

Marriage Registration Changes 2021

Introduction

The Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration Etc.) Act will modernise how marriages are registered for the first time since 1837, through the introduction of a marriage schedule system and registration in an electronic register (RON).

The electronic register will be a more secure and more efficient system for keeping marriage records. It will also allow for the names of parents of the couple (mother / father / parent) to be included in the marriage entry and on marriage certificates.

The regulations which will make the required amendments to the Marriage Act 1949 have been laid in Parliament on 22 February 2021, and subject to approval, will come into force on **4 May 2021**.

Notes Taken from: Training Material Provided by Local Registration Services Association (www.lrsa.org.uk)

What Hasn't Changed

- Couples where one or both are subject to immigration controls, will still have to give notice at a Designated Register Office - in these instances couples will marry using a marriage schedule (not a marriage document) which will be presented to the clergy at the ceremony; such couples could also marry under Special Licence.
- Ecclesiastical preliminaries will remain the same - legal requirement remains for the person solemnising the marriage to question the couple before the ceremony
- Civil preliminaries will remain the same
- The marriage ceremony remains the same
- The marriage will be formed upon the pronouncement of the marriage vows and **not** the signing of the marriage document/schedule and subsequent registration
- The residential qualification and notice periods
- Evidential requirements for giving notice
- Pre-marriage questioning

Key Changes

- No longer any need for quarterly returns (apart from final quarter before implementation).
- Now up to 4 parents can now be recorded i.e. step parents.
- Clergy no longer be required to register marriages.
- Basis for registration of the marriage will be one of two documents: Marriage Document or Marriage Schedule.
- These documents do not register the marriage, they are the means to bring about the registration, which takes place at the local registration office.
- Marriages will only be registered at the local register office using their electronic register "Registration Online" (RON), the new legal register.
- Clergy role will be restricted to the overseeing the signing of the marriage document/schedule by clergy, the parties to the marriage, and their witnesses; plus returning the signed marriage document/schedule to your local register office.

Closure of Existing Registers

- Required to return one of duplicate registers, along with all registration stock (unused certificates, quarterly return and occasional copy form) to local register office.
- Keep the other which can be used for searches but can no longer issue duplicate marriage certificates (done by General Register Office or Local Registration Service).
- The following document will provide you with guidance on how to close your marriage registers and how to manage the return of registers and stock to your local register office. [MSS Clergy Closure Instruction](#) (PDF)
- This document explains that the local register office will supply details for how to return documents to them.

Key Documents

- The marriage is registered at the local registration office on the new electronic registration system (RON).
- This registration is based on the information supplied on *either*:
 - i. Marriage Document
 - ii. Marriage Schedule

The Marriage Document

MARRIAGE DOCUMENT

Marriage document issued by <i>Edward Cargill</i> (name) <i>Vicar</i> (designation) in the parish of <i>St Luke, Chelsea</i> , in the <i>Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea</i>		
1. Date and place of marriage	<i>5th January 2021 in the Parish Church of St Luke's Chelsea, Sydney Street SW3</i>	
2. Name and surname	<i>Francis George DEBENHAM</i>	<i>Maud Ellen LATIMER</i>
3. Date of birth	<i>10th August 1975</i>	<i>15th September 1977</i>
4. Condition	<i>Single</i>	<i>Widow</i>
5. Occupation	<i>Earl of Barford</i>	<i>Dowager Marchioness of Chafont</i>
6. Residence at time of marriage	<i>Grately Manor, Suffolk</i>	<i>14 Belmont Place, London SW</i>
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation	<i>Frank William DEBENHAM (deceased) Earl of Barford Grace DEBENHAM (deceased) Lady Barford</i>	<i>Hugh Geoffrey COLEMAN Baronet Margaret COLEMAN (deceased)</i>
8. Marriage solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England by / after * Licence by me. * delete as appropriate		
9. Signature of parties married	<i>F G Debenham</i>	<i>M E Latimer</i>
10. Name and signature of witnesses	<i>Henry Coleman H Coleman Emily Matilda Debenham E M Debenham Louisa Brooks L Brooks</i>	
11. Signature of the member of the clergy by whom the marriage was solemnized	<i>E Cargill</i> (signature) <i>Edward Cargill</i> <i>Vicar</i> (name) (designation)	

- Marriage Document will be issued by clergy to the couple after they have completed ecclesiastical preliminaries i.e. after pre-marriage questioning / bans / licence etc.
- Where the couple have completed ecclesiastical preliminaries, clergy issue a Marriage Document to the couple.
- The local register office will advise how to issue a marriage document, could be:

- a type and print version accessed by clergy on their password protected website;
- on ad hoc basis GRO will send you a form to complete by hand;
- a partially completed / blank form sent direct from Registration Officer to the member of clergy
- Must be completed in registration ink.
- Actually portrait in style (just here in landscape) - an A4 sheet.
- Has 11 spaces - spaces 1-7 completed by clergy before ceremony.
- Spaces 8-11 signed by relevant parties after the ceremony.
- Can have up to 6 witnesses, but only require 2 legally.
- Completed at the time of the marriage ceremony.

The Marriage Schedule

Date / Time	
MARRIAGE SCHEDULE	
System No.	
Marriage schedule issued by(name)(designation) in the registration district of in the(administrative area) on The issue of this schedule has not been forbidden by any person authorised to forbid the issue thereof. The waiting period in respect of both notices of marriage has expired, or has been reduced on the authority of the Registrar General. The marriage must be solemnized on or before.....	
1. Date and place of marriage	
2. Name and surname	
3. Date of birth	
4. Condition	
5. Occupation	
6. Residence at time of marriage	
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation	
8. Marriage solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of/usages of *..... in the parish of*..... by schedule by me.....(signature)(name).....(designation) <i>*delete as appropriate</i>	
9. Signature of parties married	
10. Name and signature of witnesses
11. Signature of person authorised to sign the schedule(signature)(name).....(designation)

- The Marriage Schedule will be issued to the couple, after complete civil preliminaries, by the local registration service, and passed on to clergy before the marriage ceremony.
- This is issued by the local registration service where the couple are subject to immigration control.
- In some cases, with clergy's prior agreement and local register office, the schedule will be sent direct to clergy from the local registration office - this will apply when one or both parties are subject to immigration control and a photograph is being sent directly from the register office to the clergy
- It will be a single sheet of A4 paper.
- This will be issued from an electronic register held at local registration office.
- Spaces 1-7 will be pre-populated from information provided at the local register office.
- The remaining spaces are completed after the ceremony using registration ink.

- In space 8 add the name and designation of the officiating minister and their signature; if that is you, complete these details in space 8 and also in space 11.
- If someone else solemnises the marriage, add the religious rite in space 8, their name and designation details.
- Parties to marriage sign in space 9.
- Witnesses sign and add names in space 10.
- Will allow up to 6 witnesses to sign, but legally only need 2.

After the Marriage Ceremony

- After the ceremony clergy are legally responsible for the return of signed marriage document/schedule to the local register office to be registered and a certificate issued.
- With the consent of the couple clergy can arrange for someone else to return the document/schedule on their behalf e.g. a family member.
- Legally required to return the signed marriage document / schedule to your local register office within 21 days after the date of the marriage.
- If the register office has not received the document/schedule within the 21 days, they will write to request its return.
- If it has not been received within 8 days of the date of the letter, then the local registration service will send a further notice requiring clergy to attend in person at the register office within 8 days of the date of the notice.
- Therefore if the document/schedule is not returned after a total of 37 days clergy may be guilty of committing an offence.
- Failure to return the marriage document/schedule could, in addition to committing an offence, inconvenience the couple who will be unable to obtain a marriage certificate.
- A reconciliation procedure will be in place to match the marriage documents issued by you with the registrations at the local register office.
- Clergy are encouraged to use an informal numbering system on marriage documents e.g. use source code followed by 0001, 0002 to assist identifying missing marriage documents.
- For marriages after ecclesiastical preliminaries i.e. banns/licence, clergy are required to keep a separate church records of marriages in the banns book, which will be an aide when reconciling the marriage documents issued against the number of marriages that have actually taken place.
- The local register office will also contact to follow up any schedules issued for marriages after civil preliminaries which have not been returned to the register office.

Errors on Either Document

- Where an error is discovered at the pre-marriage questioning and the member of clergy is content that the error should not prevent the marriage from being solemnised, they should correct the error on the marriage document/schedule in the presence of the parties, asking the party concerned to initial the correction in registration ink.
- Minor errors found afterwards but while parties are still at the church may still be changed manually and initialled by the relevant party until they are entered onto RON.
- The couple should be warned that once the document has been returned to the registration office, the only way errors can be changed is through formal application to the GRO / local registration office, which will incur a fee and require documentary evidence.

Other Matters and Additional Information

- **Form of Acknowledgment** (see overleaf) - may be issued where a couple has insufficient time to get their marriage certificate e.g. if travelling abroad quickly; this is a non-statutory form confirming the details of the solemnisation of their marriage; they must be warned that

this is not a marriage certificate and that as soon as practicably possible they should obtain their certificate from their local register office.

- There is a useful Q & A sheet about these changes which can be accessed at: <https://www.lrsa.org.uk/downloads/MSS%20Clergy%20FAQ%20V1.0.pdf>
- The government legal guidance about marriages (as well as burials and baptisms) can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-clergy
- To contact the General Registrar's office: GROCasework@gro.gov.uk

Acknowledgement

This is to confirm that a marriage between _____ and _____

was solemnized on _____ at _____

Signed _____

Designation _____

The register office will be informed that the marriage has taken place. Once registered, a certificate can be obtained from:

A fee is charged for the certificate.

Details of register offices can be found on Gov.UK <https://www.gov.uk/register-offices>

This is not a certificate and should not be used for official purposes