

Brightlingsea census 1831

Essex appears to have an unusually high number of surviving pre-1841 census compared to other counties. The censuses from 1841 onwards are very useful for genealogists as they contain the names of all household members, whereas pre-1841 censuses do not - the 1831 census only has the name of the head of household, with numbers of people in each household. It can still be useful – you will see that the census shows occupations and areas of work, and includes servants.

The Brightlingsea 1831 census was conducted on 31st May 1831, and consists of 13 numbered pages, however, page 6 appears to be missing, unless the pages were incorrectly numbered and 7 follows directly from 5. The writing is relatively clear. In transcribing it, there were two surnames where the first letter wasn't too clear – these appear at the top of the list of names, which have been put into alphabetical order. The page on which each entry appears has been added to the transcribed census so that you will know where to look should you decide to consult the original (either by visiting ERO in person, or by ordering a photocopy).

Format of the 1831 census

From left to right, there is a column for “street or place” – throughout the Brightlingsea census, only the town's name is given. Street names are not included. The next column contains the head of households' names, followed by the number of families in that household. In a couple of cases, where two families are in one household, both names are given (James Briant & Jas Fisher in one case, and in the other, Mary Noble & Brooks). The Poorhouse & Workhouse appears in the census – although inmates' names are not given, I have included it in the transcription anyway.

There are then thirteen questions – the number corresponds to the column heading on the transcribed PDF.

Houses:

1. Number of Inhabited Dwelling Houses.
2. Now Building and not yet Inhabited.
3. Uninhabited.

4. FAMILIES OCCUPYING SAME. Employed in and maintained by – Agriculture; Trade, Manufacture, or Handicraft; Not comprised in either of those Classes.

5. Persons, including Children (of whatever age) actually in the Parish, Township or Place at the time of taking the Account, exclusive of Men actually serving in H. M.'s Regular Forces, the Militia; Seamen in H. M.'s Service, or the registered Vessels. (this is expressed in the transcription as, for example, 1m, 1f, which of course means, one male, one female).

6. Number of Males upwards of 20 Years Old.

Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 refer to “males upwards of 20 years old.”

7. Employed in Agriculture, including Graziers, Cowkeepers, Shepherds, and other Farm Servants, Gardeners (not Taxable as Male Servants), and Nurserymen.

1st: Occupiers of Land who constantly employ and pay one, or more than one Laborer or Farm Servant in Husbandry.

2nd: Occupiers of Land who employ no Laborers other than their own Family.

3rd: Laborers in Husbandry, and Farm Servants employed by Occupiers of the First Class.

This is transcribed as, for example, "3rd: 1", where there is one marked in the column for 3rd.

8. Employed in Manufacture, or in making Manufacturing Machinery; but not including Laborers, Porters, Messengers, &c.

9. Employed in Retail Trade, or in Handicraft, as Masters, Shopmen, Journeymen, Apprentices, or in any capacity requiring Skill in the Business, not including Laborers, Porters, Messengers, &c.

10. Wholesale Merchants, Bankers, Capitalists, Professional Persons, Artists, Architects, Teachers, Clerks, Surveyors, and other educated men, including generally, Persons, maintaining themselves otherwise than by manufacture, trade or bodily Labor.

11. Miners, Fishermen, Boatmen, Excavators, Roadmakers, Toll-collectors, or Laborers employed by persons of the three preceding Classes, or otherwise employed any kind of bodily labor, excepting in Agriculture.

12. Not being Taxable Servants, under the next Question 13, and not included in any of the foregoing Classes, and including retired Tradesmen, superannuated Laborers, and Males diseased or disabled in body or mind.

13. Household Servants, including all Female Servants, and such Male Servants, of whatever Age, as are Taxable as such; also Waiters and Attendants at Inns. – Males, upwards of 20 Years of Age. Males, 20 Years of Age and under. Females.

This is transcribed as, for example, 1f, meaning one female.

If you wish to consult the original of this census, it is held at Essex Record Office, ref: D/P 312/18/3.