

CONSULTATION DRAFT
OPERATIONAL SELECTION POLICY OSP18

RECORDS OF REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS
AND MARRIAGES OF UNITED KINGDOM CITIZENS
OCCURRING OVERSEAS

This Operational Selection Policy completed its public consultation phase in November 2002. It has not yet been implemented because of the ongoing review of civil registration policy in the UK. This Policy will be reviewed when the review of civil registration policy has been completed.

*August 2002
Revised December 2005*

1 Authority

- 1.1 The National Archives' Acquisition and Disposition policy statements announced The Archive's intention of developing, in consultation with departments, Operational Selection Policies across government. These policies would apply the collection themes described in the policy to the records of individual departments and agencies.
- 1.2 Operational Selection Policies are intended to be working tools for those involved in the selection of public records. This policy may, therefore, be reviewed and revised in the light of comments received from the users of the records or from archive professionals, the department's experience of using the policy, or as a result of newly discovered information. There is no formal cycle of review but we would welcome comments at any time. The extent of any review and revision exercise will be determined according to the nature of the comments received.
- 1.3 If you have any comments upon this policy, please e-mail records-management@nationalarchives.gov.uk or write to:

Acquisition and Disposition Policy Project Manager
Records Management Department
The National Archives
Kew
Richmond
Surrey
TW9 4DU

- 1.4 Operational Selection Policies do not provide guidance on access to selected records.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers the records produced in the process of registering births, deaths and marriages of UK nationals and citizens occurring outside of the United Kingdom. This registration function is performed by a number of government departments overseas, and a number in the United Kingdom, depending on the circumstances of the event to be registered.
- 2.2 The policy considers:
- Registrations of births and deaths on board British registered civilian aircraft overseas, which are made by the Civil Aviation Authority
 - Records of births, deaths and marriages of Royal Navy personnel made overseas by the Ministry of Defence
 - Registrations of births, deaths and marriages of Army and Royal Air Force personnel made overseas by the Ministry of Defence

- Registrations and records of deaths of staff of certain organisations associated with Britain's armed forces, made overseas by the Ministry of Defence
- Registrations of births, deaths, marriages and *lex loci* marriages at British consular offices made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Registrations of births, deaths and marriages overseas in states where the United Kingdom has no consular representation, made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Records of deaths on board offshore installations held by the Department of Trade and Industry and registered by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen
- Registrations and records of births and deaths on board British civil and military hovercraft overseas, made by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence respectively
- Registrations of births and deaths on British merchant ships at sea and of foreign merchant ships carrying passengers to or from British ports, made by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen
- Registration of 'marriages' conducted on British registered merchant vessels

2.3 This policy does not cover the records of the Offices of the Registrars General in the United Kingdom, which will be considered in a future operational selection policy covering records of *The Life Cycle of the Individual*, but takes note of the Registrars Generals' responsibilities and record holdings in determining acquisition criteria. Except where otherwise stated, references in this policy to the Registrar General should be taken to mean the Registrar General for England and Wales, the Registrar General for Scotland and the Registrar General for Northern Ireland.

2.4 This Operational Selection Policy provides guidance on the identification of records for permanent preservation. It does not provide guidance on access to selected records.

3 Responsibilities for Overseas Registration

3.1 The Registrars General

3.1.1 For births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, the Marriage Act 1949 and the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 (known collectively as the Registration Acts) clearly establish the Registrar General (whose office now forms part of the Office of National Statistics) as the responsible authority for keeping accurate records of these events, and making those records available, for a fee, to the public. There is separate legislation covering the registration of births, deaths and marriages in Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is however no similar legislation for the registration of births, deaths and marriages of British citizens overseas. Instead, separate Acts have

over time been passed for each of the authorities that has been required to register such events, laying down the form of record or registration to be made and the steps to be taken to pass accurate information about such events to the Registrars General (and usually making use of the provisions of the Registration Acts for the issuing of certified copies of overseas records). Registering births, deaths and marriages overseas is in many cases not compulsory, unlike in the United Kingdom.

- 3.1.2 The Registrar General is obliged to keep records of births, deaths and marriages registered overseas with British registering authorities, and (as for UK events) to make the records of those registrations available to researchers for a fee. All the regulations covering the other British registering authorities share certain common points, including that all registering authorities must make accurate records of the events being registered and that accurate or certified copies, or the original records themselves, must from time-to-time be transmitted to the Registrar General. In most cases, the regulations specify that the standard forms or registers to be used must be those supplied by the Registrar General for the purpose or must follow a standard form laid down in the regulations.

3.2 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

- 3.2.1 The Consular Marriage Act 1849 established that appropriately accredited British consular marriage officers could register the marriage of a British citizen outside of the United Kingdom. The Act provided that two duplicate registers were to be completed by the consul to record the event. Annual returns (or nil returns) of marriages were to be made to the Registrar General by each consular marriage officer, and when the registers were full, one of the duplicates was to be transmitted to the Registrar General. All subsequent legislation covering consular marriages has included equivalent provisions.
- 3.2.2 *Lex loci* marriages of British citizens overseas (marriages conducted under the law of another state rather than under UK law) were not covered by the 1849 Act, although some consuls did keep registers of *lex loci* marriages from that time. The Marriage Act 1890 established that *lex loci* marriages could be registered by consular marriage officers on the same basis as marriages under the 1849 Act. This arrangement continued until 1970, when the Foreign Marriage Order (SI 1970/1539) abolished the consular registration of *lex loci* marriages.
- 3.2.3 Although births and deaths were not covered by the 1849 Act, the Foreign Secretary issued instructions to consular officers to begin the registration of births and deaths of British citizens overseas in November of that year, an instruction that was extended to staff at British legations in 1859. Some consulates had in fact been keeping registers of births, deaths and marriages prior to 1849. Under the

Foreign Secretary's instructions, returns giving details of all registered births and deaths (or nil returns) were to be sent annually to the Registrar General.

- 3.2.4 These arrangements were formalised by the Naturalization Act 1870, which authorised the Foreign Secretary to make rules for the registration of births and deaths by consular officers. This act was enforced by Foreign Office circulars (and not codified in a Statutory Instrument until 1930), which effectively repeated the instructions in place since 1849. Under these instructions, one register (not two duplicate registers as for marriages) was to be kept for births, and one for deaths, in each consular office, and returns of certified copies of register entries for the previous year, or nil returns, were to be sent to the Registrar General annually. All subsequent legislation covering consular registration of births and deaths has included equivalent provisions.
- 3.2.5 There was no provision under the Naturalization Act for the registration of births and deaths of British citizens in states where the UK had no consular representation. This situation was addressed by the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1943, which allowed the Foreign Secretary to keep registers of births and deaths of British citizens in states where there was no consular representation, or where for other reasons registration was impractical. The order which detailed how this was to be effected (Statutory Instrument SI 1943/765) established that these registers were to be treated exactly as if they were consular registers, with certified copies (or nil returns) being made annually to the Registrar General. The same applied to registers of births and deaths kept by high commissioners in Commonwealth states under the British Nationality Act 1948, whereby qualified individuals births and deaths could be registered with the high commissioner to record British nationality rights. High commissioners were required to return certified copies (or nil returns) annually to the Registrar General.
- 3.2.6 Generally, the registration of births, deaths and marriages of UK citizens in Commonwealth states and in Britain's overseas territories (and previously in colonies and mandate territories) is done under the locally applying legislation. There is no requirement or necessity for the event to be registered with the British representatives or the Registrar General. One exception to this rule was for births, deaths and marriages in the territories of the Western Pacific High Commission. In 1893, the status of the High Commission lay somewhere between that of a foreign state and a colony, and the existing registration rules did not cover the islands involved (Fiji, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, the Union Group and the Commission protectorates of Fanning, Ocean, Pitcairn and Washington Islands). This was addressed by the Pacific Order in Council 1893, which set up a registration regime that similarly occupied middle ground between that

in place for foreign states, and for colonial territories. The High Commissioner was to register births, deaths and marriages of British subjects in his territory, but was not obliged to copy returns to the Registrar General, or to send duplicate copies of completed marriage registers to the Registrar General. This Order remained in force until and beyond the termination of the Western Pacific High Commission.

- 3.2.7 The Foreign Marriage Order 1970 (SI 1970/1539), passed under the Foreign Marriage Acts 1892-1947, allowed original marriage documents, or certified copies of marriage documents, recording marriages involving British citizens under the local laws of another state to be deposited with the Registrar General. While these events are not registered on receipt of the documents, an entry is made in the index of foreign marriages by the Registrar General to facilitate access to and copying of these documents. These documents may only be sent to the Registrar General by the consular officer responsible for the district in which the marriage took place, and there is no registration made by the consul or by the Registrar General.

3.3 **The Ministry of Defence**

- 3.3.1 **Royal Navy:** The original record of births, deaths and marriages on board Royal Navy vessels and establishments outside of the United Kingdom is that in the logbook. The commanding officer is required by navy regulations to record accurate details of such events in the log. Sections XX and XXVI of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1836 for the first time required the Captain to return the facts of overseas births and deaths of English subjects or children of English parents on board his ship to the Registrar General upon return to a UK port.
- 3.3.2 The Marriage Act 1890 provided that records of marriages solemnised on board navy ships or at overseas naval establishments should be registered under similar terms as for marriages under the Consular Marriage Act 1849. For naval marriages the original record was again the logbook, rather than a register and duplicate register, and it is certified copies of the logbook entries that are returned to the Registrar General.
- 3.3.3 **The Army:** The registration of army births, deaths and marriages overseas has been regulated since 1879, when the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Army) Act was passed. That act required the keeping of registers of such events, and also that certified copies of entries in the registers should be returned to the Registrar General annually. In 1959 the Service Departments Registers Order (SI 1959/406) provided that such registers, when full or when no longer required by the army, must be transmitted to the Registrar General.

3.3.4 **Royal Air Force:** The Air Force Constitution Act 1917 established that the existing army regulations for the registration of births, deaths and marriages overseas would apply also to the RAF. The RAF continues to come under the same regulations as the army.

3.3.5 **Related organisations:** organisations such as the NAAFI, which are attached in some capacity to overseas military establishments, are covered by the legislation appropriate to the establishment for the purposes of registration of deaths. So, the death of a member of staff of the NAAFI at an overseas naval establishment would be recorded in the log, while the death of a NAAFI member of staff at an overseas air base would be recorded in a register. This regulation also applies to deaths of members of family of a person serving in one of these organisations residing with him or in the vicinity of the station of the force concerned. The list of organisations covered by the 1959 regulations is recorded in a Statutory Instrument, the Service Departments Registers Order (SI 1959/406), as follows:

- Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
- Combined Services Entertainments
- Services Central Book Depot
- Forces Broadcasting Service
- British Red Cross Society
- Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem
- St Andrew's Ambulance Association
- Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Associations
- Council of Voluntary Welfare Work (covers such bodies as the YMCA and YWCA, the Catholic Women's League Services Club Committee, the Salvation Army and the Church Army when based overseas attached to military bases)
- Sanders' Soldiers' and Airmen's Homes
- Soldiers' and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association
- Forces Help Society and Lord Roberts' Workshops
- Malcolm Clubs
- Women's Voluntary Service
- Royal Naval Film Corporation
- Royal Naval Lay Readers' Society
- British Sailors' Society
- Missions to Seamen
- Army Kinema Corporation
- RAF Cinema Corporation

3.3.6 **Hovercraft:** Under the Hovercraft Act 1968 and the Hovercraft (Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Regulations 1972 (SI 1972/1513), British military hovercraft are not defined as being either aircraft or ships for the purposes of registrations of births and deaths. Instead, the relevant regulations for registering births and deaths overseas for the Service operating the hovercraft apply. For civil hovercraft, see section 3.5.4 below.

3.4 Civil Aviation Authority

- 3.4.1 Prior to October 1948, there was no legislation requiring the registration of births and deaths on board UK registered civil aircraft overseas. The Civil Aviation Act 1946 required the keeping of records of births and deaths on board UK registered civil aircraft anywhere in the world outside the United Kingdom. The regulation bringing this Act into force was the Civil Aviation (Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Regulations 1948 (SI 1948/411). Similar provision is included in the most recent legislation, the Civil Aviation (Amendment) Act 1982. Returns recording such births and deaths are made by the responsible registering officer (the owner of the aircraft, who is sent details by the person in command of the aircraft, who is required to make an entry of the event in the journey log) to the Civil Aviation Authority, where they are entered into the Air Register Book of Births and Deaths. Returns must also be made where deaths can be assumed following the loss of an aircraft, but where there is no confirming proof that a given individual has died, and such returns are also entered into the Register. Certified copies of entries in the Register are made quarterly, or more frequently if need be, by the Civil Aviation Authority and sent to the Registrar General.

3.5 Registrar of Shipping and Seamen

- 3.5.1 **Merchant vessels:** The Births and Deaths Registration Act 1874 included provisions that masters and captains of British registered merchant vessels must record births and deaths of British citizens on board those vessels while at sea. Certified returns of those records were to be provided to the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen, and the Registrar was in turn to provide certified copies of the returns annually to the Registrar General for entry into the Marine Register. This was the first comprehensive legislation to cover births and deaths on board British merchantmen and it also required masters of foreign passenger vessels to send returns recording births or deaths on board while the vessel was in passage to or from a British port to the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen. Prior to that, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1836 had required masters to send minutes to the Registrar General notifying him of deaths of English passengers and crew abroad and births of children of at least one English parent (by-passing the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen completely, and making no provision for the Welsh, Scots or Irish), and the Mercantile Marine Act 1850 had required masters to return logs to the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen from which a register of births and deaths could be completed (with no provision for these details to be passed on to the Registrar General). Under the most recent legislation, the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and the Merchant Shipping (Returns of Births and Deaths) Regulations 1979 (SI 1979 No. 1577) the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen is required to send a certified copy of returns submitted by masters to the Registrar

General for entry in the Marine Register, and such returns are now made as and when events happen, rather than annually.

- 3.5.2 When a whole ship is lost at sea the deaths of crew and any passengers cannot be registered by the usual means. In such cases the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen registers supposed deaths on the basis of Casualties and Deaths forms supplied by the ship's owners, and of the crew lists completed before the ship sailed. Entries were recorded in the register of deceased seamen and the register of deceased passengers. Until 1980 no returns of these entries were made to the Registrar General for entry into the Marine Register, as this was not required by the regulations. This was rectified by SI 1979 No. 1577, and from 1 January 1980 such returns have been made to the Registrar General.
- 3.5.3 Contrary to popular belief, there has never been any legal basis for the conduct of marriages at sea by the masters of British registered merchant ships and such 'marriages' have no standing in British law. Such 'marriages' have however taken place, and the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen has kept a register of those it was informed of by returning masters, or of which record was found in ships logs passed to the Registrar under the 1850 Act.
- 3.5.4 **Hovercraft:** Under the Hovercraft Act 1968, the Hovercraft (Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Regulations 1972 (SI 1972/1513) and the Hovercraft (Application of Enactments) Order 1972 (SI 1972 No. 971), civil hovercraft are considered to be aircraft for the purposes of registrations of births and deaths. The registration of such events on UK registered hovercraft outside the United Kingdom was, however, done through the Department of Trade and Industry (rather than the Civil Aviation Authority), a function that subsequently passed to the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen. The person in command of the hovercraft is required to make a record of the birth or death, and to make that record available to the operator of the hovercraft, who then makes a return to the Secretary of State. This leads to an entry being made in the Hovercraft Register Book of Births or Deaths, and certified copies of register entries are sent to the Registrars General. Military hovercraft are not covered by these regulations – see section 3.3.6 above.
- 3.5.5 **Offshore installations:** With the development of the off-shore exploration and oil and gas extraction industries in the 1960s and '70s, the possibility of deaths occurring on British registered installations outside British territorial waters and not under the jurisdiction of any other state arose (i.e. in 'designated areas' under the Continental Shelf Act 1964). Provision for registering such deaths was made under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 by the Offshore Installations (Logbooks and Registration of Death) Regulations, Statutory Instrument SI 1972/1542. The regulations provided that each installation would maintain a logbook,

provided by the Department of Trade and Industry. Among other information, the installation manager must record details of all deaths on the installation, or losses in circumstances reasonable to assume the death of the individual(s) concerned.

- 3.5.6 Installation managers were required to report any death using a standard form to the owner of the installation. The owner in turn was required to pass a copy of that standard form to the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen, and the Registrar in turn provided a certified copy to the Registrar General so that the death could be entered into the Marine Register. In addition, when installation logbooks were full, or were six months old, they were to be returned to the Department of Trade and Industry for permanent preservation. These logbooks were subsequently passed to the Health and Safety Executive for safe-keeping, and when the requirement to preserve the logbooks permanently was revoked by the Offshore Installations and Pipeline Works (Management and Installation) Regulations 1995, they were subsequently destroyed when of no further administrative use to the Executive.

4 Relevant Collection Themes in The National Archives' Acquisition Policy

- 4.1 The Acquisition Policy outlines certain themes, which form the basis of The National Archives' appraisal and selection decisions. Of these themes, the following is of relevance to the registration of births, deaths and marriages overseas:

2.2.2 Interaction of the state with its citizens and its impact on the physical environment –

2.2.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries

- 4.2 The Acquisition Policy also states, at section 2.3.4, that 'the cost of selection and of storage must ... be an explicit element in appraisal decisions and, as part of this, the rate at which The National Archives acquires records must be carefully controlled.'

- 4.3 It is these two elements, taken together, that inform the appraisal criteria set out for the various types of overseas registration record in section 5 below.

5 Key Themes within Overseas Registration Records

- 5.1 It is clear from the regulations that the lead department for the registration of births, deaths and marriages overseas is the Office of the Registrar General, which is identified as the body to which records, or accurate or certified copies of records, of registered

events must be sent in order for them to be preserved and made available, for a fee, to the public. Given that statute requires the Registrar General to do this, section 2.3.4 of the Acquisition Policy will be implemented. Records that duplicate the information in the holdings of the Registrar General will not be selected for permanent preservation at The National Archives so that the additional expense of selecting and storing registration records that duplicate information held by the Registrar General will not be incurred. Where there is a continuing administrative need for registration records not required for permanent preservation in the registering department, it will be open to the department to retain those records (after seeking the Lord Chancellor's permission to retain records that are more than 30 years old).

- 5.2 Where registration records are not sent or copied to the Registrar General, where there is evidence that the holdings of the Registrar General are incomplete, or where records of registered events are found that pre-date the holdings of the Registrar General, then those records, supplementing the holdings of the Registrar General, will be selected under section 2.2.2.1 of the Acquisition Policy detailing the demographic condition of the UK outside of its formal boundaries. The effect of paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 on each of the various sort of overseas registration document is set out in paragraphs 5.3 and following.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

- 5.3 **Consular marriage registers:** Under the provisions of the Consular Marriage Act 1849 and subsequent legislation, including the Marriage Act 1890 that established the consular registration of *lex loci* marriages, two duplicate copies of consular marriage registers are made by the consular marriage officer. As well as returns being sent annually to the Registrar General, one of the two duplicates is sent to the Registrar General when it is full or when no longer required (for example if the Consulate closes). There is therefore no necessity for The National Archives to preserve the second duplicate copy of such registers as this would exactly duplicate the holdings of the Registrar General. However, registers made by consular officers containing entries that predate the 1849 Act (or the 1890 Act for *lex loci* marriages) should be preserved as there is no guarantee that the information will be held by the Registrar General. Where any such registers are found in overseas posts, they should be transferred to The National Archives. Any second duplicate copies of registers after 1849 (1890 for *lex loci* marriages) held in consulates after the first copy is sent to the Registrar General should be retained for as long as there is an administrative need for them in the post, and can then be destroyed.
- 5.4 **Consular and high commission registers of births and deaths:** The regulations issued under the Naturalization Act 1870, and earlier

circular instructions issued by the Foreign Secretary, provided for a single register (as opposed to duplicate copies as was the case for marriage registers) to be kept by consular officers to record births and deaths of British subjects overseas. The Office of National Statistics has confirmed that it holds certified copies of all births and deaths registered with consuls since 7 November 1849, and with consular officers at British Legations since 19 July 1859. There is no requirement in the regulations for the completed registers to be passed to the Registrar General, but there is no necessity for them to be preserved at The National Archives, as this would exactly duplicate the information in the existing holdings of the Registrar General. However, registers made at consulates containing entries that predate the 7 November 1849, or at legations that predate 19 July 1859 should be preserved in the event of their discovery at overseas posts as there is no guarantee that the information will be held by the Registrar General. Registers of births and deaths registered with high commissioners before 1949 should be preserved in the event of their discovery as there is no guarantee that the information will be held by the Registrar General.

- 5.5 **Registration of Births and Deaths in States where the UK has no representation:** where any such registrations were made in London prior to the entry into force of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act in 1943, there is no guarantee that a return of the details would have been made to the Registrar General. Therefore, any earlier registers of deaths or births of British citizens in states where there was no UK representative should be selected for permanent preservation. Registers later than 1943 will duplicate exactly information held by the Registrar General, and need not be preserved.
- 5.6 **Western Pacific High Commission registrations:** records produced by the High Commission were bequeathed to the various successor states when the High Commission was wound up, but were subsequently returned to the UK when no suitable archive accommodation could be found. The Lord Chancellor has given approval for the return of these records to the region and they were passed in 2002 to the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Any registers of births, deaths and marriages under the 1893 Pacific Order in Council were carried out by the High Commissioner would have been preserved in the United Kingdom, as they would relate not to the local administration of the High Commission territories, but to the documentation of events concerning UK citizens overseas. However, it seems clear that no registers survive amongst the material recently returned from the United Kingdom to the region.
- 5.7 **Records generated by consular action under the Foreign Marriage Order 1970:** there should not be any registers of action taken by consuls passing original or copied marriage documents to the Registrar General, as no such registration was required under the

regulation. Routine correspondence forwarding such marriage documents is ephemeral and need not be preserved, and any registration records recording details of those who took action under this regulation need not be preserved, as the detailed index entries and documents will be held by the Registrar General for the purpose of consultation.

Ministry of Defence

- 5.8 **Royal Navy logbooks recording births, deaths and marriages:** the original record of such events is that made in the ship's or station's logbook. All surviving logbooks will be preserved permanently under other acquisition policy criteria, so the records of such births, deaths and marriages will be preserved by default.
- 5.9 **Army and Royal Air Force registers of births, deaths and marriages overseas:** The 1959 Service Departments Registers Order (SI 1959/406) provides that any completed registers of births, deaths and marriages, or registers for which the Army or the Royal Air Force have no further use, must be passed to the Registrar General. This applies not just to registers begun, completed or no longer required after the signature of the instrument, but also includes any registers of births, deaths and marriages in the possession of the Army and the Royal Air Force compiled under earlier legislation or instruments. Such registers will therefore always be passed to the Registrar General, and will not be considered for preservation at The National Archives.
- 5.10 **Records of deaths of personnel of organisations related or allied to the armed services:** such events are recorded in logbooks, or registered, depending on the service to which the organisation was attached, and records of such events are covered accordingly in paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 above.

Civil Aviation Authority

- 5.11 **Records of births and deaths on British registered civil aircraft overseas:** As all entries made in the Air Register Book of Births and Deaths are duplicated by the information returned annually to the Registrar General, there is no necessity for the Air Register to be preserved. Any surviving records registering births and deaths on board British registered civil aircraft before November 1948 should however be preserved, as such records will predate the time from which the Civil Aviation Authority was legally required to make annual returns to the Registrar General.

Registrar of Shipping and Seamen

- 5.12 **Registers of births and deaths on board British registered merchant vessels:** Since 1874 the majority of entries recorded in the

Marine Registers by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen duplicate exactly the information provided to the Registrar General under the relevant legislation, and there is therefore no requirement for the registers to be preserved, saving only the exception noted at 5.13 below. In the event of any records or registers being discovered that cover the period before 1875, these will be preserved.

- 5.13 **Register of deceased seamen and passengers where the whole ship was lost at sea:** Prior to 1980 the Marine Registers contain the only record of registration of deaths where entire British registered ships were lost at sea. All registers containing entries up to 31 December 1979 held by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen will therefore be selected for permanent preservation at The National Archives. Where the earliest register entry post-dates 31 December 1979, the information held will duplicate that held in the Marine Register of Deaths by the Registrar General, and such registers will not be preserved.
- 5.14 **‘Marriages’ on board British registered merchant vessels:** ‘marriage’ ceremonies conducted on board British merchant vessels have no legal standing, and no returns of such events are made to the Registrar General. Where any record or register of such events is discovered, it should be preserved as it will constitute the only record of such unofficial ceremonies.
- 5.15 **Deaths on board British registered offshore installations:** From 1972, the Registrar has been sent copies of standard form recording such deaths for registration. The information recorded on the forms exactly duplicates information held by the Registrar General, and there is therefore no need to preserve such records. However, any records held by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen recording deaths on offshore installations before the introduction of the relevant regulation in 1972 should be preserved as there can be no guarantee that that the information will have been passed to the Registrar General.
- 5.16 **Records of births and deaths on British registered hovercraft overseas:** Since 1968 entries recorded in the Hovercraft Register Book of Births and Deaths by the Department of Trade and Industry, and subsequently the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen, duplicate exactly the information provided to the Registrar General under the relevant legislation, and there is therefore no requirement for the registers to be preserved, saving only the exception noted at 5.13 above (i.e. that registers earlier than 31 December 1979 should be preserved where they contain the only record of deaths where entire British registered hovercraft were lost at sea). In the event of any records or registers being discovered that cover the period before 1969, these will be preserved.

Health and Safety Executive

- 5.17 **Installation logbooks recording deaths on board British registered offshore installations:** the original record of deaths on board British registered offshore installations is in the installation logbook. The logbooks are returned to the Health and Safety Executive under present legislation. However, as they duplicate information required by statute to be passed to the Registrar General, there is no requirement for such logbooks to be preserved to record deaths on the installations. In practice, the other information recorded in the logbooks is also not required for permanent preservation, and these records have not been preserved after 1995, when the regulations were altered to allow their destruction.

6 Implementation of Selection Policy

- 6.1 The criteria set out above for making appraisal decisions on the selection for permanent preservation, or disposal, or records of registrations of births, deaths and marriages overseas will be applied automatically across all departments concerned from the date of publication of this policy.