

Gibraltar Censuses

18th, 19th and 20th Centuries:

Historical Account

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Censuses give a fascinating insight into aspects of Gibraltar's history. The details recorded afford glimpses of how Gibraltar's population arrived in Gibraltar and how it grew and developed.

A number of lists were drawn up in the early 18th century for a variety of purposes: the Spaniards who remained in Gibraltar after its capture by Britain in 1704; the rents payable to the Governor of Gibraltar in 1712; the number of able-bodied men capable of bearing arms in 1725; and so on. However the earliest Census of the whole civilian population to have survived is that of 1753, four years after the creation of a civilian administration of Gibraltar under the newly-appointed Civil Secretary. The results were: British 414; Genoese 597; Jews 572; Spaniards 185; Portuguese 25. The civilian population numbered 1,793.

By 1767, the Census classified the population in three categories by religion: British Protestants; Roman Catholic and Jews. That was to remain the standard classification for the rest of the 18th century. The 1767 figures cover the civilian inhabitants "within the walls or out at Landport". The Landport was the gate facing the isthmus joining Gibraltar to the Spanish hinterland. The total civilian population was then 2,710: 467 Protestants; 1,460 Roman Catholics and 783 Jews.

Ten years later, in 1777, the Census became more complex. Not only were entries listed under the three religious categories, the population was now divided into "Natives" and "Not Natives". The total figure then was 3,201 of whom 506 were Protestant (all of "British Blood"), 1,832 Roman Catholics (all except 13 of whom were of "Alien Blood") and 863 Jews (all of "Alien Blood"). 1,334 of the inhabitants were natives.

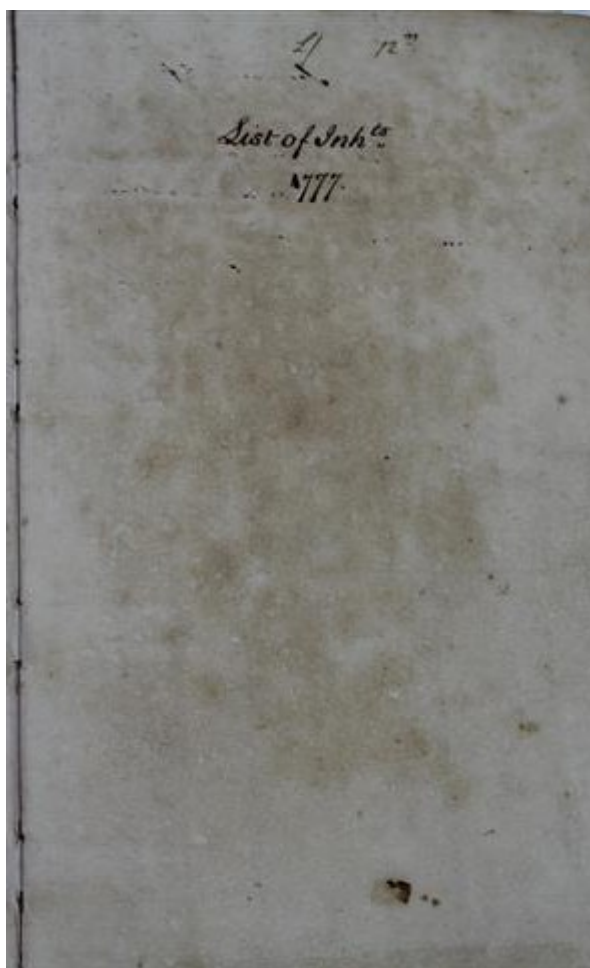


Figure 1. The cover of the 1777 List of Inhabitants.

The original 1777 list has survived. It was taken at General Boyd's command in February. Perhaps the most interesting category is that of the Roman Catholic inhabitants, as it lists the country of birth of each person, as follows:

English and Irish – 13

Minorkeens* - 62

Natives – 845

Genoese and Savoyards – 672

Potugueze* - 93

Spaniards – 134

French – 13

*These are the spellings of the original list.

List of the Inhabitants of Gibraltar, taken by General Boyd's Order in February 1777.

		Total.
British or Protestant Inhabitants	Natives	220
	Not Natives	286
		506.
Roman Catholic Inhabitants	English and Irish	13
	Minorkeens	62
	Natives	845
	Genoese Savoyards	672
	Portuguese	93
	Spaniards	134
	French	13
		1832.
Jews	Natives	596
	Strangers	267
		863.
		Total . . . 3201.

Figure 2. Summary of the 1777 List. There was a distinction between "British Blood" and "Alien Blood", as well as between "Natives" i.e. born in Gibraltar and those born elsewhere.

The 1777 Census contains an alphabetical listing of all the inhabitants by religion – first British and Protestants, second Roman Catholics and third Jews. The information recorded per person was: surname, first name, age, country of birth (and hence the nationality of the person), occupation, years in the Garrison of Gibraltar and remarks. The Scots today would probably object to the description of their country as recorded in 1777: North Britain. This

was the result of the rebellions in the North that resulted in the elimination of the name Scotland from all official documents.

Some of the occupations recorded are quaint: there was one oysterman, there were mantua makers, hucksters, sutlers, patrons (i.e. boat skippers), soil carriers (i.e. persons who removed human and animal waste), lamplighters, lime burners and a "Teacher of the Italian". The remarks column shows that the Census was updated as a record of the population after the Great Siege of 1779-1783, when it was necessary to know how many people of those who left during the Siege had returned. Thus, there are snippets of information such as

"Dead", "gone and returned", "Kill'd by a shell", "Deserted during siege to the Enemy", "Tak'n Pris'r by the Span'ds", "order'd away", "flogg'd out for rape".

Perhaps one of the most fascinating details is the commencement of the list of the Jewish inhabitants of 1777. It reads:

Aboab Isaac	65	born: Tetuan	Merchant	57 yrs in Gibraltar
Aboab Hannah	50	born: Gibraltar	Wife	-
Aboab Simha	28	born: Tetuan	Wife	15 yrs in Gibraltar

This detail shows the ambiguity surrounding the implementation in Gibraltar of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 between Great Britain and Spain, which granted Gibraltar to Great Britain in perpetuity. The Treaty provided that there should be no Jews in Gibraltar. Therefore, the English law which forbids bigamy was not applied to the Jews, as they technically were not in Gibraltar.

The next count recorded was in 1787. The population had then increased by 185 to 3,386, of whom 512 were British Protestants, 2,098 were Roman Catholic and 776 were Jews. Within four years, however, there was a sharp drop in the population. Civil Secretary John

Raleigh issued the following Notice, dated 8 February 1791, in both English and Spanish:

The Governor thinking it proper that a correct list of the present inhabitants and Residents in the garrison shall be immediately made out; Therefore the Inhab'ts and residentaries of every country and class are hereby required to send into this Office forthwith the names and numbers of each house, family and habitation, including children, servants, tenants, undertenants and lodgers, distinguishing their age, place of nativity and occupation, term of residence and by what Governor or Commander in Chief's permission each foreigner came here.

September 12th 1791

British	Men	160	}	---	364
	Women	117			
	Child ⁿ Male	48			
	Female	39			
					410

A. Cath. ^c	Men	828	}	---	1819
	Women	523			
	Child ⁿ Male	283			
	Female	185			

Jews	Men	285	}	---	666
	Women	207			
	Child ⁿ Male	92			
	Female	82			

Total 2849

Added Septem^r 17th

British	Men	3	}	---	8
	Women	2			
	Child ⁿ Male	2			
	Female	1			

A. Cath. ^c	Men	6	}	---	17
	Women	6			
	Child ⁿ Male	4			
	Female	1			

Total 2874

Figure 3. The summary of the list of inhabitants of 1791, including those who provided the necessary information late.

The Governor likewise requires the number of Mules, Burros, Horses, Cows, Goats and Sheep at this time in the inhabitants' possession: These returns may be dropt into the letter Box address'd to the Secretary, and the Governor hopes there will be no omission.

In addition, at the time, supplementary lists were made. Examples are the list of Inhabitants Houses of 1778, which was drawn up for the purpose of levying rates on properties for scavenging and cleansing, and the list of Garrison Seamen of 1792.

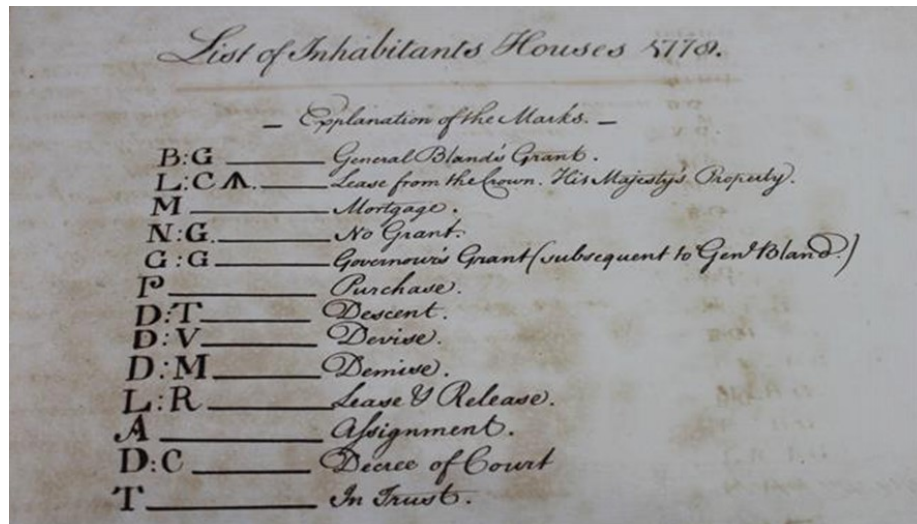


Figure 4. In tandem with the list of Inhabitants of 1777, a list was prepared the following year of the ownership of the houses in the town for the purposes of levying municipal rates.

April 23rd 1792

Abstract of the number of Inhabitants in Gibraltar at the different periods when Lists have been made out.

<i>Year when Lists were made</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Totals</i>
1767	British	467	2710
	R. Catholics	1460	
	Jews	783	
1771	British	506	3201
	Rom. Catholics	1832	
	Jews	863	
1787	British	512	3386
	R. Catholics	2098	
	Jews	776	
1791	British	372	2874
	R. Catholics	1836	
	Jews	666	

Figure 5. This abstract shows how the authorities were monitoring the growth and subsequent containment and reduction of the civilian population of Gibraltar.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Following the 1803 Yellow Fever epidemic, Gibraltar was divided into Police Districts and registers were kept of the inhabitants of each district. These registers recorded all arrivals and departures. The information contained in the police counts supplements that of each periodic Census.

The earliest 19th century Census that has survived is that of 1814. It reveals a trebling of the civilian population to 10,136. The main reason for this was that during the Napoleonic wars, Gibraltar was the only port open in Europe for the passage of British goods to other European countries. This attracted a large merchant and trading population, despite the dangers of epidemic diseases.

That the 1814 population was largely composed of recent arrivals is indicated by the breakdown of the figures: only 1,191 inhabitants were of British birth or origin and only 1,851 were native Catholics of alien origin. The great majority of the recent arrivals came from Genoa.

The early 19th century saw several other sudden decreases in population due to epidemics. Thus, there is a note in the Civil Secretary's book, "in 1828 the Garrison became overcrowded and was devastated by a 'fearful epidemic'". It was Yellow Fever once again. Nevertheless, the police count for 1829 indicated a total civilian population of 16,394.

The 1834 Census was the first to be based on the Police Districts. The Census Commissioner was then the Police Magistrate, and he was empowered to appoint five Assistants or Enumerators. The count of the population was no longer a complete alphabetical list by religion, but a listing by the areas where people lived.

The modern census dates from 1868 when *The Census of the Population Ordinance, 1868* was enacted. This laid down the basis for the decennial census. Census Reports, beginning with that for the 1871 Census, were now printed for easy access.

The 1878 Census records that "Aliens" were allowed into Gibraltar on 1st and 2nd class permits and with Fishermen's Badges. Up to 1,840 fishermen of the Genoese fleet would be based at Catalan Bay at this time, for the duration of the fishing season. There was then no road leading to Catalan Bay and no easy access other than by sea. The companies of fishermen would erect temporary shelters on the beach for the duration of their stay, or they would live in caves. Gradually, some fishermen stayed on after the season ended. By 1878, a permanent village had been established at Catalan Bay.

One of the tables no longer present in the 1878 Report is that covering the number of convicts. This is because the Convict Establishment was disbanded in 1875, 30 years after its foundation: convicts were no longer sent out to Gibraltar from the United Kingdom. The Establishment was 552 strong in 1871. At its peak, it numbered about 900. Convict labour was used to build part of the present Line Wall, the white stone sea wall that was built close to or on top of the older Spanish and Moorish sea walls. Some of the convicts were released after their term in Gibraltar, others were sent to Australia.

The 1878 population tables divide the civil population into four districts: the Town; the Rock; the South; and North Front and Catalan Bay. These enumeration areas were later to increase in number.

In 1891, for the first time, the Census covered the Port and Harbour, including the people living on board the stationary craft in the Bay such as hulks, pontoons, and lighters. They numbered 759 out of a civilian population of 19,100. The Military population was then 5,896.

At this time, it was the Registrar of Births who acted as Census Commissioner, a situation that remained unchanged until 1951. In his 1891 Report, Registrar James C. Gordon informed the Colonial Secretary (previously the Civil Secretary):

As compared with the Decennial Census taken in 1881, the increase of the civil population of the town is 719, which is even more than could reasonably have been expected when it is considered that overcrowding has existed for many years and that building space is very limited. On the other hand stagnation in trade has lately caused emigration to the states of South America to some extent, and numbers of native families have, within the last few years, taken up their residence in the neighbouring town of La Linea on account of its less expensive house rent and the want of accommodation here.

This, together with the severe limiting of residence permits, helps to explain why the population did not increase appreciably between 1871 and 1931.

Some of the occupations listed in the 1891 Census shed light on Gibraltar's way of life. There were 29 Goatherds (as opposed to 49 in 1879) and 4 Livery Stable Keepers. Merchants were listed as:

Furniture	15
Indian Goods	3
Matting	2
Gloves	1
Dealers in	
Crockery	9
Moorish Curiosities	8
Boots and Shoes	3
Wines, Spirits and Beer	45

There were also 8 Car Proprietors (i.e. horse-drawn cabs) and 8 Soda Water Manufacturers.

The 1891 Census reveals the extent of overcrowding at the time. For example, there were 37 households where 7 people lived in a single room, and 88 where 7 people lived in 2 rooms. There were also 58 households where 6 people lived in a single room, and 118 where 6 people lived in 2 rooms. The Enumerators for this Census were the three Sanitary Inspectors.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Population of the Port and Harbour of Gibraltar on the night of 2nd April 1911
Table showing Religion - with Sexes

Religion	Males	Females	Total	R. N. He M's Commandant 2nd Station	Religion
Roman Catholics	334	22	356		Males
Protestants	92	1	93		Protestants
Moslems	6	-	6		Moslems
Am. Communists	5	-	5		Roman Catholics
Presbyterians	2	-	2		Presbyterians
Congregational	1	-	1		Moslems
Hebrew	1	-	1		Protestants
Other	1	-	1		
Refusing to reply	442	24	466		Total 239

Figure 6. This return is headed "Population of the Port and Harbour of Gibraltar" on census night, 1911, by religion. The final column contains details of the men aboard the Royal Navy ships which included HMS Cormorant.

The British Government required a Census of the British Empire on or near 2nd April 1911. The Gibraltar Census questionnaire was altered slightly to conform to the requirements of this Census and information was now sought on houses, religion and education, which had not been required for the 1901 Census.

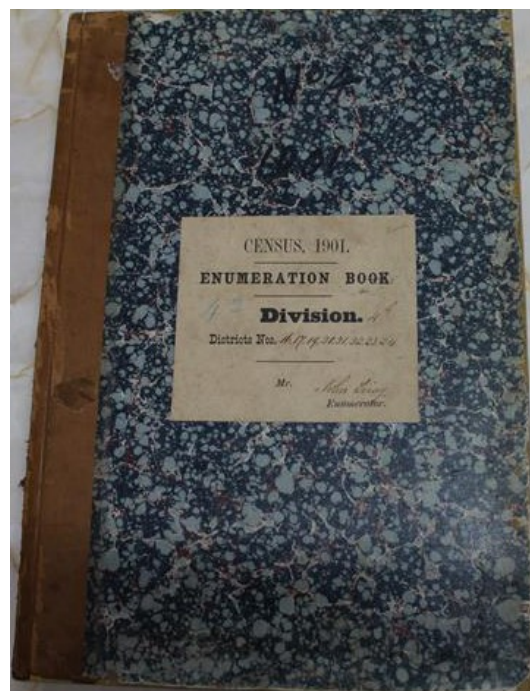


Figure 7. The Enumeration Book of John Triay, a Sanitary Inspector, who took down all the details of the persons residing in the various districts for which he was the enumerator in 1901.

In 1921, the enumerators were no longer the Sanitary Inspectors: the police performed this task for the first time. It was a logical move, given that the police had been keeping records of the population in the town for many years. There were then 27 Police Districts in the Town and 11 in the South District. They formed four Wards. North Front and Catalan Bay then formed a fifth Ward.

The 1931 Census recorded, for the first time, two separate listings in respect of employment: one was an industry classification and the other an occupational classification. One key factor – which was noted in the covering Report – was that the 6,000 daily frontier workers coming in to Gibraltar from Spain did not figure in any of the tables.

No Census was taken in 1941 because of the Second World War. A large proportion of the civilian population, estimated at about 16,700 non-combatants, was evacuated to the United Kingdom, Madeira, Jamaica and Tangier. This included all women, children and the elderly. Although the majority of the evacuees returned to Gibraltar, about 1,000 persons preferred to settle permanently abroad. The repatriation lasted from April 1944 to early 1951. This increased the importance of the 1951 Census in order to establish the exact population following the upheavals caused by the war.

The Registrar of Births was no longer the Census Commissioner. In 1951, it was the Director of Labour and Social Security; in 1961, it was the Chief Assistant Secretary. In 1970, 1981 and 1991, the Census Commissioner was Mr Harry Fell, initially on secondment from the Overseas Development Administration. The number of Enumeration Areas increased from 16 Civil Districts in 1951, to 20 in 1961, to 64 in 1970 and 1981 and 68 in 1991. The enumerators also changed. In 1951, the Police performed this task. In 1961, it was 13 police officers and the Government Rent Collectors. Since 1970, the enumerators were drawn from the Civil Service.

The 1970 Census was a year early. The reason for this was the Spanish Government's closure of the Land Frontier between Gibraltar and Spain on 9 June 1969, with the consequent sudden withdrawal of the Spanish labour force of 4,666 men who had previously entered Gibraltar daily to work. They constituted over one-third of Gibraltar's work force. Gibraltar was then finally and totally cut off from Spain on 26 June, with the suspension of the direct ferry link from Algeciras and the Spanish Government's refusal to allow a British ferry to ply the route.

An additional new factor, since the 1961 Census, was that approximately 800 persons previously living in the Spanish hinterland moved into Gibraltar in 1965 as a result of increasing Spanish restrictions against Gibraltar. The 1970 Census provided much-needed information on Gibraltar's population, manpower and employment (including those with second jobs).

With the 1981 Census, the original time rhythm was restored in line with the traditional decennial pattern for conducting censuses.

The frontier between Spain and Gibraltar was partially opened by Spain in December 1981, and the full opening followed in February 1985. It was important to measure the impacts of the open frontier. They were recorded in the 1991 Census.

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