HM Passport Office

GUIDE TO MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES

Collect the evidence for one of the most important days in your ancestors' lives and take your research back another generation

It's quick and easy...

ONLINE

It's quick and easy to order a marriage 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 'Marriage 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 marriage (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 names of the bride and groom, year of marriage and district of marriage. 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**

REVEAL YOUR FAMILY UNIONS

Marriage certificates are key documents and provide a wealth of information on two strands of your family tree. They will help take you back to the next generation by providing the father's name for the bride and groom as well as their occupations and may lead to surprising discoveries, for instance the witnesses may be family members.

The General Register Office (GRO) in Southport holds comprehensive records of all marriages recorded in England and Wales from 1837 onwards as well as records for some British Nationals married overseas dating back to 1761.

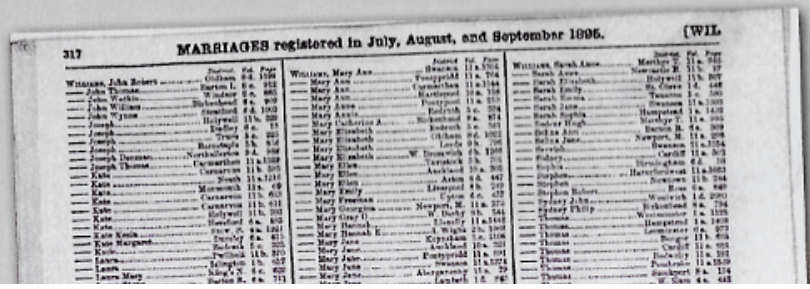
	Standard Service	Despatch target	Priority Service	Despatch target
Certificate with GRO index reference number supplied	£9.25	Four working days	£23.40	Next working day if ordered before 4pm
Certificate without GRO index reference number supplied	£9.25	Fifteen working days	£23.40	Next working day if ordered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

How to find an index reference

The GRO provides a public index that lists basic details of every marriage recorded in England and Wales. The index is divided into four quarters for each year and can be viewed online for free at libraries and record offices, or visit **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 marriage record you will need to note the following:

- **Full name of at least one of the people on the certificate**
- **The year and quarter in which the marriage was registered**
- **The registration district**
- **The volume and page number of the entry**


317 MARRIAGES registered in July, August, and September 1895. (WIL



FIND THAT MARRIAGE

Try these five tips if you can't find an ancestor's nuptials recorded in the indexes

TIP 1

Prior to 1875, the registration of an event was not enforced and therefore some were missed.

TIP 2

Marriages sometimes took place after the birth of the first child. Widening the timescale searched may help.

TIP 3

A marriage might have taken place outside of England and Wales. For Scottish records, visit www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk.

TIP 4

The bride may have been married more than once – try looking under the name of the groom instead.

TIP 5

Bear in mind that there may never have been a marriage. Couples often lived together as man and wife because divorce was rare and expensive. Some did not remarry after their spouse died.