

Oxford Diocesan Registry



Marriage Documents and Schedules

Introduction

1. Now that the new Registration system has been in place for a few months, a number of regular queries are arising so I thought it might be helpful to work through completing a Marriage Document and how to complete a Marriage Schedule from the Superintendent Registrar.

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 guide '**Marriage in the Church of England: Guidance for the Diocese of Oxford**' which can be found here: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Marriage-in-the-Church-of-England-guidance-for-the-Diocese-of-Oxford.pdf>. The 'Legal (Diocesan Registry)' section of the Diocesan website also contains other helpful information about marriages, faculties, churchyards, PCC issues etc which can be found here: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/support-services/legal-diocesan-registry/#tab-id-2>.

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 by phone, on 01440 784 596, or 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 you have) 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 Next to the words 'Marriage Document' at the top of the page is a box for you to insert a reference number ('Ref. No.') which relates to the church where the marriage took place. This can be a combination of letters and numbers so you could use an abbreviation for the church or parish followed sequential numbers, e.g. for St Michael in the Northgate, Oxford you could use '**SMNG001**', '**SMNG002**' etc.
- 4.2 The top section of a Marriage Document entry looks like this:

<p>Marriage document issued by.....(name)(designation)</p> <p>in the parish of.....in the</p>

- 4.3 After 'Marriage document issued by' the minister officiating at the wedding should put their full name and add their designation for this parish such as '**Rector**', '**Vicar**', '**Curate**', or if they are a visiting minister, retired or have permission to officiate then add '**Clerk-in-Holy Orders**' or '**Officiating Minister**'.

- 4.4 After the words 'in the parish of' you should enter the ecclesiastical parish where the marriage is taking place such as '**Chilton**' or '**Bucknell**' etc.
- 4.5 After the words 'in the' you should enter '**County of Oxfordshire**' (the Superintendent Registrar has asked for 'Oxfordshire' rather than 'Oxford') or '**County of Buckingham**' or '**County of Berkshire**' as appropriate.
5. I will work through each space in the table of the Marriage Document:

- **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 2021**.

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 approach you with a request to get married in your church, you must ask to see their passports or photographic driving licences, together with their birth certificates, so that you can check the names they have given match the names on their identity documents. This will also help establish their nationality and, as a result, 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'. You must ask to see the original Decree(s) Absolute 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. You must ask to see the death certificate of the spouse.

For any other circumstances (such as a civil partnership dissolution etc), please refer to the '*Guidebook for The Clergy*' issued by the General Document Office (GRO) which can be found at the following web address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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'.

You should 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 Guidebook mentioned earlier.

- **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, you should ask to see evidence of the couple’s address(es) 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 you are about to read their Banns 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 you know you have the correct information for their Banns and for the Marriage Documents.

- **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

You do not have to include all parents. For instance, if one of the parties would prefer only their mother’s and stepfather’s details be included on the Marriage Document, you can do this 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, you should put their profession followed by ‘(retired)’ e.g. **Chartered Accountant (retired)**.

If one of the parents has died you should put their name followed by ‘(deceased)’ 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, you should **not** put ‘unknown’ or leave the space blank. You should put a **horizontal line** through the space to show that no information was given.

NB: Blank Spaces If you leave a space 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**

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

In the first space you should put ‘**Church of England**’.

In relation to the asterisk, if the couple have been married by Banns you should 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, then you should 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 (see below). They need to sign in the space provided.

You need to record their full names on the document. If space is limited, you can write these on the reverse of the Marriage Document but you must annotate the front 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 for this parish such as '**Rector**', '**Vicar**', '**Curate**', or if they are a visiting minister, retired or have permission to officiate then add '**Clerk-in-Holy Orders**' or '**Officiating Minister**'.

- **Note about signatures**

To assist Superintendent Registrars and the GRO in providing Marriage Certificates, they have asked that the names of the signatories are written legibly in pencil in the margins so that copies of the entries can be provided. If someone's signature is illegible, it will be difficult for a Marriage Certificate to be provided.

If someone has signed their name in full, you should enter this in pencil in the margin, in capitals, (e.g. YVONNE MASEY). If someone has signed using their initials and a surname, you should enter this in pencil in the margin, in capitals, (e.g. J J SINGH). This includes the officiating minister as well as the couple and witnesses.

Entries – Marriage Schedule

6.1 If a couple has served Notice at a civil Register Office, you will receive a Superintendent Registrar's Marriage Schedule 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. You can make corrections 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 you think the name is incorrect, please check with the Superintendent Registrar to see how your church is recorded. If you require 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*..... in the parish of*.....by schedule by me(signature)(name)(designation) *delete as appropriate</p>
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You should cross out the words ‘usages of’ and put ‘**Church of England**’ in the first space provided.

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

The minister should sign their name, and add their full name and designation for this parish such as ‘**Rector**’, ‘**Vicar**’, ‘**Curate**’, or if they are a visiting minister, 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.

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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 (see below). They need to sign in the space provided.

You need to record their full names. If space is limited you can write these on the reverse of the Marriage Schedule but you must annotate the front to show this.

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Errors

Before the Marriage Document or Schedule has been signed

7.1 At the time of signing the Marriage Document or Schedule, you should ask the couple 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, you can amend the Document or Schedule by striking through the error so that it is still legible. Writing the correction next to the error and initialling the error and asking the couple to initial the error. Corrections must be made in registration ink.
- 7.3 The GRO's Guidebook covers pre-signature corrections so please refer to this guidance if you do need to correct an error (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, you should ask the couple to contact the local Register Office for further guidance.

Marriage Certificates

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

Quarterly Marriage Returns

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

Security of Documents and Certificates

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

Further Information

11. I hope this additional guidance will be of assistance to you in dealing with the paperwork for weddings. If I can assist further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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