



Royal Navy Officers, 1660-1945

Information From Archives M2

1. Officers Service Records, 1756-1931

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue reference: ADM 196

This is the main source for service records of both commissioned and warrant officers in the Royal Navy. It consists of overlapping sets of service records and because of this it is sometimes possible to find more than one record per individual.

Information that this source should reveal:

Surviving information differs from register to register. However, they should include:

date and place of birth; dates of commissions and promotion; details of ships served on; details of rewards or distinctions; dates of retirement and death.

They may also provide wife's name, date and place of marriage; father's name, occupation and address.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Although ADM 196 covers the period 1756-1931, service records of Royal Navy officers only began to be systematically kept from the 1840s.

Records of service for commissioned officers who joined the Royal Navy up to May 1917, and warrant officers up to 1931 can be found in ADM 196.

If the officer joined the service after these dates, then his records are still in the custody of the Ministry of Defence. You will need to contact:

For Retired officers:

The Directorate of Personnel Support (Navy), Navy Search, TNT Archive Services, Tetron Point, William Nadin Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0BB. Tel: 01283 227913 Fax: 01283227942

For Officers under 60:
Naval Secretary (OMOBS), Room 169, Victory Building, HM Naval Base,
Portsmouth, PO1 3LS.

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 officer*
- their rank*
- approximate dates of service*
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Officers Service Records, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £45.

2. Commissioned Officers' Services, 1660-1746

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue reference: ADM 10

This series contains some early service records for officers commissioned into the Royal Navy.

Information that this source should reveal:

Usually such returns will provide the following type of information:

names of ships served; dates served on each ship.

Some returns may provide an officer's age and address.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Officers' service records were not kept systematically after the end of the seventeenth century. Consequently, service records do not survive for all commissioned and warrant officers' ranks.

Some survive in ADM 10 for 1660-1688 and are arranged in name order for the following ranks:

Admirals, captains (although also includes those with dates of seniority up to 1746), commanders, lieutenants

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 officer*
- their rank*
- approximate dates of service*
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Commissioned Officers' Services, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £45.

3. Officers' Survey Returns, 1741-1903

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue references: ADM 9 and ADM 11

The series ADM 9 contains returns made to three surveys of officers' services conducted in 1817, 1828 and 1846, by sending circular letters to officers requiring them to furnish summary details of their services.

The series ADM 11 includes some original returns of officers' services including surgeons and chaplains. It also includes analyses of officers' services.

Information that this source should reveal:

Usually returns in ADM 9 will provide the following type of information: names of ships served; dates served on each ship. Some returns may provide an officer's age and address.

Returns in ADM 11 will usually provide the following type of information: names of ships served; dates served on each ship.

The analyses of returns in ADM 11 sometimes contain the following information:
age, date of seniority, names of ships served on and time served.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Survey returns do not survive for all commissioned and warrant officers' ranks. The officer concerned must have been alive when the survey was undertaken. The officer was required to send a return. Not all did and others have been lost. Others never received or neglected to return their forms. The accuracy of some returns may be questionable as some officers compiled their returns from memory, many years after they last served.

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 officer*
- their rank*
- approximate dates of service*
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Officers' Survey Returns, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £60.

4. Summaries of Confidential Reports, 1893-1943

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: ADM 196

These reports are assessments of officers' suitability for promotion and can be used to supplement service records as described in Search No.1, above.

ADM 196 contains confidential reports for captains 1893-1943; commanders 1908-31; lieutenants and sub-lieutenants 1885-1928; mates and acting mates 1913-30; gunners 1881-1912; and paymasters 1884-1939.

Information that this source should reveal:

These records provide dates of promotion, remarks about suitability for promotion, and may give dates of marriage, retirement and death.

Factors affecting success of a search:

You need to know the officer's rank and the date they were promoted to it. This 'date of seniority' can be found in the Navy List, or from service records. The National Archives does not hold confidential reports for every officer rank.

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 officer*
- their rank*
- date of promotion*

Our normal fee for one search in the Summaries of Confidential Reports, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £60.

5. Passing Certificates, 1660-1902

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue references: ADM 6, ADM 13, ADM 106 and ADM 107

Many officers at the beginning of their careers would have been expected to take a form of qualifying examination for their respective rank. This was to ensure that they had the relevant skills and experience to carry out the duties expected of them.

Passing certificates for the following officer ranks are available in ADM 6, ADM 13, ADM 106 and, ADM 107:

lieutenants 1691-1902;

boatswains 1810-13 and 1851-87;

carpenters 1856-87;

gunners 1731-1812 and 1856-87;

masters 1660-1830;

pursers, later known as paymasters, 1813-20 and 1851-89;

surgeons 1700-1800;

engineers 1863-1902.

Information that this source should reveal:

Lieutenants' passing certificates will provide:

dates served on board ships; names of ships and rating; date they passed the exam. They may also contain baptismal certificates.

Other officers' passing certificates may just indicate that the officer has been found suitable to undertake the duties required of that rank and the date of examination.

Factors affecting success of a search:

There are gaps in the series of passing certificates. Some series of passing certificates are not indexed by name. The date of an officer's first commission or warrant at their particular rank (a date of seniority).

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 officer*
- their rank*
- date of promotion*
- approximate dates of service
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Passing Certificates, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £45.

6. Full and Half Pay Records

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue references: ADM 22, ADM 24 and PMG 15

Full pay registers in ADM 22 and ADM 24 record salary payments made to officers on active duty between 1795 and 1905.

If an officer was not on active sea service, that is 'unemployed', he would have been paid half pay, a sort of retainer fee for possible future service. Half pay could also be considered to be a pension being paid to those officers who were no longer fit for service. Half pay registers for 1693 to 1924 are in ADM 25 whilst those for October 1836-March 1920 are in PMG 15.

Information that this source should reveal:

Full pay records note the amount of wages paid to officers, the names of ships they were serving on and the dates of service on them. Half pay records note when payments were made, usually to either the officer's agent or to his own address. These records might also provide an officer's date of death.

Factors affecting success of a search:

It is useful to know when an officer joined and left the service.

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 officer*
- their rank*
- approximate dates of service*
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Full and Half Pay Records, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £45.

7. Commission and Warrant Books

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue reference: ADM 6

A commission or warrant was the official method of appointing an officer to a ship, and on every successive appointment.

This series contains records of commissions for 1695-1846 and warrants for 1695-1849.

Information that this source should reveal:

These records would indicate when a commission or warrant was made and the name of the ship that the officer was to join.

Factors affecting success of a search:

These records are mainly complete.

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 officer*
- their rank*
- approximate dates of service*
- ship(s) served on

Our normal fee for one search in the Commission and Warrant Books, providing the information requested above is supplied, is £45.
