

Military Service Records

Background

If you are researching an individual who served in the military, the first thing to do is search for a service record. These are held in various places depending on when they served in the military. Service records only really started in the early 20th century. Before this time there are other records such as muster rolls and pension records which you can use. Before conducting any searches, it will be helpful if you know the regiment they served in, their date of birth and when they joined the service (if you do not know an exact date, try to work out a rough period).

No military service records are held at Gloucestershire Archives. Our detailed '*Military Guide (Handlist)*' is the best way to find out what we hold. You can view the handlist here: [military-handlist-consultation-version-2006-07-07.doc](#)

What records are there and what information will they contain?

Army

<u>Date</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Available From</u>	<u>Information</u>
1920 onwards (including Home Guard)	Service Records	Ministry of Defence The National Archives	• Free if applying for own/spouse's records • Fee for all other applications • Only certain information will be given to non-relatives • Forms can be downloaded from https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records • Non-officer records (soldiers), and Royal Air Force non-commissioned (airmen) records of those who were born before 1st January 1940 have been transferred to the National Archives. An up-to-date list of the transfers can be found here: Information for transfer to The National Archives - GOV.UK • Home Guard records have also been transferred, and you can find out more here: Home Guard personnel - The National Archives
1913-1920	Service Records	Ancestry	• Most do not survive as the warehouse they were kept in was bombed in WW2 and most records were burnt. • You can view the surviving records on Ancestry at any Gloucestershire

			Library, or at the Gloucestershire Family History Centre.
1913-1920	Pension Records	Ancestry	- Only available for men who survived the war but were discharged due to wounds or ill health. - You can view the surviving records on Ancestry at any Gloucestershire Library, or at the Gloucestershire Family History Centre.
Before 1913	Pension & Discharge Records	Find My Past	- Will usually include parish of birth, age, length of service, regiment, and reason for discharge. - May not exist for men who died during service. - You can view the surviving records on Find My Past at the Gloucestershire Family History Centre.
1730-1898	Muster Rolls	The National Archives (various references)	- These are pay lists for a particular regiment or battalion. They were often made quarterly. - To find out more, please see the National Archives research guide on British Army muster rolls and pay lists, available here: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-muster-rolls-pay-lists-1730-1898/
<u>OFFICERS ONLY</u>			
1920 onwards	Service Records	See above	See above
1913-1920	Service Records	The National Archives (WO 338 & WO 339)	Contain name, age, regiment, dates of service and other information about service.
Before 1913	Officers service records	The National Archives (WO 25 and WO 76)	- Sorted by regiment - To find regiment use Army Lists (WO 65)

Navy

<u>Date</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Available From</u>	<u>Information</u>
1929 onwards	Service Records	Ministry of Defence	- Free if applying for own/spouse's records - Fee for all other applications - Only certain information will be given to non-relatives - Forms can be downloaded from

			https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records
1853-1928	Service Records	The National Archives (documents online)	• Can be downloaded for a fee • Contains age, place of birth, occupation before enlisting, ranks held and ships served on. • To find out more, please see the following research guide: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-navy-ratings-service-records-1853-1928/
1789-1894	Pension Records	The National Archives (ADM 73 and ADM 29)	• Only available for men who were retired from the Navy (i.e. survived)
1667-1878	Ship Muster & Pay Books	The National Archives (various)	• Lists men serving on a particular ship. • Lists produced annually/quarterly.

Royal Air Force (For Royal Flying Corps see Army)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Available From</u>	<u>Information</u>
1922 onwards	Service Records	Ministry of Defence The National Archives	• Free if applying for own/spouse's records • Fee for all other applications • Only certain information will be given to non-relatives • Forms can be downloaded from https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records • Non-officer records (soldiers), and Royal Air Force non-commissioned (airmen) records of those who were born before 1st January 1940 have been transferred to the National Archives. There are currently 9.3 million records being transferred which is expected to last until 2027. An up-to-date list of the transfers can be found here: Information for transfer to The National Archives - GOV.UK
1918-1922	Service Records	The National Archives (AIR 78 and AIR 79)	Include • Date and place of birth • Physical description • Next of kin, spouse and children • Date of joining & discharge

How to Find the Records

Records available on Ancestry and Find My Past can be viewed for free at any Gloucestershire Library, or at the Gloucestershire Family History Society Centre. If you want to view them from home, you will need to purchase a subscription to the website. Records held at the National Archives need to be accessed onsite at the National Archives in Kew. Those records noted as being “documents online” can be downloaded for a fee.

Further Reading

There are numerous research guides on the National Archives’ website about Army, Navy and Air Force records. For more detailed information please see the relevant [guide](#).

IMPORTANT

You will need to apply for service records of men who rejoined the forces after WW1 (e.g. in the territorial army, for WW2 or in the Home Guard).

For men who rejoined the forces during WW1, their records could be stored with the WW1 records or as part of the pre-WW1 series.