

The 1851 Census in Emsworth

The population census taken on the night of March 30th 1851 in Emsworth has now been completely transcribed from the original enumerators' sheets. A preliminary report appeared in last year's Echo. It is now possible to examine easily various aspects of life in the village at that time.

I realise that the census shows details of only one day in the life of Emsworth, but it is surprising how much this snapshot in time, over 150 years ago, can reveal. I hope in later editions to generate reports about different aspects of Emsworth life in 1851, and I also hope that others will come to the Museum to study the data and perhaps write about points of interest which their survey uncovers, maybe for inclusion in a subsequent edition of the Echo.

The data have been listed under the various headings: Surname, Age, Occupation, Birthplace, Address and so on. So one can travel along a street seeing who lived in each house and looking at the details of each family and what they did. It is unfortunate that there were no house numbers in 1851 but one hopes that the census enumerators were methodical and worked along each side of the street systematically.

In the Museum, Emsworth Paper No.3, "Emsworth Square in 1840", written by our archivists, details the names of the people living and working around St Peter's Square in 1838. It would be easy to extract a list of heads of households from the 1851 census, and compare them with the 1838 names to see what may have changed and who was still living and working in the same building thirteen years on.

A surname search reveals names from Adams to Young; ages range from newborn babies to a 92 year old. It is possible to see the proportions of the population who were young or old, working or in school, trades people, employers or employed. One can imagine how healthy (or not) life in Emsworth was. (In 1901, the census for the whole of England revealed that only 5% of the population was over 65.)

Trust members who are doing their own family history research can now look up a surname, find out details about the rest of the household and go on to see who their neighbours were. This gives more 'feel' to the family than a dry list of names and dates would do.

The trades and professions are listed on the census, from bakers and blacksmiths to doctors and rectors, so it is possible to get a lively view of the village as it was in 1851.

The railway came to Emsworth in 1847 and there are three Railway Porters, a Railway Gatekeeper and a Railway Station Clerk listed in the 1851 census. Three of the five men lived in North Street so they were not far from their workplace, the railway station.

I append a short report about the oldest inhabitants of Emsworth in 1851. I hope that this illustrates how easy it is to create a short story from about 2,300 people's details. (It took about ninety minutes.)

The oldest inhabitants

A quick look at the three areas covered by the Emsworth census:

Area 3a

The oldest male was John Allen aged 84; he was a retired Agricultural Labourer living in Havant Road with his daughter and son-in-law, John Ladd, who was a Gardener. (ref. 13/6)

The oldest female was Martha Lellyat aged 84; she was classed as an Annuitant, living in Leigh with one servant. (ref. 18/5)

Area 3b

The oldest male was William English aged 86; he was a Greenwich RN Pensioner living with his wife Jane (55) in North Street. (ref. 3/9)

The oldest female was Elizabeth Chatfield aged 92; she was classed as an Annuitant living with her daughter, Elizabeth Warne (55), who was a Painter employing three men; they lived in Queen Street. (ref. 27/8)

Area 3c

The oldest male was Thomas Brookes aged 90; he was a Pipemaker, now in receipt of Parish Relief and living in Orange Row with his daughter and son-in-law, John Barter, a Weaver. (ref. 7/17)

The oldest female was Kate Byrn aged 85; she was a Stay Maker who was visiting Thomas Cluer and his unmarried daughter, Elizabeth who was a Stay Maker too. They lived in St Peter's Square. (ref. 29/5)

The references are to the sheet/line numbers on the original data.

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