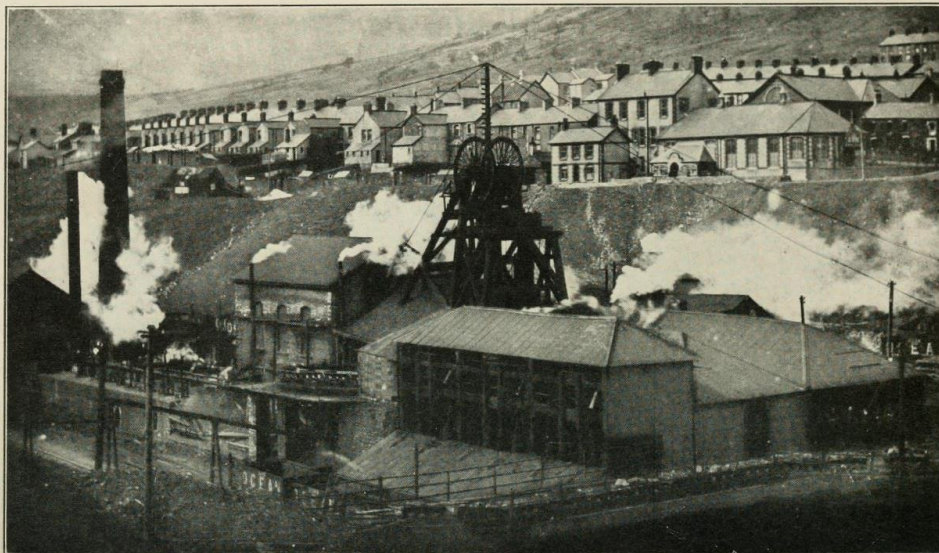


1921 Census

Joe Saunders

In the spring of 1921, the British Isles were in an unsettled state. The Irish War of Independence had been fought since 1919 and it was not until December 1921 that the Anglo-Irish Treaty ending that conflict was signed. Britain was also in the midst of a coal miners' strike. As March turned to April things remained tense. A state of emergency was declared following the calling of the 'Black Friday' strike with workers in other industries coming out to support the miners. From the beginning of April there was coal rationing. The census that should have been taken on 24 April was delayed by nearly two months in the wake of Black Friday, with industrial action rumbling on to the end of June.



OVER 200,000 OF BRITAIN'S 1,200,000 COAL-MINERS LIVE IN THE FAMOUS SOUTH WALES DISTRICT.

'Over 200,000 of Britain's 1,200,000 Coal-Miners Live in the Famous South Wales District' from Whiting Williams, *Full Up and Fed Up: The Worker's Mind in Crowded Britain* (1921)

A census is intended to be a full survey of the population. In England and Wales a full census of the population had been carried out every ten years since 1841. When the 1921 Census itself was finally taken on 19 June the population of Britain were asked some difficult questions for difficult times. Many men were listed as out of work. It was the first survey after both the First World War and the Spanish Flu and children were asked whether their mother, father or both were living. The population had suffered huge losses, especially of young men in their 20s and 30s. The birth rate had dropped dramatically during the war with so many men away and then many children were conceived as men returned. This was also the first time people were asked about divorce and the workplace of their employer, both incredibly interesting to historians.

You can download a copy of the 1921 Census household schedule for England [here](#), courtesy of the *Office for National Statistics* website.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. Please read the Instructions and Examples shown on the back, and then fill up the Schedule carefully and in Ink.

NAME and SEX— <small>of every person who lives at midnight on the night of Sunday, 24th April, 1921, and who, under an order of the Board, and available for service in the House, has an establishment, or</small> <small>(1) person that might be the dwelling of the household or establishment, or</small> <small>(2) person who is present in the House at or on the night of Sunday, 24th April, 1921, and who is not an inmate of a hospital, or a lunatic asylum, or a workhouse, or a prison, or a place of confinement, or a place of detention, or a place of confinement for lunatics, or a place of confinement for persons of unsound mind, or a place of confinement for persons of unsound mind, or a place of confinement for persons of unsound mind.</small> <small>(For order of entry name see Example on back sheet.)</small>	RELATIONSHIP— <small>to the Head of Household</small>	AGE	SEX	MARRIAGE— <small>or SINGLE</small>	BIRTHPLACE and NATIONALITY.	PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, or SERVICE.	EMPLOYMENT.	PLACE of WORK.	INFORMATION required only in respect of Married Men, Widowers and Divorces.
1									
2									
3									
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9									
10									

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: _____
Chief of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.

1921 Census form. *Office for National Statistics*

In 2019, it was announced that *Findmypast* had been selected as *The National Archives'* commercial partner to make the 1921 Census of England and Wales available online. Access until October 2022 was pay-per-view when the Census was made available through a *Findmypast* subscription. Researchers can also view the images online for free at The National Archives in Kew, the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, and at Manchester Central Library. Access is currently being made available at other libraries and archives.

In terms of issues, Sarah Williams of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* has said that;

*A number of schedules suffered water damage in the 1930s, although only 0.35 per cent of the collection was damaged so badly that it cannot be read. Apart from that, the collection is remarkably complete so if you cannot find an ancestor, it is worth considering mistranscription first. Other options may be that your ancestor was abroad at the time or gave false information. Military personnel, including RAF staff, based in overseas stations were included.*¹

The Scottish 1921 Census was released by the Scottish government-run website [ScotlandsPeople](#) in November 2022.

Censuses are fantastic sources for researchers of modern Britain and are especially beloved by family historians. The 1921 Census enables a brilliant insight into life at this time of great upheaval. It is a particularly important source given that the 1931 Census for England and Wales was destroyed in a fire during the Second World War.

Further References and Resources:

¹ [The 1921 census - everything you need to know | Who Do You Think You Are Magazine](#)

[Census records - The National Archives](#)

[What's interesting about the 1921 Census - The National Archives](#)

[Where can I access the 1921 Census? - Portals \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

[What does it take to bring the 1921 Census of England & Wales online? | Blog | findmypast.co.uk](#)

[Why publication of the 1921 census will matter to labour historians – Society for the Study of Labour History \(sslh.org.uk\)](#)

[Black Friday, 1921 | History Today](#)

Books:

Emma Jolly, *A Guide to Tracing Your Family History using the Census* (2020)

Peter Christian and David Annal, *Census: The Family Historian's Guide* (2014)