

Personal and Local History

The documents that can assist people researching personal and local history have recognisable characteristics. Understanding how the document is laid out makes the information more accessible.

Census documents enable individuals to be identified and also provide information about where people lived.

The project included a pre session web task giving information about the history of census information.

Census pre session web based task

Census Returns

A census of the population of Great Britain is taken every ten years but the information does not become available to the public for 100 years.

A census is a snap shot in time. It reveals where a family was living and all the members of the household. If a census return gives the age of a person on a certain date it is possible to work out the date of birth and find the birth certificate.

The 1901 census information became accessible in 2001 and is available on line from the Public Record Office.

WebTask

Please access the 1901 census and check the age and place of birth of a member of your family or someone you knew who was born before 1901. Print off the page recording the information.

Web site details

www.1901censusonline.com

The initial queries are free of cost.

If you would like more details there is a cost and vouchers can be purchased from the web site.

Information About Census Documents

The project used census returns from Chelmsford in Essex, Hemsby in Norfolk, and Hertford in Hertfordshire. The Hertford Record Office also has a family photograph that enables individuals on the census document to be identified.

A census is a snap shot in time. It reveals where a family was living and all the members of the household. Census returns enable us to track individuals every ten years. Also if a census return gives the age of a person on a certain date it is possible to work out the date of birth and find the birth certificate.

The characteristics of the census page.

The horizontal marks are the scratches from the microfiche rollers when the page is being viewed.

The numbers in the left hand column do not refer to house numbers. The numbers refer to the order in which the homes in the area were visited by the census enumerators.

Occupations were listed and detailed as to whether a person was an employer, a worker or own account – worked on his/her own. They may indicate rural, industrial or business occupations.

Daughter was abbreviated to daut.

Places of birth may indicate whether people were born locally or travelled from elsewhere.

Additional Information.

Census

The first census was taken in 1801 although many people felt it was an infringement of their right to privacy. The census revealed that nine million people lived in England, Wales, Channel Islands & Isle of Man.

There has been a census every ten years since 1801 – apart from 1941 because of the Second World War. Censuses are protected by the 100 year rule to safeguard the confidentiality of the living. The 1901 census is the latest available census.

The first censuses in 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 were simply headcounts of the population – no names, ages or addresses were recorded. In 1841 it was agreed that more detailed questions could be asked about country of origin and the profession/trade of the head of the house hold.

In 1891 further categories were included. People had to say whether they were deaf and dumb, blind, lunatic, imbecile or idiot.

In 2001 there was a group of people who asked others to answer Jedi when they were asked to record their religion. They believed that if enough people did so 'Jedi' would become a recognised religion. 'Jedi Knight' now has its own census code.

Original census details were completed by hand and place names were commonly mis spelt. Transcriptions will replicate the mis spellings. If people were not at home for any reason they may be recorded elsewhere or not at all. Some people lied about their ages, some may not have known where they were born so they just made it up. Children may be listed as scholars when they were actually working but their parents did not want anyone to know.

Marks by enumerators can be seen on census forms.

/ marks the end of each household // at the end of each building.

Except for the 1851 census when a line was drawn across the first four columns after the end of the building and a shorter line after the household.

Information about Birth, Marriage and Death certificates.

Before 1837 it was the law that people were christened, married and buried by the Church of England. These events were recorded in parish registers which date back to 1538 though many early records have not survived. Some parish records were completed very conscientiously, others were not.

The National System of births, marriages and deaths started on July 1st 1837.

In 1887 it became the law to register the three events.

Until the early part of the nineteenth century only Church of England baptisms, marriages and burials had any legal status.

The Family Records Centre in London houses the indexes for every birth, marriage and death in England and Wales since 1837 as well as details of every available census from 1841. The Adoption Registers are kept at the FRC.

www.familyrecords.gov.uk/frc

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