

Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates (Scotland)

The best place to find documented information about your ancestors is from these certificates. However, one really important thing to remember is that the details were only as accurate as the knowledge of the person who was reporting the information. Civil registration in Scotland only started on 1st January 1855, so you will not be able to find such certificates prior to this date and will have to rely upon Parish Registers, which are covered in a separate hand-out.

So, what can you expect to find?

Birth Certificates

Those early certificates in 1855 contained the following information:

- date, place and time of birth
- full name
- sex
- the parents' names (including maiden surname of mother)
- father's occupation
- name of informant and relationship to child
- information on siblings
- the ages and birthplaces of both parents
- the parents' usual place of residence
- the date and place of the parents' marriage.

However, by the following year, the information on siblings was removed, as were ages and birthplaces of parents and date and place of parents' marriage.

But by 1861, the date and place of the parents' marriage was being recorded again.

Marriage Certificates

For both the bride and groom it will show:

- Name and Surname
- Usual or present residence address
- Age
- Rank or Profession
- Condition (Bachelor, spinster etc) ++
- Birthplace and when/where it was registered
- Parents' names (including mother's maiden name) and their occupation
- If a Regular marriage, the signature of the minister and witnesses
- If an Irregular marriage, the date of extract sentence of conviction or decree of declaration and in what court pronounced ^^
- When and where registered and signature of registrar

It will also provide details of when and where the marriage took place, whether or not Banns were read or if it was by licence

++ If the person was a widow or widower, it was also stated if this is their second or third marriage. A note of the number of children (living or dead) from any previous marriage was also recorded.

^^ An irregular marriage could result from mutual agreement, by a public promise followed by consummation, or by cohabitation.

Death Certificates

Again, the early 1855 death records recorded:

- the date, time and place of death
- full name of the deceased
- sex
- marital status
- age
- occupation
- cause of death
- duration of last illness
- doctor's name
- details of the informant.
- the usual place of residence
- the deceased's place of birth
- spouse's name
- parents' names, occupations and whether they were deceased
- names and ages of children or age and year of death if the child pre-deceased the parent.

However, by the following year, the deceased's birthplace was removed, as were the details of any children and the spouse's name, but the latter was reinstated from 1861. Until 1860, the place of burial, the name of the undertaker and when the doctor last saw the deceased alive, were also included. The burial details can certainly prove to be invaluable when tracking down a grave for ancestors who died in those few years!

Important: Please remember that the information registered was only as good as the knowledge of the person registering the event. Therefore, some ages or names might be different from what you expect. Also, the event was registered where it took place, which is not necessarily where you would expect. For example, a person's home might be in Glasgow, but their death occurred in Edinburgh. It will be Edinburgh where you find the certificate registration!

Where do I get a certificate copy?

You will need to register with the Scotland's People website and purchase some credits. You will then be able to download a copy of the entry. A full explanation of their costs is available on the website.

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If you would like some assistance searching for your elusive ancestor, Genealogy Specialists (TOP DOG) may be able to help. Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and join our community of like-minded people.

There is a lot more information that may be had about Scottish Civil Registration than can be written here and so listed below are some products that will certainly help you along your

way and all of them are available from [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details.

- A Scottish Historian's Glossary Ref: SAFHS-11
- Family History Research Sources In Central Scotland (Booklet) Ref: CSFHS-M5
- Researching Scottish Family History Ref: FHP-NB02