



## The Royal Engineers Museum: How to Research your Family History



This leaflet provides information on how to research those individuals who served for the Royal Engineers. Searching for individuals can be tricky and you might not always find anything.

### STEP 1: Starting Point

So you want to research a family member that you know served with the Royal Engineers. Before going any further, what do you already know? Do you have information about their year of birth, date of death, rank, years of service, regiment or whether they received a gallantry medal? Work out what you do know first. The more information you have before you start, the easier it becomes!

### STEP 2: Finding an Individual's Regiment or Unit

With their full name, see if you can find their service record.

### STEP 3: Finding an Individual's Service Record

The Royal Engineers does not hold any service records. To find information about an individual's personal service history visit the following websites:

The National Archives for pre 1920s and World War One:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). Please note that roughly 60% of service records between 1914 and 1920 were destroyed during the bombing raids in 1940.

The Army Personnel Centre for World War Two and later: [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk). This service is only available for next of kin at a fee of £30.00. Please visit their website for further information.

### STEP 4: Finding a Regiment or Unit without a Service Record

If a service record cannot be found, an individual's regiment or unit can be traced through other means:

- Gallantry medal rolls sometimes hold unit information.
- Look at the addresses on any letters they wrote
- Look at any uniform or equipment they owned, has it been stamped?
- Look at any photographs; is there a sign with the unit number? Or are they wearing particular badges?
- Were they an officer? You can sometimes use the Army List to determine their regiment.
- You can always bring these to the museum for help.



## STEP 5: Once you know their Regiment or Unit

As soon as you know an individual's regiment or unit, you are ready to use our library and archives. We currently hold the following records:

- Official Corps Histories
- Journals, including a complete run of the Sapper Magazine and the Professional Papers of the Royal Engineers
- Medal Rolls
- Photographs
- Plans and technical drawings
- Unit Histories
- War diaries for the First World War and a small selection from the Second World War

## STEP 6: Make an Appointment!

Access to the Library and Archive is by appointment only. We ask for a two week notice period. Please contact the museum (details below) if you have any questions about your enquiry prior to your visit or wish to book an appointment. Please address all written enquires to 'Library and Archive Appointments'.

Opening Times: The Library is opened on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:30 to 16:30 (it is closed between 1-2pm).

Prices: The entrance price is included with the Museum entrance fee. Please visit our website for further details.

## Useful Websites

*The following websites are useful for records that we do not hold and further information.*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)) for information on grave sites, dates of death and next of kin.

The General Register Office ([www.gov.uk/research-family-history](http://www.gov.uk/research-family-history)) for birth, marriage and death certificates. A small fee applies; please visit their website for further information.

The Ministry of Defence Department ([www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility)) for more information about medals and how to claim a medal that has not been awarded.

The London Gazette ([www.london-gazette.co.uk](http://www.london-gazette.co.uk)) for further information about medals.

The National Archives ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)) for records on Army lists, British Army medal index cards 1914-1920, British Army muster rolls and pay lists c.1730-1898, census records 1841-1911, certificates of service, commander-in-chief's memoranda papers, ordnance office and war office registers, soldier's certificates of service 1787-1813, soldier's pensions records 1760-1913, and many more.

## Useful Books

*The following books are useful for a more detailed guide into researching your family history.*

Fowler, S., Spencer W. & S. Tamblin, *Army Service Records of the First World War* (Surrey, 1997).

Watts, M. J. & C. T. Watts, *My Ancestor was in...The British Army* (London, 2009).



---

## Royal Engineers Museum – Library and Archive

Royal Engineers Museum, Prince Arthur Road,  
Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG  
01634 822839  
[mail@re-museum.co.uk](mailto:mail@re-museum.co.uk)

Registered charity number: 295173