

Identity Card 1939

As war approached, preparations were made to enable a national register to be rapidly compiled and identity cards issued. A National Registration Bill was quickly introduced and royal assent given on the 5th September 1939, just two days after the declaration of war and a few days later it was announced that National Registration Day would be Friday September 29th 1939.

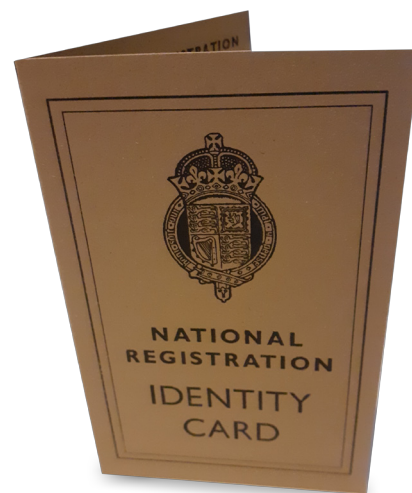
Three main reasons were put forward by the government for passing the law in September 1939:

1. The major dislocation of the population caused by mobilisation and mass evacuation and also the wartime need for complete manpower control and planning in order to maximise the efficiency of the war economy.
2. The likelihood of rationing, actually introduced from January 1940 onwards.
3. The Government needed recent statistics about the population. As the last census had been held in 1931, there was little accurate data on which to base vital planning decisions. The National Register was an instant census and the National Registration Act closely resembles the 1920 Census Act in many ways.

The decision was made to use similar methods as for the census for which planning had started for the 1941 census. Roughly 65,000 enumerators across the country delivered forms ahead of the chosen day. On the 29th, householders were required to record details on the registration forms and then on the following Sunday and Monday the enumerators visited every householder, checked the form and there and then issued a completed identity card for each of the residents.

Information gathered for each person was their address, name, sex, date of birth, marital condition, occupation and whether a member of the armed forces or reserves.

Initially, adult identity cards were buff, the same colour as children's cards, but in 1943 when registration and rationing were combined, a blue card was introduced and issued to all adults, replacing their previous cards. A new buff card for children was introduced at the same time but existing children's cards were not replaced apart from when a new card was necessary.



E.D. Letter Code EJK		DATE OF NATIONAL REGISTRATION DAY 29th September 1939		Postal address <i>45, The High Street, Cuckfield, East Sussex</i> Name of householder or other person responsible for making the return <i>Bertrum William Agate</i> Description of premises, establishment etc., if other than a private dwelling <i>Private Dwelling</i>		FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Initials Date FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. 1 2 3 4 5	
Schedule Number 24		PERSONAL OCCUPATION. State Occupation or calling followed. If wholly retired, add "Retired" after the statement of Occupation. Indefinite terms such as "Labourer," "Machinist," "Accountant," must not be used. Instead describe Occupation precisely as "Builder's Labourer," "Iron Moulder," "Captain Lather Hand," "Wood Machinist," "Chartered Accountant," and so on. See instructions on back as to statement of Occupation. If a person engaged in heavy work write "Heavy Worker" after the statement of Occupation. If a person serving in the Royal Navy, Regular Army, Royal Air Force or Royal Marines, or in any regular Women's Service administered by the Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force, see Instruction 12. If a person belonging to the Mercantile Marine, see Instruction 13. If a child at school, write "At School."					
Persons to be included. All persons who spent the night of National Registration Day in this household or establishment, whether as members, visitors, boarders or servants, or who joined the household or establishment the next morning without having been enumerated anywhere else. No one else may be included.						Membership of Naval, Military or Air Force Reserves of Auxiliary Forces or of Civil Defence Services or Reserves. If a person on the Billed, Emergency or Part-time Lists of the Royal Navy or Royal Marines, or belonging to the Territorial Army or to any Royal Military or Air Force Reserve of Auxiliary Force, state Service, and whether Billed, etc., the Reserve or Force, Unit, Rank and Number, if any. If a person belonging to any Women's Auxiliary Force or Organisation, administered by the Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force, state the Force or Organisation, Unit, Rank and Number, if any. If a person belonging to— the Special Constabulary or any Police Reserve; any Auxiliary or Naval or Air Force Reserve; or the Auxiliary Machine Gun Service Unit or Component Auxiliary Service; or if a person entitled to any Civil Defence Service or Reserve (including any A.E.F. Service or Reserve or Auxiliary Fire Service) or in any Land Army Force or Reserve; State the Force, Service or Reserve, etc., the authority with which connected and the person's Service Number, if any.	
SURNAMES AND OTHER NAMES. See note above for the persons to be included. Newly-born infants who have not yet been given a name should be described as "Baby", following the Surname. Enter Surname first in Block Capitals.		SEX. (M. for male; F. for female)	BIRTHDAY. (Day and Month)	YEAR OF BIRTH.	CONDITION AS TO MARRIAGE. State whether "SINGLE," "MARRIED," "WIDOWED," or "D." if marriage dissolved by divorce.	Signature (Head of Household, Manager of Establishment or other person responsible for making the return.)	
A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.		
1.	<i>Bertrum William Agate</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>22 August</i>	<i>1915</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that the persons included spent the night of National Registration Day in this household or establishment, or have been otherwise properly included according to the above instructions.						Enumerator's Initials.	

Schedule Number
(see Registration form above)

Line Number
(see Registration form above)

Registration District
(See '1939 Registration
Districts' document)
[Click here for more info](#)

Name of owner of
the Registration
Card.
(Written by the
Enumerator)

NATIONAL REGISTRATION

EJK	24	1
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Bertrum W. Agate

1. This Identity Card must be carefully preserved. You may need it under conditions of national emergency for important purposes. You must not lose it or allow it to be stolen. If, nevertheless, it is stolen or completely lost, you must report the fact in person at any local National Registration Office.

2. You may have to show your Identity Card to persons who are authorised by law to ask you to produce it.

3. You must not allow your Identity Card to pass into the hands of unauthorised persons or strangers. Every grown up person should be responsible for the keeping of his or her Identity Card. The Identity Card of a child should be kept by the parent or guardian or person in charge of the child for the time being.

4. Anyone finding this Card must hand it in at a Police Station or National Registration Office.

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NATIONAL REGISTRATION

EJK	24	1
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Bertrum W. Agate

DO NOTHING WITH THIS PART
UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD

Full Postal Address of Above Person :-
45, The High Street
Cuckfield
East Sussex

(Signed) B. W. Agate
Date 21 May 1940

Home address of
owner of Identity
Card (written by
the owner of the
card)

Date of filling in
address - always
around May/June
1940 - just prior to
expected invasion

Identity Card

Approximately 46 million cards were issued. The identity card had 2 pages and at the top of each page the enumerator entered the person's name and their identity card number. This card number consisted of a three or four letter **enumeration district code** plus the line number of the schedule that was completed by the enumerator for the census (see form on previous page), e.g. for area EJK (which is Cuckfield district), schedule 24, 1st person in the household the card number would have been "EJK 24/1"

On the right hand page of the cards was a space for the cardholder's full postal address and signature but when originally issued in 1939, there were strict instructions that this should be left blank.

Initially, the card had to be produced to a policeman on demand or alternatively within 2 days at a police station. Further regulations were also issued requiring notification of change of address, also for births so a card could be issued for the newborn, also surrendering of the card if the person dies.

In December provision was also made to make it possible to exchange an ordinary buff identity card for a green card with room for a photograph and description of the holder; the reason for this was to assist anyone who needed to provide better evidence of their identity where they did not possess any other acceptable document, for example if they required access to enter a protected area under the defence regulations.

In late May 1940, as the danger of invasion increased, instructions were issued that everyone over 16 must sign and date the card and write their address on the right hand page of the card and also that the card must be carried at all times. In the case of under 16s, the parent or guardian had the responsibility of signing the card and entering the address; under 16s were instructed not to carry the card with them but instead follow advice given earlier of carrying a luggage label or card with them with their name, address and national registration identity number.

The Identity Card was finally abolished in February 1952.