



Civil Certificates - Births Marriages and Deaths

Background

The process of registering a birth, marriage or death began on 1 July 1837. Births and deaths were both registered at the local register office and it was not compulsory to register a birth or death until 1874. Marriage registers were kept by the church where the marriage took place and then sent to the local register office when they were full.

England and Wales were split into registration districts, each with a local register office. Some of these districts went over county boundaries. Scotland, Ireland and events overseas were registered separately.

If you are looking for an event before 1 July 1837 there will be no certificate so you will need to search the parish or chapel registers. See Research Mini Guide 3: *Nonconformists* and Mini-Guide 4: *Parish Registers* .

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Birth certificate

- Date and place of birth and date of registration
- Full name at birth
- Father's and mother's name (including mother's maiden name)
- Occupation of the father (or mother if no father given)
- Name, relation and residence of witness.
- Additional names given after birth

Marriage certificate (the church marriage registers include the same information)

- Date and place of marriage
- Name, age, marital status, occupation, residence of groom and bride
- Name, age, marital status, occupation, residence of bride
- Name and occupation of the father of both the groom and bride
- Names and signatures of witnesses

Death certificate

- Date and place of death
- Name at time of death, age and occupation
- Name of husband (for widows and married women only)
- Father's name (children under the age of 15 and some unmarried women)
- Address if different from place of death
- Cause of death
- Signature of informant

You will only be able to view this information by ordering a copy of the certificate.

How to Find the Records

Since you can't check the original registers you need to find the information (year, quarter and registration district) before you can order a copy of the individual certificate.

If you're looking for an event in Gloucestershire try this first:

Index compiled by Gloucestershire Family History Society

This index was compiled from the copies of the certificates held by the local registrar and covers the six registration districts which were combined in 2006 to form the current Gloucestershire Registration District. They are Cheltenham, Cirencester, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, North Cotswold and Stroud. This means that the index doesn't include events registered in the South Gloucestershire registration district which covers parishes in the south of the historic county

- Check the index online www3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/bmd/. Full information about the areas and dates covered are included
- It includes births, marriages and deaths but the marriages are the most complete and are covered from 1837 into the 2000s

If this search isn't successful or you're looking for an event outside Gloucestershire try these:

The General Register Office Index (St Catherine's House Index)

This index covers the whole of England and Wales and was compiled from the copies of the certificates sent to the General Registrar in London – it was stored in Somerset House and then St Catherine's House.

- You can search this index online through various websites, including: www.freebmd.org.uk, www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk. You can use these websites for free at Gloucestershire Archives and any Gloucestershire library.

Scotland and Ireland

- See www.gro-scotland.gov.uk for information about Scottish certificates (historical Scottish certificates can be viewed for a fee at www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk),
- See www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro for Northern Ireland and www.groireland.ie for Ireland and Northern Ireland pre 1920.

Overseas

Marriages, births and deaths that took place abroad are indexed separately and these indexes are available on www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk. There are three main series and some pre-date the introduction of civil registration:

- Registers of births, marriages and deaths from British Consulates, 1810-1968
- Registers of army and navy births, marriages and deaths, 1730-1960
- Registers of births, marriages and deaths at sea, 1844-1890

Ordering a certificate

Once you have the name(s), year, quarter and district you can order a copy of the certificate.

- **Gloucestershire certificates**
You can order these through the Gloucestershire Registration Service for a fee. You can order online at <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/certificates> or you can download and complete an order form and send it to Copy Certificate Request Service, Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester, GL1 3DW.
- **Certificates from England & Wales**
 - Certificates for anywhere in England and Wales can be ordered from the General Register Office, PO Box 2, Southport, PR8 2JD (www.gro.gov.uk).