



Tracing Second World War participants

Find out as much as you can about the people you wish to trace.

The age range for signing up for WW2 was 18-41, so that gives an approximate birth date of 1898 to 1921. If you know their Service Record Number this is extremely useful.

You will not be able to see anyone's actual Service Record, as these are only accessible by the official Next of Kin at a probable charge of £30.00 unless needed for pension purposes.
<https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>

FreeBMD and GRO Indexes (General Register Office) see the separate handout for Birth, Marriage, Death Certificates

Findmypast (fmp) commercial website often available free in record offices and libraries

1939 Register see the separate handout Poll Books, Electoral Registers and 1939 Register.

Prisoner of War Records (fmp)

This database contains a listing of World War II British Army, Navy and Air Force prisoners of war (POW). Information provided about them includes:

Name, Rank, Branch of the armed forces, Regiment, POW number, Camp type, Camp number, Camp location, Record office, Record Office number, Notes.

The Geneva Convention of 1929 established the rules for the treatment of prisoners of war that were used in World War II. Over 100,000 soldiers of the British Armed Forces were captured and placed in prisoner of war camps. The POW camps run by the Germans were:

Oflag - camp for officers, Stalag - camp for enlisted personnel

There were separate camps for navy, aircrews, and civilians.

The German camps were named according to a numbering system, beginning with a Roman numeral representing the military district the camp was located in. Following the Roman numeral could be a letter. This letter represented a specific camp within the military district. If the camp was a sub-camp, "/Z" was then appended to the end of the number. If the camp was a main camp, then the "/H" was appended to the end of the number. You will see this nomenclature in the "Camp number" field of this database.

British Army Casualty Lists 1939-1945 (fmp)

Each record will display both a transcript and an original image. The original images are held at The National Archives in Surrey and have been digitised and indexed for Findmypast. The information in the transcripts can vary, but most will include the following:

Name, Year, Capture year, Service number, Rank, Rank as abbreviation, Regiment, Regiment as abbreviation, Theatre of war, Archive reference, Piece description, Archive

The image may provide you with additional information. The letter 'L' or 'CL' and a number or a number on its own refers to another casualty list. The casualty lists are numbered. Use the previous/next buttons to move through the documents to view other list numbers.

About UK, Army Roll of Honour, 1939-1945 (fmp)

This is a listing of British Army casualties from World War II.

The original data comes from the National Archives records series WO 304, War Office: Roll of Honour, Second World War, compiled from various War Office records between 1944 and 1949. The data was transcribed by the Naval & Military Press and published on CD.

Information recorded on the Roll of Honour includes:

Name of soldier, Initials, titles, and decorations, Birthplace, Residence, Enlisted rank, Rank at time of death, Enlisted Regiment, Regiment at time of death, Theater[?] of War or country where wounded or died, Death date

About Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910-1950 (Ancestry)

This database contains approximately 28,000 index cards and 34 photograph albums of aviators who were issued with their flying licences (certificates) by the Royal Aero Club from 1910-1950. These included the first military and naval personnel to become pilots.

The Royal Aero Club is the national organization for air sport, including private and recreational flying, in the United Kingdom.

Index Cards:

There is one card per pilot. On the front side of the card is information about the pilot:

Name, Birth date, Birthplace, Nationality, Rank, regiment, or profession, Date and place of certificate, Certificate number.

On the back there may be a photograph of the pilot.

Photo Albums: the 34 photo albums contain approximately 13,000 photographs of Royal Aero Club pilots, organized according to certificate number. Album no. 4 is missing.

In the search results for an individual, you will be presented with a set of images. The images will consist of the front and backs of the index cards and photo album pages. For some individuals there may only be images from the index cards and for other individuals there will be images from both the index cards and the photo albums. For these individuals, the images from the index cards and photo albums have been linked using the pilot's certificate number. This number is unique to individual pilots in the club. To see multiple images for a single individual, use the "Next" and "Previous" buttons in the image viewer to navigate among the images.

Other commercial sites: Ancestry.uk, Genes Reunited, see Useful Websites handout

Newspapers see also Newspapers handout

Genes Reunited, Ancestry and FMP also have newspaper archives.

Many sources are the same as for the First World War see Handout Tracing First World War Participants.

Libraries and Record Offices

Army (355.33), Navy (359.33) and Air Force (358.433) Lists: Officers only.

Check with your library for the years they cover.