

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY



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## SEARCHING FOR A WORLD WAR ONE ANCESTOR

This leaflet is only a very brief guide. Many of the records for army, air and navy personnel have been digitised and the National Archives website (TNA) ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/research](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/research)) has more detailed information about the records it holds, those that can be viewed online on their site and those available on commercial sites such as Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)) and FindMyPast ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk)) . **Please do read the research guides on TNA website as they will direct you to what is available and where to look.**

(Both of the commercial sites can be viewed for free at local libraries or the Record Office. Please also bear in mind that WW1 army service records were bomb-damaged in WW2 and consequently only about 40% survive).

### ALL SERVICES – KILLED IN ACTION

- If he was killed, details should be recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission – see [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)
- Information should include name, regiment, rank, number, date of death, where buried or commemorated and occasionally next of kin.
- Look on the local war memorial to see if he is listed.
- Check the Roll of Honour website for the county (not complete coverage).
- Check National Inventory of War Memorials – via [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)
- Search ‘Soldiers died in the Great War’ on Ancestry/FindMyPast (name, rank, place of birth/residence, date of death).
- You may find an obituary and sometimes a photograph in local newspapers.

### ARMY

- Check Ancestry or FindMyPast to see if service records survive.
- If he was discharged before the end of the war, he may have been entitled to the Silver War Badge. (Ancestry)
- If you are not sure of his regiment, check the Medal Record Cards (Ancestry/TNA) – these will give regiment, number and medal entitlement (before 1916 should also give date first served overseas). However, as only indexed by name and forename, it can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint the correct one.
- Officer’s records can be searched online on TNA website and some can be downloaded for a small fee.
- Household Cavalry records can be searched online on TNA website.

### PRISONERS OF WAR

For those men captured by the enemy, records were held by the International Red Cross. These have been digitised and can now be searched online at [www.grandeguerre.icrc.org/](http://www.grandeguerre.icrc.org/) Details include name, forename, regiment and number, where and when captured and camp where held.

### GALLANTRY AWARDS

- Please see the detailed research notes on TNA website for more information.
- Details of the award (but not always the citation) should appear in the London Gazette and its supplements.

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## GENERAL

- If you know the regiment, then there are many online sites detailing the battles and engagements that the regiment took part in. See [www.1914-1918.net](http://www.1914-1918.net) , [www.nam.ac.uk](http://www.nam.ac.uk), [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk) or use a search engine.
- War Diaries are held at the National Archives and are in the process of being digitised. They give locations, daily reports on operations, intelligence and may include trench maps and battle orders. You may find an officer's name listed but rarely are other ranks mentioned.
- Regimental museums may have some information.
- Regimental/divisional histories can be very informative.
- The Western Front Association holds details of the pension record cards – details of how to access these are on their website: [www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)
- He may also be recorded in the National Roll of the Great War (printed volumes – local libraries, online on Ancestry) – however, the family had to pay to insert an entry so only a small percentage are included.
- Check the Absent Voters Lists for 1918, 1919 and 1920. If he was still serving and entitled to vote, he should be listed as absent with details of his regiment and number. These are usually held at the local Record Office.

## ROYAL NAVY

- The National Archives has Registers of Seamen's Service from 1853-1923. They usually detail the names and dates of the ships on which he served.
- Using a search engine, you can often find out more about the ship and any battles/engagements that it took part in.
- Medal rolls can be searched on Ancestry.

## ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE

- Most records will be found at The National Archives, look at the research guide on their site for what is available.
- Medal rolls can be searched on Ancestry.
- Some records are also held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum.
- Some ratings also served in battle as part of the Royal Naval Division and may appear with army records.

## MERCHANT NAVY

- Records for 1913-1917 have not survived.
- If you know the ship, then you may find details on crew lists (TNA or National Maritime Museum).

## ARMY NURSE

- There are various units that a nurse may have served with. Please see TNA website for more information.

## AIR FORCE

- The RAF came into being in 1918. Some records are on FindMyPast.
- Officer's records are held at TNA.



If you are researching Northamptonshire ancestors, then why not visit our website

**[www.northants-fhs.org](http://www.northants-fhs.org)**

and find out more about the Society including meetings (4 a month),  
quarterly journal, resources, publications,  
memorial inscription booklets, databases and more!