

Dates

Before 1752, England used the Julian, or “old style” calendar. A lot of the continent adopted the Gregorian, or “new style”, calendar in 1582. Scotland adopted it in 1660.

In the old style calendar the year started on the 25th March (Lady Day), not the 1st January. Thus March was the first month of the year, which explains the naming of September, October, November and December, which are derived from the Latin for seven, eight, nine and ten. Some clerks were aware of the different calendars, so they wrote the year as, e.g. 1718/19, meaning 1718 old style, 1719 new style.

An act of parliament in 1751 set up a system to bring the English calendar into line. It changed the start of the year and corrected what had by then become an 11 day deficit. The 1st January was the first day of 1752, and the 2nd September was followed by the 14th September.

Thus: 1750 started 25th March 1750 (the last old year)
ended 24th March 1750/51
1751 started 25th March 1751
ended 31st December 1751
1752 started 1st January 1752
ended 31st December 1752 but with 11 days missing from September.

When copying from pre-1752 registers or other documents, always note which style you have used for the transcription. I always do the translation on the spot, noting at the top of the page “all dates new style”, so I know that they all conform to the current system. It is interesting to note that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has never had a short year, thus the tax year changes on the 5th April each year.

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Quaker Dates

The Society of Friends was founded in 1643 by George Fox. They have always been noted for keeping very good records. Their record office is in the Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, Euston Rd, London.

Because they refused to use the names of heathen gods, they used numbers for the months.

Examples: 25th March 1737 was 25 1mo 1737

31st December 1737 was 31 10mo 1737

This system can be seen on Quaker gravestones, as in the Friends burial ground in Crawshawbooth.
From 1752 January became the first month.