# 1831 England and Wales Ancient Counties GIS shapefile documentation

# by Max Satchell

# filename: 1831EngWalesAncientCounty.shp

ArcGIS shapefile of 288 polygons providing boundary and attribute data for the fifty-five ancient counties of England and Wales as given in the 1831 census for England and Wales.[[1]](#footnote-1) As such this represents the counties of England and Wales as they were before the boundary changes caused by the Counties (Detached Parts) Act, 1844 (7 & 8 Vict. c. 61) which led to the elimination of some of the detached portions of counties. These data derive from the 173 digital maps of the boundaries of English and Welsh parishes and their subdivisions produced by Roger Kain and Richard Oliver based on the listing in the 1851 census.[[2]](#footnote-2) The maps were subsequently converted into a single GIS by Burton *et al*.[[3]](#footnote-3) The GIS attribute data were checked, edited and enhanced with extra data from the census by Max Satchell, Tony Wrigley and a small army of research assistants with technical support from Peter Kitson and Gill Newton. This work was undertaken as part of *The changing occupational structure of nineteenth century Britain* project funded by the E.S.R.C. – RES-000-23-1579 and directed by Leigh Shaw-Taylor and Tony Wrigley. Max Satchell checked and in some cases edited the GIS polygon data using a variety of cartographic and documentary sources. Of these the most important were digital scans of the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 and 1:10560 maps from the Landmark Group distributed by Edina[[4]](#footnote-4), the series of maps of registration districts and sub-districts boundaries prepared for the Registrar General prior to the censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1891 and the description of enumeration district boundaries given in the Census Enumerators Books for the censuses from 1851, 1861 and 1871. The 1:63,360 maps and Census Enumerators Books are held in The National Archives, Kew (TNA, RG 18/3-155, 198-227, HO 107, RG 9, RG 10). The work involved changing one or more elements of information about place, parish, county, or three figure census number for 2,461 (10.8 per cent) of 22,729 lines of data in the Kain and Oliver GIS. This editing process saw the redigitisation of 644 of the 22,729 polygons, the deletion of 81 polygons, and the digitisation of 525 new polygons.

The original Kain and Oliver parish and place dataset did not give details of which counties its units belonged to in 1831, though the authors did note some units had changed county under the auspices of the act of 1844. Max Satchell with help from Geoffrey Stanning and input from Peter Kitson and Tony Wrigley added the 1831 census counties as an attribute to the parish GIS primarily by systematic comparison between the censuses of 1831 and 1851 - the latter's footnotes being particularly informative concerning changes in the county boundaries. In situations where the 1831 county boundary deviated from the post-1844 alignment the polygons from the Burton *et al.* GIS were subdivided. At the end of this exercise all 23,177 polygons of the enhanced parish GIS could be assigned an 1831 ancient county. This attribute was then used to generate the shapefile of ancient counties.

The work was aided by an Emeritus Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust, two British Academy Small Research Grants (SG 40833, SG 42909) awarded to Tony Wrigley with further funding under the British Academy's Research Project scheme (BARP) awarded to Leigh Shaw-Taylor. Our thanks go out to these organisations and to the Landmark Group and Edina for supplying the Ordnance Survey data. The shapefile comprises the standard ArcGIS .shx, .shp, .sbx, .sbn, .prj and .dbf files. The dbf file is described below.

**Attribute data**

#### 1831EngWalesAncCounty.dbf

The dbf table contains the following fields.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Field* | *Data type* | *Description* |
| **FID** | Object ID | Unique ID for each row in the table |
| **Shape** | Polygon | Polygon/s for county as per the 1831 census |
| **A\_CTY31** | Text | Name of county as given in the 1831 census |
| **A\_CTRY** | Text | Name of country |

### Co-ordinate system

British\_National\_Grid

Projection: Transverse\_Mercator

False\_Easting: 400000.000000

False\_Northing: -100000.000000

Central\_Meridian: -2.000000

Scale\_Factor: 0.999601

Latitude\_Of\_Origin: 49.000000

Linear Unit: Meter

GCS\_OSGB\_1936

Datum: D\_OSGB\_1936

**Citation guidelines**

Satchell, M., Shaw-Taylor, L., Wrigley E.A., 1831 England and Wales Ancient Counties shapefile (2017). This dataset was created with funding from the ESRC (RES-000-23-1579), the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy. The Satchell *et al* dataset derives from an enhanced version of Burton, N., Westwood J., and Carter P., GIS of the ancient parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive (May 2004), SN 4828, which is a GIS version of Kain, R.J.P., and Oliver, R.R., Historic parishes of England and Wales: An electronic map of boundaries before 1850 with a gazetteer and metadata. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive, May, 2001. SN 4348. A description of the dataset can be found in Satchell, M., 1831 England and Wales Ancient Counties GIS documentation (2017, 2006) available at: http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/occupations/datasets/documentation.html

**Optional extra**

If on a second reference to the dataset you need an abbreviated reference, our suggestion is Satchell *et al*, 1831EWAC1831shp. 1831EWACshp stands for 1831 England and Wales Ancient Counties shapefile.

**Copyright**

© 2017 Max Satchell, Leigh Shaw-Taylor, Humphrey Southall, Nick Burton, University of Portsmouth, Roger Kain, Richard Oliver.

**Errors and further corrections**

Collectively the research teams led by Roger Kain, Humphrey Southall and Leigh Shaw-Taylor have directly or indirectly contributed many thousands of hours to create this GIS and have struggled to make it as accurate as possible. However, we remain interested in refining it still further. If you spot something that is wrong with the county boundaries, please email details to campop@geog.cam.ac.uk.

1. British Parliamentary Papers, 'Enumeration Abstract 1831 Vol. I', 1833, Vol. XXXVI, C.149; 'Enumeration Abstract 1831 Vol. II', 1833, Vol. XXXVII, C.149. The term "ancient" is used here in the general sense to indicate the traditional or historic counties of England and Wales as they existed prior to the major changes brought about by the Local Government Act of 1972 (Elizabeth II c. 70). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R.J.P. Kain and R.R. Oliver, *Historic parishes of England and Wales: An electronic map of boundaries before 1850 with a gazetteer and metadata*. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive, May, 2001. SN 4348 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. N. Burton *et al.*, *GIS of the ancient parishes of England and Wales, 1500-1850.* Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive, May, 2004. SN 4828 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Edina is the JISC national academic data centre based at the University of Edinburgh: http://edina.ac.uk/. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)