

Where to find Royal Navy Service Records

The vital information required for researching an individual is the ship(s) or shore establishment(s) they served with. Information may be known in the family, or there may be items at home such as medals or paperwork that can help you. If a sailor died during the world wars, details should be easily accessed through the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#). If your relative survived the world wars start with the personal service record.

First World War service records are generally held at [The National Archives \(TNA\)](#) and many of these are available online on a pay-per-view basis. Two useful publications that will help you get the most out of your visit to TNA are *A Guide to the Naval Records in The National Archives of the UK* by Randolph Cock and NAM Rodger (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2006) and *Tracing Your Naval Ancestors* by Bruno Pappalardo (Richmond, Surrey: PRO, 2003).

Online records at TNA include:

- [Records for regular service](#) - between 1873 - 1923
- [Royal Navy Officers' records up to 1917](#)
- [Royal Navy Officers' service record cards](#) between 1840 and approximately 1920
- [Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve records](#) (covering the dates 1903-1919 for ratings and 1914 - 1922 for officers) are held at TNA - not all records have survived
- [Royal Naval Reserve](#) records for the First World War (and up to 1955 for ratings)
- [First World War Royal Naval Division \(RND\)](#) records of service
- [Records of Royal Marines](#) serving between 1842 - 1925
- [Officers' records between 1793 - 1925](#)

Records of those who served in the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) can be found at [TNA](#). [Ratings' records](#) may also be available. TNA also holds the pre-1929 Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service records.

For Second World War service records or for those dating after the cut-off dates listed above, please write to CN Pers (Commodore Naval Personnel). Full records will be released to proven next of kin for a £30 fee.

Very basic information about deceased service personnel will be released to general enquirers, with slightly more details available 25 years after the date of death. Download an application from the [Veterans UK website](#).

The careers of naval officers can be traced through the *Navy List*, a regular official publication. These contain seniority lists of all officers, cross referred to individual ships. A full set is held by TNA but IWM holds a near complete run from 1914 to date.

Get a copy of military service records

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1. Overview

You can get a copy of your own or someone else's military service records, eg for proof of service or research purposes.

Records date from 1920 and may include:

- medals received
- medical records
- details about someone's career, eg the units they served in
- date of death, if they died in service

In some cases little or no information is available about someone's military service.

Check the National Archives for [service records from 1913 to 1920](#) or [service records before 1913](#).

Who can apply

You can [apply for a copy of your own service records](#) if you are, or have been, a member of the armed forces, e.g. the army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force (RAF).

You can [apply for a copy of someone else's service records](#) if one of the following apply:

- you're their immediate next of kin, eg spouse or parent
- you've got consent from their immediate next of kin
- you have a general research interest - you'll only have access to limited information, unless they died more than 25 years ago

You'll need to know the person's full name, date of birth and service number.

How much it costs

There's no fee:

- for your own records
- if you were someone's spouse or civil partner at the time of their death (or their parent, if there was no spouse)

All other applications cost £30.

How long it takes

It can take up to several months for your application to be processed.

Your application will be prioritised if it's urgent, e.g. you need proof of service so you can claim benefits.

**[More information, links and forms are available at
https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records](https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records)**