

BOOKHAM U3A Family History Research Part 2

Certificates

Certificates and Census returns are the backbone of Genealogy records and therefore of Family History.

In England and Wales Births Marriages and Deaths occurring after 1837 had to be recorded and copies of the records kept centrally. For a fee you can ask for the copy of a certificate up to that date. But you will need to provide detailed information to get that copy (and a slighter cheaper way is to print out a pdf).

Birth Certificates contain:--

Year, Registration District and County Since 1937 although not compulsory until 1875 (perhaps 15% missing) (from 1926 this included stillbirths but these records are locked closed)

When and where born

Name and sex

Name & surname of father and his occupation (from 1875 fathers of illegitimate children may be on the certificate)

Name, surname and maiden name of mother (but only after 1911 is this on the index)

Name, description and address of informant

When registered and Registrar.

As the informant is usually the mother this should give you a lead on an address to look up in the censuses where available.

Marriage Certificates contain: -

Where and when the marriage took place

The names and ages of the spouses.(Spouses surname only after 1912)

Their places of residence

The spouse's occupation and conditions (bachelor, widower, spinster or widow)

The names and occupations of their fathers and whether the marriage took place after banns or by special license

The signature or marks of the spouses and two witnesses

Death Certificates contain: -

Name of deceased, date & place of death

Cause of death (after 1845 as certified by a doctor)

Age or date of birth if after 1866

Deceased's occupation

Signature/mark, name and address of informant.

www.genuki.org.uk has more information about certificates.

Since 1837 births marriages and deaths have to be recorded at a local registry office (or originally at a church). Every quarter this record had to be copied and sent to the General Registry Office (GRO).

The main website is www.gro.gov.uk and there is a section with details of ordering and advice to family historians. Ensure your information is as complete as possible and accurate before parting with any money. Obtaining downloaded certificates is the cheapest way to obtain the information on them.

Certificates provide links to parents and in-laws so provide a chain of evidence. A direct copy of a copy is a **Primary Source** as it was completed at the time. However mistakes may still happen as the registrar or officiating minister may have copied details down in-correctly. A transcript of a certificate is a **Secondary Source** and may be prone to error.

The index is a **Secondary Source** as this was either a handwritten, printed or typed copy of the names entered on the certificate.