



TRACING FIRST WORLD WAR PARTICIPANTS

ARMY RECORDS: Information needed for researching your family member may be known in the family, contained on medals or surviving paperwork. Unfortunately approximately 60% of First World War Army records were destroyed during the London bombing of the Second World War. If a soldier died during the First World War then

information is readily available through the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)**. They hold records of those who died from 4th August 1914 to 31st August 1921. If your relative survived the war, the personal service records, if they survived the bombing, should be your starting point. Surviving records for other ranks up to 1920 can be accessed online through the subscription based website

www.ancestry.co.uk. Some libraries and county record offices have free access to this site. One of the few surviving records, the medal index cards, are also on Ancestry and give name, number, rank and unit served (not always the battalion number, e.g. 7th Royal Sussex) and sometimes the theatre of war in which he served and when he went overseas.

If you're relative was an officer and he left the army before April 1922 then surviving records are held at **The National Archives (TNA)** Kew. If your relative, either officer or other rank, left the army after 1920 then it is worth contacting the **Ministry of Defence's Army Personnel Centre**, Historic Disclosures, Mailpoint 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow, G2 8EX, Tel. 0141-224 2023. **www.veterans-uk.info**.

ROYAL NAVY RECORDS: Tracing records for **ratings** who were regular servicemen between 1873 and 1923 are now available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-seamen.htm

Royal Navy Officers' records up to 1917 are available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-officers-service-records.htm. Royal Navy Officers' service record cards from between 1840 and approximately 1920 are available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-officers-files.htm

Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve records (covering the dates 1903 to 1919 for ratings and 1914 to 1922 for officers) are held at TNA, but not all records have survived. Those that have can be consulted online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-volunteer-reserve-service-records.htm

Royal Naval Reserves records for the First World War (and up to 1955 for ratings) are available at TNA.

Royal Naval Division During the First World War there were more naval personnel than required so some of these were sent to fight as soldiers, but under naval orders. They formed the Royal Naval Division (RND). Their records of service are now at TNA. Service records for the RND can be found online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-division.htm.

Royal Marines. Officers and men in service up to 1925 are at TNA. Service records for men of the Royal Marines serving between 1842 and 1925 can now be found online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-marines-register-service.htm. Officers' records between 1793 and 1925 can be found online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/record/royal-naval-officers-service-records.htm. Some Royal Marine records are also held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum. *See below.*

Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). These too are held at TNA. Ratings' records may be available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/royal-naval-seamen.htm. The Royal Air Force (RAF) was created in April 1918 by amalgamating personnel from the RNAS and the Royal Flying Corp. *See below RAF.*

Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). 1917-1919 are at TNA and are available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/womens-royal-naval-service-ww1.htm.

Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service records pre-1929 are also held at TNA.

Campaign Medal records are held at TNA for the period up to 1921. These can be viewed online at www.ancestry.co.uk while records for officers can only be seen on www.findmypast.co.uk – both are subscription websites and are often available at County Record Offices and major libraries. For medals after this period see **Ministry of Defence Medal Office**.

ROYAL FLYING CORP & ROYAL AIR FORCE RECORDS: Surviving First World War service records for officers and other ranks that left the RAF before 1920 are held at TNA. RAF officers' records 1918-19 are available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/raf-officers-ww1.htm. Service records for RFC other ranks can now be accessed through www.ancestry.co.uk.

The records for any member of the RAF who saw service after 1920 or who re-joined after the First World War should still be held by **RAF Disclosures** (*see below*).

FOR CASUALTIES OF ALL THREE SERVICES SEE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION.

USEFUL REFERENCE MATERIAL

The publication *First World War Army Service Records* by William Spencer, The National Archives, 2008 is essential reading for First World War army records. TNA also has a number of useful research guides on their website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Tracing Your Royal Marine Ancestors by Richard Brooks and Matthew Little (Pen & Sword Books).

Tracing your Air Force Ancestors by Phil Tomaselli (Pen & Sword Books).

ADDRESSES AND WEB SITES

The National Archive (TNA), Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU. 020 8876 0717.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HT. 020 7730 0717. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk

Imperial War Museum London, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. 020 7416 5342. www.iwm.org.uk. Email collections@iwm.org.uk

Army Personnel Centre (APC) Disclosures 4, MP 555, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX.

Regimental Headquarters, Grenadier/Coldstream/Scots/Irish/Welsh Guards, Wellington Barracks, Birdcage Walk, London SW1E 6HQ.

RAF Museum Department of Research and Information Services, Royal Air Force Museum, Grahame Park Way, London NW9 5LL. 020 8205 2266. www.rafmuseum.org.uk

Ministry of Defence, Air Historical Branch (RAF), Building 824, RAF Northolt, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex HA4 6NG.

RAF Disclosures, Room 6, Trenchard Hall, RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG38 8HB.

Fleet Air Arm Museum, RNAS Yeovilton, near Ilchester, Somerset BA22 8HT. 01935 840 565.

www.fleetairarm.com.

CN Pers (Commodore Naval Personnel), Naval Disclosures Cell, Mailpoint G-2, Room 48, West Battery, Whale Island, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 8DX.

Ministry of Defence, Naval historical Branch, 24 Store PP20, Main Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LU.

National Museum of the Royal Navy (Portsmouth), HM Naval Base (PP66), Portsmouth, Hampshire PO1 3NH 023 9272 7562. www.royalnavalmuseum.org.

Royal Marines Museum, Eastney Esplanade, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO4 9PX.

www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk

Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Haslar Jetty Road, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 2AS. (*Email contact preferred*) archives@rnsusbmus.co.uk 023 9251 0354. www.submarine-museum.co.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7DX.

www.cwgc.org

Ministry of Defence Medal Office. Innsworth House, Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucestershire GL3 1HW

USEFUL WEB SITES: www.ancestry.co.uk; www.findmypast.co.uk; www.military-genealogy.com; www.1914-1918.net.

PLEASE NOTE: REGIMENTAL MUSEUMS DO NOT NORMALLY HOLD PERSONNEL RECORDS, BUT ARE USEFUL FOR BACKGROUND DETAILS OF UNITS I.E. WAR DIARIES, TRENCH MAPS, UNIT PHOTOGRAPHS ETC.

This information sheet has been compiled by John Chapman for the Sussex Family History Group. ©May 2014