

Glossary of banking record types

This document describes some of the record types which may be found in bank archives. It relates to UK-specific practices, laws and historical obligations. Circumstances and traditions in other countries were often different.

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| Accounts closed book | A chronological register of accounts closed at a bank or branch, giving the customer's name, address and account number, the date on which the account was closed and sometimes the reason why. |
| Accounts opened book | A chronological register of new accounts opened at a bank or branch, giving the customer's name and address. Sometimes includes additional information such as the customer's signature, occupation, the date on which the account was opened, the account number allocated and other related facts such as the name of the person who introduced the customer to the bank. |
| Articles of (co)partnership or partnership agreement | A formal agreement laying out the limits and obligations of the partners in a firm. When a partner left or joined a firm, a new agreement would be drawn up. Also sometimes known as a contract of copartnership. |
| Authorities or mandate book | A book of instructions from customers regarding name changes, new signatories and arrangements for standing orders or receipt of dividends. May be in the form of letters or printed forms in a guardbook. |
| Banker's licence | After 1808 every British bank had to have a licence for each branch which issued banknotes. Early licences give the names of all the partners or shareholders as well as the town where notes were issued. Later licences refer only to place of issue and the name of the bank. |
| Banknote | <p>A note issued by a bank, promising to pay the bearer on demand a fixed sum of money, defined by the note's face value.</p> <p>Banknotes originate from receipts issued by 17th century goldsmiths in exchange for money accepted for safekeeping. Gradually they became assignable (that is, they could be passed from one person to another) and evolved into formal printed banknotes.</p> <p>Banknotes often give the partnership names of private banks at the date of issue and other trading names that the bank used.</p> |
| Banknote register | A register recording banknotes issued or destroyed, usually arranged by denomination. Lists the number and value of the note, the date of issue, by whom it was signed and sometimes the total number or value of the notes in circulation. |
| Bill of exchange | Once the most common financial tools for commercial payments, a bill is an order, addressed by one person to another, requiring the addressee to pay on demand or at a fixed time in the future a certain sum of money to the order of the bearer or to another specified person. It was used as a safe way of making payments between parties in different locations. It also became a useful way for firms to obtain short-term credit, either from their suppliers or from banks. |
| Box book | A register recording the visits of customers to view safe custody items. |
| Character or opinion book | A book recording information about the standing of customers, obtained before the bank agreed to open an account or grant a loan. Sometimes bankers were also asked to give references about their own customers. May record the name of the customer and the institution or person providing or requesting the opinion, details of the opinion and possibly the security provided by referees as guarantors. |

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| Cheque | An instruction from an account holder to the bank to pay a stated sum to a third party. Cheques originated in notes of this kind written to 17 th century goldsmiths by their clients. They eventually came to be issued as pre-printed forms, often featuring monograms and scrolls as a security device across a tear-off counterfoil. Early cheques can be similar in appearance to bills of exchange, but they are always drawn on a banker and payable on demand. |
| Circular | A printed letter sent out to a large number of people, such as all shareholders or all branch managers, giving information that the bank wished to be known by all recipients (for example, announcing a bank's intention to enter into a merger). |
| Customer account ledger | A register recording transactions on customer accounts. |
| Customer interview book/daily remembrancer | A book recording the manager's decisions, instructions, interviews or correspondence regarding the conduct of particular accounts or advances. The format and content of these books varies widely. They may also include information about branch staff, property and profits and presscuttings concerning customer activities. |
| Declaration of secrecy | New bank staff were – and still are – required to sign an undertaking not to reveal the confidential affairs of the bank or its customers. These declarations eventually took the form of a standard printed declaration. |
| Deed of settlement | Document signed by the investors in a new partnership, binding them to take shares and abide by the regulations of the firm. |
| Deposit receipt | Receipt, commonly issued in Scotland, in return for money lodged in temporary interest-bearing accounts. |
| Dividend warrant | An order issued by a company in favour of one of its members for the payment of the dividend due to them through their holding of stocks and shares in that company. The dividend warrant is drawn upon the bankers of the company. |
| Dormant account book | A book documenting customer accounts which had become inactive and on which the bank was unable to make contact with the holder or their successors. |
| Fidelity bond | From the 18 th century banks required staff to provide personal sureties, guaranteeing that any loss arising from their conduct would be repaid to the bank. Early bonds may take the form of handwritten personal undertakings, but later specialist insurance companies, such as the Bankers' Guarantee and Trust Fund, were established and produced printed forms which were completed for each staff member. |
| Guardbook | A book into which have been pasted individual items, such as letters, circulars or presscuttings. |
| Memorandum and articles of association | <p>The memorandum of a company defines its identity and the extent of its powers. The articles of association record the internal regulations governing the management of the company.</p> <p>At the time of a company's formation, its memorandum and articles of association have to be submitted to the Registrar of Companies. Subsequent alterations have to be re-submitted.</p> |
| Passbook | <p>From the mid-18th century onwards, a small book was issued to customers for each of their accounts. Regularly updated by the bank, these books served as the customer's record of transactions.</p> <p>Some banks updated passbooks as duplicates of their ledger entries. Others filled them in as the reverse of the ledger entry so, for example, a withdrawal of cash by the customer would appear in the bank's ledger in the 'Dr' (debitor)</p> |

column, but in the customer's passbook in the 'Cr' (creditor) column.

Passbooks were largely superseded by printed customer statement sheets between the 1930s and the 1960s.

- Probate book** A book recording the details of all legally-proved wills or letters of administration shown to a banker regarding a deceased customer. The books are usually arranged chronologically and give the name and address of the deceased, the name of the executors or administrators, the sworn value of the estate, the registration office, the dates of death and probate and why it was exhibited.
- Register of members** A register of members of an organisation or fund, for example, members of a bank's staff annuity fund.
This term was also sometimes used for a register of shareholders.
- Safe custody/safe deposit book** A book recording packages and boxes deposited for safe custody in bank strongrooms. In the 18th century, and sometimes subsequently, these books were also known as plate ledgers. The contents of packages remained confidential and registers consequently describe an item solely in physical terms or allocate the deposit a unique number, alongside the name and signature of the person who deposited or withdrew the property.
- Securities register** A register recording the purchase or sale of gilts and shares on behalf of customers or the holding of such securities for the collection of dividends and interest or for safe custody. Banks also held securities on behalf of customers as collateral for loans. These are often recorded in securities registers marked up as 'securities held for advances'.
- Sederunt book** A book, commonly used in Scotland, listing the names of the attendees at meetings. 'Sederunt' is Latin for 'they were sitting'.
- Share register/register of shareholders** A book listing the shareholders of a bank, often including addresses, number of the shares held and how much was paid for them.
- Signature book** An alternative or additional record to accounts opened books, providing samples of customer signatures against which signed cheques and other authorities could be validated. Usually includes the customer's name, address and signature, and may also state his or her occupation, details of how the customer was introduced to the bank and what type of account had been opened.
- Staff register/salary book** A book of details about bank staff. Contents vary widely, but may include – in addition to name and salary details – date of birth, address, length and places of service, job grades, qualifications and additional information such as details of subsequent employers or emigration.