

England & Wales – Census & Civil Registration Records

GAZETTEERS & MAPS

Do you know where your family lived in England? Is the parish name identified? Do you understand the boundaries & jurisdictions where they lived?

Gazetteers

- Imperial Gazetteer - www.visionofbritain.org.uk
- Topographical Dictionary of England - www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/england

Maps

- English Jurisdictions Project 1851 - <http://maps.familysearch.org>
- <http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales> - Ordnance Survey Maps
- Use search engines to find maps: Google, Ask.com, Bing, Dogpile, etc.

CENSUS RECORDS – 1841 to 1921 & 1939 Register

- One of best ways to locate ancestors at a given place and time.
- Census records are a statistical count of the population of the country.
- Used for Taxation, Military, etc.
- Taken every 10 years
- The records are released 100 years after census taken.
- Enumerated by County > District > Sub-district > Enumeration district.

CONTENT OF CENSUS RECORDS

1841 census:

- Name, age, and occupation of everyone in household (Occupations often abbreviated)
- No relationships given to head of household
- Ages rounded down to nearest multiple of 5 except for children 15 years and under
- Place of birth: Only 'Yes' or 'No' if born in county where living; if born outside of England supposed to indicate country i.e. "S" (Scotland), "I" (Ireland)

1851-1901 censuses:

- Each household member is named with relationship to head of household
- Status (married/single/widowed), age & occupation are given
- Parish & county of birth are requested

1911 census: In addition to previous census information, these items were added:

- Number of years married
- Number of children born to couple; number deceased & number living
- Number of rooms in dwelling & address of residence
- Signature of head of household

After 1911?

- 1921 census - available at www.findmypast.com – (\$\$)
- 1931 census was destroyed
- 1941 census did not occur – WWII
- 1951 to present – released in 100 years

1939 Register: Census substitute taken on September 29, 1939 at beginning of WWII

- Found at www.ancestry.com
- Critical tool in coordinating the war effort in England
- Used to issue identity cards, ration cards & call-up papers
- Lists full names, dates of birth, occupations & address
- Register was maintained in some form up to 1991; changes of name upon marriage & subsequent deaths may also be noted.

SEARCHING CENSUS ONLINE

- www.familysearch.org (free)
- www.ancestry.com
- www.findmypast.com
- www.myheritage.com
- www.freecen.org.uk (free) – incomplete; transcriptions
- www.censusfinder.com - list of free indexes/transcripts
- www.genuki.org.uk -links to county web sites
- www.census-online.com– incomplete; transcriptions
- Search Engines – Google, Dogpile, Ask.com, Bing

CENSUS SEARCH TIPS

- Build families noting ages, places & occupations
- Search ALL census years for family (look for married members in later censuses)
- Note if gaps in children's ages – missing children?
- Review neighbors for possible family connections
- Remember - people may not have known their exact age or birth date.
- Relationships to head of house — relationships may be noted in ways we don't understand; don't read more into census than is there.
- NOTE: Names may be misspelled and ages & birthplaces may not be accurate
- Possibility of indexing errors online
- Jurisdictions changed; people may not be where expected; pages may be unreadable
- Online: first do general search; don't add too much information; use wildcards
- Search more than one web site if having difficulty finding a family or reading a record

CIVIL REGISTRATION

- Government registration of births, marriages and deaths; began July 1, 1837
- Organized by registration districts; go to www.ukbmd.org.uk/genuki/reg/ to understand order
- One index for ALL of England & Wales.
- Pre-1875: 5-10% births may be unregistered
- Certificates only available from England
- Event was registered at local registrar's office & periodically they would send books to national office where copies were made by hand - resulted in two sets of registration books. The National office copy is subject to copying errors & does not contain original signatures. But local registrar's office usually charges more for certificates.

RECORD CONTENT

Birth

- Registration district & sub-district
- Child's name & gender; Birth date & birthplace (sometimes street address)
- Father's name and occupation
- Mother's Christian and maiden name (indicated by "formerly")
- Signature, description & residence of informant & date registered (42 days to register)

Marriage

- Registration district & sub-district
- Date and place of marriage (look at religion – married at Church or Registrar Office?)
- Bride & groom's names, ages, occupations & residences at time of marriage
- Marital status (Bachelor/Spinster – single; Widower/Widow)
- Names & occupations of fathers (sometimes noted whether they are deceased)
- Signatures of bride & groom and witnesses (signatures not original if record obtained from GRO)
- Should have been registered immediately after the ceremony by officiating officer

Death

- Registration district & sub-district
- Date & place of death; Name, gender, age & possibly marital status of decedent
- Cause of death & occupation (in the case of a woman her occupation may be given as "wife of"; in the case of a child the occupation may be "son/daughter of")
- Signature, description & residence of informant & date registered

CIVIL REGISTRATION INDEXES

- Indexes arranged by: Event type, year, quarter, surname (alphabetically), given name (alphabetically)
- Organized in Quarters: **March** (Jan, Feb, Mar); **Jun** (Apr, May, June); **Sep** (July, Aug, Sep); **Dec** (Oct, Nov, Dec)
- Events found in index by **date of registration** (not necessarily date of event).
- Added Information given in Indexes:
 - Birth Indexes – in 1911 - Mother's maiden name
 - Marriage Indexes – in 1912 - Spouse's surname
 - Death Indexes – in 1866 – Age of deceased
- Birth, Marriage & Death events are organized by indexes. Index reference needed to order record:
 - Year and Quarter
 - Full name
 - Registration District (can contain a number of civil parishes)
 - Volume number & Page number

SEARCHING INDEXES ONLINE

- ****www.gro.gov.uk** – births: mother's maiden name (1837-1917); deaths: gives age (1837-1957) - £7
- www.freebmd.org.uk
- www.familysearch.org
- www.ancestry.com
- www.ukbmd.org.uk

NOTE: Before ordering certificates, check church records on various sites for digitized christenings, marriages & burials.


Strategy to order certificates:

- 1) Search an index; 2) Record all index reference information given; 3) Order certificate online
- Certificates only available in England at www.gro.gov.uk – National office; will be required to log in
- Need credit or debit card and e-mail address; cost is £11
- Possibility of finding an 'unwanted certificate' online - Google

CIVIL REGISTRATION STRATEGIES

- Never take index information for family records – ALWAYS order certificate
- Consider different spellings of both Christian names & surnames
- Entry could be listed as "male" or "female" instead of given name
- Search wider span of years for needed event
- Maybe event is registered in a different place than expected
- Maybe event was not recorded or there is an indexing error
- More info: www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/most_customers_want_to_know

www.familysearch.org – HELPS

-  > Help Center > Learning Center > free online classes (including handwriting)
- 'Search' > Records: 3 ways to search: Person, Place, Collections
- 'Search' > Images: Being loaded in real time but not indexed yet
- 'Search' > Family Tree & Genealogies: old contributions; may help with brick walls
- 'Search' > Catalog: Search Place-names, Surnames, Titles, Author, Subjects, Keywords & Films
- 'Search' > Books: Digital books from various libraries; family histories etc. (also Google Books)
- 'Search' > Research Wiki: Information on places, record sets, classes etc.

MORE STRATEGIES - FINDING YOUR ENGLISH ANCESTORS

- Search for one generation at a time; search for the entire family; search a broad time period
- Consider ancestor's whole life; search each source thoroughly; watch for spelling variations
- Take time to assess research that has been done to keep up to date.
- Keep a research log to track what you've done & where you've been, even if nothing is found
- When records are found, cite the source including repository name, title, author & page no.
- Evaluate findings
 - Did the person that provided the information witness the event?
 - Was the information recorded at or near the time of the event?
 - Is the information consistent and logical?
 - Does it suggest a place to go next? It's a good idea to make notes at the end of each research session - what research has been done and what still needs to be done.
- **REMEMBER:** Indexes point to original records – **ALWAYS** obtain copy of original.
- Keep current on new websites that are indexing or transcribing records for counties
- Sign-up for free e-newsletters: <http://blog.eogn.com> (Dick Eastman) & www.lostcousins.com
- Consider joining local Family History Societies or getting on mailing lists.