

Sources for Second World War Research

HHD U3A Family and Social History Group meeting 2nd September 2022

Not much is yet online of the records of an individual serviceman unless he got a medal, was an officer, features in a book on online history site etc.

ww2talk.com This is similar to the Greatwarforum in that it has many experts who give their time free to help others. One of them is an expert in the Merchant Navy.

Newspapers often covered small events & larger ones in a soldiers life.

www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk The Mid Sussex Times is digitised up to 1949.

Also try the Times digital archive at galeapps.gale.com (free to WSCC library members via library website).

Many regiments have dedicated sites, for example: www.bedfordregiment.org.uk and queensroyalsurreys.org.uk

Which regiment or corps issued a service number ?

Sequences used 1920-1942 are at:

<http://ww2talk.com/index.php?threads/army-number-block-allocations.4837/>

After 1942 soldiers started with a number from the General Service corps sequence & were allocated to units after basic training, but with no change of number.

One exception is soldiers who were conscripted into the militia in early 1939, who often had their militia number replaced by a seven digit one.

www.thegazette.co.uk The *London Gazette* should all officers commissions, promotions, and also awards for officers & other ranks in WW2. One exception to this was the King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom & King's Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom, which were awarded to foreign citizens such as the French Resistance & were not gazetted incase it caused issues in their home country.

Soldiers killed in WW2

Commonwealth War Grave Commission **www.cwgc.org**

Now contains grave registration reports so you can see who is buried next to a soldier & if they were re-interred where moved from.

Soldiers Wills **www.gov.uk/search-will-probate** most not here, recently I think fee gone up from £ 1.50 to £ 10.00 useful if legatee is not immediate family.

School or University Memorial books.

The *Army Roll of Honour* on ancestry.

Andrews Newspaper Card index on ancestry.

Burma Star Association Membership applications now on findmypast or free at <https://burmastarmemorial.org/archive/membership-records/f?>

General

1939 Register In the R/H remarks column as well as any civil defence work it can say if they were a reservist in the forces. By the time this was taken the Territorials Army & many reservists had been mobilised so they will not show.

Tank & Armoured Regiments have Tracer Cards for each man at the Tank Museum. Bovington

tankmuseum.org/services/archive-and-library (fee payable)

Attestation Books. Used from 1920 to 1941 by each regiment or corps to issue service numbers. When no longer needed by the army these were offered to the regiments or their museums. Start by enquiring at the regiments museum, or they may be on ancestry etc like the West Surrey Regiments.

RAF Squadron operation books are now on the National Archives & ancestry. Most will only mention aircrew or officers by name.

Merchant Navy. Some records and personal cards with photos are at the National Archives. Plenty of experts on the **ww2talk website**.

Military Campaign Medal and Award Rolls, 1793-1949. Soldiers who were awarded medals or bars to medals for non world war campaigns such as Palestine or the NW Frontier will show in this record set on ancestry.

Post 1920 Service Records

RAF to 1940 on ancestry (not sure how comprehensive)

Rest of RAF now payable online at gov.uk. £ 30. Can take as little as three weeks to arrive.

Navy also payable online. £ 30

Army records have started a 5 year process of transfer in batches from MoD Glasgow to The National Archives. If transferred a quick service & expected to be restricted to persons who had died over 116 years ago, but there may be exceptions and processes such as Freedom Of Information Act to get around this. Still need to pay by cheque £30. If still at Mod timescales vary but after the first lockdown they had a two year back log & had not even opened the post for a few months.

Apply at www.gov.uk.

For soldiers discharged after 1920 (usually 7 or more digit number) their ww1 record could be included in his post 1920 record. These are at MoD or on way to the National Archives.

A partial index to any of these men who were born before 1901 is on ancestry in the record set *Military Discharge Indexes, 1920-1971*.

RAF service records for 1918-1940 are now on ancestry & possibly from The National Archives.

Reserved Occupations in 1939

<http://anguline.co.uk/Free/Reserved.pdf>

Home Guard

A mans application form (two sides of A4 paper) is all that's held & costs £ 30. Gives his personal details, but no details of his postings or activities. Although they were asked about any previous military service. Apply at Gov.uk
Lancashire Home Guard is online at FMP or ancestry.

Royal Artillery

Attestations 1883-1942 on findmypast.co.uk

Casualty Cards 1939-1947 on findmypast.co.uk

RA Tracer cards are on ancestry.

India

Families in British India Society can be helpful inc info about WW2 service burials etc www.fibis.org

Australia. WW2 service recrds in process of being digitised.

www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records

Canada. Index of papers for WW2 service people who died in the war plus info on how to apply for the survivors records. www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspxCanada

Medals

If you think a service person did not apply for their medals you can contact the Medal Office to enquire. This is a free service & sometimes a shortcut to getting some of the info that would be on the service record as it will show which medals they qualified for. Issue of medals if not originally claimed is free.

Access latest info/contact details at www.gov.uk

Qualification for medals and stars. Look on wikipedia under any of the medals eg Defence Medal & it will link you to the others.