



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Nottinghamshire Archives

Census Returns

Introduction

The census was first taken in 1801 and has taken place every ten years since, with the exception of 1941, when a national registration was taken instead due to the Second World War. The census can be a valuable tool for family and local history research as it provides information on individuals and addresses.

In 1841 the office of the Registrar General was made responsible for the administration of census data.

- Each civil registration district was used as the basic geographical area for collecting data.
- Each district was divided into a sub-district comprising a number of civil parishes.
- Each sub-district was again divided into enumeration districts. The enumerator was the officer who collected data within the enumeration district.

The enumerator distributed forms to householders, who completed them by listing all people who were in the house on census night. If the householder failed to complete the form, or was illiterate, the enumerator completed it instead. People who were away from home that night were not included at their home address; people visiting another address would be included there.

People in charge of military barracks, prisons, hospitals, ships, workhouses or boarding schools completed the forms for all their residents.

The enumerator would copy the information from the householders' forms into books, and

completed tables to calculate the number of people within the enumeration district. It is the enumerators' books, rather than the original forms, which were retained and are now available to the public.

The Records

The enumerators' books:

- Begin with a description of the area covered by the enumeration district
- Are arranged by place, followed by street, then followed by building
- The address is noted, but may only be a street name or a village name
- Individuals are listed by household, starting with the head.

The enumerator used the books as working documents, and so made marks and abbreviations on them.

- A single diagonal stroke indicates the last person within a family or household. There may be more than one family or household within a building.
- Two diagonal strokes indicate the last person within a building.
- Abbreviations used include:
 - M or Mar = married person
 - Unm = unmarried person
 - W = widow or widower
 - FS = female servant
 - MS = male servant
 - App = apprentice
 - Dom = domestic servant
 - Ag Lab = agricultural labourer
 - FWK = frame work knitter

Information recorded in the census may be inaccurate, as the enumerator recorded only

what they were told by the householder. Ages, places of birth and relationships within the household may often be incorrect.

Census Information

The 1801 – 1831 Census Returns

Between 1801 and 1831 the government wanted to know the number of people in each area, their gender and age groups, but not their names. The enumerators sent only statistics to the central authorities, and most returns have since been destroyed. Some lists of householders survive among parish records.

The 1841 Census

This census took place on 8 June 1841. The following information was recorded:

- Person's name – only one forename per person
- Gender
- Age – usually rounded down to the nearest five years, for example '43' would be recorded as '40'. The exact age is usually recorded for children under 15.
- Occupation, if any
- If the birthplace was in the same county
 - y = yes
 - n = no
 - NK = not known
 - S = Scotland
 - I = Ireland
 - F = foreign parts

The 1851 Census

This census was held on 30 March 1851. On this census, the following is usually recorded:

- Person's name
- Gender
- Actual age
- Condition – married, widowed or unmarried
- Occupation – children are usually noted as 'scholars'
- Relationship to the head of the household
- Birthplace
- If the person was 'blind', 'deaf' or an 'idiot'

The 1861 Census

Taken on 7 April 1861. The details recorded are the same as those on the 1851 census.

The 1871 Census

This census was taken on 2 April 1871. It recorded the same details as in 1851, except:

- Instead of 'blind', 'deaf' or 'idiot', individuals were now asked to specify if somebody was 'blind', 'deaf', 'imbecile', 'idiot' or 'lunatic'

The 1881 Census

This census was carried out on 3 April 1881. It recorded the same information as the 1871 census.

The 1891 Census

This census was taken on 5 April 1891. In addition to the details recorded on the 1871 and 1881 censuses, it now also asked for:

- The number of rooms in the building, if less than five, occupied by one family
- If a working person was 'employer', 'employee' or 'neither' – this last was generally used for people who were self-employed

The 1901 Census

The first census of the twentieth century was taken on 3 March 1901. It recorded the same information as in the 1891 census, except:

- An individual's employment status was now classed either as 'employer', 'employee' or 'worked on his or her own account' – they usually record whether he or she also worked at home
- For individuals born in Scotland or Ireland, the county should be recorded, although often the country name only was given

Accessing the Records

The enumerators' books are public records, and are subject to a 100 year closure period. This means that they do not become accessible until 100 years have passed after they were originally compiled.

The original books are held at The National Archives. Nottinghamshire Archives holds

copies of the census returns for Nottinghamshire enumeration districts for each census from 1841 to 1901 on microfiche. A place index and a series of surname indexes compiled by the Nottinghamshire Family History Society are also available to assist in using the microfiche.

Nottinghamshire Archives has free access to the Ancestry web site at <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>. The national censuses from 1841 to 1901 can be searched on this web site, including searching by individuals' names.

The 1901 Census can also be searched online at <http://www.1901censusonline.com>. A charge is made to view data on this site.

The 1881 Census can also be searched online at <http://www.familysearch.org>. This web site is free to search.

A number of resources are also available on CD:

- The 1841 Census for Nottinghamshire
- The 1851 Census for Nottinghamshire
- The 1861 Census for Nottinghamshire
- Surname Indexes for the 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 Censuses for Nottinghamshire

Transcripts of the censuses between 1801 and 1831 are available in *Transcripts of Nottinghamshire Pre-1841 Census*, Nottinghamshire Family History Society Record Series, Volume 95. The parishes covered by this surviving information are listed below with the reference numbers of the original documents:

- Beckingham (1831: PR 10989)
- Blyth (1831: PR 3743)
- Car Colston (1831: PR 24596)
- Eakring (1801: PR 8603)
- Edwalton (1831: PR 3974)
- Gamston (1821: PR 20745/1-2)
- Gotham (1811: PR 21408; 1821: PR 21408; 1831: PR 21408)
- Kinoulton (1801: PR 17048; 1811: PR 15341/1; 1821: PR 15341/2)
- Laxton (1811: PR 4796/1; 1821: PR 4142)
- Mansfield (1831: DC/M 1/18/1)

- Newark (1811: PR 27558)
- Radford (1821: PR 14751-2)
- Syerston (1821: PR 394)
- Thorpe Next Newark (1821: PR 5799)
- Torworth (1831: PR 2821)
- Walkeringham (1831: PR 628)
- Welbeck Abbey (1801: DD4P/68/74)
- West Retford (1811: PR 8024)
- Worksop (1811: M420)