

Using the FREEBMD Website

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freebmd.org.uk

The freebmd website allows people to search for certificate reference numbers. You will not actually see the certificate itself but you will find out its details which you can send away to get a copy of the original. The site covers the three types of certificate – Birth, Marriage and Death.

The reference details have been typed by volunteers all over the world – there is a page you can use to apply to take part if you wish. There are well over 100,000,000 certificates listed so you have a good chance of finding one that is relevant.

Using the site for searching is free and will not need to register your email address or give any other information. The site is funded by people using it as a stepping stone to the Ancestry.com site and then paying. You do not have to do this.

The site has close links with Ancestry.com. At the top of many pages you will find an advert encouraging you to start searching. These searches at the top of the pages will take you to the Ancestry website. If you want to use freebmd itself then follow the instructions below.

Searching freebmd

The website address is freebmd.org.uk



Drag the scroll bar downwards.

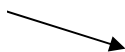
Scroll down the side of the page until you see the word **Search**.

PLEASE NOTE: WE HAVE NOT YET TRANSCRIBED THE WHOLE INDEX. A breakdown by event and year can be viewed [here](#)

FreeBMD is very busy

At the moment, FreeBMD is a victim of its own success. So many people are trying to search that we are having trouble coping with all the searches. If your search fails, please try again later. FreeBMD is least busy between 23:30 and 09:00 GMT daily.

Click on Search



[Search](#) [Information](#) [Join FreeBMD](#) [Transcribers' Page](#)


The FreeBMD Database was last updated on Wed 21 Apr 2004 and currently contains 78,676,640 distinct records (91,633,437 total records).


On Sun 2 May 2004 FreeBMD users did 94,578 searches. [\(More information\)](#)

FreeBMD is kindly sponsored by [RootsWeb](#), [Ancestry.com](#) and [The Bunker](#).

You are now at the Search Page. You still need to scroll down to get to the search form.

Advertisement

 Find your British ancestors!
Your last name: [Click Here](#) *Ancestry.com.*

 Search

A fuller explanation of how to get the most out of your search is [here](#).

Please note that you are now required to select explicitly the Type of the search (Births, Marriages, Deaths or All Types).

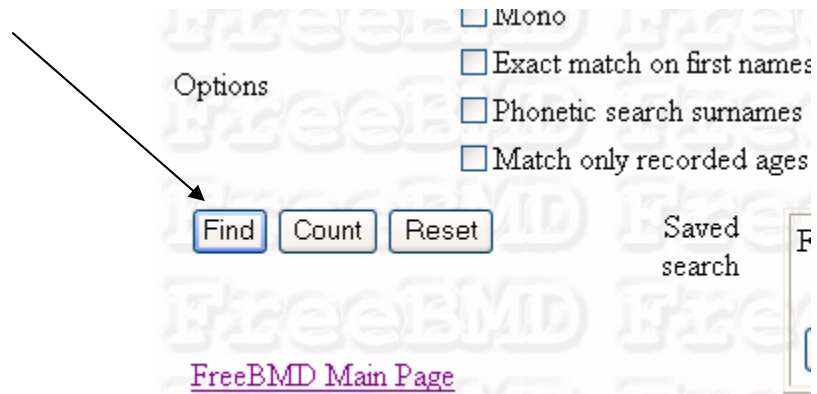


Scroll downwards **again** until you see the Search screen.

The search form :

Type	Click on Births, Marriages, Deaths or All Types. You must choose one of them.
Surname	Click into the box and type the surname of the person you are searching for – capital letters do not matter. If you are not sure how a surname (or first name) ends eg. Mcsweeney/Mcsweeny you can type mcsween* This will find all names that begin with what you typed, no matter what they end with.
First Name	Click into the box and type the first name of the person
Date Range	Click into the first box and type the start year of the range you would like to search
Ignore the month	Click into the second box and type the final year of the range you would like to search
Counties	Click on a particular county if you are absolutely sure of the county you are searching, otherwise leave it as All Counties
Districts	If you know the exact district you could click on that, otherwise leave it as All Districts
You can only choose one of these	

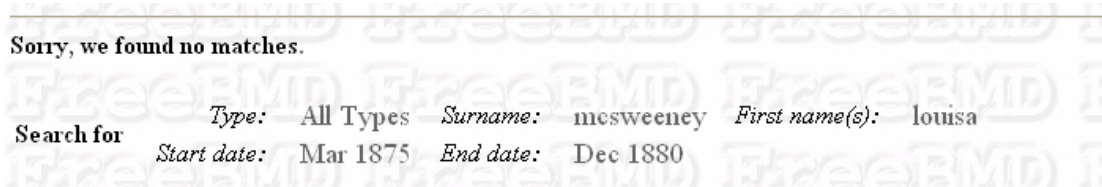
When you have finished entering search criteria scroll down a little and click on the word "Find" in the bottom left corner of the screen.



The search may take a minute or two. If a coloured box appears on the right of the screen it means that you have found some results. Scroll down the page to see them.

Key	Births	Marriages	Deaths	An entry in Bold means it has been double keyed	A district in <i>italic</i> means it is suspect (click on it for details)	Information available:
	 	 	 			
Change of shade means a possible gap in the data	 	 	 			↶ Scan ? Comment ✉ Postem

If just text appears then it means there is nothing on the site that matches what you are looking for.



Births - example

Search was for Louisa McSweeny, born between 1865 and 1870 searching on all counties and districts:

The screenshot shows the search interface with the following details:

- Type:** Births (selected from a dropdown menu)
- Surname:** mcsweeny
- First name(s):** Louisa
- Date range:** Mar 1865 to Dec 1870
- Counties:** All Counties (selected from a dropdown menu)
- Districts:** All Districts (selected from a dropdown menu)
- Options:** Phonetic search surnames

With this search engine you need to spell the name correctly to find a result. If you are not sure of a spelling click into “Phonetic search on surnames” – this gives you a longer list of results but is more likely to find your person. It will search for names that sound like the one you are looking for.

Results

The results page includes a key and a table of search results:

Key

Change of shade means a possible gap in the data	Births	Marriages	Deaths	An entry in Bold means it has been double keyed	A district in <i>Italic</i> means it is suspect (click on it for details)
--	--------	-----------	--------	--	---

Search for Type: Births Surname: mcsweeny Firstname(s): Louisa
 Start date: Mar 1865 End date: Dec 1870 District: all
 County: all

Whilst FreeBMD makes every effort to ensure accurate transcription, errors exist in both the original index and the transcription. You are advised to verify the reference given from a copy of the index before ordering a certificate.

Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page
Births Dec 1870				
McSweeny	Louisa	<u>St Geo East</u>	1c	435 Info

Click on the District name (blue and underlined) to get a printable version of your result and to find out exactly which areas the “District” refers to. You could also use the form at the back of these notes to write down your results and save paper.

[Louisa McSweeny Birth Dec 1870 St Geo East Volume 1c Page 435](#)

Marriages - example

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields and values:

- Type: Marriages
- Surname: mcsweeney
- First name(s): louisa
- Spouse/Mother surname: (blank)
- Spouse first name(s): (blank)
- Death age/DoB: (blank)
- Date range: Mar 1895 to Dec 1900
- Volume/Page: (blank) / (blank)
- Options:
 - Mono
 - Exact match on first names
 - Phonetic search surnames

The Districts dropdown menu is open, displaying a list of districts. The Counties dropdown menu is also open, displaying a list of counties.

Note the change of surname spelling – this is common in family history research. If you don't find results immediately you will need to try the "name*" described on page 3 or use the **Phonetic search** option described on page 5.

If you know the first name or surname of the other partner in the marriage you can type this in to the Spouse section. If you don't know them you can leave this blank.

Results

The screenshot shows the search results page with the following elements:

- Buttons: New Query, Save Search, Revise Query
- Search Summary:
 - Type: Marriages
 - Surname: mcsweeney
 - First name(s): louisa
 - Start date: Mar 1895
 - End date: Dec 1900
- Key:
 - Change of shade means a possible gap in the data
 - Births: (Red)
 - Marriages: (Green)
 - Deaths: (Grey)
 - An entry in **Bold** means it has been double keyed
 - A district in *Italic* means it is suspect (click on it for details)
- Results Table:

Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page
Marriages Sep 1897				
McSweeney	Louisa	Lambeth	1d	823

This time click on "Page" to see a list of all who were married on that day in the register.

Find the partner in a marriage

Search for Type: MARRIAGES Start date: Sep 1897 End
Volume: 1d Page: 823

Whilst FreeBMD makes every effort to ensure accurate transcription, errors exist in transcription. You are advised to verify the reference given from a copy of the

Surname	First name(s)	District	Vol	Page	
Marriages Sep 1897					
McSweeney	Louisa	Lambeth	1d	823	info
Noonan	George Frederick J	Lambeth	1d	823	info
REFFOLD	Frederick	Lambeth	1d	823	info
Woods	Emily Ann	Lambeth	1d	823	info

Hopefully you will know the name of the marriage partner, if not you will only have one or two possibilities to search through.

In this case the important details are :

[Louisa McSweeney/Frederick Reffold Marriage Sept 1897](#)
[Lambeth Volume 1d Page 823](#)

Before 1852, up to 4 marriages were entered on each page of the register. You will therefore see eight different people listed. After that there are usually two marriages per page. From 1912 onwards the marriage entries in the index give the surname of the spouse. This obviously helps a great deal. It may be that this is all the information you are seeking and you do not need the certificate.

Occasionally there will be an odd number of people listed on this page so you may not be able to work out who your ancestor married. It is worth trying the search again after a few weeks because it just means that all of the entries for a particular page have not yet been typed up.

Deaths – example

Type	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"><ul style="list-style-type: none">All TypesBirths<li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">DeathsMarriages</div>
Surname	<input type="text" value="mcsweeney"/>
First name(s)	<input type="text" value="justin"/>
Spouse/Mother surname	<input type="text"/>
Spouse first name(s)	<input type="text"/>
Death age/DoB	<input type="text"/>

Known details are entered as usual.

Click on the Find button.

Results

Surname	First name(s)	Age	District	Vol	Page	
Deaths Mar 1879						
McSweeney	Justin	49	Poplar	1c	488	info
Deaths Dec 1909						
McSWEENEY	Justin	59	Blackburn	8e	292	info

The main difference here is that you will often see the age of death which helps you to work out if you have found the correct record. In this case the District also helps narrow down which of the two results is the right one.

[Justin McSweeney Death March 1879 Poplar Volume 1c Page 488](#)

You have the reference number – how do you get the certificate?

1. You can apply online at the address below for £7.00

<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>

The following methods of applying for a certificate currently cost £8.50

2. Or printout a form which can be sent to the Public Records Office at the following website

<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/research/obtainingcertificates/waystoapply.asp>

Post the form to

GRO
PO Box 2
Southport
Merseyside
PR8 2JD

3. Or phone the details to

Tel: 0845 603 7788

(8am to 8pm Monday to Friday. Saturday 9am to 4pm)
Calls are charged at the cost of a local call.

