

16 January 2007

Births, marriages and deaths records to go on the Internet

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) today announced that facilities to search indexes of births, marriages and deaths will start to be available on the Internet from early 2008.

ONS intends to close its public search facility, currently located at the Family Records Centre (FRC) in Islington, and instead to make indexes available at The National Archives (TNA) in Kew. This will enable researchers to access records yet to be digitised in paper or microfiche format as well as making use of the wider opportunities offered by Kew for researching historic records.

The relocation is expected to be complete by April 2008. The services currently provided by ONS in Islington will then cease.

TNA announced earlier this year that it intended to relocate to Kew the facilities it currently provides alongside ONS at the FRC. At the time, ONS said that it would be reviewing the services it offered at the FRC.

Peter Murphy, ONS Director of Registration Services, said:

“The decision reflects the outcome of the review we said we would carry out but, more importantly, it reflects the changes in the way family historians and others prefer to carry out their research, by making use of online facilities. Confirmation of funding for further development of the existing civil registration modernisation programme has now allowed us to plan for most searches to be possible electronically by April 2008 and almost all the rest by 2009.

“As part of the system developments underlying these changes we will improve the process for users to place orders for the certificates they identify from the indexes.

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“Our decision has been taken in close consultation with The National Archives. In planning the detail of the relocation, we will be discussing ways in which we can maintain and further develop services of a high quality.

“Because the electronic indexes will not be fully complete when the relocation takes place, we expect that some indexes in the form of books or microfiche, will be available at Kew for a short period after the move. This will ensure that users of the search facility will have access to all records by one means or another.”

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