

My Life in Seven Censuses

This is a summary of where I was living and what I was doing when the census enumerator came to call.

23 April 1961

This is one of only two censuses where I appear as part of a complete family unit. I am living in a three-bedroomed terraced house at 28 Sundridge Road, Addiscombe, Croydon with my parents. Recent censuses ask about central heating and I believe past ones have included questions about radio ownership. At this point, we do not have central heating, although we do have both radio and television, as well as a fridge. I am about to start my



second term at Tenterden School. I am a little hazy about when my father moved from job to job but he is working as a projectionist and I think, has just started working for Associated Electrical Industries. My mother is probably doing freelance book-keeping at home. I will shortly be going for a week's holiday to Bognor. I have just been given my second tortoise, Emma.

25 April 1971

I am a stropky teenager and am just about to return to Croydon High School after a term off having broken my wrist and ankle. Breaking both at once means that I haven't been able to use crutches. School is two bus rides away and involves many flights of stairs, so attendance isn't practical whilst I am in plaster. At least, that's what I am claiming. I am studying for eight O levels (this will reduce to seven after my absence, although actually I learn better at home than I do at school). Whilst I

am home from school, I am volunteering at the nursery school up the road; the first of many voluntary jobs involving children that I will take on. I am also recovering from a severe bout of flu, leading to my weight dropping to under six stone. I have just met my first 'proper' long-term boyfriend.

By this time, my father has died and my mum and I are living in a two bedroomed maisonette at 3 Parkfields, Shirley, Surrey. Thus, the census shows no record of my living at what I regard as being my childhood home, 57 Firsby Avenue, Shirley. We had solid fuel central heating at Firsby Avenue but now have electric, oil-filled radiators.

Mum is working, both at home and in the office, as a book-keeper for the instrument makers Negretti and Zambra. In a month's time, I will be working in the restaurant at Crystal Palace Athletics Stadium at weekends; a job that was short lived. An important member of our family is our dog, Sparky but she won't appear on any official document.

5 April 1981

I have been married for nearly eight months and I am living in my first home of my own; a three-bedroomed Victorian terrace, 31 Cross Street, Sandown, Isle of Wight. We have gas central heating. Although I have had a colour television for nine years, we have reverted to black and white to save the license fee. I am working as a school secretary and my husband is a civil servant for the Customs and Excise Department. Censuses are keen on asking about



qualifications, so I will record that, at this point, I have seven O levels, three indifferent A levels and a Diploma of Higher Education in history and sociology (DipHE was a short-lived and fairly meaningless qualification that was the equivalent to two years of degree level study). I am working to convert this into a full degree through the Open University. I am looking forward to starting a family and I am just about to go on holiday to Guernsey.

21 April 1991

My second and last census as a complete family unit and a short stay living in Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire has slipped between the enumerators' nets. Now I am in the 'forever' home at 12 Ranelagh Road, Lake, Isle of Wight. This is a detached three-bedroomed house with a two-bedroomed flat in the basement. We now have gas central heating, a washing machine and a freezer but the television is still black and white. Both my daughters feature in this census as school children. I have completed my honours degree and also have a Further & Adult Education Teachers' Certificate Parts I & 2 (City & Guilds).



I am teaching genealogy evening classes and doing free-lance research. My husband is still with the Customs and Excise but is now commuting daily to Portsmouth to do so. My mum has moved to a bungalow round the corner.

I have learned to drive so the household has a car to record in the census for the first time (my dad's short spell as a car owner fell between two censuses).

I am actively involved with Isle of Wight Family History Society, running their bookstall and library. I am also the Honorary Education Liaison Officer for the Federation of Family History Societies, traveling to Birmingham for the meetings. I am a governor at my daughters' primary school.

29 April 2001

I am still at the same address, the first home to appear on two censuses. We finally have a coloured television. I am now a widow; one daughter is at university and the other is on the roll at the local High School.

My short stints as a lecturer for The Open University and a school dinner lady have come and gone. I am working part time teaching history in a private faith school, with a handful of pupils. I will later also teach geography and law, as well as taking on a role as school bursar. I am also working as a relief special needs classroom assistant, which I love.

I have added to my qualifications with a Part 2 certificate in Genealogy and Heraldry from the Institute of Heraldic & Genealogical Studies.

I am still involved with Isle of Wight Family History Society and also the Braund One-name Society as their historian and editor.

27 March 2011

Now I have relocated to Devon and downsized drastically to live alone in my current seventeenth century cottage. It has three bedrooms but two are little more than box rooms, a tiny garden compared to the 250 foot that I have left being and central heating fed by an oil-powered Rayburn.



The intended early retirement has certainly not happened. I have now spent nearly eight years in a job I must not mention online and have been promoted to a position of responsibility. I work occasionally as a traffic census enumerator. I am also enjoying working as a seventeenth century historical interpreter for a local tourist attraction. Living where I do, my lecturing opportunities have greatly expanded. I volunteer for

Devon Family History Society and the Braund Society. I have also completed my PhD. Both my children are now married. I have begun to travel abroad regularly; later this year I will visit Australia.

My daughters and sons in law are staying at my house on census night, in preparation for my mum's funeral the following day. [Although I have put a note to this effect with my form, I didn't include them as visitors. I have no idea why, perhaps I had already filled it in.]

21 March 2021

Again a home appears in two censuses, although this one is now sporting an additional conservatory, giving me 35% more downstairs space. I am still living here by myself, although due to COVID, I have a 'bubble'. I have not seen my family, which now includes three grandchildren, for six or seven months. There are no holidays on the horizon.



I have had two more promotions in the job I must not mention but this is currently greatly reduced due to the pandemic. I am still giving family and social history lectures to a worldwide audience, although this is being accomplished virtually at present and this is keeping me busier than ever. Following the closing of the tourist attraction for which I was working, five years ago, I went free-lance as an historical interpreter but my colleagues and I haven't been able to present in person for over a year.

I am now chairman of Devon Family History Society and also of my local history group and I continue to work for the Braund Society. I am a published author of both fiction and non-fiction.

What will 2031 bring?