

British Census (England and Wales)

This is a fascinating way of finding out about your ancestors and where they lived, but the censuses have different information held within them. Although some were taken at the end of the 18th/beginning of the 19th centuries, they are rather lacking in detail, being mainly statistical records. Not many have survived, either.

Taken every 10 years, you should be able to follow your ancestors from 1841 to 1911. Returns were completed by the householder and passed to the enumerator who then completed schedules. However, for the 1911 census, you will be able to see the household return – probably completed in your ancestor's handwriting!

When was the census taken?

1841 – 6th June
1851 – 30th March
1861 – 7th April
1871 – 2nd April
1881 – 3rd April
1891 – 5th April
1901 – 31st March
1911 – 2nd April

What will you find on them?

The details that you will be able to see **from 1851 to 1901** are:

- ~ first name, middle names (or initials) and surname
- ~ relationship to the head of the household
- ~ marital status
- ~ age
- ~ sex
- ~ occupation
- ~ place of birth
- ~ whether they had certain disabilities
- ~ their full address

In 1911, you will also find:

- ~ for a married woman, the length of her present marriage, the number of children from that marriage and whether they are dead or still alive.
- ~ more detailed occupational information
- ~ more detail about, for example, exact birthplaces for people born in Scotland or Ireland

However, the **1841 census** had less information:

- ~ first name and surname
- ~ age (Note: This was rounded down to the nearest five years for those aged 15 or over)
- ~ sex
- ~ occupation
- ~ whether they were born in that county (Recorded as Y or N)
- ~ whether they were born in Scotland (S), Ireland (I) or Foreign Parts (F)

It is important to note that no relationships were recorded in 1841, so a man and woman might be a husband and wife – or a brother and sister!

How can I see a Census?

Whilst Pay Per View and Subscription websites allow access to view the censuses, they may also be viewed for free at many local libraries. Also, the 1881 census is free to view online at Family Search. However, you may find that various family history society websites have extracts published for their areas.

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It may be that you have not been able to find a particular entry for an ancestor. Well, another pair – or more - of eyes can help! Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and post details of your hard to find ancestor. The members will do their utmost to track them down for you!

If you would like to find out more about Censuses, how they were taken and the best ways of finding your elusive forebears, listed below are some products that will certainly help you along your way and all of them are available from [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details.

- Local Census Listings 1522-1930 Ref: FHP-023
- The 1901 census and How to Tackle It Ref: NWA-OHM17
- The Census 1801-1911 Ref: FHP-124
- The Censuses 1841-1891: Use and Interpretation Ref: NWA-OHM19

Also, Parish Chest has a complete section dedicated to censuses, which is broken down by county. Take a look on [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com) to find the area in which you are searching.