



## First World War Prisoners of War 1914-1918

### 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 serviceman\*.....
- The unit(s) or ship he served with when captured\*.....
- His service number(s).....
- Whether he died in captivity.....

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](mailto:enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

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#### 1. Prisoner of War (PoW) Reports and Correspondence

Standard charge: £60

Catalogue reference: WO 161

These contain the reports made by repatriated, escaped or interned PoWs of all ranks and services.

Catalogue reference: FO 383

Information from Archives M7

This series contains a limited number of additional reports and correspondence made by PoWs of all ranks and services.

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Information that this source should reveal:

These are of variable length but usually include details of unit, home address, when and where captured, wounds suffered, transfers between camps as well as comments on treatment and conditions in the camp.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

These records contain details of *less than 5%* of the total number of Allied PoWs. The majority of these reports are in WO 161/95-100, but even these contain details of less than 5000 individuals.

If the PoW died in captivity, there would be no report.

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## 2. (Surviving) Service Records

Standard charge: £60

Officers

Catalogue references: WO 339 and WO 374

It is in WO 339 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.

The series WO 374 contains the files of officers in the Territorial Army, a number of officers who had come 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.

Other Ranks

Catalogue references: WO 363, WO 364 and WO 400

This series WO 363 is the 'burnt' series of records covering both war survivors and war dead.

The series WO 364 contains mostly soldiers discharged to pension (including medical discharge).

Information from Archives M7

The series WO 400 contains 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.

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Information that this source should reveal:

Surviving information for officers may include:

Officers were required to provide a report into the circumstances behind their capture. Little detail is provided about what happened during their period of imprisonment.

Surviving information for other ranks may include:

These normally only record the date of capture. Sometimes they also include a date of release.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

Officers

Bombing during the Second World War destroyed about 20% of officer's service records.

Other ranks

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%.

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).

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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.

Information from Archives M7

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, email: [apc\\_historical\\_disclosures@btconnect.com](mailto:apc_historical_disclosures@btconnect.com)

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### 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](http://www.1914-1918.net)

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Information that this source should reveal:

A daily account of a unit's activity, although the level of detail varies. These can give details on the capture of officers but rarely mention other PoWs.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

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

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

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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.

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### 4. Campaign (or Service) Medal Rolls

Information from Archives M7

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 web site at:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline>

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Information that this source should reveal:

Sometimes they provide a date of capture.

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Factors affecting success of a search:

The indexes do not always show that an individual was a PoW, as no special medal was issued.

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