

# Historical Data UK

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## About the UK Historical Data Repository

Launched at the 2019 Conference on Economic Measurement, Historical Data UK is an online repository of historical datasets and statistical publications with its own dedicated section on ESCoE's website, [escoe.ac.uk/research/historical-data](https://escoe.ac.uk/research/historical-data). The project is a joint initiative between ESCoE, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Bank of England, which aims to make historical statistics more available to researchers and the general public. As well as being a new 'standalone' repository of historical British data and relevant statistical publications, UK Historical Data is also a hub that links to other data websites and sources. The focus is on macroeconomic and financial market data but the site includes a range of disaggregated economic data at a sector, industry and regional level.

## Project update

Since the first iteration which contained nine different thematic sections, each covering a particular range of data, it has expanded to include 15 sections. These cover a broader set of themes, which now also include historical data on climate change, regional data and international data. There are also now dedicated sections on capital and productivity, on financial accounts, and on balance sheets.

## Publications

The site now contains around 4000 digitised statistical publications, including complete sets of the core Central Statistics Office (CSO) and ONS publications of yesteryear, such as the Blue Books and Pink Books which began in the 1940s, the Annual Abstract and Monthly Digest of Statistics from 1946 and Financial Statistics from 1962. The publications also cover methodology as well as data. In addition to CSO and ONS publications, we have also digitised a number of other statistical publications of government departments.

## Links to other digitisation efforts

Where publications already exist digitally in the public domain we have provided links, most notably to the HathiTrust digital library which provides access to digitised content from a variety of sources, including Google, the Internet Archive, Microsoft, and member-institution initiatives. We have also co-ordinated our digitisation programme with other UK libraries that are carrying out similar programmes to avoid duplication of effort.

## Academic sources

We have been securing permissions to reproduce key academic publications covering historical UK statistics. This has involved a concerted effort, tracking down copyright holders from publications that were published as far back as the 1920s.

## Excel transcriptions

We have also begun the task of converting pdf files of the various statistical publications into spreadsheets. Most notably we have now transcribed all the tables of Charles Feinstein's National Income, Expenditure and Output of the United Kingdom 1855-1965, and his subsequent tables on capital formation and capital stocks between 1760 and 1920. On the financial market side, we have also transcribed the relevant sections of the Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz dataset covering fluctuations in the British economy over the period 1790-1850, and banking system balance sheets from David Sheppard's The Growth and Role of UK Financial Institutions 1880-1966. Regional employment data by industry covering the period 1841-1971 derived from the census by Professor Clive Lee has also been transcribed. Many more Excel transcriptions are in the pipeline.

## A new version of the Millennium of Macroeconomic Data Spreadsheet

The Bank's Millennium of Macroeconomic Data Spreadsheet, which is available in the Headline Macro Data Section, is largely derived from the digital sources available in the repository. For this reason it has been decided to link the two projects together more formally and the organisation of the spreadsheet will match the structure of the repository. In this way the repository will act as the "Sources and Methods" reference for the Millennium dataset, which up until now has not provided additional metadata and information over and above the primary data sources. Version 4 of the Millennium spreadsheet is due shortly and will contain updated data up to and including 2020.

## What's next for the repository?

Since the launch of the new ESCoE website in September 2020, the repository has attracted over 1000 visits and 800 document downloads. We have received good feedback from researchers and practitioners alike.

On our 'to do' list are the following:

- The Actuaries Share Price Indices from 1928 to 1962 (the forerunner to the modern FTSE share price indices) in conjunction with the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries
- Additional Excel transcriptions of key datasets
- Filling in publication gaps, especially missing Economic Trends Articles
- A diary of economic events
- A new Business Cycles section to cover historical business cycle metrics

We are open to ideas for other additions.

Visit the repository today at [escoe.ac.uk/research/historical-data](https://escoe.ac.uk/research/historical-data)

Interested in the repository? The site curators and project researchers Sylaja Srinivasan and Ryland Thomas would like to hear from you. We would particularly welcome any feedback on additional material you think would be useful to include in the repository, and we welcome any thoughts and suggestions on how we can generally develop and promote this fantastic resource. Email [ryland.thomas@bankofengland.co.uk](mailto:ryland.thomas@bankofengland.co.uk) for specific questions and suggestions for the repository, and [escoeinfo@niesr.ac.uk](mailto:escoeinfo@niesr.ac.uk) for more general information and feedback. Thank you!

