

Marriage Certificates 2021

(throughout this article, please read C of E as including both Church of England and Church in Wales)

The years 2020-21 (and possibly longer) will be remembered in history for a global pandemic; however, for future genealogists and family historians, 2021 will have another significance.

Since 1st July 1837, every bride and groom in England and Wales have signed a register (two during a Church of England or Church in Wales marriage; one to remain with the church the other going to the local registrar when complete) and a marriage certificate which they took away with them. Other venues apart from registry offices may also have a register for their own purposes. The certificate being a copy of the register, the format of which has remained the same until 4th May 2021.

As many will be aware, the personal information on the certificate comprises the name, age (although this sometimes says 'over 21'), address and occupation of both bride and groom also the name and occupation of their fathers. No other relatives are named; even if relatives are witnesses, their relationship is not recorded. Where the father is unknown, absent, or deceased, this box may be empty, but it often contains the name of the person standing in the place of a father, e.g., stepfather, grandfather, uncle (until made aware of this novice researchers can worry that they have found a case of incest), or an invented father where one of the couple did not wish to reveal that they were illegitimate.

The announcement that from 2021 marriage certificates could contain the names of the couple's mothers was greeted with pleasure by feminists and genealogists, seen as women finally getting recognition in England and Wales that they have had in Scotland, where details of both parents have been recorded since 1855. This change will also be of great help to future generations of family history researchers. However, as the published marriage certificate for Boris Johnson and Carrie Symonds shows (see below), information about parents is not compulsory. If parents are not entered on the marriage schedule or document, they will not appear on the register or certificate.

The use of local registers held at District Registrars Offices has ended; the General Register Office will now keep one national digital register. If you are marrying anywhere except C of E churches, you must notify the Registrar and complete a Marriage Schedule giving all of the information needed for the register and certificate. The Registrar retains the schedule for a civil marriage, but the couple otherwise takes it to the relevant person at the religious building. If parents' details are missing from the schedule, they can be added before on on the day of the ceremony. For C of E marriages, the clergy will complete a Marriage Document with information obtained from the couple. The schedule or document is signed during the ceremony.

Marriage documents and schedules from religious marriages are sent to the local registrar within 21 days, and documents/schedules are used to input details to the digital register by the registrar at their office. Only after this has been done can the couple obtain a printed certificate which is a copy of the register. Churches will continue to keep a register for parish records.

Another change is that dates of birth are given for bride and groom where previously, it was the age that was quoted, sometimes shown as over 21; this will probably result in more accuracy as the ages given have often been incorrect.

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CERTIFIED COPY OF AN  ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE		Entry No: 822631088
Marriage solemnized by schedule at Roman Catholic Cathedral Ashley Place Victoria Street in the District of Westminster in the City of Westminster according to the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholics		
1. Date of marriage	Twenty ninth May 2021	
2. Name and surname	Caroline Louise Bevan SYMONDS otherwise Carrie SYMONDS	Alexander Boris De Pfeffel JOHNSON otherwise Boris JOHNSON
3. Date of birth	17 March 1988	19 June 1964
4. Condition	Single	Previous marriage dissolved
5. Occupation	Director of Communications	Prime Minister of The United Kingdom
6. Residence at time of marriage	11-12, Downing Street, London, SW1A 2AB	11-12, Downing Street, London, SW1A 2AB
7. Mother/father/Parent name surname and occupation		