

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: *Nonconformists* and Mini-Guide: *Parish Registers*. This guidance excludes significant changes made in 2005 e.g. civil partnerships

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 name (if given) & mother's name (including maiden or previous surnames)
- Occupation of the father (or mother if no father given)
- Name, relation and residence of informant.
- Additional or alternative names given after birth

Marriage certificate (Church of England 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
- Informant's details

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

How to Access the Information

You can't check the civil registration registers. You can only access the information they contain by obtaining a copy certificate. To order a copy certificate, you will need to find and provide the year, quarter and registration district for the specific event.

The General Register Office (GRO) Index (also known as the St Catherine's House Index)

This index covers the whole of England and Wales. It was compiled from the copies of the certificates sent to the General Registrar in London. Note: GRO references cannot be used to order certificates from the local registration service.

- You can search [this index online](#) directly or 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, Gloucestershire Family History Society Centre, and any Gloucestershire library.

Scotland and Ireland

- See <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration> for information about Scottish certificates (historical Scottish certificates can be viewed for a fee at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk),
- See www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro for Northern Ireland and [gov - General Register Office \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov-generalregisteroffice.gov.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 <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/births-marriages-deaths-and-civil-partnerships/order-certificates/> or you can download and complete an order form from the webpage 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).