

Tracing Military Records at Surrey History Centre



In 2003 Surrey History Centre received the records of the Queens Royal Surrey Regiment and its predecessors from the Regimental Museum at Clandon Park, now held here under references QRWS, ESR and QRS. The records hold a wealth of information relating to the regiments and many of those who served in them and there is a separate guide to assist navigating the catalogue. We also hold Queen's Royal (West Surrey) and East Surrey Regiments Recruitment District registers, 1908-1933 (SHC ref 2496), nominal rolls for officers of the Queen's Royal (West Surrey) and East Surrey Regiments, 1914-1919 (SHC ref 8227) and registers of enlistments, discharges and transfers for the Queen's Royal (West Surrey) and East Surrey Regiments, 1894 - 1958 (SHC ref 7791).

Discover the history of the Surrey regiments and those who served in them

The records of the Surrey regiments span 300 years and contain a treasure trove of documents and images of the regiments' service across Europe, Africa, India and the Far East. They include the records of the Queen's Royal (West Surrey) Regiment (formerly the 2nd Foot), the East Surrey Regiment (formerly the 31st and 70th Regiments) and the Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment. We also hold an extensive collection of published sources such as regimental and battalion histories and the regimental journals and can provide a bibliography on request. The journals have been indexed and are an invaluable source for tracking the careers and lives of individual soldiers, particularly officers.

The Surrey Infantry Museum holds artefacts and medals associated with the regiments although much was lost in the fire of 2015. Telephone 01483 770761 for further details.

'Buried Battles and Veterans' Voices'

The records of the regiments and the memories of soldiers who served in them, have been preserved and made accessible for all to enjoy thanks to 'Buried Battles and Veterans' Voices', a Heritage Lottery funded project. You can search the catalogues online via Surrey History Centre's website www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre and the TNA Discovery website discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk.



Papers relating to Private Edward George Cutt, B Company, 9th Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment, killed at the Battle of Loos in September 1915, less than a month after arriving at the Front

A 'virtual archive' of clips from interviews with some of those who saw service with the regiments can be found on the Surrey Infantry Museum website www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk which can also be accessed via the Surrey History Centre website.

For further details of the project 'Buried Battles and Veterans' Voices' please see our website.

Service records: Army

Although the records include many sources which give names of individuals, they do not include service records for individual soldiers. The purpose of this leaflet is to outline some of the resources you may find helpful if you are trying to track down your ancestor's service record.

The MOD's Veterans UK website gives up to date contact details for all service record enquiries (www.veterans-uk.info/). However the following guide gives details of what records are available and where they can be accessed.

There are three sources for these records, depending on when the individual served.

For serving officers and soldiers and those whose regular or reserve service ended after 1997:

Army Personnel Centre, MS Support Division
Parliamentary & Disclosure Branch
Disclosure 1, Mailpoint 520,
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street,
Glasgow, G2 8EX
Tel: 0845 600 9663

For officers and soldiers whose regular or reserve service ended between 1921 and 1997:

Army Personnel Centre,
MS Support Division
Parliamentary & Disclosure
Branch
Historical Disclosures,
Mailpoint 555, Kentigern House,
65 Brown Street,
Glasgow G2 8EX
Telephone: 0845 600 9663
Email: apc_historical_disclosures.com

It is important to note that that the Ministry of Defence does not normally release information from a service record to persons other than the individual concerned or their next of kin. There is a search fee for third party genealogical enquiries which currently stands at £30.00.

There may be a long delay with your application.



Troop movements between the lines, somewhere on the Western Front, 1916

Ex-soldiers wishing to access their personal records should write to:

Army Personnel Centre
Disclosure 2
Mail Point 515
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow
G2 8EX

For officers and soldiers pre 1921

As a result of bomb damage in 1940 only about 25% to 30% of soldiers' records from the period 1914-1920 have survived. The surviving records can be found at The National Archives in Kew, reference WO363 (The Burnt Documents) which are supplemented by WO364. These can now be consulted via the website www.ancestry.co.uk.

The main series of soldiers' discharge papers 1760-1913 are in WO96 for the militia and volunteers and WO97 for the regular army. Officers' service records can be found in WO25 and WO76 with the bare bones being found in the Army Lists.

For the 1st World War, officers' papers are held in either WO339 or WO374, with an index held in WO338. For further information on military records held at the National Archives, go to their website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.



QRWS Pte Johnson at Anzio

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Indian Army (until 1947)

Asia, Pacific and
Africa Collections
British Library
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB



'Tiffin in the jungle, Christmas 1893'. 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment, relaxing in India

www.bl.uk/collections/orientaloffice.html

If you are trying to trace a former comrade, placing an advertisement in one of the following may be useful:

Soldier Magazine

Parson's House
Ordnance Road
Aldershot
Hampshire
GU11 2DU

Tel: 01252 347351
Fax: 01252 347358

The Legion

Magazine of the Royal British Legion
48 Pall Mall
London
SW1Y 5JY
Tel: 020 7973 7200
Fax: 020 7973 7399

Website: www.britishlegion.org.uk

You could also try contacting the Regimental Association, or request the branch which deals with army service records to forward a letter to the last known address.

Service Records: Royal Navy

Prior to 1972 all Royal Navy (RN) personnel were given their service record when they were discharged. For pension purposes the RN retained pay details. Therefore the only information held on RN personnel who served prior to 1972 are their service details (number, rank, name etc) and a list of dates and ships/shore bases.

Commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks who entered or enlisted into the service during or before 1924.

Commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks service records from the introduction of Continuous Service (CS) in 1853 until 1872 are in ADM139 and continued from 1873 to 1923 in ADM188. These records are held by the National Archives as Kew.



*Barbara Craster
(WRNS)*

Commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks who enlisted as regular service entrants or national servicemen after 1924.

For records contact:

Royal Navy & Royal Marines
Royal Naval Disclosure Cell MP 1.3
Leach Building
Whale Island
Portsmouth PO2 8DY

Telephone: 02392 628667/70

Records of commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks who entered the service before 1930, approximately, are held at The National Archives.

The records of commissioned officers and non-commissioned ranks who entered the service during or after 1930, approximately, are held by the MOD.

Service Records: Royal Marines

Royal Marine enquiries should be sent to the same address as for the Royal Navy. This also applies to commissioned officers who are currently serving, or are retired, and service records from 1939 onwards.

The MOD will normally only release the information given in service records of the Royal Navy and the Marines to the subjects of those records, or to their next of kin; and it may charge a search fee, which cannot be refunded.

Service Records: Royal Air Force

Royal Air Force personnel records are held at RAF Cranwell. If service number and details are known, please quote it in correspondence.

Cranwell will only divulge information to the person to whom it refers or, if he or she has died, to his or her immediate next of kin. Anyone else must obtain written permission from the person about whom they are enquiring, or from his or her next of kin, before any information will be given to them. There is a charge made for any information they provide. The only people exempt from charges are the person to whom the records refer or their widow or widower.

You should write to:

RAF Disclosures
Room 221b
Trenchard Hall
RAF Cranwell
Sleaford
Lincs NG34 8HB

Precursors of the RAF



Handley Page arriving at Lahore

Records for the precursors of the RAF (the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS)) are held at The National Archives, as are RAF records for service during the First World War. These cover service records of RAF officers that served prior to 1922 (AIR76) and airmen that served prior to 1924 (AIR79).

Records of RFC officers, 1914-March 1918, were forwarded to the RAF and are in AIR76. If the airman died or was discharged from the RFC before April 1918, look in WO363 or WO364 (see Army Records section). Records of the first 329,000 men who served in the RFC before 1 April 1918, and in the RAF (formerly RFC and RNAS) from 1 April 1918 are in AIR79. Records of those men within the service number range 1-329000 who went on to see service in the Second World War and records of men whose service number was 329001 or higher, are still maintained by the RAF.

Records of RNAS officers, 1914-March 1918, are in ADM273; after March 1918, look in AIR76. For airmen who served in the RNAS before April 1918, their records of service up to 31 March 1918 will be found in ADM188. If they served after April 1918, their records were kept from then on by the RAF.

Information about casualties is deemed to be personal and only enquiries in writing from or on behalf of next of kin can normally be considered. Casualty enquiries are dealt with by:

Service Personnel & Veterans Agency (SPVA)
Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre
Building 182
RAF Innsworth
Gloucester
GL3 1HW

and:

Air Historical Branch (RAF)
Building 266
RAF Bentley Priory
Stanmore
Middlesex
HA7 3HH

Air Historical Branch (RAF) also maintain historical records relating to individual aircraft.

Medals and Decorations

Post 1920 medals are administered by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Medal Office.

Service Personnel &
Veterans Agency (SPVA)
Joint Administration
Centre
MOD Medal Office,
Building 250
Innsworth Station
Gloucester
GL3 1HW
Tel: 0141 224 3600



VC Medal

This office is also the authority for all questions concerning the entitlement to current campaign medals.

The Office provides two main services:

- 1) The issue of medals post WW1 to those entitled persons who have never received them.
- 2) The replacement of medals under certain conditions for entitled personnel.

In both instances, an initial letter should be sent to the Medal Office explaining the precise request and the circumstances behind it. As much of the following information as possible concerning the original recipient or entitled person should be included and where possible backed up with photocopies only of supporting documentation (entitlement to medals is only determined from original records held by the relevant Service): full name, date of birth; service number; date of joining first unit; and date of leaving/transfer/demob.

Replacement of medals is only offered to the recipient or the immediate next of kin, and then only when clear and documented proof of loss is provided.

Where a question concerns an event over seventy years ago, the National Archives at Kew should be the first point of contact.

Enquiries about decorations for gallantry and distinguished service (except those relating to Northern Ireland) prior to 1980 should be addressed to The National Archives. Almost all gallantry awards are published in the official Government newspaper, the *London Gazette*, or, where appropriate, in its Colonial or Dominion equivalent. The National Archives has a full set of the *London Gazette* (ZJ1) but it is also available in some major reference libraries, and is online at <http://www.gazette-online.co.uk>.



North West Frontier

There was always a delay, often a considerable one, between the gallant deed, the actual award of a medal, and publication in the *Gazette*. Therefore it is a good idea to consult The *Gazette* indexes in order to establish an exact date.

As well as the public announcement, there may survive a citation (a brief official statement of why the medal was awarded), or a recommendation (usually a fuller statement, by the commanding officer, from which the citation was written). However, sometimes actual citations are published in the *London Gazette*, not always at the same date as the announcement.

Citations for the Victoria Cross (for all services) were usually published in full.

Citations and recommendations may survive in the records of each service, although this is not always the case.

For records of decorations and citations to RAF personnel, contact :

MOD Medal Office
Building 250
AFPAA
RAF Innsworth
Gloucestershire
GL3 1EZ

Surrey History Centre holds a large number of records relating to the county's involvement in conflicts and other military activities, including the English Civil War, Crimean War, later nineteenth century defence measures, the Boer War and the First World War.



Officer in the 17th Century

A vast amount of material is also held relating to both civilian and military activities in Surrey during the Second World War, including the Civil Defence services and Home Guard.

You may search our catalogues for military references online using the Collections Catalogue (www.surreyarchives.org.uk) and the Exploring Surrey's Past website (www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk) to search for records. If you cannot find what you are looking for, you are welcome to contact us and we will advise which sources we hold relating to your particular research interest.

It is worth noting that early records relating to military activity in the county may be contained within less obvious sources in the archives.



Grenadier 1751

For example, records relating to the raising of the local militia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries survive in the Loseley manuscripts (Refs: LM/- and 6729/-) as well as in some Surrey parish records.

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Film

A small collection of archive film footage of Surrey during the First and Second World Wars and the Surrey regiments is available for viewing in our public searchroom; a full list can be found on our website.



Online resources

You can access the Library Editions of Ancestry.com and Find My Past free of charge in Surrey Libraries and at Surrey History Centre. These sites include many military sources, such as The National Archives' indexes of the British Army World War I service records, medal rolls and pensions, silver war badge records, naval and Flying Corps records and much more.

Books, periodicals and published works relating to military history in Surrey can be located online using the Surrey Libraries Virtual Library Catalogue, www.surreylibraries.org/

The Battalion War Diaries for the Queen's Royal West Surrey and East Surrey Regiments, 1914 - 1918, have been digitised and are now available online via the website of the Surrey Infantry Museum, www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk

You can also explore and search many of the collections held at Surrey History Centre through the Exploring Surrey's Past website (<https://www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk/>). This facility can also be used to discover more about the military history and archaeology of the county through the Historic Environment Record (HER) and records from a number of partner museums and local history organisations.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

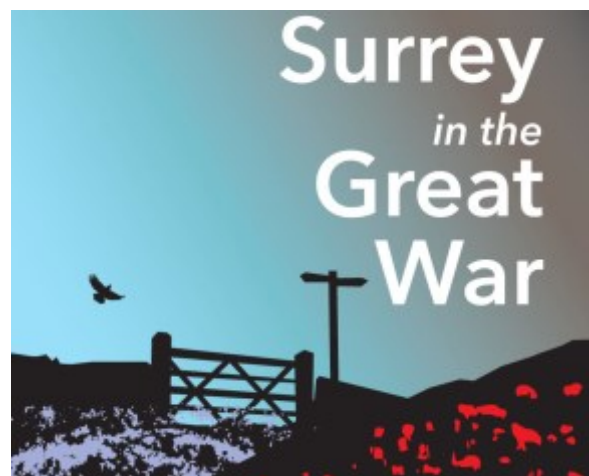


QRWS/2/14/5/63 Malaya

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org) provides an online search facility for the Debt of Honour Register. This database lists the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two world wars and the 23,000 cemeteries, memorials and other locations worldwide.

It also includes details of the 67,000 Commonwealth civilians who died as a result of enemy action in the Second World War.

Surrey in the Great War: A County Remembers.



This five year project, run by Surrey Heritage and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to discover how the 1914-1918 conflict affected those left behind.

The website includes stories and articles reflecting how the Great War impacted on families, towns, villages, schools and communities in Surrey, from soldiers' experiences to stories from the home front and Belgian refugees.

This project is ongoing, and volunteers and local historians across the entire county have come together with the common aim of creating a global, accessible and enduring resource which will tell Surrey's story during the Great War.

The website aims to record the lives and service of all the men and women whose names are on war memorials in Surrey. It will not only be a comprehensive 21st century digital memorial but also a resource to enable people to explore, discover and understand the impact of the war on their local area and community.



Mobilisation of the Croydon Territorials

August 1914

(<https://www.surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk>)

While we make every effort to ensure our information is correct, we cannot be held responsible for sudden changes in Ministry of Defence policies or addresses relating to service records.

Surrey History Centre in Woking, Surrey, England, collects and rescues archives and printed materials relating to Surrey's past and present. You are welcome to visit us and it's free to do so. Further details about all our services, facilities and the resources we hold for Surrey's history can be found on our website

www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre

Please Contact:

Surrey History Centre
130 Goldsworth Road
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6ND

Telephone: **01483 518737**
Fax: **01483 518738**
e-mail: shs@surreycc.gov.uk

Opening Hours

Monday	CLOSED
Tuesday	9.30-5.00
Wednesday	10.15-5.00
Thursday	9.30-5.00
Friday	9.30-5.00
Saturday	9.30-4.00

**The Centre is closed on Sundays
and Bank Holiday weekends
(including Saturdays)**