

Marriage Documents and Schedules

Introduction

1. This guidance note has been updated following the implementation of the new Registration system to help in completing Marriage Documents and Marriage Schedules. Please also continue to refer to the '*Guidance for the clergy*' issued by the General Register Office (GRO) which can be found at the following web address: [Guidance for the clergy](#)

Identity Documents and Marriage Preliminaries

2. For information about establishing the identity of couples, their addresses and qualifying connections and information about marriage preliminaries, please refer to our guidance notes in the 'Diocesan Registry' section of the Diocesan website which can be found here: [Diocesan Registry](#). The website also contains other helpful information about faculties, churches and churchyards, PCC issues etc.

Ink

- 3.1 Marriage Document entries can be typed into a Word version of the document and then printed to use during a marriage service. Alternatively, Marriage Documents can be completed by hand. Signatures and handwritten entries should be completed in **blue/black registration ink** using a fountain pen. They should **not** be completed using a ball point pen or felt tip pen in all the colours of the rainbow – apparently this does happen.
- 3.2 Registration ink can be ordered from Ecclesiastical Stationery Supplies from their website www.registrarsink.co.uk.
- 3.3 A number of people reported problems with their ink and clogging of fountain pens etc. Some possible solutions were suggested such as replacing the ink annually or every couple of years (depending upon the number of weddings taking place in the church) and/or to flush the pen through after every use so that it does not clog and the ink does not congeal in the pen.

Entries – Marriage Document

- 4.1 In the box next to the words 'Marriage Document' at the top of the page a reference number ('Ref. No.') should be inserted which relates to the church where the marriage took place. This can be a combination of letters and numbers so an abbreviation for the church or parish followed sequential numbers could be used, e.g. for St Michael in the Northgate, Oxford could be '**SMNG001**', '**SMNG002**' etc.

4.2 The top section of a Marriage Document entry looks like this:

Marriage document issued by.....(name)(designation)
in the parish of.....in the

- 4.3 After 'Marriage document issued by' the minister officiating at the wedding should put their full name and add their designation such as **'Rector', 'Vicar', 'Curate'**.
- 4.4 After the words 'in the parish of' the ecclesiastical parish where the marriage is taking place should entered, such as **'Chilton'** or **'Bucknell'** etc.
- 4.5 After the words 'in the' the county should be entered, such as **'County of Oxfordshire'** (the Superintendent Registrar has asked for 'Oxfordshire' rather than 'Oxford') or **'County of Buckingham'** or **'County of Berkshire'** as appropriate.
- 4.6 If the marriage is solemnised by a minister from another parish or benefice, they should include their designation and the details of their home parish. If the minister is retired or has permission to officiate then they should add **'Clerk-in-Holy Orders'** or **'Officiating Minister'** and their parish of residence.
5. Details concerning each space in the table of the Marriage Document area covered below:

- *Space 1 – Date and Place of Marriage*

The day and month should be written in words and the year in figures e.g. **Twenty-fourth July 2024**.

The place of marriage should be written referring to **'the parish church'** or **'the church of ...'** if it is not a parish church, followed by the Saints dedication and location of the church e.g. **the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Freeland**.

- *Space 2 – Name and surname*

When a couple first request to be married in church, their passports or photographic driving licences and full birth certificates must be seen, so that their names and nationality can be checked. This will also help establish which marriage preliminaries are best suited to them.

When entering their full names (including middle names) on the Marriage Document, the surname should be entered in CAPITALS not in lower case e.g. **Juliette Elizabeth SMITH**

- *Space 3 – Date of birth*

The date of birth should be entered in numbers and words e.g. **15th January 1989**.

- *Space 4 - Condition*

Condition relates to their marital status. If neither party has been previously married the term **'Single'** should be entered. The terms bachelor/spinster are no longer used.

If one or both of the parties have been previously married, and that marriage ended by divorce, the term **'Previous marriage dissolved'** should be entered, not 'Divorced'. The original Decree(s) Absolute must be seen to confirm the previous marriage(s) were legally ended before accepting the marriage booking.

If the previous marriage ended through the death of a spouse, the term **'Widow'** or **'Widower'** should be entered accordingly. The death certificate of the spouse must be seen.

For any other circumstances (such as a civil partnership dissolution etc), please refer to the GRO's [Guidance for the clergy](#).

- *Space 5 - Occupation*

As much information as possible should be entered in this space. Abbreviations should be avoided, for example, '**Information Technology Consultant**' rather than 'IT Consultant' or '**Agricultural Labourer**' rather than 'Labourer'.

Try to avoid using the word 'unemployed' but try to refer to the person's previous occupation where possible.

If the person is a Housewife or Househusband, these descriptions can be recorded.

For any further advice about descriptions of occupations, again, please refer to the GRO's [Guidance for the clergy](#).

- *Space 6 – Residence at time of marriage*

The current full address(es) of the couple should be entered in these spaces, including the postcode.

As with the identity documents mentioned earlier, evidence of the couple's address(es) should be seen when they make their application, such as bank statements for six months or Council Tax bills for two years. Due to the recent sham marriages which have taken place throughout the country, we no longer accept utility bills because it is so easy to add someone to a bill even if they do not live at the address.

Bearing in mind many couples do change address between applying to marry in a church and getting married, please check with the couple, perhaps when their Banns are about to be read or three months before their wedding, whether there has been a change of address or is likely to be a change of address so that their Banns are read in the correct parishes and the address details in the Marriage Documents are correct.

- *Space 7 – Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation*

The full names of mothers, fathers and parents should be entered here; again, the surnames should be in CAPITALS. Up to four people per person can be recorded in this space so if the parents have divorced and both remarried, the parents and step-parents can be recorded. There should be no designation for a parent (mother or father, for instance) unless they are a step-parent, e.g.:

Samuel TAYLOR Civil Engineer

Ann Ruth TAYLOR (step-parent) Doctor

Rachel Elizabeth HAMLEY Costume Designer

Joseph Thomas HAMLEY (step-parent) Sales Manager

The details of all parents do not have to be included. For instance, if one of the parties would prefer only their mother's and stepfather's details be included on the Marriage Document, this can be done so long as he is or has been married to their mother, or *vice versa*.

There is no set order for the details to be recorded so the couple can decide the order.

If one of the parents has retired, their profession followed by '(retired)' should be entered, e.g. **Chartered Accountant (retired)**.

If one of the parents has died, their name followed by '(deceased)' should be entered, then their occupation before they died and, if they were retired at the time of their death, put retired in brackets:

e.g. **James Ernest WRIGHT (deceased) Timber Merchant (retired)**

If either party does not wish to put any parents' details in the document or they do not know who their parents are, **do not** put 'unknown' or leave the space blank. A **horizontal line** should be put through the space to show that no information was given.

NB: Blank Spaces If a space is left blank an assumption will be made that the Marriage Document was incorrectly completed, resulting in questions being raised. Always put a horizontal line through a space if no information is provided.

- *Space 8*

Married solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of the.....
by/ after*.....by me. *delete as appropriate

'**Church of England**' should be inserted in the first space.

In relation to the asterisk, if the couple have been married by Banns, strike through the word 'by' and insert the word '**Banns**' in the space provided (so that it reads 'after Banns by me'). If they were married by licence, strike through the word 'after' and put '**Common Licence**' or '**Special Licence**' in the space provided (so that it reads 'by Common Licence by me' or 'by Special Licence by me' as appropriate).

- *Space 9 – Signatures of parties married*

The couple should be asked to check the Marriage Document for errors before signing. If any errors are discovered, they should be amended as set out in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.3 below.

The couple should sign the Marriage Document using their usual signatures. The bride should sign using her maiden name, as this is the name she contracted to marry under; however, if she does sign using her married name it does not invalidate the document nor require correction.

- *Space 10 – Name and Signature of Witnesses*

There needs to be at least two witnesses, but there can be up to six witnesses if space allows.

The witnesses should also sign using their usual signatures which must be legible. They need to sign in the space provided.

The full names of the witnesses should be recorded on the document. If space is limited, they can be written on the reverse of the Marriage Document but the front must be annotated to show this and refer to space 10 on the reverse.

- *Space 11 – Signature of member of the clergy by whom the marriage was solemnized*

The minister should sign their name, and add their full name and designation such as '**Rector**', '**Vicar**', '**Curate**', or if they are retired or have permission to officiate then add '**Clerk-in-Holy Orders**' or '**Officiating Minister**'.

Entries – Marriage Schedule

- 6.1 If a couple has served Notice at a civil Register Office, a Superintendent Registrar’s Marriage Schedule will be issued to record their marriage. The majority of the Schedule will have been completed based on the information provided by the couple at the time of their appointment. However, please check these details with the couple before their wedding because they may have moved house, or their occupation may have changed, or one of their parents’ details may have changed. Corrections can be made as noted in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.3 below before the Marriage Schedule is signed.
- 6.2 Please also check the details of the church where the marriage is due to take place. These details are taken from a list held by the GRO but are not always accurate. If the name is incorrect, please check with the Superintendent Registrar to see how the church is recorded. For further assistance, please be in touch with the Diocesan Registry so we can check our records and correspond with the GRO, if required.

- *Space 8*

<p>Married solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of/usages of*.....</p> <p>in the parish of*.....by schedule by me(signature)</p> <p>.....(name)(designation)</p> <p>*delete as appropriate</p>

The words ‘usages of’ should be crossed out and ‘**Church of England**’ should be put in the first space provided.

After the words ‘in the parish of’ the ecclesiastical parish where the marriage is taking place should be entered such as ‘**Chilton**’ or ‘**Bucknell**’ etc.

The minister should sign their name, and add their full name and designation such as ‘**Rector**’, ‘**Vicar**’, ‘**Curate**’, or if they are retired or have permission to officiate then add ‘**Clerk-in-Holy Orders**’ or ‘**Officiating Minister**’.

- *Space 9 – Signatures of parties married*

The couple should be asked to check the Marriage Schedule for errors before signing.

The couple should sign the Marriage Schedule using their usual signatures. The bride should sign using her maiden name, as this is the name she contracted to marry under; however, if she does sign using her married name it does not invalidate the entry nor require correction.

- *Space 10 – Name and Signature of Witnesses*

There needs to be at least two witnesses, but there can be up to six witnesses if space allows.

The witnesses should also sign using their usual signatures which must be legible. They need to sign in the space provided.

The full names of the witnesses should be recorded on the document. If space is limited, they can be written on the reverse of the Marriage Schedule but the front must be annotated to show this and refer to space 10 on the reverse.

- *Space 11 – Signature of person authorised to sign the schedule*

The minister should sign their name, and add their full name and designation such as ‘**Rector**’, ‘**Vicar**’, ‘**Curate**’, or if they are retired or have permission to officiate then add ‘**Clerk-in-Holy Orders**’ or ‘**Officiating Minister**’.

Errors

Before the Marriage Document or Schedule has been signed

- 7.1 At the time of signing the Marriage Document or Schedule, the couple should be asked to check that all the information in the Document or Schedule is correct. Due to emotional distraction on the day, it may be sensible to ask the couple to check the Document or Schedule at the rehearsal.
- 7.2 If an error is discovered before the Document or Schedule has been signed, the Document or Schedule can be amended, by the minister, by striking through the error so that it is still legible. The correction must be written next to the error and the minister and couple should to initial the error. Corrections must be made in registration ink.
- 7.3 The GRO's Guidance note covers pre-signature corrections so please refer to this guidance if an error needs to be corrected (currently paragraph 3.4, on pages 16 and 17, and Appendix J, on page 40).

After the Marriage Document or Schedule has been signed

- 7.4 If couples notice an error on their Marriage Certificate, the couple should contact the Civil Register Office which issued the Certificate for further guidance.

Marriage Certificates

8. Clergy are no longer able to issue Marriage Certificates. These can only be issued by a local Superintendent Registrar or the General Register Office.

Quarterly Marriage Returns

9. These are no longer required under the new registration rules, however, the local Superintendent Registrar may be in touch to ask how many weddings have taken place in a church during a given year to ensure all have been recorded by them.

Security of Documents and Schedules

10. Please note there is a lucrative black market in Marriage Documents and Schedules. Any theft should be reported immediately to the local Superintendent Registrar, the GRO and police. See paragraphs 1.10 to 1.12 of the GRO Guidance.

Further Information

11. If clergy or parish administrators require further assistance, please contact Sara Leader, Registry Manager.

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