



Birth, Marriage, Death (BMD) Certificates

After speaking to as many friends and relatives as you can about your family history the time will have come to obtain some certificates of Birth, Marriage and Death.

In England and Wales people have been able to register Births, Marriages and Deaths (BMD) since the 1st July 1837. In Scotland registration began in 1855 and in Ireland it began in 1864. Local record offices and some libraries hold BMD indexes which list names and dates, and physical copies of certificates can be obtained from <https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/>.

The General Register Office for England and Wales (GRO) holds records relating to births, marriages, deaths and adoptions. These include those registered with British Consuls, High Commissions, HM Forces, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen.

Birth, showing mother's maiden name (1837-1916) and Death, with age at death (1837-1957) are available in PDF format at £7.00. Indexes for these may be searched at www.gro.gov.uk.

Birth searching requires: Surname at Birth, Gender, and Year +/- 2 years.

Death searching requires: Surname at Death, Gender, and Year +/- 2 years. Age at death allows for a range of 0, 1, 2, 5 or 10.

To order either a PDF or a full certificate (£11.00) you will be required to register with a password of at least 8 characters and must contain 3 or more upper-case letters, lower-case letters, numbers, special characters (!"#\$%&'()*+,-./:;<=>?@[\\]^_`{|}~)

For physical copies of certificates from Scotland you can contact the New Register House, Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YT and copies relating to Ireland can be obtained from the General Register Office, Government Offices, Convent Road, Roscommon.

Registrations for Northern Ireland from 1922 are at Oxford House, 49-55 Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 4HL.

Before commencing Scottish or Irish research, however, you are strongly advised to read the relevant chapter in one of the many books available.

England and Wales

Birth Certificate.

A birth certificate includes the date and place of birth, the name, residence and maiden name of the mother and the name and occupation of the father (where given). From September 1911 the mother's surname is included in the index. Knowing both parents' full names, you can search the indexes for a reference to their marriage.

Marriage Certificate

This normally contains the names of the groom and bride, their occupations, places of residence, fathers' names & occupations, and the names of witnesses. From 1912 the spouse surname is included in the index. 1929 age at marriage changed to 16, from girls 12 boys 14.

Death Certificate

This should show the full name, date of death, age at death, residence and occupation and the name and residence of the informant. From 1 January 1866 the supposed age at death is shown in the index and the date of birth from 1 April 1969.

Simple steps like these can take your line well back into the nineteenth century. For useful information the GRO: <https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history>

To order a copy of a certificate online outside the GRO searching you need to provide some information.

The Surname and Forename of the individual

The Quarter (March, June, September, December) of the Registration of the event.

The Year of the event.

The Volume in which it appears and the Page number.

To find these details using FreeBMD <https://www.freebmd.org.uk/>

A team of volunteers has for many years been entering the GRO Index entries into a searchable database. There is no charge for using this database. Read their instructions and study the options they offer.

If you are looking for a 20th century event then it is as well to check their display of Graphs which show the progress they are making to see if the years you wish to search are covered. <https://www.freebmd.org.uk/progress.shtml>

To Search click on one of Births, Marriages, or Deaths.

You can choose to limit your search by Registration District. There is a helpful list of Places at : <https://www.ukbmd.org.uk/reg/>

or you can limit your search by County, scroll down for the one you require.

Births: from Sep 1911 it is possible to search for all children by entering the surnames of both parents.

Enter the name remembering that the index may not have included the full names.

You can limit your search by date. Except for 1837 all the quarters are available March to December. If the name you wish to find is a frequently occurring one then it would be well to divide the period you wish to search into sections. eg Mar 1900 to Dec 1905 and then reducing or increasing the range if you get too many results or only a few.

The finds are displayed for you to judge which might be the one you require.

Note the details: Year, Quarter, District, Volume, Page.

The name as it appears in the index.

Marriages: search first under the less frequent name and then confirm it by clicking on the page which shows the names appearing on the same page or by searching under the other name with the precise year and quarter to see if the same reference is shown. From 1912 it is possible to search including the spouse surname. Pre 1912 FreeBMD will search for the name on the page; this could take a long time.

Deaths: it is possible to enter a range of ages (60-70) or an estimated date of birth (@1910-1913). See FreeBMD's instructions.