



Shropshire Archives

GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE INDEXES

We hold microfiche copies of the indexes of births, marriages and deaths for England and Wales 1837-1950. There are separate sequences of indexes for births, marriages and deaths. There are four quarterly indexes for each year (January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December). Name entries within each quarter are arranged alphabetically by surname and then first name. The information you should find is Surname, First name, Registration district, volume number and page reference.

How to see...

You can search the indexes on www.ancestry.co.uk Shropshire Archives has the library edition which you can use here for free (please book a computer for a maximum on 2 hours).

One fiche viewer is reserved for users of the GRO index. A charge of 50p is payable for each half hour session or part of a session. The microfiches are arranged in the cabinets in three sequences - BIRTHS MARRIAGES DEATHS. The content of each fiche is identified by date and surnames.

PLEASE LEAVE YOUR CARD IN PLACE OF MICROFICHE YOU WISH TO VIEW. IN THE INTERESTS OF OTHER USERS PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE MORE FICHE THAN YOU NEED TO USE AT ANY ONE TIME.

When you have finished using the microfiche please make sure that it is returned to the correct place.

What next?

If you have found appropriate index entries, you can now apply to the **General Register Office**, PO Box 2, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 2JD or telephone +44 (0)845 603 7788 or visit www.gro.gov.uk and order online.

Alternatively, as you now know in which quarter of which year the information is contained, the relevant local Register Office may be able to supply a copy of the certificate. However, the number you have found on the GRO index does not apply to the locally held registers and you will need to be more precise with the location of the event – for marriages you will need to supply the place of marriage.

In the case of marriages, Shropshire Archives holds copies of many post 1837 church or chapel marriage registers; these contain the same information as the civil registers but each civil district will contain several churches and chapels.

About the indexes

If you do not find the information you are looking for this may be for a number of reasons.

It was not compulsory to register births until 1875. Many births, particularly of illegitimate children, were not registered in the early days of civil registration. Some children had not been named by the time they were registered - they may be entered in the index as male or female at the end of the surname entries.

The index is sometimes unreliable because:-

- Clergy failed to make copies of marriages regularly each quarter.
- Some returns sent long after they were due.
- Some returns were duplicated and were indexed twice.
- Some entries were sent in too early and were cancelled by the Registrars and not indexed.
- Some entries were only partially copied (e.g. witnesses omitted from marriage records).
- Registrars failed to check the "due succession of numbers" in the copy register received. (It is calculated that 50,000 marriage entries may be missing between 1837 and 1900 for this reason).
- Copying by the clergy assumed that their handwriting would be legible and their copying accurate. Copies by local registrars sent to the Registrar General could introduce further errors and misreadings.
- Indexing clerks included variant readings in the indexes when they were unable to read the hand-written copies. In the case of marriages, if the parties signed their names in a way which was different to the clerks entry these were indexed also.
- The clerks indexing was not checked. Fathers were indexed instead of the parties. Names were mis-indexed (Henry instead of Hannah, Trench instead of French.). Entries on the back of a page were sometimes missed.
- In the 1970s some of the manuscript indexes were typed and many errors were introduced. The originals were destroyed.
- Some pages are omitted from the microfiche copy; you can only tell this has happened by comparing the last name on one frame with the first name on the next.
- From 1866 onwards the indexes were printed but there are gaps in name sequences pointing to omissions.

(These notes based on Saul, P *The family historian's enquire within* (1995) and Camp A.J. in *Family Tree Magazine* March 1999 pp 9-10)