

## **Week 2: Part 1.1: Census Information: Counting Heads...the ins and outs of the Scottish Census**

### **What's so great about census information?**

You can pinpoint your ancestors to a given location at a particular time.

This makes it easier to:

- Work back in time to marriages and births
- Work forward in time to marriages and deaths
- Find information on occupations and ownership of land.

### **Why a census in 1801?**

The first modern census in Great Britain was in 1801. The first census bill was presented to Parliament in November 1800. It legislated for a Census of Scotland, England and Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. (Ireland was included in 1821). The first census was held just 14 weeks later, on 10 March 1801. It was organised by a Commons clerk named John Rickman.

The 1801 census was considered necessary because of the demand for food in Britain and the concern that had arisen over Thomas Robert Malthus' 'Essay on the Principle of Population', written in 1798. It's hard to know how much food you'll need to feed a population if you don't know how many people are in your country, after all!

The census then took place every 10 years, 1801, 1811, 1821, etc.

### **Details on the 1801-1831 censuses**

- It was secular – administered by the government, not the church.
- In England, the local census enumerators were usually Overseers of the Poor.
- In Scotland, they were usually the local schoolmaster ("Dominie") along with others (doctors, clergymen, lawyers, merchants) as paid volunteers.
- Census returns were made on prescribed forms and in most places the enumerator went around to each household in their district questioning whoever was in.
- The census returns were attached to the census schedule for the area, which merely asked for raw numbers, and these were affirmed before the local Justice of the Peace. The forms were forwarded to the central office in London, checked again, collated, and published in summary as a Parliamentary Paper.

- Individual census records, for the most part, were just not taken. In London, however, printed schedules were left with householders to fill in themselves. In other places, census overseers created nominal listings of the inhabitants of their parish, from which final returns were created.
- These censuses were statistical in nature.

The early censuses collected several types of information:

- Numbers of families and households.
- Numbers of marriages, christenings and burials.
- Occupation information

The statistical summaries include the totals of:

- Houses: Inhabited, By how many families occupied, Uninhabited;
- Persons: Males, Females;
- Occupations: Persons chiefly employed in Agriculture, Persons chiefly employed in Trade, Manufactures, or Handicraft, All other Persons not comprised in the two preceding Classes;
- Total of persons: England, Wales, Scotland, Army, Navy, Seamen and Convicts.

Statistical summaries on national levels are available at [www.visionofbritain.org.uk/](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/).

Some original transcripts of household level records do exist – check with local library and Family History Societies, or the Scottish Genealogy Society for any existing 1801–1831 transcripts. Also try the Census Online website: (<http://www.census-online.com/>) – there's more information on this website later in this handout.

## 1841 Census

- Individual names were finally recorded!
- Less detail than later censuses.
- Census enumerators delivered forms to each household.
- Information was recorded about everyone at an address on the census night.
- Forms were collected, checked and entered into transcript books, which are what we view today.
- Returns were collected in enumeration districts based on parishes, but not exactly the same.

## 1841 Census: Information Recorded

- Surname
- Forename(s)
- Sex
- Age
- County and District
- Address
- Occupation

- Where born (If born in Scotland, whether born in county or otherwise. Whether born in England or Ireland or a Foreigner)
- Note that ages over 15 are rounded down to nearest 5 – so 29 = 25, 32 = 30, etc.

## 1841 Census Problems

- Parishes missing from the records – many in Fife.  
Missing parishes:  
Abdie, Auchtermuchty, Balmerino, Ceres, Collessie, Creich, Cults, Cupar, Dairsie, Dunbog, Kinghorn, Kinglassie, Kirkcaldy and Leslie.  
Some other parishes (e.g. Arngask, Burntisland and Kennoway) are known to have missing books
- Rounding down and also possible errors in adult ages – ages of everyone over 15 were rounded down to the nearest 5.
- Relationship to head of household not recorded.

## 1851-1901 Censuses: Information Recorded

- Surname
- Forename(s)
- Sex
- Age
- County and District
- Address
- Relation to head of family
- Condition (i.e. married, single, widow or widower)
- Rank, profession or occupation
- Where born (in greater detail than 1841 census)
- Whether Blind or Deaf and dumb

## 1861 Census Changes

The 1861 census was the first to be carried out by the new office of the Registrar General for Scotland and the local Registrars.

Questions added:

- Number of rooms with windows.
- Number of children aged 5-13 attending school.

## 1911 Census Changes

Questions added on the 1911 census:

1. For married women: duration of current marriage, number of children born alive to the current marriage, number of children still living born to the current marriage.
2. Industry or service in which 'worker is connected'
3. Nationality, if born in a foreign country
4. Number of persons in house

There are numbers written on the schedule beside the individual's personal occupation and in the industry or service column. These correspond to centrally assigned codes for each occupation and industry, e.g. '030' corresponding to 'laundry workers'.

A great deal of detailed background information is available about this and other aspects of census records, for example on the Histpop website:

University of Essex (2004-2007) *Histpop: the online historical population reports website*. <http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/Show?page=Home> : accessed 26 January 2016.

An additional example on the website *A Vision of Britain* is a table from the original census reports giving the industry/service codes that were used to summarise the "numbers engaged in principal industries and services", with a list of 54 industries.

University of Portsmouth et al (2009) *1911 Census of Scotland: Population, ages and conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, housing, Gaelic-speaking: Table 1: Scotland: Summary of industries*. Available online on the website *A Vision of Britain*: [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table\\_page.jsp?tab\\_id=S1911POP\\_Int\\_E1&show=DB](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=S1911POP_Int_E1&show=DB) : accessed 26 January 2016.

## Usage of 'idiot, imbecile and lunatic' terms

Definitions in use until about 1900:

- imbecile - "mental age of an infant"
- idiot - "natural fool from birth"
- lunatic - "sometimes of good and sound memory and understanding, and sometimes not"

Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 introduced revised definitions:

- idiot - "unable to guard themselves against physical danger"
- imbecile - "incapable of managing themselves or their affairs"
- feeble minded - "needing care or control for the protection of themselves or others"
- moral defective - those possessed of "vicious or criminal propensities" (included women who gave birth out of wedlock)
- lunatic - retained its old definitions until 1930, when it came to mean "of unsound mind"

## Limitations and Problems with Census Records

Census records are normally released 100 years after recording.

- Census records for your parish may be missing.
- Check married name and surname of women if possible, widows sometimes reverted to maiden names.
- Children often took name of stepfather.
- Different birthplace of a child may indicate the mother's family address.
- People did move in the 19<sup>th</sup> century! Check neighbouring parishes and counties especially.

- Remember to check workhouses, institutions, prisons, ships, etc.

## Organisation of Census Records

The 1841 and 1851 censuses were organised on a parish basis. The census reference number will be the same as the Old Parish Register (OPR) reference number.

From 1861, censuses were organised on an enumeration district (ED) basis. There were some differences between the two administrative areas. Some addresses will therefore appear in a different area, under a different reference number, from one census to another.

Street indexes for the Scottish census records are available online on the ScotlandsPeople website at <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>; navigate to the Help and Advice page for each separate census year, then scroll down the page to the Street Index link at the bottom.

A list of the Scottish census parish/registration district reference numbers, with applicable date ranges, is available online on the National records of Scotland website at: <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//research/statutory-registers/registration-district-guide.pdf>. These district codes were also used to index birth, marriage and death records, both for the earlier Old Parish Registers and for later Statutory Records, therefore the registration district numbers can be useful to know for helping to pinpoint records for the right family.

## Where to find census records

- Scotland's People: [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) - The 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses are indexed and online. They can be searched and images of the census pages purchased. **This is the only place online where you can find images of the Scottish census pages!** Pay to use (£7 for 30 credits).
- Ancestry.co.uk (& .com): [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) The 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 Scottish censuses are extensively indexed and available. Index only, no images of the pages. Pay to use (subscription). 1841-1911 English/Welsh are extensively indexed and images are available.
- FreeCen: <http://www.freecen.org.uk/> A **free** searchable index to census returns for 1841 - 1891 are available on FreeCEN. Scottish coverage is best for 1841 & 1851. It is a volunteer operation.
- Censusfinder: [http://www.censusfinder.com/united\\_kingdom.htm](http://www.censusfinder.com/united_kingdom.htm). Free listing of British census records available online.
- Census Online: your guide to online census records: <http://www.census-online.com/>. 'The web's largest directory of links to online census transcriptions! This directory includes links to US federal censuses and indexes, state and territorial censuses, tax lists, voter lists, military pensioner lists, etc.'
- National Archives of Ireland: <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>. The Irish censuses for 1901 & 1911 (and additional census fragments and substitutes) have been digitised and can be searched and viewed for **free**.

- FindMyPast: [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)  
Searchable index of English/Welsh census records, images of English/Welsh records (1841-1911) and a searchable index of Scottish census records for 1841-1901. Index only, no images of the Scottish census pages. Pay to use (credits or subscription).
- FamilySearch: [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
**Free** searchable index of UK census records, including Scotland (1841-1891). Index only, no images of the pages.

### **Microfilm/fiche at LDS Family History Centres, local libraries, etc.**

Census returns have been microfilmed by the LDS church and may be consulted in their Family History Centres around the world, including the centre in Julian Avenue, Glasgow (contact details on the FamilySearch website). The 1881 census may be purchased (on CD) from the LDS.

Microfilm copies are also held by many local libraries and family history societies such as the Mitchell Library and the Glasgow and West of Scotland Family History Society.

Some censuses have also been indexed by Family History Societies. Check individual FHS websites, for example Glasgow and the West of Scotland Family History Society, <http://www.gwsfhs.org.uk/>.

An index to the 1891 census is available on microfiche at some local libraries and family history societies. But many libraries have local census indexes.

## **Forms and tools for working with census records**

### **CensusTools - <http://www.censustools.com/>**

A man named Gary Minder in Washington State has created numerous Excel spreadsheets (.pdf versions are available as well) which allow you to enter information from various censuses and thus have it in an easy to read format. Spreadsheets are available for the following censuses: U.S. Federal (1790-1930), U.S. State (8 states), Canadian (1851-1901), England (1841-1901), Ireland (1821-1911) and Scotland (1841-1891).

Other spreadsheets on his website allow you to enter cemetery data and passenger manifest data. There's also a research log and a family group sheet.

These spreadsheets can be sent to you on CD for \$17.00 to an international address.

### **Ancestry.com – UK Census Forms**

Ancestry provides blank UK census forms for free download. These enable you to see the format and column headings for various census years (especially if the schedules themselves are hard to read), they also provide a clean and convenient method for extracting and filing

important information you find.' These are based on the English/Welsh census forms and do not have the specific Scottish questions. However, they are still quite useful.

<http://www.ancestry.com/download/forms#ukcensus>

### **Scottish Counties – old and new**

GENUKI Scotland has a map of the old and new counties in Scotland at

<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/sct/index.html#Counties>

### **Church Congregation Locator Tool**

GENUKI UK has an online UK church congregation locator tool which you can use to discover which parish a town or village is located in.

<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/churchdb/>

### **Summary of general difficulties with census records...**

- Lost records.
- Information not given or incorrectly stated.
- Information wrongly transcribed or typed - spelling or numerical errors may not have been spotted.
- People move, emigrate, etc.
- First names / Nicknames (Peg, Peggy, Margaret, Meg)
- Abbreviated names - Thos for Thomas; Jas for James; Rbt for Robert; Alexr for Alexander, for example.
- Later children named same as dead siblings - same name, different age in successive censuses.
- Alternative spellings of surnames - McKay, M'Kay, Mackay, McKie.
- Prostitutes not recorded as such. "Dressmaker" and "independent means".
- Children listed as "scholars" (i.e., at school) may have in fact been sent out to work; if underage, their parents were breaking the law.
- Information wrongly recorded or transferred - illiteracy was common and many individuals asked friends, neighbours or enumerators to help them complete the forms.
- Information wrongly transcribed or keyed - volunteers and commercial organisations do make mistakes despite checks, error-trapping and validation routines, e.g. "John Smith Senior" indexed as if "Senior" is the surname.

## Happy Hunting!