

Bishop's Transcripts

Background

The Bishop's Transcripts are copies of the entries in a parish register and were made by the churchwarden or minister. They were sent to the Diocesan Registry in Gloucester each year and so are part of the diocesan records (GDR). Some churches began making transcripts in 1562 but it was not required until 1597.

At first the churchwarden signed the copies and sometimes they were also signed by the minister. From 1813 the minister alone was responsible. The Bishops Transcripts can be easier to read and use than the parish registers because they were written by different people and kept in year order. Since they were stored separately, they can survive when the original register has been lost.

Once civil registration of births, marriages and deaths started in 1837, the bishops transcripts became less important and many parishes stopped keeping them. The last parish in Gloucestershire to send in bishops transcripts was North Cerney, which stopped in 1929.

What information will they contain?

Bishop's Transcripts should contain the same information as the parish register but this is not always the case. Sometimes the 'extra' details such as occupations, ages, places of abode, relatives' names or causes of death were not copied. You should be prepared to check both!

Baptisms should record the name of child and parents and the date of the baptism.

Burials should record the name of deceased and the date of the burial.

Marriages should record the name of the bride and groom and the date of marriage.

What records survive?

Bishop's Transcripts survive for each parish in the diocese of Gloucester. But the coverage is not complete and there are many gaps especially before 1700. No transcripts at all were kept between 1640 and 1660 when then the Commonwealth disrupted the established procedures.

You can find out what BTs exist for a specific parish by checking our Parish Register Guide (available on our website), Or you can check our online catalogue using the finding reference GDR/V1

How to access the records

The Bishop's Transcripts have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry. You can view records which have been digitised by Ancestry for free from the Gloucestershire Family History Society Centre, from any Gloucestershire library, or from home with an Ancestry subscription www.ancestry.co.uk