



# ENGLAND and WALES CIVIL REGISTRATION

ENGLAND “HOW TO” GUIDE, BEGINNING LEVEL: INSTRUCTION

[www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) General Register Office

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## GOAL

Learn how to use Civil Registration indexes to find births, marriages, and deaths and order certificates.

## INTRODUCTION

The General Register Office indexes to birth, marriage and death can be looked at in many various ways.

At present, the General Register Office **Online** indexes at [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) only cover births 1 July 1837 to 1917 and deaths 1 July 1837 to 1957. See pages 2 and 3 for indexes and certificates.

**Civil registration** is the government recording of births, marriages, and deaths from 1 July 1837 to the present. The resulting records or database is called the **civil register** or **civil registry**.

Indexes to Birth 1 July 1837-2008  
Marriage 1 July 1837-2007  
Death 1 July-2017

The primary purpose of civil registration is to create legal documents that are used to establish and protect the civil rights of individuals. A secondary purpose is to create a data source for the compilation of vital statistics. In most countries, there is a legal requirement to notify the relevant authority of any life event which affects the registry.

The following is a list of ways civil registration documents may help you:

- Provide dates of birth, marriage or death
- Indicate names of people involved
- Verify the place of an event
- Supply name and occupation of father
- Confirm maiden name of mother
- Validate other information to ensure correct identity

## Why is Civil Registration Important in Genealogical Research?

- These records, collected and used by the government, provide information regarding ancestors. The basic information provided in birth, marriage and death records, help validate correct identity. Because the records of an individual frequently in birth and marriage records include names of one or both parents, as well as the father's occupation, they can help provide a link to the previous generation.
- They can also be linked to other records for further information of Census, Church, Occupational, Probate, Newspaper, family records and traditions, residence,
- The records can confirm information starting in 1837. Information can also help provide family connections earlier than 1837 with names of parents for marriage and baptismal records.

## HOW TO (Indexes)

The indexes are yearly and subdivided quarterly. For example, for a birth in 1842 there are four indexes - March quarter, June quarter, September quarter and December quarter. Be aware that a selection of Sep, for example, covers the whole quarter of July, August and September. The name of the month is last month in the quarter.

Quarter periods:

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter- Jan-Feb-Mar    2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter- Apr-May-Jun    3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter- Jul-Aug-Sept

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter- Oct-Nov-Dec

Remember that the indexes reflect the date the event was registered, not necessarily the date the event took place.

Indexes contain:

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

Partial Indexes, and birth, marriage, and death certificates, are available at the following website according to search priority. This website is the easiest and least expensive to obtain certificates.

[www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) This is the website for The General Registrar Office **and best place for indexed births 1 July 1837-1917 and deaths 1 July 1837-1957 certificate information.**

Websites that have indexes. Certificates can only be purchased through the GRO and local Superintendent Registrars.

[www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk)  
[www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

[www.ukbmd.org.uk](http://www.ukbmd.org.uk)  
[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

<https://familysearch.org>

## The General Register Office (How To Indexes and Purchase Certificate(s))

1. Already have a birth, marriage or death index reference.

Go to [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) step by step instruction

- A. Order certificates online
- B. Search the GRO historical birth and death indexes and order Certificates/PDFs Online
- C. Login or Register
- D. Start Application Fill in the fields of interest and those with a \*
- E. For events registered in England and Wales choose Birth, Marriage or Death
- F. Fill in year of event. The GRO will search 3 years for the certificate if index reference is not provided, then click Submit
- G. Application for an England and Wales Birth or marriage or death certificate or PDF copy
- H. Fill in required fields and add reference, then click submit
  - I. If by mail verify contact details or if by PDF verify e-mail address
- J. Basket Summary/Order details
- K. Checkout, Continue Shopping, Return to the GRO Indexes
- L. Proceed with Payment

2. To obtain PDF of birth 1 July 1837-1917 or death 1 July 1837-1957.

Go to [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) step by step instruction using the index and purchase certificate

- A. Order certificates online
- B. Search the GRO historical birth and death indexes and order Certificates/PDFs Online
- C. Login or register
- D. Search the GRO Indexes
- E. Search the GRO Online Index - Choose Birth or Death
- F. Fill in the fields of interest and those with a \*
- G. See the results
- H. Order Certificate PDF/Place an Order
  - I. Application for an England and Wales birth or death certificate
- J. If by mail verify contact details or if by PDF verify e-mail address
- K. Basket Summary/Order details
- L. Checkout, Continue Shopping, Return to the GRO Indexes
- M. Proceed with Payment

## PRACTICE

- Locate the birth certificate index entry for Charles Bittle Outridge born around 1851 in Southwark, England
- Use steps above under the General Register Office to locate birth certificate entry.
- Write down the information or order Certificate PDF
- Choose how to order the certificate (Standard Post, DX or PDF by Priority Post, DX, or by Special Delivery or Priority DHL
- How many certificate
- Submit
- Check information
- Submit
- Check information
- Checkout
- Purchase certificate with credit Card

## ACTIVITY

Try a name you are interested in finding. Do you know where in England and Wales to look? A birth place or death place is very helpful to the search. For a birth, the mother's maiden surname is listed. If you know the Mother's maiden name, then a birth entry maybe easier to locate. A death entry has an age. If you know the age at death and place of death you may have a better chance of finding and determining the correct death certificate. [maps.familysearch.org](https://maps.familysearch.org) will help you determine a possible registration district to look for a birth or death. Use the practice steps above to complete the activity. If you find the reference, decide how you want to purchase the certificate. Order a pdf and you will receive it in an e-mail within a week of ordering. Order by mail and should come within two weeks of ordering.