



Devon Family History Society
Joint Project Publication with
Devon Record Office



AXMINSTER MARRIAGE NOTICE BOOK

1838-1856

DRO Reference – R7/8/C58

DFHS Book Reference - D057

When Hardwicke's Marriage Act was passed in 1754 to regularise weddings and avoid clandestine marriages, the form of marriage recognised as legal by the state was a ceremony in the Church of England. Only Jews and Quakers were exempt from this rule, partly because neither were baptised Christians and partly because their marriage procedures were already rigorous and their record keeping was thorough. This situation was resented by non-conformists who were forced either to pay for a marriage licence to marry in church, or to attend church services on three successive Sundays while the banns were read.

All this changed with the introduction of civil registration in July 1837. Couples could marry in church if they so wished, but they also had the option of marrying in a licensed non-conformist chapel, with the registrar present, or in the register office. In the case of a marriage in a chapel or the register office, a notice of the couple's intention to marry had to be displayed in the register office for three weeks prior to the wedding and the couple had to marry within three months of the notice being put up.

A notice could also be displayed in the register office if the bride and groom were marrying in the parish church but one or both of them lived in a different registration district. One of the parties to the marriage had to reside for at least a week in the registration district before the notice was issued. If the bride and groom lived in different registration districts, the notice had to be displayed in both. The three week period was similar to reading the banns in church in that it gave time for anyone objecting to the marriage to come forward.

The notices were copied up into a register to make a permanent record and objections had to be written in the register next to the relevant notice.

The names of bride and groom were recorded, whether they were single or widowed, their occupation, their age and address, the length of time they had lived at that address, the place where the ceremony was to be performed and the registration district and county in which both parties lived.

This notice book is for the Axminster Registration District, which covered the parishes in Devon surrounding Axminster and also included Charmouth and Lyme Regis in Dorset.