



# Tracing your wartime ancestor



## Local Studies Genealogy Guide No. 23

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Newcastle Libraries

The aim of this guide is provide suggestions of sources of information on wartime ancestors.

### **Starting Point**

Before you start looking for your ancestor it is best to have the following to hand;

- Full name – middle name is a bonus
- Date of birth
- Service in which they served
- Rank and regiment or ship or squadron
- When they served
- Significant events (enlistment, demobilisation, injury, etc)

### **British Army**

Records before 1921 are held by the National Archives at Kew and can be viewed online by using Ancestry or Find My Past. The microfilm can be viewed at Kew.

National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DY

Tel: 020 8876 3444

Website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Records after 1921 are held by the Ministry of Defence and can only be viewed by a member of the next of kin if a service person is deceased. The following address should be used for family members wishing to access records of deceased soldiers

Army Personnel Centre,  
Historical Disclosures,  
Mail Point 555,  
Kentigern House,  
65 Brown Street,  
Glasgow,  
G2 8EX

### **Royal Air Force**

Records before 1924 are held by The National Archives as above and can be viewed online using Ancestry or Find My Past.

Records after 1924 are held by the RAF and can be contacted at the following address;

RAF Disclosures  
Room 221B  
Trenchard Hall  
RAF Cranwell  
Sleaford  
Lincolnshire  
Telephone: 01400 261201 ext 8176, 8172, 8173

### **Royal Navy**

Records before 1924 are held by The National Archives as above and are available online by using Ancestry or Find My Past.

Until 1972 records were given to the individual on discharge. The Royal Navy can be contacted at;

Fleet DN Pers Disclosure Cell  
MP G2  
Room 48  
West Battery  
Whale Island  
Portsmouth  
PO2 8SX

### **Medals**

Medal rolls can be searched online using Ancestry or Find My Past. Historical medal rolls are held by The National Archives. Medal were announced in the London Gazette, which can be searched online at [www.london-gazette.co.uk](http://www.london-gazette.co.uk) and Newcastle City Library has copies which can be viewed on request.

Further information about medals can be found by contacting the MOD Medal Office.

MOD Medal Office  
Building 250  
Imjin Barracks  
Gloucester  
GL3 1HW

Telephone: 0800 085 3600

### **War Graves**

You can trace graves and resting places online at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) . The website also has information about each cemetery and may also have an image of the grave you are looking for. The organisation can also be contacted at:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
2 Marlow Road  
Maidenhead  
Berkshire  
SL6 7DX  
Telephone: 01628 634221

### **War memorials**

The North East War Memorials Project can be found at [www.newmp.org.uk](http://www.newmp.org.uk) . You can search by name or town. Similar projects exist across the country and are useful for tracing memorials in less obvious locations such as schools and workplaces.

### **Prisoners of War**

Records are available on Ancestry and Find My Past, the First World War records only list officers.

The Swiss Red Cross hold records on where prisoners were held as part of their role in forwarding mail and parcels. They can be contacted and there is a charge for searches.

Archives Division and Research Service  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
19 Avenue de la Paix  
Geneva CH-1202  
Switzerland.

Website: [www.icrc.org/eng](http://www.icrc.org/eng) (click on Info Resource, and then ICRC Information Sources – an electronic application form can be found under Archives)

### **Regimental records**

The regiments have a variety of records and memorabilia including war diaries and photos. Consult a regiment's website to find where the records are kept and how you can gain access.

Durham Light Infantry  
Durham Record Office  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UL

Website: [www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk](http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk)  
Email: [record.office@durham.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@durham.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0191 383 3253

Northumberland Fusiliers  
The Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland  
Abbots Tower  
Alnwick Castle  
Alnwick  
Northumberland  
NE66 1NG

Website: [www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk)  
Email: [fusnorthld@aol.com](mailto:fusnorthld@aol.com)  
Telephone: 01665 602 152

The Imperial War Museum  
Lambeth Road  
London  
SE1 6HZ

Website: [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 7416 5000

### **Regimental Museums**

For details of regimental museums and archives view [www.armymuseums.org.uk](http://www.armymuseums.org.uk) .

### **Newspapers**

The Illustrated Chronicle published photographs of servicemen who were in the news usually for being wounded, killed, promoted or awarded medals for gallantry. At times of heavy casualties there may be a time lag of 6-8 weeks for a photograph to appear. Images from The Illustrated Chronicle are available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/illustratedchronicleww1/> .

All local newspapers may carry news of significant events involving individuals and relatives or friends may have placed a death notice. Reporting restrictions often meant that reports on the sinking of ships or military operations were deliberately vague and would be unable to report the name of a stricken vessel or be specific about troops' locations. Newspapers would often carry articles about evacuees (again they would be vague about locations) and stories about the home front featuring the likes of munitions workers, women volunteers and the home guard.

A list of the newspapers held by Newcastle City Library can be found at <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/leisure-libraries-and-tourism/libraries/local-studies-and-family-history#factsheets> or we have a fact sheet to consult on Level 6 of the City Library.

Newspapers can be searched online at the British Newspaper Archive [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) that can be searched for free, articles can be viewed for free using a Newcastle Libraries PC, otherwise there is a charge.

### **National Archives**

The National Archives have vast holdings and it is worth consulting their website to see what records are held. The website also has a number of interesting podcasts and explanations of abbreviations used in documents.

National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DY

Telephone: 020 8876 3444

Website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### **Tyne and Wear Archives**

Useful for information about the home front, civil defence and non military operations.

Tyne & Wear Archives  
Discovery Museum  
Blandford Square  
Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear  
NE1 4JA

Telephone: (0191) 277 2248

Website: <http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/tyne-and-wear-archives.html>

Email: [info@twarchives.org.uk](mailto:info@twarchives.org.uk)

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Newcastle Libraries  
Charles Avison Building  
33 New Bridge Street West  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 8AX

Tel: 0191 2774100

Email: [information@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:information@newcastle.gov.uk)