

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.											
<p>Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.</p> <p>The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.</p>											
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE			PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards			BIRTHPLACE of every person.	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country.	INFIRMITY.
<p>of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who</p> <p>(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or</p> <p>(2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included. (For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)</p>	<p>State whether "Head" or "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant."</p>	<p>For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.</p>	<p>Write "Single," "Married," "Widowed," or "Widow," as appropriate the status of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.</p>	<p>Children born alive to present Marriage (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7).</p>	<p>The reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &amp;c.</p> <p>If engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated. (See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on back of Schedule.)</p>	<p>Industry or Service with which worker is connected.</p>	<p>Whether Employer, Worker, or Working on Own Account.</p>	<p>Whether Working at Home.</p>	<p>(1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish, age.</p> <p>(2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, etc., and of the Province or State.</p> <p>(3) If born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country.</p> <p>(4) If born at sea, write "At Sea."</p> <p>NOTE.—In the case of persons born elsewhere than in England or Wales, state whether "British" or "Visitor" in this Country.</p>	<p>State whether—</p> <p>(1) "British subject by naturalisation,"</p> <p>(2) "Naturalised British subject," giving year of naturalisation.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>(3) "Foreign national," state whether "French," "German," "Russian," etc.</p>	<p>If any person included in this Schedule is—</p> <p>(1) "Totally Blind," or "Deaf and Dumb,"</p> <p>(2) "Totally Stupid,"</p> <p>(3) "Lunatic,"</p> <p>(4) "Infirm," or "Feeble-minded," state the infirmity.</p> <p>NOTE.—In the case of persons whose names, and the age at which he or she became afflicted.</p>

## En Famille

### Understanding the Census

A census providing details of the members of each household in England and Wales has been taken every ten years since 1841 and all are available online once more than 100 years has passed.

The census returns are of immeasurable value to the family historian since they show families as households and provide details of ages, relationships and birthplaces. These details can help you to pinpoint the dates and places of births, deaths and marriages to help you find these events in the civil registration records. They can also be invaluable as a springboard back into the period before 1837 when research will depend upon the use of parish registers.

The census records are based upon a small area of a city, town or countryside called an Enumeration District in which an official called the Enumerator distributed forms to each household, collected the completed forms and from 1841 to 1901 copied them into Enumeration Books, which are the records we can see today. The original forms were destroyed. The 1911 forms were retained and so for the 1911 census, you get to see what the head of household actually wrote.

### How do I Find a Person in the Census

The census returns are today almost exclusively accessed online. The full set of digitised Enumeration Books for all censuses from 1841 to 1911 are available on such commercial sites as [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) and [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk) and are linked to indexes which should (at least in theory) enable you to locate any individual in the records.

You usually search by surname and forename, but further conditions can be specified such as expected age, birthplace and where they are expected to be residing. As a general principle "less is more". It is sensible to start with the minimum of conditions and narrow the search if too many matches are produced than to start with lots of conditions and fail to find the person because what is in the index is not what you had expected.

Unless the name you are looking for is very unusual, you may be presented with several matches. You will have to inspect each possible match to decide whether it is the one you are looking for. This may be because the person's occupation matches what you know from other sources, or the details of other household members fit in with what you have discovered from other research.

## What will the Census Tell Me?

The information about each person recorded in the census from 1851 to 1911 is much the same:

- surname and forename (occasionally only an initial)
- relationship to the head of the household
- whether married, single or widowed
- age in years (for children, usually in months, weeks or days)
- occupation
- where born (this may be the parish rather than the specific place)
- whether suffering from deafness, blindness or mental illness

The 1841 census is less informative:

- relationships are not recorded
- no indication of marital status
- ages of those over 15 years rounded down to the nearest 5 years
- birthplace limited to whether born in the same county or in Scotland, Ireland or overseas.

The 1911 census is more informative as it includes for married couples:

- number of years married
- number of children born to the marriage
- number of those children still alive

You should bear in mind that the information is only as accurate as it was supplied to the Enumerator. Honest errors may be made as also there may be deliberate untruths. In many cases, people just might not have known the information or 'guessed' at it.

## How do I Use Census Information?

Clearly the census can provide us with some details of the wider family. A typical household may consist of husband and wife with several children, but can also include, for example, parents, grandchildren, brothers/sisters-in-law and more distant relatives as well as servants and/or lodgers. The names and relationships may identify other branches of the family and broaden your research.

A major benefit of the census is that it shows approximately when and where a person was born. This helps you to find their birth in the civil registration records or, if before 1837, their baptism in the parish registers. This can be particularly helpful where the family was very mobile and the children born in widely distanced parts of the country.

Where the occupation is distinctive, it may be possible to pursue more information in professional or business records. Where an infirmity is indicated, it may suggest investigation of records of institutions such as schools for the deaf or blind or public asylums.

## What's Special about Manchester?

The one thing you need to know about Manchester, Salford and part of Oldham is that many of the enumeration books for the 1851 census were damaged by flooding while they were in storage. These were not filmed with the others, or where they were, the images are largely unreadable. A later filming by ancestry.com has produced better images, but the legibility is still very poor.

A lengthy project was undertaken by MLFHS volunteers who were given access to the fragile originals at the Public Record Office (later The National Archives) to transcribe the content which was visible in both natural and ultraviolet light. A high percentage was recovered and the transcribed returns are

available as reconstructed pages in the member area of the MLFHS web site, as well as on the findmypast.co.uk web site.

While the above provides an outline of how to find and use census returns, the process can be considerably more complicated. The notes below explain the system in more detail and discuss search techniques and some of the problems which you may encounter.

## **Looking More Closely at the Census**

### **The History of the Census**

The first national census of England & Wales was carried out in 1801 and further enumerations were carried out in 1811, 1821 and 1831. There was no requirement to record names and so most of these returns are genealogically useless. In a few areas, however, names were recorded and records have survived. See Reading list below for areas covered. Names were first required in 1841 and the first recognisably "modern" census was taken in 1851. The process has continued every 10 years with the exception of 1941 when wartime conditions prevailed. A 100 year closure rule applies to viewing the records.

### **How was the Census Taken**

The basis for taking the census was the system of Registration Districts which had been introduced for civil registration of births, marriages and deaths (itself based on the Poor Law Union boundaries established in 1832). Each registration sub-district was divided into a number of Enumeration Districts and an Enumerator appointed to collect information in each. The Enumerator travelled around his appointed district distributing schedules to each household to be completed with the details of all people present in the household on census night. Shortly after census night, he would return to collect the forms. His next job was to complete an enumeration book by transcribing the details from each schedule in turn. He would also complete some summary information and describe the district and its boundaries. He then forwarded his enumeration book(s), together with the schedules, to the Registrar who in turn sent them to the Registrar General. The schedules were at some stage discarded and no longer survive so we are dependent upon the details as transcribed by the Enumerator. Following analysis of the returns and publication of statistical reports, the enumeration books were put into storage and are held under a 100 year closure rule.

From 1911 onwards, the enumeration books were discontinued and the household schedules were sent to the Registrar General for analysis.

### **Enumeration District Details**

Each enumerator was required to include a description of the area for which he was responsible in a section at the front of his enumeration book. This should describe the boundary of the area, usually by reference to the boundary streets in a city but possibly in less precise terms for a village or small town. He will also list the streets and occasionally institutions within the enumeration district. Enumerators might start on a main road but then divert to enumerate small side streets, courts or tenements before returning to enumerate further households on the original road. Streets may therefore be enumerated in small stretches scattered throughout the district return. Boundaries were frequently defined down the middle of a street so, for example, odd house numbers and even house numbers may be found in two different enumeration districts. Similarly a long road might both form a boundary between districts and also pass through several districts. You may have to search ten or more districts in the case of a major highway.

Separate (and slightly different format) books were completed by those responsible for large institutions such as hospitals, army barracks or workhouses. There are separate returns for those on board naval and merchant vessels though the rules for enumeration of those on board ships changed from census to census.

### **The Data in the Enumeration Books for 1841**

The 1841 census returns are considerably different (and less informative) than those for later years. They also contain some pitfalls for the unwary. They are, however, if used with caution, still highly valuable.

The information in the 1841 enumeration books consists of:

- Place - in a city this is likely to be a street (but very unlikely to include a house number), in villages may be only the village name but farms may be named, as may public houses.
- Names - "middle" names or initials will usually not be recorded.
- Age - These are stated in whole years for children up to 15, but rounded down to nearest 5 years for those aged over 15 e. g. a person aged 47 would be entered as 45.
- Sex - males and females are differentiated by placing the ages in separate columns.
- Employment - This will usually be quite a short description e. g. "Farmer", "Male Servant", "Ag(ricultural) Lab(ourer)". Several common abbreviations are used including MS - Male Servant, FS - Female Servant, FWK - Framework Knitter and J - Journeyman.
- Where born - there is one column "whether born in the county" in which will be entered "Y" or "N", and a second column for persons born outside England & Wales which may contain "S" for Scotland, "I" for Ireland or "F" for Foreign Parts.

### **Caveats**

The peculiar way in which ages are to be recorded reflects the practice in earlier (anonymous) censuses but 1841 was the last year in which ages were recorded in this way. You will, however, occasionally find precise ages stated for adults. These "precise" ages may, however, not be trustworthy as is discussed below. You should also note that relationships are not stated and care must be taken in inferring them from ages and the order in which names are listed. Although the first name will usually be the head of the household, do not infer that the similarly-aged woman who appears next is his wife. She may be his sister or more distant relation.

### **Data in the Enumeration Books for 1851 Onwards**

The data in these later books is considerably more helpful than for 1841. It consists of:

- Schedule Number - the number of the original (and now lost) schedule.
- Name of Street etc. - may contain house numbers. Villages will often not have street names.
- Name - will generally, but not always, contain middle names or at least initials.
- Relation to Head of Family - this may require care in interpretation
- Condition - Married, Unmarried or Widowed
- Age - now in exact years. Infants under one year often given in months, weeks and days.
- Sex - separate age columns as above.
- Occupation - rather more precise. Acreage and number of men and boys employed given for farmers.
- Where born - will usually be the county and parish. If outside England & Wales will usually be the country only.
- Whether blind, deaf or dumb - the disability should be specified. Expanded from 1871 to include whether imbecile or lunatic (notes for the enumerator explain the difference!).
- Number of rooms occupied - from 1891 only, the number of rooms if fewer than five.
- Whether employer, employed or neither - from 1891 only, three columns, one to be marked

## **Houses and Households**

The enumerator was required to indicate the boundaries between separate houses and separate households sharing a common building. In 1851, uniquely, the division between separate houses was indicated by a line across the first four columns of the page and between separate families in the same house (e.g. occupying rooms in a shared house) by a line across part of the second column and across the third and fourth columns. In other years, houses are separated by two oblique strokes and households by a single oblique stroke at the right hand side of the "Houses" column.

## **Numbering System**

The census returns are numbered by The National Archives in distinct series for each census year. Those for 1841 and 1851 were deposited by the Home Office and are filed in Class HO107. Later ones were deposited by the Registrar General and are filed in Class RG9 (1861), RG10 (1871), RG11 (1881), RG12 (1891) and RG13 (1901). Within each class, collections of books are numbered with a "Piece" reference up to 4 digits long e. g. HO107/2345, RG11/35. How many books make up a piece may differ from census year to census year.

Each enumeration book's pages are numbered in sequence but since there may be several books in each piece, a page number may be repeated several times and so it is difficult to refer to an individual page with any precision. To overcome this problem, a system called "folio numbering" is used. The several books making up the piece were stitched along the spine to make one large book. A sequence of numbers, starting at 1 was then stamped onto the top right hand corner of the front of each page. This is called the "folio number" and applies to the numbered page and its un-numbered reverse. Since the pieces are filmed page-by-page, folio numbers will appear on alternate images and refer to the numbered image and the one which immediately follows. Folio numbers provide a unique reference to locate an entry within a given piece.

## **Where to Find the Census returns**

The original books are deposited at The National Archives, Kew. They are only available to the public by advance request and where the filmed copy is illegible.

The enumeration books have been filmed and can be seen on microfilm or microfiche at a variety of places:

- The National Archives, Kew - 1901 returns for all England, Wales & Channel Is.
- County Record Offices - likely to have all returns for the county
- Libraries/Local Studies - probably have returns for their immediate area of interest
- Family History Societies - possibly have some returns for their area of interest.
- LDS Family History Centres - can order copies of films for any area.

It is, however, considerably more common to access the census returns on the internet (see below)

## The Census on the Internet

The census enumeration books (schedules for 1911) have all been digitally scanned and can be accessed via a number of web sites. These sites charge for access to the images, though use of the indexes is generally free of charge. Payment may be by subscription or pay-to-view, according to the site. Sites which offer census images include:

- [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
- [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)

Additionally, an indexed transcript of the 1881 census returns is available free of charge via the [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) web site.

It should be noted that each provider has created his own indexes and that these may differ. It is not uncommon for an entry which has been incorrectly indexed by one provider to be correctly indexed by another.

The quality of indexing is not always what one might wish. Much of the work has been done by workers outside the UK for whom English was not their first language and who would have no familiarity with local surnames. This means that names which may be instantly recognised when seen on the page may be meaningless as they appear in the index. When using these indexes, it is not common for the search to fail simply because the family name has been misread. One should not assume that a nil return means that the family was not correctly enumerated. In such cases, the use of traditional finding aids (see below) may help.

## Finding People in the Census

You will usually search the census returns using one of the online databases. These allow you search by surname and forename, but further conditions can be specified such as expected age, birthplace and where the person is expected to be residing. You may also be offered a 'keyword' option to select entries with, for example, an occupation. As a general principle "less is more". It is sensible to start with the minimum of conditions and narrow the search if too many matches are produced than to start with lots of conditions and fail to find the person because what is in the index is not what you had expected.

Unless the name you are looking for is very unusual, you may be presented with several matches. You will have to inspect each possible match to decide whether it is the one you are looking for. This may be because the person's occupation matches what you know from other sources, or the details of other household members fit in with what you have discovered from other research.

If you are fortunate, the name search will lead you directly to the census entry. Otherwise, you may need to find an address to search. In a village, a blanket search through the returns of a few hundred households will not take long but if the family was living in a city, even if the district is known, such a search would be very much a last resort.

Possible sources of addresses include:

- Family documents, letters, etc.
- Birth, marriage and death certificates
- Wills and administrations
- Trade Directories, particularly those published in census year or the year after.
- Newspaper birth, marriage and death announcements
- Cemetery grave books.

You may find it useful to use a contemporary map, for example the Alan Godfrey reprints of Ordnance Survey maps, as a means of "following the enumerator" and placing the census address into its local context. Note that the boundary between enumeration districts will often be down the centre of a street which may therefore appear in two enumeration districts. Long streets may be divided between several enumeration districts. Be certain not to miss any portion, particularly where no house numbers are stated in the returns. Some larger streets may form the boundaries between Registrars' Districts and so may appear on two or more piece numbers.

It should be noted that not all of the online sites offer street indexes. The indexes provided at [www.findmypast.org.uk](http://www.findmypast.org.uk) offer comprehensive street indexes but to access this you need to locate the specific census in the 'A-Z of Record Sets' and use the more detailed search form.

### **Census Problems and Pitfalls**

Census data cannot be accepted at face value. The process of collecting, recording and transcribing the information provided many opportunities for error and omission and care must be taken to try to corroborate any information found. Areas in which problems may arise include:

- The person was not enumerated or their schedule was lost. This probably applies to a small but significant number of individuals and families.
- Transcription errors may have distorted the name or other data. This is particularly troublesome when using an index since the person sought may appear to be missing.
- The books for a given area may have been damaged or lost. These gaps will usually be known to the local family history society or archive. There are several such areas in and around Manchester for 1851. See [www.1851-unfilmed.org.uk](http://www.1851-unfilmed.org.uk) for more information about these returns.
- A street you are looking for may have changed name between the date of the source in which the street name was found and the census date. House numbers may also change.
- If the householder was illiterate the enumerator or a friend will have written down his spoken answers. Personal and place names may be spelled phonetically and not as expected, particularly if remote from the census place.
- Middle names may be omitted (they were excluded from the 1841 census but occasionally appear) or only an initial given. "Pet" names may also be used, Sally for Sarah, Jack for John etc.
- Ages are particularly unreliable. People may deliberately have given an incorrect age or may not have known their age. This is evidenced by individuals who age less than 10 years between successive censuses and by the tendency for ages of 40, 50, 60 etc. to appear more frequently than might be expected, particularly in 1851 and 1861.
- Relationships must be treated with care. "Cousin" may mean nephew or other kin. If a married couple are living with parents, occasionally their children are described as son & daughter when they should be grandson & granddaughter (i.e. relationship to head). Son/Daughter-in-law may mean stepson/daughter.
- Birthplaces may be incorrect. A person may not know where he was born, only the place of which they had the earliest memories. Concern about "removal" under the Poor Law may have led people to say they were born in the town or village where they were living.
- Some very young infants may have been omitted.
- Statisticians' pencil marks may obscure all or part of an entry. They may also look like ticks in the "blind, deaf or dumb" column suggesting infirmities which did not exist.

## Why the Census is Useful

The census returns show us individuals in their family context and so immediately may identify parents and siblings. There is, however, other useful information which can be derived:

- The age and birthplace can assist in locating a birth. This is particularly useful if the person was born before civil registration and parish registers have to be searched.
- The wider family may include in-laws and so suggest a wife's maiden name. It may also include a widowed parent or grandparent and so as well as confirming a relationship will provide an upper time limit when searching for the death of the deceased partner.
- Study of the occupations of neighbouring families will enable you to gain some idea of the socio-economic position of your family. The number (if any) and nature of servants employed may also indicate relative prosperity.
- The presence of step-children will indicate a wife's previous marriage but note that because relationships are to the head of household, there will be no indication in this way of a husband's earlier marriages.
- The birthplaces of children will provide an indication of former residences and approximate dates. This can be helpful when a child is 10 or 20 years old as it suggests where to look in earlier censuses.

## Some General Tips

The following suggestions may help you get the most out of the census:

- Note the piece and folio number in case you wish to return for another search. Keep note of areas searched.
- If you find your family in a census transcript, check the original, some of the details may have been mis-transcribed.
- Take a look at other families living nearby and note any with the same surname (unless it is very common). Children, when married, would often live close to their parents.
- Try to find your person in two or more successive censuses. Details of name, age and birthplace may differ.
- People living in cities would usually rent their house. They may move at least once between census years. They will, however, frequently not move far.
- Note that some occupational descriptions can be misleading. "Independent Means" does not necessarily mean substantial assets. It may mean "reliant on children's charity". Scholar implies a child is receiving some form of education but this may not necessarily mean full-time schooling.

## References

A Clearer Sense of the Census, Edward Higgs, HMSO (an update of his earlier Making Sense of the Census and by far the best book on census history and records)

Making Use of the Census, Susan Lumas, TNA (A good practical guide to using the records)

Local Census Listings 1522-1930, Jeremy Gibson, FFHS (Location of 1801-1831 nominal returns as well as many other local lists of people)

*Amended 12 June 2020 - John Marsden*