



Parish Registers

Background

As part of the Reformation changes, parish churches were required to keep registers of all persons baptised, married and buried in their parish after 1538. Early registers often only contain basic details; but some ministers added extra information such as ages, occupations and references to local or national events. Pre-1754 registers often contain baptisms, marriages and burials in one volume. They can be on separate pages, sections of the register or mixed together throughout the whole book. Some early entries are in Latin

Unusual events may contain more information e.g. suspicious deaths, notable accidents, illegitimate children etc. Although parish registers were kept during the Civil War and the following Commonwealth period, the entries can be incomplete.

Under the 1753 Marriage Act (Hardwicke Act), churches performing marriages had to be licensed and separate marriage registers were kept with printed forms for the vicar complete. In 1837 the marriage registers kept by churches were exactly the same as those made for civil registration, so entries contain the same information. George Rose's 1812 Act required baptisms and burials to be kept in pre-printed volumes with specific information recorded.

What information will they contain?

Parish registers only contain details of the baptisms, marriages and burials that took place in a **Church of England parish church**. Marriage registers will contain information about non-conformist couples since from 1754 to 1837 everyone, except for Quakers and Jews, had to marry in the parish church. Sometimes nonconformists were buried in the churchyard since this was the only consecrated ground available. For records of non-conformist churches please see *Research Mini Guide 2: Non-Conformist Records*.

Before 1752, the year started on the 25th March (Lady Day). So January, February and March 1st - 24th were in the year before. This can be confusing, so remember to check both years.

Baptism registers

Before 1812

- Date of baptism
- Name of the child
- Name of parents (not mother's maiden name).
- Some registers note the occupation of the father.
- Some registers note the date of birth

After 1812

- Date of baptism (Some registers note the date of birth)
- Name of the child
- Name of parents (not mother's maiden name).
- Occupation of the father
- Place of abode (could be an address or just the village)

Marriage Registers

Before 1754

- Name of bride and groom and date of the marriage
- Some registers give the name of the parish they were from if it was different to the place of marriage
- Some registers give the name of the bride's father.

1754-1837

- Name and parish of abode of bride and groom
- Date of the marriage
- Whether married by banns or licence
- Name of minister
- Signature or mark of bride and groom
- Name and signature of witnesses

1837 onwards

- Date of marriage
- Place of marriage
- Name, age, marital status, occupation, residence of groom
- Name, age, marital status, occupation, residence of bride
- Name and occupation of the groom's father
- Name and occupation of the bride's father
- Names and signatures of witnesses

Burials

Before 1837

- Date of burial
- Name of deceased
- If a child, the name of the father may be given
- If a married woman, the name of her husband may be given.
- Cause of death is rarely recorded unless unusual or a dangerous disease

After 1812

- Date of burial
- Name of deceased
- Place of abode (village or address)
- Age
- Some entries are annotated with a burial plot number

How to find the registers

Gloucestershire Archives holds the parish registers of Church of England churches in the Diocese of Gloucester. Many of these registers have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry www.ancestry.co.uk. You can view them via Ancestry's website for free from Gloucestershire Archives or any Gloucestershire library, or from home with an Ancestry subscription. You will need to visit Gloucestershire Archives to view any registers we hold which have not been digitised. Please email the references to us before you visit archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk. Our *Parish Register Guide* will tell you how to check what registers we hold, and whether they have been digitised. It will also give you the references.