

PRE-1841 POPULATION CENSUS SCHEDULES AND LISTS

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In September 2004 the History Department at the University of Essex published a working paper entitled: *Census schedules and listings, 1801—1831: an introduction and guide*, by the authors of this research note and Beatrice Moring. The guide gives brief details of the various surviving census listings from the censuses of 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831. Copies of this guide, which runs to 149 pages, have been sent to all relevant archival repositories in England to confirm their details and to elicit further information. Unfortunately we have already exhausted virtually all of our initial print run, so we can not supply any further paper copies. However, a copy is available on the world wide web at: www.histpop.org.uk/pre41/ which anyone is welcome to download.

The guide was designed to augment the account of listings known to the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure published in *Local Population Studies* in issues 24 to 38 between 1980 and 1986, and the catalogues of pre-1841 censuses and listings published by Colin Chapman and Jeremy Gibson.¹ What follows is a slightly revised version of the introduction to the guide.

For the 1801, 1811, 1821 and 1831 censuses there are, generally speaking, three types of records to be found in archives. The first are complete listings, which contain individual-level (and often nominal) information about all the residents of a parish or township at the relevant census date; the second are 'household' listings which contain information about each household within the parish. These often have nominal information about the head of the household, but this is not always the case; and third, copies of tabulations which were sent to the census office in London, and are essentially only the 'statistical' information which relates to that particular parish for that census. The guide generally covers only the first two of these three forms of return.²

These returns have value to local historians as well as to genealogists. The latter have, to date, been the most frequent users of these records because the listings include nominal information. They have value to the local historian for the same reason, but also because they sometimes contain information about household and occupational structure and are extant for a period in which few other sources provide this information. However, they have not been systematically analysed for these purposes. The intention of the authors was initially to draw up a complete list of extant listings using the guides published

by Gibson and Chapman,³ and to annotate it specifying the type of information provided for both individuals and households. It soon became clear that this was not possible given the large number of these listings which survive, but it also seemed unwarranted to simply produce a guide to those listings which were in the Cambridge Group Library. Hence, we produced a hybrid working document, which attempts to catalogue all such listings, and also provides a detailed guide to those which are available from the Cambridge Group.⁴ We hope that within a couple of years, perhaps with the assistance of others, we will be able to produce a fully annotated guide to all of the extant listings for England and Wales, and perhaps an introduction to listings elsewhere in the British Isles.

History

The first census in Great Britain was taken in 1801, and its history has been well documented in Higgs' two introductory guides to the census returns.⁵ The first census Act (41 Geo. III, c.15), entitled 'An Act for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain, and the increase or diminution thereof', was not simply the legislation to count the numbers of persons, families and houses in the country, but also an attempt to discover whether the population was increasing or decreasing by requiring counts of the numbers of baptisms and burials for every tenth year between 1700 and 1780, and then annually through to 1800. Annual totals of marriages were to be provided beginning in 1754. The Act contained a schedule containing six questions, the first three of which were posed to the 'overseers of the poor' or 'other substantial householders', and the other three to the parish clergy. The first three questions (reproduced below) related to the current population, while the latter three related to the numbers of baptisms, burials and marriages recorded in the parish registers.⁶

1. How many Inhabited Houses are there in your Parish, Township or Place; by how many Families are they occupied; and, how many Houses therein are Uninhabited?
2. How many Persons (including Children of whatever Age) are there actually found within the Limits of your Parish, Township, or Place, at the Time of taking this Account, distinguishing Males and Females, and exclusive of Men actually serving in His Majesty's Regular Forces or Militia, and exclusive of Seamen either in His Majesty's Service or belonging to Registered Vessels?
3. What Number of Persons in your Parish, Township, or Place are chiefly employed in Agriculture; how many in Trade, Manufactures, or Handicraft; and how many are not occupied in any of the preceding Classes?

A pro forma answer form (or schedule) for these questions for overseers and 'other substantial householders' to complete was pre-circulated to Clerks of the Peace and Town Clerks who were to send them to Justices of the Peace and to High Constables or other proper Officers so that these could be received by the Overseers of the Poor and substantial householders. Forms for the clergy also

followed this route. The schedule, once completed, was to be attested to or affirmed in front of a Justice of the Peace and then endorsed by the High Constables or other proper officers before being returned to the Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. These forms were later abstracted under the guidance of John Rickman.

The schedules demonstrate how the overseers or other substantial households were to remit their returns to the census office.⁷ In order to complete the form satisfactorily it would have helped the overseer or enumerator to make a list of the houses and the characteristics of each household, and then add them up to complete the form. This list would have been most useful if all households were listed indicating the numbers of persons within them in the respective categories (such as males and females, and the number of persons employed in agriculture, trade or other employments). Making a list with details of all the people in the parish would not have been so useful for this purpose, but a number of individual-level listings do survive for 1801. Thus the lists which survive for 1801 (and the subsequent years) are essentially notes, and are not official documents comparable with the enumerators' books for the period 1841 and onwards.

In 1811 similar questions to 1801 were posed. Changes included the number of houses being built as distinguished from those simply uninhabited and the number of families (rather than persons) chiefly 'employed or maintained by' the three economic groupings from 1801. Again, in order to provide this information, overseers would almost certainly have had to create a list of householders and tabulate the information themselves.

At the following census some basic information relating to the age structure of the parish was asked for, if it could be collected 'in a manner satisfactory to yourself, and not inconvenient to the parties'.⁸ Where this information was collected there would have been a greater chance for the production of an individual-level listing as it would have facilitated the rapid production of figures for the census authorities. However, many of the enumerators were content to provide counts, for each household, of the numbers of persons in different age groups.

For the final pre-enumerator census, in 1831, there were considerable changes in the occupational questions. Details of these alterations can be found in Higgs' books and the questions are reproduced in Gatley's recent description of this census.⁹ Again the answers to the questions would have been more easily calculated from individual (or household) lists, but the known surviving lists are less numerous than for 1811.

What is also of interest is that a number of these listings contain information which was not pertinent to the census. Higgs gives a number of examples, such as bastardy cases in Smalley in Derbyshire in 1801, religion in Marnhull and Shaftsbury St James, both in Dorset, and Warburton, Cheshire in 1821.¹⁰ In the 1821 listing for Hendon, the rent and numbers of both windows and dogs were enumerated for each household.

Table 1 Type of known surviving listings by census year.

Year	Type of listing			Total
	Household	Individual	Not known	
1801	125	15	5	145
1811	196	10	8	214
1821	231	32	8	271
1831	130	16	15	161
Total	682	73	36	791

Note: The dating of seven lists is uncertain; 3 were probably taken in 1801, two in 1811 and one each in 1821 and 1831.

The guide lists a total of 791 listings—a far cry from the 27 known to the Cambridge Group in 1969.¹¹ What is indisputable is that the guide is incomplete. New lists have been continuously drawn to the attention of the authors of the guide during its production, and it is clear that many more of these listings remain undiscovered.¹² Within two weeks of the booklet being circulated, we received confirmation of at least eight catalogued listings.

Table 1, which tabulates the type of known listings surviving for each year, shows two interesting features. First the distribution of surviving lists over time; the number surviving for 1831 shows a marked decrease on the two preceding years. Second, the number of lists (and in particular the number of individual lists) for 1821 is greater than for all other years. The increase in known individual lists can be accounted for by the asking of the question on age, but the reason for the overall number is unclear.

The geographical distribution (Table 2) of the known surviving listings shows that there are at least two listings surviving for each county in England with the exception of Rutland. Almost 10 per cent of known surviving listings are from Yorkshire, and a further 18 per cent are from the three East Anglian counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. Lancashire would seem to be under-represented with only 2 per cent of the total listings and around 10 per cent of the population in 1831, but otherwise the distribution of known surviving lists seems unremarkable. It must of course be remembered that these are only the listings known to the authors, and there are likely to be others, and that some of these may not in fact be related to the census

In summary, the origin of many lists lies with the format of the questions posed by the census authorities. The fact that some of the questions were being addressed specifically to the overseers of the poor or the clergy has meant that the majority of the lists which survive are to be found with other parish records. These listings are of interest to historians of all persuasions because of the nature of the information they provide on individuals and households. Members of the Cambridge Group, in particular Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, have used these listings to study household composition during this period.

Table 2 Geographical distribution of known surviving pre-1841 census listings.

County	Year				Total
	1801	1811	1821	1831	
Bedfordshire	0	1	3	4	8
Berkshire	5	4	5	3	17
Buckinghamshire	3	2	5	3	13
Cambridgeshire	5	5	5	1	16
Cheshire	2	2	2	4	10
Cornwall	1	1	3	0	5
Cumberland	0	1	3	0	4
Derbyshire	5	7	10	1	23
Devon	2	1	9	1	13
Dorset	4	2	10	3	19
Durham	0	0	1	1	2
Essex	7	27	19	18	71
Gloucestershire	5	7	12	2	26
Hampshire	3	6	9	3	21
Herefordshire	1	1	0	0	2
Hertfordshire	2	0	2	0	4
Huntingdonshire	0	1	3	0	4
Kent	9	11	7	6	33
Lancashire	4	5	4	3	16
Leicestershire	3	3	5	1	12
Lincolnshire	2	4	6	5	17
London	4	13	14	14	45
Middlesex	7	5	7	7	26
Norfolk	11	5	14	5	35
Northamptonshire	0	5	6	4	15
Northumberland	0	1	1	0	2
Nottinghamshire	3	6	7	4	20
Oxfordshire	3	4	8	2	17
Shropshire	2	1	8	4	15
Somerset	4	11	7	3	25
Staffordshire	5	4	2	4	15
Suffolk	7	6	11	8	32
Surrey	9	12	5	10	36
Sussex	1	7	10	9	27
Warwick	4	4	14	10	32
Westmorland	1	2	0	0	3
Wiltshire	4	4	6	6	20
Worcestershire	1	2	6	4	13
Yorkshire	16	31	22	8	77
Total	145	214	271	161	791

The listings collection of the Cambridge Group

Over the course of several decades the Cambridge Group has collected photocopies of many of the lists of inhabitants of parishes and townships in England and Wales between 1523 (the earliest located) and 1841 (after which enumerations books survive for successive decennial censuses). These lists were compiled for a variety of purposes, for example the collection of taxes, surveys of the poor, examination of religious practice and after 1801 as part of the national decennial census. In some instances the motive for enumeration remains obscure. Initial criteria set by Peter Laslett for inclusion in the collection were coverage of the total population of the parish or township and division of that population into a series of units considered by Laslett as representing households.¹³ In practice a considerable number of lists which do not meet these criteria have been added to the collection over the years either because of the exceptional detail provided on sections of the population (for example on the family circumstances of the poor) or to expand the coverage of a particular population (as in the case of cities that were divided into a number of wards or parishes). A few lists compiled after 1841 have also been acquired. In addition, as Peter Laslett himself recognised, in some cases the failure of the list to cover the entire population only becomes apparent after considerable detailed research has been undertaken.¹⁴ Laslett was also aware that not all the name blocks might represent households and, although it is customary to refer to the units identified in the lists as households, it is important to recognise, as discussed below, that different definitions may have been applied by different enumerators.¹⁵

The guide gives details of all known returns which at either individual or household level were produced for the censuses after 1801 and before 1841. The guide also includes some non-census listings taken during the same period. These are not exhaustive, and only cover those held at the Cambridge Group Library. Considerably greater detail has been provided for all the lists of inhabitants in the Cambridge Group collection. However, we must insist that not all such lists that survive for this period have made their way into the Cambridge Group collection, priority having been given to the acquisition of lists which provide more detail on the inhabitants than required for the national census, specified the ages of the inhabitants (as in the case of enumerations conducted for the census of 1821) or where several lists survive for different census years. This element of the guide expands and corrects two earlier assessments of the quality of the lists, the first originating with Peter Laslett (and held on manuscript at the Cambridge Group),¹⁶ and the second published in successive issues of *Local Population Studies* beginning with No. 24 (1980).

After 1801 most lists are one or other of the following types: enumerations required for the national decennial censuses, accounts of religious observances, and surveys of the poor. The two latter categories of list are generally less complete in their coverage of a local population than a census enumeration. Surveys of the poor provide less detail on wealthier inhabitants (or even omit

them altogether) while surveys of religious observance through their focus on the family rather than on the household, tend not to record the presence of servants or inmates although some reference may be made to the absence from families of particular children due to service. As is the case with lists taken before 1801, enumerations, whether taken in conjunction with the censuses of for other purposes rarely record how the resident population or the household have been defined. Their definitions have therefore to be inferred from whom they list and who appears to have been omitted. For example, the omission of any reference in these lists to the presence of visitors in some household suggests that the lists record the population resident at their usual address (the *de jure* population) rather than those present at a particular address on a given night (the *de facto* population) which was selected as the population base for the mid-Victorian and later censuses.

All lists are recorded in the body of the guide, in alphabetical order, by county. Every listing contains four key pieces of information:

Location The physical location of the original or a copy of the list.

Source The source of the information. Where this is missing, it means that information for the listing has come from the publication or transcription listed later in that entry. A very small number do not contain an entry here, which means that the source is usually a website which mentions the return but gives no further detail.

Pop. This gives the population totals for the relevant census year from the published census reports.

Type This classifies the listing by its type. Individuals (I) or by households (H). At present a number of entries contain the entry (?) as the list has not been examined by the authors. A very small number of entries are included which we believe contain just statistics (S). We have not sought to collect details of all such returns as it would have made the guide unmanageable.

If there is a known publication or transcription of the listing, then this is detailed within the entry. Some of these listings have been published on the WWW and while an attempt has been made to trace all lists so published it is likely that some have eluded our observation.

For all those listings where there is a copy at the Cambridge Group, there is additional information. In the case of lists of householders (H) the number of members of each unit is usually specified, and sometimes the numbers of each sex and (as with enumerations for the 1821 census) the numbers of males and females in each household in age groups through to 90+. Lists which record the size of the household were defined as those where clear boundaries have been drawn between groups of names (through numbering, or insertion of lines, spaces or (where appropriate) other headings such as a relationship or occupation) and a list is not obviously incomplete due to the omission of certain sections of the population such as servants and inmates. However, no attempt has been made in the guide to indicate what definitions may have been

applied to distinguish one block of names from another although many of the enumerations taken in conjunction with the censuses of 1801–1831 appear to report persons per house rather than per household. This can be inferred from the recording of the poorhouse or workhouse as the equivalent of any other unit and the reporting as one unit of houses occupied by several families. Yet, conversely, other lists note that some units that they listed separately occupied just one house, but without specifying how the property had been divided. The Puddletown listing of 1724 is exceptional in recording how houses and outbuildings were occupied.

The information given in the lists which identify individuals also varies and can include name (first and last), age, sex, and marital status, the presence in the household of a spouse and children, relatives (persons related to the head of the household other than as their spouse or child), servants and inmates or lodgers, and occupations. More detail is usually provided on the head of the household than on other members. This is particularly the case in respect of names, marital status and occupation. Women who head households in widowhood were more likely to have their marital status specified than were men. However, the inclusion of the information on widowhood encouraged omission by the enumerator of the widow's first name. The occupations of the men who headed a household were also more frequently specified than were those of women. In the guide the sections of the population on whom information is provided have been indicated by the use of the following abbreviations: H (household heads), M (males) F (females), C (children) and A (adults). Instances where information has been provided for some but not all individuals in a particular category for reasons that are unclear are marked with a % in the appropriate section of the guide. Lists with additional details (for example on communicants, church and school attendance), which were taken in a census year but appear not to be part of the census, or raise particular problems of interpretation are identified in the notes field.

Evidence of further inconsistencies is likely to emerge from a more detailed examination of specific lists. The most reliable of the lists are probably those that specify each person by their relationship to the head of the household, identifying spouse, sons and daughters, the exact relationship to the head of any other related persons, and any resident servants, boarders and lodgers. Few lists, however achieve recording of this quality and other lists have to be examined to provide a fuller survey of the extent of the variation over time and by region in the size and composition of family and household. The evidence of the poorer quality lists, however, needs to be used with care. For example, although the guide indicates whether a particular list includes information on relatives (other than spouse and children), servants and lodgers this does not necessarily mean that all such persons have been identified. The presence in a list of some persons whose relationship to the household head is not specified provides one indication of omissions. It is also worth bearing in mind that lists which use child rather than son or daughter to describe relationships to the household head may have included with the term 'child' a certain number of grandchildren, nieces and nephews even though other relationships involving the senior generation, the parents of the head for example, are specified.

Figure 1 An example entry for Great Bircham, Norfolk.

Great Bircham		1811
Location:	NorRO PD34/43; Copy at CAMPOP Library	
Source:	Gibson	
Pop:	330	
Type:	H	
Size:	X	Lodgers: -
Ages:	-	Occupations: -
Sex:	X	Head's firstname X
Marital Status:	-	All firstnames: -
Kin:	-	Head's surname X
Servants:	-	All surnames: -
Notes:	Transcript only at Cambridge Group.	
Web:	http://www.uea.ac.uk/~s300/genuki/NFK/places/b/bircham_great/census1811.shtml [09/03/2004]	

Figure 1 shows a typical example from the guide. This particular listing comprises two columns of householders names along with the number of males and females in each household. (Since the guide was compiled the web address for this particular listing has altered.)

As noted at the beginning of this report, the guide is incomplete and may contain some erroneous information, which is why we have always given a 'health warning' as to the nature of the information. We will be pleased to hear from any reader who knows of additional listings which we have not included within the guide. We would especially like to be informed of any published transcriptions, either on paper or in machine-readable form, which relate to these listings. Please contact Matthew Woollard (matthew@essex.ac.uk) with any further information.

NOTES

1. Colin R. Chapman, *Pre-1841 censuses and population listings* (Dursley, Lochin Publishing, 5th ed., 1998); Jeremy Gibson with Mervyn Medlicott, *Local census listings, 1522–1930: Holdings in the British Isles* (2nd ed., 1994).
2. A fourth type of return also exists in the form of the Clergyman's returns for 1831. See S. A. Royle, 'Clergymen's returns to the 1831 census', *Local Historian*, **14** (1980), 79–90 and S. A. Royle, 'Illegitimates recorded in the 1831 Clergymen's returns', *Local Population Studies*, **26** (1981), 41–42. These returns are at TNA.

3. Chapman, *Pre-1841 censuses and population listings*; Gibson with Medicott, *Local census listings, 1522–1930: Holdings in the British Isles*.
4. The Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure, Department of Geography, Sir William Hardy Building, Downing Place, Cambridge, CB2 3EN.
5. Edward Higgs, *Making sense of the census: the manuscript returns for England and Wales, 1801–1901* (London, Public Record Office, 1989) and Edward Higgs, *A clearer sense of the census: the Victorian censuses and historical research* (London, H.M.S.O., 1996).
6. Census of Great Britain, 1801, *Abstract of the Answers and Returns: enumeration. Part I England BPP 1801–2 VI*, i.
7. A re-typeset version of this pro-forma is published in the 1801 census volume. This version is reproduced in Higgs, *Making sense*, 114.
8. Census of England and Wales, 1821, *Abstract of the answers and returns...* BPP 1822 XV, 6.
9. Higgs, *Making sense*, 23; David Alan Gatley, *An introduction to the 1831 census* (Stoke-on-Trent: Victorian Census Project, Staffordshire University, 2003).
10. Higgs, *Making sense*, 25.
11. Pre-1841 census enumerators's schedules', *Local Population Studies*, 2 (1969), 53–4.
12. For example, David Wright's *The Kentish census returns, 1801–1901. Origins, location, registration districts and indexes* (Whitstable, Kent, the author, 2003), was brought to our attention just before the completion of this introduction.
13. See Peter Laslett, 'The study of social structure from listings of inhabitants' in E.A. Wrigley ed., *An introduction to English historical demography* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 180 and Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, eds, *Household and family in past time* (Cambridge, 1972), 25 and 129.
14. Laslett, 'Study of social structure', 178.
15. Laslett and Wall, *Household and family*, 127 note 5.
16. For a specimen return see Laslett 'Study of social structure', 178–81.