

Sources for First & Second World War Research

HHD U3A Family and Social History Group meeting 5th August 2022

World War One - General

longlongtrail.co.uk Lots of useful info about the army in WW1, recruitment, organisation, rations, medical treatment, pensions etc.

Greatwarforum.org A good place to ask any questions, full of experts with free advice.

Service Records

On ancestry those in the Service records category are the ones that were at the Arnside Street Warehouse when it was bombed. Often called the "burnt" records. Only 30-40% of Arnside Street service records survived the fire.

www.longlongtrail.co.uk/the-1940-fire-at-arnside-street/

"Pension" Service Records on ancestry & findmy past. Also called the "unburnt" records as were made up from records or part records held elsewhere in 1940 such as at the Ministry of Pensions.

Records are also on the **fold3.com** website. Different sites ^{MAY} ~~an~~ have varying records for the same man.

Household Cavalry records now on ancestry.

Guards Regiments now with Ministry of Defence.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records

If a soldier continued to serve 1920 or later (usually 7 or more digit number) his ww1 record should be at MoD or on its way to 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*. Apply at **www.gov.uk**

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

Royal Navy & RNVR records are I think now on ancestry, or findmypast.

Other

Surrey Recruitment Registers on findmypast. Recruitment in Surrey to many units, not just for the Surrey Regiments.

Irish Regiment Attestation Registers at the National Army Museum.

Silver War Badge register on ancestry & findmypast. Lists all badges given after discharge from army through wounds or sickness. Useful as it gives date of enlistment & sometimes whether served overseas.

Pension Cards. Six million cards (rescued from destruction by the Western Front Association). This is another source that includes home service men as well. Cards for any soldier or dependent who claimed a pension. Often lists children if under 16. These are on the pay site associated with **ancestry fold3.com** Also on www.westernfrontassociation.com (membership fee) you get other records for I think about £ 30 pa.

Newspapers often covered small events & larger ones in a soldier's life. **www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk** or The Times digital archive at galeapps.gale.com (free to WSCC library members via library website)

Casualty lists are at the National Library of Scotland, website: search.nls.uk

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

Military Tribunals under the 1916 Conscription Act. Those for Middlesex (at the National Archives) and Lothian & Peebles were kept but most others destroyed esp in WW2 waste paper drives. Some for Surrey, Portsmouth and Northamptonshire are on findmypast.

Medal Rolls and Medal Index Cards on ancestry & FMP. Separate medal Rolls for the 1914 & 1914/1915 Star than the British War Medal & Victory Medal

Did they serve under an alias ? Some are listed here: **www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/project-alias-the-results-and-a-searchable-database/**

When was a service number issued ? **armyservicenumbers.blogspot.com/2009/07/army-service-numbers-1881-1918-index.html**

If there is not a surviving service record a lot can be deduced by searching for surviving records for soldiers with near numbers, as they were usually issued in date order by the regiment/corps.

3

livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk was a Imperial War Museum attempt to gather a list of all serving from various sources.

National Roll of the Great War on ancestry. Includes those who survived as well if they paid to have an entry. Volumes not completed for all counties.

Absent Voters Lists 1918/1919/1920 If they survive gives soldiers unit & service number by street address. Lists of surviving registers on ancestry & www.longlongtrail.co.uk/?s=absent+voters

www.thegazette.co.uk should list all officers promotions & awards for all ranks WW1 and WW2

Medical Records After WW1 medical units were required to give in a 5% sample of their records. These are on findmypast under First World War Soldiers Medical Records.

Deserters. Lists & details of army deserters from 1812 to 1927 were published in the *Police Gazette*. This record set is on ancestry.

Soldiers killed in WW1

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. Not all WW1 deaths shown here esp if died of wounds after discharge.

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.

Death Certificates If died in the Uk have a civillian cert (may lead to inquest report), abroad a military cert which does not give much info & the french issued death certs for British who died in France.

School or University Memorial books eg:

roll-of-honour.com Listing of a lot of UK war memorials & the people on them often with extra biographical detail.

Scottish National War Memorial **snwm.org** As well as Scottish born soldiers lists any who died in Scottish regiments & those from units with Scottish connections eg 14th Londons (London Scottish).

Photos of war graves: **twgpp.org** (best coverage, but a fee) or **rememberourdead.weebly.com**

Sources on **ancestry.co.uk** (often duplicated on findmypast)

Soldiers Died in the Great War

De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour (bios that often have a photo & family details)

Bond of Sacrifice (bios of officers killed early in the war)

Army Register of Soldier's Effects Soldiers 1901-1929. Shows what the gratuity was & who got the outstanding pay. May give a more precise place of death & can work out how long served.

Second World War

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.

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.

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

Deaths in Second World War

Army Roll of Honour on ancestry.co.uk

Andrews Newspaper Card index on ancestry.

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.

5.

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

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 *Military Campaign Medal and Award Rolls, 1793-1949*.

Which regiment or Corps issued a service number ?
ww2talk.com/index.php?threads/army-number-block-allocations.4837/

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 & were supposed to be restricted to persons who had died over 116 years ago , but expect there may be exceptions. Still need to pay by cheque £30. If still at Mod timescales vary but after pandemic they had a two year back log & did not even open the post for a few months.

Apply at gov.uk.

Australian Service records for WW1 & WW2

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

Tracer cards on ancestry.

India

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