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Looking for records of a birth, marriage or death in England and Wales

This is a brief guide to help you with your research. **Records of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales** are kept in various places, but **not** usually at The National Archives. This guide will help you to find out where else you can look.

What do I need to know before I start?

Try to find out:

- the person's name (and name of their parents, spouse or next of kin, where applicable)
- the approximate date of the birth, marriage or death
- the [district](#) where the event is likely to have taken place

What records can I see online?

Indexes to birth, marriage and death registrations (1837 to present)

Search [birth, marriage and death indexes \(http://www.freebmd.org.uk/\)](http://www.freebmd.org.uk/) on freebmd.org.uk. Some commercial websites ([£](#)) also have the indexes such as [Findmypast \(http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds\)](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds) and [Ancestry \(http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=124\)](http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=124). For more information see the [General Register Office family history page \(https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history-general-register-office\)](https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history-general-register-office) on GOV.UK.

Non-conformist registers (primarily before 1837)

Search [BMDregisters \(http://www.bmdregisters.co.uk/\)](http://www.bmdregisters.co.uk/) ([£](#)) for records of:

- [non-conformist](#) and other [non-parochial](#) births and baptisms, deaths and burials, and some marriages for the 17th-19th centuries
- clandestine (irregular) marriages up to 1754
- Quaker births, marriages and deaths up to 1837 (RG 4-RG 8)

Selected church marriage registers (1837-c1920)

View some church marriage registers from 1837 up to the 1920s on [Ancestry](http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=124) (<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=124>) and [Findmypast](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds) (<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds>).

What records can I find in other archives and organisations?

Birth, marriage and death certificates (1837 to present)

[Order birth, marriage or death certificates](https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate) (<https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate>) either from the General Register Office ([£](#)), or from the relevant local register office ([£](#)).

Indexes to birth, marriage and death registrations (1837 to present)

Use the GOV.UK website to find out which libraries, archives and record offices keep [birth, marriage and death indexes on microfiche](https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history) (<https://www.gov.uk/research-family-history>).

Parish registers (before 1837)

Find the [parish register](#) in a local archive to locate baptism, marriage and burial records **before 1837**. Look up the parish using [English jurisdictions 1851](http://maps.familysearch.org/) (<http://maps.familysearch.org/>) or in [The Phillimore Atlas and Index of Parish Registers](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/bookshop/details.aspx?titleId=115) (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/bookshop/details.aspx?titleId=115>), 3rd edition, edited by Cecil R. Humphery-Smith (Phillimore, 2003).

What other resources will help me find information?

Websites

Search for birth, baptism, marriage and some burial records on the [FamilySearch](http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=igi/search_IGI.asp&clear_form=true) (http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=igi/search_IGI.asp&clear_form=true) website.

Geographical coverage is patchy but the index provides a useful pointer to relevant parish registers.

Search for birth, baptism, marriage and burial records on [Ancestry](http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=34) (<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/category.aspx?cat=34>) ([£](#)) [findmypast](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds) (<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/life-events-bmds>) ([£](#)) and [Deceased Online](http://www.deceasedonline.com/) (<http://www.deceasedonline.com/>) ([£](#)).

Books

Search [The National Archives' bookshop](http://bookshop.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) (<http://bookshop.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>) to see whether any of the publications

below may be available to buy. Alternatively, look in [The National Archives' Library \(http://tna.koha-ptfs.co.uk/\)](#) catalogue to see what is available to consult at Kew.

David Annal and Audrey Collins, Birth, marriage and death records: a guide for family historians (Pen & Sword 2012)

The National Archives is not responsible for the content of external websites.

- Births, marriages and deaths in Scotland and Ireland (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/bmdscotlandandireland.htm>)
- Births, marriages and deaths at sea or abroad (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/bmdatseaorabroad.htm>)
- Census (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/recordscensus.htm>)

- Divorce (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/divorce.htm>)

Did you know?

Birth, marriage and death certificates **cannot** be viewed or ordered at The National Archives.

The General Register Office (GRO) keeps all certificates of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales since **1837**.

Civil registration began on **1 July 1837** and no central records of births, marriages or deaths exist before that date.

If you are tracing a birth, marriage or death before **1 July 1837**, look for [parish registers](#) in local archives.

As most non-conformists were obliged to marry in the Church of England between 1754 and 1837, it is possible to find records of their marriages in Church of England parish registers.

Video guides (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/quick-animated-guides.htm>)

Preparing to research (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/quick-animated-guides/preparing-research-video.htm?WT.lf=3327>)