



Researching the Roll Of Honour

This is an introductory guide to help with research of servicemen and women. It is not intended to be comprehensive but it should start a path to learning and finding out more about an individual, who they served with and where they went.

The Ministry of Defence use a lot of abbreviations and acronyms which can make it hard to understand the information when you do discover it. This useful document provides an alphabetical list, there are so many that it is 402 pages long!

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ebee940f0b6230268b464/20140808_MOD_Acronyms_and_Abbreviations.pdf

National Archives, Kew

The National Archives is the official archive for the UK government and for England and Wales. It is the guardian of some of our most iconic national documents, dating back over 1,000 years.

Second World War records at The National Archives are records once held by central government departments, especially the departments responsible for the British Army, the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy and the Royal Air Force. Among them are records of service for individuals, operational plans and reports, administrative records of various kinds all the way up to those documenting top level government policy and decision making. These are the original records, most of them paper, that played some part in the working life of these departments and the branches of the military which they governed. Some records are available to view online or by ordering copies. Some documents have not been digitalised so may only be available to view by visiting the Reading Rooms at the National Archives by appointment.

The Ministry of Defence are in the process of transferring all Second World War records to The National Archives and a huge project is underway to catalogue and digitise these records. For more information, visit their website or click on the link below.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-projects/ministry-of-defence-service-records/>



To assist the researcher, The National Archives have produced a host of guidance documents, the one below relates to the Second World War but there are many more to look at.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/second-world-war/>

Military Service Record

This document details an individual's history within the military. It covers the period from enlistment to discharge and will include where, when and with which units they have served.

These records contain personal information therefore some may remain closed until 115 years past the birth of the individual. Whether or not the material can be open to all, or closed fully or in part, is assessed on a case by case basis. Family members can apply for a copy of a service record and sometimes service records appear on family history sites such as Ancestry, if they have been made public.

Search the Regiment or Squadron

The Memorial's Roll of Honour provides the name of the regiment or squadron that an individual served in. A simple online search can provide a wealth of information and many regiments and squadrons have websites as well as museums with lots of material about their history and those that served in them. Each individual unit compiled a war diary during times of conflict, which details what happened every day. Some websites may have digital copies of these diaries that you can view and read. These records can help you track the movements of the units and the battles and skirmishes they may have faced.

The Ogilby Trust have a list of Army museums on their website.

<https://www.armymuseums.org.uk/museum-directory/>



Research Guides

Many organisations have written guides to assist the researcher, a few of them are listed below but there will be many more. Just have a search on the internet and see what you can find!

D-Day Story Portsmouth:-

<https://thedaystory.com/discover/family-history/>

National Army Museum:-

<https://www.nam.ac.uk/collections/how-research-former-soldier>

Imperial War Museums:-

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/tracing-your-family-history>

National Museums Liverpool:-

<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/archives-centre/information-sheets/naval-and-military-history-archive-information-sheets>

Royal Museums Greenwich:-

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/search?search-term=research+guides>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/caird-library/family-history-research>

Royal Navy National Museum:-

https://www.nmrn.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-10/Researching_Naval_Personnel.pdf

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

Searching the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website can identify where an individual was laid to rest and it may provide other burial documents. It also has an online archive, mainly relating to its history. The mission of the Commission is to ensure those who died in service, or as a result of conflict, are commemorated so that they, and the human cost of war, are remembered for ever.



Family History Sites

Family history organisations have worked with many archives to digitalise records, including military records. The main commercial sites are listed below but there are others.

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

Being a member of a public library should give access to most records held by Ancestry for free using their Library Edition.

Find My Past is another site that may be worth exploring.

- <https://www.findmypast.co.uk>

Other sources

WW2 Talk is a comprehensive web forum where people can ask questions and search topics which members have posted about <https://ww2talk.com/index.php>

France Crashes 39 – 45 is an inventory of combat crashes and air accidents for the period of 1939 – 1945. It is an excellent source of information <http://francecrashes39-45.net/#>

British Newspaper Archive is a platform to view newspapers. Some are free to view but others require a subscription or the purchase of credits.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Local Information

Towns and cities often have local historical societies or museums and local amateur historians who can help you with research. It is well worth visiting local libraries to see what local literature may be available in print.

Hopefully this guide has given you some ideas to start your research, good hunting!