



PATRON CLASS HANDOUT

ENGLAND AND WALES CIVIL REGISTRATION

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Registration of births, marriages, and deaths with the English government began 1 July 1837. In theory, every vital event that occurred was to be reported to the local registrars. From 1837-1875, many births—perhaps as high as 15%—were not reported. After 1875 registration is nearly complete, although there is some debate that in large cities some events went unregistered.

Registration is an ongoing project to document the population.

Events were recorded within registration districts. Registration districts were typically smaller than counties but larger than parishes. A registration district in a rural area might include 30 parishes, whereas a district in an urban area might only cover part of a parish. To find which registration district your parish or town belongs to, you can look in an online gazetteer. Go to www.visionofbritain.org.uk, click on “Expert Search” then scroll down and click on tab “Search Descriptions”. Fill in the Name (for placename), and when the results come back click on the place name with “Imperial” as the source. The first line or so of the entry will tell you the district. If the place is a hamlet, village or chapelry within a parish of a different name, you will have to look up that parish in order to find the district.

To find all of the parishes in a registration district, go to www.ukbmd.org.uk/genuki/reg/, click on your county, and then the name of the district. This will show you all the parishes within that district.

There are two sets of civil registration records—the local copies and the national copies that were transcribed by hand from the local copies.

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM CIVIL REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES?

Civil registration is a main source for learning about family history in the 19th century. It can also be helpful for the late 18th century—someone born well before civil registration began may have had a second marriage or died during the civil registration time period.

Birth Certificates

- Registration district
- Name and sex of child
- When and where born
- Name, surname, and occupation of father
- Name and maiden surname of mother (indicated by “formerly”)
- When and by whom registered
- Signature, description, and residence of informant

- Father, mother, neighbor, or other person present at the birth was supposed to register the birth within 42 days

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM CIVIL REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES?

Marriage Certificates

- Registration District and place of marriage
- Names and surnames of bride and groom
- When and where married
- Ages or full age
- Occupations and marital status
- Residences at time of marriage
- Fathers' names and occupations
- Signatures of bride and groom and witnesses
- All marriages were to be recorded in a civil register immediately after the ceremony by the officiating minister

Death Certificates

- Registration District
- Name and surname of deceased
- When and where died
- Age
- Sex
- Cause of death
- Signature, description, and residence of informant
- When and by whom registered

SEARCHING THE INDEXES

Indexes to civil registration include all of England and Wales. The indexes are quarterly, e.g. if you're searching for an ancestor born in 1842 you must search four indexes—March quarter, June quarter, September quarter, and December quarter.

It is helpful to remember that the indexes reflect the date the event was registered, not necessarily the date the event took place.

Indexes to civil certificates from the General Register Office contain:

- Full name
- District name
- Volume number
- Page number

Over the years, the indexes evolved to contain more information:

- Age added to death indexes in 1866
- Mother's maiden name added to birth indexes in 1911
- Spouse's surname added to marriage indexes in 1912
- Birth date added to death indexes in 1969

Local Superintendent Registrars are putting up indexes to the Birth, Marriage, and deaths. These indexes have more information. Births (mother's maiden Surname) Marriages (Marriage place) and Deaths (age prior to 1866)

Strategy

Here is a prioritized search strategy to find an ancestor in the civil registration indexes. If the first doesn't work, try the second, and so forth.

1. FreeBMD www.freebmd.org.uk
2. UKBMD www.ukbmd.org.uk
3. Familysearch familysearch.org
4. Index images at www.findmypast.com (\$) or www.ancestry.com (\$) or www.thegenealogist.co.uk – these are available at the FHL for FREE.
5. Microfilm and Microfiche Indexes at FHL

Then order the certificate from England!

Where can I find Indexes?

1. FreeBMD

FreeBMD is a computerized fully searchable index made from the national civil registration indexes. You can search all of England and Wales for entries from July 1837-1930 (although currently not much after WWII has been transcribed on this website).

NOTE: All data for these dates are not yet extracted and put in FreeBMD. Coverage charts are available on FreeBMD. Even for years that are covered “100%”, I have found obvious omissions, e.g. where three men and only two women have the same page reference. This would seem to indicate that there are three marriages on the same register page but only two of the brides are in the index. This could imply that the index is incomplete, or an error was made.

- a) Open the Internet.
- b) In the address bar, type in www.freebmd.org.uk and hit enter.
- c) Scroll to, and Click on Search.
- d) Select Births, Deaths, or Marriages.
- e) Type in Name and Date information. (Use the ‘spouse’ fields on marriage searches only. The mother’s maiden name applies only to births after 1910.)
- f) Optional— Select County and or District. (I recommend leaving this blank, at least for your initial search.)
- g) Click Find. If “No Matches” is indicated, expand the search or check the coverage charts to see if your year has been indexed.
- h) If you click on the name of the district and then on “more information about it can be found here” you can see the *county* the district was in and the *parishes* within that district.
- i) If you click on the page number of a marriage you can see the other names on that page—the spouse should be one of them. Where possible verify a marriage search using www.ukbmd.org.uk.

Where can I find Indexes?

2. UKBMD

While FREEBMD is an index of the national registers, UKBMD is an index of the local civil registration registers. Most of the time they are the same, but not always.

UKBMD is particularly valuable for marriages, as it will identify for certain the spouse as well as the exact location of marriage. Once the place of marriage is known, the FHL Catalog can be searched to determine if a copy of the marriage can be found in the parish registers. Steps:

1. Open the Internet.
2. In the address bar, type in www.ukbmd.org.uk.
3. On the left-hand side of the page, choose a county and click the "County" button.
4. Look down the page for "Local BMD" links, click on the link.
5. Follow the instructions!

3. FamilySearch.org

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2285338> Births 1837-1920
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2285732> Marriages 1837-1920
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2285341> Deaths 1837-1920




The index includes name, record type, year, quarter, district, county, volume, and page number. The index is arranged in volumes by years with the entries listed alphabetically. These indexes can be used to order a copy of the actual certificate. Index courtesy of Findmypast.com.

<https://familysearch.org/search> This is the search function under records. This search will also pick up the Civil Registration Indexed references 1837-1920 for births, marriages, and deaths.

4. Index images at www.ancestry.com Ancestry has images of the national civil registration index books. You can use these to verify information found on FreeBMD, or look up names in cases where FreeBMD has not indexed the year you need (or they missed your entry!).

Steps:

1. Go to www.ancestry.com
2. Click on the "Search" tab at the top
3. Scroll down to "Browse by location" select region "UK & Ireland," then "England."
4. Scroll down to "England Birth, marriage, & death" and click on "view all England birth marriage and death."
5. The civil registration index images are called:

-  England & Wales, Birth Index: 1837-2005
-  England & Wales, Marriage Index: 1837-2005
-  England & Wales, Death Index: 1837-2007

Where can I find Indexes?

Index images at www.findmypast.co.uk

1. **Search All UK Records**
2. **Birth, marriage, death & parish records**
3. **Choose to Search births, marriages, or deaths (1761-2008)**
4. **Put in name of interest in search field**
5. **See results: England and Wales 1837-2008**
6. **See results: Certificates outside England and Wales 1761-2005**

5. Microfiche indexes at the FHL (1837-1983)

If the fiche is hard to read, use the microfilm copy instead. (See Civil Registration Indexes, REG 942 V2ic 1997 for the film #)

CIVIL REGISTRATION ENGLAND-WALES ORDERING CERTIFICATES

From the indexes you should have noted the

- event type
- year
- quarter (List the quarter by the last month in that quarter, e.g. March, June, September, or December)
- district name
- volume
- page number

Go to the Web site www.gro.gov.uk and click on “Order online” under “Order Certificates” on the right-hand side of the page. Next, click on “Order a certificate online now” or on the “Register/Login” link on the right-hand side of the page. The next screen is for Login. The first time you use the web site, you will need to register. Thereafter you can log in anytime you want to order certificates. After the registration page is the “Certificate choice” page. The only tricky part is the question “Is the GRO Index reference known?” The default answer is no, but you want to change it to “yes,” because you have already found your person in the indexes. I recommend only filling in the starred fields.

The cost is £9.25 per certificate including delivery. Time for a standard delivery is about two weeks.

The local Superintendent Registrars can be contacted and they will send you a copy of the birth, marriage, or death certificate of interest. The local registrar can be more expensive. You can usually request a certificate through their local website or by contacting them by e-mail

Why Can't I Find My Ancestors?

Look for different ways to spell the first name or last name.

Jno versus John

Look for ways a name could be pronounced.

Kenety instead of Kennedy

Look for “male” or “female” as a given name.

Male Johnson

Female Johnson

Search more quarters or years.

At least two years on either side of the event year.

A name was misfiled or misspelled.

A name is there but the place is not expected.

The event was not recorded.

There was an error in indexing or transcribing.

Sometimes names were dropped when placing names into the national index from the local registration register copy.