



First World War Army Service: Other Ranks

Information From Archives M3

1. Campaign (or Service) Medal Rolls

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue references: WO 372 and WO 329

Relates to: 1914 Star, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal, Territorial Force War Medal and the Silver War Badge.

You can carry out this search yourself and download an image for only £3.50: visit DocumentsOnline, available on our website at:

www.documentsonline.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

Information that this source should reveal:

The medal rolls index (WO 372) normally gives: name, unit(s) rank, service number(s), and medal entitlement. It may also give the theatre of war first served in and the date of entry therein. The actual medal rolls (WO 329) rarely give any further information to that which appears in the index, but we will check them just in case.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The full name is essential to make a search feasible (ideally any 'middle names' should be included). The name of at least one unit or regiment is also essential.

Service No: It is highly desirable to know this in order to 'clinch' the correct entry.

Ultimately, success depends on the quality of your information and the popularity of the surname.

If we find several soldiers with same name in same unit, we will produce a report on the results.

There are some gaps, but overall the index is reliable.

2. (Surviving) Service Records

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: WO 363

This is the 'burnt' series of records covering both war survivors and war dead.

Catalogue reference: WO 364

This is mostly for soldiers discharged to pension (including medical discharge).

Catalogue reference: WO 400

These records contain the surviving records of service for non-commissioned officers and other ranks that served in the Life Guards, the Royal Horse Guards and the Household Battalion.

Some basic details of soldiers who died during the First World War can also be obtained from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Try searching their 'Debt of Honour' online database at: www.cwgc.org/

Information that this source should reveal:

Surviving information may include:

Age, place of birth, physical description, any former service and occupation, next of kin, medical records, date of enlistment, postings, promotions, awards, leave, transfers and date of discharge, post-war employment and address.

Factors affecting success of a search:

WO 363 and WO 364: Bombing during the Second World War destroyed an estimated 60% of the service records. The overall success rate of finding entries is estimated at 25-30%.

These records are currently being digitised. The collections are being released in a number of phases: **all** the pension records in WO 364 have now been released and are fully searchable online. WO 363 "burnt records" are fully searchable online for surnames between A-N (excluding mis-sorts) . For further details see www.ancestry.co.uk

If the soldier served in the Household Cavalry, please note that for the period 1914-1918, the majority of the entries in WO 400 mainly cover casualties (invalided or discharged dead).

Details required to carry out a search, and our Charge for a search:

In order to carry out a search for our normal fee, the following information is required:

- the full name of the serviceman*
- the unit(s) he served with*
- his service number (s)*
- whether he died in service

Our normal fee for one search in the (Surviving) Service Records, providing the information detailed above is supplied, is £60.

Please note, however, if the soldier has a very common surname then the standard charge may not apply. We will only search for the name as it has been provided to us. If you wish a search to be undertaken on a variation of the soldier's name (such as with or without middle names, or middle names used as first names) , the fee is likely to be higher. For example, if we have been asked to search for a Charles Marshall Burr, we would not search under the name Charles Burr. Likewise, if we were asked to search for a Fred Cheeseman we would not search under the name Frederick Cheeseman.

These only contain the records of servicemen who left the army before 1920. If the soldier continued in the after 1920, then his records are still in the custody of the Ministry of Defence. You will need to contact:

Army Personnel Centre, Historic Disclosures, Mailpoint 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow, G2 8EX, tel: 0141-224-2023 and 0141-224-3303, e-mail: disc4.civsec@apc.army.mod.uk

3. War Diaries

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: WO 95

Some war diaries are available online from other organisations, for example, the Wiltshire and Berkshire published regimental histories available at:

www.1914-1918.net/

Information that this source should reveal:

A daily account of a unit's activity, although the level of detail varies. The war diaries do not normally mention the names of other ranks.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The precise details of the regiment/battalion or unit are needed, e.g. the 14th Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment, or 219th Machine Gun Company.

Most war diaries do survive although they do not normally mention the names of other ranks.

Details required to carry out a search, and our Charge for a search:

In order to carry out a search for our normal fee, the following information is required:

- the unit he served with*
- the date(s) he served with that unit*

Our normal fee for one search in the War Diaries, for one unit, providing the information detailed above is supplied, is £60 and then £30 for each additional month.

Please specify a date, as we are unable to transcribe or summarise the entire contents of a war diary.

4. Gallantry Awards

Standard charge: £60

Awards were announced in the *London Gazette* (Catalogue reference ZJ 1). The National Archives has indexes which cover the: Victoria Cross (VC) Military Cross (MC), Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), Military Medal (MM), Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) and Mentions in Despatches (MIDs).

Consult the paper or microfiche indexes to the *London Gazette*. You could also try: www.gazettes-online.co.uk

Information that this source should reveal:

Entries for the MC and DCM may include citations. For the MM, MSM and MIDs, there will be no citation – just a general heading and a list of recipients giving only name, rank, service number and regiment or unit.

Factors affecting success of a search:

To know the year the award was won is very helpful.

War diaries (see above) can be relevant but time delays between the action and the announcement in the *London Gazette* would make searches difficult

and time consuming. It would be a case of using the *London Gazette* date and working backwards.

5. Selected First World War Pensions Award Files (PIN 26)

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: PIN 26

Duplicates of these records may also be found in WO 364 (see No.2).

You can search PIN 26 on the Catalogue (by first initial and surname). The Catalogue is available on our website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue It is useful to know the nature of the disability. For popular names it may be necessary to investigate several files at The National Archives (original documents) to establish which (if any) file is relevant.

Information that this source should reveal:

PIN 26: Files will normally include a basic record of service, medical reports and assessments, pension calculations and awards, and in many cases death certificates.

Factors affecting success of a search:

PIN 26 is a 2% sample of the pensions awarded, so the likelihood of success is low.

6. Sample of First World War widows' and dependants' pension forms

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: PIN 82

You can search PIN 82 (the widows' records) on the Catalogue (see comments above) by surname and initial of soldier and the regiment in which he served. It is useful to know the nature of the disability. For popular names it may be necessary to investigate several files at The National Archives (original documents) to establish which (if any) file is relevant.

Information that this source should reveal:

These records provide very basic service information about the deceased, including unit data, date and place of death, and information about the widow and any children, including place of residence and the amount of pension they were granted.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The files in PIN 82 are a random selection of less than one twelfth of the estimated 100,000 files that originally existed, so the likelihood of success is low.

7. Royal Hospital Chelsea: Personal Files of Deceased Pensioners

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: WO 324

For in-pensioners who were admitted to the Royal Hospital Chelsea before 1933 you can search the series WO 324 by surname and first initial(s) on the Catalogue. Details such as service number, rank and corps/regiment/unit will help.

Information that this source should reveal:

These files contain details of military service, death and testamentary instructions.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Relatively few army pensioners were in-pensioners (residents of the Royal Hospital Chelsea).

8. (Surviving) Medical Records

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: MH 106

This series contains a representative selection of medical records for the First World War.

Information that this source may reveal:

Medical unit admission and discharge registers; patient records; and records concerning certain types of wounds and diseases – the surviving material is variable.

Factors affecting success of a search:

If we are provided with the name of the medical unit or hospital which treated the casualty (e.g. 3 Casualty Clearing Station or 19 General Hospital), we can

carry out the search, but please note that the majority of medical records for the British army during the First World War do not survive.

The records in MH 106 represent only a 2% sample, so the likelihood of success is low.
