

UK ELECTORAL REGISTERS AND THEIR USES

This guide has been created to give you a brief overview of the British Library's, and other collections of Electoral Registers, some information about what they are and what may be contained in them and some suggestions about their use. If you need more detailed information this can be found in the Introduction to *Parliamentary constituencies and their registers since 1832* at <http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/uk-electoral-registers>.

The only nation-wide (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) set of current and non-current Electoral Registers forms part of the 150 million plus items in the British Library's collections. In 2004, 43 km of the 625 linear km of shelving in the British Library were Official Publications and the registers themselves took up 3.21868km or 2 miles. Approximately 800 volumes are added to the collection each year. Assuming the number of volumes and size remains the same (c. 40.64m per year) by 2024 the registers will take up more than 4km of shelving.

CONTENTS

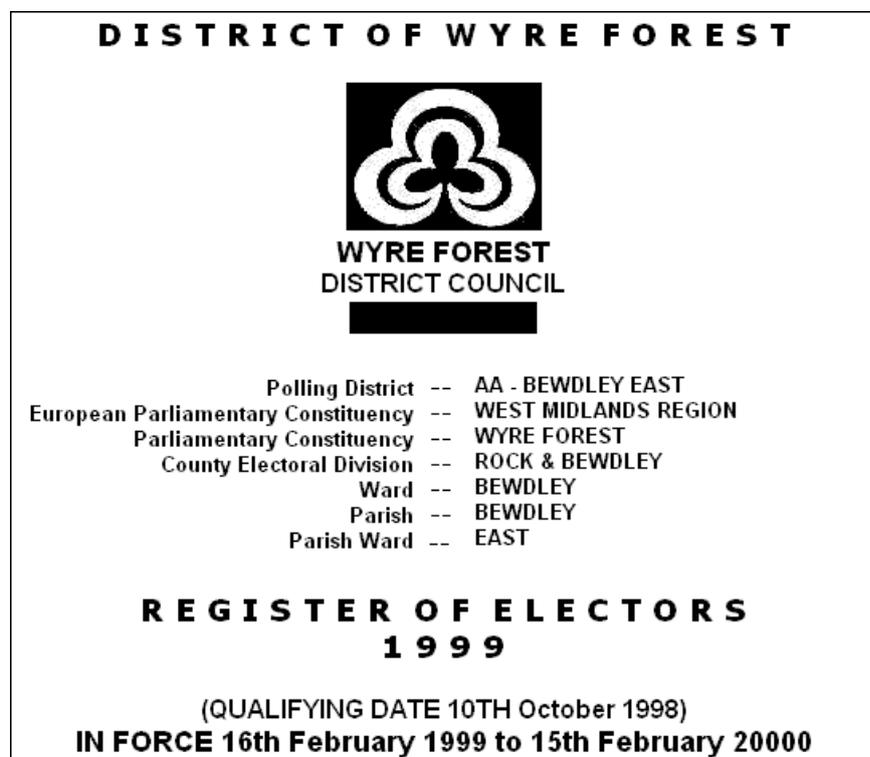
WHAT ARE ELECTORAL REGISTERS?	1
WHAT EXISTS	2
WHAT THE BRITISH LIBRARY HAS	3
WHAT REGISTERS CONTAIN	4
HOW REGISTERS CAN BE USED.....	5
HOW THEY ARE ARRANGED	6
ELECTRONIC VERSIONS	7
IDENTIFYING THE CONSTITUENCY	8
Using boundary commission maps	9
Using alternative sources	10
FINDING THE REGISTERS.....	11
AVAILABILITY OF REGISTERS	11
ORDERING REGISTERS	12

WHAT ARE ELECTORAL REGISTERS?

Electoral registers are lists of names of people entitled to vote, during the lifetime of the register, at an election in the polling districts in which they are listed and are the sole evidence of that right to vote. No-one can vote elsewhere than where they are registered and anyone omitted from the register cannot vote at all. Electoral Registers were first produced under the Representation of the People Act 1832. (2&3 Gul. 4) and continue to the present day with some variations in the amount of information they contain but always governed by Representation of the People legislation.

The registers are compiled by local authorities and are produced for units called 'Polling Districts' which are combined to form parliamentary constituencies. Polling districts from

different local authorities are frequently combined for this purpose. The same polling district register is used for elections of representatives at every level of government from Parish Council to European Union.



The register above indicates that it was compiled by the District of Wyre Forest and is the register for Polling District AA - Bewdley East.

Alone, or in combination with those in other polling districts, the electors listed in the example above are eligible to elect a parish councillor for East Ward of Bewdley Parish ('Wards' are the constituencies for most local government elections), a district councillor for Bewdley Ward of Wyre Forest District, a county councillor for Rock and Bewdley Division of Worcestershire, an MP for Wyre Forest at Westminster, and an MEP for the West Midland Region for the European Parliament.

In the description that follows, registers will be described in terms of (UK parliamentary) constituencies and, indeed, are bound as such at the British Library.

WHAT EXISTS

Electoral registration was introduced in 1832 and registers have been issued for each parliamentary constituency every year since then, with certain exceptions and changes to the usual pattern too various to describe here. Most notable exceptions are:

- Registration was suspended in both World Wars and there are no registers for 1916 and 1917 (1915-17 in Scotland) and from 1940 to 1944 inclusive.
- From 1919 to 1926 inclusive there were two registers a year called the 'Spring' and 'Autumn' registers. There were also two registers in 1945 and 1946; in addition to the regular registers in October, there was a special register in May 1945 for the general election and a supplementary register of service voters in March 1946.

- There were also two registers in 1868 and 1885. The January registers in both years were supposed to last the calendar year but were superseded in both cases by new registers on revised constituency boundaries in November. These registers lasted until the end of the following year and are identified as '1868/69' and '1885/86'. In all other cases up to 2001 registers are identified by the year in which they came into force even if they span part of two years.
- From 2002 to 2013 and from 2014 onwards as a result of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41), the annual 'revised' register was published on 1 December. However, the register which came into force in December 2002 was identified as "2003" and this practice has continued subsequently, so that the register which came into force in December 2012 is identified as '2013'.
- In 2013, while the publication date for the revised register remained as 1st December in Northern Ireland, the registers in England and Wales came into force on 17 February 2014 and in Scotland on 10th March 2014. With the issue of the new register on 1st December 2014 the previous pattern was resumed.

As a consequence of new regulations, most notably *Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 1871)* as amended by SI 2006/752, *Representation of the People (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 1872)* as amended by SI 2006/834 and *Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/1873)* two versions of the register have been produced since 2003:

- The electoral register usually referred to as the full version of the register contains the names of all voters and is used primarily to support the electoral process. **Public access to it is strictly controlled and the data can only be used for research purposes. This version of the register is held by the British Library**
- The open register, also known as and referred to in this guide as the edited register, is available for sale for commercial use for direct marketing, advertising, etc. It omits the names of electors who have exercised their right to opt out to protect their privacy. Some companies provide online access to searchable versions of the edited register for a fee. The edited register is not held by the British Library.

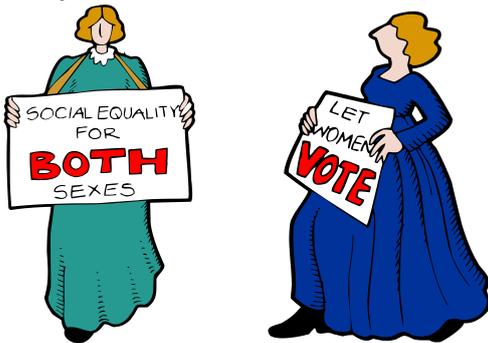
WHAT THE BRITISH LIBRARY HAS

Under the *Representation of the People* legislation, the British Library has received a complete set of electoral registers for the whole of the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) from and including 1947. From 2003 the Library holds the full, but not edited, version of the register. It also has a complete set of registers for 1937 and (except for Northern Ireland) for 1938. Apart from a few Scottish constituencies, the Library has no registers for 1932 to 1936 and 1939 and, apart from the odd London, some Northern Ireland and the same few Scottish constituencies; it has none of the four registers issued during 1945 and 1946.

For the period 1832 to 1931, only a general indication can be given of the British Library's holdings which nevertheless total some 20,000 registers - it is modest to 1885, good from then until 1915 and modest again from 1918 to 1931. A complete inventory of the British Library's holdings is listed in *Parliamentary constituencies and their registers since 1832* which also lists non-parliamentary registers (burgess rolls, juror's lists, valuation rolls, etc.) and poll books held by the Library. This book was originally published in 1998 and is continually updated. It has never been re-issued in hard copy but is freely available on the British Library website.

WHAT REGISTERS CONTAIN

Separate registers are produced for each constituency. Up to and including 2002, these listed everyone entitled to vote within them. From 2003, two versions of the register are being produced: full and edited or open. The edited version is available for sale and omits names of electors who have exercised their right to opt out to protect their privacy. Registers have always given voter's names and 'places of abode' (not necessarily whole addresses). Additional information has come and gone over the years:

DATES	DETAILS INCLUDED
1832-1948	Nature of qualification to vote.
1885-1915	Landlord's/landlady's name, weekly rent and number of rooms_ rented for people qualified to vote under the lodger's franchise.
1869-1928	Names of women ratepayers (a rarity until the reform of married women's property law), who had the municipal vote and increasingly appear in electoral registers in that capacity until they received the parliamentary vote, partially in 1918 and fully in 1928. Many other women had the vote because of their husband's profession. 
1878 -	People entitled to vote at municipal but not Parliamentary elections. Nowadays this includes peers of the realm and non-British European Union citizens.
A few years from 1918	Armed service details of absent voters.
A few years from 1945	The National Registration Identity Number was used to distinguish between two people with the same first name and/or initial at the same address.
1951-	Names of young people coming of age in the lifetime of the register (nowadays including their birthday). To 1968 they were identified with a letter prefix Y in bold.

Parliamentary registers have doubled as registers for local government elections for more than a century and some people without a parliamentary vote are to be found on the register. At present this mostly means peers and aliens who are European Union citizens. Others with a restricted franchise have this indicated by a letter prefix printed in bold: **E** or **U** for those entitled to vote only at European elections, **F** at parliamentary or European elections (not local), **G** only at local elections, and **K** or **L** at local and European elections (not parliamentary). At the end of the sequence are listed 'other voters' for the registration district, overseas voters with a franchise based on former residence. Absent voters, those temporarily absent on government service (principally in the armed services) are listed at their normal address and are no longer

separately identified but formerly they were identified by the prefix **A** or **S**. Likewise those qualified as jurors are no longer identified with a **J** and the former significance of **Y** voters is explained in the table above. Finally, a **Z** marker appearing in a copy of the full register indicates that the person does not appear in the edited version of the register. Note that use of **Z** markers is compulsory only in copies of the full register sold to government departments or credit reference agencies.

HOW REGISTERS CAN BE USED

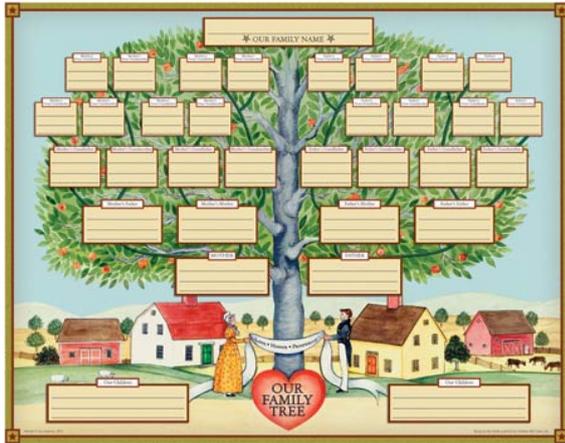
Registers can be used in legal cases e.g. to help prove “right to buy” and for criminal record checks.

unique mortgages for unique people	
RIGHT TO BUY DIRECT LTD	UK MORTGAGE LINK.com
<p>Would you like to own your own council house?</p> <p><i>We can help. Call us for further information</i></p> <p>Tel 0808 166 2342 Kingfisher House, Burnley Road, Rawtenstall BB4 8EQ</p>	 <p>No Up Front Fee's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No Proof Of Income (Self Employed) ✓ Mortgage Arrears ✓ CCJ's ✓ Ex-Bankrupt <p>Tel 0808 166 2342 Fax 0845 226 8599 www.ukmortgagelink.com</p>
<small>THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE SECURING OTHER DEBTS AGAINST YOUR HOME. YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR ANY OTHER DEBT SECURED ON IT.</small>	

They can be a treasure trove for all kinds of historical research including political and local history.



They are increasingly being used for genealogical research.



HOW THEY ARE ARRANGED

This guide is principally concerned with parliamentary registers although other registers are referred to where relevant. All the electoral registers in the British Library's collection are arranged into and by parliamentary constituency. The basic building blocks over time have changed.

Until 1918 electoral registers were compiled by parish overseers or overseers of the poor and the arrangement was at first in alphabetical order of voters, parish by parish. This began to change in 1878 when it was permitted (later required) to merge parliamentary registers with burgess rolls (the registers for municipal elections). These were effectively lists of ratepayers and, as rates were then collected door-to-door, their arrangement was in street order. Gradually parliamentary registers adopted this pattern.

Since 1918 the principal division of parliamentary registers has been the Polling District (there are currently about 35,000 polling districts). The arrangement within polling districts is normally by street in alphabetical order. Within each street properties are listed in number order. In remote rural areas where 'street' order is not meaningful the arrangement is alphabetically by voter within the smallest local government unit. This means parish or community in Great Britain or the townland in Northern Ireland. There are no alphabetical indexes of voters.

Because of these arrangements, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that **printed electoral registers are of very little use in tracing named individuals**. All the registers can do is confirm who was living at a given address at a given time, provided that they were eligible to vote. Without an address or at least a fairly precise locality for the whereabouts of the person sought, it is generally best to use alternative directories arranged by name. However family history research services such as FindMyPast and Ancestry are now adding digitised versions of historic registers to their datasets. These can be searched by personal name. This means that access is improving all the time. It is also possible to search the current (or near current) electronic versions of the **edited or open** registers by name using commercial services some of which are listed below.

Although there are no indexes to the names of voters in the print registers, some have alphabetical indexes to street names but even these have their pitfalls. Firstly, many registers lack street indexes altogether but, where they exist, they have been compiled, like the registers themselves, by local authorities. Local authority boundaries are not the same as constituency boundaries. If a constituency straddles two authorities, there will be two indexes or, if there is only one, it will only be to a part of the constituency. Equally, if two or more constituencies, in whole or in part, fall within a single local authority then, if there is a street index, it will

indiscriminately cover all the constituencies concerned. As the index cannot split, the Library binds it with the register for the constituency that comes first in the alphabet.

Thus, if 'Borchester' Council produces a street index covering constituencies of Borchester East and West, it will be bound with Borchester East; and if either constituency extends beyond the borough's boundary, streets in those parts would not be indexed. In some cases there are street indexes only to polling districts but, as the registers for these are only a few pages long and arranged by street in alphabetical order, such indexes are redundant.

ELECTRONIC VERSIONS

An increasing number of electronic versions of the edited or open registers have been made available on the Internet by a number of commercial firms. These are searchable by personal name in combination with information from other sources for a fee. The British Library does not offer this service. Moreover, family history research services such as FindMyPast and Ancestry are now adding digitised versions of historic registers to their datasets which can be searched by personal name in combination with other records such as census returns and births, marriages and deaths indexes. This means that access is improving all the time.

Please note that numerous new research tools are becoming available and expanding constantly and this guide lists just a small selection of those available. If in the course of your research you discover resource sources that you think should be added to this guide please contact us. Due to the instability of URLs the British Library cannot guarantee that the URLs will remain stable. The URLs and information provided below were correct on 22nd April 2016. The British Library neither endorses, nor can be held responsible for, any information provided by external websites.

They include:

192 com

<http://www.192.com>

This internet based service offers access to the edited electoral register from 2003 to the present, the UK telephone directories and. births, marriages and deaths indexes for England and Wales from 1837-2005 (Scotland and Northern Ireland are not included). You can search by first name, surname, street, town, county and/or post code. You can also use the database to see who is looking for you.

Ancestry: London, England, Electoral Registers, 1832-1965

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=1795>

This database contains selected annual lists of names and residences of people in London who were eligible to vote in elections. Full access is available to subscribers only.

FindMyPast

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/uk-electoral-registers-2002-2014>

Offers the current edited or open electoral register for the years 2002-2014. You can search by first name, last name, and address.. Access is available free in the British Library's reading rooms. Otherwise, although searching is free, a fee is payable if you decide to view the full records found

FindMyPast Historic Electoral Registers 1832-1932

http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/england-and-wales-electoral-registers-1832-1932?_ga=1.220636568.1420795317.1410962273

Offers 220 million records of mainly English voters from the Electoral Registers held in the British Library's collections for the period 1832-1932. You can search by first name, last name, constituency, county and keyword. Access is available free in the British Library's reading

rooms. Otherwise, although searching is free a fee is payable in order to view the full records found.

FindMyPast also offers online versions of a selection of historic county and Parliamentary borough electoral registers, including Cheshire, Manchester 1832-1900, Hampshire & Portsmouth 1835-73 and Devon, Plymouth and West Devon, 1780-1973. New datasets are added regularly.

People Trace Online

<http://www.peopletraceonline.co.uk/>

Offers access to the edited or open electoral register backed up by additional datasets. Charges vary

Peopletracer

<http://www.peopletracer.co.uk>

Peopletracer is a low cost online people tracing provider giving access to information from the open or edited Electoral Registers 2002 to date, birth, marriages and death records, telephone directories, Google maps, and the Land Registry. Charges vary.

The UK Electoral Roll

<http://www.theukelectoralroll.co.uk>

Provides searches of the edited or open UK electoral registers from 2004, alongside births, marriages and deaths indexes for England and Wales 1984-2005, consented consumer data, and UK Property Ownership data. The enhanced UK electoral register search claims to provide customers with the address of any UK individual, and the names of anyone else at the address. Charges vary

UKroll.com

<http://www.ukroll.com>

Offers data from the electoral registers from 2004, alongside births, marriages and deaths indexes, company director information, and house prices. Charges vary

IDENTIFYING THE CONSTITUENCY

Before anyone can discover whether the British Library has the register required, it is necessary to identify the constituency concerned. To do this, you must first establish the period for which registers are needed.

Since 1832 boundary revisions have taken place in 1867 (1868 in Scotland), 1885, 1918, 1948, 1955, 1970, 1983, 1995, and 2010 (implemented in 2005 in Scotland and 2007 in Wales). There was a partial revision in 1944 when seats with electorates of over 100,000 were split in two or more.

Each revision was the work of a Boundary Commission which generally published maps. The Boundary Commission reports containing these maps are available in the Social Sciences Reading Room.

Until 1948, when permanent commissions were set up to report at regular intervals, Parliament could alter Commission recommendations but generally the Commissions' maps are reliable indications of the spatial extent of constituencies. It is seldom necessary to consult the Acts of Parliament or Statutory Instruments that put the boundary changes into effect but, if required, the legislation concerned is also available on the open shelves of the Reading Room.

Using boundary commission maps

The basic procedure is to pinpoint the place sought in an atlas of Britain or a street atlas of urban areas (print or online) and compare it with the relevant Boundary Commission map to find the constituency wanted. There is a selection of street atlases on the reference shelves of the Reading Room but readers may find it more convenient to use an online source such as Google Maps at URL: <http://maps.google.co.uk/> especially for current registers. If you need to consult registers for a given area for a period that spans a boundary revision then the process must be repeated for 'before' and 'after' the revision.

This process is laborious and some of the Boundary Commission maps are hardly adequate for the purpose but it is still essential to verify the constituency one way or another as the name alone cannot be relied upon. The post-town of an address or the registration district name on a marriage certificate may be different from any constituency name of the period. Worse still, it may be the same as an actual constituency but with widely different boundaries e.g. for an address in Newport the following constituencies exist:



CONSTITUENCY NAME	DATE OF EXISTENCE	BRITISH LIBRARY HOLDINGS	BRITISH LIBRARY SHELFMARK
NEWPORT PB [Isle of Wight]	Pre-1832-85	1854, 1859-66	SPR.Mic.P.17/BL.I.15
ISLE OF WIGHT PC/CC	1832-	1865-66, 1937-38, 1947-	SPR.Mic.P.351/BL.I.14 (to 1938); BL.I.14 (1947-83); BL.I.25 (1984-95); BL.I.32 (1996-2009); BL.I.38 (from 2010)
NEWPORT PB/BC [Monmouthshire/ Gwent]	1918-83	1937-38, 1947-83	BL.W.N.1
NEWPORT EAST CC	1984-	1984-	BL.W.N.3 (to 1995); BL.W.N.6 (from 1996)
NEWPORT WEST CC	1984-	1984-	BL.W.N.4 (to 1995); BL.W.N.7 (from 1996)
NEWPORT [Shropshire]			<u>See also</u> SHROPSHIRE PC, NORTHERN OR NEWPORT Div.
SHROPSHIRE PC, NORTHERN OR NEWPORT Div.	1885-1918	1885/86	SPR.Mic.P.526/BL.S.33

Using alternative sources

Find Your MP

<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

This is a free and easy-to-use Internet service which will recognise postcodes and names of MPs or constituencies, or fragments of these. Entering a postcode in the search box under "Find Your MP" using the link from the home page of the Parliament web site at www.parliament.uk under MPs, Lords & Offices will produce both the name of the sitting MP and the current constituency.

Ordnance Survey Election Maps

<http://www.election-maps.co.uk/>

You can search for electoral boundaries in effect at May 5th 2016 for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. You can choose from a variety of administrative and electoral boundaries that can be overlaid on OS maps.

Royal Mail's Post Code Finder

<http://postcode.royalmail.com/>

If you know an address but not the postcode this service can be used to establish the full code for any address.

Identity in Britain: a cradle-to-grave atlas: online appendix

by Bethan Thomas and Daniel Dorling

http://www.sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/publications/identity/online_appendix.pdf

This contains locational maps of 1995 parliamentary constituencies and neighbourhoods, together with look-up tables of neighbourhood and constituency names and numbers, and in which constituencies neighbourhoods are located. A hard copy printout is available at the Enquiry desk in the Social Sciences Reading Room.

A Vision of Britain through Time

<http://www.gbhgis.org/>

This compilation covering 1801 to 2001 includes maps, statistics and historical descriptions. Enter the name of a town or village and then choose Units and Statistics to find constituencies associated with the town over time.

F.W.S. Craig's **Boundaries of parliamentary constituencies 1885-1972** contains descriptions of constituencies in terms of contemporary local authority areas and maps for each revision for the period covered. The maps are small-scale and outline only, bordering on diagrams, but they are often sufficient alone or together with the descriptions of constituencies it contains to identify what is wanted. Similar information for the 1983 revision can be found in Crewe and Fox's *British parliamentary constituencies* and for the 1995 revision in Rallings and Thrasher's *Media guide to the new parliamentary constituencies*. Both revisions are covered in different editions of Waller's *Almanac of British politics*, the 5th edition for the 1995 revision and earlier ones for the 1983 revisions. Dod's *new constituency guide*, 4th ed. covers the boundary revisions recommended in the 2007 Boundary Commission report for England, implemented in 2010, including maps and lists of ward changes.

The London County Council's **Lists of streets and places** provide a simple way of identifying constituencies in Inner London between 1885 and 1954. Use ; the 1900 or 1912 edition for constituencies for the period 1885-1915, the 1929 edition for 1918-48 and the 1955 edition for 1949-54. In each edition there is a column for parliamentary constituencies and this information is given for every street. In some editions, for long streets like the Edgware Road or the Old Kent Road that ran through several constituencies, house-number spans are included for each constituency.

Frederic Youngs' **Guide to local administrative units of England** in two volumes (Northern and Southern) is invaluable if you know the parish or locality you are looking for. It contains a

section of 'Parliamentary Constituencies' but please use the 'Parish' section arranged by county. This indicates the constituencies in which the parish was successively placed with dates and, if the parish was newly created or abolished, it will indicate the parish that formerly or subsequently contained it. If the constituency reference is to a sequence (e.g. Parl. Seq. 3) one must refer to the start of the county's Parish section where the sequences, used to save space when several parishes share a common history of parliamentary representation, are given. There is no equivalent to Youngs' Guide for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

You can identify parishes, among other ways, through the **Census Index of place names** (1981 ed.) or the 1973 *Municipal year book* for parishes as they existed before the local government reorganisation of the early 1970s.

FINDING THE REGISTERS

Once you have established the constituency or constituencies that you want by whatever means, then consult the online version of *Parliamentary constituencies and their registers since 1832* at

<http://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~//media/subjects%20images/government%20publications/pdfs/parliamentaryconstituencies.pdf> . This will tell you if the British Library has the registers and, if so, what are the relevant shelfmarks.

The names of the constituencies given in this list are the official names derived from the legislation establishing them or from the registers themselves with three exceptions.

- Pre-1948 constituency names took the form of 'Parliamentary County (or Borough) of', which has been abbreviated to PC or PB and inverted so that, for example, the 'Parliamentary County of Kent' becomes 'Kent PC'.
- The many counties that take their names from their county towns have always been officially called 'County of [name of town]' though less formally they are better known as '[name of town]-shire', so County of Worcester is the formal name of Worcestershire and this extends to a number of counties where the shire form has evolved somewhat (County of Chester/Cheshire; County of Lancaster/Lancashire or County of Southampton/Hampshire). In all these cases the -shire form of the county name has been preferred (Lancashire PC not Lancaster PC).
- The final exception concerns Lincolnshire (or County of Lincoln) for the period 1918 to 1948. The ancient threefold division of the county was as Parts of Lindsey, Parts of Holland and Parts of Kesteven. These divisions were made separate administrative counties in 1889 and separate parliamentary counties in 1918 and their formal names were 'The Administrative [or Parliamentary] County of the Parts of Lindsey [or Holland, or Kesteven]. Lincolnshire's Parts are not well known as Yorkshire's Ridings and unlike the latter, the parent county's name is not incorporated in that of the parliamentary county (e.g. East Riding of Yorkshire). Nevertheless, for convenience, they are entered as 'Lincolnshire, Parts of Lindsey PC' etc., even though Lincolnshire does not officially appear in their names.

As well as the online version of *Parliamentary constituencies and their registers since 1832*, there are two hardcopy printouts available in the reading room, one at the enquiry desk and one on the ERR shelves. We have not produced a printed version of the book for sale.

AVAILABILITY OF REGISTERS

All the registers listed in the 'Registers held' column of *Parliamentary constituencies and their registers since 1832* at <http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/uk-electoral-registers> are available

for consultation and extracts from most of those issued more than ten years ago can be copied subject to copyright and conservation. Other, more expensive, forms of reproduction are normally available when fragility or size of the register makes ordinary photocopying impractical.

From 2003 the Library holds the full version of the registers only. **These can only be consulted under supervision in the Reading Room and copied solely by means of hand-written notes. No form of photographic, mechanical or electronic copying is permitted by law until ten years after their publication. The law also prohibits the Library from disclosing any information from these full versions over the phone or in writing until 10 years after their publication. Data in the full register can only be used for research purposes, and not for commercial activities such as mailshots.** Enquirers needing information from registers less than 10 years old must visit the Reading Room in person.

The Library has an on-going programme of filming pre-Second World War (1832-1938) registers and registers already filmed, identified by pressmarks prefixed 'SPR.Mic.P.', may normally be consulted only on film. These have all been catalogued and can be located using the *Register of Preservation Surrogates* at <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/catblhold/all/other/other.html> as well as through *Parliamentary Constituencies and their Registers since 1832*. You will need the name of the constituency and then just add electoral to your search. The catalogue record will appear with our holdings and the shelfmark for the microfilm.

If the register is not available from the British Library, there may be other sources and this is particularly important for current registers.

Although the British Library receives new registers from the 35,000 polling districts as they are issued, the sorting and binding of these registers for permanent preservation is a year-long process. If readers want to see individual current registers they can do so at local public libraries or at the council's electoral registration office. In the light of the access restrictions introduced from 2003, enquirers should consult that office to ascertain local access arrangements for the full registers. Locations of earlier registers can be traced in Gibson's *Electoral registers since 1832-1948*; and *Burgess Rolls: a directory to holdings in Great Britain*, new ed. (2008) but, if nothing is listed there and the British Library has no copy, it may well be that no copies of the register sought survive.

ORDERING REGISTERS

Both print and microfilm versions of registers are ordered online through the automated book request system (ABRS). Please follow the instructions in <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/order/registers.html>

We strongly suggest that if you are unfamiliar with the ordering process or the registers you contact a member of the Social Sciences Reference Team. This can be done by filling in an online form that will be sent to the Social Sciences Reference Services [<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/inrooms/stp/refteam/refteam/refcontacts.html>] or by e-mailing social-sciences@bl.uk. The telephone number is 0207 412 7894. As has been explained above, the difficulties involved in establishing the name of a constituency make ordering particularly problematical.

Print registers covering years earlier than 1997 are held off site in Yorkshire; you need to allow 48 hours for delivery. Registers from 1998 to the present are held on site at St Pancras and are normally delivered in 70 minutes. Please note that only one year can be ordered per ABRS request, even if the years wanted are consecutive. All electoral registers microfilms are also kept

at St Pancras and are normally delivered in 70 minutes. They will have a microfilm shelfmark beginning with SPR.Mic.P ..., e.g. Bath SPR.Mic.P.44.BL.B.13

You can consult both print and microfilm registers in the social sciences reading room at St Pancras; they cannot be delivered elsewhere.

Jacquie Carter & Jennie Grimshaw

28th April 2016