

England Beginning Research Series—Handout



Lesson 2: Understanding Census Records

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Overview

A census is a statistical count of the population of a country taken for accurate government representation, tax collection, and military purposes. Censuses are a snapshot of a family in a given place and time. They were taken every ten years from 1841 to the present. Censuses are released every 100 years, so the most recent is the 1911.

What You Will Find on the Census

Below is a short synopsis of what you will find in the various censuses:



1841 Census:

- Originally done on blue paper with pencil.
- Names, gender and occupations are given but no relationships.
- Ages (rounded down to the nearest 5 years for those over age 15).
- “Yes” or “No” given if born in the same county as the residence; if born in another country this sometimes indicated.
- Residence address.

1851–1901 Censuses:

- Name, age, gender, Marital status.
- Relationship to head of household.
- Occupation, birthplace (parish),
- Residence address.

1911 Census:

- Name, age, gender, marital status.
- Relationship to head of household.
- Children born alive to present marriage; children still living and children who have died
- Occupation, birthplace (parish), Nationality.
- Residence address at the bottom right of the form with the signature of the head of household.

| NAME and Surname of each Person | RELATION to Head of Family | SEX | AGE | Occupation | Place of Birth |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|
| John G. Giddens | Head | Male | 43 | Shoe Maker | Newbold on Avon |
| John G. Giddens | Wife | Female | 43 | | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Head | Male | 13 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 10 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 8 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Daughter | Female | 5 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 2 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 37 | | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Head | Male | 28 | Labourer at Mine | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 50 | | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 46 | Stone Breaker at Mine | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Daughter | Female | 14 | Railway Labourer | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 7 | Unemployed | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 4 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Head | Male | 77 | | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 73 | | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 7 | Blacksmith | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Son | Male | 5 | Scholar | Newbold on Avon |
| James Giddens | Wife | Female | 59 | | Newbold on Avon |

Census Markings

- The “Do” word means “ditto” and is used in the household names where the surname is the same. It can also be used in the “where born” column.
- Tally marks (pencil strokes) used to add up certain columns in the record.
- Double stroke used by head of household, used to denote a new dwelling.

Page 21 The underenumerated Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the *Newbold on Avon*

| House No. | ROAD, STREET, and No. or NAME of HOUSE | INC. by Act of 1855 | NAME and Surname of each Person | RELATION to Head of Family | SEX | AGE | Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION | WHERE BORN | Whether 1. Dead 2. Blind 3. Minded or Lame 4. Lunatic |
|-----------------|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 4 | | | Joseph G. Lybster | Son | M | 4 | | Warrick Newbold on Avon | |
| | | | Georgy Do | Son | M | 1 | | Do | |
| 5 | | / | James Lucas | Head | Mar. | 43 | Shoe Maker | Northampton Rowden | |
| | | | Harriet Do | Wife | Mar. | 43 | | Do | |
| | | | Harriet Maria Do | Daughter | | 13 | Scholar | Do | Doventry |
| | | | Elizabeth Ann Do | Daughter | | 10 | Scholar | Do | Warrick Newbold on Avon |
| | | | Hyson John Do | Son | M | 8 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Wilde Ellen Do | Daughter | F | 5 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Thomas Do | Daughter | F | 2 | | Do | Do |
| 6 | | | Joseph W. Harris | Head | Mar. | 27 | Labourer at Lime Works | Do | Attentive |
| | | | Jane Do | Wife | Mar. | 28 | | Do | Newbold on Avon |
| 7 | | / | William Turland | Head | Mar. | 50 | Stone Breaker at Kites | Do | Do |
| | | | Mary Ann Do | Wife | Mar. | 46 | | Do | Do |
| | | | William Do | Son | Mar. | 20 | Railway Labourer | Do | Do |
| | | | Edwin Thomas Do | Son | Mar. | 16 | Railway Labourer | Do | Do |
| | | | Alfred Henry Do | Son | Mar. | 14 | Blacksmith | Do | Do |
| | | | William Thomas Do | Son | Mar. | 7 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Annastephia Do | Daughter | F | 4 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Agnes Norton | Daughter | F | 77 | Domestic | Do | Do |
| 8 | No 1 Pine Cottage | / | Charles Henderson | Head | Mar. | 37 | Blacksmith | Do | Marlborough |
| | | | Emma Do | Wife | Mar. | 32 | | Do | Newbold on Avon |
| | | | William Henry Do | Son | Mar. | 7 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Edward Richard Do | Son | Mar. | 5 | Scholar | Do | Do |
| | | | Richard Carter | Widow | Mar. | 24 | Blacksmith | Do | Do |
| Total of Houses | | 3 | Total of Males and Females | | 13 | 11 | | | |

Finding a Census:

- Pick a website which contains census records for the British Isles.
- First search the online index and select from the resulting choice.
- View original images.

Online Census Websites:

- www.familysearch.org 1841-1901 Indexes (free)
- www.freecen.org.uk Varies in what is available; the site is still growing (free)
- www.ancestry.co.uk 1841-1901 Indexes and Images (\$)
- www.findmypast.co.uk 1841-1911 Indexes and Images (\$)
- www.theGenealogist.co.uk 1841-1911 Indexes and Images (\$)
- www.originsnetwork.com 1841, 1861-1871 Indexes and Images (\$)
- www.1911census.co.uk 1911 Index (free) Images (\$)

Features:

- FamilySearch is accessible from home without a subscription.
- Ancestry.com—search by parents’ names; browse the entire parish.
- Findmypast.co.uk—browse entire parish; search by street address.
- TheGenealogist.co.uk—search by adding multiple family members; street address; or by occupation.



- Remember—Above subscription websites are free to use at the Family History Library and family history centers.

Other Useful Websites:

- The “official” 1901 census site www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk (index free, images \$)
- Try www.freecen.org.uk for free census transcriptions.
- Check www.censusfinder.com for your country and county to see what is available in the way of individual transcriptions and indexes.
- Try a Google search on the Internet. Use keywords like [Parish] or [County] [Census Year] Census, as in this example: Cambridgeshire 1841 Census.
- Many census indexes and some with images of the census can be purchased through family history societies or genealogical companies. Use www.genuki.org.uk and go to your country and then county and then the topic **Societies** to find the website for the family history society in your ancestral area.



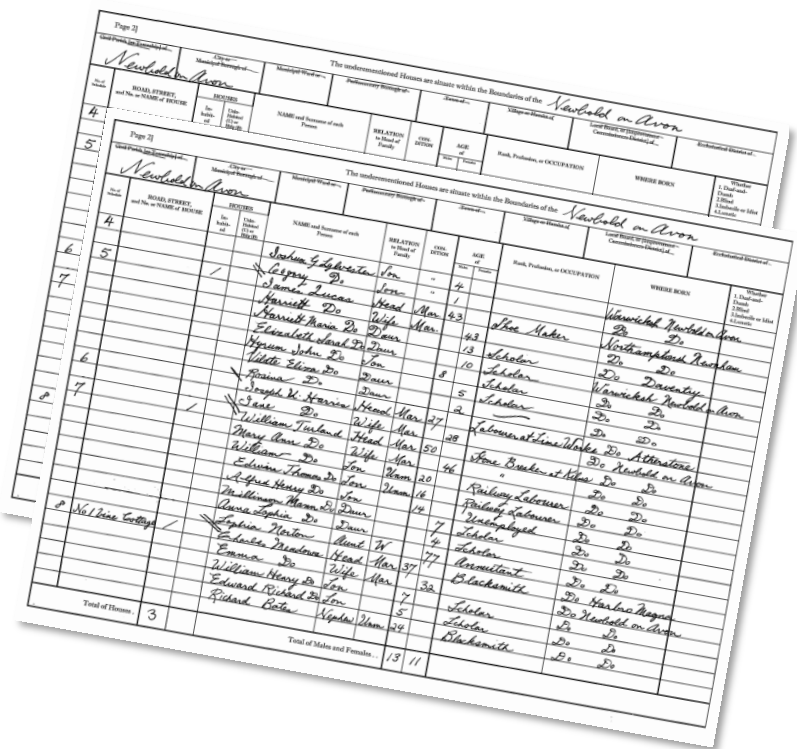
When Searching Remember:

- Names may be misspelled.
- Relationships may not be expressed in terms we understand today.
- Ages and birthplaces may not be accurate.
- Jurisdictions may have changed.
- People may not be where expected.
- Pages may be unreadable.
- If you don't find your ancestors using one website, try searching another one.
- Remember, different people indexed the different websites. One surname may be misspelled on one site and spelled correctly on another.
- Once you have found your ancestor in an index, always, always obtain the original image.

Page 21 The underscheduled Hensons are situate within the Boundaries of the *Newbold on Avon*

| House No. | NAME and Residence of each Person | RELATION to Head of Family | SEX | AGE | Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION | WHERE BORN | When last seen in the Parish of Newbold on Avon |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 4 | Stephen J. L. Henson | son | M | 4 | | Newbold on Avon | |
| 5 | George Do | son | M | 1 | | Do | |
| | James L. Henson | Head | Man | 43 | Shoe Maker | Northampton Newbold on Avon | |
| | Harriet Do | Wife | Woman | 43 | | Do | |
| | Harriet Maria Do | Daughter | Woman | 13 | Schooler | Do | Daughter |
| | Elizabeth Elizabeth Do | Daughter | Woman | 10 | Schooler | Worcestershire Newbold on Avon | |
| 6 | Henry John Do | son | M | 8 | Schooler | Do | |
| | William Do | son | M | 5 | Schooler | Do | |
| | William Do | son | M | 2 | | Do | |
| | Joseph W. Henson | Head | Man | 27 | Labourer at Lime Works | Do | Attentive |
| | Jane Do | Wife | Woman | 28 | | Do | Newbold on Avon |
| | William Henson | Head | Man | 50 | Stone Breaker at Kites | Do | |
| | Mary Ann Do | Wife | Woman | 46 | | Do | |
| 7 | William Do | son | Man | 20 | Railway Labourer | Do | |
| | Edmund Henson Do | son | Man | 16 | Railway Labourer | Do | |
| | Arthur Henry Do | son | Man | 14 | Unemployed | Do | |
| | William Henson Do | son | Man | 7 | Schooler | Do | |
| | Anna Sophia Do | Daughter | Woman | 4 | Schooler | Do | |
| 8 | Stephen Henson | Head | Man | 77 | Retiree | Do | |
| | Elizabeth Henson | Wife | Woman | 37 | Blacksmith | Do | Married at Newbold on Avon |
| | Emma Do | Daughter | Woman | 32 | | Do | |
| | William Henry Do | son | Man | 7 | Schooler | Do | |
| 9 | Edward Richard Do | son | Man | 5 | Schooler | Do | |
| | Richard Do | son | Man | 24 | Blacksmith | Do | |
| Total of Hensons | | 3 | | Total of Males and Females | | 13 // | |

- Explore the pages before and after your ancestor; other family members may be found.
- If you still can't find your ancestor, try searching the available census street indexes in the Family History Library. Check the Family History Library Catalog for these indexes. You will need to look under parish, county, and country. In addition, you can search on the Internet for name indexes especially under the parish or the county. When all else fails, try searching the census microfilms at the Family History Library.



Search Guidelines:

Searching for an ancestor in a census is an art and science; there is no one right way to search.

- First try searching with the given name, surname, and county of residence. If this returns too many matches, narrow it down by age. Remember that ages as reported in the census are not always reliable, so search for a range of years instead of an exact year. Children's ages tend to be more reliable than adults' ages.
- If needed, further narrow the search by listing the exact parish of residence, if known. (Be careful; the spelling may be different than you anticipate.) As a last resort, narrow it down further by place of birth (if known), understanding that the place of birth is often indexed incorrectly or not as expected.
- If you haven't found your person yet, perhaps it is because his or her name was misspelled in the indexing process. Be creative! Try looking at everyone with that surname in the parish of residence.
- Search for everyone with that given name (leave the surname field blank) in the parish of residence who is near the age you are expecting. You can scroll through the results and will likely spot the person whose name has been misspelled or incorrectly indexed.
- If you can't find what you want using a **Ranked search**, try using the **Exact search**, and vice versa. (Some people feel that **Exact search** is easier to use and produces better results.)

