

7) Electoral registration and the registers after the 1918 Act

The Act of 1918

The Act of 1918 made the clerk of the county council the registration officer for the parliamentary county and the town clerk the registration officer for the parliamentary borough (the Local Government Board directing who was to act in the case of overlapping boundaries).

The register was compiled by polling district and by three main divisions: parliamentary and local government, parliamentary but not local government (residents who were not ratepaying occupiers) and those entitled to vote as local government electors only (non-resident occupiers). Within these divisions the names were arranged in alphabetical order in county constituencies and in street order in borough constituencies, unless the county or borough council decided otherwise. Against each name were recorded the residence or property occupied and the abode of a non-resident occupier, and the qualifications.

The business premises qualification rarely appears because most voters would be qualified as parliamentary electors as residents, while occupation of business premises would, for local government purposes, be regarded as an occupation qualification.

Registers between 1918 and 1926 were compiled in Spring and Autumn of each year. Annual registers were resumed under the Economy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1926 (16 and 17 George 5, c9).

The Act of 1945

The Act of 1945 simplified the franchise so that (except for peers) anyone qualified as a parliamentary elector in an area was qualified also as a local government elector in that area. Registers from 1945 do not indicate the qualification against the name of the voter, except in a very limited number of cases when the qualification was not valid for all kinds of election. A separate, usually short, list of business electors is found until 1948.

The Act of 1969

The Act of 1969, by extending the franchise to eighteen-year-olds and making election day the date of qualification, caused the inclusion in the register of those who were aged 17 and upwards on the date the register came into force. The birth date of those aged 17 is given.