

Electoral Registers

The right to vote in local and parliamentary elections was given to all adults only as recently as 1928. All men over 21, and most women over thirty, could vote for MPs after the Representation of the People Act of 1918. Before that date, the right to vote in elections was determined by property ownership. The qualifications were higher for parliamentary elections than for local councils.

Major alterations in voting rights were introduced by the parliamentary reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884. Elections for borough councils were introduced in 1835. All ratepayers of three years' standing could vote for councillors. Not all residents appeared in these registers, but only those who were entitled to vote.

Doncaster Archives holds electoral registers ('burgess rolls') for Doncaster borough council elections from 1844 to 1915.

Doncaster Local Studies Library has registers, either in book form or on microfiche, for various constituencies from 1899 onwards. There are registers for the Doncaster division of the West Riding of Yorkshire (a constituency containing an area larger than just the town centre of Doncaster) from 1899 to date, excluding 1916-1917 and 1940-1944. There are also registers for the Don Valley division of the West Riding from 1918 to date, excluding 1940-1944, and for the Dearne Valley and Goole divisions of the West Riding covering the period 1949-1971.

When using electoral registers remember the following points:

- The purpose of these documents was to record those eligible to vote. They had to be eligible to vote both by age or nationality.
- Prior to 1918 eligibility to vote was by owning or renting property to the value of £10 or more per year
- In 1918-men over 21, women over 30 were eligible to vote
- In 1928 voting included all women over 21
- In 1969 the voting age goes down to 18 for both men and women
- Always check the qualifying date (when the information was collected or given). This is in reality the only time the given information is correct (someone can move or die within days or weeks). The date that a register is classed as being 'in force' is not as relevant or accurate.
- The registers are a good source of information for searches after the last census is issued.
- Since 2002 there have been two registers produced.
- A full one with all names included. There is limited access to this (police and credit reference agencies have access).
- An edited one is freely available but people can opt to be excluded from this which makes it not less accurate but of limited use due to excluded information.

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