

## **Some key dates for understanding the historical background of parish registers include the following.**

*1538 – A mandate is issued requiring that every parish was to keep a register. Many parishes ignored this order. Only about 800 registers exist from this time period.*

*1598 - Clergy were required to send copies of their registers to the bishop of their diocese. These copies are known as Bishop's Transcripts.*

*1643-1659 – Registers were poorly kept during the English Civil War and the Commonwealth period which followed, or abandoned altogether.*

*1711 – An order was made to the effect that all register pages were to be ruled and numbered. This was widely ignored.*

*1733 – The use of Latin in registers is prohibited.*

*1751 – Calendar reform. Prior to this the year commenced on 25th March, so any register entry for December 1750 would have been followed by January 1750.*

*1754 – Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act. A separate marriage register is enforced which records witnesses, signatures of all parties, occupation of groom and the residences of the couple marrying. It also enforced Banns and made clandestine marriages illegal.*

*1763 – Minimum age for marriage set at 16 (previously the Church accepted marriage of girls of 12 and boys of 14). Those under 21 still needed the consent of parents. On marriage records individuals that are over 21 often have their age listed as "full age" rather than an exact year.*

*1812 – George Rose's Act. New pre-printed registers were to be used for separate baptism, marriage and burial registers as a way of standardizing records.*

### **About Baptisms:**

*Children were usually baptized within a few days or weeks of birth. Earlier records generally only listed the name of the infant, the father's and/or mother's name, the date of christening, and whether the child was illegitimate.*

### **About Marriages:**

*Couples were usually married in the bride's parish. Until the early 20th century couples could marry at a very young age. Earlier records generally only listed the names of the bride and groom and their marriage date.*

### **About Burials:**

*Burials took place within a few days of the deceased's death. Records generally only listed the name of the deceased and the burial date. However, sometimes other family members were listed as part of the deceased's name; for example, "Mary wife of John Smith" or "Matthew son of William Clark." In earlier records it was not uncommon for women to simply be referred to as "wife of [husband's name]."*