Resources for Research

Population Censuses

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Family historians and anyone wanting to research the impact of the first world war on their local area might be expecting 2021 to yield new information from the 1921 Census. But they will be disappointed because the way the hundred-year rule is being applied under the Census Act 1920 means that the detail will not be available until the start of 2022.

Britain has carried out a census if its population every ten years since 1801. However, the first four censuses were little more than counts of the population and few records of individuals or households survive. But from 1841 the enumerators' books have been digitalised and made available online. Successive censuses asked an increasingly wide range of questions with the later ones giving more information about the relationship between household members, more precise birthplaces, and greater detail about employment. From 1911 the head of household filled in a schedule with their family's details (the one shown above was written by Gustav Holst). The enumerator's book then had a single-line entry for each household. The 1921 Census is particularly important as the second world war meant the cancellation of the 1941 Census and also saw the destruction of the 1931 Census records.

Barnes and Mortlake residents live close to the National Archives where they can view census returns free of charge. Although last year there was no access to National Archives computers, membership of Richmond Libraries gives free access the *Ancestry* site. Clink here for a note on how best to use this.

David Deaton