



A selective log of corporate information released in response to FOI requests 2005

1911 and 1921 Censuses

Request asked how the censuses of 1911 and 1921 could be accessed.

Information provided

The 1911 census form included the following emphatic assurance to Householders: 'The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict Care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the Preparation of Statistical Tables.

In 1966 the Lord Chancellor determined that all decennial census returns should be closed for a period of 100 years, on the grounds that they contained personal information supplied by citizens about themselves, the disclosure of which would constitute a breach of good faith. Since 1966 successive Governments have consistently maintained this position, and from 1981 onwards there has been an explicit assurance on census forms that they will remain closed to the public for 100 years.

In a debate in the House of Commons held on 29 March 2004, the Minister at the Department of Constitutional Affairs reaffirmed that, in the Government's view, a closure period of 100 years strikes the right balance between the access interests of family historians and the right of citizens to have the personal information about themselves in their census returns kept confidential. As he explained, 'the Government believe that maintaining the security and confidentiality of the information that citizens supply about themselves in their census returns is of paramount importance. It is strongly in the national interest that public confidence in these confidentiality assurances is maintained'.

Now that the FOI Act has taken effect, the National Archives will be mindful of this most recent restatement of government policy when it considers requests for access to information contained in the 1911 census returns, in consultation with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as the transferring department. Consultations have taken place on the specific enquiries received to date, and it has not been possible to release the information that has been sought on the grounds that the exemption (section 41) relating to information provided in confidence applies.

Censuses from 1921 onwards were taken under the provisions of the Census Act 1920. This legislation prohibits the release of personal information by the Registrar-General, those under his control or those supplying services to him without lawful authority. The census returns from 1921 onwards which are in the custody of the Registrar-General for England and Wales are, as a consequence, exempt information under Section 44 of the FOI Act relating to information prohibited from disclosure by or under any enactment.

Date of disclosure: 25 May 2005

Vehicle insurance

Request asked various questions about the vehicle insurance The National Archives takes out under the Road Traffic Act 1988

Information provided The National Archives does not own any vehicles so it does not require insurance policies for this specific use.

Date of disclosure: 5 September 2005

Security in the The National Archives' reading rooms in Kew

Request asked a series of questions about security in The National Archives' reading rooms in Kew and any changes to security that have been considered since several documents in two files were alleged to be forgeries. Request also asked about the internal investigation and whether the police had been involved.

Information provided Each reader is permitted to take into the Reading Rooms up to 20 sheets of loose paper and a notepad, up to A4 size. Should a reader request an exception for a specific purpose, there is a facility to allow this, subject to permissions being granted on the day. No bags are allowed in the research areas, other than the clear plastic bags issued by TNA. No outdoor garments are allowed within the reading areas. No files or folders are allowed, and any reader taking in an official document which could be confused with a 'record', is issued with a receipt for ease of recognition. Any such documents are required to be declared prior to entry to the reading rooms. Such permissions may be refused. Further details on our reading room rules, can be found at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/plan/rules

...Every reader is checked, both on entry and exit. This involves a physical check of all documents, papers etc in their possession. The Head of Security prepares a bi-annual report for TNA Departmental Security Committee and Management Board on all aspects of site security, including attempted thefts. Reports of such incidents are prepared by security staff at the time, identifying clearly the perpetrator. These reports are filed and referred to should further incidents occur, to identify any trends, or problems with a particular reader.

...The files containing the alleged forgeries were not microfilmed.

... The issue of a stamp [the request referred to the practice at the US National Archives where material taken in and out of the archives by users is stamped with an official archives stamp] is under consideration. However previously a stamp was considered but rejected as readers were concerned about their (personal) documents being stamped. This issue is currently covered by the receipt system.

Date of disclosure: 31 August 2005

Access to information in the 1911 census

Request for information in the 1911 census pertaining to two addresses in Birmingham.

Information provided Unfortunately, all of the information that you are looking for is covered by an exemption. This means that we are unable to give you any of the information. Details of which exemption we have applied and why are set out below.

The section 41 exemption has been applied to all of the information you seek in the 1911 census returns. This section exempts information obtained from any other person if its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person.

Unfortunately we are unable to release information in the 1911 census because Decennial Census returns contain personal information supplied by citizens about themselves, the disclosure of which would constitute a breach of good faith. The 1911 census form contained the following emphatic undertaking to Householders: "The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons'. Since 1981 there has been an explicit assurance on census forms that they will not be released to the public for a period of 100 years. The 1999 White Paper on the

2001 census clearly stated that 'it is not intended that ...proposals for a Freedom of Information Act should affect the current period of closure for census records'.

If the Government were suddenly to reduce the closure period of 100 years in relation to the 1911 census, this would result in a reduction of public confidence in the explicit assurances given by the Government that later census returns will be closed for 100 years. The Government believes that a closure period of 100 years strikes the right balance between the access interests of family historians and other researchers and the right of citizens to have their personal information kept confidential. As a Department for Constitutional Affairs Minister explained in the House of Commons on 29 March 2004 'the Government believe that maintaining the security and confidentiality of the information that citizens supply about themselves in their census returns is of paramount importance. It is strongly in the national interest that public confidence in these confidentiality assurances be maintained'

All requests to view information contained in the 1911 census returns will be considered on a case by case basis. However, we should make you aware that none of the requests received so far under the FOI Act has been granted, because the S.41 exemption, relating to information supplied in confidence, has been applied. In addition, the Minister at the Department of Constitutional Affairs has recently reaffirmed, in a written parliamentary answer, that it remains government policy to make census returns publicly available after a period of 100 years (Hansard, 12 July 2005, 869W).

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm050712/text/50712w07.htm#50712w07.html_sbhd2

In accordance with the 100 year closure period that applies to census returns, the National Archives is developing plans to make the 1911 census available online to a worldwide audience in the year 2012.

Date of disclosure: 5 September 2005

Documents retained by department

The Catalogue refers to certain documents being "Retained by Department under Section 3.4". Request asked what this means.

Information provided "Retained by Department under Section 3.4" in the Catalogue means that the record has been kept by the responsible government department or agency under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958 (rather than transferred to The National Archives).

There is a copy of the Act on the TNA Website at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy/act/act.htm>

A government department may wish to retain a record after it is 30 years old for several reasons, the two most common reasons being (1) the record is still required by the department for administrative use or (2) the presence in the record of sensitive material. In such a case the department must apply for the Lord Chancellor's approval, and the application is scrutinised by the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives in the United Kingdom. If retention is approved, the record is shown in the Catalogue as 'Retained by Department under Section 3.4'.

This part of the Public Records Act was not repealed or altered by Freedom of Information legislation. However, you have the right under FOI legislation to request access to the record from the government department that is retaining it.

Date of disclosure: 23 September 2005

Internal records management

Request for information about how The National Archives administers the disposal of its own internal information.

Information provided Like other government departments, The National Archives has its own Departmental Records Officer with responsibilities for our internal records. I fulfil that role. I also have a Client Manager, with whom I liaise about the appraisal and transfer of records from our own file store to the archives (in the classes PRO, HMC and RW). Records are selected for permanent preservation by the Client Manager (in agreement with the Departmental Records Officer) in line with TNA's Acquisition Policy and usually by use of the Operational Selection Policies that are derived from it. Unfortunately, the records created by TNA and its predecessor body (the Public Record Office) do not yet have an OSP. However, the Acquisition Policy and a list of OSPs created to date can be found at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/>

Much of my team's recent work has been focussed on the implementation of our Electronic Records Management system. Hence there has been a pause in the review of paper records whilst we have concentrated on the new system and methodologies. This now means that we have two parallel systems in place, and I have a variety of documentation to illustrate what we do.

Paper file review

The official "registered" files of The National Archives are recorded on a database. This records files created before 2003. The screen shot below gives you an indication of the information recorded.

TNA Registered Files Database

File Ref: 2/ED 101.10.6 File ID: 15431 DESTROYED

Cycle: 2 Series: ED File Number: 101 10 6

Title: ADMINISTRATION : REGISTRY : ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

Nominated Officer: FLORA CROWHURST
Section: INFORMATION AND RECORDS C
Requesting Officer: DAVID MATTHEW
Protective Marking: (none)
Location: (See Notes)

Open Date: 24/03/1998
Closed Date: 15/04/1999
Loan Date: []

Notes: Destruction approved, after review, by PRO Client Manager

1st Review due: []
2nd Review due: []
Review Decision: []
Review Action: Destroyed
Action Date: 23/06/1999
PRO Class: []

Part	Part Title (optional)	Open Date	Closed Date
1		24/03/1998	
*			

Loan Date	Return Date	Borrower	Location

Form View FLTR NUM

This is the main finding aid for files, but it only has limited space for notes. Additional information about review decisions have been recorded on review forms such as **2ED**

Destruction Recommendations.pdf. The reviews were normally carried out on a file-by-file basis, and recorded as such.

A more complete form would bring all the information into one place, which would facilitate answering external enquiries such as yours. **Blank review list template.doc** is the form I have passed to colleagues for some work in progress.

Electronic file review

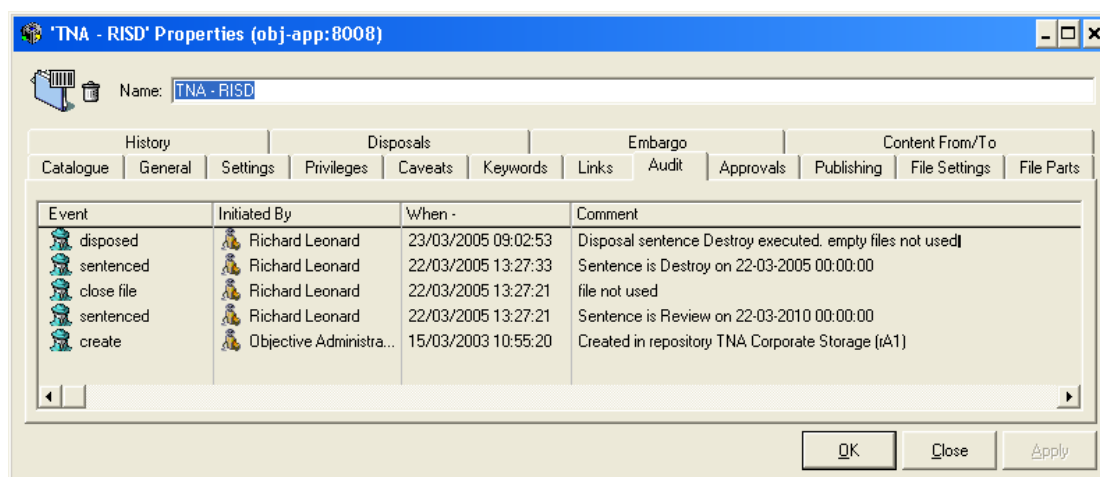
Much work has been done since the closure of the file **Administration: Registry: Electronic Documents and Records 2/ED/101.10.6**, cited above.

The National Archives now uses an electronic records management system (ERMS) to manage its electronic files. This combines storage in one system. However, disposal of a Word document does not necessarily mean that the information about the record is removed from the system. Hence it should be easier to report on records that are no longer held.

Emerging practice about the review of electronic files is moving away from the file-by-file review of records. Macro-appraisal of whole sets of files can make the process more manageable, although a risk assessment must be carried out when using this method to ensure that the risk of destroying records that are historically valuable and preserving records that are not is minimised. We designed our file plan on a functional basis, grouping files into activities such as Outreach or Financial Management. Decisions can then be applied to several files at one time, perhaps reflecting business needs for outreach work, and legal requirements for financial information. The system still uses the idea of a file, or container, to group several documents, eg spreadsheets. We are not using file in the MS Windows sense.

The file plan was designed in 2002, and actually started being used in 2003. With such a new system there is very little that is due for disposal. However, a review of the file plan revealed several files that were no longer necessary. These empty files were then closed, as a mock disposal exercise. The file **F0004921 Objective reports.pdf** shows a couple of the reports that are possible.

The audit trail for the individual files can give more information, such as the comment at the top of the list "Disposal sentence Destroy executed empty files not used", indicating that a number of files were processed at the same time.



You can also see that this is a multi-stage process. The file has to be Closed, Sentenced, and then that sentence Executed. Other sentences include Review, or Archive.

These different states mean that reports can be produced at various stages, for instance for consultation with our Client Manager.

Other supporting files sent to enquirer are located in Objective ID ref: A831895

Date of disclosure: 1 November 2005

Web archiving programme

Request asked a series of questions about our web archiving programme

Information provided:

We do very much aim to preserve the original archival order of the websites we collect - as you say, we believe that this is the best way to ensure that they can be viewed in their original context. All our websites are catalogued under the ZWEB lettercode. Within this are 7 series, corresponding to the 7 thematic clusters we use for selection (e.g. ZWEB 1 is Defence and Foreign Policy). Each website is catalogued as a subseries within this. Every snapshot of that website is then catalogued as a piece within that subseries (e.g. ZWEB 1/14 is the snapshot of the Ministry of Defence website from 3 November 2003. We do therefore arrange the websites by their provenance, although the series level is an artificial distinction, and we do tend to separate the websites from other records produced by those departments. It may be useful to read our selection policy for websites, which is available at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/ospintro.htm>.

...The majority of our sites are collected through a contract with the Internet Archive, and collected at either weekly or six-monthly frequencies. In both cases, all sites on the list are collected in a single crawl (e.g. all sites on the weekly list are collected in one weekly crawl). This does create a single ARC file for each crawl. We may also collect specific sites using other methods, in which case we will simply crawl that site. In fact, there is no problem with having sites split between multiple ARC files, and this is quite normal. The Wayback Machine software we use retrieves the files from the relevant ARC file using an index which is maintained for the whole collection.

... We do catalogue down to the level of the individual snapshot. However, if a website had several subdomains, these would be treated as a single snapshot and given one catalogue reference.

... 'Cabinet Office (4 sites) means that we collect four different websites, all owned by the Cabinet Office. They are collected and catalogued as separate sites, but would be collected in a single crawl

... Pages means website snapshots, so '2003: 6' pages means that we have six different snapshots of the same website from 2003. This part of the archive uses the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine software, so it is difficult for us to change the terminology.

... We apply our standard catalogue metadata, which is based on ISAD(G) and EAD. We currently collect very little metadata at the level of the individual snapshot, although we are investigating the collection of more detailed metadata.

...TNA is using a version of PANDAS for some of its web archiving, through the UK Web Archiving Consortium (www.webarchive.org.uk). We have changed the subject headings to suit the needs of the UK, but the majority of government websites are catalogued under the heading of "Government & Politics", with sub-categories such as "Central Government" and "Local Government". We were very constrained in the categories we could create for two reasons: firstly, the PANDAS software places limits on the number of levels of subcategory, and on the number of terms within each category, and secondly, as a consortium which involves both libraries and archives, we had to find a compromise which would meet everyone's needs. Ideally, we would have created sub-categories to reflect the thematic clusters I mentioned in 1 above, but this was not possible.

Date of disclosure: 19 December 2005