



Royal Navy Ratings, 1835-1945

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 person*.....
- The service number of the rating*.....
- The approximate dates of service*.....
- Their rating (rank).....
- Did the rating die 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. (Surviving) Service Records, 1853-1945

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue references: ADM 139 (1853-1872) and ADM 188 (1873-1928)

This is the main source for service records of ratings 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, year of entry into service, official number of rating, details of ships served on, date of pension and death (if killed in action).

Next of kin details are not given in service records except in cases where parental consent was required to allow boys to join the Royal Navy.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Records of service for ratings who joined the Royal Navy after 1928 are held by the Ministry of Defence (see below)

It is often useful to combine this with a search of the naval medal roll since this gives the rating's continuous service number, particularly useful given that the indexes to ADM 139 and ADM 188 are not in strict alphabetical order and some of them are missing or incomplete (see below).

Information can be inaccurate as some ratings lied about their age or used an alias in order to join.

2. Campaign (or Service) Medal

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue references: ADM 171/94-119

Information that this source should reveal:

Usually campaign (or service) medals will provide information on the medal(s) to which the rating was entitled and the continuous service number. This number is essential for locating (surviving) service records since the indexes to ADM 139 and ADM 188 are not in strict alphabetical order and some of them are missing or incomplete.

Factors affecting success of a search:

You must know the name of the rating since the medal role is in alphabetical order.

3. Naval Deaths

Standard charge: ADM 80 £15
 ADM 104 £30

Catalogue reference: ADM 80 (1863-65) and ADM 104 (1854-1957)

ADM 80 contains details of gratuities paid to the widows of ratings killed in action or drowned.

ADM 104 contains casualty and wound registers that give details of naval deaths for ratings who were killed, wounded or died of wounds as a result of enemy action.

Information that this source should reveal:

Information that this source provides varies according to the date of death.

ADM 80 (1863-65 only) will provide the ratings name, name of the ship serving on, cause and date of death, widows name and address, amount paid, and how and when paid.

Depending on the date of the register ADM 104 can provide the ratings name, rank, ship serving on, service number, date of death, date of notification of death, relative informed and in some instances, the address of the next of kin.

You may also wish to consult the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org/ as well as Parts II and IV of S. D. and D. B. Jarvis, *The Cross of Sacrifice* (Roberts: 1993) which provides details of RN Ratings who died during the First World War.

Copies of death certificates can be obtained (by post) from the General Register Office or (in person) from the Family Records Centre (see below for addresses).

Factors affecting success of a search

To make a search feasible you will need to know an approximate year of death.

4. Pension Records

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue reference: ADM 6 (1673-1960), ADM 22 (1734-1934), ADM 73 (1704-1981), PMG 70 (1866-1928) and WO 22 (1842-1883)

Information that this source should reveal:

Pension records can often provide name, rank and place of birth, dates served on board ships, dates of entry and discharge from ships (useful for searching ship's musters and pay books), age on entry and length of service.

PIN 26 can also contain references to dependents.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Owing to the variety of pensions and the lack of records for some periods, information about pensions paid to naval personnel can sometimes be difficult to find. PIN 26 only represents 2% of pensions awarded.

5. Ships Muster and Pay Books

Standard charge: £45

Catalogue reference: ADM 31-39 (1669-1836), ADM 115 (1853-1879) and ADM 117 (Ship's ledgers 1872-1882)

Information that this source should reveal:

From 1761 these records should provide age, place of birth, date of death, name of ship that rating served on, whether rating sent part of pay to next of kin and whether a rating was discharged to hospital.

Factors affecting success of a search:

Muster and pay books are prime sources for tracing the service history of a rating, especially before 1853 when the Admiralty kept no centralized record of rating's service. However the name of the ship is essential to make this search feasible.

Most muster books for the period 1878-1909 were destroyed by enemy action in 1941.

6. Specific Gallantry Award

Standard charge: £30

Catalogue reference: ADM 171/78-88

Information that this source should reveal:

Relates to the Albert Medal, Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, Conspicuous Service Cross and Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Order, George Cross, George Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Military Medal, Mentioned in Despatches and Victoria Cross.

Factors affecting success of a search:

The citation (which provides details of the act of bravery that earned the award) does not always survive and searching the relevant information can be time-consuming, particularly if you do not know which medal was awarded or the date of the award.

A selection of sources held outside The National Archives.

Contacts Details	Useful for:
<p>Commonwealth War Graves Commission 2 Marlow Road Maidenhead Berkshire, SL6 7DX United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)1628 634221 Website: www.cwgc.org</p>	<p>The 'Debt of Honour Register' is the Commission's database listing the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two world wars and the 23,000 cemeteries, memorials and other locations worldwide where they are buried. There is no public access to the CWGC office, but the database is available on the CWWG website.</p>
<p>http://www.gazettes-online.co.uk</p>	<p>London Gazettes Online has a search facility which is useful for tracing details of officers' appointments, promotions and gallantry award citations.</p>
<p>Ministry of Defence 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 Email: navysearch.defencerecords2@gtnet.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please write to this address if you are interested in a seaman who joined the Navy after 1923.</p>
<p>National Maritime Museum Romney Road Greenwich London, SE10 9NF United Kingdom Tel: + 44 (0)20 8858 4422 Website: www.nmm.ac.uk</p>	
<p>Naval Secretary's Department Administrative Support Room 115, Victory Building HM Naval Base Portsmouth, PO1 3LS United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)23 9272 7486</p>	<p>Holds records of naval gallantry awards from the start of the Second World War to the present day.</p>
<p>Royal Naval Museum</p>	

Contacts Details	Useful for:
HM Naval Base Portsmouth, PO1 3LR United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)23 9272 7562 Website: www.flagship.org.uk	
Family Records Centre 1 Myddelton St London EC1R 1UW Tel: 020 8392 5300	Copies of death certificates can be obtained in person at the Family Records Centre.
General Register Office PO Box 2 Southport Merseyside PR8 2JD Tel: 0845 603 7788 www.gro.gov.uk	Contact this office to apply for copies of death certificates by post.
www.cronab.demon.co.uk	Histories of the sailing ships of the Royal Navy by M. Phillips.
www.navynews.co.uk	Online news about the Royal Navy.
www.nelson-society.org.uk	Website for those interested in the life of Admiral Horatio Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar.
www.royal-navy.mod.uk	Official Ministry of Defence website.
www.ringsurf.com	Friends of the Royal Navy link to a selection of privately developed websites that look at various aspects of the past, present, and the future of the Royal Navy.