**The hidden secrets of the**

**1939 National Register of England & Wales**

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**Background**

The 1939 National Register has been compared to an additional census for England and Wales. However, it is so much more than this. The register may have been assembled in 1939, but the Government constantly updated the 1939 National Register over time to take account of changes of name, deaths or other important information. Some changes are plain to see, but others are hidden within the annotations and codes written next to entries.

The 1931 UK census was destroyed by fire during the Second World War, and no census was taken in 1941 because of the war. So the 1939 National Register is one of the most important twentieth century genealogical resources for England and Wales available.

**Why was it created?**

* issue identity cards and ration books.
* conscription purposes
* direction of labour e.g. land army
* monitor movement of population i.e. evacuations

**Coverage**

* The digitalized records only cover England and Wales
* Channel Islands, Isle of Man : records haven’t survived
* Scotland and Northern Ireland not available online
* Only the civilian population, over 41 million people.
* Members of the military on leave are included.

**Where can I search the Register?**

* www.ancestry.co.uk
* www.findmypast.co.uk
* www.myheritage.com (only the transcripts.)

**What information does the register contain?**

* name, address, gender, marital status and occupation of each person.
* also gives the date of birth as opposed to just the age.
* It doesn’t give us the place of birth or relationship of family members.
* People who could still be alive (born less than 100 years ago), will in theory have their records redacted. These records will not show up in the index search.

**Ways to search the Register**

The register can be search in a number of different ways.

* By person: can also search by birth year or even birth date.
* By address: can enter not only the area or town but also the street address.
* Browse the register: this search will allow you to walk the route the enumerator took around a particular area.

**Why is the 1939 Register different to a Census?**

It differs from the usual censuses taken in England & Wales in that it is not simply a snapshot taken on a particular date. The 1939 Register was considered a working document which meant that it was updated as changes occurred, due to its links to the National Health Service.

**Deciphering the annotations and notes in the Register**

The 1939 Register is littered with annotations and notes. There has been no master index made of the abbreviations and code letters used and as the books were annotated by a lot of different people for about 60 years, for a variety of purposes we may never know the meaning of all the scribbles. However many we have been able to decipher.

* NR = National Register
* CR = Central Register
* I/D = Identity Card
* M/C = Medical Card

Area Codes: relating to the enumeration districts and boroughs. These enumeration districts have been listed by the National Archives and are further detailed at FindMyPast.

* three letter codes e.g. AAA=London City, London, EGA=Brighton, East Sussex etc.
* Listed at www.findmypast.co.uk/articles/1939-register-enumeration-districts

Column 11 on the second page is only partially visible.

* ARP = Air Raid Precautions (Air Raid Warden)
* PWC = Post War Credits
* FA = Family Allowance
* Red Cross volunteer, Special constable etc

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