Portsmouth is one of the oldest naval ports in the country. It offers easy access from the M27, and the continental ferry port makes it ideal for those couples wishing to sail away for their honeymoon in Europe. The city is rich in history being the home to monuments such as Charles Dickens’ birthplace, Nelson’s ship HMS Victory and Henry VIII’s Mary Rose.

This publication has been written, edited and designed by Portsmouth City Council.

Marriages and Civil Partnerships in Portsmouth 2016-2018
Portsmouth Register Office is situated in Milldam House, a Grade II listed Georgian building. Built in the early 1800s, it has won awards for the renovation work carried out in 1994, when it was restored as much as possible to its original features. The main entrance to the building is dominated by the original wrought iron staircase and is perfect for those who wish to make a grand entrance. Milldam House has a beautifully landscaped garden and offers a great setting for your photographs.

There are now two rooms available for ceremonies. Both rooms have been re-decorated in a style which is in keeping with the period of the building. Situated on the first floor, the Ceremonies Room, which holds a maximum of 45 guests, is fully air-conditioned and is spacious and elegant. This room is available on weekdays and Saturdays.

Downstairs there is an alternative room available for register office ceremonies only. This room holds 16 guests and a very simple ceremony is available only on weekdays. Please note: both rooms have been fully equipped with a hearing loop system for use by the hearing impaired. If you would like to use this facility please let the Registrar know prior to your ceremony.

If you are looking for somewhere different to hold your marriage ceremony we can offer you an extensive range of venues to choose from. We have something for everyone from a ship to a theatre! A full list of our venues can be obtained from the Register Office or via the Portsmouth City Council website.

We hope that this brochure will offer you a full and comprehensive insight into planning your day, covering everything from your preliminary arrangements to the legal requirements.
Approved premises

Once you have provisionally booked with the venue of your choice, you should contact the Superintendent Registrar of the district where it is located. You will need to confirm that registration staff will be able to attend on your chosen date and discuss a time for the ceremony.

A locally set fee is payable for the registration staff to attend. This fee is in addition to any charged by the venue or those paid for the notices of marriage. Full details of these can be obtained from the Register Office or via the Portsmouth City Council website.

Booking your civil ceremony

You can have a marriage or civil partnership in any register office or approved premises of your choice in England or Wales. At Portsmouth Register Office we are happy to take a provisional booking from you up to two years in advance. This allows you to be able to make your other arrangements in plenty of time.

A non-refundable booking fee is applicable when making a provisional booking and this can be done in person or over the telephone by either one of the couple.

We are unable to take bookings from friends or relatives unless the couple are overseas.

Our refund policy

In the unfortunate event that you may need to cancel your ceremony with us, Portsmouth Registration Service’s refund policy is as follows:

- Twelve weeks or more written notice of cancellation: Full refund
- Less than twelve weeks but more than four weeks notice: 50% refund
- Less than four weeks notice or failure to cancel: No refund
Documents we will need to see

When you give your notices you will need to show some documents to the Superintendent Registrar. These documents will be used to verify your details such as name, marital status and nationality.

A current passport is the preferred document for proving your identity and nationality. If you have never held a passport we will need to see a copy of your full birth certificate, and possibly your mother’s full birth certificate, depending on your date of birth.

If either of you has been married or in a civil partnership before we will need to see proof that the marriage or partnership has ended. This will be either a decree absolute, conditional order or a death certificate for your late partner. In some cases the previous marriage or civil partnership certificate may also be required.

If either of you has changed your name by deed poll, change of name deed or statutory declaration, we will need to see the document.

If either of you is under eighteen, we will need to see proof that your parents or guardian agree to the marriage. They will need to complete a consent form, which you must collect from the Register Office before giving your notices of marriage.

Please remember that all documents must be the originals and any translations should be carried out by a third person.
Your marriage ceremony

When you arrive on the day of your ceremony the Registrar will need to see both of you prior to the ceremony in order to complete your marriage certificate.

On Saturdays there will be someone to greet you and your guests at Milldam House, and they will show you the way to the marriage waiting room. The Registrar will collect you from the waiting room and will then take you through to a private interview room, where they will check your details and complete your certificate.

If you are having a ceremony in the downstairs Ceremonies Room at 9.30am, you will be taken into the room together, before your guests enter, to complete your paperwork with the Registrar.

If you are having a ceremony in the upstairs Ceremonies Room, you may be seen separately if you prefer.

The Registrar will take your guests through to the Ceremonies Room, but if you require specific seating arrangements please nominate one of your party to act as an usher. Please note that for health and safety reasons the downstairs Ceremonies Room holds a maximum of 16 guests and the upstairs Ceremonies Room holds a maximum of 45 guests. This includes children aged two and over.

If you are having a ceremony in the upstairs Ceremonies Room you can choose how you wish to make your entrance. Some couples like to enter the room together, whilst others prefer to be escorted by friends or relatives.
Exchanging rings
The giving and receiving of rings can also form part of the ceremony.
The choice of one or two rings is left to the wishes of the couple.

The ceremony
The ceremony is a simple one during which you will each make two statements. In the first you will each declare that you are free to marry the other person; this is called a declaratory statement. In the second you will each say that you take the other person as your husband/wife; this is called a contracting statement.

There is a choice of three statements for each of these and you will need to decide which two you would like to use. Please note, these words will be prompted to you to repeat after the Superintendent Registrar.

These statements are:
- Declaratory words
  - “I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I ......... may not be joined in matrimonio to .........”
  - or
  - “I declare that I know of no legal reason why I ......... may not be joined in marriage to .........”
  - or
  - By replying “I am ” to the question “Are you ......... free lawfully to marry .........?”
- Contracting words
  - “I call upon these persons here present to witness that I ......... do take thee ......... to be my lawfully wedded wife/husband”
  - or
  - “I ......... take you ......... to be my wedded wife/husband”
  - or
  - “I ......... take thee ......... to be my wedded wife/husband”

Personalising your ceremony
If you are having a ceremony in the upstairs Ceremonies Room you can choose to personalise your ceremony. There are many ways in which the ceremony can be tailored to be more personal to you. The Superintendent Registrar is able to offer a choice of vows, readings and music, and as it is your special day your own suggestions will be welcome.

However, any additions to the ceremony must be seemly and dignified, and must not have any religious or spiritual connotations. Any additions must be approved by the Superintendent Registrar at least two weeks prior to the ceremony taking place.

Due to time constraints you can choose either one reading or your own vows. If you would like any help planning your ceremony our staff will be happy to offer advice or suggestions.

Please note that these options are not available for ceremonies held in the downstairs Ceremonies Room.
Signing the register

At the end of the ceremony you will be asked to read through the details recorded in the marriage register. You are asked to check the information carefully as corrections are very difficult to make once the register has been signed.

After you have both signed, the Registrar will ask the witnesses to come forward to sign the register.

You are required by law to have two witnesses present at the ceremony who can sign for you. We recommend that your witnesses are eighteen years or over and they must be able to speak and understand English.

Confetti

In order to keep Milldam House looking attractive and tidy for all its users, we would ask that confetti is only used when you are outside the building. Confetti and bubbles are on sale at Milldam House should your guests wish to purchase them.

Photographs and videos

Photography is permitted throughout the ceremony and there will also be an opportunity for your guests to take photographs afterwards.

A video recording can also be made throughout the ceremony.

Smoking, including electronic cigarettes, is not permitted in the building. Alcohol is not permitted in the building or the garden.
Your civil partnership ceremony

On the day of your civil partnership the Registrar will need to see both of you prior to the ceremony in order to check your details on the schedule. To do this we ask you to arrive fifteen minutes early, however if you would like to be seen separately we can arrange to do so, but we do ask you to let us know before the day.

On Saturdays there will be someone to greet you and your guests at Milldam House, and they will show you the way to the waiting room. The Registrar will collect you from the waiting room and will then take you through to a private interview room, where they will check your details on the Schedule.

The Registrar will take your guests through to the ceremonies room, but if you require specific seating arrangements please nominate one of your party to act as an usher. Please note that for health and safety reasons the upstairs Ceremonies Room holds a maximum number of 45 guests, and the downstairs Ceremonies Room holds a maximum of 16 guests. This includes children aged two and over.

You can choose how you enter the Ceremonies Room. Some couples like to enter the room together, whilst others prefer to be escorted by friends or relatives.
The ceremony

The ceremony is a simple one during which you will each make two statements. In the first you will each declare that you are free to enter into a civil partnership, this is called a declaratory statement.

In the second you will each say that you take the other person as your civil partner, this is called a contracting statement.

Please note, these words will be prompted to you to repeat after the Superintendent Registrar.

These statements are:

Declaratory words
"I declare that I know of no legal reason why I ....... may not register as the civil partner of ......."

Contracting words
"I call upon these persons here present to witness that I ....... do take ....... to be my lawful civil partner.
Alternatively you can choose to write your own declarations and vows to each other. Please see the section headed “Personalising your ceremony”.

Personalising your ceremony

There are many ways in which the ceremony can be tailored to be more personal to you. The Superintendent Registrar is able to offer a choice of vows or readings and music, and as it is your special day your own suggestions will be welcome.

However, any additions to the ceremony must be seemly and dignified, and must not have any religious or spiritual connotations. Any additions must be approved by the Superintendent Registrar at least two weeks prior to the ceremony taking place.

Please note that, due to time constraints, for a Milldam House ceremony you can choose either one reading or your own vows.

If you would like any help planning your ceremony our staff will be happy to offer you advice or suggestions.

Exchanging rings

The giving and receiving of rings can also form part of the ceremony. The choice of one or two rings is left to the wishes of the couple.
Photographs and videos
Photography is permitted throughout the ceremony and there will also be an opportunity for your guests to take photographs afterwards.

A video recording can also be made throughout the ceremony.

Smoking, including electronic cigarettes, is not permitted in the building. Alcohol is not permitted in the building or the garden.

Confetti
In order to keep Milldam House looking attractive and tidy for all its users, we would ask that confetti is only used when you are outside the building. Confetti and bubbles are on sale at Milldam House should your guests wish to purchase them.

Registration Only
If you do not wish to hold a ceremony, then you can opt to have a simple signing of the schedule in front of two witnesses, held in the Superintendent Registrar’s office.

Signing the schedule
At the end of the ceremony you will be asked to read through the details recorded on the schedule. You are asked to check the information carefully as corrections are very difficult to make once the schedule has been signed.

After you have both signed, the Registrar will ask the witnesses to come forward to sign the schedule. You are required by law to have two witnesses present at the ceremony who can sign for you. We recommend that your witnesses are eighteen years or over and they must be able to speak and understand English.

Photographs and videos
Photography is permitted throughout the ceremony and there will also be an opportunity for your guests to take photographs afterwards.

A video recording can also be made throughout the ceremony.

Smoking, including electronic cigarettes, is not permitted in the building. Alcohol is not permitted in the building or the garden.
Our facilities

Milldam House has its own car park at the rear of the building. The car park can become busy, and should this happen parking is available in the surrounding streets.

The main entrance has access for disabled guests and there is a lift to the first floor. Our Ceremonies Room is fully equipped with a hearing loop system for use by the hearing impaired. A parent and baby room and nappy changing facilities are also available. If you have questions about the facilities we have, please contact us for further information.

Naming ceremonies

These ceremonies have been designed for people who wish to celebrate a special event in their lives, but who may not feel that a religious ceremony is right for them. The ceremony has no legal status and is simply an opportunity to bring family and friends together to share in a special or significant occasion.

Naming ceremonies give parents the opportunity to pledge themselves to the upbringing of their child and to ask supporting adults to promise their support and commitment to the whole family.

Renewal of vows

These ceremonies are an opportunity for couples to rededicate themselves to their partner. These are particularly popular with couples who are celebrating a special anniversary or who have recently married abroad. Very often family and friends are unable to travel abroad for a ceremony and many couples want a family celebration when they return as well. A renewal of vows ceremony is ideal for this and offers couples a chance to rededicate their vows to each other in front of their friends and family.
Order of Ceremony Examples

**Venue Ceremony**
- Entrance of couple or one party with an escort
- Welcome and introduction by the Superintendent Registrar
- Possible reading by family member or friend
- Declaratory Words & Contracting words
- Exchange of wedding rings
- Possible reading or personal vows
- Conclusion of ceremony
- Signing of the Register or Schedule & Photographs
- Exit of Couple

**Milldam House Ceremony**
- Entrance of couple or one party with an escort
- Welcome and introduction by the Superintendent Registrar
- Declaratory Words & Contracting words
- Exchange of wedding rings
- Possible reading or personal vows
- Conclusion of ceremony
- Signing of the Register or Schedule & Photographs
- Exit of Couple

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Member of The London Guild of Toastmasters
Member of The Toastmaster Partnership
British Boxing Board of Control Licensed
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Peter will be on hand to make sure you
remember all the small details of your day.
Making it a day you will never forget.

From before leaving your home until
late into the evening, Peter will ensure
you enjoy the best day of your life.

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