HM Passport Office

GUIDE TO DEATH CERTIFICATES

The official records of an ancestor's demise may provide clues as to how, where and with whom they spent their final days

It's quick and easy...

ONLINE

It's quick and easy to order a death certificate online, just follow these three steps:

STEP ONE Visit **www.gov.uk/bmdcertificates** and click on 'Start now'. Select 'Order a certificate online now' and register if you have not registered before (you will need an email address).

STEP TWO Select 'Death Certificate' and if you know the GRO index reference number, click yes, if not click no. You will need to add the year of the event (if you do not have the index reference number a search will be carried out for you that covers a three-year period around the year you provide).

STEP THREE Once your address has been confirmed you will be asked to provide the information you have got from the index. You can order a certificate without an index reference number but you will need to give some identifying information such as the name of the deceased, year and district of death. You will not be charged more for this service but it will take longer for your certificate to be dispatched. You will need to pay by credit or debit card. See right for fees.

BY PHONE

If you don't wish to order online you can apply by telephone with a credit/debit card on 0300 123 1837. Lines are open Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm, Saturday 9am – 4pm.

BY POST

Application can also be made by post and forms can be obtained from GRO or downloaded via **www.gov.uk/bmdcertificates**

TRACK DOWN A FOREBEAR'S DEATH

Death certificates are often overlooked in the family historian's research, however they can unlock secrets of an ancestor's life. They will provide details of how, where and when your forebear died, while the name of the informant could shed light on previously unknown relatives or friendships. These details will allow you to find any wills or probate records, which can take your research further.

The General Register Office (GRO) in Southport holds records of deaths recorded in England and Wales from 1837, as well as records for some British Nationals who died overseas dating back to 1761.

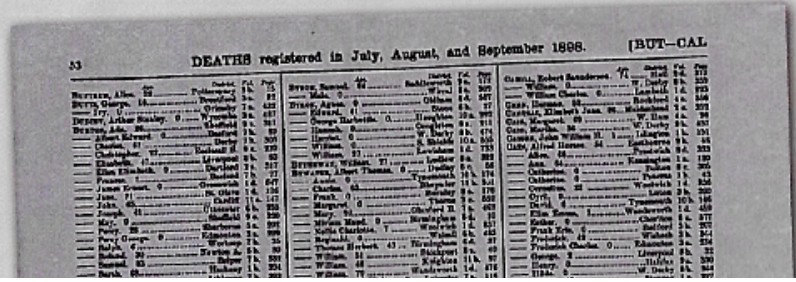
	Standard Service	Despatch target	Priority Service	Despatch target
Certificate with GRO index reference number supplied	£9.25	Four working days	£23.40	Next working day if ordered before 4pm
Certificate without GRO index reference number supplied	£9.25	Fifteen working days	£23.40	Next working day if ordered before 4pm

How to find an index reference

The GRO provides a public index that lists basic details of every death recorded in England and Wales since 1837. The index is divided into four quarters for each year and can be viewed online for free at most libraries and record offices, or online at **www.freebmd.org.uk**. This free-to-use website has an almost complete transcription of the indexes for England and Wales from 1837 to 1983. You can also search the complete indexes for a fee using commercial websites.

Once you have found the right death record in the indexes you will need to make a note of:

- **Full name of the person on the certificate**
- **The year and quarter in which the death was registered**
- **The registration district**
- **The volume and page number of the entry**


53 DEATHS registered in July, August, and September 1898. [BUT—CAL



FIND THAT DEATH

Try these tips if you can't find the demise of an ancestor listed in the indexes

TIP 1

After 1866, the age of the deceased is recorded in the indexes so it will help to have pinpointed their date of birth before searching for a death.

TIP 2

Not sure of the year of death? Try narrowing down your search using other records such as the census.

TIP 3

A death might not have taken place in the town – or even country – where they lived, so hunt further afield. Don't forget to search the overseas death indexes.

TIP 4

If an inquest was held, the death might have been registered some time later, so widen your search.

TIP 5

The name you know your ancestor by might not be the one that appears on their death certificate. Try searching using their middle names, for example.