

United Kingdom parliamentary publications: parliamentary papers

INTRODUCTION AND TERMINOLOGY

Parliamentary publications are organised in two groups, each in three series for each House. The first group consists of the information papers required by Parliament in its work of legislation and of monitoring the work of the government. These papers are known as the *Parliamentary Papers*, *Sessional Papers* or, as gathered together in their official sequence and bound, as the 'Bound Set'. The three series of parliamentary papers are 'Bills' and 'Papers' of which each House has their own series and 'Command Papers' which are common to both Houses. The second group consists of the proceedings of Parliament. The three series of proceedings are the *Journals* of each House, the *Debates* of each House, commonly called 'Hansard' and the daily business papers called 'The Vote Bundle' for the House of Commons and 'Minutes of Proceedings' for the House of Lords.

CONTENTS

1. PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS	2
2. PUBLIC BILLS	2
3. HOUSE OF COMMONS PAPERS	2
4. COMMAND PAPERS.....	3
5. GENERAL PRINTED INDEXES	3
6. SPECIAL PRINTED INDEXES	3
7. PRINTED REPRINTS.....	4
8. HOUSE OF LORDS PAPERS AND BILLS	5
9 CITATION	5
10. ELECTRONIC VERSIONS	7
11. ELECTRONIC INDEXES.....	7
12. LOCATIONS.....	8
Open Shelves	8
Texts in closed access	9

1. PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

The *Journals of the House of Lords* began in 1510 (1509 Old Style), and the *Journals of the House of Commons* began in 1554. Since 1801 the House of Commons' parliamentary papers have been issued in a numbered series of Bills and Papers which have been gathered together and bound in sessional volumes. Indexes date from 1807. Command Papers form a separate series within the sessional papers from 1833 onwards. Until session 1978-79 the prescribed sequence for binding the sessional volumes was in subject order in four groups: 'Public Bills', 'Reports of Committees' (i.e. Select Committees of the House), 'Reports of Commissioners' (i.e. all other committees, etc. of enquiry), and 'Accounts and Papers' (all other papers not comprised in the first three categories). Indexes are therefore essential to finding any particular paper.

From 1979-80 the arrangement has been simplified and Bills, House of Commons Papers and Command Papers are arranged in their numerical sequences within the sessional volumes. The British Library had anticipated this new arrangement three years earlier and our set has therefore been bound numerically from 1976-77. The bound volumes are kept in basement storage on site at St Pancras at shelf mark BS.Ref.1 and have to be ordered, while unbound papers of recent sessions remain on open access in the Social Sciences Reading Room.

2. PUBLIC BILLS

Bills are draft acts of parliament and are numbered consecutively within parliamentary sessions. As bills progress through Parliament, they may well be amended and, if so, are normally reprinted as amended and are given a fresh bill number. Proposed amendments to bills proceeding through the House of Commons are issued in the 'Vote Bundle' (see **Daily Business Papers** for further details). Private bills are printed at the promoters' expense and are not parliamentary or even official publications. However, unlike public bills, publication has been compulsory since 1703. The British Library has extensive holdings thanks to its possession of the Harper Collection, the private papers of an eighteenth century parliamentary agent. Unlike the House of Commons, the House of Lords issues amendments to its public bills within its bill series. The amendments carry the same bill numbers as the original bill but with lower-case letter or roman numeral suffixes.

3. HOUSE OF COMMONS PAPERS

These consist of papers produced within the House, particularly reports of Select Committees of the House and certain papers originating outside Parliament. These include papers required by acts of parliament to be submitted to Parliament ('Act Papers'), such as the annual reports of some public bodies, and papers submitted to the

House of Commons in response to its requests from it for information ('Returns'). The different categories of papers are not formally distinguished and are numbered in a single sequence which starts new each session.

4. COMMAND PAPERS

Like Returns, Command Papers originate outside parliament but they are submitted to parliament by the wish of the government. As a separate series, they date from 1833. Before 1833 they were numbered as House papers. Numbering continues successively through parliamentary sessions. The first series omitted the command paper number from the papers and in citations the numbers are given in square brackets, []. A new series began in 1870. It is prefixed 'C'. Since then a further series has begun when the previous series approached 10.000 in number. The following prefixes have been used successively: Cd, Cmd, Cmnd and currently Cm. They are called "Command" papers as the formula printed on the title page is "Presented to Parliament ... by command of His/Her Majesty". They are presented to both Houses of Parliament but in practice are not included in the House of Lords' set of sessional papers and can only be found in that of the House of Commons. Two unofficial terms should be mentioned that are widely used though they have no formal definition. 'White Papers' are statements of government policy and are always issued as Command Papers. 'Green Papers' are consultation documents and may be issued as Command Papers, but more usually they are not parliamentary papers at all. They are mainly published directly by the departments and agencies themselves, often only in electronic form on the departmental or agency web site.

5. GENERAL PRINTED INDEXES

The House of Commons Sessional Papers have their own subject indexes which constitute the final paper of the session. During the first half of the nineteenth century various cumulations of these sessional indexes were produced, culminating in a three volume index covering 1801-1852. The first volume covers bills, the second select committees and the third (bound as two volumes in the Library's set) everything else. The next multi-sessional index covered 1852/53 to 1869, after which intermediate cumulations covered decades. Final cumulations exist for 1852-1899 and 1900-1949, each in a single volume. The 1852-1899 index, though adequate for retrieving papers from the Bound Set, lacks numbers. After the 1900-1949 index there are decennial indexes up to 1969/70 to 1978/79, published as recently as 1995. After that there are only sessional indexes.

6. SPECIAL PRINTED INDEXES

Apart from the official sessional indexes and their cumulations, there are numerous other indexes, some alternative general indexes, others specialised indexes on particular topics.

The principal alternative general index was produced in five printed volumes by Chadwyck-Healey to accompany their microfiche edition of the Parliamentary papers. It is a systematic index with an alphabetical subject index at the back of volume five. It covers 1801-1900. Another general, yet in this instance selective, index has also been produced in connexion with a reprint edition. The index to the Irish Universities Press (IUP) 1000-volume reprint of nineteenth-century papers also contains a checklist in session/volume/paper number order. Specialised indexes on the open shelves include an index to Charity Commission Reports, indexes to Consular and Commercial Reports (a mixture of printed, typescript and card indexes), a card index of Colonial Annual Reports, and a numerical list of Command Papers.

7. PRINTED REPRINTS

Before the nineteenth century no attempt was made to gather sets of parliamentary papers together and there is no eighteenth century equivalent of the 'Bound Set'. Early in the nineteenth century some attempt was made to rectify this. A set of reports was printed in 15 large folio volumes, known as 'The First Series' and covering the period 1715-1801. Further series followed but they duplicate the Bound Set and can therefore be ignored. Also, from papers still in store, seven sets of eighteenth century papers were put together in 111 volumes on the orders of Speaker Abbot. These volumes are known as 'The Abbot Collection' and cover the period 1715-1800. The sets contain papers of all sorts and not just reports of select committees. No two sets are identical or absolutely complete. Access to 'The First Series' and 'The Abbot Collection' here at the Library is restricted but a modern facsimile reprint containing both is available in the Reading Room at shelf mark BS.Ref.19. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* was edited by Sheila Lambert and is popularly known as the Lambert reprint. It not only makes available papers in both collections in 145 vols. plus two volumes. of indexes, but also has several other advantages. Sheila Lambert collated all seven versions of the Abbot Collection and her reprint contains papers found in any of them. It is therefore more detailed than the Library's own original set. It also includes a quantity of papers not previously collected. Although it does not reprint papers first printed in the House of Commons' *Journals* (a practice common in the eighteenth century), it does index them. It also indexes papers for which orders to print have been found in the Journals, but of which no existing copies have been traced. This may indicate that the order to print was not carried out or that no copies are known to have survived.

Nineteenth century papers were selectively reprinted in the 1960s by the Irish University Press in its "1000 volume set". Papers reprinted in this set are individually recorded in the Integrated Catalogue and can be requested from the off-site store where they are held.

The Chadwyck-Healey microfiche edition of the House of Commons papers from 1801 to the present day is however available in the Reading Room at shelf mark SPR.Mic.E.291. To avoid damage to the Bound Set, copies of individual papers must be made from the microfiche.

8. HOUSE OF LORDS PAPERS AND BILLS

In general, all that has been said with respect to the House of Commons can also be said of the House of Lords. They too produce Bills and Papers, and Command Papers are presented to them as well. However, as the same Command Papers are presented to each House, in practice they are not included in the Lords' set. Like the Commons, Lords' sessional papers have been gathered together in a Bound Set from the start of the nineteenth century. There is also a facsimile reprint of eighteenth century papers edited by F.W. Torrington. Additionally there are cumulative *General Indexes* but only three exist, covering 1801-59, 1859-70 and 1871-85. There is a further complication with the Lords' indexes. Because of delays in the House of Lords' Library in arranging their set for binding, the British Museum Library bound its set differently. Where they exist, the indexes can identify House of Lords' papers, but they cannot locate them in the Library's collections. To locate them make a note of the session and paper number from the indexes (until 1986-87 House of Lords bills and papers were in a single numerical sequence each session) and then consult the crib volumes next to the indexes. These are two oblong volumes with squared paper printed on the right-hand page with numbers printed in the squares. These represent the paper numbers and each page represents a session up to 1951-52. The corresponding volumes in the British Library's set are hand-written in the appropriate squares. In some instances the Lords' papers lack numbers. In this case the titles of the papers and the volume number are given on the back of the page. After 1885 only sessional indexes exist, which are kept in storage.

For the period from 1953-80 photocopies of the sessional tables of contents are with the indexes at the 'Quick Reference' shelves [OPL Index]. In the nineteenth century it was not uncommon for papers of one House to be communicated to the other so that many House of Lords' papers have also been published as House of Commons' papers. As it is so difficult to find papers in the Lords' set, it is always worth checking the indexes of the House of Commons' set first. This does not apply to bills which are printed documents unique to each House though the text will be the same if no amendments have been made.

9 CITATION

To identify and to be able to retrieve parliamentary papers, a standard form of citation has evolved. Each citation begins with a short yet unambiguous title of the paper followed by a semi-colon and then 'P.P.' for parliamentary papers. After that the parliamentary session is given in date form. If a session was wholly contained in a single calendar year, then that defines the session (e.g. '1974'). If a session spans two years the date span defines the session as in '1973-74' or '1974-75'. Occasionally two short sessions fell within one year and are identified as e.g. '1841 Sess.1' and '1841 Sess.2'. In one single instance a session spanned three years (1914-16). After the date follows the paper number. House of Commons' Bills are given in the form 'Bill' plus the number whereas House of Commons' Papers are given in the form of the paper number alone in

parentheses (). House of Lords' Papers and Bills, when numbered in one series, are given in the form "HL" plus the number. After separate numbering was introduced for the two series, they are given as 'HL Bill' and "HL Paper" plus the number. The first series of Command Papers without prefix, are given as the number within square brackets []. For subsequent series which have a prefix (C, Cd, Cmd, Cmnd or Cm), the prefix must be given plus number. With the prefixes the brackets are unnecessary but are still often used. Similarly parentheses are unnecessary for House of Commons' Bills or any Lords' papers but they are often used. Next comes the volume number in the Bound Set of sessional papers in the form of lower-case roman numerals (e.g. Vol. 23 is given as 'xxiii'). There are two sets of volume numbers for the House of Commons' Bound Set, the volume number of the session as a whole and the volume numbers of the sub-series (Bills, Report of Committees, etc.) within it. Only the former should ever be used in citations. Finally give the page number within the volume where the paper starts. Again there are two sets of page numbers for the Bound Set, the original printed page numbers of the individual papers and the hand-written or stamped page numbers of the made-up volume. Only the latter should be used in citation. From 1979-80 onwards, papers in the Bound Set are arranged in their three numbered series Bills, House of Commons Papers and Command Papers (two series for Lords) in numerical order. Here volume and page number are no longer needed when citing as session and paper numbers are sufficient.

This system clearly identifies the individual parliamentary papers and is adequate to retrieve them from any library's collection whether or not they are arranged in the sequence of the official Bound Set. However sometimes it is necessary to refer to a section within a parliamentary paper. In this case the printed page number of the reference (this time the printed page number) should be included *before* the semi-colon and everything after the semi-colon should be as above (i.e. the final page number should still be the manuscript page number of the start paper and not the page number of the reference).

Some examples of citations to different types of parliamentary papers:

- Food and drugs bill; P.P. 1955-56 Bill 47 ii 355.
- 1841 population census (GB): P.P. 1841 sess. 2 (52) ii 227.
- Rept., Sel. Cttee on bastardy orders ; P.P. 1909 (236) v 717
- Rept., R. Comm'n on the Press 1947-49; P.P. 1948-49 Cmd 7700 xx I.
- Osteopaths bill as amended in Cttee; P.P. 1991-92 HL Bill 75
- Rept. On Bor of Eye. In Rept. of Parl. Boundary Comm'n, Pt V, pp.27-28; P.P. 1831-32 (141-V) xl I.
- New Forest: return of enclosures; P.P. 1867 HL 329 xix 427.

Note that the last case is one of the frequent instances where the paper is also issued in the House of Commons set (in sess. 1867, vol. lix). In practice it would be that copy that would be used and cited.

10. ELECTRONIC VERSIONS

The Official Documents web site at www.official-documents.gov.uk is the official reference facility for Command and departmentally sponsored House of Commons Papers. From May 2005 onwards, all Command Papers and House of Commons Papers, as well as Key Departmental Papers, are available for free on the site in PDF format. The Parliament web site at www.parliament.uk includes full text of papers originating from within the Houses, and is particularly useful for select committee reports and bills before Parliament in the current session.

The whole of the Bound Set of House of Commons Parliamentary papers from 1801 has been digitised by Proquest and is available online in full text to subscribers. The nineteenth century papers are available through a Joint Infrastructure Committee (JISC) agreement to all UK higher and further education institutions. The British Library has access from 1801 to session 2003/04 from the Reading Rooms.

For the eighteenth century, a project led by the University of Southampton created the Eighteenth Century British Parliamentary Publications Portal, offering full text of the journals, a selection of pre-Hansard debates, sessional papers and public bills from the Lambert reprint, and an extensive set of private bills from the British Library's collections. This resource is available free to UK higher and further education institutions and from the Reading Rooms of the British Library only at www.parl18c.soton.ac.uk

11. ELECTRONIC INDEXES

Several fee-based online indexes to the Parliamentary papers are available from the Library's Reading Rooms, including:

- **Index to House of Commons Papers CD-ROM, 1801-.** There is an archival disc issued annually going back to 1801 and a current disc issued quarterly going back to session 1991-92
- **UKOP (UK Official Publications) Online.** This is a bibliographic database issued by TSO which covers the full range of parliamentary publications except the business papers from 1979 onwards.
- **Parliamet.** This database issued by Justis indexes the Official Report (Hansard), the parliamentary papers and the business papers from 1979 onwards

The principal gateway to government information published on the Internet, including parliamentary, is the **Directgov** citizen's portal at www.direct.gov.uk. TSO remains the principal publisher of parliamentary publications and their website at www.tsoshop.co.uk gives free access to their catalogue and the *Daily List*.

Parliamentary Data (www.polis.parliament.uk) is a free web-based index to the proceedings and publications of both Houses of Parliament since the May 2001 general election, and includes the full text of Early Day Motions. The database can be searched using a simple form, and the service offers easy navigation tools.

BOPCRIS (British Official Publications Collaborative Reader Information Service – www.bopcris.ac.uk) was produced by a consortium led by the University of Southampton and selectively indexes British official publications of the period 1688-1995. Citations consist of bibliographic descriptions and detailed abstracts.

12. LOCATIONS

Open Shelves

Materials on the open shelves in the Social Sciences Reading Room consist of:

1 Texts

- current unbound sessional papers of the House of Commons BS.Ref.1
- Lambert reprint of eighteenth century parliamentary papers BS.Ref.19

2 Indexes All indexes are shelved in the bookcases opposite the Enquiry Desk. These include:

- *General index to the bills...House of Commons, 1801-1852.*
- *General index to the reports of Select Committees...,1801-1852.*
- *General index to accounts and papers [etc.]...,1801-1852.*
- *General alphabetical index...House of Commons...,1852-1899.*
- *General index to the bills [etc.]...House of Commons, 1900-1948/49*
- *General alphabetical index to the bills [etc.]..., 1950-1958/59, 1959/60-1968/69, 1969/70-1978/79.*
- *Sessional index for session 1979/80-(sessional).*
- *Subject catalogue of the House of Commons parliamentary papers, 1801-1900 (5 vols. Chadwyck-Healey).*
- *Catalogue of British parliamentary papers in the IUP 1000Volume series [1801-1899]*

- *Check list of British parliamentary papers in the IUP 1000 Volume series [1801-1899]*
- *Printing for Parliament, 1641-1700* (List & Index Soc. Special series; vol.20).
- *Select list of reports...in the Journals of the House of Commons, 1688-1800.*
- *Hansard's catalogue and breviare of parliamentary papers, 1696-1834.*
- *List of House of Commons sessional papers, 1701-1750* (List & Index Soc. special series; vo.1).
- *General index to the reports of committees...1715-1801* (first series).
- *Catalogue of papers printed by order of the House of Commons...1731-1800* (the 'Abbott Collection).
- *Index to the reports of the Charity Commissioners [1819-1843]*
- *Index to the reports of the commissioners 1812-1840* (colonies).
- *Index to consular [or Trade] reports, 1898-1916* (continued back by the Library until 1854).
- *Finding list of British Royal Commissions reports 1860-1935* (continued by Sectional Lists No.59).
- *Guide to the principal parliamentary papers relating to the Dominions, 1812-1911.*
- *Serial publications in the British parliamentary papers 1900-1968.*
- *Numerical finding list of British command papers, 1833-1961/62.*
- *British command papers ...1962/63-1976/77.*
- *British government publications: an index to chairmen [1800-1982]. 4 vols.; continued by sessional indexes produced by HMSO/TSO.*
- *General index to the sessional papers...House of Lords...1801-1859, 1859-1870, 1871-1885.*
- *House of Lords sessional paper index [BL crib], 1802-1952, 2 vols.*
- *House of Lords general tables of contents, 1953-1980.*

Texts in closed access

House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1801- microfiche edition (Chadwyck-Healey)	BS.Ref.1 (the 'Bound Set') SPR.Mic.E.291
• The 'First Series' Reports from committees,	BS.Ref.7 1715-1801
• The 'Abbott Collection' 1731-1800	BS.Ref.7a
• The 'Harper Collection'	SPR.Mic.A.163
• Private bills, 1702-1814	BS.Ref.2
microfilm edition (to 1959-60)	SPR.Mic.P.13