

## Commentary on the Census of April 1911 for the Parish of Congresbury with Wick St Lawrence.

The Census was taken on the night of Sunday April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1911. A few weeks later, on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1911, King George V and Queen Mary, of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, were crowned. To commemorate this the City of Bristol Education Committee issued a certificate to all pupils.



The chocolate manufacturers Frys of Bristol produced a blue presentation tin of with sepia portraits of the King and Queen containing chocolate replicas of the insignia of the Royal Houses of Europe.



A year later the King and Queen visited Bristol, where 2500 school children formed a living British flag. This was a world that was largely soon to vanish for ever – and the census gives us a glimpse into that world. The information it contains is comprehensive, covering such things as name, age, family structure, occupation, address, number of rooms in the dwelling and number of males and females in the dwelling. In all there were 1002 residents, including Visitors, recorded in the Parish of Congresbury with Wick St Lawrence, excluding those who lived in Hewish. They were living in 237 households.

Two Heads of Household were not resident in Congresbury at the time of the census. One, a farmer, was in hospital (Thomas Franklin of The Causeway). I have been unable to trace the whereabouts of the other, George William James Chandos Bruce, Marquess of Ailesbury, but his two daughters, Lady Ursula aged 5 and Lady Rosemary aged 4, and three servants, lived in Cadbury House. (He had succeeded his father in the marquessate on the latter's death on 10 March 1911).

Approximately one third of the households had 4 rooms or less. Of these, 2 residents lived in one room, 5 households lived in 2 rooms (including 2 married couples), 15 households lived in 3 rooms and 55 households in 4 rooms (of which 35 households had between 4 and 9 people living in four rooms). These smaller dwellings were scattered throughout the village, and the people who lived in them earned their living through manual labour, with the exception of two pensioners.

Most of the village was clustered around the rectangle of roads formed by High Street, Broad Street, the Causeway and Brinsea Road between the Church and the Plough Inn. To the south there was some scattered development along Brinsea Road with clusters of buildings along Venus Street and Brinsea Batch. To the north Kent Road was still the main Bristol Road, with development along it as far as Wrington Lane. All households were in houses or cottages – except for Edward Britton, a Licensed Hawker, and his wife Annie who had parked their caravan on Brinsea green.

The National Library of Scotland has an on-line resource of 25-inch OS maps for 1902.

Much of the village is shown on:

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/106018919>

Kent Road is shown on:

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/106018895>

King's Wood on:

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/101460448>

and Iwood on:

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/101460460>

Walking around the village in 1911, two major differences would have quickly become apparent. The buildings were surrounded by orchards, and the village was served by railways – to the west Bristol and Exeter's Cheddar Valley Line, and to the south the Wrington Vale Light Railway to Blagdon. These lines met at Congresbury railway station. As well as the dominant orchards, villagers in the 1970s remembered watercress beds earlier in the century where the Millennium Green is located. The old road bridge over the river had yet to be replaced, and three of its arches have been built into the boundary wall west of the Cross on Broad Street.

At least 2 blacksmiths and 4 butchers had businesses at their homes in the village. There were also a Post Office, corn merchants, a cycle agent, a wheelwright, a mason and plumber and 6 pubs and inns – The Plough; The Ship and Castle; The Railway Inn (now Mediterranean); The Bell Inn (now demolished, replaced by Tesco and housing); The Star Inn and The White Hart. Arthur Smith, the Certified Elementary School teacher from Bristol and his wife Bessie from Bridgwater – an uncertified teacher – lived in the School House. Police Constable Ernest Greedy from East Quantoxhead lived in Glen Yeo Terrace, as did the Station Master James

Braund from Watchet. The Vicar, and Chair of the Parish Council, Rev. Robert Maunsell-Eyre, originally from Kilmallock in Limerick, lived in the Vicarage with his wife and two of their three surviving children. (The child mortality rate in Congresbury was startlingly high. Of the married couples, widows, and widowers in the census area 75 had a deceased child – one family had lost 6 children).

I have sorted the 1002 residents into 10-year age bands. The numbers in each age band both as a total and percentage of the population are:

Age range	0 – 9	10 – 19	20 – 29	30 – 39	40 – 49
Number (& %age of total population)	199 (20%)	180 (18%)	167 (17%)	111 (11%)	124 (12%)

Age range	50 – 59	60 – 69	70 – 79	80 – 89	90 +
Number (& %age of total population)	103 (10%)	76 (8%)	30 (3%)	10 (1%)	2 (<1%)

The number of residents in each age band over 60 falls dramatically. This is in line with a national life expectancy in 1911 of less than 60.

One in five of the parish population was under 10. Just less than 2 in 5 was under 20 while 55% of the population was under 30.

The census return requires householders to declare illness or infirmity in the family. Five individuals are listed, one lame, one deaf, one a “cripple from birth” and a 21 and 14 years-old brother and sister suffering from paralysis.

Many of the villagers listed in the Census seem to have left by 1918. This was the year in which the vote was given to all the males over 21 and they are listed in the 1918 Electoral Register. The Census and Electoral Register boundaries are not quite the same but are close enough to provide useful comparisons. Of the males living in Congresbury aged 13 or over in 1911, 160 of them are listed in the 1918 electoral register; but 186 are not (this includes the ten who were living in the village in 1911 but who lost their lives in the First world war). 141 voters appear on the Electoral Register who are not listed in the 1911 census. While these figures are subject to transcription and recording errors in both the Census and Electoral Register, nevertheless they are substantial enough to point to significant movement in and out of the village

This is also reflected in the number of residents who were born in the parish. Sixty four percent of the under nines, fifty-four per cent of the ten to nineteens and thirty six percent of the fifty to fifty nines were born in the census area.

Age Range	Percentage of inhabitants in each 10 year range born in Congresbury
0 - 9	64%
10 - 19	54%
20 - 29	39%
30 - 39	37%
40 - 49	35%
50 - 59	36%
60 - 69	25%
70 - 79	40%
80 - 89	30%
90+	50%

**Age distribution of the inhabitants of Congresbury in 1911 born in the village as a percentage of each age group**

The percentage of residents born in the village fell as the population ages. As children left school aged 12 it is possible that they began to leave the village during their teens, with the exodus accelerating during their twenties. Additionally, several young unmarried women moved into the village to work as servants.

So it was a young population and more than half was under the age of 30. The workforce was largely made up of men or unmarried women. Of the 468 residents earning an income, 125 worked in agriculture and 57 were servants. There was no doctor living in Congresbury.

Some residents listed in the census are clearly identified as Farmers and others are farm workers of one sort or another. It is impossible to make a distinction between the two groups as some relatives of a Head of Household are listed as "Farmer" in the census return and others as "Worker" or "Helping on the Farm". I have therefore incorporated all those engaged in farming into an aggregate total – 125 in all. Out of these a total of 33 were Heads of Household who gave their occupation as "Farmer" or "Farming". Presuming that they farmed where they lived, this may give an indication of the number of farms in the village. The 33 are as follows:

First names(s)	Family name	Sex	Approx. d.o.b.	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Postal Address
William	Atwell	M	1878	33	Married	Farmer	Bossy Tree farm
Thomas	Osmond	M	1847	64	Single	Farmer	Brinsea
Charles	Cavill	M	1870	41	Married	Farmer	Brinsea
Joseph	Sweeting	M	1842	69	Married	Farmer	Brinsea

Howard	Kingcott	M	1886	25	Single	Farmer	Brinsea Batch Farm
John	Alvis	M	1886	25	Married	Farmer	Brinsea Farm
George	Court	M	1852	59	Married	Farmer	Cadbury Farm, Yatton
Sidney H	Atwell	M	1871	40	Married	Farmer	Chestnut Farm
John Vowles	Edwards	M	1864	47	Married	Farmer	Church farm
Alice Catherine	Virgo	F	1859	52	Widowed	Farming	Clarence Cottage Kent Road
George	Norton	M	1850	61	Married	Farmer	Honey Hall
Ernest H	Bennett	M	1868	43	Married	Farmer	Honey Hall Farm
Mary Ann	Willett	F	1841	70	Widowed	Farmer	Iwood
James William	Harding	M	1866	45	Married	Farming	Iwood
Edward John	Edwards	M	1863	48	Married	Farmer	Iwood Manor
Oliver R	Porter	M	1852	59	Married	Farmer	Land Farm Yatton
Frederick	Green	M	1844	67	Married	Farmer	Mill Tree Farm
George	Ball	M	1849	62	Married	Farmer	Oak Farm
John	Harris	M	1842	69	Widowed	Farmer	Park Farm
William Yeates	Edwards	M	1859	52	Married	Farmer	Pineapple Farm
George	Cavill	M	1874	37	Single	Farmer	Poplar Farm
Joseph	Macey	M	1835	76	Married	Farmer	Rookery Farm
Francis	Parsons	M	1850	61	Married	Farmer	Rose Tree Farm
Frank	Browning	M	1871	40	Married	Farmer	Silver Street
Emma	Hardwick	F	1837	74	Widowed	Farmer	Silver Street Farm
Harriet	Wear	F	1858	53	Widowed	Farmer	Stonewell Farm
Wilfrid	Atwell	M	1885	26	Married	Farmer	The Causeway
<i>Ellen</i>	<i>Franklin*</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>1884</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>The Causeway</i>
Mary Ann	Harris	F	1847	64	Widow	Farmer	The Elms
Jessie Mary	Edwards	F	1888	23	Single	Farming	Urchinwood Wrington Road
George	Hancock	M	1873	38	Married	Farmer	Venus Street
Charles	Franklin	M	1847	64	Married	Farmer	Venus Street
Arthur	Martin	M	1874	37	Married	Farmer	Walnut Tree farm

*\*Wife of Thomas franklin who was in hospital*

Of the one hundred and twenty-five residents who worked on farms 58 (46%) were born in Congresbury. One hundred and fourteen (91%) were born in Somerset. The age distribution of these agricultural workers is shown in the table below.

Agricultural workers: age distribution	Total	%age of farming workforce
12 - 19 years	22	18%
20 - 29 years	33	26%
30 - 39 years	20	16%
40 - 49 years	12	10%
50 - 59 years	20	16%
60 - 69 years	13	10%
79 - 79 years	3	2%
80 - 89 years	1	1%
90 years	1	1%

The second largest group of workers were servants. Fifty-seven people worked in this sector; 75% of these were under 30.

Servants: age distribution	Total	%age
12 - 19 years	18	32%
20 - 29 years	25	44%
30 - 39 years	6	11%
40 - 49 years	5	9%
50 - 59 years	2	4%
60 - 69 years	1	2%

Nine of the 57 servants had been born in Congresbury: most had been born in Somerset (including Congresbury).

<b>Servants: Place of birth</b>	<b>Total</b>
Somerset	33
Bristol	4
Cambridgeshire	1
Wiltshire	2
Oxfordshire	1
Lincolnshire	1
Gloucestershire	5
Middlesex	1
Aberdeenshire	1
Devon	1
Not recorded	2
Worcestershire	1
Austria	1
Wales	2
Staffordshire	1

In total 33 households employed one or more servants and only two servants were married - one a cook and the other a housekeeper. They were, of course, all individuals who had a story to tell; but for some the 1911 Census is the only time that they clearly occur in any record. For example, the first two addresses in the Census that had servants were The Elms and Brinsea House. At the Elms 16-year-old Nellie Kimmins worked for a 64-year-old farmer, Mary Ann Harris, who was widowed, and her 30-year-old son, also a farmer. They were the only occupants of the 11-room house. I was unable to find any record of Nellie either before or after 1911.

At the second address, Brinsea House 35-year-old William Young, an “Art manager colour printer” lived with his wife, Annie, two infant sons and two servants, Kate Huish and Elsie May Kimmins. Kate was 15 and a Domestic Nursemaid. She was born in Hambrook, Gloucestershire, and in 1901 was living with her father Charles, a dairyman, and mother Eliza. She was one of 4 children, of whom 3 had survived. In 1911 her 20-year-old brother Sidney worked as a labourer in a market garden in Winterbourne while her 18-year-old brother Sidney was a market gardener, also in Winterbourne. In 1921 Kate was living at Wycliffe School, Victoria Road, Clevedon, Somerset, England where she worked as a domestic help to the Principal, Miss A. M. Dunford.

Elsie May Kimmins was an 18-year-old servant and had been born in Brinsea. Her parents had 10 children of whom 8 survived. In 1911 her father, an invalid – formally a waggoner – and mother, a charwoman, lived in Hewish. Elsie married Ernest Brooks in 1915. In 1921 she was living in The Row, Worle, with her husband, who was a builder’s labourer; 3 children aged 5, 2 and 1; her brother-in-law, a self-employed tea dealer; her sister and her infant niece and nephew.

In 1921 Kate and Elsie’s employer, William Young, had moved to 6 Oakland Road, Redland, Bristol with his wife and two sons. He was working for Esta Robinson Ltd. Bristol, Manufacturing Stationers.

Perhaps one of the more intriguing individuals working as a servant was Pauline Poonenger, aged 23 from Vienna. She worked as a cook in the household of the Marquess of Aylesbury at Cadbury house. Again, there is no record of her before or after 1911.

The table on page 8 gives a breakdown of the occupations of all of those who earned a living. While it is possible to speculate about jobs that may have taken people out of the village – commercial traveller, haulier, “Public Worth Contractor Agent”, Midshipman – there are only two, a teacher at Colston School, Bristol and a marine engineer that may have involved a commute to work in the sense that we know it now. For most, the village was their home and place of work, although as we have seen within a few years many will no longer be living in the village.

Classification of occupations	Total
Farming	125
Servant	57
Retired	22
Gardener	20
Great Western Railway	17
Butcher	15
Private Means	15
General Labourer	13
Dressmaker	12
Carter	11
Baker and Confectioner	11
Labourer	10
Corn Merchant	7
Publican	7
Mason	6
Mill Hand	6
Post Office	6
Laundress	5
School teacher	5
Blacksmith	4
Market Gardener	4
Uncertain	5
Apprentice	3
Baker	3
Charwoman	3
Clerk	3
Domestic duties	3
Errand Boy	3
House Decorator	3
Plumber	3
Quarryman	3
Work at home: sewing?	3
Chimney sweep	2
Coachman	2
Grocer	2
Haulier	2
Miller	2
Roadman	2

Classification of occupations	Total
School assistant	2
Stonemason	2
Timber merchant	2
Woodman	2
Bailiff	1
Carrier	1
Clergyman - Vicar of Parish	1
Commercial traveller	1
Cycle agent	1
Dealer	1
District Nurse	1
Domestic Worker	1
Drainer	1
Drapers Assistant	1
Insurance Clerk	1
Licensed Hawker	1
Marine Engineer	1
Marketer	1
Midwife	1
Motor Mechanic	1
Music Teacher	1
Night Watchman	1
Nurse	1
Pedlar	1
Plasterer	1
Somerset Constabulary (P.C.)	1
Printer	1
Public Worth Contractor Agent	1
Sack and Bag Repair	1
Sewing Woman	1
Shop Assistant	1
Smith	1
Tailoress	1
University student	1
Wallpaper stencilling	1
Washerwoman	1
Wheelwright	1
Wood Fitter	1
Working on own account at home	1



Two categories in the table need some explanation. "Uncertain" refers to relatives of the Head of the Household whose occupation was described as "Domestic". It is not clear whether they were paid or not. "Domestic Duties" covers relatives of the Head of the Household described as, for example "Housekeeper", but again it is not clear whether they are paid or not.

Only 16 married women worked. Two were teachers, two were publicans, four worked in their husband's business (2 farmers, a market gardener and a baker), one was a cook in service with her coachman husband. Two were dressmakers, one took in laundry, one was a tailoress and these all worked from home. Others were a "marketer" and domestic workers working away from their home address.

The 16 married women in paid employment were only 9% of the 183 married women in the census area. One hundred and eighty-three married couples out of a population of over one thousand may seem a relatively low proportion. At the time marriage could take place at the age of puberty (considered to be 14 for boys and 12 for girls), subject to parental permission up to the age of 21. In fact, no-one under the age of 22 was listed as "Married". Almost 7 out of 10 of residents aged between 20 and 29 were unmarried, but one of the largest occupation groups in this age was, of course, servants – who were largely young single women. The proportion of unmarried villagers falls to almost 3 in 10 for those between 30 and 39 and to less than 1 in 10 for the over 50s.

The 1911 Census gives a snapshot of the percentage of female residents in each of our age bands:

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Total number of inhabitants in 10 year ranges*</b>	<b>Number of Female inhabitants in 10 year ranges</b>	<b>%age of Female inhabitants in 10 year ranges</b>
0 - 9	199	96	48%
10 - 19	180	77	43%
20 - 29	167	84	50%
30 - 39	111	54	49%
40 - 49	124	77	62%
50 - 59	103	53	51%
60 - 69	76	40	53%
70 - 79	30	16	53%
80 - 89	10	6	60%
90+	2	1	50%

Generally, females were outnumbered by males in the younger age groups. Looking at data for the whole of England three statistics stand out:

- i. Since 1838 roughly 105 male births have been recorded for every 100 female ones (Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46597323>)
- ii. At the time of the census life expectancy for women was 54, and for men 50. (Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/jan/13/socialtrends-family>).
- iii. Women could expect to live 3.9 years longer than men. (Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/articles/howhaslifeexpectancychangedovertime/2015-09-09>).

Additionally, the census data makes it possible to work out how old a mother was when her child was born. The figures for the Congresbury 1911 census area are:

Mothers' approx. age at birth of child	Number of births
50 - 60	3
45 - 49	8
40 - 44	40
35 - 39	79
30 - 34	102
25 - 29	106
20 - 24	47
19	2
N/A	24

**Mothers' approximate age when giving birth to a child (each individual mother may be represented more than once)**

N/A: Not Available, i.e., the mother's age cannot be calculated as their child's age is not given.

The higher ages may indicate mistakes in recording census details or women taking responsibility for the child of a younger person.

Finally, a small group of children living in the village present a puzzle. Aged between the ages of 2 and 13 they were listed as "Lodgers" with families to whom they do not seem to be related. There are two 2-year-olds; two sisters aged 3 and 12; two sisters aged 8 and 10; a 5-year-old boy and a 5-year-old girl; two 9-year-old boys and a 13-year-old girl who was still at school. Where their place of birth is recorded 3 are from Bristol, 2 from Axbridge, 2 from Weston-super-Mare, 1 from Nailsea and 1 born in Gloucestershire. How such small children came to be lodging with strangers is, at the moment, a mystery.

Richard Baker: July 2022