

Electoral Registers
at
Sheffield Local Studies Library

Note many electoral registers for England and Wales, 1832 - 1932 and 2002 onwards, are available online at www.findmypast.co.uk



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Electoral Registers

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Introduction

The electoral registers (also known as electoral rolls, voters' lists and sometimes as burgess rolls) list everyone who is entitled to vote in local and national elections, but it is important to remember that people have not always had the right to vote. Before 1832 only large landowners could vote. In counties a voter had to be a resident possessing a freehold worth £2 a year – this figure had been fixed in the 15th century when £2 was a substantial sum. In towns the borough franchise varied but generally only a minority, often just the mayor and corporation, could vote. The Reform Act of 1832 extended the vote in boroughs to all occupants of houses valued at £10 a year. This extended the franchise but still excluded many people. (Sheffield did not become a borough until 1843). Further Acts of 1867 and 1884 extended the vote to householders and occupants of lodgings worth £10 a year unfurnished, if they had lived in one place for 12 months and did not receive poor relief.

Women were excluded completely until this time, but in 1867 many women householders claimed the right to vote and tried to register; some were placed on the register but most were excluded. Two years later, in 1869, single and widowed rate-paying women were given the right to vote for municipal councils, and later for county councils. No women were allowed to vote in parliamentary elections.

In 1918, after the First World War, the vote was extended to all men aged 21 and over, and all women aged 30 and over. In 1928 men and women were enfranchised on the same terms i.e. both had the vote at 21. In 1969 the right to vote was extended to all aged 18 or over.

The principle of 'one person, one vote' did not come into force until after the Act of 1948 (see Glossary). People who occupied business premises worth more than £10 per year had an extra vote or votes if the premises were in a different constituency from their residence.

The Sheffield Electoral Registers

The Sheffield electoral registers up to and including 1879-80 are in alphabetical order within electoral wards. After 1880-81 they are arranged by parliamentary constituencies, sub-divided by wards, and then by polling districts. This arrangement continues to the present day. The layout can be complicated for searchers by the fact that some streets can be divided between different polling districts, different wards, and sometimes even different constituencies. One part of a street may be in one polling district, another part in a second and another in a third. Before the First World War each ward usually had an index at the beginning listing which streets it covered and on which pages the streets appeared. Women who qualified to vote were listed separately so a reference, for example, to Industry Road in 1886/87 reads:

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NAME OF STREET	NAME OF POLLING DISTRICT	PAGE
Industry Road	Darnall	71-73 85

The page 85 reference is for the women who could vote and the pages 71-73 to the men.

It is not always obvious which ward is likely to cover a particular street; the quickest method is to try the most likely first then, if you do not find it, work through the others. Sometimes a street is not where you might expect to find it. When boundary extensions brought the Norton/Woodseats area into Sheffield it was at first put into Heeley ward, which might be expected, but Heeley ward was then in the Attercliffe constituency, which might not be expected. Later Woodseats was in Park constituency, again unexpected. Now it is of course in Heeley constituency. We have ward maps for 1843 and 1901 on display in the Local Studies Library.

For indexes to post-1918 registers, see below.

To qualify for voting before 1918, a voter had to live in, or own, property of sufficient value for a year. If a voter moved during the electoral year, his right to vote could be carried forward to his next address. This would be indicated in the next register with a note 'house successive' and the previous address would be given. This did not work forwards – if he then moved on to another address the electoral register does not tell you where he moved to if you only have the old address. After 1918 as the franchise was no longer property based, this helpful note was dropped.

The layout of post 1918 entries sometimes gives a clue to family relationships. Usually, as with the census, the head of household (and first listed) would be the husband or father of the family, so with some entries it can be guessed (but not confirmed) that the names are listed in order of husband, wife and (adult) children, but there would be many exceptions to this, e.g. brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, lodgers etc. Since the advent of databases for sorting material this layout has been abandoned, and the names are usually listed alphabetically, regardless of age, gender or relationship. One clue to the ages of the younger voters is that nowadays anyone who reaches the age of 18 during the year in question will have their birth date given after their name e.g. if a date of (28/5) appears after a name this means that the person could not vote in any elections held up to 27th May of that year, but could vote on or after 28th May.

From 1878 to date, and (inconsistently) for some of the earlier years, each voter has been given an identification number, which changes annually, and which appears before his/her name. This should not be confused with the house number which appears after the name.

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Indexes

After 1920 finding which street appears in which constituency, or ward, or polling district can be very difficult, and the helpful street index given in pre-1918 registers no longer appears. Instead, at very long intervals, a separate street index was sometimes published, and we have indexes for 1934, 1953, 1968, and intermittently during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Of course there is a long gap between some of these indexes, and in the intervals new streets were built, ward and polling district boundaries could change or be renamed, or wards could be moved from one constituency to another. In the worst cases sometimes the only way to find a street is to trawl through the whole of a constituency. Within polling districts the streets are arranged in alphabetical order. Nowadays, and since 1989-90 the index gives two identification letters (e.g. JA for Muskoka Drive), and this also tells you which ward and constituency it is in (Ecclesall ward in Hallam constituency). The lists are bound with these identification letters in alphabetical order so finding a street in the modern lists is very easy.

What the electoral registers can tell you

The people registered to vote at a given address.

Sometimes, from the layout you can guess family structure, but not since the entries started to appear in alphabetical order.

Who qualified for jury service – this has been dropped in the modern lists and everyone qualifies. Over 70s are now exempt.

What the electoral registers can't tell you

If you only have a name, where (i.e. at which address) someone is registered.

No automatic entry. If a person qualified to vote does not return the registration form, no entry is made.

No one under 18 (21 before 1969) is listed, unless someone comes of voting age during the year (see above). No indication of ages, except in recent registers those coming up to 18 years old.

When people move – no list of where they have moved to or from. (See above and Glossary for the note on 'house successive').

Gender of registered people can only be guessed from the names.

Elections were not held during both world wars, so there are no lists 1914-1918 or 1940-1945. There are no 'Absent Voters' lists for Sheffield. (See Glossary)

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Some people deliberately do not return their electoral registration forms and therefore do not appear on the registers. It is believed that at the time of the Community Charge (Poll Tax) (1980s to 1990s) many people did not send in their registration forms so that they could avoid the tax.

Glossary

Absent Voters

During both world wars, no elections that needed a vote were held in Sheffield. (One unopposed by-election was held). Though there is a list of absent voters for parts of Sheffield, dated 1918, at the Local Studies Library (MP 1746 M). Absent Voters lists may exist for some other areas where local elections were held during wartime.

Acts of Parliament

1832 – Representation of the People Act
'First Reform Act'

In Boroughs gave the vote to £10 householders.

1867 – Representation of the People Act
'Second Reform Act'

In Boroughs gave the vote to all occupiers of dwelling houses rated to poor rates, lodgers occupying £10 lodgings.

1884 – Representation of the People Act
'Third Reform Act'

A uniform lodger and household franchise in effect giving the vote to every man over 21 who had a 'decent settled home'. Residence in one place for twelve months was required.

1918 – Representation of the People Act *and* Parliament
(Qualification of Women) Act

Men qualified at 21, women at 30. The residential qualification period was reduced to six months.

1928 – Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act
Women enfranchised at 21.

1948 – Representation of the People Act

University constituencies and all plural voting, and the residential qualification abolished.

1969 – Family Law Reform Act

Voting age reduced to 18

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Dates of Birth

Appear in brackets after a voter's name – this indicates date and month when voter reaches the age of 18 and is entitled to vote.

House Successive

If a voter moved during the electoral year, his right to vote could be carried forward to his next address. This would be indicated in the next register with a note 'house successive' and the previous address would be given.

J

Indicated that the voter was also eligible for jury service. At one time this was predominantly men, now everyone on the list qualifies, although those aged over 70 are exempt. There is however no indication of age on the register.

Qualifying Dates/in force from

Qualifying date is the date by which registrations had to be received by the elections office. For many years this was the 10th October preceding the date of currency of the register e.g. to be on the register commencing 1980/81, the voter had to be registered before 10th October 1979. This practice has recently changed, and voters may now register at any time, but they may not appear on the printed lists until later.

Places originally outside Sheffield

Area	Date transferred to Sheffield	Historic electoral registers at held at
Batemoor	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Beauchief (part)	1901	Derbyshire Record Office
Beauchief (remainder)	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Beighton	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Birley	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Birley Carr	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Bolsterstone	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Bradfield	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Bradway	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Chapelton	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Deepcar	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Dore	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Ecclesfield	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Firth Park	1901	West Yorkshire Archives
Frecheville	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Gleadless (part)	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Gleadless (remainder)	1967	West Yorkshire Archives
Greenhill	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Grenoside	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Hackenthorpe	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Halfway	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Handsworth Hill	1901	West Yorkshire Archives
Handsworth (remainder)	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Hemsworth	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
High Green	1974	West Yorkshire Archives

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Area	Date transferred to Sheffield	Historic electoral registers at held at
Hillsborough (part)	1901	West Yorkshire Archives
Intake	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Jordanthorpe	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Loxley	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Malin Bridge	1901	West Yorkshire Archives
Meersbrook	1901	Derbyshire Record Office
Mosborough	1967	Derbyshire Record Office
Norton (part)	1901	Derbyshire Record Office
Norton (remainder)	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Oughtibridge	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Parson Cross (part)	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Parson Cross (remainder)	1967	West Yorkshire Archives
Richmond	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Rivelin Valley	1914	West Yorkshire Archives
Shiregreen	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Southey	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Stannington	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Stocksbridge	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Tinsley	1912	West Yorkshire Archives
Tinsley Park	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Totley	1933	Derbyshire Record Office
Wadsley	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Wadsley Bridge	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Wharnccliffe Side	1974	West Yorkshire Archives
Wincobank	1901	West Yorkshire Archives
Woodhouse	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Woodseats	1901	Derbyshire Record Office
Woodthorpe	1921	West Yorkshire Archives
Worrall	1974	West Yorkshire Archives

Record Offices holding electoral Registers for Places originally outside Sheffield

West Yorkshire Record Office
Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield, WF1 2DE *Note due to move in early 2017.*

Tel: 01924 305 980

e-mail: wakefield@wyjs.org.uk

Website: www.archives.wyjs.org.uk

Note that the electoral registers for the West Riding, 1840-1962 area available online at www.ancestry.co.uk

Derbyshire Record Office
New Street, Matlock, DE4 3AG

Tel: 01629 538 347

e-mail: record.office@derbyshire.gov.uk

Website: www.derbyshire.gov.uk

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<p>For 70,000+ images of Sheffield: www.picturesheffield.com</p>	
	<p>www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives</p>
	<p>www.twitter.com/shefflibraries</p>
	<p>http://shefflibraries.blogspot.co.uk/</p>
	<p>www.flickr.com/photos/shefflibraries</p>
	<p>www.youtube.com/user/SheffieldArchives1</p>
	<p>www.facebook.com/shefflibraries</p>