

The Allied Air Forces Memorial & Yorkshire Air Museum Guide to Research

The purpose of this document is to assist individuals in conducting their own research on former service personnel. It breaks down the different avenues of research publicly available and how and where to access them with an index listing at the rear of this document for ease of consultation. The questions detailed below have been especially selected as they represent logical and effective focal points within which to begin your research, which can in turn, be easily progressed as your research naturally develops.

There is an overwhelming array of online resources available to this end. This document has been broken down in to the following Frequently Asked Questions format:

1. How do I obtain information on Service Numbers?
2. How do I obtain information on Service Records?
3. How do I locate information on Forces War Records?
4. How do I locate information on Family history Sites?
5. How do I find out about Aircraft losses?
6. How do I locate information on Burial sites/Memorials?
7. How do I locate Gallantry Awards/Officer Promotions information?
8. How do I locate Squadron Records?
9. How do I locate information on Prisoners of War?
10. Where do I locate information on Evaders?
11. Generic Information

Each aforementioned question is discussed in detail in its own right, with links to resources available on line and in some cases detailing the particular libraries/archives to visit which are available for public consultation by prior arrangement. The majority of the sources listed offer free access to their data, however, please be mindful of charges that may apply to obtain particular records, and that some sites may offer a free trial period. For example, Ancestry offers a free 14 day trial and then begins charging a subscription service thereafter. Where a charge applies this has been cited, however, of course, it is down to the individual to confirm such matters at the time of research.

The Yorkshire Air Museum and Allied Forces Memorial hosts a wealth of information supported by a very well-resourced and proactive Archive department. The Archive is accredited under the National Archive scheme which means that all material has to be catalogued and preserved in a particular format. Contact information for the Archive team is located in the Closing Information section at the rear of this document, on page nine.

The Museum's primary objective is the education of all who come to visit the Museum, ensuring that the history of aviation is well documented in the public domain, from aviation's birth, through both world wars (particularly WW2), right through to present day; this is reflected in the collection of aircraft on display at the Museum which spans the

ages. It is hoped that a visit to the Museum, which is also recognised as a memorial to all allied forces, acts as a way of people continuing to remember and honour the sacrifices made by all sectors of the armed forces, inclusive of the sacrifices continuing to be made in recent and ongoing armed conflicts.

1. How do I obtain Information on Service Numbers?

This is essential for obtaining any information attaining to service records. If you haven't got a service number for example the following link may help www.nationalarchives.gov.uk and click on "help with your research". From here you can begin filtering your search parameters. This is a freely available resource, however please be aware this is a time consuming process.

2. How do I obtain Information on Service Records?

The following website www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records provides forms which you download and populate. You can apply for information either for yourself if you are a former serving officer or for another. Please bear in mind that you may need to support your application with official supporting documentation i.e. birth certificates; each submitted application costs £30.

The records are dated from 1920. With each approved application you receive information regarding date of birth and date of passing and brief service information i.e. the regiment they were assigned to for example and their length of service.

Other service record resources to consider:

Royal Flying Corps (RFC)/Royal Air Force (RAF) service records: many records are only available online, sometimes on more than one site. Some records are free to view but others are available on either a subscription or pay per view basis.

Royal Canadian Air Force: www.ba-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage this enables free online access to service records. However, please be advised that some records can contain gruesome details of the state of the body; provides research aids/databases and a wealth of other resources.

Royal Australian Air Force: if they have been digitised, they hold free online access to complete files available through the National War Memorial site. This is available via www.awm.gov.au

The National Archives (TNA): holds the service records for men who served up to 1922. Their service, rank and dates determine which set of records you need as detailed below:

- RFC airman who died or were discharged before 1 April 1918 - British Army service records (see Tracing Army Family History guide) Lives Of The First World War, Find My Past, Ancestry (WO363) / Ancestry (WO364) however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- RNAS ratings including those who served in the Royal Navy before July 1914 - Register of Seamen's Services (ADM 188) on The National Archives, Lives of the First World War, Find My Past, Ancestry, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- RAF airmen (service numbers 1 to 562875) including RFC airmen and RNAS ratings who transferred to the RAF on 1 April 1918 - RAF airmen's' service records (AIR 79) on

Lives Of The First World War and Find My Past, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.

- All non-officer members of the RAF on 1 April 1918 - listed in the Royal Air Force Muster Roll in numerical order - on RAF Museum website available for free, and on Lives Of The First World War and Find My Past websites, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- RFC officers who served between 1914 and March 1918 - RAF officers service records (AIR 76) on The National Archives, Lives Of The First World War and Find My Past, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- RNAS officers who served before 1918 - RNAS officers' service records (ADM 273) on The National Archives, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- RAF Officers, including those who transferred from the RFC and RNAS on 1 April 1918 and served up to 1922 (most had been discharged by 1919) - RAF officers service records (AIR 76) on The National Archives, Lives Of The First World War and Find My Past, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.
- Men from the USA and Dominions who served with the British Air Forces are included in the Roll in AIR 2/219 - at The National Archives. Some nominal rolls for individual units are in AIR1 -at TNA

You can contact the National Archives via the following website <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> or via phone +44 (0) 20 8876 3444 please check the website for phone line opening times, as these do vary on a day to day basis with a six day week phone cover provided.

Post 1922 Service Personnel:

RAF personnel who served after 1922 and those who served during the Second World War - service records are held by the RAF 3rd Party Disclosure Team. Full records will be released to proven next of kin. Only very basic information about deceased service personnel will be released to other enquirers, with slightly more detail made available 25 years after the date of death. The fee is currently £30 and there may be a lengthy wait for this service.

Officers' commissions and promotions are listed in the regular official publications. IWM holds an extensive set of these publications. The London Gazette also lists commissions and promotions up to the present day.

- RFC officers - the Army List
- RNAS officers - the Navy List - Ancestry
- RAF officers (from 1918) - the Air Force List

Individuals who qualified as a pilot 1910-1950 - Aviators' Certificates, some with photo, issued by the Royal Aero Club on Ancestry, however, please note there is a cost attached to this.

Court martial records from 1918-1986 (AIR 21) are held at The National Archives.

Other records which may assist your research:

- Casualty records
- Medal records
- Unit and operational histories & contact addresses

3. How do I locate information on Forces War Records?

The genealogy collections list includes over 30 completely exclusive collections and information is currently being added at a rate of around 250,000 new records each month. As well as their own digitisation projects, they also license collections from a variety of sources.

The website is as follows <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/collections/>

Please note that they are constantly cross referencing and adding new data, and they will almost certainly hold more collections than are listed below as they update the site.

Please refer to the table below, for a sample of the collections they hold:

Collection	Information
Airmen Died in the Great War 1914-1919	
Aviators Certificates 1905-1926	The National Archives
Bomber/Fighter Command Losses 1939-1945	The National Archives
British Red Cross and Order of St John Enquiry List 1917 (Wounded and Missing)	British Red Cross & Order of St. John Enquiry List No. 14, [...]
Far East Prisoners of War 1942-46	FEPOW
Fighter Command Losses 1940	The National Archives
Gazetted Awards and Mentions in Despatches	Transcribed & compiled from the London Gazette
Imperial Prisoners of war held in Italy 1943 - Exclusively Transcribed	These details have been transcribed in the UK by the Forces War Record
Imperial Prisoners of war held in Japan - Exclusively Transcribed	Transcribed from the National Archive reference WO392/23-26
Inter War Awards 1919-39 - The uneasy peace	London Gazette Military Awards 1919 until 1939
List of British Officers taken prisoner (WW1)	
Military Hospitals Admissions and Discharge Registers WW1 - Exclusively Transcribed	Transcribed from the National Archive reference MH106
National Roll of the Great War	Transcribed from the National Roll of the Great War

Prisoners of War of the British Empire held in Germany 1939-45	The National Archives WO392/1 - WO392/20
RAF discharges 1945-46	AIR 29
RAF Formations List 1918	Archives reference Air 1/819/204/4/1316 & also Air 10/232
Recipients of the DCM	The National archives WO101/2, WO102/14, 3/535, 6,7
Royal Air Force Nominal Index of Airmen and Airwomen 1918 to 1975	Transcribed from the National Archive reference AIR 78
UK Air Force List 1931	Transcribed from the original Air Force list
UK Air Force List 1936	Transcribed from the original Air Force list
UK Air Force List 1940	Transcribed from the original Air Force list
UK Air Force List 1943	Air Force List July 1943
WWI Prisoner of War Records	
WWII Daily reports (missing, dead, wounded & POWs)	

4. How Do I locate Information on Family History Sites?

The following are very good starting points when looking to compile a family tree or research an individual:

Ancestry: please use the following link:

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/CardCatalog.aspx#ccat=sbo=1&hc=25&dbSort=1&title=&keyword=air%20force&>

The following table indicate the records retained in line with the collection and number held:

Title	Collection	Records
UK, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1919	Military	26,928
UK, Royal Air Force Muster Roll, 1918	Military	194,814
UK, Royal Air Force Airmen Records, 1918-1940	Military	616,118
Web: UK, Women's Royal Air Force Index, 1918-1920	Military	31,086

Find my Past: please use the following link:

[https://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records?
SearchedRecordsetName=r+a+f&Region=World&subcountry=&subcountryfieldname=](https://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records?SearchedRecordsetName=r+a+f&Region=World&subcountry=&subcountryfieldname=)

The following table indicate the records retained in line with the number held:

Title	Category	Subcategory	Records
British Royal Air Force, Airmen's Service Records 1912-1939	Armed Forces & Conflict	Service Records	342,825
British Royal Air Force, Officers' Service Records 1912-1920	Armed Forces & Conflict	Service Records	101,266
British Women's Royal Air Force Service Records 1918-1920	Armed Forces & Conflict	Service Records	31,090
Royal Air Force Muster Roll 1918	Armed Forces & Conflict	First World war	181,625

www.myheritage.com

www.familytree.co.uk

Each listed site above contains a wealth of information, with the majority offering either free access or a free trial period to access the information. But please bear in mind, this is a time consuming process having to cross reference the information.

Researching Scottish Ancestry:

Scotland's People is a good resource for researching Scottish ancestry <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk> you can search their indexes for free, however, to view and download images a small fee is to be paid.

Alternatively to research former serving personnel please consider the National Library of Scotland with the following link <http://digital.nls.uk/british-military-lists/archive/93506069>

In addition, Air Force lists' contains the following 2 items:

- 1919-1922 - Monthly Air Force lists [ID: 97343433]

(These lists include details of officers who served during the First World War).

- 1938-1945 - Air Force list [ID: 97343434]

(These lists cover 1938 to 1945).

www.familytree.co.uk may also prove useful

5. How do I find out about Aircraft Losses?

A very good resource for this is www.forces-war-records.co.uk you can search 10 million records for information on WW1, WW2, Crimean war, Boer war, the Napoleonic war and the post war period from 1946 to 2017.

This resource displays Fighter Command Losses in 1940; you can search their records which return the names of officers, their rank, service number, any awards, flying service and detailed aircraft information.

In addition, there are of course books, available to purchase:

1. **RAF Fighter Command Losses of the Second World War** by Norman L.R. Franks with three volumes available in three distinct time frames as follows, Volume 1: 1939 - 1941, Volume 2: 1942 - 1943 and Volume 3: 1944 - 1945.
2. **RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War: Volume 7: Operational Training Units 1940 - 1947** by W.R. Chorley. Volume 8: Heavy Conversion Units 1939 - 1947 and the Roll of Honour 1939 - 1947 both by W.R. Chorley.
3. **Royal Air Force Coastal Command Losses: Volume 1 Aircraft and Crew Losses 1939-41** by Ross McNeill. The book details aircraft and crew losses endured by the RAF coastal command squadrons, all losses are categorised in sequence of occurrence.
4. **Bomber Losses in the Middle East and Mediterranean** by David Gunby and Pelham Temple with two volumes available, with volume 1 covering the period from 1939 and 1942 and volume 2 covering from 1943 to the end of the war in Europe. Both volumes provide detail on dates, squadrons, crews known to be in the aircraft loss, reason for the loss and the operation the aircraft was involved in.

Another resource to look at is **Air Britain**, essentially a group which caters for aviators and historians alike and was established in 1948. Over the years it has pulled together a large amount of information which has also been published.

The website is as follows <http://www.air-britain.com/ab.html> they have several published volumes on specific aircraft i.e. the Lancaster, Halifax and of the Stirling.

6. How do I locate information on Burial sites/Memorials?

Common-wealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) - this is an excellent resource if you are trying to locate someone or somewhere; this is a freely available resource and they have data on 23,000 locations throughout the Commonwealth commemorating the 1.7 million service personnel who passed away during both world wars.

Their website is as follows <https://www.cwgc.org> You can begin searching straight from their homepage where you can search both cemeteries and memorials.

They have an archive which is open to the public in Maidenhead in Berkshire, which the CWGC actively encourages the public to utilise and support. It is open Monday to Friday between 10am and 4.30pm, though they do ask you to contact them to advise of your visit, so that they may make an appointment for you and so that the correct resources are available for you to read through. Please note the CWGC is unable to undertake comprehensive research on your behalf. To make an appointment please email enquiries@cwgc.org

CWGC Archives:

To enable a more efficient search the CWGC have divided the archive in to two main sections, the Commission Archive and the Casualty archive.

The Commission Archive: details the formation process of the CWGC and the policies and processes it is governed by, with records dated from 1917 to 1967, though this is slowly increasing due to the ongoing work of the commission.

The Casualty Archive: details the commemoration location of every individual the commission has a duty of care towards. Records attain to grave registration documents, casualty registers. In many instances, these records detail the earliest information the Commission was able to obtain, and over the years these records have been updated where required, or where new information has come forward; to enable the most accurate collection as possible in order to provide the most detailed account in each case, to facilitate greater understanding and more accurate research.

7. How do I locate Gallantry Awards/Officer Promotions?

The London Gazette is the official U.K public record, which has been recording military triumphs to Royal births for over 350 years. This is a government publication managed by the Stationery Office, and as such, comes under the jurisdiction of the National Archives; any information published is confirmed and certified as fact; in addition this is a freely available resource, where you can download records for personal use.

To facilitate efficient and meaningful research, the Gazette has been subdivided in to the following five areas: Wills and Probate, Insolvency, Awards and Accreditation, Company Profile and All notices.

The Gazette is also held in print form in larger reference libraries such as the National Archives in Kew, London, which is open to the public, they hold a hard copy dating from 1665 to 1986 for example, you can alternatively contact them by phone, on 0208 876 3444 to discuss your requirements/enquiry.

Alternatively, you can visit the British Library on Euston Road in London where they also hold hard copies of the Gazette, available for public viewing again, by prior arrangement so that the material can be prepared for you.

8. How do I locate Squadron Records?

A very useful resource here is the **Operational Record Book**, again available from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/raf-operations-record-books-1939-1945> which primarily date from the Second World War, however there are some remaining from the First World War. In addition, there are some in existence from the 1920's and 1930's. Halfway down the page the link takes you to, you can begin searching for squadron records provided you have the squadron number and the years you wish to search between.

The records typically contain the aircraft type and number, names of personnel, rank of the aircrew, names of any passengers, weather conditions and flight details; the records are arranged by squadron number and date and by the time of flight.

Another useful resource is the **Air Ministry Combat Reports** from 1939 to 1945 <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-air-force-squadron> where you can search and download Second World War combat reports free of charge. These records include reports from squadrons, wings and groups in fighter, bomber and coastal command and the Fleet Air Arm squadrons.

Another point to bear in mind is that there are still some surviving squadron associations who may be able to offer further information, or at least provide some contacts if they can't help. A desk based search of squadron associations is recommended as a good starting point.

9. How do I locate Information on Prisoners of War?

A good starting point for this sort of enquiry is the **Forces War Record** where you can search 10 million military records free of charge, the link is as follows https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/records.asp?SE=go&adID=191653164477&KW=prisoner%20of%20war%20records%20ww2&SC=R1&NO=9429W2&gclid=EAlaIqobChMILZ7d6KH_1glVpBXTCh2GzgRWEAAYASAAEgJ9lvD_BwE

The records are dissected and compiled by specialists in their field and will provide assistance anyway they can in helping to provide information to further your research.

Another good resource to look at is **Ancestry** <http://www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/start-military> this is a free resource and the link will take you to the Ancestry homepage, where you can begin your search using the person's name and the location in which they lived. This is suitable for personnel who served in the Army, Navy or RAF.

Another resource to consider here is <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-prisoners-second-world-war-korean-war> This will take you to a page concerning British prisoners of the Second World War and the Korean War. But specifically for POW of British and Commonwealth prisoners in time periods 1939 to 1945 and 1950 to 1953, this in turn will inform you of the kind of records held and how to obtain further information.

In the centre of the page you will find a breakdown of the guide's contents with links to other websites, as well as links to British POW in Europe and the Far East and Korea. On the far right hand side you will find contact information for the National Archives.

10. Where do I locate Information on Evaders?

A wonderful resource for this, available for free, is <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/full-list-of-united-kingdom-records/armed-forces-and-conflict/wwii-escapers-and-evaders> this enables you to search for individual reports regarding their experiences of evading re-capture and escaping from camps during World War Two. This resource enables you to have access to 10,529 records with each record providing the following information: name, rank, service number, details of decorations and date of capture and the camp in which they were held.

Another point to consider is a book on **RAF Evaders** by Oliver Clutton who is a respected historian who has gone to great lengths to produce this book which identifies over 2000 evaders during World War Two.

11. Generic Information

The **British Newspaper Archive** has records going back to the 1700's; you can access hundreds of newspapers from all over Britain and Ireland. This service is initially offered for free with a subscription service in place once your trial period is over.

The web address is as follows https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMlh-bPqcP1gIVaSjTCh1rlgbHEAAYASAAEglo_vD_BwE&gclid=CKHn96rD_9YCFQOIUQodBOcMAA

Closing Information:

The Yorkshire Air Museum hopes that the aforementioned reference sources are of some assistance to you; if however you still cannot locate answers to your research questions, please feel free to get in touch directly with the Archive department on 01904 608595. Please note the volunteers are unable to carry out research on an individual's behalf due to the time and resources this would require, however, they may be able to direct you to further sources of information upon enquiry. The Archive department is operated by volunteers and is open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10.00 and 15.00.

Reference Sources Listing

Please find below a listing of all the websites cited in this research document for your reference:

1. To research the Royal Australian Air Force, please use the following link:

www.awm.gov.au

2. To research Ancestry for military records (Army, Navy & RAF) please use the following link:

<http://www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/start-military>

3. To research Air Britain in reference to specific aircraft, please use the following link:

<http://www.air-britain.com/ab.html>

4. To research family history on Ancestry please use the following link:

<http://search.ancestry.co.uk/search/CardCatalog.aspx#ccat=sbo=1&hc=25&dbSort=1&title=&keyword=air%20force&>

5. To research the Royal Canadian Air Force service records please use the following link:

www.ba-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage

6. To research the British Newspaper archive records dating back to the 1700's, please use the following link:

https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIh-bPqcP_1gIVaSJtCh1rlgbHEAAYASAAEglo_vD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds&dclid=CKHn96rD_9YCFQOIUQodBOcMAA

7. To research the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website for a known location or someone, please use the following link:

<https://www.cwgc.org>

8. To research former serving personnel from Scotland, please use the following link:

<http://digital.nls.uk/british-military-lists/archive/93506069>

9. To research the Forces War records, please use the following link:

<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/collections/>

10. To research the Forces War record for POW information, please use the following link:

https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/records.asp?SE=go&adID=191653164477&KW=prisoner%20of%20war%20records%20ww2&SC=R1&NO=9429W2&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIIZ7d6KH_1gIVpBXTCh2GzgRWEAAYASAAEgJ9lvD_BwE

11. To research Find My past, please use the following link:

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/historical-records?SearchedRecordsetName=r+a+f&Region=World&subcountry=&subcountryfieldname=>

12. To research Find My past regards information on evaders, please use the following link:

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/full-list-of-united-kingdom-records/armed-forces-and-conflict/wwii-escapers-and-evaders>

13. To research Service Records, please use the following link:

www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records

14. To research Service Numbers held at the National Archive, please use the following link:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

15. To research Squadron Records from the National Archive, please use the following link:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/raf-operations-record-books-1939-1945>

16. To research Air Ministry Combat Reports from the National Archive, please use the following link:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-air-force-squadron>

17. To research British POW in both WW2 and the Korean War, please use the following link:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-prisoners-second-world-war-korean-war>

18. To research Scottish ancestry, please use the following link:

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>