

Registration and Census Districts

1852 – 1946

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In 1831 England and Wales were divided into registration districts, which formed the divisions upon which the schemes of general registration and census enumeration were based. The first figure relates to the General Register Office indexes, and gives the searcher some idea of the general area in which his subject may be found. From 1837, when the general registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced, each district was allotted a numeral. Until 1851 Roman numerals were used; in 1851 the boundaries of the districts were redrawn, and they were renumbered using Arabic numerals. They remained unchanged until 1946.

The two general registration maps provide a useful aid to name distribution surveys from G.R.O. indexes and for use with the census returns of 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881.

In carrying out research in the period before general registration began, genealogists and demographers must have recourse to parochial records. A series of maps has been compiled by the Institute for each county on which the ancient parochial boundaries are shown, along with the dates of commencement of the registers and the area of probate jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts before the establishment of the Principal Probate Registry. All maps have been updated to 1983. An atlas containing all the parish maps for England and Wales along with comparative topographical maps and an index to parishes and sources has been published. Individual maps (which have also been produced for Scotland), and the atlas are available from the Institute.

The information from which these maps have been drawn was obtained from parochial incumbents, archivists, record offices and local experts. To these and all who have worked so generously to make this series of maps as useful and reliable as possible the Trustees of The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies are most grateful.

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