

Making Sense of the Scottish Census

by Emma Maxwell

www.scottishindexes.com

A Short History of the Census

- First censuses of households in Great Britain 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831
- Statistical information - www.histpop.org.uk
- Schoolmaster responsible
- Schoolmaster often also the session clerk
- Surviving records usually found within the Kirk Session records
- Other record sets held by National Records of Scotland
- Some with local archives
- www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records/pre-1841-census-records
- Indexed - www.scottishindexes.com

Searching the Census - Information on the census

- 1841: basic census – name, age, occupation and whether born in country or not
- 1851: relationships, marital status, age at last birthday, place of birth, and whether blind, or 'deaf-and dumb' recorded
- 1861: number of children from 5 to 15 attending school, numbers of rooms with windows recorded
- 1871: whether 'Deaf and Dumb', 'Blind', 'Imbecile or Idiot' or 'Lunatic'
- 1881: number of children from 5 to 15 attending school dropped; first count of Gaelic speakers
- 1891: 'Employer', 'Employed' or 'Neither Employer or Employed but working on own account' and whether they speak Gaelic only or both Gaelic and English
- 1901: 'Employer', 'Worker' or on 'Own Account' and if working at home recorded
- 1911: married women – duration of marriage, children born alive and children still living; also nationality of those born in a foreign country

Searching the Census - Information on the census

- 1841 – 1911 index and images (including 1911) www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk
 - Pay per view – limited search
- 1841 – 1901 index and transcription www.findmypast.co.uk
 - Multiple ways to search, including by address
 - Not a full transcription – does not include number of rooms with windows
- 1841 – 1901 index and transcription www.ancestry.co.uk
 - Not a full transcription – does not include marital status or number of rooms with windows
- 1841 – 1891 index and transcription www.freecen.org.uk
 - Free! Not complete: check coverage
- 1841 – 1861 index and full transcription www.scottishindexes.com
 - Free! Not complete: check coverage

Searching the Census - 1911

Make good use of the references on ScotlandsPeople. Use these in conjunction with street indexes.

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records/1911-census#Street%20indexes>

Use the Registration District Guides for cities to work out the name of each district.

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/statutory-registers/registration-districts>

Pitfalls to avoid

- Married women entered using maiden surname
- Name variations
- 1841 – ages rounded
- Age variations
- Boundary changes
 - People appear to move
 - Birthplace – old or new boundary?
- 1841 – no relationships given – don't presume
- Family split over two pages
- Remember, the census is just a snapshot in time

Tips for success

- Don't look at an entry in isolation – use header pages, look at neighbours
- Make use of references to avoid wasting credits
- Use a variety of websites to overcome transcription errors
- Look at original as often as possible
- Don't fill in every box!
- Find your family in every census year
 - Build a better picture and may get more information
- Use wildcards
 - Helen, for example might be 'Hellen', 'Helen', 'Ellen', 'Elen', 'Elinor' or 'Eleanor'. Searching for *el*n* will bring almost all variations of the name up.

Tips for success - Useful websites

- www.scottishindexes.com/learningcensus.aspx
- www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/census-records
- www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/census-returns
- www.histpop.org.uk
- genuki.org.uk/
- maps.nls.uk/
- www.google.com/maps



Scottish Indexes
Conference

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2022

FAMILY

Learn how to trace your Scottish
family history 

www.scottishindexes.com



Register on Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/6216625590846/WN_ERdVuCQnR42Ovzr-mx2Xs

Q