



Electoral Registers/Rolls

(also known as registers of electors)

Background

Electoral registration in the modern sense began in 1832 when the Great Reform Act was passed. The county clerk was required to make lists of those eligible to vote by parish every year.

Not everyone was able to vote until 1928 and qualification was based on property ownership or tenancy. The level for qualification changed many times, including 1867, 1884 and 1918, so the number of people on the register increased. In 1918 the franchise was extended to cover every man over the age of 21 and women over 30. In 1928 the franchise was extended again to include women over 21. In 1970, the voting age in the UK was lowered to 18.

Electoral registers are sometimes referred to as electoral rolls and are part of the Quarter Sessions administrative records.

What information do they contain?

The lists give the name of each individual, their home address and the property which gave them the qualification to vote (this may not be where they lived). There is a lot of variation in the amount of detail so sometimes a specific house number and street is recorded, but in rural areas often only the village name is included. Generally later registers are more detailed.

A register was produced for each electoral district or constituency. The entries within each register are arranged by civil parish or ward. Early registers are arranged by surname. In urban areas this quickly changed to a listing by address

The information in a register was valid for a year and the date is given at the front of each register. Like today, information about people eligible was collected in the previous year.

What original registers exist and where are they held?

- Gloucestershire Archives holds electoral registers for the Gloucestershire Constituencies **1832-1915** (with some gaps).
- Between **1918 and 1974 Cheltenham** electoral registers are held at Cheltenham Local Studies Library. Cheltenham registers. Registers from **1975 onwards** are held at Gloucestershire Archives
- From **1974 onwards** *most* Kingswood, North Avon and **South Gloucestershire** registers are held by the South Gloucestershire Electoral Services (tel:01454 863030). (Gloucestershire Archives holds the Kingswood registers for 1974-1987 and for South Gloucestershire 1983/1984)
- For all other districts Gloucestershire Archives hold registers from 1918 onwards
- If you are interested in a register after 2006 please contact Gloucestershire Archives to check whether we hold the register you want to see.
- No electoral registers were produced between **1916 - 1918** and **1940 - 1945** inclusive, because of the world wars.

- There are **no separate absent voter's lists** for Gloucestershire districts. These are lists of people who needed a postal vote because they were away from home with the army. These entries are mixed in with the general register. Absent voters are denoted by an A.

How to access registers held at Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Library

- Electoral registers up to and including 1974 held at Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Library have been digitised and indexed by Ancestry www.Ancestry.co.uk. You can view them for free via Ancestry's website from Gloucestershire Archives or any Gloucestershire library, or from home with an Ancestry subscription.
- Electoral registers from 1975 onwards, including those for the city of Gloucester, held at Gloucestershire Archives must be ordered from the strongrooms. They are held under the catalogue reference Q/RER. To order a register you will need to know the district you wish to see along with the year.
- You can find the catalogue references you need by searching our online catalogue. A search by Q/RER* will find all the electoral registers we hold. You can sort your results hitlist by date. Alternatively, you can do a more specific search using the "advanced search" option: search by reference Q/RER* using the district as keyword.
- As electoral boundaries changed frequently, many parishes switched electoral districts over the years. Please contact us for more information.
- You will not be able to take copies of registers less than 10 years old; however you can make hand written notes.

How to access the current Electoral Register

The current electoral register can be viewed at the relevant District Council Offices

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| • Cheltenham Borough Council | 01242 264132 |
| • Cotswold District Council | 01285 623009 |
| • Forest of Dean District Council | 01594 812626 |
| • Gloucester City Council | 01452 396203 |
| • Stroud District Council | 01453 754886 |
| • Tewkesbury Borough Council | 01684 272025 |

Is there any similar information available before 1832?

Before 1832 the names of voters were listed in Poll Books and these were produced for individual elections. They record the details of the electors (name, place of residence and place of the qualifying freehold) and the name of the candidate for whom they voted. To find these, search the online catalogue for the term "Poll Book". Some are held under the reference Q/Rep.