

BIRTH & DEATH - DISCOVER THE HIDDEN SECRETS OF REGISTRATION

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(Note – the following points refer to registration in England/Wales)

General :

There is no “Original Certificate” – the only original record is the register entry kept by the local registration office. All certificates are copies of the information on that original entry.

All births/deaths MUST be registered in the district in which the event occurred.

Birth:

Before 1969, birth entries do not show any surname for the child, only for the parent(s) – they are indexed by the parent’s surnames, according to their marital status. A single register entry can appear more than once in the indexes.

(From 1874) An unmarried father couldn’t be entered on a birth register entry unless he was present to sign as a “joint informant”.... still the case today.

For registration purposes, a woman’s maiden name is not necessarily the name she was given at birth. A maiden name is “the name in which a woman first contracted a marriage”.

Informant

Always look closely at the informant column. It tells you three things:

- How the informant signed (not always their full name)
- The qualification that allowed them to register the event.
- Their address (on the date of registration).

- A single informant and the father is named = parents were married, or claiming to be
- if two informants are shown and the father is named = the parents are not married, at least not to each other.

Re-Registrations:

Births can be re-registered for two statutory reasons:

- To add an unmarried father not shown on the original entry (most common after 1953, but could be done before that)
- To legitimise the birth after the later marriage of the parents (from 1926).

Births (and occasionally deaths) can also be re-registered under the authority of the Registrar General for any reason if deemed necessary – this may be where an entry has been registered by an unqualified informant or by giving fraudulent information, but can be for many other reasons, (including sometimes to add an unmarried father before 1953).

A re-registration creates a NEW register entry. This may appear in the indexes months or years after the original.

Got an unusual certificate ? – email me via info@chalfontresearch.co.uk for an explanation

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Death

- Numbered causes of death ? The first (usually 1, I or 1a) is the actual cause of death, which was caused by 1b, which was caused by 1c. Anything listed as 2 or II is a condition present and maybe contributory but not directly causing the death.
- Deaths should be registered in the name the person used or was known by at the time of death, there is no requirement for it to match their birth name. Births & deaths are not cross-referenced in any way.
- The informant on a death may be the most important piece of information for research. Check who they were and how well they may have known the details of the deceased. Early entries often just show “present at the death” or “in attendance” and may not mention a family relationship.
- If the coroner is the informant, then an inquest took place - check local newspapers for details. Inquests historically took place very quickly but can now be months (or years) after the death and registration can't happen until after the inquest has concluded.

Corrections:

A correction does not create a new entry, it amends an existing one. This may result in a new index entry in some circumstances, but will be in the same quarter as the original.

Some corrections can only be made with the permission of the Registrar General.

DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS BASED ON INDEX ENTRIES - GET THE CERTIFICATE !

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