



## Census

Since 1801 and every ten years (except 1941) the government has held a census of the population of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (from 1921 this covered Northern Ireland only). Early census returns 1801-1831, with a few exceptions, do not contain personal details but only record the number and age ranges of the inhabitants.

The 1841 census contains the following information:

First name and surname, place of residence, gender, age (for those over 15 this is rounded down to nearest five years), occupations, whether they were born in the county (Y or N), whether they were born in Scotland (S), Ireland (I) or Foreign parts (F).

From 1851 onwards the information is more detailed:

First name and surname of the head of household (note: sometime a step brother/sister/son/daughter is referred to as brother or sister in law, or son/daughter in law), Whether married, unmarried or widowed, age, occupation, place and county of birth and country of birth if outside England or Wales.

Only census information over 100 years old is available for viewing. The 1921 census will be made available in early 2022. In smaller rural parishes, street addresses are not usually given.

Families at that time may have lived in closer contact with other members of their extended family so it is worth looking at neighbours. From 1841 to 1901 a census schedule was completed for each household, this was then collected by the enumerator who copied the information into enumeration books before the schedules were destroyed. It is the enumeration books which you view online. Special enumeration books were completed for institutions such as workhouses, barracks and hospitals. There were also special schedules for vessels from 1851 onwards

In the 1911 census household schedules were not copied into enumeration books. When viewing these you see the return as filled in and signed by your ancestor (if literate). This census also asks how many years a couple had been married, how many children were living and how many had died.

### **Where can I see Census returns.**

Those for 1841-1911 are readily available online on the main commercial genealogy website. Some other returns have been transcribed and can be searched online on the Free Cen website.

Copies are also generally available at your local Archives or Local Studies Library. Transcripts for the 1851 census (and some other) are available on the open shelves at the Archives.

### **Be aware!**

Don't take the information given in any one census as the actual truth – try and corroborate this information from as many censuses as possible. A person may not know their precise age or may have 'adjusted' it. Likewise with birthplaces, a person may not always know exactly where they were born and sometimes, if they are living some distance from their birthplace they may give the name of the nearest town. If they are illiterate then they would be relying on the enumerator to write down the information for them.