



Somerset Archive and Record Service

Information Leaflet

Marriage Licences in Somerset

MARRIAGE LICENCES

Marriage licences were issued to couples not wishing the publicity or delay involved in marrying by banns and until the 19th century generally concerned persons of the artisan class and upwards. Among the diocesan records will be found the records completed before a licence was issued, mainly allegations and bonds (ref. D/D/Cm). These documents will often supply not only the names and residences of the parties but also occupations, details of bondsmen (sometimes relations) and indicate whether minors were involved. Parchment bonds survive from 1574 to 1717 and are un-indexed (apart from 1627-30). Paper bonds from 1645 to 1755 have been published and indexed in A.J. Jewers, *Marriage Allegation Bonds of the Bishops of Bath and Wells* (1909). Subsequent paper bonds from 1756 are being indexed by volunteers and at the time of writing the index has reached 1811. Bonds have generally been deposited up to 1899. Bonds issued for 'Peculiar' parishes will be found among the records of those Peculiars (D/D/P--) and have also been indexed. Diocesan licence books (D/D/Ol) contain references to the granting of licences from c. 1570 and allegations from 1664. Typescript calendars and indexes to these for the years 1583-1676, compiled by Col. H.R. Phipps, are available in three volumes in the Orchard Wyndham Room. No licences were granted during the Civil War and Commonwealth (1642-61). Further details are given in the catalogues of the diocesan records. If parties lived in different dioceses, licences had to be obtained from the Archbishop or his Vicar-General. Calendars of many of these are among the volumes published by the Harleian Society, also available at the Record Office.