



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

# Nottinghamshire Archives

## Electoral Registers

### What are electoral registers?

Electoral registers are lists of those residents in a town or village who have registered their right to vote in local and parliamentary elections. Only those people eligible to vote can appear on the electoral register. In the past the right to vote has been restricted by age, gender and property qualifications.

Electoral registration was introduced in 1832 following the Reform Act of the same year. Electoral registers are useful as they have been published annually since then, although there are certain years when no registers exist; for example, when voting was suspended between 1916-1917 and 1940-1944 during the two World Wars.

Between 1919 and 1926 two registers were produced each year; in Spring and in Autumn. There were also two registers each year in 1945 and 1946. A special register was compiled in May 1945 for the first post war general election, and a supplementary list of service voters was produced in March 1946.

Each register is based on a qualifying date; this is the date by which an individual establishes their right to vote in a particular constituency. The register would come into force a few months later and would usually be replaced after twelve months. For example; the qualifying date in 1926 was 15<sup>th</sup> July, with the register coming into force on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

All registers are available on microfiche in the Searchroom.

### Content

Registers have always included the names of electors and their places of residence, although not necessarily the whole address.

Early registers contained additional information such as if an individual was an absent voter or if a person had qualified to vote through jury service. More recent registers also include the date of birth for those people reaching voting age during the life of a register.

Between 1885 and 1915 the landlord's details, including the number of rooms rented, were also recorded for any person who qualified to vote as a lodger.

Up until the Representation of the People Act in 1918 the registers also contained information concerning each individual's voting qualification, and from 1918 the service details of absent voters were also often recorded.

RUSHCLIFFE DIVISION OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. BESTWOOD PARK POLLING DISTRICT (DISTRICT D).				
Parish of BESTWOOD PARK.				
OCCUPATION Electors (other than Lodgers).				
DIVISION ONE.—Persons entitled to vote both as Parliamentary Electors and as County Electors.				
No.	Name of each Voter at full length, the surname being first.	Place of Abode.	Nature of Qualification.	Description of Qualifying Property.
D 1	Aikin, William	Bestwood park	land and tenement	The Hundred Acre farm
D 2	Berrington, Thomas	12, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	42, Bestwood colliery
D 3	Berrington, Edward	58, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	58, Bestwood colliery
D 4	Beresford, Samuel	50, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	50, Bestwood colliery
D 5	Blankley, Samuel	3, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	3, Bestwood colliery
D 6	Blankley, John	62, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	62, Bestwood colliery
D 7	Blankley, Ferdinand	Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	Bestwood colliery
D 8	Blagg, Thomas	6, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	6, Bestwood colliery
D 9	Bloomfield, Isaac	74, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	74, Bestwood colliery
D 10	Bloor, George	18, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	18, Bestwood colliery
D 11	Bramley, John	Bestwood park	land and tenement	The Cherry orchard farm
D 12	Bradwell, John Howard	Bestwood park	land and tenement	The Hall farm
D 13	Broom, Samuel	8, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	8, Bestwood colliery
D 14	Buxton, Simon	28, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	28, Bestwood colliery
D 15	Bullin, John	36, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	36, Bestwood colliery
D 16	Bunney, Reuben	31, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	31, Bestwood colliery
D 17	Carter, Samuel	36, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	36, Bestwood colliery
D 18	Challand, John	Bestwood park	land and tenement	The Forest farm
D 19	Chadwick, George	Bestwood park	land and tenement	South Glade farm
D 20	Chamberlain, Charles	Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	Bestwood colliery
D 21	Cook, Walter	47, Bestwood colliery	dwelling house	47, Bestwood colliery

Extract from the Electoral Register of the Rushcliffe Division of Nottinghamshire, 1891.

Certain abbreviations may be found in the registers as follows:

- 'D' an individual could not vote in local government elections
- 'L' an individual could not vote in Parliamentary elections
- 'M' merchant seaman
- 'S' in military service
- 'Y' an individual will reach the age of 21 in the first half of the year that a register is in force (between 1928 and 1970). After this time, this refers to anyone reaching the age of 18.

## Arrangement of Information

During the nineteenth century the registers were compiled by Parish Overseers and were arranged in alphabetical order of voters' names within each polling district.

By the end of the nineteenth century electoral registers began to be arranged in street order bringing them into line with Burgess Rolls, which were already compiled in this way, and from 1918 the vast majority of registers were arranged in this way.

At Nottinghamshire Archives, the electoral registers are arranged in two sequences; those for the City of Nottingham, and those for the rest of the County of Nottinghamshire.

## Voting Qualifications

Since the nineteenth century, the voting qualification has gradually been extended by a range of parliamentary Reform Acts, which are summarised below.

It must be remembered that the rules differed between parliamentary and local government registrations, and that before 1884, there was a distinction between the voting qualification for those residents living in counties, and those living in boroughs.

### Before 1832

In counties: All men over 21 who owned freehold lands or tenements to the value of 40s (i.e. 40s freeholders)

In boroughs: The franchise varied widely according to local custom. In Nottingham, the Mayor, freemen, and 40s freeholders were entitled to vote. The eldest sons of freemen, by birth, and the younger sons of freemen, who had served 7 years apprenticeship, were also entitled to vote. Also men who had served 7 years apprenticeship to a freeman were entitled to the vote on payment of admission fees

### After 1832

In counties: 40s freeholders  
Anyone occupying or having a life interest in lands or tenements worth over £2 and under £5 per annum  
All holders of real property worth at least £10 per annum  
Tenants paying rent of at least £50 per annum

In boroughs: Owners or tenants of properties worth at least £10 per annum, provided they had occupied them for at least 12 months before registration, and all taxes had been paid

### From 1867

In counties: All holders of property worth at least £5 per annum, and all occupiers (owners or tenants) of lands worth at least £12, who paid poor rates

In boroughs: All owners and tenants, and all lodgers paying at least £10 per annum, provided they had been resident for 12 months

### From 1884

The qualification for boroughs and counties now became equal namely;

40s freeholders, all freeholders of any land worth £5 per annum, and all occupiers and lodgers paying £10 per annum

**From 1918:**

Men aged over 21 who had lived at an address for six months at the time of registration, and women aged over 30 who were householders or householders' wives (with appropriate qualifying land or property value) and, in the case of university constituencies, women graduates.

**From 1928:**

All men and women over the age of 21

**From 1969:**

All men and women over the age of 18

## How to use the electoral registers

### City Electoral Registers, 1832-2001

**Between 1832 and 1879** the registers are arranged alphabetically by surname. Simply refer to the microfiche folder for the year that you wish to consult.

**1880 onwards:** the registers are arranged by electoral divisions called wards. From the mid-1880s each ward is sub-divided into polling districts. The boundaries of the electoral wards have changed periodically; therefore, in order to locate a particular street in the registers, you need to know the ward in which it was located in a given year. It is also helpful to know the polling district, however this is not always possible to establish.

To search for people living in the City of Nottingham, use the card index of streets which give the name of the electoral ward but not the polling district.

From 1935, there are also electoral boundary maps for Nottingham City which can be used to find the polling district of a particular street.

These maps are available for the following dates:

- 4 March 1935
- 29 July 1935
- 15 August 1955
- 6 Nov 1967
- 1976
- 1984

**Bedells' Street Directory for Nottingham** for the years; 1887, 1921, 1937, 1949, 1953, 1957 and 1975 can also be used to search for electoral wards and polling districts.

Once you have located the electoral ward, and if possible the polling district, refer to the **City of Nottingham Electoral Register Indexes** for the relevant year to locate the reference number and number of the fiche you need. The correct fiche can then be obtained from the microfiche folders which are arranged in chronological order. If the polling district is not known, then all the fiche for the particular ward will need to be searched.

For example; according to the card index of streets and the July 1935 boundary map, Glasshouse Street is located in St Mary's electoral ward within polling district 'C' in the period 1935-6. The City of Nottingham Electoral Register Indexes for 1935-6 then give reference CATC 3/71E for St Mary's ward and fiche number 1 for polling districts A-D.

**Please note:** there are no electoral registers for the following periods: 1855-1870, 1916-1917 and 1941-1944.

### County Electoral Registers, 1833-2001

There is a constituencies card index for places in Nottinghamshire which shows into which division a place fell. The County Electoral Registers from 1833-2001 are then arranged in folders in chronological order; however the following points should be remembered:

**Between 1838/9 and 1842/3** the county was divided into two main divisions; the Southern Division and the Northern Division. These divisions were subdivided into Hundreds (administrative districts) as follows:

## Southern Division

**Hundreds:** Bingham  
Rushcliffe  
Thurgarton

## Northern Division

**Hundreds:** Bassetlaw  
Broxtowe

The registers are arranged in hundreds and then by parish, with voters listed alphabetically by name within each parish. There is a list at the front of the first county electoral register folder which should be consulted to find the hundred for a particular place, and the fiche number for the required year.

**Between 1846/7 and 1885**, the hundreds were renamed polling districts. At the beginning of each electoral register on the microfiche, there is an alphabetical list of polling districts, within which each place is listed with a page number. Voters are still listed alphabetically.

**From 1901** onwards, there are place indexes to the Notts county electoral registers which give the microfiche and page number for every place covered. The indexes start in 1901, and cover the census years, so there is one index every ten years, between 1901 and 2001. There are also indexes every ten years between 1965 and 1995, with an on-going project aiming to complete indexes between 1905 and 1955.

The index can also be used as a guide for finding the microfiche number for places in the registers between the indexed years. It is likely that a particular place is on the same fiche number or the one either side for any given year. Further instructions on how to locate particular microfiche can be found with each individual index.

There are various indexes of polling districts, places and streets at the beginning of the first microfiche of each division, or before each polling district's list of electors, which can be used for establishing the correct page number for a specific year. Streets are listed alphabetically within each ward or polling district, apart from small villages which may

only be listed in alphabetical order by elector, rather than by street.

## Additional Records

### Absent voters

There are usually separate lists of absent voters; these include members of the armed services, who can be found listed under the constituencies of their permanent residence.

### Registers of Nottingham burgesses

Admission as a burgess brought with it several privileges, which included the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

Up until the First World War burgess registers were often to be found separate from electoral registers.

For the Borough of Nottingham there is a separate list of burgesses who were entitled to vote in local government elections, 1835-1915

### Registers of women voters

There are also separate lists taken from the borough of Nottingham electoral registers, of women who had the vote in elections for the Nottingham Poor Law Union, but who did not qualify for parliamentary or municipal franchise. These registers cover the period 1906-1915

## Possible Problems

There are no alphabetical indexes of voters, and as a result, electoral registers are of very little use in tracing individuals without an address or a general location.

The gap of a few months between the qualifying date and the start of the register can occasionally lead to inaccuracies in the registers, for example:

- If an individual died between the qualifying date and the start of the register
- If an individual moved address between the qualifying date and the start of the register

There are also many reasons why an individual may fail to appear on the register:

- Some individuals eligible to vote deliberately chose not to register
- In the early years of electoral registration, there was a charge of one shilling to register, which some did not want to pay
- Until 1928, if an individual reached the qualifying age in the middle of the period when a register was in force, they would not be included in the register for that year
- Voters had to ensure their rates were paid before the qualifying date, which if they were not would lead to them being disenfranchised

## Other Useful Records

### Land tax assessments

Before the introduction of electoral registration in 1832, land tax assessments were used to establish qualifications for the vote at county elections, and are available on microfiche from 1780-1832

### Poll books

Poll books record the names of electors and their choice of candidate at elections. They were introduced at the end of the seventeenth century in an attempt to prevent fraud at a time when elections to Parliament were not held in secret

### Poor rate books and rate valuation records

These record the names of householders and the rate paid. They include the names of both owners and occupiers of rented properties and can be a useful source of information from the late eighteenth century onwards

## Further Reading

Additional information, including the whereabouts of surviving registers, can be obtained from the following publication located in the reference library:

Jeremy Gibson and Colin Rogers, *Electoral Registers since 1832; and Burgess Rolls*, Federation of Family History Societies (Second Edition), 1990

The British Library holds electoral registers for various dates, for the whole of the United Kingdom, contact details as follows:

The British Library  
St Pancras  
96 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2DB  
Tel: 020 7412 7536  
Website: [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

More recent electoral registers can be consulted at your local electoral registration office (usually your local council office). Please contact your local council for more information.

**Please note: Under the Representation of the People Act (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, no copies may be made from the electoral register fiche until 10 years after they are current.**

