommended to search using the name and subject indexes rather than by name of committee.
- Although it is essential to use the indexes to search the principal minute books, some are cumbersome, fragile and somewhat complicated in the way in which they are structured; overlap in the date ranges covered by individual indexes means it may not be immediately obvious which volume to use and, whilst extensive, they are not comprehensive. Use the sub-series and lower level descriptions in the online catalogue as a guide (see [CMS/G/C 1A](#)).
- Entries vary in detail. For example, for some individuals, detailed retirement or in memoriam tributes are recorded in the principal minute books, some several pages long even in the 1950s, whilst for others entries are very brief regardless of length of service.
- The level of detail recorded in the minutes concerning matters brought before the committees declines over time. Early minutes include summaries and, in some instances the full text, of correspondence and papers considered at committee and summaries of interviews and discussion topics; later minutes record only that papers were read and the committee's resolutions. Researchers interested in the sources giving rise to the minute must search the other record series.

Handy hints!

- Whatever your research topic, it is worth using the indexes to check the principal minute books. Even if an entry is very brief, it might help you to search other record series by narrowing the date range of your search, identifying people or key words of interest.
- Start by using the online catalogue for an overview of the scope of the committee records in the General Secretary's Department and how to use them.

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- If you are looking for records of a particular CMS committee but cannot find it in the CMS catalogues, try searching the principal minute books as it might be one of the smaller committees not listed individually. If you know which committee it reported to, you should find references to it in the minutes of that committee.
- Published histories of the Society (such as those by Eugene Stock and Gordon Hewitt), and the printed annual reports, made extensive use of the principal minute books. They can be helpful in explaining key matters of business or events referenced in the minutes. Key themes might also be followed up using the CMS periodicals such as the 'Church Missionary Intelligencer'.
- Much of the business discussed at the main committees arose from incoming correspondence from the UK or overseas. Equally, the CMS Secretaries often acted on committee decisions by themselves writing ('outgoing correspondence'), even where this is not explicitly stated in the minutes. The incoming and outgoing correspondence series can be used alongside the committee minutes to follow up items of interest and the minutes and indexes can be used to search the correspondence series which lack subject indexes (see [CMS/G/AC](#)).
- Don't dismiss the sub-committee minutes and papers. Many were appointed to enable specific issues to be dealt with in more depth than could be achieved at full committee meetings and the minutes are correspondingly more detailed. The number and variety of sub-committees appointed was considerable and it has not been possible to list them in this summary guide; see the online catalogue for further details ([CMS/G/CS](#)).
- The records of the General Secretary's Department do not encompass all of the Society's minutes. In particular, once other departments were established, their committee minutes were generally held within the records of that department. For example, although brief notes of Candidate Committee reports to the Committee of Correspondence can be found in the in the principal minute books, the signed minutes are filed with the Candidates Department records ([CMS/C/C](#)).



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Examples of CMS committees whose working records are held amongst the committee records of the General Secretary's Department, listed alphabetically:

Committee	Dates	Finding Nos*
Accounts (some including minutes of the House Committee and Funds Committee), Committee of	1808-1818 1818-1875	CMS/G/CS 1 CMS/G/C 1
Appointments Committee	1924-1949	CMS/G/CS
Bishop Tucker's Resolutions, Sub-Committee on	1913-1914	CMS/G/C 16
Centenary Committees	1887-1901	CMS/G/CC
Children's Home Visiting Sub-Committee (see also missionaries' children series CMS/G/AMc)	1850-1882	CMS/G/C 1
Clerical Sub-Committee	1838-1881 1873-1909	CMS/G/C 1 CMS/G/C 3
Correspondence, Committee of	1799-1818 1818-1916	CMS/G/CS 1 CMS/G/C 1
Conscience Clause (India) Sub-Committee	1906-1922	CMS/G/C 19
Constitution of Native Churches, Special Sub-Committee	1861-1910	CMS/G/C 9
Ecclesiastical Sub-Committees and Committee	1784-1898 1889-1942 1930-1936	CMS/G/C 13 CMS/G/CS CMS/G/C 22
Educational Committee	1900-1909	CMS/G/C 10
Executive Committee	1923-1953	CMS/G/C 1 CMS/G/C 2/3 and CMS/G/C 2/4
Federation Committee	1932-1934	CMS/G/C 21
Finance Committee (including minutes of the Finance Committee sitting as the House Committee)	1842-1953	CMS/G/C 1
Foreign Committee	1916-1919	CMS/G/C 1
Foreign Council	1914-1950	CMS/G/C 27
Foreign Literature Committee	1901-1904	CMS/G/C 11
Funds, Committee of	1812-1815 1875-1881	CMS/G/CS 1 CMS/G/C 1
Funds and Home Organisation Committee	1881-1916	CMS/G/C 1
General Committee	1799-1953	CMS/G/C 1 CMS/G/C 2/4
Home Committee	1916-1919	CMS/G/C 1
Home and Foreign Committee	1919-1923	CMS/G/C 1
Indian Bishop's Resolutions and Laws and Regulations Sub-Committees	1858-1878	CMS/G/C 4
Industrial committees (various)	c 1891- 1915	CMS/G/C 12
Islington College Visitors Committee	1825-1881	CMS/G/C 1
Joint Council	1941-1947	CMS/G/C 25
Limpsfield Home Committee, Special	1907-1908	CMS/G/C 14
Memorials Sub-Committee	1917-1918	CMS/G/C 17
Mission Administration in the Field, Special Committee	1908-1909	CMS/G/C 15

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Committee	Dates	Finding Nos*
Patronage Committee	1812-1923 1833-1880	CMS/G/CS CMS/G/C 1
Personal Questions Sub-Committee	1890-1906	CMS/G/C 8
Polygamy, and marriage of Christian converts, sub-committees on	1856-1887	CMS/G/C 6
Procedure Sub-Committee	1874-1896	CMS/G/C 5
Recruiting, Selection and Training of Candidates, Special Sub-Committee on	1927-1937	CMS/G/C 23
Relations between CMS and Church of England Zenana Missionary Society	1895-1919	CMS/G/C 7
Review Committees	1903-1921	CMS/G/CR
Secretariat committees (various)	1892-1923	CMS/G/CS
Secretariat and Staff, Special Committee on	1924-1927	CMS/G/C 20
Thankoffering Committee	1918-1919	CMS/G/C 18
Ways and Means Committee	1937-1940	CMS/G/C 24

This is not a comprehensive listing. The principal minute book series ([CMS/G/C 1](#)), for example, also includes minutes of various special committees such as the Association Sub-Committee, House Committee and Buildings Sub-Committee, occasional minutes of some of the smaller committees listed above, and of 'Special' meetings convened where necessary in addition to regular committee meetings. The other committee sequences also include a number of other miscellaneous committee papers 1849-1943, records of many other special and sub-committees and records of the Archbishop's Evangelistic Committee 1934-1941 (non-CMS).

Further details can be found in the online catalogue (<http://calmview.bham.ac.uk/>)

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Examples of CMS committees whose working records are held amongst the committee records of the General Secretary's Department, listed thematically:

Biographical/family history research

Appointments Committee
Children's Home Visitors Committee
Clerical Sub-Committee
Committee of Correspondence
Executive Committee
Finance Committee
Foreign Committee
Home and Foreign Committee
General Committee
Limpsfield Home Committee
Miscellaneous papers (CMS/G/C 26)
Personal Questions Sub-Committee
Committee of Visitors

Different branches of work overseas and in the UK (literary work, women's work, educational, industrial medical work etc)

Centenary Committees
Conscience Clause (India) Sub-Comm
Committee of Correspondence
Educational Committee
Executive Committee
Foreign Committee
Foreign Literature Committee
Funds and Home Committee
General Committee
Home Committee
Home and Foreign Committee
Industrial committees
Joint Council
Special Limpsfield Home Committee
Miscellaneous papers (CMS/G/C 26)
Review committees
Sub-committee sequence (CMS/G/CS)
Ways and Means Committee

Missionary training

Centenary Committees
Clerical Sub-Committee
Executive Committee
General Committee
Miscellaneous papers (CMS/G/C 26)
Special Sub-Committee on Recruiting,
Selection and Training of Candidates
Review committees
Sub-Committee sequence (CMS/G/CS)

Overseas missions

Centenary Committees
Committee of Correspondence
Executive Committee
Foreign Committee
Foreign Council
Home and Foreign Committee
Miscellaneous papers (CMS/G/C 26)
Special Committee on Mission
Administration in the Field
Review committees
Sub-committee sequence (CMS/G/CS)
Ways and Means Committee

Ecclesiastical issues, work with overseas churches, diocesanisation

Sub-committee on Bishop Tuckers'
Resolutions
Centenary Committees
Sub-com Constitution Native Churches
Committee of Correspondence
Ecclesiastical committees
Executive Committee
Foreign Committee
General Committee
Home and Foreign Committee
Indian Bishops Resolutions Sub-Com
Laws and Regulations Sub-Com
Memorials Sub-Committee
Committee on Mission Administration in
in the Field
Review committees
Sub-committee sequence (CMS/G/CS)
Ways and Means Committee

Property

Committee of Correspondence
Executive Committee
Finance Committee
Foreign Committee
General Committee
Home and Foreign Committee
Property sub-committees (G/C 1; G/CS)
Review committees
Ways and Means Committee

**Guide to the committee records of the General Secretary's Department of the
Church Mission Society**

CMS policy, administration, procedures and regulations

Centenary Committees

Executive Committee

Foreign Committee

General Committee

Home Committee

Home and Foreign Committee

Miscellaneous papers (CMS/G/C 26)

Special Committee on Mission Administration in the Field

Procedure Sub-Committee

Committee of Correspondence

Review committees

Special Committee on the Secretariat and Staff

Secretariat committees

Sub-Committee sequence (CMS/G/CS)

The Centenary Committee papers, the review committees and committees appointed to look at Society expenditure (such as the Ways and Means Committee) provide detailed reviews of different aspects of the Society's work.

Updated July 2016