

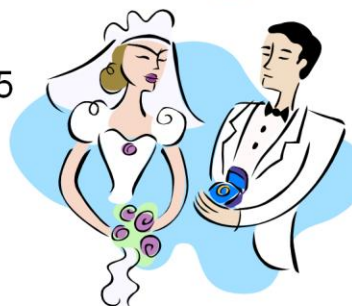
RESEARCHING YOUR  
FAMILY HISTORY

Civil Registration

The image shows the front cover of a book. The top half is a solid dark brown color with the title 'RESEARCHING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the title is a horizontal bar divided into two sections: a smaller orange section on the left and a larger light blue section on the right. The subtitle 'Civil Registration' is printed in white, sans-serif capital letters on the light blue background.

## Civil Registration

- Started in 1837
- Births
- Marriages
- Deaths
- Adoptions from 1927
- Civil Partnerships from 2005



Civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, in England and Wales, started on 1 July 1837 introduced after legislation in 1836, the Marriage Act of 1836 (Act of 6 & 7 William IV, chapter 85) and the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1836 (Act of 6 & 7 William IV, Chapter 86).

# Registers and Registrars

- Local Record Offices
  - [www.ukbmd.org.uk/genuki/reg/regoff.html](http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/genuki/reg/regoff.html)
- General Register Office
- Quarterly Indexes
  - Transcription



## REGISTRATION DISTRICTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES (1837–1974)

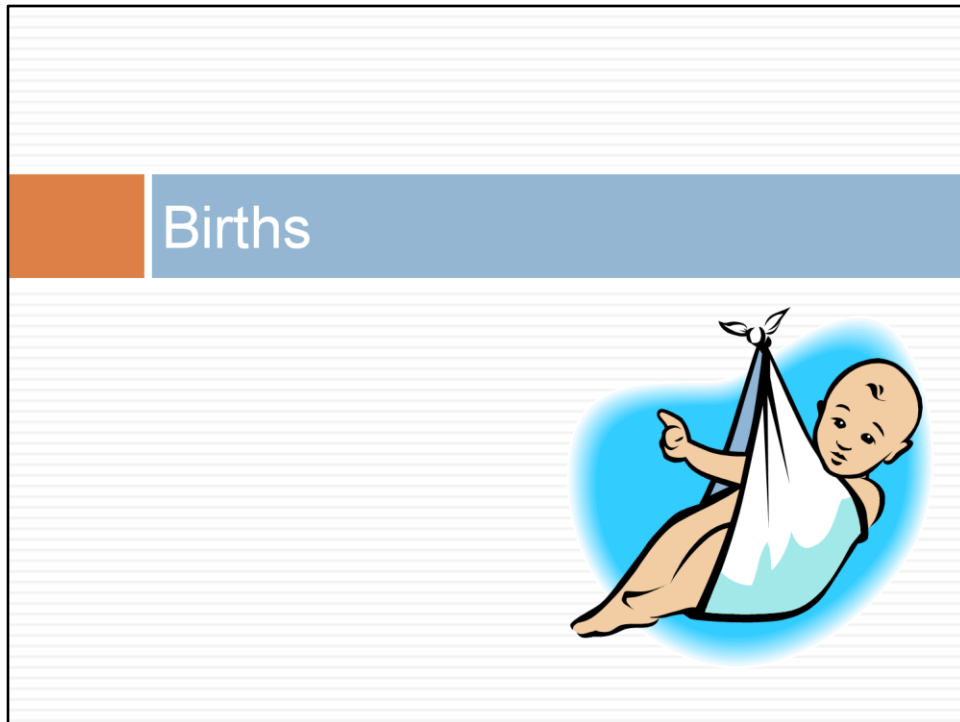
These pages show composition of the civil registration districts in England and Wales between 1.7.1837 and 31.3.1974. The same districts were also used to compile the decennial census for the years 1851 to 1911.

The following information is given for each district:

- Name of the district
- Registration county (many districts crossed county boundaries, but were classed wholly in one county for registration and census purposes)
- Date of creation
- Date of abolition (if before 1974)
- Names of the sub-districts
- The General Register Office (GRO) volume numbers used for the district in the national indexes of births, marriages and deaths
- A table showing the civil parishes or other local government areas included within its boundaries. Civil parishes often differ from the ancient parishes in use until the early 19th century
- A table showing any changes affecting the boundaries of the registration district after 1.7.1837
- The name(s) of the district(s) which currently hold the records. If two or more offices are listed, the one which holds the most records is named first, and the one with the fewest is given last. Click here for [addresses of current register offices](#)

There is also an [Alphabetical List of Districts](#) and an [Index of Place Names](#) for the whole of England and Wales.

The country was divided into Registration Districts, each under the control of a Superintendent Registrar. Registrars were appointed to issue certificates for births and deaths which occurred in their area. Their duty was to actively collect information and they were paid according to their success. There was no penalty for not registering a birth or death, so records from this time are incomplete, possibly a third of the population is missing from these early records. When the local registers became full they were sent to the Superintendent Registrar for safe keeping. The Superintendent Registrar produced local indexes of events and four times a year sent copies to the Registrar General in London.



1837 - 1879

Information only had to be given if asked for

Registering a Birth more than 6 weeks after was chargeable. Some were not truthful about the date of birth, as they had to pay if the registration was more than 6 weeks after the birth.

Some Parents thought Baptism was a valid alternative.

Parents were not bound to give birth information unless requested by the Registrar.

1879 –

The onus for registration of a birth was passed to the parents, or the occupier of the house where a birth took place.

There was £2 fine for registering late.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1874 (Act of 37 & 38 Victoria, Chapter 88) made registration compulsory. The onus for registration of a birth was passed to the parents, or the occupier of the house where a birth took place. The birth had to be registered within 42 days or a £2.00 fine was imposed. It still remained a common belief that baptism registered the birth, also if the parents ran out of time they would either lie about the date of birth or simply not register and hope not to get caught.

# Birth GRO Index

**BIRTHS**

Sept 1837 - June 1911	Surname	Forename/s	District	Volume	Page		
Sept 1911 - Dec 1983	Surname	Forename/s	Mother's Maiden Name	District	Volume	Page	
1984 - 1992 (Annual Index)	Surname	Forename/s	Mother's Maiden Name	District	Reg Month/Year	Volume	Page
1993 - date (Annual Index)	Surname	Forename/s	Mother's Maiden Name	District Name/No	Register No	Entry No	Reg Month/Yr

1844

SURNAME of PARENT	NAME (if any) SEX of CHILD	SUP. REGISTRAR'S DISTRICT	Vol.	Page
boxon	Emma	220		526
boxon	Fredrick	Stockport	xix	264
boxon	Humphrey	Barnham	xix	81
boxon	Mary Jane	Whithelmton	xix	263
boxon	Millicent Ann	Whithelmton	xix	4
boxon	Peter	Shrewsbury	xix	586
boxon	Roscha	Derby	xix	551
boxon	Sarah Louisa	Birmingham	xix	264

# Birth GRO Index

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1993 - date (Annual Index)	Surname	Forename/s	Mother's Maiden Name	District Name/No	Register No	Entry No	Reg Month/Yr

**TAP-TAY] BIRTHS registered in October, November, and December 1884. 518**

1884

<p>TAPPING, William Thomas ... Bethnal Green 1 c. 385</p> <p>TAPSCOTT, Ernest ... Langport 5 c. 392</p> <p>--- Hanser Jane ... Norwich 4 b. 103</p> <p>--- James ... Northampton 3 b. 58</p> <p>--- William Harris ... S. Milton 5 b. 444</p> <p>TAPSELL, Beatrice Mary ... Thaxted 3 a. 911</p> <p>--- Benjamin ... Windsor 2 c. 471</p> <p>--- Ernest William ... Guildford 3 a. 75</p> <p>--- Robert William ... N. Aylesford 2 a. 510</p> <p>--- Robert ... Windsor 2 c. 471</p> <p>--- William John ... Hastings 2 b. 19</p> <p>TAPSON, Gladys Marion ... Angsey 11 b. 302</p> <p>TAPVIA, Arthur Joseph ... Mabley 3 a. 381</p> <p>--- Susan Sophia ... Barnes 3 a. 212</p> <p>TARBERT, Florence Elizabeth ... Kettering 2 b. 180</p> <p>TARBERT, Elton Mary ... Farneth Park 8 b. 180</p> <p>TARBERT, Jane Falsner ... Bedford 10 b. 399</p> <p>TARBERT, Elizabeth Willey ... Easington 10 a. 454</p> <p>TARBOTTON, Kate ... Sulveston 3 d. 159</p> <p>TARBOX, James Herbert ... Winslow 3 a. 488</p> <p>--- Mabel Mary ... St. Alban's 3 a. 218</p> <p>--- Thomas Joseph ... St. Alban's 3 a. 216</p> <p>TARBROOK, Charles ... Bury 8 c. 853</p> <p>TARBUCK, Ada Alice ... Bedford 8 d. 183</p> <p>--- Thomas Hersch ... W. Derby 8 b. 619</p> <p>--- Timothy ... Wolverhampton 6 b. 608</p> <p>--- William Henry ... Wivold 9 a. 431</p>	<p>TASKER, Thomas John ... Wandsworth 1 d. 631</p> <p>--- William ... Easingwold 9 d. 426</p> <p>--- William ... Scunthorpe 9 d. 370</p> <p>--- William Chippfield ... Leeds 2 b. 502</p> <p>TASKER, Maud ... Fenance 2 c. 370</p> <p>--- William ... Fenance 2 c. 373</p> <p>TASKMAN, Elsie Heath ... Coydon 2 a. 240</p> <p>TASNEY, James ... Woodwich 1 d. 1182</p> <p>TASSELL, Constance Fanny ... Edmonston 2 a. 240</p> <p>--- Edgar James ... Fulham 1 a. 219</p> <p>--- Evangelina ... Hollingbourn 2 a. 753</p> <p>--- Joseph ... Cranbrook 2 a. 758</p> <p>TASSELL, Ann ... Manchester 8 d. 305</p> <p>TATA, Mary Ethel ... W. Derby 2 b. 305</p> <p>--- Rose Edna ... Holbeach 2 a. 407</p> <p>TATCHELL, Frederick Albert ... Waresham 2 a. 307</p> <p>--- John ... Tipton 2 b. 416</p> <p>--- Mabel Sarah ... Waresham 2 a. 304</p> <p>--- William Edwin M. ... Cambwell 2 a. 445</p> <p>TATZ, Albert ... Wakefield 2 c. 94</p> <p>--- Alfred ... Tynemouth 10 b. 191</p> <p>--- Alfred ... York 9 d. 14</p> <p>--- Ann Gertrude ... W. Derby 2 b. 624</p> <p>--- Arthur Philip ... Cardiff 11 a. 347</p> <p>--- Cecilia ... Guisborough 2 d. 524</p> <p>--- Charles ... E. Preston 2 b. 385</p> <p>--- Charles William ... Greenwich 1 d. 974</p>	<p>TATTEBALL, Samuel ... Prestwick 8 d. 356</p> <p>TATTSFIELD, Albert Edward ... Dewsbury 2 b. 628</p> <p>--- Ethel ... Dewsbury 2 b. 628</p> <p>--- Florence Davie ... Birmingham 6 b. 633</p> <p>--- Martha ... Dewsbury 2 b. 628</p> <p>--- Willa ... Dewsbury 2 b. 628</p> <p>TATTSFIELD, Arthur Fowler T. ... Parnes 1 b. 68</p> <p>--- James ... Worsley 9 c. 255</p> <p>TATTSFIELD, Ethel ... Burnley 9 c. 197</p> <p>TATTON, Alfred ... Birmingham 9 a. 157</p> <p>--- Alfred Herbert ... Maccfield 6 d. 68</p> <p>--- Beatrice Louise ... Aston 6 d. 201</p> <p>--- Frederick ... Salford 8 d. 144</p> <p>--- John Thomas ... Newcastle L. 2 b. 285</p> <p>--- Sarah ... Chesterfield 7 b. 708</p> <p>--- Sarah Jane ... Nantwich 8 a. 311</p> <p>TATY, Albert James ... St. Saviour 1 d. 80</p> <p>--- Thomas William ... St. Omer 1 d. 259</p> <p>TATYMAN, Edward ... Farneth Park 8 b. 220</p> <p>TATYMAN, Sidney Tom R. ... Cardiff 11 a. 310</p> <p>TATYSON, Albert Henry M. ... Leam 2 b. 178</p> <p>--- Ross Isabel S. ... Hackney 1 b. 518</p> <p>TAVENDALE, Duncan ... Wallingford 2 c. 331</p> <p>TAVENDALE, George William ... Shorncliffe 1 c. 124</p> <p>TAVENOR, Arthur Thomas ... Wolverhampton 6 b. 564</p> <p>--- Emily Elizabeth M. ... Islington 1 b. 380</p> <p>--- Frank Halseid E. ... Forton 2 b. 522</p>
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# Birth GRO Index

**BIRTHS**

Sept 1837 - June 1911	Surname	Forename/s	District	Volume	Page		
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1993 - date (Annual Index)	Surname	Forename/s	Mother's Maiden Name	District Name/No	Register No	Entry No	Reg Month/Yr

1959

**MUL-MUN**

BIRTHS REGISTERED IN OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1959.

398

Mother's Maiden Surname,	District.	Vol.	Page.	Mother's Maiden Surname,	District.	Vol.	Page.
MULLIGAN, Douglas	Darlington	1 a	312	MULLIS, Sally A.	WHITFORD	Bristol	7 b 48
-- Gregory	HARRISON	Leeds	2 c 460	MULLISH, Lynda	SEGALL	Stoke N'ton	5 d 83
-- Ian F.	MARSH	Lambeth	5 c 1689	MULLISS, Anita F.	PHILLIPS	North Bucks.	6 a 689
-- John B.	McARTHY	Chatham	5 b 384	-- Elizabeth	CLARE	Birmingham	9 c 506
-- John P.	McPARLANE	Wtambld.G.	1 b 367	MULLOY, Mary A.	TOOHER	Worthington	3 b 788
-- John M.	CASEY	Manchester	10 e 171	MULLNER, Richard N.	PAYNE	Fanora	5 d 513
-- Julie	WHITBY	Manchester	10 e 466	MULNER, David G.	SCOTT	London C.	5 d 157
-- Lorna	SHEPHERD	Swindon	7 c 703	-- Michael A.	O'SULLIVAN	Chelmsford	4 a 754
-- Lynn	RANDLE	Nuneaton	9 c 1396	MULRANEY, Philip B.	COLE	Chelmsford	4 a 754
-- Margaret A.	HANNA	Coventry	9 c 927	MULRENNAN, Julie A.	PALMER	Uxbridge	5 f 160
-- Mary T.	REED	Coventry	9 c 927			Widenedon	0 - ---

# Anatomy of a Birth Certificate

CERTIFICATE [Printed by authority of the Registrar General.] GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

**CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF BIRTH Pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953**

1906. Birth in the Sub-district of Corne Dorchester in the County of Dorset

No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name, and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden name of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar
28	Twenty 8th Feb 1906 Holywell Frome St Quinton RD	Albert Jack	Boy	Henry Mullins	Frances Susan Mullins formerly Pilcher	Great Western Railway Packer	H Mullins Father Holywell Frome St Quinton	Sixth March 1906	JFA Cole Registrar

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.

**CAUTION**—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate, intending it to be accepted as genuine to the authority.

**WARNING: THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PRESENTING IT.**

**CAUTION: THESE CERTIFICATES ARE NOT TO BE USED AS EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.**

**WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.**

*J. Mullins* Superintendent  
23rd May 1906

3 Types of Birth Certificates, the basic, the GRO and the local office.



## Header

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number COL.092932

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Tiverton

1868. BIRTH in the Sub-district of Tiverton in the County of Devon

We might as well start with the top of the birth certificate with the heading because this does have some relevance to finding your way through the indexes.

When civil registration was first organised the most obvious unit that already existed and could be adapted to registration districts were the Poor Law Unions. Many of the original districts were a straight use of these and indeed those who administered the poor laws often became the first superintendent registrars.

Poor Law Unions were made up of several parishes and the Unions could sometimes cross the county boundaries. As a registration district could be quite large - especially in rural areas - the actual place of birth could be quite a long way - and in a different county - from the town that gave its name to the registration district. If you can find a birth registration at the right time but apparently in the wrong place close by it could be worth checking it out.

Some villages could lie in more than one registration district e.g. in my area the village of Colnbrook lay in 3 separate districts - one in Berkshire, one in Buckinghamshire and one in Surrey and this was not changed until 1994! That means that if a family moved down the road or across it they could be in a totally different registration district for the next child in the family.

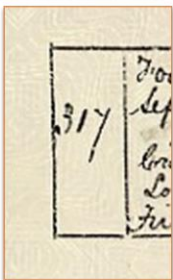
A large registration district was divided into two or more sub-districts e.g. the Eton Registration district in 1837 had 3 - the Eton, Burnham, and Iwer sub-districts. Each birth had to be registered in its correct sub-district.

Applications for a birth certificate can sometimes take quite a while to get to the correct current registration district. E.g. if you find a birth in the Dec quarter 1852 Eton district and ask where Eton registrations are held you will be told to apply to the Windsor and Maidenhead Register Office (because that is where current Eton registrations go). However, none of the Eton registrations before 1974 are held there - and most of them are at Slough so the application will be passed on to Slough. Slough only has 2 out of the 3 Eton sub-districts however, and once a search has been made of those it will be passed to Chiltern and South Bucks. Not surprising then if your certificate takes some time to get to you!

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Entry Number

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Four weeks September 1868 Lough Finn Finn	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenelake	Farm Laborer	Jane Gooding Mother Lough Lough Lough	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Conway Registrar	



#### Entry Number and GRO reference

The first column on your birth certificate is the entry number in the register. This can be anything from 1 to 500. You can sometimes pick up twins from the fact that they might have the same GRO reference.

The GRO reference is for a whole page of a register which means 5 entries. If you have twins on the same page they will have the same reference number. However if the twins were the last entry on one page and the first on the next they will have consecutive reference numbers not the same. And if two different families with the same surname are on the same page it will look like twins when it isn't.

## Birth Certificate Columns

### When and Where Born

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
31	Fourteenth September 1868 Lodge Court Flixton	Ellen	Girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenhalgh	Farm Labourer	Jane Gooding Mother Lodge Court Flixton	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Registrar	/

The date of birth should be clearly written in the form "Eighteenth May 1840" although some of the early registers have variations on that in the very first registrations.

You would have thought that the date would be accurate but there are an amazing number of people out there celebrating birthdays on days which are not their birth dates! One reason is that parents lied about the date of birth to bring their birth dates within the 6 week registration date. These days, birth dates are checked against other lists to confirm their accuracy but that is a pretty recent development. If you are getting one set of birth dates from one source such as a baptism and another set from the certificate have a look at column 8 on the birth certificate and see how close to the 6 weeks limit the registration was. There is no such thing as a "late" baptism and therefore less need for parents to massage the truth.

Parents with large families frequently muddle which child was born when especially when the birth dates are close to one another - a second reason why the date of birth is sometimes not accurate.

If there is a time against the date of birth then there was more than one child born alive at the birth. If however a mother had twins, one liveborn and one stillborn, then the live born twin will not have a time against the birth. Until 1926 there were no registrations at all of a still born child. Having said that, again the early registrations are not consistent. The registrar in the Eton district did not put the times of births of twins in the registers at all until 1845 while the one in Stoke-on-Trent put times against all the registrations up until about 1850. It is possible to check for twins by looking for identical or consecutive GRO references in the indexes.

If a child lived even for a few seconds there should be both a birth registration and a death registration but I think in the early days that this wasn't always done.

The place of birth is not terribly helpful in the early registrations. The description is likely to be just the village name although "posh" people with big houses sometimes got their house names even on the early registrations. By 1860 more of the address was commonly in use eg High Street Chalvey and you might get even more given. By about 1880 reasonably full addresses were in use.

You need to look at the place of birth against the informant and address in Column 7. If mother has registered and the names given in Column 2, and 7 are identical you have probably got mothers address at the time of the birth. Ditto for father. But if, for example, you have an illegitimate child born in the workhouse and the workhouse master registered - quite a common occurrence - then you have not got a permanent address for the mother of the child. What you have is the address at which the birth took place - the workhouse - and the address of the informant who lives at the workhouse. In early registrations the mother has probably not travelled far from home to give birth, but even so may have come from several parishes away. In later dates mothers often travelled very long distances from home especially when the baby was going to be adopted and the pregnancy hidden from the rest of the family/village.

Similarly if the mother went to her mother for the birth of a baby she could be quite a long way away from her real home but it will not necessarily show on the registration. What you could have is the address at which the birth took place - grandmothers - and the informants address which might be grandmother again as being present at the birth.

Similarly if the mother went to her mother for the birth of a baby she could be quite a long way away from her real home but it will not necessarily show on the registration. What you could have is the address at which the birth took place - grandmothers - and the informants address which might be grandmother again as being present at the birth.

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Name

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Townsend Leicester (1868) Leicester Leicester	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenhalgh	Farm Laborer	Jan: Gooding Mother (brag) Cousman (Townson)	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Registrar	

The name(s) entered in Column 2 of a birth certificate is/are the forenames only.

A child can be registered without a first name and even today that is occasionally done. Sometimes that is because - despite nearly 9 months + 6 weeks to register in - the family has not yet chosen a name. Know the feeling actually - if we had had girls they would have been nameless! Sometimes that is because the baby has already died and the family is registering both the birth and the death and do not name the child. Sometimes this is because the baby is going to be adopted and the mother cannot cope with naming the child - it gives the baby more of an identity and makes it harder for the mother.

Whether or not the child has been named in column 2, it is possible - by using Column 10 - to alter the name. The reason for this stems from the fact that the Church of England was the established church in existence before civil registration. Names by baptism in 1837 were considered of greater importance than names by civil registration and so the facility was given for the name to be changed by baptism provided the baptism took place within one year of the date of registration. The two critical words here are "baptism" and "registration", Provided the baptism was done within the year the actual change of name in the registers could be done many years later.

The change of name could be by adding a name, taking one out, altering the order, changing them totally, changing the spelling. I suspect that where it is a problem in finding an ancestor, one reason is that the child was registered in one name, baptised in another but the registration not brought up to date. Where a name has been altered by baptism or change of name and added to the register, the indexes should have been updated to show the new name.

These days the same facility to change the name has been extended by offering a "change of name" form for those whose children are not or cannot be baptised into the Christian church.

Children registered with two first names are frequently called by the second. One of my husband's family had 10 sons, all with two first names, and all those that survived without fail were called by the second one. This is fine if somewhere there is an indication that there was a first element not being used but if they marry and are in the census and die as Frederick it is difficult to match that with the birth registration index for William F.

Where a child was illegitimate with no fathers details in the register it is quite common to find a name such as William Johnston in column 2 which might possibly suggest a surname for the father of the child.

For the surname of the child you have to look at Column 4 or Column 6 where the parents names are recorded but I will look at that when I get there.

Unlike many countries there is no proscribed list of names from which the parents must choose. The only prohibitions on names are that they must not be blasphemous or obscene. If the parents wish to name their child Humpty Dumpty they can. Similarly there is no prescribed list of spellings for names either so you sometimes get very strange spellings in the name column - either because the parent chooses a name that they have no idea how to spell (amazingly frequent) or because they deliberately choose to spell it in the most obscure fashion possible to make the child different. (They aren't going to have to go through life spelling it to everyone of course). Hope I am not treading on too many toes here!

Names can be very helpful in placing an approximate age on someone. A surprising number of people have a second name that is the place of a famous battle or after a soldier hero or politician or pop star or whatever. My husband's G-Grandfather has a second name of Albert, Prince Albert had died just a few days before his birth. Some families, including many Scottish ones include the mothers maiden name in the forenames.

Even more baffling are the people that have a name that bears no resemblance to any of their given names. My Grandmother Mary Margaret was known as Mollie, her sister Helen was Nellie. My favourite of the moment was the man called Nicholas Curry who was always called Harry (You might have to think about that one - give you a clue - try reading it as Hari).

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Sex

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhatch Leptonston (house) Leptonston Leptonston	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenhalgh	Farm Laborer	Jan: Gooding Mother brag: Cousman (Turkton)	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Sherburne Registrar	
			girl							

Now we are beginning to get to the REALLY interesting parts! Before 1969 the sex of the child was denoted by boy or girl and after that date by male or female. And you would think that was the end of the matter but you have to remember that the information is only as accurate as the person giving it makes it.

There have been mistakes made in the sex of the child. It can always be a problem if the child is being given a name which does not denote a sex e.g. Alex. Would you know automatically what sex a child named Storm or Aston is? And if the parents go in for very obscure names from mythology or strange first names which are part of the family tradition it can be even more difficult. Especially where parents are illiterate and cannot read the register for themselves to check it is right, it is quite possible for mistakes to be made in any part of the information including the sex of the child.

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Fathers Name

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhatch Leicester (1868) Leicester Leicester	Ellen	girl	John Spoding	Jane Spoding formerly Greenstable	Farm Labourer	Jane Spoding Mother brags, Cowman (Turkton)	Suristy with October 1868	Arthur Corrump Sherburne Registrar	

I am sorry if anyone gets upset at this section, but there is still a fundamental difference between the way children born inside and outside of marriage are registered because there are still differences in law between the two. For example inheritance was affected by legitimacy in the past and nationality of a child still is.

Whether father is entered in the register depends on two factors - were the couple married (always entered) and what date the registration was made (maybe - maybe not).

The early registrations between 1837 and approximately 1850 are a little mixed. The Act of Parliament of 1836 reads "And it be enacted that the father or mother of every child born in England.....shall within 42 days next after the day of every such birth give information upon being requested so to do to the Registrar, according to the best of his or her knowledge and belief of the several particulars hereby required to be known and registered touching the birth of such child provided always that it shall not be necessary to register the name of any father of a bastard child." Now some registrars interpreted that quite freely and put father in even where the couple were not married and only mother or someone else was signing the register and some did not allow fathers details to be entered in the register. By about 1850 the situation had been clarified and the instructions read quite clearly "No putative father is to be allowed to sign an entry in the character of "Father" ". From that time, therefore there are 2 kinds of entries in the register

- (1) Where the parents were married to one another, fathers details must be entered in the register and only one parent will sign the register (or some other informant)
- (2) Where the parents were not married to one another there will be blanks in Column 4 (fathers name) and [Column 6](#) (his occupation).


This situation lasted until the Registration Act of 1875 where the instruction read "The putative father of an illegitimate child cannot be required as father to give information respecting the birth. The name, surname and occupation of the putative father of an illegitimate child must not be entered except at the joint request of the father and mother; in which case both the father and mother must sign the entry as informants". There are therefore 3 kinds of entry after this Act:

- (1) Described above
- (2) Described above
- (3) Where the parents are not married to one another but both attended the register office together, fathers details are entered in Column 4 and [Column 6](#) and both parents sign. Looked at a different way - if both parents have signed in Column 7 regardless of what names they are using then the parents

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Mothers Name

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhatch Leicester 1868 Leicester Leicester	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenlatte	farm labourer	Jane Gooding Mother largely Cousman (Turkton)	Society each October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Sherburne Registrar	



Column 5 of a birth certificate shows the name, and previous names if any, of the mother of the baby. There are several combinations of name possible. If a woman has not been married there will be a sole entry for her name e.g. Martha Robinson. If a woman has ever been married there will be two names shown for her e.g. Martha Robinson formerly Wheeler. If a woman has been married more than once the names shown will be e.g. Martha Robinson late Wheeler formerly Gregory. If a woman has been married, all previous names should be shown whether the baby being registered was legitimate or not. In later records it is possible to find a mother registered along the lines of Margaret Blinco otherwise Margaret Joel. This shows that she was using a name to which she didn't have legal entitlement e.g. she was living with someone called Blinco and using his name but was not married to him. Margaret Blinco otherwise Margaret Joel formerly Smith would show that she started life as a Smith, married and became Joel and was now living with someone and using his name.

The format of the registers changed in 1969 so that if a woman had married more than twice before her present marriage not all her previous married names would be shown.

It is important to remember that the definition of the maiden surname in registration is NOT the surname at birth but is the surname used at the first marriage. So someone who was born Ellen Hudson but who had changed her name to her stepfather's surname of Culshaw before she was married would have a maiden surname of Culshaw not Hudson. The reason for that is when tracing back, the next step would be to find the marriage of a child's parents and so it is necessary to look for the names used at marriage. The marriage certificate should show the natural fathers name not the stepfathers and so therefore you would have the birth name. That's the theory! The practice is often different as we know.

Married women never apparently had an occupation! Being a wife and mother was all the occupation they were allowed. This was not altered until the late 1980's after a threatened legal action, when women were finally allowed to have an occupation shown against their name and only in the last few years has there been a dedicated space for a mother's occupation. However, mothers of illegitimate children had an occupation shown - one of the few compensations for finding illegitimacy.

All the problems associated with changes of name for one reason or another were covered in the tutorial on the fathers name.

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Occupation of Father

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhatch Leicester (house) Leicester Leicester	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenfield	Farm Labourer	John Gooding & father large Courman (curtains)	Survity with October 1868	Arthur Corway Sherlock Magistat	

This is the occupation of the father. [Column 4](#) and Column 6 go together. If there is no father shown in [Column 4](#) then there will be no occupation shown in Column 6. If there is a father shown in [Column 4](#) but a line drawn through Column 6 it means that the father did not have an occupation or perhaps was not employed at the time of the registration or the informant did not know what father did.

Only paid employment is shown and, as in the census, men only had legal and respectable jobs so you wont find pimp or burglar! On the other hand, before this century they probably had a more meaningful occupation than the ones you get at present - blacksmith, shepherd, coalporter or whatever rather than company director (owns his own windowcleaning company) or office administrator (files bits of paper). Informants can be modest about occupations as well aggrandising them.

Labourer might mean totally unskilled - heaving stuff about in a market - but could equally mean a quite specific skill e.g. many 'ag labs' (agricultural labourers) were quite specialised workers such as hay trussers.

Especially in the past, occupations would show status such as "of independent means".

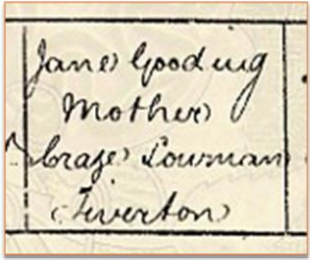
If a father of a legitimate baby had died before his baby was born then Column 6 would read something on the lines of "Railway worker (deceased)."



## Birth Certificate Columns

### Informant

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhink Lepton (1868) Lepton Tewerton	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenstable	Farm Labour	Jane Gooding Mother Grays, Courman Tewerton	unity each 1868	Arthur Courman Registrar	



Starting with the signature. Once the entry has been checked by the informant, he or she signs in Column 7 - their usual signature. If the informant can't sign their name then they make a mark and the registrar completes it with the words "The mark of.....". If you see this on a certificate warning bells should start to ring. It means that the informant has been unable to check the information for himself/herself and the registrar has done the best possible. Especially where a family has a name that is unusual in the locality where they are now living and where they have a strong accent, it is going to be luck if the registrar hits on the correct spelling of it. After all how many of you would spell Kirkcudbright correctly if you did not already know how it was pronounced and spelt and you had someone in front of you saying Kecoobree?

If someone can sign their name but in a different script then they sign in Chinese or Arabic or whatever and the registrar write "The signature of.....". Same problem really - the informants probably can't check for themselves.

A signature does not necessarily mean that the informant could read. Many people learnt to write their name but nothing else. In a way this is worse because you don't know if they could read or not! Description of informant. The current list of eligible informants reads, in order of preference

- (1) In all cases - mother
- (2) Father - if he is married to mother
- (3) Father and mother jointly where they are not married to one another
- (4) A person present at the birth
- (5) The owner or occupier of the house or institution
- (6) The person in charge of the child

After 1875 a joint registration could be made by the mother and father of the baby together if they were not married. Before that fathers details could not be given (from about 1850 to 1875) and before that it is a little bit variable, see [Column 4](#).

- (1) Mother - mother was usually not in doubt although it was not unknown in the past for grandmother to go the register office and register her daughter's illegitimate daughter as her own.
- (2) Father - he is the second choice by preference because - by biology alone - mother knows she is the mother and only she really knows (or might do!) who the father is. There is an assumption in law, however, that unless told otherwise, the husband is the father of the baby.
- (3) Father/Mother jointly. From 1875 only for couples who were not married. Both were present at the registration and both signed.

## Birth Certificate Columns

### Date of Registration

Columns--	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downbrook Leicester 1868	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenhalgh	Farm Laborer	Jane Gooding Mother brags, Courston (Leicester)	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Newby Registrar	

This is very relevant to the indexes because birth, death and marriage indexes are compiled by the date of registration NOT the date of the event ( in marriages these 2 dates are usually the same but can be very different in births and deaths). So a baby born on eg 25th November 1851 that was not registered until 2nd January 1852 would be indexed in the March quarter for 1852 not the December quarter for 1851.

In the early days the parents had 3 weeks to register in and could not register at all after 3 months. After a while this was changed to 6 weeks to register in, a late registration could be made up to a year after the birth if the superintendent took the information and signed the register too, and registration could not take place after 1 year without reference to GRO. Once the delay was this long then proof of the event had to be provided by other parties who knew of this event eg midwife or doctor or siblings alive at the time and able to recall the event. Even now, if it is not possible to provide the proof and/or the people who can attest to the truth of the event it is not possible to register and there are people walking around today with no birth certificate.

It means, therefore, that a birth registered very late could be in the indexes a whole year later or more than expected. It is also relevant in that there were penalties for late registrations that were quite severe in the beginning and rather than get into trouble parents would "adjust" the date of birth to fall within the specified time for registration. If you have a discrepancy between a date of birth on a certificate and one given on a baptismal certificate, have a look at the date of registration. If it is very close to the six weeks, it is quite likely that the parents didn't tell the truth at registration but did at baptism where there were no penalties. There were no checks on the dates of birth until well into this century.

### Birth Certificate Columns

Signature of Registrar

Columns-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downham Upington (1868) Lambert Upington	Ellen	girl	John Upoding	Jane Upoding formerly Greenstable	Farm laborer	Jane Upoding Mother brag, Cousman (Upington)	Seven sixth October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Superintendent Registrar	

This is not particularly relevant unless you have an ancestor who was a registrar! If the registrar AND the superintendent registrar have both signed in Column 9 then there was something unusual about the registration - such as a late one or a re-registration of a birth.

## Birth Certificate Columns

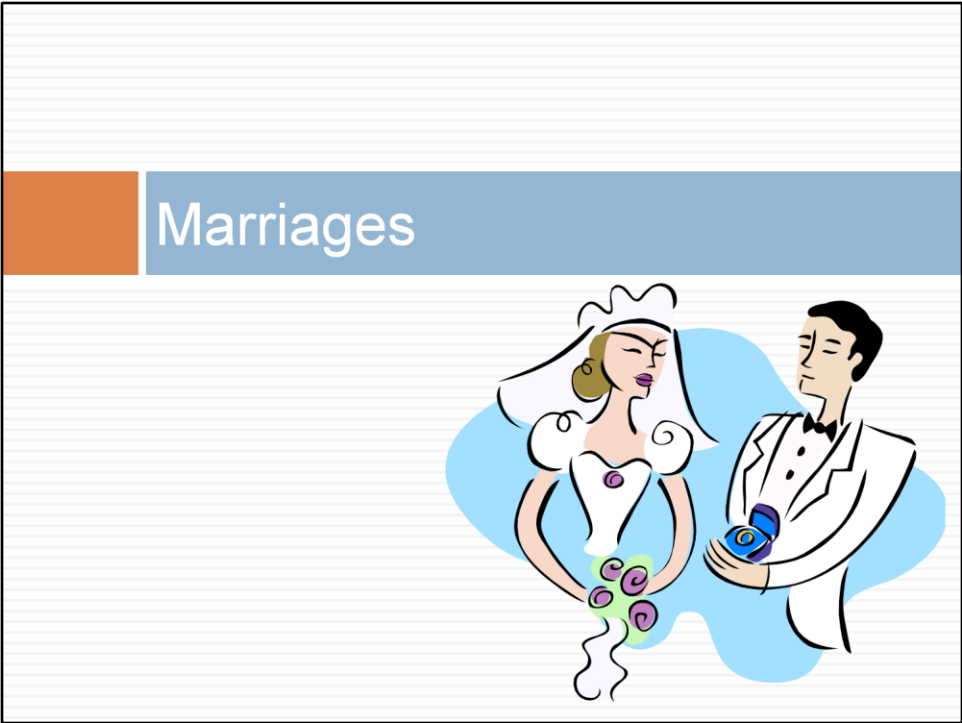
Name entered after registration

Columns-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
317	Downhatch Leptonston (house) Leptonston Leptonston	Ellen	girl	John Gooding	Jane Gooding formerly Greenhalgh	Farm Laborer	Jane Gooding Mother (Mrs) Cousman (Turkton)	Twenty sixth October 1868	Arthur Corrigan Registrar	

This is for the entry of a name given after initial registration. This relates to the fact that before civil registration, the recording of the major life events was in the hands of the church and especially of course of the established church (Church of England). There was tremendous resistance to civil registration by the established church who felt (rightly as it happened) that people would stop baptising their children if they had an alternative piece of legal paper in a civil registration. And the church had had the power and responsibility for centuries.

If a child was registered without a forename and was then baptised, or if a child was registered with forenames that were changed at baptism - because baptism was in place before civil registration and was considered more important - then the facility was given to change the first names (but NOT the surname). These days the baptism must take place within one year of the date of registration but the alteration can be made to the register at any time once the baptism has been completed.

The importance of this is that very often a child had a name changed by baptism but the civil registration was not corrected. That means that the name used by the child will not match the indexes, which are amended if a space 10 correction is made. At baptism the names may be altered in order, changed in spelling, new ones put in, names taken out or changed totally. These days there is a facility for names to be changed without baptism because of course many people are of other faiths or do not go to church.



## Marriages

- Four Types of Marriage
- Two Registers

### Four Types of Marriage

- in the Established Church (Church of England in England, the Church in Wales in Wales),
- in a Register Office (more recently other Approved Building)
- in a non-conformist Church
- by Jewish or Quaker ceremony.

### Two Registers

- One for the Church and one for the Registrar

# Marriages

## GRO Index

**MARRIAGES**

Sept 1837 - Dec 1911		Surname	Forename/s		District		Volume	Page	
Mar 1912 - Dec1983		Surname	Forename/s	Surname of other party	District		Volume	Page	
1984 - 1993 (Annual Index)		Surname	Forename/s	Surname of other party	District	Reg Month/Year	Volume	Page	
1994 - date (Annual Index)		Surname	Forename/s	Surname of other party	District Name/No	Reg Month	Page	Entry	*Source Code

\* Source Code is not required to identify entries


- Pre 1911 2 Marriages per Page, so a choice of two spouses when using the search indexes.





# Marriages

## Headings



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE      GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number COL464192

1867. Marriage solemnized at St Peter's Church in the Parish of Tiverton in the County of Devon

Mr. Groom	Mr. Bride	Minister	Witness	Witness
John Gooding	Barbara Gooding	Henry Gooding	John Gooding	Barbara Gooding
John Gooding	Barbara Gooding	Henry Gooding	John Gooding	Barbara Gooding

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church of England by me, John Stanley

This Marriage was solemnized before me, Elizabeth Hooper


CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Tiverton  
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 21st day of July 2006

MXC 712093

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 63 of the Marriage Act 1949. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT

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### First Heading

The first heading is for the registration district and this is the name you will find in the General Record Office indexes. Registration districts were not split into sub-districts for the purposes of marriage and a rural district could be extremely large - even in the past some of the registration districts could cover an enormous area. The point is that you have to remember that the name of the registration district will not coincide with the name(s) of the town or village that the couple were living in and indeed the name of the registration district could even be from an adjoining county (see the earlier tutorial on births). The next heading reads (with slight variations over the years) "Marriage solemnized at .....(1)..... in the District of .....(2)..... in the County of.....(3)....." or "Marriage solemnized at.....(4).....in the Parish of .....(5).....in the County of.....(3)....." (Church of England marriages only)

(1) this could read something such as The Register Office or The Baptist Church, High Street or a private address (rare)  
 (2) this will be a repeat of the registration district name given in the heading above  
 (3) this will be Surrey or York or whatever  
 (4) this will say something like the Parish Church of St Matthews  
 (5) this will be the parish name such as St Matthews

### Lower Section

The heading there needs to be checked with the line immediately below the groom and brides details. There are 6 possible variations here

1. Church of England/The Church in Wales " Married in the parish church (or a chapel name) according to the rites and ceremonies of the established church (or the Church of England or in the Church in Wales) " or some similar wording.
2. All other non-conformist churches or other religious groups (except Quakers or Jews) "Married in the .....according to the rites and ceremonies of ..... " Look carefully at this line because the religious denomination shown in the top heading does not have to be the same as the one shown underneath the entry. So you could get an entry which reads "Marriage solemnized at the Baptist Church, Queen Street " at the top and has "according to the rites of ceremonies of the Presbyterians" underneath. Provided that the religious building is registered for marriages, any denomination may hold a marriage there after the proper legal preliminaries and with a registrar or authorised person present. Small religious denominations without their own registered building or with a building too small for a marriage might do this.
3. You can get rarities such as "Marriage solemnized at the ..... " at the top and that bit only repeated without the "according to the rites and ceremonies" bit underneath. That would happen if the minister failed to show up at the wedding - the registrar or authorised person would do the legally binding parts of the ceremony and the couple would be legally married but it would not be by the rites and ceremonies of the religious group even though the marriage had been in a church.
4. "Married at 4 The High Street" according to the rites and ceremonies of the Quakers (or Jews) or "Married at Braeside House....." etc. Quakers and Jews might have a marriage ceremony in a registered building in which case 2 would apply but they could equally get married in a private residence or hotel. If you have a private address as the place of marriage you need to check whether this is indeed because it was a Quaker or Jewish marriage or whether you have a deathbed marriage or a marriage of detained or housebound people.
5. "Married in the Register Office..... " There will be no further qualifications to this
6. "Married at St Thomas Hospital (or a private address) according to the rites and ceremonies of..... " either a non-conformist denomination or Established Church together with the ceremony being conducted according to the Registrar General's licence means it was deathbed marriage
7. "Married at .....(private address)" together with "according to the rites and ceremonies of" but without mention of the Registrar General means a marriage of people actually taking place in the prison or mental institution where one of them is detained or in the private home of a housebound person.

# Marriages Reference

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE  
GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number: COL66192

Marrriage solemnized at St. Peter's Church in the Parish of Westerhall in the County of West Lothian

No.	Date	Name of Bride	Name of Groom	Place of Solemnization	Signature of Registrar
3109	21st July 2006	John Goring	Jane Goring	St. Peter's Church	John Goring

Parish Church according to the Rite and Ceremonies of the Established Church of England

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Tiverton  
Given at the General Register Office, under the Seal of the said Office, the 21st day of July 2006

MXC 712093

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

No. 3109


## Entry Number

The first unnumbered column on the certificate is simply the entry number in the book. It can be any number between 1 and 500. These days churches etc have a book that is commensurate with the number of marriages performed - so a small church that only does one marriage in a blue moon will only have a marriage book of 10 entries while the marriage register for a popular church in a large parish or catchment will have as many as 500 entries. The church will have two identical registers and when they are complete one book is deposited with the superintendent registrar and the other is kept by the church authorities and may finish up in the county record office or in the local church.

Some small chapels were issued with 500 entry registers in 1837 and still have not completed them so it is quite possible for a superintendent registrar (SR) to have no record of the marriages in a church in their district (another reason why it is better to apply for your marriages certificates from GRO who receive copies every quarter, rather than the local SR). The entry number in the marriage book has nothing to do with the GRO reference in their indexes.

The first numbered column - Column 1 - is the date of the marriage. The marriage entry is the only record that is completed at the time of the event and there is no separate date for the registration as there is for births and deaths. It should be recorded in the form "Twenty seventh March 1997" but the early records are written in many different forms such as 7th August 1876 or May 9 1900 or November the thirteenth 1854. There is no time given for the marriage but marriage was only legal between the hours of 8am and 12 noon at the start of registration and from 8am to 3pm until fairly recently. It is still only legal between 8am and 6pm.

# Marriages Day

  
**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE**      GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
 Application Number: COI-464192

Type of Marriage	Name and Surname	Age	Residence	Rank or Profession	Profession at the Time of Marriage	Father's Name and Rank	Rank or Profession of Father
1857	Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Peter's Church</u> in the <u>Parish of St. Albans</u> in the County of <u>Essex</u>						
	<u>Henry Gooding</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>St. Albans</u>	<u>Farmer</u>	<u>St. Albans</u>	<u>Henry Gooding</u>	<u>Farmer</u>
	<u>Lucy Gooding</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>St. Albans</u>	<u>Farmer's Daughter</u>	<u>St. Albans</u>	<u>Lucy Gooding</u>	<u>Farmer's Daughter</u>

According to the rites and Ceremonies of the Evangelical Church of England solemnized by me  
 The Minister of the Parish of St. Albans in the County of Essex on the 21st day of July 2006  
 At the Parish of St. Albans in the County of Essex by John Stannard  
 The Minister of the Parish of St. Albans in the County of Essex by Elizabeth Hooper

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Tiverton  
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 21st day of July 2006

**MXC712093**

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 63 of the Marriage Act 1983. Sub-section 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry prepared by the clerk or registrar shall be treated as evidence of the marriage in which it is contained in any legal proceedings. It is an offence under section 64 of that Act to supply or attempt to supply a false copy of an entry, and an offence under section 65 of that Act to use or attempt to use a false copy of an entry.

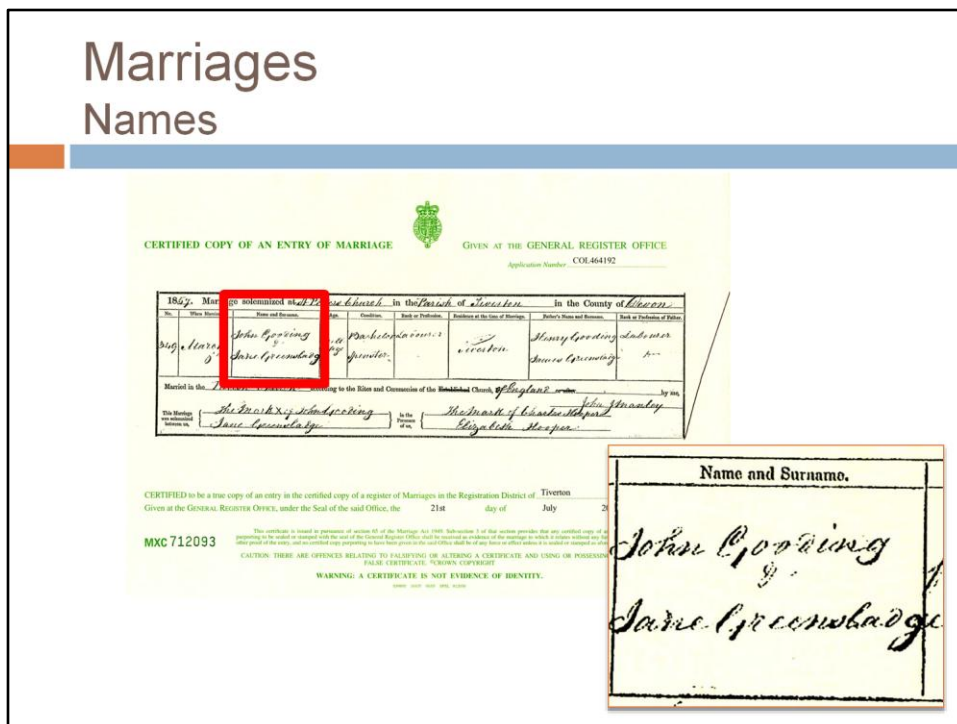
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**1857. Marriage**

No.	When Married.
319	Mar. 21 <sup>st</sup>

# Marriages Names



## Names of Bride and Groom

Column two is the name and surname of the bride and groom at the date of the marriage. Those last 6 words are crucial - the name used at the date of marriage is not necessarily the one on the birth certificate of the bride or groom. These days the words "Name changed by Deed Poll" or "formerly known as ....." or "otherwise" indicate that the bride or groom has changed their name since birth but that is a fairly recent phenomenon. In the past, the bride or groom were simply asked for the names they were known by. Remember that it was not necessary to produce any proof of the use of a name.

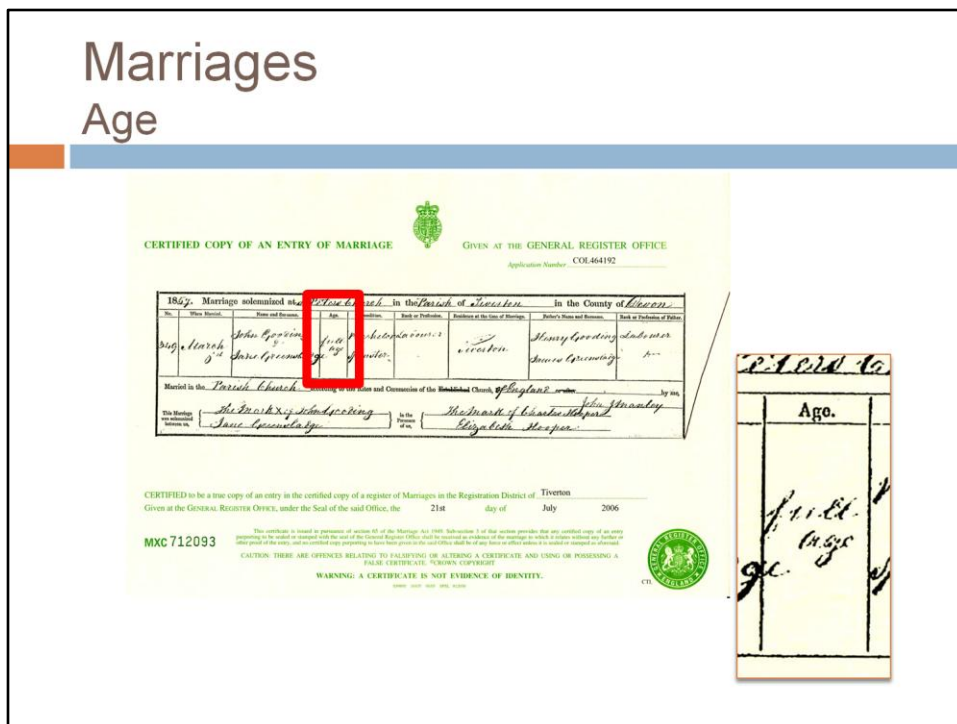
Names were changed in all sorts of ways. One of the most common would be by the bride or groom using a stepfather's surname. Or a person might use a mother's maiden name or indeed a name chosen at random because they didn't like the one they were born with or because they wanted their original identity hidden for a variety of reasons.

First names also frequently changed - the child named Albert Henry is always known as James for some reason and that is the name he marries in.

In theory it should be possible to use the column showing father's name and surname as a guide to the original surname of the bride or groom but father's details too are not always accurate.

# Marriages

## Age



### Age at the Date of Marriage

The next column shows the age at the date of marriage. There are all sorts of problems here. First of all the information is only as accurate as the bride or groom cared to make it - remember that unless the bride or groom appeared to be under the age of consent they were not asked for proof of their age or identity.

There are many instances when the age was "massaged" to make it a little more palatable! Brides who were older than their grooms often "lost" a few years or grooms who were younger "acquired" a few. Some people genuinely wouldn't know precisely how old they were.

Unfortunately some marriage registers simply state "of full age" which tells you nothing except that the bride and/or groom were aged 21 or over and could have been anything from 21 to 80+ - not terribly helpful. It was always possible for a bride under 21 to add a few years if she thought she could get away with it so that she did not require the consent of her family.

In the past, at the age of 21 a man or a woman was considered old enough to give their own consent to their own marriage. Under that age, the consent of the parent(s) or the legal guardians or the court was required.

Parents of people under the age of consent were notified separately that a notice of marriage of their child had been taken - giving them time to object to the marriage if they should wish. If one or both parents objected and stated so (no reasons need be given) then the marriage cannot take place until the bride or groom reaches the age of their own consent. Technically, a marriage of a couple who should have had consent of parents and have married without it is not legal.

The age at which a person could marry and at which they would require consent has changed since 1837. Then marriage could be at 12 for a girl and 14 for a boy, but consent of parent(s) was required for both up to the age of 21.

In 1926 the age of marriage for both parties was raised to 16 but consent for both was still required until 21. Now, the age at which people can marry is still 16 but the age for consent has been lowered to 18.

The only exception to the requirement for consent was for a second marriage before the age of 21 ie if a bride/groom had married once with consent of parents and had been widowed they could marry the second time without consent of parents. I thought that the logic of that was - if they had tried it once and still wanted to do it again....! but in fact it stems round the fact that once a woman has married, her father no longer has legal status with regard to consent, and so she can give her own consent to her own marriage.

Marriage before the legal age is invalid.

# Marriages Status

**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE** GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number: COI-464192

No.	Name	Rank and Residence	Rank	Rank of the Line of Marriage	Rank of the Line of Marriage	Rank of the Line of Marriage
1867	John Spinning	Bachelor	Spinster			
	John Spinning	Bachelor	Spinster			

MARRIED in the Parish Church, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Established Church of England, on the 21st day of July 2006, by the Rev. Mr. John Spinning, Minister of the Parish of St. Andrew, and Miss Elizabeth Spinning, Spinster, of the Parish of St. Andrew.

**Condition.**  
Bachelor  
Spinster

**the Rites and Ceremonies**

MXC712093

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

## Marital Status

The fifth column shows the marital status at the time of the marriage. The most commonly occurring ones in the last century were bachelor or spinster or widow or widower.

You have to remember that it is not possible to prove that someone has not married - it is very easy to prove that someone has been married and also that a marriage has ended in the death of one of the partners or in divorce. There are relevant papers to show these events but there is nothing which exists to show that someone has not married. If a man or woman states that they have not been married, then they have to be taken to be speaking the truth.

Unfortunately there is, equally, nothing to stop them from lying! And plenty of bigamous marriages to show how easy it is to lie.

No matter how old they are, any woman who has not previously been married is entered as a spinster and any man not previously married is a bachelor.

It is also possible for a man or woman to be stated to be a bachelor or a spinster when there has been a previous marriage. If a person had been previously married and that marriage was void or voidable then they would revert to the marital status previously existing. So someone whose first marriage was void or annulled would be entered as bachelor or spinster on their second marriage.

A marriage would be void if a legal impediment to the marriage existed i.e. one of the following a) one of the parties was under age b) the marriage was within the forbidden degrees of relationship c) the marriage was between two people of the same sex d) there was an existing legal marriage for one of the parties

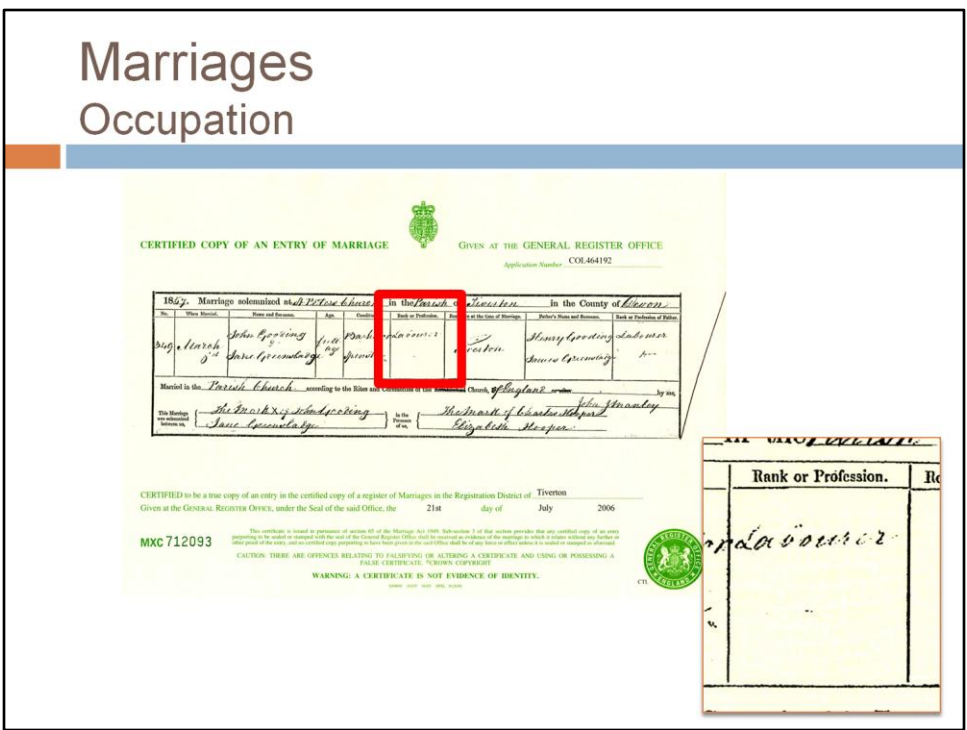
The age of consent has changed over the years and the degrees of forbidden relationship have also changed with time. At present (and in the past) it is forbidden for a man to marry his mother or adopted mother, grandmother, daughter or adopted daughter, niece, granddaughter, aunt, or sister, and the equivalent relationships are banned for a woman. It may be possible now for a couple to marry within the boundaries of step and in-law relationships depending on circumstances but these were forbidden in the past: e.g. it is now legal (since 1912) to marry a brother or sister in law.

(Incidentally, it is assumed in law that the innocent party IS innocent and did not knowingly contract an unlawful marriage).

Before August 1971 a person whose marriage was voidable and had been annulled would also have reverted to their previously existing marital status at their next marriage. Since that date the marital status would be "previous marriage annulled". A voidable marriage is one which meets the legal requirements but which the court has annulled. A marriage is voidable if there is an inability or wilful refusal by one party to consummate the marriage, if one of the parties is deemed to be mentally incapable of understanding the purport and meaning of marriage (this could be from mental handicap or from mental illness - temporary or otherwise) or if the bridegroom had married the bride believing her to be carrying his child when she had deliberately misled him. This last example would be of a marriage under duress and if either party is forced into marriage under duress that is also a voidable marriage. None of these marriages HAVE to be annulled - the grounds exist for an annulment if one of couple wish to end the marriage but they don't HAVE to eg if a couple are both quite happy in an unconsummated marriage that is their affair, and mentally handicapped people are not barred from marriage if their families/carers feel this is an appropriate step for them (but the family of a wealthy heiress might try to have a marriage annulled on the grounds of mental instability if they felt that their emotionally unstable daughter had been talked into a marriage by a fortune hunter).

In this century increasing numbers of brides and grooms have "previous marriage dissolved" as their marital status (this was shown as "previously the wife/husband of ..... in the early part of this century). In the last century, divorce was immensely expensive as each divorce required an individual act of parliament to dissolve it and was also considered a great scandal. Few couples therefore were divorced and anyone in a marriage that was effectively finished but could not be dissolved would either have to admit the truth to a new partner and the couple live together as husband and wife without going through any legal ceremony or had to lie to a new partner and go through a bigamous marriage.

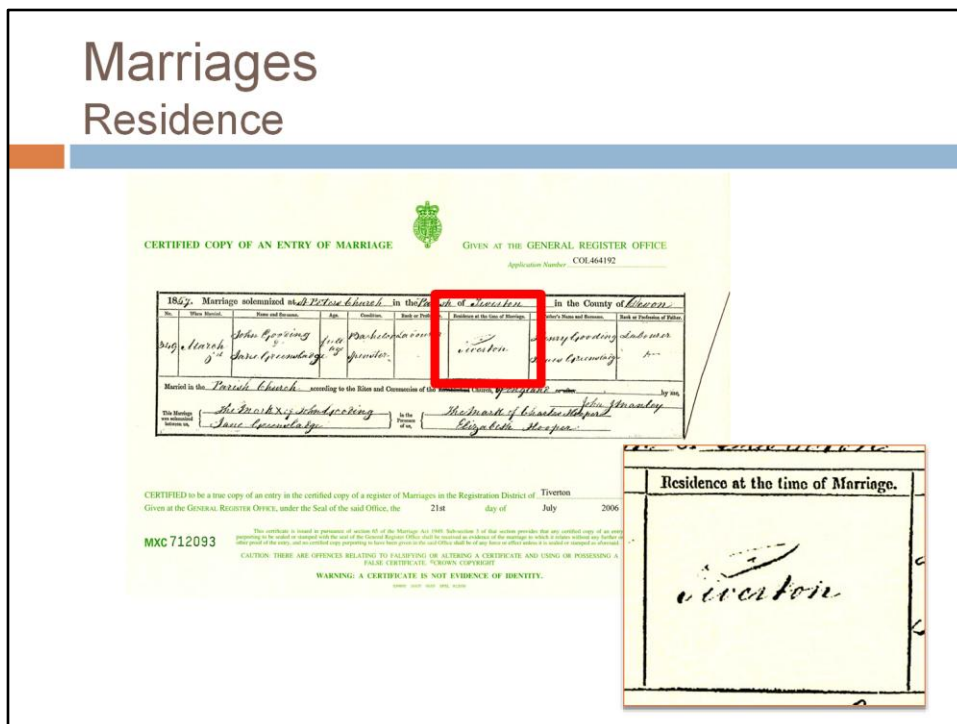
# Marriages Occupation



## Occupation

The next column shows the occupation at the time of marriage. A line through this column does not necessarily mean that the bride or groom was not in employment. In the last century most women did not have an occupation shown on a marriage certificate even when most women worked. Only paid employment is shown and only acceptable occupations so you would not find burglar or prostitute! Sometimes the bride or groom makes the occupation sound grander than it was in fact, but on other occasions the bride or groom has made less of it.

# Marriages Residence



## Address

The address at the time of the marriage can often be a misleading column. Except for a couple having a Jewish or Quaker marriage for whom totally different rules apply, when a couple wanted to get married one of them had to live in the parish for a C of E wedding, live in the district in which the nonconformist church was situated But there were two exceptions.

If a couple lived in one parish/district but regularly worshipped at a church in a different parish/district then they could get married in that church while still living at their real addresses if one of them was on the electoral roll for a C of E church or could state that the nonconformist church was where they usually worshipped (and the Minister would agree that was so if approached). I have known a bride state that her usual place of worship was a Methodist chapel 300 miles away - she rarely went to church but when she did, that was the church she attended and she didn't go anywhere else - it was therefore her usual place of worship.

Or if a couple wanted a marriage in a denomination for which there was no church/building in either of their districts, then the couple could nominate the specific church of the correct denomination where they wished to get married (and this did not necessarily have to be the one nearest to either of their districts). eg the nearest Greek Orthodox church to me is 20 miles away and if I was Greek Orthodox then I could nominate that church for my marriage if I chose or I could nominate one that was 50 miles away if I preferred.

In general then the address of either the bride or groom will be close to the church they are marrying in but it does not have to be so - the registration district for the church may be many miles away from the bride/grooms address(es).

However, for a variety of reasons a couple might want to get married in a church or a register office which was not in the district in which they lived and they did not fall into one of the two exceptions mentioned above. The only way round that was to establish residency (for one or both of them) in the district in which they wanted to get married. All that was necessary was for one or both of them to go and live at an address for 7 days in the required registration district and at the end of the 7 days go and give notice of marriage (This information is correct for non-conformist marriages and marriages in the register office - I do not know about the specific rules of residency for Church of England marriages). They did not then have to stay at that address but could return to their usual address. In other words - having an address on a marriage certificate is not necessarily where the bride and/or groom usually lived.



# Marriages

## Fathers Names and Occupations

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number: COI-464192

1867. Marriage solemnized at *St. Peter's Church* in the Parish of *St. Peter's* in the County of *Down*

No.	Name	Rank and Profession	Age	Residence	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Date of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
1867	<i>John Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>Henry Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>
	<i>James Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>Labourer</i>	<i>St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>James Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church of England* by *John Gooding*

This Marriage Celebrated by *John Gooding*

Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
<i>Henry Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>
<i>James Gooding</i>	<i>Labourer</i>

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certificate given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the Registrar-General.

MXC 712093

CAUTION: THESE ARE OFFICIAL COPIES.

### Name and Occupation of the Father of the Bride / Groom

The last two columns on the marriage certificate are the name of the father of the groom/bride and the father's occupation.

The man named in this column - with the exception of an adoptive father after 1926 - should be the natural father of the bride or groom. It should NOT be stepfather, godfather, mothers latest lover or anyone else.

If a bride or groom did not have her/his father named on their birth certificate that does not stop them being named on a marriage certificate. My illegitimate Joseph Edward Calvert (mother was Mary Calvert) named his father as Robert Twistleton when he - Joseph - got married. On the other hand my illegitimate David Culshaw (mother was Mary Culshaw) named a man also called David Culshaw as his father on the marriage certificate but I am sure this is a figment of David's imagination - he just did not want to see blanks on the marriage certificate.


On the other hand - if a bride or groom does not want her/his father shown on a marriage certificate they do not have to. The Times carried a half page on the recent marriage of Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit with a copy of their marriage certificate showing that Liam had refused to have his father's details on the marriage entry - apparently Liam and his father have not spoken for 20 years.

If the father of the bride or a groom has died by the time of the marriage then it should say "deceased" under his name but this is not a very reliable item.

The last column is father's occupation. It should say "retired" if a father had reached retirement age but that was not an option for a lot of men in the past! Unfortunately when it was an option there are plenty of registers around which simply say retired. Where you are trying to sort out descent with fairly common names the fathers name and occupation can be a considerable help. For example I have two Thomas Bishops born within a year of one another getting married in Skipton, both with fathers called Thomas. The fact that one father was a tailor while the other was a nailmaker was the only way of sorting the two Thomas out.

# Marriages

## Signatures

  
 CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE      GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
 Application Number: COE-464192

No.	Name	Rank and Name	Age	Residence	Rank or Position	Signature at the Time of Marriage	Rank or Position and Name	Rank or Position of Office
1867	John Spinning	John Spinning	21	Widow	Widow	John Spinning	Henry Spinning	John Spinning
	Jane Spinning	Jane Spinning	19	Spinning	Spinning	Jane Spinning	Jane Spinning	Jane Spinning

This Marriage was solemnized at the Parish of *St. Andrew* in the County of *Essex*  
 by the Minister of the Holy Catholic Church, *John Spinning*

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of *Tiverton*  
 Given at the General Register Office, under the Seal of the said Office, the *21st* day of *July* 2006

MXC712093

This Marriage was solemnized between us,

*The Mark X of John Spinning*  
*Jane Spinning*

### Signatures

These should be the signature of the bride and groom and the witnesses. It is a pity that many C of E clergy insist on people writing their full names which of course is quite different from them signing their signatures. If you want to compare signatures to ensure you are looking at the correct bride or groom or whatever or to see if one person has been impersonating another, then a full name written out is not as useful as a proper signature. The witnesses should be personally known to the bride or groom. After all their function is to witness in a court of law what they heard and saw at a marriage ceremony and it might be necessary to contact them at a later stage to witness on your behalf. However, some couples do use witnesses off the street that they do not know from Adam!

It is not necessary for a marriage register to be completed and signed for the marriage to be legal. The marriage is valid in law once the declaration and contract have been verbally made - hence the witnesses. There are no laws concerning the age of marriage witnesses - they need to be old enough to function properly as a witness that is all.


A marriage must be witnessed by 2 people, but it is perfectly possible to have more than 2 signing.

The certificate will be completed with the signature(s) of those taking the ceremony. There may be two signatures eg all Register Office marriages have 2 signatures which are those of the superintendent conducting the ceremony and that of the Registrar who is doing the registration. Non-conformist marriages might also have 2 in the same way. Church of England marriages would usually only have the one signature of the cleric who has both conducted the ceremony and completed the registration.

The certificate is completed with the date of issue of the certificate - which may be the same date if it is the one completed on the marriage day or could be a later date.


The last feature on a marriage certificate should be a line drawn through the space at the end of the certificate but outside the box containing all the details. The line indicates that there have been no corrections to the original entry. If it is the certificate completed on the day there should be a line drawn through this space. If a correction to the entry is made after the marriage then this is where the correct details will be shown.

# Marriages Witnesses

  
**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE**      GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number: COL-464192

No.	Name	Rank and Residence	Age	Residence	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Time of Marriage	Rank, Name and Residence	Rank or Profession of Father
1867	Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Peter's Church</u> in the <u>Parish of St. Louis</u> in the County of <u>Missouri</u>							
1867	Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Peter's Church</u> in the <u>Parish of St. Louis</u> in the County of <u>Missouri</u>	<u>John Sprenkle</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>St. Louis</u>	<u>Merchant</u>	<u>St. Louis</u>	<u>Henry Sprenkle</u>	<u>Merchant</u>
		<u>John Sprenkle</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>St. Louis</u>	<u>Merchant</u>	<u>St. Louis</u>	<u>Henry Sprenkle</u>	<u>Merchant</u>
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Roman Catholic</u> Church by the								
The Bride <u>John Sprenkle</u>		In the <u>Parish of St. Louis</u>		by the <u>Minister of the Gospel</u>				

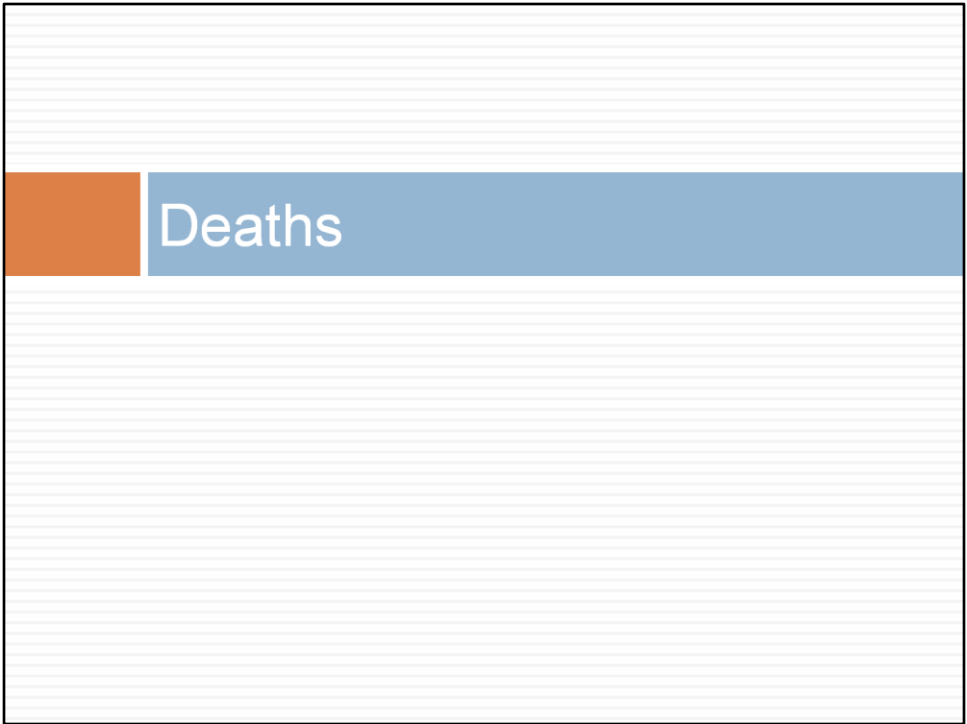
CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of Trenton  
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 21st day of July 2006

MXC712093      

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WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

in the Presence of us, Bretherton of St. Louis  
Elizabeth Hooper



A table with a header row and multiple empty rows. The header row has a blue background and contains the text 'Deaths'. The rest of the table is empty.

	Deaths

# Deaths GRO Index

**DEATHS**

Sept 1837 - Dec 1865		Surname	Forename/s		District		Volume	Page
Mar 1866 - Mar 1969		Surname	Forename/s	Age at Death	District		Volume	Page
Jun 1969 - Dec1983		Surname	Forename/s	Date of Birth	District		Volume	Page
1984 - 1992 (Annual Index)		Surname	Forename/s	Date of Birth	District	Reg Month/Year	Volume	Page
1993 - date ( Annual Index)		Surname	Forename/s	Date of Birth	District Name/No	Register No	Entry No	Reg Month/Yr

# Deaths

## Anatomy of a Death Certificate

**CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH**

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number 3320211-1


REGISTRATION DISTRICT  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot BEAMINSTER  
in the County of Dorset

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
1856	1856	Thomas	Male	55	Labourer	Prostration of food & drink of the brain	Henry John Roberts, Beamsville	1856	Regina


CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.  
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DVD 052705

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE "CROWN COPYRIGHT"  
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



# Deaths Reference



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1


REGISTRATION DISTRICT									
BEAMINSTER									
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot in the County of Dorset									
Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
1	24th Dec 1856	John Adams	M	45	Labourer	Heart Affection	John Adams, 24 London Road, Evershot	1st Dec 2011	W. J. Registrar

CERTIFIED copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the Office of the Registrar, the 4th day of July 2011

DVD 05

See note overleaf



THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE:  
 USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE "CROWN COPYRIGHT"  
 USING A CERTIFICATE AS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

This is the date and place of death. Most deaths are registered within a day or two of the date of death. Today a death certified by a doctor should be registered within 5 days of the death and a death certified after a post-mortem within 14 days. If there has been an accident or suspicious circumstances or an unexplained death and an inquest has been held, the lag between death and registration could be as long as a year although in the past the delay was still only a couple of weeks. The death is not registered until the inquest has been held.

If the death being registered is that of a baby that lived for less than 24 hours, then these days the hours or minutes that the baby lived would be shown with words such as "Aged 2 hours" or "Aged 11 minutes" but I do not think this was common practice in the last century.

If a body has been found and the precise date of death cannot be ascertained then there may be wording such as "Dead body found on....." or "On or about the twelfth June.....". If someone is taken ill but is dead by the time they have reached hospital there could be the wording "Found dead on arrival at....." but again this is a more modern occurrence.

The place of death could be anywhere! Note that you do not necessarily have the address of the deceased. Column 1 is the place where the death occurred and Column 7 gives the address of the person registering the death but nowhere is there a column which gives the specific address of the deceased. If someone dies away from home and the death is registered by someone other than the wife or husband of the deceased you do not have the home address of the deceased.


The address shown may not give you the precise nature of the building. Institutions such as prisons or psychiatric hospitals have alternative addresses eg 24 London Road which are used when someone is born or dies in them eg 24 London Road ..... could be an alternative address for an institution.

As with the births, the address may be very vague in the early days of registration. It might simply say "Skipton" or "Enfield". By the 1860s there is often a street given and by the 1880s a fairly precise address would be given. If therefore you have an imprecise address eg King Street given when you would expect a precise address you are probably looking at the true place of death - ie the person really did die on King Street rather in a house on King Street.


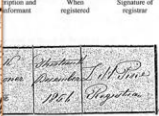





# Deaths Name and Surname

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH  GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number: 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT: BEAMINSTER  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershott in the County of Dorset

Column:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname				Age at death	Sex and marital status	When registered	Signature of registrar
	26 1856 Evershott	Charles Wellman						26 1856 Evershott	 

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the  
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, July 2011

DVD 052705 See note overleaf

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### Name and Surname of the Deceased

This is the name by which they were known at the time of death. If, therefore, someone started life with a different name but by usage has come to be called something else you will not find any reference to the original name on older certificates. Sometimes people have dropped a first name so that a child named John Stanley FRANCIS at birth might only be known as Stanley FRANCIS by the time they die. Where a child was illegitimate at birth and only registered with mothers details they could only have mothers surname on the birth certificate. However, they might well be known all their life by their fathers surname so eg someone with a birth certificate of Samuel HOLLOWAY might be registered at death as Samuel STEWART.

A baby that has died might not be given a first name and the death registration would simply show ----- GREEN and all registrations where the information is not known will have lines drawn through the relevant spaces. Sometimes someone would be found dead on the road or in a house and no-one knew very much information about them - even today this still happens and in the past when people carried much less in the way of paperwork about themselves it happened more frequently.

These days a person is frequently registered in more than one name so that all previous names would be shown. My 2 favourites were the man who was known as something on the lines of Charles WELLINGTON who was born with a name something like Abraham LEVI and around the time of the second World War had decided that such a name was not going to help him progress through life and so had changed it totally.

The other was the man who had changed his surname to his stepfather's when his Police Sergeant had taken him on one side and suggested gently that he was never going to go far in the police force going into court and being named PC Hogsflesh! There are a multitude of reasons why someone should change their name between birth and death - but it doesn't help you much when you are trying to do your family history.

# Deaths Sex

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT	BEAMINSTER
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot	in the County of Dorset

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Place of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	
26	1856 Evershot	Thomas Matthews	Male	52	at home Evershot	Henry Lamb Ryde to Beaminster Dorchester	1856	S. A. P. 1856	W. H. P. 1856

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DYD 052705

See note overleaf



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SPS 30308 10/02 10/08 10/08/08 10/02/11

# Deaths Age

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT BEAMINSTER  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot in the County of Dorset

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Place of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	
26	1856	William Matthews	Male	50	at home	Henry Lamb, Registrar, Bournemouth	1856	W. H. Rogers	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a [redacted] above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DVD 052705

See note overleaf



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SPS 30388 10/02 10/00 10/00/00 10/02/00

# Deaths Occupation

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT	BEAMINSTER
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot	in the County of Dorset

Columns: 1 2 3 4 5 8 9  
 No. When and where died Name and surname Sex Age Occupation When registered Signature of registrar

1856	Evershot	Paul May	M	33	Labourer	1856	W. P. P. P. P.
------	----------	----------	---	----	----------	------	----------------



CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DVD 052705

See note overleaf



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979 50008 0002 0000 000000 000021

# Deaths Cause of Death

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT **BEAMINSTER**  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot in the County of Dorset

1	2	3	4	5	6	9	
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature of registrars
1856	26th Dec 1856	Abraham Matthews	Male	55	Small boy	Insultation of God. Pleurisy of the Lungs	James [Signature]

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY OF AN ENTRY IN THE REGISTERED COPY OF A REGISTER OF DEATHS IN THE DISTRICT ABOVE MENTIONED.  
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

D Y D 052705

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WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.

This is the really juicy column. Let me start by explaining who might have given the information that you find given as the cause of death.

There are basically 4 possible scenarios

- Uncertified death
- Certification by a doctor
- Certification by a post-mortem but without an Inquest
- Certification following an inquest.

In the early days of registration all the deaths were uncertified. The informant simply gave the cause as they saw it. And they were probably not far off the truth. You tend to get simple causes such as measles, stroke, gout, childbirth and so on.

It is still possible to have a death not certified by a doctor in which case it is still the informant who is supposed to tell the registrar what the cause of death was. If you have a death certificate without the name of a certifying doctor and it was not a post mortem or an inquest then you have an uncertified death. They are pretty rare today - but the sort of situation in which you would have an uncertified death would be where a person died at home at the weekend - they had only been treated by the one doctor from their surgery and that doctor went on holiday for a fortnight starting that weekend. In that case there is no other doctor who can legally sign a certificate. The coroner would then be notified - but if he decides after looking into the matter that there is no need for a post mortem then you would have an uncertified death.

By 1845 most of the causes of death are followed by the word - certified. Where those words are not found then a doctor did not write a certificate of cause of death. Plenty of families who had sick and dying relatives would not necessarily have called a doctor to see the patient - after all doctors had to be paid.

By 1875 the cause of death is followed by "Certified by.....(name of doctor) .....(doctors qualifications)" in which case the doctor in attendance on the deceased in his last illness has signed a medical certificate of cause of death. This tends then to be in medical jargon eg myocardial infarction (a layman would have said heart attack) or cerebrovascular accident (stroke). A doctor is only qualified to sign if he has been in attendance on the deceased in his last illness AND has either seen the deceased within 14 days of his death or saw the deceased after death. If there is no doctor who qualifies under these restrictions then the death must be notified to the coroner.

When a death has been notified to the coroner, that coroner may take one of two actions. If the coroner is satisfied with the cause of death and the circumstances immediately before the death, he may decide to take no further action in which case the original doctors certificate will stand.

If there is no doctor at all qualified to sign or the cause of death is not certain or the circumstances are open to debate then the coroner may insist on a post-mortem (and the relatives will not be able to object to this). If the post-mortem gives a clear cause of death and the circumstances are not suspicious then the death will be registered on a coroners post-mortem and the certifying person will be given as the coroner or it may just say "post-mortem" or "PM".

If there are suspicious circumstances and the death is considered to be due to violence (including self-inflicted) or neglect or unnatural (eg someone dying from severe sunstroke or alcoholic poisoning) or from an industrial disease just to name a few possibilities, then there will be an inquest.

Where an inquest has been held it will say so although the wording for this varies through time. A verdict will be given such as natural causes, suicide (or deceased took his own life while of unsound mind), accidental death. If an inquest adjourned has been held and there is no verdict given then someone has been charged with the death. In the past it might name the accused, or say murder by person or persons unknown.

Once deaths were mostly certified by doctors you tend to get more medical jargon - myocardial infarction, status asthmaticus and so on. As these medical terms have not changed and can be found in medical dictionaries I have not attempted to list them here.

Some terms however are no longer in common use and these are some of the more commonly occurring ones -

- consumption - TB
- dropsy - accumulation of fluid in any tissue (often a symptom of kidney failure or heart failure)
- fistula - I think this is connected with boils and carbuncles but would be grateful for any better information
- phthisis - TB I suspect that consumption and phthisis may relate to different forms of TB but don't know for certain
- marasmus - always of a small child - generalised failure to thrive. (Could be from a major heart problem or a congenital disease such as intolerance to certain foods etc)
- wasting - as for marasmus

- apoplexy - stroke or cerebral haemorrhage
- syncope - usually associated with a heart problem I thought although my dictionary gives lack of blood to the brain as its meaning
- dyspnoea - difficulty in breathing
- anasarca - diffused dropsy in the skin
- scrofula - TB (usually of the lymphatic glands)

climacteric - vague term meaning something unusually severe has happened e.g. heart attack or stroke.

I would be glad to hear of any more causes of death which are not now used and very glad to hear of any better definitions than the ones I have given - I don't pretend to any medical background

Many of these causes of death would not be acceptable today. eg dyspnoea would have to be qualified by something giving the reason for the difficulty in breathing eg pneumonia or asthma.

# Deaths

## Cause of Death

- 4 possible scenarios
  - Uncertified Death (common pre 1845)
  - Certification by a doctor
  - Certification by a post-mortem but without an Inquest
  - Certification following an inquest.
- Medical Terms
  - <http://www.antiquusmorbus.com/>

This is the really juicy column. Let me start by explaining who might have given the information that you find given as the cause of death.

There are basically 4 possible scenarios

- Uncertified death
- Certification by a doctor
- Certification by a post-mortem but without an Inquest
- Certification following an inquest.

In the early days of registration all the deaths were uncertified. The informant simply gave the cause as they saw it. And they were probably not far off the truth. You tend to get simple causes such as measles, stroke, gout, childbirth and so on.

It is still possible to have a death not certified by a doctor in which case it is still the informant who is supposed to tell the registrar what the cause of death was. If you have a death certificate without the name of a certifying doctor and it was not a post mortem or an inquest then you have an uncertified death. They are pretty rare today - but the sort of situation in which you would have an uncertified death would be where a person died at home at the weekend - they had only been treated by the one doctor from their surgery and that doctor went on holiday for a fortnight starting that weekend. In that case there is no other doctor who can legally sign a certificate. The coroner would then be notified - but if he decides after looking into the matter that there is no need for a post mortem then you would have an uncertified death.

By 1845 most of the causes of death are followed by the word - certified. Where those words are not found then a doctor did not write a certificate of cause of death. Plenty of families who had sick and dying relatives would not necessarily have called a doctor to see the patient - after all doctors had to be paid.

By 1875 the cause of death is followed by "Certified by.....(name of doctor) .....(doctors qualifications)" in which case the doctor in attendance on the deceased in his last illness has signed a medical certificate of cause of death. This tends then to be in medical jargon eg myocardial infarction (a layman would have said heart attack) or cerebrovascular accident (stroke). A doctor is only qualified to sign if he has been in attendance on the deceased in his last illness AND has either seen the deceased within 14 days of his death or saw the deceased after death. If there is no doctor who qualifies under these restrictions then the death must be notified to the coroner.

When a death has been notified to the coroner, that coroner may take one of two actions. If the coroner is satisfied with the cause of death and the circumstances immediately before the death, he may decide to take no further action in which case the original doctors certificate will stand.

If there is no doctor at all qualified to sign or the cause of death is not certain or the circumstances are open to debate then the coroner may insist on a post-mortem (and the relatives will not be able to object to this). If the post-mortem gives a clear cause of death and the circumstances are not suspicious then the death will be registered on a coroners post-mortem and the certifying person will be given as the coroner or it may just say "post-mortem" or "PM".

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phthisis - TB I suspect that consumption and phthisis may relate to different forms of TB but don't know for certain

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wasting - as for marasmus

apoplexy - stroke or cerebral haemorrhage

syncope - usually associated with a heart problem I thought although my dictionary gives lack of blood to the brain as its meaning

dyspnoea - difficulty in breathing

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# Deaths

## Signature, description and residence of Informant

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT BEAMINSTER  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot in the County of Dorset

No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
1	18th November 1856	Thomas Matthews	Male	64	Labourer	Smallpox	Henry Lamb Deputy Coroner Bournemouth	18th November 1856	Wm. H. Rogers Registrar


CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DVD 052705

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE "CROWN COPYRIGHT"

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



The signature could be made by the informant if they could write their name or it could be a mark. A large "X" and the words "the mark of ....." will be familiar to most of you.

The description of the informant has varied with time. In the early days, the informant was one of the following

- someone present at the death
- someone in attendance
- the occupier of a house
- the master or keeper of an institution
- the person present at the death or in attendance (which meant they had been nursing the deceased or in close contact with them during their illness) was also usually a relative, but the early registrations do not give the relationship of the informant to the deceased. It is always worth remembering with registrations before 1875 that an informant "present at the death", with a name you might not recognise, could be a married daughter that you have had no information on since she left home, or a granddaughter or grandson, son-in-law or any other relative likely to have a different surname from the deceased .
- By 1875 the relationship of the informant to the deceased was given - together with additional qualifications such as "present at the death" or "in attendance". People not related to the deceased but present at the death still qualified, but only "present at the death" would be shown.
- The occupier (usually the owner) of a house or institution (usually the master of the workhouse) still qualified but in addition the following had been added
- a person who found the body
- inmate of a house or institution - this was a person living at the same address who knew of the event
- person causing the burial
- person in charge of the body

A relative of the deceased includes any relation by blood or by marriage so that - apart from the widow(er) of the deceased - daughters and sons, grandchildren, cousins, sons- or daughters-in-law, brothers- or sisters-in-law, second cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces, stepchildren and stepparents all qualify. The early registration will make no distinction between relatives by blood or by marriage so eg it will say brother whether it is a blood brother or a brother- in-law.

A common-law wife or husband has no status in law for registration purposes and would be unable to register a death of a partner unless they qualified in some other way such as being present at the death. That doesn't stop people lying about their marital status of course! Nor are godchildren or godparents qualified to register.

Someone present at the death could simply have been the person who made a living by sitting with the dying and laying them out after death, or a close friend or neighbour and is not necessarily a relative.

The more remote the relationship to the deceased, the less likely it is that the information they have given is accurate. This is even more true when the master of the workhouse has registered a death as the occupier of the institution where the death took place.

Note that someone whose qualification is "causing the burial or cremation....." is NOT the undertaker. This is the person who is giving the instructions to the undertaker - or in the past - was doing the funeral arrangements themselves. Note also that the executor of a will does not qualify to register unless they are the ones making the funeral arrangements.

When an inquest has taken place then the informant will be the coroner and there will be no signature as such. The column will read something on the lines of "Information received from Thomas Griffin Coroner for the City of Westminster". Later on the date of the Inquest might be given.

The residence of the informant will vary from just a town or village name in the early registrations to a fuller address. If you think you have a married daughter or sister or other long lost relative doing a registration you should have a name and address - enough to look on a census, or to look for a marriage. We found a sister of the main line registering the death of her 90 year old mother in 1872 - 60 years after the only other time we had found her at her baptism. So once you have the main tree established - don't neglect your death certificates - they can lead to all sorts of further good family history material.

# Deaths When Registered

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 3320211-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT BEAMINSTER  
1856 DEATH in the Sub-district of Evershot in the County of Dorset


Columns								
No.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	When registered	Signature of registrars	
1	26th December 1856	Abraham Matthews	Male	55 years	Small Shop Ladener	26th December 1856	Wm. Registrar	

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 4th day of July 2011

DYD 052705 See note overleaf

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This is normally very close to the date of death - or even the day of the death itself. Even today only 5 days is allowed for a death registration, or 14 if a coroners post-mortem is required. An Inquest has no time limit.

Occasionally there will be a significant difference between the date of death and the date of registration eg someone may have died without anyone else being aware of it, and the body may not be found for some time. In the case of an Inquest, the registration is not made until the Inquest has been held. In the last century that meant that there might be only a few days or up to two or three weeks between the death, the Inquest and the registration. These days, there can be many months between death and registration - or even over a year in a few rare cases. The importance of the date of registration is that it dictates the appearance of the death in the indexes, as deaths are indexed by the date of registration and not the date of death. If you do not find a death registration in the quarter or even year that you expect it - look further on. It might have been that there was an Inquest.

If a death has not been registered within a year of the date of death, then the death cannot be registered except with the authority of the registrar general and this will be noted in the column with the date of registration.



## Ordering Certificates

- GRO or Local Office
- Local Offices will normally only search for marriages if you know the Church as they don't have indexes by period

# GRO Certificate Checking

- Births
  - Date of Birth
  - Place of birth as exactly as possible
  - Full name and surname of person's father
  - Full name and surname of person's mother
  - Other checking point
- Marriages
  - Date of marriage
  - Place of marriage as exactly as possible
  - Full name and surname of man's father
  - Full name and surname of woman's father
  - Other checking point
- Deaths
  - Date of death
  - Place of death as exactly as possible
  - Date of birth of deceased (only shown in and after June 1969)
  - Occupation and (if female) marital condition of deceased
  - Other checking point
- If any of the checking references do not match, a certificate will not be issued and the ONS will refund part of your fee.

