

CENSUS, 1939 REGISTER, ELECTORAL ROLL AND
1642 PROTESTATION RETURN - 2021

CENSUS

In England and Wales a census of the population has been taken every ten years since 1801 with the exception of 1941. The 1841 Census was the first to list the names of every individual. Earlier censuses covering 1801 to 1831 only officially recorded the number of people in each area. However, some did record names but these are very patchy but are listed in a small book entitled Local Census Listings 1522-1930, Holdings in the British Isles by Jeremy Gibson and Mervyn Medlycott. ISBN No. 186006 052 8

Available census online and in county record offices are 1841 to 1911. The 1881 Census can be found on Familysearch.org and Ancestry for free and gives all the detail but although Family Search have all the others the 1881 is the only one where they give details of all the persons living at an address. If you click on any of the others it will direct you to Ancestry. Freecen, an off shoot of free BMD, is adding records all the time. You can search by census year and it shows each County and how many records. All census are kept private for 100 years and the 1921 census will be released on 1 January 2022 on findmypast. This will be a very interesting census because, being taken after the 1914-18 war and the flu pandemic, will enable people to double check if people survived these years.

Census records for Scotland are online at Scotlandspeople and Ancestry. Records of the 1901 and 1911 plus parts of other census for Ireland, including Northern Ireland are on the National Archives of Ireland website and are free. I will be showing examples later.

The dates Census were taken may be significant and these are:

1841 – 6th June 1841
1851 – 30 March 1851
1861 – 7 April 1861
1871 – 2 April 1871
1881 – 3rd April 1881
1891 – 5th April 1891
1901 – 31st March 1901
1911 – 2nd April 1911
1921 – 19 June 1921
then reverted to April again.

You were only supposed to record the people who are actually in your house on the night of the census but people recorded who usually lived in the house and you may find double entries for a particular person who was away from home on that night and was recorded where they were as well.

All Census books had a front page which detailed the area that was being covered. If you find a page which shows the relationship to head of household as a prisoner, could be inmate, scholar or soldier you know that this is not a normal household and then it is worth going to the front page to find out what institution. The reason it asks for relationship to head of household is because a workhouse might have live in members of staff and the same with barracks where the first person may be the commanding officer.

1911 – This is the first to be completed by the head of household if they were literate. A page per household.

If there are boarders or others in the household check if these are significant eg a boarder marries one the children of the head of household. You might find nieces and nephews, sisters, brothers or parents listed and these can be researched to see where they fit into the family.

If you find a family listed at the bottom of the page always go to the next page to see if there are any other people listed. If you find a record at the top of the page go to the previous page just to check

The further back you go you will find a great change in the occupations of people a large number of whom will be listed as Ag Lab ie Agricultural Labourer or other occupations on the land. You will also find servants in professional homes.

Once you are back to 1841 you will have found at least 3/4 generations of your ancestors and their births might date from the late 1700s.

Wales

The information asked for is the same as for England except a question about whether the person spoke Welsh, English or both.

Scotland

Scottish census are available on Scotlandspeople at a price but you can get a transcription from Ancestry but, of course this does not show you everything. No occupations etc except for the person you have researched. However, you could bring up each of the names to find this information.

Ireland –

The 1901 and 1911 census are available free on the National Archives of Ireland. There are only fragments remaining of the 1821 to 1851 census. These Census cover Northern Ireland as they are before the partition of Ireland.

The 1911 census has three extra columns ie religion, literacy and language spoken.

No residence shown

However, from the website you can also download a House and Buildings Return.

1939 REGISTER

Was taken on 29th September 1939 and is a snapshot of the civilian population of England and Wales just after the outbreak of the Second World War. The records were used to produce up-to-date population statistics and identification cards and, once rationing was introduced in January 1940, to facilitate the issuing of ration cards. It was also used to administer conscription and monitor and control the movement of the population caused by military mobilization and mass evacuation.

The records do not include the civilian population of the Channel Islands: Isle of Man; Scotland and Northern Ireland. Armed Forces in barracks including those billeted in homes, including their own homes, are not included. However, they do include armed forces on leave and civilians on military bases.

The register became the basis of the NHS Register in 1948 and was kept in paper form until 1991. Surnames of women who married after 1939 until 1991 are shown. The far right column shows additional information eg if they were an ARP Warden

The 100-year rule applies and all these records are redacted unless it is known that they have died. However, they only have deaths up to 1991 when the record ceased to be used.

If you think that someone should appear on the 1939 Register because they've died, To open a record it must first be located and checked. If you are a Findmypast.co.uk subscriber and you have located a closed record, you can request a check of the record free of charge and if successful, the record will be made available via the online service. Please note, Findmypast will not search for records on your behalf – to request a check of a closed record you must locate the record yourself first. To have a record checked you will be required to provide proof of death, most commonly a death certificate. If you have proof of death but cannot identify a specific record, you can request a search of the 1939 Register for a fee using The National Archives Freedom of Information (FOI) request form.

Non-Findmypast.co.uk subscribers should also use The National Archives Freedom of Information (FOI) request form to request a search of closed records from the 1939 Register. If the record can be opened, they will send you a full transcription of the information held in the record. The opened record will be available to view on Findmypast.co.uk ten working days after the notification of a successful request. Please note there is a fixed charge of £24.35 for this service.

An individual is entitled to submit a Data Subject Access Request to obtain their own record information within the 1939 Register. There is a form to fill in if you are searching for information about yourself. You can also use this form if you are acting on behalf of someone who was in the Register and has authorised you to request information on their behalf.

These requests fall under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. Please note that the information will only be disclosed to you, and the record itself will remain closed.

This is the link for the form and full details

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PaidSearch/DSA1939Register>

ELECTORAL ROLLS

These are available on a range of on-line sources. As they are a public document they are not subject to the 100 year rule and I have found records up to the 2000s on-line. If you can't find a record on-line they are available at local archives.

1916 Representation of the People Act – ruled that members of the armed forces should be listed in separate registers under the constituencies in which they normally lived. This enabled absent service men and women to vote by proxy or by postal application when they were away from home on active service. They record the civilian address of the absent voter, but more importantly they give the service number and regimental details. The years covered are 1918-25 and 1939.

Whilst women did not get the right to vote until 1918, if they were over the age of 30 and met a property criteria, they could vote before this in local elections if, again, they met certain criteria including a property qualification. Women were not granted suffrage on the same basis as men ie over the age of 21, until 1928.

PROTESTATION RETURN

By order of the House of Commons all adult men were asked to swear an oath of allegiance to the Protestant religion in 1642. Their names were duly inscribed in a list in each parish and the list sent back to Parliament. In a few areas such as Cornwall people wrote their own names but usually a local officer wrote out all the names. About a third of English counties records survive.

Can be searched by name of parish or on a map

HINTS AND TIPS

National Archives (on the sources list) has an amazing catalogue of resources held both at the archive and others around the country. They have regular on-line talks on how to research the archive and other subjects. They have 359 Research Guides of which 191 cover aspects of family history. Whilst they are closed records are downloadable free. You can sign-up to their newsletter which will alert you to upcoming talks and news about the Archive.

Buy a magnifying glass if you don't have one. I always carry mine, which has an in-built light whenever I visit an archive.

DNA Link - <https://www.lostcousins.com/newsletters2/mar20news.htm#gsc.tab=0>

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