

Strategies for Using Civil Registration in the British Isles

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What is Civil Registration?

- The government recording of birth, marriage, and death certificates.
- For more information on Civil Registration visit wiki.familysearch.org and type “England Civil Registration,” or “Scotland Civil Registration,” etc.

Why Use Civil Registration?

- If your ancestor lived in the 1800s and 1900s
- Establish correct parentage
- Find siblings of an ancestor
- Determine a woman’s maiden name
- Discover birth, marriage, and death dates and places
- Verify information on your family tree
- Extend your family tree
- Establish places of residence
- Find the occupation of an ancestor
- Learn who the informant was giving the information
- Determine whether your ancestor was literate
- Discover who the witnesses were (maybe relatives)
- Learn age at marriage and death
- Determine the cause of death of an ancestor (establishes medical history)

Things to know when using Civil Registration

- When searching for a birth, marriage, or death certificate, knowing the parish or townland will be the key that will unlock your ancestor’s records.
- You need to know at least a specific county where your ancestors came from.
- When searching Civil Registration records, you need to have an estimate date for when an ancestor was born, married, or died. Other records can help give you clues for determining this information.
- England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland all have national indexes to the birth, marriage, and death certificates.
- A birth must be registered within 42 days.
- The 1874 act imposed a fee for late registration (43 days to 6 months). This penalty may have persuaded some parents to "adjust" their child's birth date to avoid paying the fee. This happened frequently in Ireland.
- After six months the birth could not be registered.

- Scotland Civil registration records (also referred to as Statutory Registers) provide the most detailed amount of information for births, marriages, and deaths.
- The law required all marriages to be recorded in a civil register immediately after the ceremony.
- Marriages were often performed at the bride's parish.
- For England and Wales, marriage information found in the civil certificates of marriage are an exact replica of the marriages found in the church registers.
- Know the civil registration districts.

Civil Registration Districts

A group of towns or townlands within a close distance from each other formed a parish. A conglomeration of parishes were formed into Civil Registration districts. It was within these districts that a birth, marriage, or death was registered. If you know the parish, you will find the Civil Registration district. Knowing a specific Civil Registration district is particularly helpful when your ancestor has a common name.

- England: <https://www.familysearch.org/mapp/>
- Scotland: Google: Scotland Registration Districts
- Ireland: www.thecore.com/seanruad (the PLU is the Registration District) or https://www.johngrenham.com/places/plu_index.php

When Civil Registration Began

England and Wales – July 1, 1837

- Any English or Welsh ancestor who was born, married or died before July 1, 1837 will not have a birth, marriage, or death certificate.
- Church records do exist before 1837 and would include baptisms, marriages, and burials.
- With this starting date you can analyze your family tree to determine which of your English and Welsh ancestors would have a birth, marriage, or death certificate.

Scotland – 1855

- Any Scottish ancestor who was born, married or died before 1855 will not have a birth, marriage, or death certificate.
- Church records do exist before 1855 and would include baptisms, marriages, and sometimes burials.
- With this starting date you can analyze your family tree to determine which of your Scottish ancestors would have a birth, marriage, or death certificate.

Ireland – 1864 (Marriage certificates began for Protestant marriages in 1845)

- Any Irish ancestor who was born, married or died before 1864 will not have a birth, marriage, or death certificate, unless they were Protestant and married after 1844.

- Church records do exist before 1864 that would include baptisms, marriages, and burials.
- With this starting date you can analyze your family tree to determine which of your English and Welsh ancestors would have a birth, marriage, or death certificate.

How to Access Civil Registration Records

Below are key websites to access Civil Registration records in the British Isles:

| ENGLAND AND WALES CIVIL REGISTRATION WEBSITES | | |
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| <p>www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Click <i>Order certificates online.</i> 2. Click <i>Search the GRO historical birth and death indexes....</i> 3. Click <i>Register/Login.</i> 4. Click <i>GRO Indexes.</i> 5. Once you have found your ancestor, click <i>Certificate, PDF, or MSF + Certificate.</i> | <p>www.freebmd.org.uk (General Register's Office)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select <i>Search</i>, then the type of certificate. 2. Enter in the first name and surname. 3. Enter a year range. 4. Select a County <u>or</u> district if known, then select <i>Search.</i> 5. For marriage indexes, click the page number to see a possible spouse. | <p>www.familysearch.org</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to <i>Search</i>, then click <i>Records.</i> 2. Under the map of the world type "England and Wales" and then add the word <i>birth, marriage or death</i>, depending on which certificate you want to find. Then click <i>enter.</i> 3. Remember that civil registration began on July 1, 1837. |
| <p>Other websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.ancestry.com • www.ukbmd.org.uk | | |
| SCOTLAND CIVIL REGISTRATION WEBSITES | | |
| <p>www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk \$</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Click <i>Register or Login.</i> 2. Click <i>Certificates and Copies.</i> 3. Scroll down and select <i>Certificate search.</i> 4. Select the statutory type (i.e. <i>birth, marriage, or death</i>), then search for your ancestor. | <p>www.familysearch.org</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to <i>Search</i>, then click <i>Records.</i> 2. Under the map of the world type "Scotland" and then add the word <i>birth or marriage.</i> Click <i>enter.</i> 3. Remember, every entry after 1855 is a Civil Registration record. | <p>www.ancestry.com \$</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to <i>Search</i>, then click <i>All Collections.</i> 2. Scroll down and under the heading <i>Explore by Location</i>, click <i>UK & Ireland.</i> 3. Click <i>Scotland</i> on the map. Indexes are under the <i>Birth, marriage, and death</i> section. |
| IRELAND CIVIL REGISTRATION WEBSITES | | |
| <p>www.irishgenealogy.ie</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Click the <i>Civil Records</i> tab. 2. Type in an ancestor's name. 3. Click the box for searching a <i>birth, marriage, or death.</i> 4. Click "<i>I am not robot.</i>" 5. Type in <u>your</u> name, click the box, and then click <i>Submit.</i> | <p>www.familysearch.org</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to <i>Search</i>, then click <i>Records.</i> 2. Under the map of the world type "Ireland Civil Registration," then hit <i>enter.</i> 3. Every entry after 1864 is a civil registration record. | <p>www.ancestry.com \$</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to <i>Search</i>, then click <i>All Collections.</i> 2. Scroll down and under the heading <i>Explore by Location</i>, click <i>UK & Ireland.</i> 3. Click <i>Ireland</i> on the map. Indexes are under |

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| 6. Click a name and if the image has been digitized there will be an "image" link. | | the Birth, marriage, and death section. |
| Other websites: www.rootsireland.ie/ \$ | | |

Civil Registration Tips:

- Remember, all information on a civil registration record is dependent on the informant's knowledge.
- Look for any certificates of other relatives in the parish where ancestor lived. Cousins can lead to grandparents.
- Search variations with names. For example, both "Mc" or "Mac" or drop the "Mc" or "Mac."
- Use both birth and marriage certificates to help find information about the parents.
- Middle names do not always appear on the indexes or the certificates.
- Remember that indexes can have omissions or errors.
- Search within a range of years, i.e. plus or minus five years of the estimated dates. Birth dates for example, may have been "adjusted." The informant also may not have known the exact date.
- Birth and marriage certificates help establish women's maiden names.
- Use civil registration in conjunction with the census and church records.
- When searching, check for all known spellings using wildcard searches, i.e., ?, *, etc.