

LIVERPOOL RECORD OFFICE

ELECTORAL REGISTERS AND POLL BOOKS

INFORMATION LEAFLET - 7

We hold electoral or voters' registers for Liverpool only, for every year from 1832 – 1914, 1918 – 1939 and 1945 to the present. We also hold some poll books from the 1730's to 1850's.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Liverpool returned two members of parliament intermittently from 1295 and consistently from the 1540's. The parliamentary borough consisted of the town until 1832 when its boundaries were extended to include Kirkdale, Everton and parts of West Derby and Toxteth Park.

In 1868 redistribution of seats increased representation to three members of parliament and the boundaries were further extended to include Bootle cum Linacre, Fairfield and part of Wavertree.

In 1885 redistribution divided the parliamentary borough into nine divisions. Anfield was added but Bootle and Linacre went into the new Bootle division of Lancashire.

In 1918, Walton, Fazakerley, West Derby, Knotty Ash, Wavertree, Childwall, Woolton, Allerton, Mossley Hill, Aigburth, Grassendale and Garston were added. The city was then divided into eleven divisions – its highest ever number.

In 1950, Speke, Gillmoss and Croxteth Park were added. However, falling population resulted in the number of divisions gradually reducing to five by 1997.

VOTER QUALIFICATION

The right to vote was severely restricted before 1832. Boroughs had various systems for electing Members of Parliament. Overall, approximately one per cent of the population was entitled to vote.

The Representation of the People Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884 gradually extended the right to vote to more and more of the male population, although it was always based on the ownership or tenancy of land of a specific value. Despite these changes only about 58% of adult males were registered as electors as late as 1911. In 1918, the vote was given to all men aged 21 and over and to women aged 30 and over. In 1928, all women of 21 years of age and over were given the vote. The final major change came in 1969 when the voting age was reduced to 18.

Those mainly disqualified from voting have been convicted prisoners, lunatics, peers, peeresses (except 1918-1963), paupers (pre-1918) and policemen (before 1887).

Women are sometimes recorded in the registers before 1918 in connection with ownership of property and the right to vote in local government elections rather than parliamentary elections.

ELECTORAL OR VOTERS' REGISTERS

These lists are compiled annually since 1832 of persons entitled to vote. No registers were compiled 1916 – 1917 and 1940 – 1944 inclusive. Before 1918 they include the nature of the qualification of each person which entitled them to vote. Draft registers were compiled at which stage anyone might object or appeal.

From 2003 there is a full register and an edited register. The former includes all electors, whilst the latter includes only those who agreed for their details to be widely available. Different conditions of access and copying apply.

We hold no separate series of Absent Voters Registers for the First World War. However, absent voters will be included in the ordinary registers, listed at what would be their usual address, but noted with an 'a' for absent.

HOW TO ORDER THE REGISTERS

The registers from 1832 to 1899 and an ever increasing number of later registers are available on microfilm only.

Use the separate request slips provided specifically for these registers. You can order up to three years of registers at a time. Remember to include an address, including a house number if known, because for most years there are several volumes. There is some alphabetical arrangement by name in the earliest registers. From 1880 onwards they are not arranged alphabetically by surname but by streets within polling districts.

Members of staff will use street indexes to the registers to locate the relevant polling district for you. Sometimes the indexes, which were made at the time, are incorrect or omit certain streets. Staff will try to assist but a longer search in relevant sections may be necessary.

The more recent registers, those from 1970's onwards, are available on the open shelves.

POLLBOOKS

These are lists of electors giving the name of the candidate for whom each elector voted. They ceased to be produced after the Ballot Act, 1872.

We hold some copies for parliamentary elections 1730's – 1850's and municipal and mayoral elections 1820's- 1850's. They are listed in detail in the Local Studies Catalogue under 'Elections'. They are stored in the Rare Books sequence.

PHOTOCOPYING

Photocopying of the original registers from 1832 to 1969 cannot be permitted because of the unacceptably high level of wear and tear, although copies may be taken from those on microfilm. Photocopying of the full register from 2003 is prohibited by legislation, but the edited register can still be photocopied.

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