



Census Records in the Archives and Heritage Service in Birmingham Central Library.

The Archives and Heritage Service holds microfiche/film of the census for Birmingham from 1841-1901, including suburbs such as Handsworth and Yardley that were formerly in Staffordshire and Worcestershire. Some may also include other areas, for example, the 1871 fiche includes Oldbury in West Bromwich and the 1891 fiche includes Solihull, but coverage varies from census to census. Most of the census returns are indexed by street rather than by name, although we do hold surname indexes for the 1851 and 1881 census. We also hold some census returns for other areas of the country, but coverage is not consistent.

There is free access to the library edition of www.ancestry.co.uk in all Birmingham libraries, and census returns are available to view on this website.

FAQs

Q. What censuses are available to view generally?

A. Census returns have been taken every ten years from 1801, but the first one that has generally survived is that of 1841. The most recent which can be accessed is the 1911 census, which is available online at www.findmypast.co.uk (this is a pay to view site), or by personal visit to the National Archives. Ancestry is in the process of putting the census and index on their website and currently copies of the Enumerator's schedules are available.

Q. When was the census taken?

A. Except for the 1841 census, which was taken at the end of June, the census is usually at the end of March/beginning of April. This was to avoid distortion of the population figures due to seasonal work in agriculture. This could affect the age of an individual on the census dependent on when their birthday was.

Q. What does a census tell me?

A. Consider it as a snapshot of a household at ten yearly intervals. From 1851-1901 information shown includes the names, age, sex, place of birth and occupation of individuals and their relationship to the head of household. Less information is shown on the 1841 census and more on the 1911.

Q. How do I find my family?

A. There are name indexes for England and Wales on several websites. These include

www.findmypast.co.uk

www.ancestry.co.uk

www.freecen.org

The 1911 census can be accessed at www.findmypast.co.uk

NB. Birmingham Libraries has a subscription to the library version of www.ancestry.co.uk so customers can book a timed slot to use the website at any Birmingham library.

Q. What if I can't find the person I am looking for?

A. Try different spellings of their surname

Try widening your search to include different areas of the country

Be aware that some entries may contain errors. The head of the household may have given the wrong age of a person or an incorrect place of birth

If you can't find a person on one census try previous censuses or subsequent ones

Q. What censuses exist for Ireland and Scotland?

A. For census returns of Ireland see <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>

For census returns of Scotland see <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk>