

Ancestral digitised records (my most popular websites I use in research)

- Ancestry.co.uk (subscription)
- Billiongraves.com
- Britishnewspaperarchives.co.uk (subscription)
- Familysearch.org (free)
- Findmypast.co.uk – including newspapers (subscription)
- Findagrave (free)
- FreeBMD (free) – for searching GRO indexes
- General Register Office – gro.gov.uk (free)
- Historical Directories – specialcollections.ie.ac.uk (free)
- Irishgenealogy.ie (free)
- Nationalarchives.gov.uk (free to search/pay for documents)

County record office – many have online catalogues. County record offices may have information on an individual – donated family documents, information on villages including maps etc. Some record offices hold case notebooks for asylums and information on workhouses. Please note that not all records have survived.

Local Study Library – can be an excellent source of local information. Check out their online catalogues. The archivists in both county record offices and local studies have a wealth of knowledge and will always guide you as to where to look.

The General Register Office (Civil Registration)

Birth, Marriage and Death certificates were introduced in
England and Wales 1st July 1837 / Scotland 1st January 1855 / Ireland 1st January 1864

However, not everyone complied and in 1874 the act was amended to put the onus for registration on the parent or person registering the birth. The time period for registration was 42 days from birth. Of course, this may be why some birth dates were bought forward if a parent was late registering.

NOTE: Stillbirths were not registered until 1874 when a law required a death certificate before a stillborn baby could be buried. In 1927 a register of stillborn births was introduced. This is not open to the public.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Only order certificates through the General Register Office or local registry offices. Ancestry and other sites offer a service but you will pay a significant premium.
Current GRO prices as of 2022 are
Birth and death certificates £7 pdf version (certain dates) £11 certified copy.

There is a gap in the GRO searches online for births between 1934 and 1984 and GRO searches online for deaths between 1957 and 1984.

NOTE: The GRO indexes for marriage cannot currently be searched online. Search FreeBMD, Ancestry, Findmypast for the required index references before ordering if the details can't be found on the GRO. To order a certificate you need a name, year, registration district, quarter (Jan.Feb.Mar/Apr.May.June/July.Aug.Sept/Oct.Nov.Dec) Sometimes shown as 1st quarter, 2nd quarter etc. Also the volume number and the page.

Pre Civil Registration – Parish Records.

Parish records can be a great source of information when searching for ancestors. However, there is often a lack of information.

Baptisms: A baptism entry rarely contains the actual birthdate of the child. There are exceptions of course and a great source of joy if you find a diligent vicar or curate that has entered that detail. Not all baptisms were carried out in the first year of life. Details of parents are scant, usually just name, occupation and abode. Rarely is the actual address noted but the village name instead. Further back in time it may just mention the father's name and not the mother's.

Marriages: Parish records rarely give details of the fathers, unless looking at Non-conformist records like the Methodists. Methodist and other denominations often mention the mother's maiden name too. This can be a great help.

Burials: Unless, an infant, burials rarely mention any relative. This can prove difficult to be exactly sure that the person you have found is your relative. Sometimes they might be helpful and say, Elizabeth Knighton, 63, widow of the late Thomas Knighton.



Census Year, Reference, Date (England and Wales)

- 1841 – Ref H107 – 6 June
- 1851 – Ref H107 – 30 March
- 1861 – Ref RG09 – 7 April
- 1871 – Ref RG10 – 2 April
- 1881 – Ref RG11 – 3 April
- 1891 – Ref RG12 – 5 April
- 1901 – Ref RG13 – 31 March
- 1911 – Ref RG14 – 2 April (the first census to reveal each sheet written by the individual family rather than the enumerator's transcription sheets).
- 1921 – Ref RG15 – 9 June – this was released 6th January 2022 * should have been taken in April. This date is still on the forms as a decision was taken not to reprint.
- 1931 – Destroyed in a fire
- 1941 – Cancelled due to the WW2
- 1951 – Should be released in 2051/2*

*The rules in the UK bar any release of a census for 100 years to protect privacy. However, fortunately for family researchers, this rule was not applied to the 1939 register. See on the next page.

NOTE: 1841 to 1901 information available is from the enumerator's sheets. The enumerator may have had to help some of the households fill in the sheets. Once they had collected all the sheets their job was to transcribe them into enumerator books. After this was done the individual sheets were destroyed (there are a few rare survivals). This transcribing does lead to errors. The handwriting of the person filling in the form would vary in legibility. Sometimes figures in the ages might be misread. Out of area birthplaces may also present a challenge to the enumerator.

Over the years from the first census (useful for family researchers) in 1841 to 1921, the information gathered has been expanded.

1841

- First name and surname
- Age (rounded down to the nearest 5 for those aged 15 and over)
- Sex
- Occupation
- Where they were born in the county when they were enumerated. Yes or No (Y or N)

1851 – 1861 (additions)

- Middle names or initials
- Relationship to the head of the household (extremely useful)
- Marital status
- Age at last birthday
- Rank, profession, or occupation
- Where born, county and parish if born in England and Wales, Country only if outside England and Wales.
- Whether blind or deaf and dumb

1871 – 1881 (additions)

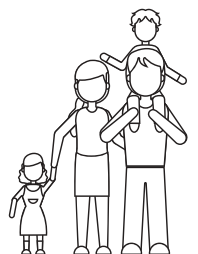
- Last column now lists the following 1 Blind / 2 Deaf and Dumb / 3 Imbecile or Idiot / 4 Lunatic

1891 (additions)

- Whether Employer, Employed, or Neither Employer or Employed
- Language spoken (Wales only)

1901 (additions)

- Employer, Worker or Own Account
- New Column "If working at home"
- Language spoken (Isle of Man only)



1911 (additions)

- For married women only, the number of years of their present marriage, the number of children born of that marriage, the number still living, and the number that had died. This question really helps pinpoint a marriage date. The information re the children can help identify if any children were born and died between census returns. If that is the case they can be searched for in the first instance via gro.gov.uk (the General Registration Office).
- As well as their occupation, the industry in which the person was employed. If employed by a government, municipal or other public body, the name of that body.
- Parish and county of birth for anyone born in the UK (which included Ireland). If born elsewhere in the British Empire, the colony or dependency, and the state or province.
- For anyone born outside England and Wales, whether they were resident or visitor in the country.
- Nationality of anyone born overseas whether British by parentage, British by Naturalisation (including year of naturalisation), or, if a foreign national, of which country.
- In the infirmity column, the age at which the person had started with the infirmity. So this may say 'from birth' or 'from the age of 19' etc.

1921 Census (released to the public 6th January 2022)

Questions removed

For the first time, some of the questions were dropped.

- Sadly one that was extremely useful when researching families. The question removed was the one re how long married, and how many children born, alive and died.
- No questions about infirmity or disabilities
- British subjects were no longer asked for year of naturalisation.

Questions expanded

- Age was now asked for in years and months
- Divorced was added as an option for marital status
- Name and business address of a person's employer
- Address of actual place of work.
- No fixed place was added as an option in addition to Home (working)
- Persons born outside the United Kingdom, country and state or province of birth.

Questions added

- For children under 15, whether both parents are alive or father dead, mother dead or both dead.
- Whether in full-time or part-time education.
- Married men, widows and widowers were asked for the number and ages of their living children and step-children under 16.

1939 Register – 29 September (it was released to the public 2nd November 2015)

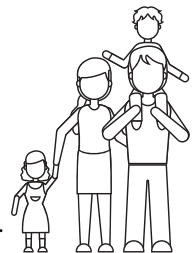
The register was taken to produce identity cards and later ration books. To family historians, it helps fill the gap between the 1921 and 1951 census. It has the advantage of asking for birth dates rather than age.

The register was also used by the NHS and often if a woman married after 1939, the register was updated with her new surname. Not always though, as from personal experience, some have been missed. This practice was eventually stopped in 1991 when the paper-based system became computerised. The register contains details of over 40 million people and was recorded in more than 65,000 volumes (transcript books).

The information taken varied slightly from censuses. Information was

- Address
- Name
- Gender
- Exact date of birth
- Marital status
- Occupation

It does not, unlike census returns, ask for the relationship between household members.



IMPORTANT NOTE: Some entries are marked 'This record is officially closed' This is to protect anyone who might still be alive. Anyone born after 1922 might show as officially closed and their information blacked out. The exceptions are where that person has died. The record can then become open and available to view. Should you find a closed record but have evidence i.e. death certificate for that person you can apply to Findmypast or Ancestry to have that record opened.

My personal thoughts on Ancestry v Findmypast

Ancestry

14 day free trial

All UK & Ireland Records – £69.99 6 months / £119.99 12 months

Worldwide – £99.99 6 months / £179.99 12 months

All Access – £119.99 6 months / £224.99 12 months (including newspapers.com but very USA centred)

PROS

- Great for linking with other people – via trees
- Can be synced with Family Tree Maker software
- DNA – one of the world's largest databases for genealogy purposes
- DNA – links with matches can be helpful
- Hints – shown on your tree as a green leaf. These can point you in the right direction and possibly highlight things you may have missed
- I find the search fields better than Findmypast

CONS

- Hints can be wrong – mainly because some are from other people's trees – which are incorrect
- Less accessibility to British newspapers

FINDMYPAST

Free trial

Starter – £74.99

Plus £119.99 (inc 1939 reg, Irish, UK parish, military, travel)

Pro £159.99 (inc newspapers, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand records)

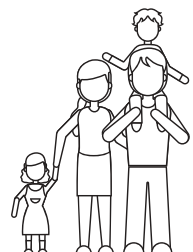
You can purchase it by month but it is more expensive.

PROS

- British based
- A subscription can include access to the newspapers
- A copy to clipboard feature can save you typing all the information
- 1921 census – currently exclusive – pay an extra small fee for each one you wish to view.

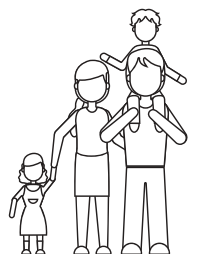
CONS

- DNA / Tree database is not as large as Ancestry's
- Can be challenging to search



Acronyms and abbreviations found on census forms

Abt	About / Around
Ag Lab	Agricultural labourer
App	Apprentice
Dau / daug	Daughter
F.S.	Female servant
Ditto	Same as
FWK	Framework knitter
Ind.	Independant
Jr / Jnr / Junr	Junior
m.	maker i.e. Boot m.
M / Mar	Married
m / mon	Month/s
Man	Manufacturer
N	No
N.K.	Not Known (usually birth place)
Pen	Pensioner
Sen / Senr / Sr	Senior
Serv.	Servant
S	Single
U / Un / Unm	Unmarried
Unk	Unknown
W / Wid	Widow
Widr	Widower
Y	Yes



Genealogy acronyms and abbreviations

Abode	Place of residence
aft	After
a.k.a.	Also known as
alias	Alternative name
AWOL	Absent without leave
b	Born
Bap / Bapt	Baptism
Bach	Bachelor
Bef	Before
BMD	Birth marriage death
b.o.t.p	Both of this parish
Bur	Buried
c	Circa / About
Cert	Certificate
CWG	Commonwealth War Graves
d	Died
GRO	General registry office
IGI	International Genealogical Index
LDS	Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints
lic	Licence
MMN	Mothers maiden name
nee	Maiden name
Obit	Obituary
ONS	Office of National Statistics
Par	Parish
PRO	Public Record Office
SOG	Society of Genealogists
Spin	Spinster
TNA	The National Archives

© Gay Evans, the curious past 2021

