1911 starts here!

Never mind Kate and William's wedding – the big announcement at the end of 2010 was that the 1911 Census is coming to Ancestry.co.uk. Perhaps the most exciting part of this news is that the records will be available to all our members, at no extra cost. This month, we've put the first part of the Census online, and we have important information about the rest of the records.

We know how much you want this collection, so we're working as fast as we can to make it available. To get you started while we carry out this work, we've released the **Census Summary Books for England and Wales**. These provide a useful taste of the information in the full records.

They tell you the name of the head of each household and the number of people recorded there, and also include accounts of what each neighbourhood was like with descriptions of the buildings and businesses.

We'll be releasing the full Census in stages as soon as we can. However, it will take time to transcribe all the records. Because of this, our plan is to release all the scanned page images first – as soon as we can.

These will be browsable images and will mean we can bring the entire Census to you straightaway, and crucially it won't slow down the transcription work at all.

In the meantime, you can use the Summary Books to pinpoint your family. Find the head of the household in these records, and you'll discover exactly where they were living. You can then use the browse features on the full Census to locate the same property – and see all your relatives' details. We'll show you exactly how to do this when the page images become available.

At every stage of this release, all the records will be available to all our members at no extra cost. And once the work's finished, you'll be able to locate your ancestors just as you can in our other censuses. The 1911 Census is such a crucial resource we feel you should all be able to enjoy it, and reap its benefits.

Top Tip

If you've found a family in the 1901 Census, there's a good chance they were still in the same place in 1911. So, you can use that information to either search the Summary Books, or browse the full Census when the page images are available.

Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2011

25-27 February sees the return of the biggest family history event in the calendar. So, we thought we'd give you more details of the tasty treats you can expect.

We were amazed at the popularity of the Ancestry Academy 12 months ago. The good news is, we've planned five different workshops this time, all hosted by our family history experts and packed with hints and tips to help you uncover your family's best-hidden secrets.

For those of you who are new to family history, we'll walk you through the basics – from creating your family tree to pinpointing relatives in census, birth, marriage and death records.

If you're ready to delve a bit deeper, we'll explain how you can combine parish, military, immigration and other more advanced records to piece together your ancestors' lives. Then, our third talk will look into worldwide records, from American censuses to Australian passenger lists.

We'll also have a very special workshop from celebrated actor, social history expert and friend of Ancestry.co.uk, Tony Robinson. Tony will celebrate our launch of the 1911 Census by examining what Britain was like at the time, and what kind of lives your ancestors led.

Plus, computer experts MyHistory will provide top tips on using our award-winning Family Tree Maker® software – and introduce the new features in the 2011 version.

All these workshops are completely free, and there's no need to book in advance – just come along and grab a seat. To make sure you don't miss out, check our free guide. As well as a workshop timetable and a handy map of the show, this is packed with suggestions to help you make the most of your time.

Are you looking forward to the show as much as us? Then make sure you're not disappointed. Buy your tickets now through our website to take advantage of our Special Member's Code and get 2 tickets for £25.

Top Tip

We'll have some of our most knowledgeable members on stand 616, to help answer your queries. If you can think of any areas you're having particular problems with before you come, it'll help you make the most out of your visit.

You can help!

One of our key goals is to preserve as many important historical documents as possible, and make them available to family historians in the UK and all over the world. To help with this aim, we set up the Ancestry World Archives Project, which lets you and all our members make their own contribution to family history by transcribing records.

As part of the Project, you're among the first people to see some of our most fascinating records. Plus, you get permanent free access to both the indexes and the images in any collection you help to transcribe – the indexes are then free to all our members.

Right now, our members are working hard to complete the transcription of our new Post Office Appointment Books. These records form a register of everybody employed by the postal service in the UK from 1831 up until 1969. They're obviously crucial to anyone researching ancestors who worked for the Post Office over the last 200 years, but they also provide an intriguing glimpse into an important part of our social history.

We're well on our way to getting these Appointment Books transcribed, but we'd love to make these fascinating records available to everybody as soon as possible. So, we'd love it if as many of you as possible could join the effort. Not only will you be helping to preserve an important set of records for future generations, but you'll be working alongside like-minded family historians to make it happen.

Top Tip

If you want to know more about what your ancestors did for a living, we have a wide range of records to help you out. Start with our census records then look at the variety of record collections available in Schools, Directories & Church Histories.

Have You Tried...the Card Catalogue

Last month, we showed you how to use Search All Records to find your forebears more efficiently. This time around, we'll take a look at another option for locating ancestors quickly: our Card Catalogue.

The **Card Catalogue** is designed to help you pinpoint which collections your family members are likely to appear in, before carrying out a search. It can be a huge time-saver, helping you find relatives within certain types of documents, in a specific region, during a given period in history.

The screen's split into two areas – a list of collections on the right, with categories including types of records, places and dates on the left. When you select what you want on the left, the list on the right is narrowed down. If you're looking for something specific, simply type in the Title and Keyword boxes.

If you're looking for overseas records, don't forget to untick the box that says 'Only records from the UK and Ireland'. In an instant you can use the **Card Catalogue** to narrow down searches in Canada, Australia, the USA, Europe and more.

1) Imagine you have an ancestor you know was born in Yorkshire in the 1790s. The **Card Catalogue** makes it much easier to hone in on collections that may include their birth record. In the panel on the right, click 'Birth, Marriage and Death including Parish' under 'Filter by collection'.

2) Next click 'United Kingdom', and then under Filter by Collection choose 'Birth, Baptism and Christening'. This will get rid of all the collections devoted solely to marriages and burials.

3) Now we want to narrow your results down to the correct region, so first click on England, then scroll down the list of counties to select Yorkshire.

4) The birth we want is in the 1790s. You'll see a grid of decades running from the 1600s to the 1990s under Filter By Dates – click on the 1790s. There are 32 record sets that match our criteria listed on the right.

5) At this stage, the 'Sort By' menu is handy for managing the filtered-down list of records. If you want to see the biggest collections first, choose Sort By Record Count. Or perhaps you did a search a few months ago and want to see if we've added more records – in that case choose Sort By Date Updated.

Perhaps the best collection to search for this birth is Yorkshire Extracted Parish Records, which contains 990,000 Yorkshire baptisms, marriages and burials. Thanks to the **Card Catalogue**, you can search knowing you won't have to wade through possible matches for the whole of the UK.

Ask the experts

Welcome to our Ask the experts section. This is where we answer your questions on all things genealogical, so if you have any pressing queries, send us your questions now*

Thank you for all your questions so far. If your question doesn't appear here, you can email our Member Services team at support@ancestry.co.uk and they'll help you with your research.

This month's questions are answered by professional genealogist Chris Paton and top military historian Paul Reed.

Without a trace

Q. I'm stuck. My great-grandfather Charles Robert Middleditch was born in 1839 in Saffron Walden, Essex. I can find him in the 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses, and he married Mary Ann Bunton between January and March 1860. In the 1881 Census, Mary Middleditch is shown as a widow living in Wimbish Essex.

I've searched in vain for a death or burial record between 1871 and 1881. I've also looked for emigration, prisoner and probate records, without success. I'm starting to assume that he didn't die in the 1871-1881 decade but disappeared for some reason.

Ray Grainger

A. Charles is noted in the **1871 census** as a farmer and beer seller at Potash Farm and Beer House. He's therefore likely to be listed in the **City and County directories** for Essex at Ancestry.co.uk – try to follow his listings each year from 1871 to 1881 to see if and when the listings suddenly cease. That may narrow down the date of death, or a possible date when he sold up, though bear in mind trade directories were usually a year out of date by the time they were published. It's also worth checking for an obituary in local newspapers – ask at the nearest record office.

It may also be that his death was simply missed in the **national indexes**. Contact the local superintendent registrar's offices in Essex to see if they can check the local death register for you – Radwinter will most likely be covered by the one in Saffron Walden.

Chris Paton

Ask the experts (continued)

Dad's army record

Q. I have my father's Army number and the regiment he served in and would love to chart his progress through World War I. All I know is that he went to Ireland during the uprising in 1916 and at some time he was in Belgium. Could you point me in the right direction, please? He was one of the fortunate ones and returned safely.

Kath Matlock

A. With his number and regiment, a search for your father should start with the **Military Records page** at Ancestry.co.uk. Enter his name into the Search box, and then for each set of records use his number to narrow down your search.

Very quickly, you'll be able to access his Medal Index Card to show what unit(s) he was in and what campaign medals he was awarded. You may also find that a Service or Pension Record has survived, which will show you when he served and with whom.

Service Records don't list the battles a man served in, but once you know what battalions of the regiment he was with, you can use online sources like **The Long Long Trail** to work out where he served.

Paul Reed

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