



### About census records

A census is a population count that shows who lived where, with whom and their occupation

- An enumerator collected the census details
- Taken every ten years 1801 to present (not 1941)
- Records are available after 100 years (can be earlier)

**Census records** – To find a person you need to know:

- The name of the person
- Approximate date of birth
- A geographical location of birth or residence – exact addresses are useful
- Occupations are useful as they can be key identifiers

### When were the censuses we use taken?

- 1841 - Sunday, 6 June
- 1851 - Sunday, 30 March
- 1861 - Sunday, 7 April
- 1871 - Sunday, 2 April
- 1881 - Sunday, 3 April
- 1891 - Sunday, 5 April
- 1901 - Sunday, 31 March
- 1911 - Sunday, 2 April
- The 1939 Register - Friday, 29 September

These dates are useful if you are searching within a person's known lifespan - born 16 Mar 1851 – died 11 June 1890. Search can be limited to the 1851-1881 censuses. This is known as a bookend search.

### What else about census records

- 1801-1831 only record numbers, not names
- 1841 the first to name each individual
- 1841-1911 records are available online
- Only those at home on census night are listed. Any visitors, boarders or extended family are also listed. Those away from home are listed where they were staying They could be with grandma, at boarding school, in the navy, in gaol or in a hospital, mental institution or the workhouse

**TIP:** Trace your family through all available census records and plan your search using known facts.

### 1841 census lists

- Forename and surname
- Age (rounded down to nearest five for those aged 15 or over). A person aged 29 would be listed as 25
- Sex and occupation
- Whether born in county where enumerated Yes (Y) or No (N)
- Whether born in Scotland (S), Ireland (I) or Foreign Parts (F)
- Addresses rarely show house numbers. In rural areas usually only village/hamlet name listed

### 1851-1901 census lists

- Forename, middle names (often initials), surname and address
- Relationship to the head of the household (oldest male)
- Marital status (single, married, widowed)
- Sex, age (at last birthday) and occupation
- County and parish of birth (if born in England or Wales)
- Country of birth (if born outside England and Wales)
- Whether they suffered from certain medical disabilities



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### Medical conditions - infirmity

- 1851-1861 – records whether deaf, dumb or blind
- 1871-1891 – the above plus lunatic, imbecile or idiot
- 1901-1911 altered to deaf, dumb, blind, lunatic, imbecile or feeble minded

[www.genuki.org.uk/files/eng/LIN/census\\_abbrev.txt](http://www.genuki.org.uk/files/eng/LIN/census_abbrev.txt)

*Definition of Terms Used on Census Returns England & Wales 1841-1891* on the GENUKI site defines:

- Lunatic - mentally ill person with periods of lucidity
- Imbecile - person with chronic dementia later in life
- Idiot later altered to feeble minded – person who suffers from congenital mental deficiency

### Some more terms and interesting facts

- Boarder - shares the dinner table with the family
- Lodger - has separate accommodation to the householder
- The occupation of 'dressmaker' was commonly given by prostitutes

Another occupation you may see is Chelsea Pensioner - receives an army pension administered through the Royal Hospital Chelsea

### Using original census records - Things you need to know

- Single diagonal line ( / ) indicates end of a household
- Double diagonal line ( // ) indicates end of a dwelling
- Do = ditto “ (same as above)
- Ag Lab = agricultural labourer
- App/Ap = apprentice
- FS = female servant
- MS = male servant
- HLW = hand loom weaver
- Ind - Independent - Who can live on own means
- mos = age in months

### What else is there? 1911 Census

- The individual household schedules are available for the first time. You can see the census form in your family member's handwriting (with mistakes and comments).

The 1911 census includes these extra details:

- For women, if married the number of years married. Total number of children born alive - listing the number living and deceased in 1911
- Detailed occupational data
- Nationality of every person born in a foreign country
- Number of rooms in the house including kitchen but not the bathroom, closet, sculleries, landings or lobby

### 1911 census occupation codes

[www.findmypast.co.uk/content/expert-1911-occupation-codes](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/expert-1911-occupation-codes)

If an occupation is hard to decipher use the number code written beside it by the enumerator to identify it.

### About the 1939 Register

[www.findmypast.com.au/Register1939](http://www.findmypast.com.au/Register1939)

- The 1939 Register is not a census. It was a one off compiled to help the country prepare for the logistics of war and to collect vital information from the population
- Taken on 29 Sep 1939
- Lists names, addresses, occupations, marital status and date of birth of every person in England and Wales
- Used as the basis for rationing and identity cards



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- Only available on Findmypast. The free search offers a preview of the transcript showing the person's name, year of birth, town and county of residence plus the number of other persons in the household with one named
- Records of people younger than 100 and still alive, or who died after 1991 are officially closed

### More about the 1939 Register

- There is free access for Findmypast full subscribers. With a one month subscription it costs 60 PAYG credits per 1939 Register household or just use PAYG. Costs are \$13.50 for 60 credits, \$48.50 for 300 credits and \$106.50 for 900 credits (valid for 90 days)

The 1939 Register is important because:

- The 1931 census was destroyed by fire on 19 December 1942 at the Office of Works store, Hayes and the 1941 census was never taken. So this is the only surviving record for England and Wales 1921-1951
- Used post war to establish the National Health System

### Find online census records - Free and paid

[www.freecen.org.uk/](http://www.freecen.org.uk/)

**FreeCen** aims to provide a free online database of UK census returns (transcripts) 1841-1891. Many counties in England and Scotland are completed and online. Check for your counties of interest on a regular basis.

[www.familysearch.org/search/](http://www.familysearch.org/search/)

**FamilySearch** Historical Record Collections, United Kingdom and Ireland has free census indexes 1841-1911 for England and Wales, images link to Findmypast \$. Indexes only for Scotland 1841-1891.

[search.ancestry.com.au/search/group/ukicen](http://search.ancestry.com.au/search/group/ukicen)

Ancestry.com - UK census collection search \$.

[tinyurl.com/jq2gmug](http://tinyurl.com/jq2gmug)

Findmypast – United Kingdom census search \$.

### How to search effectively

- Search within collections or individual census
- Keep your search simple – less is best. You can always add more
- Enter only one first name
- Leaving fields blank can help find names that are recorded as initials, abbreviations or nicknames – Wm, Willie or Jno
- Don't use exact dates – search with a date range (plus or minus two years at least) – estimate dates if unknown
- Use women's maiden names before marriage
- Use extra search features available on Ancestry.com and Findmypast \$

**TIP:** Ancestry.com and Findmypast are available for free, onsite, at some state, public and family history libraries. Check what is available at a library near you.

### When all else Fails what can I do to find them?

- Understand there is bad writing, damaged originals, inaccuracies, transcription errors and/or indexing by persons who cannot correctly interpret handwriting
- Can't find Grandpa John? Search for someone else in the family with a more unusual name – Eli or Mercy
- Search by address – helps eliminate transcription errors
- Use directories to locate addresses. Use a directory published just before a census was taken
- Search by occupation – these do change over time
- Search without a surname and use given names of known family members



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### Use wildcards

? To replace any one character

\* To represent zero or more characters

A surname search for Har?er will display Harder, Harmer, Harper, Harter

A first name search for Ann\* will display Anna, Anne, Annette, Annie, Annis

Wildcards may also be combined or used at the beginning or end of a name \*inern?y for a McInerney search

### Research tip - use records in tandem

- Use birth marriage and death (BMD) indexes and census records together
- If the status changes from married to widow/er on the 1871 census. Search BMD indexes for the preceding 10 years (1861-1871) for spouse's death
- Use also for new children who appear on a census or children no longer listed at home (die or marry?)
- If the 1939 Register lists children born after July 1911 the mother's maiden name will be on the birth index and can confirm if you have the correct family

### Some extra sites

[www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-Index.html](http://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-Index.html)

Dictionary of Old Occupations: A-Z Index. This online dictionary of old occupations, by Jane Hewitt, has over two thousand entries. There is an A-Z index of old occupations online with the occupations listed alphabetically by occupation title.

[tinyurl.com/q2quowu](http://tinyurl.com/q2quowu)

Historical Directories of England & Wales. This collection of digitised trade directories is part of the University of Leicester's Special Collections Online and covers England and Wales from the 1760s to the 1910s. This site replaces the Historical Directories website, withdrawn in March 2014.

[www.coraweb.com.au](http://www.coraweb.com.au)

My website CoraWeb is designed to help you trace your family history in Australia and elsewhere. There are 2,400+ categorised links and descriptions. It is fully keyword searchable including all the site descriptions.