

Tying the Knot: an investigation of wedding ceremonies past and present

The proposed project forms part of a wider study examining the laws regulating how and where couples can get married. The structure of the current law – with its division between civil and religious weddings, the differential treatment of Anglican, Jewish, Quaker weddings, and the registration of buildings rather than officiants – all date back to the Marriage Act 1836.

While the annual reports of the Registrar General provide very detailed statistics on how many people married in different types of ceremonies, it remains unclear why certain areas had higher levels of civil or Nonconformist marriage than others. Drawing on the wealth of knowledge generated by family historians provides a unique way of obtaining an insight into this.

The project will also collate and disseminate the information in a way that will help the wider family history community understand this area.

What information is being collected?

Did any of your ancestors marry in a register office in England and Wales?

- If so, could you provide details of the location of the wedding, the age and occupation of the parties, and any reasons why they might have chosen to marry in a register office?

Were any of your English and Welsh ancestors Catholics or Nonconformists?

- If so, could you provide details of when and where they married – whether in a register office, Catholic or Nonconformist church, or in the Anglican church? If they did not marry in a place of worship that matched their religious affiliation, do you know why?

If you would like to share this information please email Professor Probert at R.J.Probert@exeter.ac.uk with these and any further details you would like to share, or any questions about the project.

Emailing the information will be deemed to be consent to it being used as set out below. Taking part in the research does not pose any foreseeable risks to those providing information.

How will the information be used?

All data will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet on a password-protected computer. It will be kept for 10 years and then destroyed.

The findings will inform a monograph on the history of the current law of marriage. A summary of the findings will be made available to all those who provided information and will be disseminated to the family history community more widely.

All personal data (eg email addresses) will be processed in line with the data protection principles under the GDPR.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number 201920-095).

Further information and contact details

If you are not happy with any aspect of the project and wish to complain you are welcome to contact the University's ethics team at ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this project