



First World War Army Officers' Service

The crucial information needed for a search in the archives

The National Archives holds records which might contain the information you require and we can:

- Either search for it on payment of a fee and supply you with the information (if found)
- or
- Enable you to search for the information in other ways.

Please send as much information as you can. The following details are particularly important:

- The full name of the officer*
- The unit(s) he served with *
- Whether he died in service.....

If you have all of the information marked with an asterisk*, the standard charges for our searches will apply and these are shown on this leaflet. If you do not have this information, the standard charges will not apply, as the search time will increase by a large amount, and therefore the search will require a very high fee to be paid. Please contact us if you still want to proceed: enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk

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.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline

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.

If the officer's rank or unit is not known, the *Army List* can be checked.

Unlike other ranks, whose medals were issued automatically, officers had to apply for their campaign medals, which is one reason why the index card may be missing – he never applied.

Success depends on the quality of your information and the popularity of the surname.

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

2. (Surviving) Service Records

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: WO 339

It is in this series that most of the officers who held regular army commissions, and who were still serving at the outbreak of the war, can be found. It also includes those granted emergency commissions in the regular army and those granted commissions in the Special Reserve of Officers.

Some basic details of officers 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/

Catalogue reference: WO 374

These series contains the files of officers in the Territorial Army, a number of officers who came out of retirement, and other officers who did not really fit into either the regular or Territorial Army. It also includes the civilian specialists who were granted commissions on account of certain skills that the army needed.

You can search in WO 339 and WO 374 on our online Catalogue, available at: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue

You can search by surname, but you may find that there are several file references for officers with the same surname and initials, so you may require the help offered by our paid search service (unless you decide to visit us to do the search, or to hire an independent researcher).

Information that this source should reveal:

WO 339: It is more accurate to refer to this series as correspondence files rather than service files. Although they can contain service details, the documents that survive relate mainly to money, length of service, pensions for wounds and the settling of deceased officers' estates.

The content of the WO 374 files is similar to those in WO 339.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The main series of officers' service records was destroyed by bombing in 1940, and what remains is a supplementary series of correspondence files in WO 339. In some cases War Office clerks had destroyed the supplementary file before 1940, and so no file now exists.

Please note: The First World War records of medical practitioners (who were granted temporary commissions in the Royal Army Medical Corps) were all destroyed after 1920.

For officers who were still serving after 31 March 1922 or who had left the army prior to that date but rejoined or were recalled for further service, for example in the Second World War: the records of service are still retained by 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, email: apc_historical_disclosures@btconnect.com

3. Miscellaneous Records of Service

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue Reference: WO 25

Entry books and registers of the Secretary-at-War

Catalogue Reference: WO 68

War Office and predecessors: Records of Militia Regiments

Catalogue Reference: WO 76

War Office: Records of Officers' Services

Catalogue Reference: WO 138

War Office Personal Files

Information that this source should reveal:

WO 25: This series includes a small collection of Royal Engineers officers' records (WO 25/3913-3920).

WO 68: Includes some Militia officers' records of service

WO 76: Records of service for officers of the infantry and cavalry, and also the Royal Engineer (Militia) officers: some overlap with the First World War in some cases.

WO 138: Small collection of personal files for officers. Most of these files concern officers whose service led to an official War Office enquiry into their actions. You can search this collection by surname on our online Catalogue, available on our website at:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue

4. 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.thewardrobe.org.uk.

A number of others are 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 – some are detailed, some are highly summarised. Officers' names are mentioned fairly frequently.

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 the 219th Machine Gun Company.

Most war diaries do survive.

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.

5. Gallantry Awards

Standard charge: £60

Awards were announced in the *London Gazette* (Catalogue reference: ZJ 1). We have indexes which cover the:

Victoria Cross (VC), Distinguished Service Order (DSO) Military Cross (MC), and Mentions in Despatches (MIDs).

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

We hold further sources including: WO 98 (VC), WO 389 (MC), WO 390 (DSO).

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

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

6. Selected First World War Pensions Award Files

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: PIN 26

You can search PIN 26 on the Catalogue (by first initial and surname). The Catalogue is available on our website at:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue

It is useful to know the nature of the disability. For popular names, it may be necessary to examine several files held here (original documents) to establish which (if any) file is relevant.

Information that this source should reveal:

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 total pensions awarded. Also, the proportion of this sample relating to officers is very small in comparison with the other ranks, so the general likelihood of success is very low.

7. (Surviving) Medical Records

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: MH 106

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

Information that this source should 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.
