



# **Somerset Archive and Record Service**

## **Information Leaflet**

# **Parish Registers in Somerset**

## PARISH REGISTERS

Anglican registers of baptism, marriage and burial were ordered to be kept from 1538, although only 21 parishes in Somerset have registers starting this early. The Heritage Centre holds registers for nearly all of Somerset's ancient parishes, as well as for some 60 Anglican churches founded in the 19th and 20th centuries. Because original registers are very popular sources, and would otherwise get so much wear and tear, we have microfilmed most of the registers up to 1900. If a microfiche is damaged or very difficult to read because of the quality of the filming, or if the register has not been filmed, we will get out the original register for you (as long as it is not in too poor a condition).

Churches keep the registers that they are still using. In some small parishes, these can be the registers which started as far back as 1813 (for baptisms and burials) or 1837 (for marriages). If the register you need to consult is still held by the parish, you can find the incumbent and churchwardens' names in the *Diocesan Directory* (ask searchroom staff for a copy) or online on the [Diocese of Bath and Wells online directory](#).

The marriage registers of 103 Somerset parishes, usually up to 1812, have been published in [Phillimore's Somerset Marriages](#) (15 volumes) and a slip index to these by surname is also available here. We also hold register transcripts in whole or part for many parishes. All new transcripts are catalogued under the collection reference **AICQY**, which also includes details of earlier transcripts. The existence of transcripts is also noted in our *Summary List* (available for purchase at Reception).

[Dr Campbell's Index](#) to baptisms and marriages (before 1900 and excluding marriage registers published by Phillimore) is available for parishes to the west of the Quantocks and in the south of the county. It can be consulted on microfiche in the searchroom.

The [Mormon Computer File Index/International Genealogical Index](#) is available at the office for Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. The coverage for Somerset is poor, amounting to only about 3% of entries for the years 1754-1812. The national indexes can be consulted at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 721 Wells Road, Bristol, BS14 9HU, or online at [FamilySearch](#).

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**Bishops Transcripts** From 1598, transcripts of each year's parish register entries were sent to the bishop every year. Where the original registers have not survived, these transcripts can be very useful. Unfortunately, the bishops' transcripts were kept in very poor conditions at Wells; because of this, many have perished and others are in a very bad state. Generally speaking for each parish there will be a few years available from about 1600 to 1630 after which there will be an occasional return before a fairly complete series for the years 1800-1837. Some parishes in the west of the county have good returns for the 18th century. For about 300 parishes the series continues, with greatly varying degrees of completeness, for the period 1838-c.1890. Usually these later returns cover only baptisms and burials. There is a catalogue showing which years survive for which parishes - search for **D\D\rr\*** and the name of your parish on the [online catalogue](#) to see the full list.

All of the bishops' transcripts before 1837 can be consulted on microfiche in the searchroom. A slip index to about a third of the pre-1813 bishops' transcripts, compiled by Edward Dwelly, is also available.