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British Connections

*Official Publication of the International Society for British Genealogy
and Family History*



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President's Message



Craig L. Foster, AG®

Military History and Much More

"Die Damen aus der Hölle" is what the Black Watch Regiment was called by German soldiers during World War I. Translated, these fierce Scottish soldiers were known as "Ladies from Hell." Dressed in their distinctive Black Watch tartan kilts and known for their fearsome fighting, soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland, led by their regimental bagpipers playing "the most awful music to be heard by men who have the Highlanders against them, and with fixed bayonets and hand-grenades they stormed the German trenches."¹

By World War II, the use of bagpipes was only allowed in the rear of combat zones. However, Simon Fraser, 15th Lord Lovat, commander of the British 1st Special Service Brigade at D-Day, ignored orders and ordered his personal piper, William "Bill" Millin, to play the pipes as Lovat's men stormed Sword Beach. When Millin questioned given the army's orders, "Lord Lovat replied: 'Ah, but that's the English War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply.'" Dressed in "the same Cameron tartan kilt his

father had worn in Flanders during World War I—and he was armed only with his pipes and the *sgian-dubh*, or 'black knife,' sheathed inside his kilt-hose on the right side," Millin marched along the beach playing "Heilan' Laddie" and other familiar tunes as bullets flew all around him. Millin later claimed he asked a couple of captured German snipers why they hadn't shot him, and they told him they thought he'd gone mad.²

Millin and his comrades were not alone in terms of courage and fortitude among soldiers in Britain's rich military history. The first British "standing army" was in 1661, but still depended upon volunteers and did not conscript until 1916 during World War I.³ Over the centuries, thousands of men and later women volunteers and conscripted served in the various branches of the British military. In the process, they produced a plethora of records. This edition contains articles with fascinating and helpful information on military records and researching military ancestors.

No doubt our British Institute classes for Scotland, Ireland, and England will include discussion of military records and research.

Now is the time to register for one of these courses being taught by well-known and respected genealogists Chris Paton, Fintan Mullan, Gillian Hunt, and Paul Milner. Start planning for British Institute 2025, being held 6-10 October in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In the meantime, we will have only one more Winter Webinar on 15 March, but be sure to join us on 24 March for the Virtual Spring Institute! This year's topic is "Caribbean

Research for your British Ancestors." Todd Knowles and Dan Poffenberger, both of FamilySearch, will be teaching this all-day institute. It's amazing how many people around the world have ancestors who settled for a short time in the Caribbean before migrating to other countries. Register now for a day filled with fascinating information and research strategies.

Craig

Endnotes

¹ Claire Barrett, "'Ladies from Hell': Bagpipers led the Charge During WWI," *HistoryNet*, 6 October 2022, <https://www.historynet.com/ladies-from-hell-bagpipers-led-the-charge-during-wwi/#:~:text=Nicknamed%20Die%20Damen%20aus%20der,battlefields%20of%20World%20War%20I>, accessed 7 February 2025.

² "Bill Millin," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Millin#cite_note-Economist-6, accessed 7 February, 2025.

³ John Rabon, "10 Random and Interesting Facts about the British Armed Forces," *Anglotopia*, 21 October 2024, <https://anglotopia.net/british-history/british-empire/10-random-interesting-facts-british-armed-forces/>, accessed 7 February 2025.



WINTER WEBINAR

March 15, 2025 11 a.m. EST

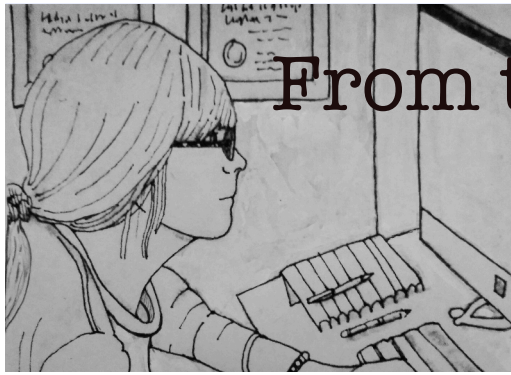
DONNA RUTHERFORD

The Hull Mystery (the
Story of John Dring)



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Webinar of the
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From the Editor's Desk

Find Your Place on Our Map

Where is your British research taking you? Are you knee-deep in Kirkcudbright, like I am, or are you somewhere in Ulster or maybe even in Cornwall, rooting around in records and making mind-blowing discoveries about the lives of your ancestors?

Did you know that the FamilySearch library has a vast collection of records from Britain, both physical and digital (some not available outside of FamilySearch centers)? FamilySearch has digitized some records from The National Archives (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Archives_and_Libraries), and the FamilySearch Library contains physical copies of books such as this one (of interest to me): *An Index to the transcripts of monumental inscriptions in the church and churchyard at Cornelly: recorded by members of the Cornwall Family History Society*. See what you can find in this amazing FamilySearch collection.

If your research list has been growing over the past year, it may be time for a visit to the FamilySearch Library. We'll be there in October for British Institute, and we would love to meet you!

Your Research Progress

We would love to hear about your research! If enough members share short summaries (a paragraph or two) of their successes (and continuing struggles) in British Isles and Commonwealth countries research, we will share your information on a "letters to the editor" page. Share your stories with me at editor@isbgfh.com.

Have you looked at the Member Surnames of Interest page recently? Please tell us about your contact experiences with other members. Did you discover anything new or find a new direction for your research?

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Sandra

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Fencible Regiments

Many famous regiments have been raised for military service in Scotland over the centuries, but a particular chapter in the country's history is often overlooked. In 1759 and 1778, units known as "fencible" regiments were raised in parts of Scotland as a form of home guard to allow the regular army to march off and fight overseas. After a short and uneventful existence, they were disbanded in 1783, following the American Revolutionary War.

In the ensuing peace, Britain reduced its military compliment and soon found itself unprepared when the French declared war in February 1793. The order was given for the re-creation of the fencible units to defend against the threat of invasion, particularly important in Scotland as there were few militia forces to speak of compared to her southern neighbours. Less than a month later, regiments had been established by some of the country's wealthiest and most influential clan chiefs and landowners, including the Sinclairs and MacKays in Caithness, the Campbells in Breadalbane and Argyll, and the Grants of Strathspey. Initially, they were comprised of eight companies each, led by a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, a major, and five captains, but by 1794 had grown to ten companies, with some regiments forming separate battalions. There were two types of regiments, the infantry and the cavalry. As infantry they were given regimental numbers, as with the regular army, but were later renamed in favour of the landowners who had raised them, whilst the cavalry brigades were renamed as Light Dragoons.

Upon passing a medical examination by a local surgeon, enlisted recruits were paid a bounty of three guineas, out of which they had to buy their own uniforms. This would typically include a



Chris with his family outside Edinburgh Castle in 2008, where his four times great grandfather William Paton was initially stationed with Breadalbane's Fencibles in 1707 (author's image).

scarlet jacket with white cuffs, collar and buttons, a twilled white flannel waistcoat, a pair of flannelled drawers, a bonnet and feather, three shirts with frills, two pair of hose, two pairs of shoes, a comb, a black leather stock and buckle, a leather rose, and a haversack. Some, such as the Rothesay and Caithness Fencibles, wore tartan pantaloons, whilst others, such as the Gordon Fencibles and the Inverness-shire Fencibles, wore full Highland garb instead.



The National Records of Scotland, based in Edinburgh (author's image).

Various correspondences between the sergeant and his captain at Edinburgh Castle are held within the Breadalbane Muniments at the National Records of Scotland (catalogued under GD112/52), detailing the pressure MacKay was under to return his recruits as soon as possible; he was finally able to inform his superior that eight recruits would be marching to Edinburgh on 28 March. I was lucky to find a description of William from the battalion's recruitment book, which noted that he was aged 19 and born in the city of Perth, in the County of Perth. He was five feet, eight and a half inches tall, had black hair,

Sergeants sent out to raise men for their units were under strict instructions not to recruit those from occupations which may have caused economic distress to their employers, unless they agreed to pay a fine for non-completion of the work out of their military bounty. This caused one particular sergeant, Robert MacKay, a huge headache on 24 March 1797, when he tried to enlist my 4th great grandfather William Paton, a handloom weaver from Carr's Croft in Perth, into the 2nd Battalion of Breadalbane's Fencibles in Perth. William signed up with four other weavers on the same day, they being George McKay, John Garvie, John Herres and James McLagon. However, MacKay was required to follow this recruitment rule:

III: You must take care not to inlist any indented Apprentices, without previously getting up their Indentures discharged. Nor are you to inlist Deserters from other Corps, nor any Weavers engaged with an unfinished web, unless he agrees to purchase it out of his bounty, previous to his being attested.

The five weavers informed MacKay that they all had webs to complete, and were going absolutely nowhere until their work was finished.

brown eyes, a fair complexion, and was a weaver by trade.

As a home defence force, a great deal of the soldiers' time was spent in barracks, on various manoeuvres across the country and in performing escort duties, with some sent to perform similar duties in Ireland. The entries for William Paton in the muster rolls for Breadalbane's Fencibles note various quiet weeks spent at Edinburgh Castle before marches to St. Andrews, Kirkcaldy, Queensferry, Bathgate, Airdrie, Glasgow, and Ayr. On 22 August 1798, members of William's regiment were asked to volunteer to sail to Ireland, to assist in policing efforts in the aftermath of the United Irishmen rebellion.

The 1798 rebellion had already seen many Scottish regiments engaged in fierce fighting in the country, including the Reay Fencibles, the Caithness Legion of Fencible Men, the Fraser Regiment of Fencible Men, the Inverness Fencibles, and others. The Reay Fencibles fought in a major battle against the rebels near Tara Hill, with twenty six of their number killed or wounded in the fighting, though the rebels lost

well over four hundred. The Fife and Argyll Fencibles fought at the Battle of Ballynahinch, the turning point of the uprising, whilst the Inverness men also saw serious combat operations, and were renamed as Duke of York's Royal Inverness Highland Men in gratitude.

Many soldiers were, however, unhappy about being posted to Ireland. When Breadalbane's Fencibles were asked to send over volunteers, about half of the compliment refused to go—including my ancestor William Paton—infuriating those who had sponsored the regiment. George Penny, in his 1832 book, *Traditions of Perth*, recorded that

Lady Breadalbane, who had taken great interest in these proceedings, was so incensed at their obstinacy, that she is reported to have declared, that she would raise a regiment that would march to the devil if she desired it.

Those who volunteered did travel to Ireland, with the Earl of Breadalbane granting a medal to each in gratitude for their service. When these soldiers were subsequently asked to go to Europe to continue their service, they also drew the line at that point and refused. They returned to Scotland, and along with those who had stayed behind, were recorded in a final muster on 18 April 1799, after which they were duly disbanded.

A major problem at the time was that many soldiers within the fencible regiments were beginning to embrace ideas from political pamphleteers such as Thomas Paine, whose *Rights of Man* publication in 1791 sowed the idea in their minds that they were no longer chattels, and had some degree of free will. This led in many cases to disciplinary problems, such as that which occurred in Glasgow in December 1794, again with the Breadalbane Fencibles. Following the arrest and detention in Glasgow of a soldier from the 1st Battalion for an offence for which he had been found guilty, a party of his colleagues armed themselves with muskets and fixed bayonets, and marched to the guard house, where they successfully secured his release. So

outraged was Lord Adam Gordon, the commander in chief for Scotland, that an order was given to round up every spare soldier in the city to confront the soldiers to demand the return of the prisoner and the leaders of the mutiny. Before the issue was forced, however, the ringleaders voluntarily gave themselves up to Lord Breadalbane without condition. They were escorted to Edinburgh Castle, where the ringleaders were tried and sentenced to death. Three had their sentences commuted, but the fourth, Alexander Morton, was shot on Musselburgh Sands.

In an almost identical situation, a similar mutiny broke out amongst the Strathspey Fencibles later in 1795, when several men were imprisoned following a joke made at an officer's expense, and then similarly liberated by their comrades. Following a trial of the ringleaders, four privates were sentenced to death. Escorted to Gullane Links at East Lothian, they were informed that they could draw lots to spare two of their number. Charles Mackintosh and Alexander Fraser, who lost the ballot, were then executed in front of their regiments.

An interesting point concerning the Scottish Fencible regiments which travelled to Ireland is that upon their return they established the Orange Order within Scotland, having served alongside the recently formed Orange Yeomanry within the country. The first warrants granted to establish Scottish lodges went to the Breadalbane's and Argyll Fencibles between March and May 1798, followed soon after by the Ayr, Tay, Dumfries, North Lowland, and Caithness Fencibles. It was not until the early 1800s that civilian lodges were then established within the country.

Following the rebellion in 1798, other fencible units saw service elsewhere in the UK, with the MacDonald Fencibles sent to the English port of Whitehaven, for example, to prevent the ships of seamen trying to force an increase in their wages from leaving the port. So terrified of the



The cottages of Carr's Croft, home to William Paton who was recruited into Breadalbane's Fencibles in 1797 (postcard, author's collection).

Highlanders were the sailors that they backed down.

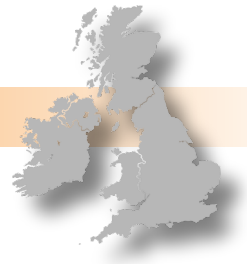
When the Treaty of Amiens was signed in 1802, the Fencibles were finally disbanded, and new regiments were then raised to specifically serve overseas. This followed an order given in 1799 which decreed that all units which had been designed to purely serve within the British Isles were to be discontinued.

If your ancestor was in the Scottish fencibles, you may have to search far and wide to locate their records. Some are held at the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh (www.nrscotland.gov.uk), and some are held in local archives across the country. A small number of records are at the National Archives in England (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), whilst others have not survived. A useful guide to help locate those that do exist is *Militia Lists and Musters 1756–1787* (4th edition) by Jeremy Gibson and Mervyn Medlycott, available from Family History Books (www.familyhistorybooksonline.com).

Based in the Ayrshire town of Stewarton, Northern Irish-born Chris Paton runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (<https://scotlandsgreateststory.wordpress.com/>)

*and the daily Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (<http://scottishgenes.blogspot.com>). Amongst his many publications are Tracing Your Scottish Family History on the Internet, Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church and State Records, and Sharing Your Family History Online from Pen and Sword, as well as Down and Out in Scotland: Researching Ancestral Crisis from *Unlock the Past*. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including Scottish Research Online and Scotland 1750–1850: Beyond the Old Parish Registers.*





Tracing a British Army Officer: Lieutenant Colonel William Dixon of the Royal Artillery

The clue that you have a British Army Officer in your family lineage may come from family tradition, or may come from almost any record that mentions a person's occupation. You need to be observant to find the clue, then need to know where to look next. This article, using a case study, will highlight some of the resources that you will need to use to get started and then identify the variety of records that you may need to use to flush out your ancestor's career. Each officer's search is likely to be unique but the basics will be standard. The case study is from the Napoleonic War / War of 1812 time period.

Finding William Dixon

How I originally found the monumental inscription for William Dixon inside Saint Mary Church Ponteland, Northumberland, has been lost in the mists of time. Certainly I have known it for over 35 years—before I really knew how to research. Nowadays, the monumental inscription can be found in a minute or two by searching on Find A Grave, and the entry even includes a photograph of the marble inscription on the inside of the church.

Sacred to the Memory of William Dixon Esqr of Benbridge. Late Lieutenant Col. Of The Royal Artillery who died at Tours the 25th of Decr 1824. Aged 55 Years. Much esteemed and lamented by the desire of his affectionate widow, fourth daughter of the Revd James Worsley Late Rector of Gatcombe in the Isle of Wight. This tablet is erected in token of her esteem and regard.¹

What the inscription tells us is that when William Dixon died, age 55, on 25 December 1824 at Tours in France, he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Artillery. This is what we need to get

into the military records. The tablet was erected by his wife. Notice she is not named, except identified as the fourth daughter of the Revd James Worsley, late rector of Gatcombe in the Isle of Wight.

Staying with the family history, a quick search at FamilySearch shows four entries for William Dixon marrying Elizabeth Worsley on 16 March 1800, in Newport, Isle of Wight. Given what is known from the monumental inscription, it makes sense that William would be married on the Isle of Wight where his father-in-law is a minister.

Accessing the British Army Lists

Let's turn to William's Army career. The easiest way to trace an officer is through the annually published Army lists. These are readily available, for free, from The National Archives (TNA) at Kew, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

On TNA's opening page, you will see two important buttons: 1) Help with your research; and 2) Search the catalogue. If this is your first time searching for an officer, or if you need a refresher, then choose "Help with your research." This will lead you to the research guides. TNA staff recommend you access the guides via the "Use our A-Z index." Select the button, then choose A, then Army. This will produce a list of 30 guides to different aspects of Army research.

There are three guides immediately relevant to our search:

- British Army officers up to 1913
- British Army officers of the First World War
- British Army officers in service after 1918

The printed annual army lists are available for free as part of TNA digital microfilm for the period 1754 to 1879. These lists, in WO65, were the actual volumes used by the War Office or its predecessors and may contain handwritten annotations used in preparation for the following year's volume. For any given year, the downloadable PDF files may be a large single file or be split into multiple sections, so make sure you download all the relevant pieces for your chosen year.

After 1879, the annual lists were replaced by quarterly lists from 1879 to 1922. From 1923 to 1950, the lists were issued half-yearly. There may be differences in content between one issue and the next in a given year. If you cannot find what you expect to find, then read the descriptions in *Spencer's Army Records*.

For the years after 1879, the most complete collection for annual, semi-annual, or quarterly lists is the collection at the National Library of Scotland (NLS) at <https://digital.nls.uk/british-military-lists/archive/88735803>. This collection also includes copies of the unofficial Hart's Army Lists for the period 1839-1915. Though unofficial, they often contain much helpful biographical material.

FindMyPast and Ancestry have browseable and/or indexed copies of some of the lists, allowing access to individual pages. Personally, I would recommend downloading the complete printed volumes from the TNA and NLS websites. This way you learn to navigate the whole volumes, and see what supportive, instructive and contextual material is available—something that is difficult to do when the volumes are available as single page images.

[1824]

310 ROYAL ARTILLERY.

	John Lemoine †	20 Dec. 1814	M. Gen. 19 July 1821
	Spencer Claudius Parry	do.	do.
	Roberts Evans	do.	do.
	William Millar	do.	do.
	George Salmon	25 Oct. 1817	do.
	Joseph Maclean	24 Feb. 1820	4 June 1814
	John Harris	21 Apr.	do.
Colonel	Sir George Adam Wood, † K.C.H.	11 May	do.
	Richard Dickinson	29 July	do.
	George Bulteel Fisher	6 Nov.	do.
	Edward Pritchard	6 Aug. 1821	12 Aug. 1819
	James Viney †	4 Sept. 1823	do.
	Robert Beevor	17 Oct.	do.
	William Dixon	17 Mar. 1812	dd 25 Dec 1824
	Francis Rey	23 Jan. 1813	
	Charles Gold †	17 Dec.	
	Sir J. Carnecross, K.C.B.	14 Feb. 1814	
	Alexander Watson	1 May	
	Edw. Vaughan Worsley	20 Dec.	4 June 1814
	Thomas Downman †	do.	17 Dec. 1812
	Henry Eveleigh	do.	
	Charles Cox Bingham	do.	
	Stephen Galway Adye †	do.	
	Henry Phillott	do.	
	Peter Fyers †	do.	
	Robert Thornhill	do.	1 Jan. 1812
	Sir Aug. Simon Fraser, K.C.B.	do.	21 June 1813
	Hon. Wm. Henry Gardner	do.	
Lt. Col.	James Hawker †	16 May 1815	
	Frederick Walker	3 July	
	George Desbrisay	19 Jan. 1818	4 July 1816
	† Col. Wm. Williamson	21 Apr. 1820	13 Oct. 1814

Fig. 1 1824 published annual Army List. Note Lt. Col. William Dixon was promoted to that rank on 17 March 1812. The line is crossed out with the annotation died 25 Dec. 1824.

If you are looking for an army officer prior to 1754, then read the guide, *British Army officers up to 1913*, for alternative sources. They do exist.

Using the British Army Lists

For most periods in the Army Lists there are two methods for accessing the information you need. The first, and probably the easiest, if you know the regiment, is to search for the regiment. This will then list the names of officers, their rank, and the date of promotion in order of seniority. If you know only an officer's rank, but not his regiment, then you will need to search the full army listing for that specific rank. You will need to watch for others with the same name who may be officers in different regiments. There is usually an all-name index near but not actually at the back of the volume. The index is often followed by successions of colonels and alterations while printing, or something similar.

Rank	Army List date of promotion	List of Officers – Royal Regiment of Artillery
Gentleman cadet		1 Feb 1784
2 nd Lieut.	2 Oct 1789	2 Oct 1789
1 st Lieut.	16 Nov 1792	16 Nov 1792
Capt. Lieut. and Captain	8 Jun 1796	8 Jun 1796
Captain		14 Oct 1801
Major	1 Feb 1808	1 Feb 1808
Lieut. Colonel	17 Mar 1812	17 Mar 1812
Died		25 Dec 1824 Tours in France
Shown Deceased	1826	
Comments		Walcheren 1809; Directed the dismantling of the works

Table 1. Information for William Dixon RA obtained from the published official army lists and Lists of Officers of the Royal Regiment of the Artillery by General W.H. Askith, both discussed in the article.

For our case study, we know that William Dixon is a Lieut. Colonel in 1824 from his memorial. From TNA we download WO65/79, the Army List for 1824. Fig. 1 shows on page 310 the entry for William Dixon in the Royal Artillery. It shows that at the time he was the most senior Lieut. Colonel, having been promoted on 17 March 1812. What is important here is that every annual list between 1813, the year after his promotion, and 1824 will show the same piece of information. You do not need to search the intervening years. The next step would be to look at the list for 1812 to see in what year he had

been promoted to a Major (1808) and so on back through the annual lists. You reconstruct the career of your officer—shown in Table 1. Note in the Royal Artillery, promotion is due to seniority, not through purchase as with many other regiments. Your officer serving in a cavalry or line regiment may have moved from one regiment to another to gain promotion.

Note in this army list we see that the listing for William Dixon is actually crossed out and has the annotation “died 25 Dec 1824.” This is the War Office’s working copy of the army list. With the death at the end of 1824, the information was too

Reference	Date of Completion	Notes
WO25/744-748	1809-1810	Alphabetical, details of military service only.
WO25/749-779	1828	Officers, retired on full or half-pay, refers to service completed by 1828. Alphabetical, with some family information - wives and children.
WO25/780-805	1829	Serving officers, by regiment. Info as in 1828. Army list forms index.
WO25/808-823	1847	Retired officers, alphabetical, same info as 1828.
WO2/824-870	1870-1872	Few returns before 1870 and after 1872. Arranged by year, then by regiment.

Table 2. Officers service records created by the War Office prior to WWI.

late for the 1825 edition, where again, William Dixon is printed in the list. His name is crossed out and marked with a “del.” In the 1826 army list, William Dixon is not included in the Royal Artillery officer listing, as would be expected. He is, however, listed at the back of the volume, in the section for “casualties since last publication,” as deceased, but the actual date of death is not provided.

Officer Service Records

For officers in the British Army, the service records vary depending upon the time period and who created them—War Office or Regiment.

The War Office surveyed the careers of the army officers. They did not create an ongoing record of service until WWI. All the records are in WO25 at TNA. See Table 2. Our William Dixon did not create a service record in the 1809–10 compilation.

In many ways, the regiments in which the officers served kept better records, but the information recorded varies from one regiment to another, as does survival. These records are in WO76.

There is a combined index to the officers names in WO25 and WO76 that is available for free at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk. A search template is found in the guide to “British Army Officers up to 1913.” Results take you to the digital microfilm that contain the officer. You will need to search the record images. Ancestry has an index, “UK, Officer Service Records, 1764-1932” that is described as an index to WO76 (no mention of WO25) so it is not clear if the indexes are related or not. For a given officer in the Ancestry index, images of their service records are available on Fold3.

Regimental Records

Many regiments have used their records to publish much on the careers of their officers, especially the senior ranks. They are well worth looking for.

It is also the regimental histories that you should be using to put your ancestors into context and to find out where they physically served. For officers in the hundred plus foot/line regiments, it can be relatively easy to figure out where they were, as most consisted of a 1st, 2nd and/or Depot battalions. For those like our William Dixon, it can be more complicated as the Royal Artillery had batteries and groups serving all over the empire.

Two highly recommended resources for tracing regimental histories are *A Bibliography of Regimental Histories of the British Army* by Arthur S. White, and *Regiments and Corps of the British Empire and Commonwealth 1758–1993: A Critical Bibliography of their Published Histories*, 2nd ed. by Roger Perkins. Many of the regimental histories listed will be old enough to be out of copyright and may thus be available online. These volumes will not pick up more modern histories but they are by far the best starting points.

Returning to our case study and seeking information on William Dixon, R.A., we look at the 33 listings for the Royal Artillery in White’s book. There are many more listings for horse, field, garrison artillery, and more still for the first and second world wars.

One publication of interest is *List of Officers of the Royal Regiment of Artillery from the Year 1716 to the Year 1899, to which are added the notes on officers’ services by General William Harrison Askith*, fourth edition, 1900. This is available at www.archive.org. The information is presented in tabular format and has been extracted and added to table 1 above. Note we have additional information on the beginning of his career and a comment about his service activity at Walcheren in 1809—a clue for further exploration, see below. An indexed copy with images is also available at www.findmypast.com as “British Army, Royal Artillery Officers 1716–1899.”

The same volume provides context showing what an officer would have earned daily. For both 1806 and 1814, a Lieutenant Colonel earned 18s 1d; Major 16s 11d; Captain 11s 1d; Captain-Lieutenant 11s 1d. By contrast a gunner would have earned 1s 7d. Note this does not mean the officer would have pocketed all this money as there would have been numerous stoppages.

Where—Explanation

So far, all we have is a listing of his promotions and one mention of a place where he served. It is the regimental histories that you should seek first to put your ancestors on the ground, serving somewhere in the empire. This will be easier as many of the original records are at TNA, and usually not online. Though you may be lucky as more and more specialized sets of military records continue to come online; however, these records are often for a specific regiment or for a short time period.

Where—Port Royal, Jamaica

For the Royal Artillery, all captains are put in

charge of a battery of guns somewhere in the Empire.

White’s book pointed me towards *Battery Records of the Royal Artillery 1716–1859*, compiled by Lieut.Col. M.E.S. Laws, 1952. A copy of this volume is in the FamilySearch library (not digitized). Worldcat shows 13 libraries in the USA with copies. When you know the specific title of a book, it can be relatively easy to locate copies.

For 1801, the year in which William Dixon became a captain, the book shows that Captain William Dixon replaced Captain E. Stehelin as the officer in charge in Port Royal, Jamaica. He remains in charge until he is promoted to a major in 1808. He survived 7 years as the officer in charge. I am certainly impressed, for Jamaica, like many of the Carribean Islands was a death trap for many of the British soldiers and sailors assigned there. His brother-in-law Captain Henry Worsley RA died in Jamaica in 1806. The predominant killer was Yellow Fever, but other tropical diseases took their toll. It was not

W017/2000
Jan 1808
JAMAICA.

ABSENT OFFICERS.				
Regiments	Rank and Names.	Whether on Staff Employ, or absent with leave, and by whom such leave is granted.	For what Period.	From what Period.
Royal Artillery	Captain A. G. Spearman	Master General of the Ordnance		17 October 1803
	" William Dixon	Ditto		21 June 1805
	" Henry Deacon	Ditto		1 June 1806
	Ensign White Seward	Ditto		3 Feb. 1805
	" George Long	Ditto		1 June 1806
	" Thos. G. Brown	Ditto		1 February 1807
	" W. A. Cockburn	Ditto		1 June 1807
	" X. De la Roche	Ditto		10 March 1807

Fig. 2 W017/2000 Station Return for Jan. 1808 in Jamaica, accessible only at TNA. Note William Dixon has been on leave since 21 June 1805, and this is actually a renewal of an earlier leave permission since 1801.

uncommon for over 50% of soldiers and sailors to die, or be seriously incapacitated.

But wait, the printed Battery Records are a secondary source. The British Army created monthly/quarterly station returns showing basically which regiments, with numbers of officers and soldiers, were in what locality. Some of the returns show the names of the officers, while others show the names of officers not present. The monthly station returns need to be examined for Jamaica in WO17 at TNA; they have not been digitized. When looking at the entry for February 1805 (WO17/1997), we find William Dixon has been on leave of absence since 1801. Looking at subsequent dates, like January 1808, we find he has been absent since June 1805 (see fig. 2).

Yes, William Dixon was the assigned Captain to the artillery battery in Port Royal, Jamaica, from 1801 through 1808, but he survived by being absent, on leave, the whole time period. Not quite as impressive. Where he actually was during this time is still unknown.

Where—Walcheren, Holland

From Askith's book, mentioned above, there is a comment that Dixon was at Walcheren in 1809 and directed the dismantling of the works.

With many army clues, you may have to improve your sense of geography and history to understand where your officer actually was, and what was actually happening. In this case Walcheren is the first island in the estuary of the River Scheldt. Napoleon is gathering the French Navy at Antwerp and the British need to stop the Navy getting out, or preferably capturing the ships. The British mounted the largest joint amphibious exercise so far carried out by the armed services with 35,000 infantry and 1,900 cavalry using 352 transport ships and 266 ships of war. The British easily took Walcheren and the next island of South Beveland, but the French and Dutch had retreated towards the more easily defensible areas of Antwerp. The British soldiers on the marshy islands were getting sick, the

actual causes were unidentified, but symptoms varied. This was known as Walcheren Fever, with approximately a third of the men being hospitalized, many dying or becoming severely impaired. Of the survivors, many had early deaths. The British chose to retreat and evacuate. Many of the soldiers returning to England had to be hospitalized. The future Duke of Wellington viewed this as one of the major disasters of the war, taking many soldiers out of commission. As the troops were evacuated, the fortifications on the island had to be destroyed so that the French could not just return and use them again. The now Major William Dixon was responsible for destroying these fortifications.

The activity of this campaign is reported in the official volume *British Minor Expeditions, 1746 to 1814*, compiled in the Intelligence Branch of the Quartermaster-Generals Department, 1884, page 57–80.

I know that William Dixon had an active role in the campaign and does not appear to have had his health impaired.

Where—Halifax, Nova Scotia

William Dixon served in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Yes, William can be found in WO office records at TNA. However, when the British Army pulled out of Canada at Confederation in 1867, they left behind much paperwork. Luckily for us, the newly formed Canadian government saw the value of these records and has preserved them, and importantly, indexed them. They are at the Library and Archives of Canada and are a gold mine for researching any British soldier who served in Canada. The records and index are in RG8, C series.

Certainly for William Dixon there are numerous index cards, all referencing the original record. So for example, we can find a record of William's promotion in 1812:

Quebec 20 August 1812

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent in the Name and on the Behalf of His Majesty has been pleased

to make the following Promotions and Appointment in the Army serving in British North America ...

Major William Dickson [sic] to be Lieut. Colonel over Cookson - dated 17 March 1812.²

These same records show the more routine operations of the army. For example, Lieut. Col. Dixon recommends to Captain T.F. Addison that Corporal Lewillan to be conductor of Truckage; or again to Captain Addison that an allowance of fuel be given to Mrs. Fenwick, widow of Brevet Major Fenwick, R.A. These examples also show how soldiers of any rank may be found in these records.

After the war was over, the station returns in WO17/2361 for October 1816 show that William Dixon obtained leave of absence for Private Affairs, like a couple of other officers from other regiments. The form does not indicate when the leave would end or where he was going. The following month showed that he left Halifax onboard the *HMS Akbar*, which was the former ex-East India Company's *Marquis Cornwallis*, a 4th rate ship of the line with 54 guns. The ship was 166.5 x 43.5 feet—not large for sailing across the Atlantic. The ship had been purchased in 1801 and was used, moving to harbor service in 1824, and being sold in 1862.³

Under the later section regarding death, Elizabeth has to petition the courts in 1832/3 to get possession of property purchased by William in Halifax while he was there.

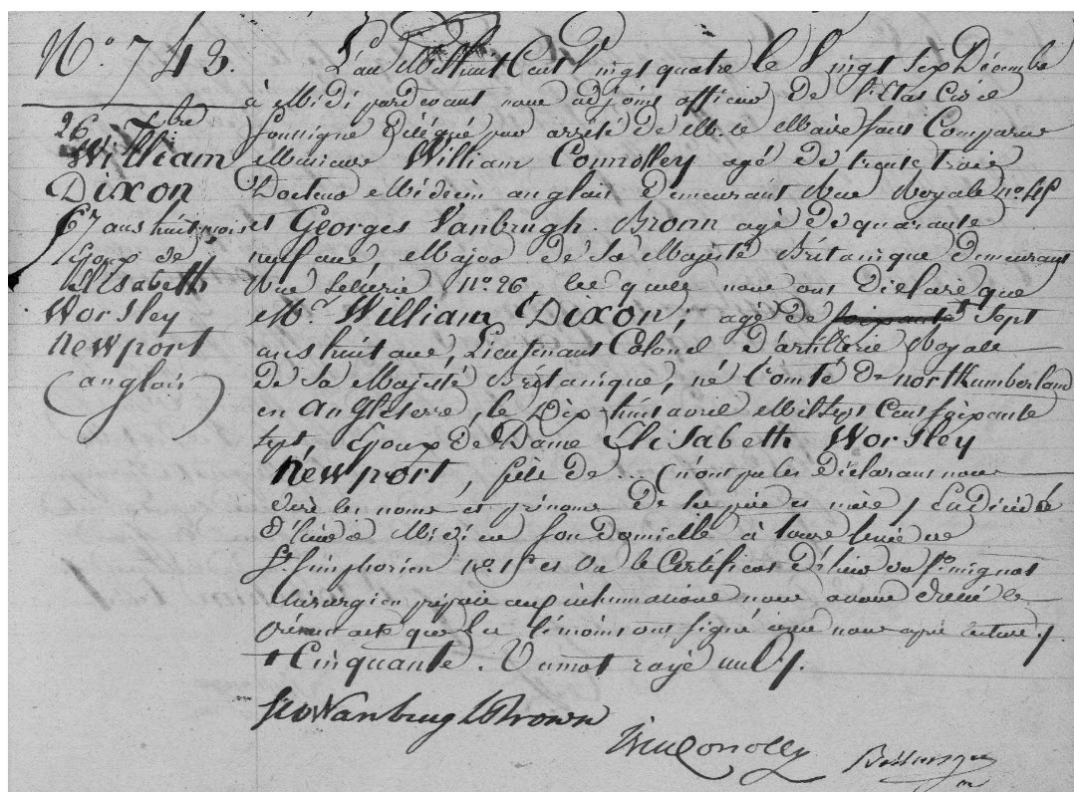


Fig. 3 French civil death record for William Dixon, dying 25 December 1824 at Tours. Record available online from the Archives of Indre-et-Loire. Deaths, 18246NUM8/261/110Archives of Indre-et-Loire media 189/247.

Where—Portsmouth

After William left Nova Scotia, it is unclear what his timeline was. He died in 1824 at Tours in France. At that time, he was identified as the commandant of the Royal Artillery at the Portsmouth Garrison. It is unknown at this point as to when he took that position, or what the position involved.

Records Regarding Death

We know from the original memorial in Ponteland, Northumberland, and comments from the army lists that William Dixon died 24 December 1824 at Tours in France. Civil Registration starts early in France, so we can search for the death record. The death record is found online at the Archives of Indre-et-Loire in France.⁴ From the death record, we learn that William Dixon was born 18 April 1777 in Northumberland, his wife was lady Elisabeth Worsley of Newport, and he died around midday on 24 December 24. Unfortunately, although asked for, the names of his parents were not

provided. The informants were William Connolley, the English doctor in the community and Major George Vanburgh Brown, one of William's fellow artillery officers (see fig. 3).

Looking at how William's death was reported in the newspapers, we see the importance of not limiting your search geographically. The following is just a sampling.

We learn William's present position and the length of his death illness from the *Fife Herald*, 27 January 1825 listed under deaths—"At Tours, on Christmas Day, after two days' illness, Lieutenant-Colonel Dixon, lately Commandant of the Royal Artillery, in the garrison of Portsmouth." His death is reported in *The Sun* [London], 17 January 1825, and again in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 January 1825, where he is incorrectly identified as the brother of Admiral M. [Manly] Dixon; *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 1 February 1825 and again in the *Dublin Morning Register*, 5 February 1825. The news of his death is spreading.

We learn that on 7 February, the Office of Ordnance announced that "Major and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel James Power to be Lieutenant-Colonel, vice Dixon deceased," reported in *The Southampton Town and Country Herald* on Monday, 14 Feb, 1825, but also in the *Scots Magazine* issue for 1 March 1825.

After the death of William Dixon, his estate is probated in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, available online through the TNA website.⁵ In this will he makes his wife Elizabeth his sole Executrix. He leaves her the leasehold house, 47 Gower Street, Bedford Square London, left to him by the late William Dixon Esq., and now let on a 14-year lease for the rental of one hundred and fifty pounds. It is a nice house that still exists. He leaves a one-thousand-pound life insurance policy. He leaves three dwelling houses, a stable and land in Halifax, Nova Scotia, currently leased with instructions to be sold [which is problematic]. The Benridge property in Northumberland goes to Dixon Brown

Esq., but Elizabeth is to be allowed to remove possessions and sell the current crops. She is also to receive an income stream and cash from investments. In other words there is every indication that William and Elizabeth were well-to-do.

In 1832/3, Elizabeth Dixon is having to petition the Crown courts in Nova Scotia, as the property owned by William Dixon had escheated to the Crown. The Nova Scotia courts had required three witness signatures instead of the two signatures accepted by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. She is petitioning the courts but the final judgement does not appear to have survived in the records. However, the petitions do provide the lot numbers in the Levers division within the town and the name of the tenant, making identification possible.⁶

The court petition shows that Elizabeth was still alive in 1833. She was also alive in 1836, for having outlived all her siblings and parents, she erects a memorial to them in St. Olave's Church, Gatcombe, Isle of Wight. After years of searching, I am still trying to find out when and where she died. Oh, for a less common name.

Summary

It is very easy to identify the dates of when your officer got promoted from the published army lists. Depending upon when he served, you may be able to obtain some personal and family biographical information. You then need to do some regimental research to identify where your ancestor may have served, and then dig deeper to put him into context. Many of the original records are likely not to be online, and only available at The National Archives at Kew, or possibly in a regimental archives.

Good luck with your research. It is a great way to learn the geography and history of the British Empire and identify where your ancestor fit into that story.

Bibliography

Start with TNA research guides, then for more in-depth guidance, start with these how-to and reference books. There are many more how-to British military books available, but I recommend starting with these.

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Endnotes

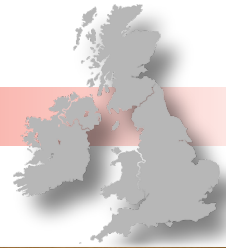
1. Photo image online (accessed 10 February 2025) <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/201910373/william-dixon#view-photo=190395814>.
2. National Library and Archives Canada RG8, C Series. C.1168, p. 239 .
3. Ship information from *Ships of the Royal Navy: The Complete Record of all Fighting Ships of the Royal Navy from the 15th Century to the Present* by J.J. Colledge and Ben Warlow.
4. Original image at <https://archives.touraine.fr/ark:/37621/xr140dn2wfgk/34c0b546-6b17-42da-9c30-979de9ea9543> (accessed 10 February 2025).
5. Will of William Dixon, Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Regiment of Artillery PROB 11/1697/430, probated 27 April 1825.
6. Nova Scotia Land Records, Department of Crown Records. Originals in possession of Public Archives of Nova Scotia, PANS R.G.20, 1833-34, vol. 121, A-Z, A-C, FS digital 008540339. No.S2346.

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Paul is a recipient of UGA Fellow Award (2018) and the David S. Vogels Jr. Award from FGS (2019). He is the author of six publications providing how-to guidance for English and Scottish researchers.

Paul is currently the book review editor for the BIGWILL newsletter and retired review editor of the FGS FORUM. He is currently on the board of the International Society for British Genealogy and Family History (ISBGFH), the past president of the British Interest Group of Wisconsin and Illinois (BIGWILL), and a past board member of the APG, FGS, and GSG. Paul focuses on British Isles resources and methodology on his blog at www.milnergenealogy.com.





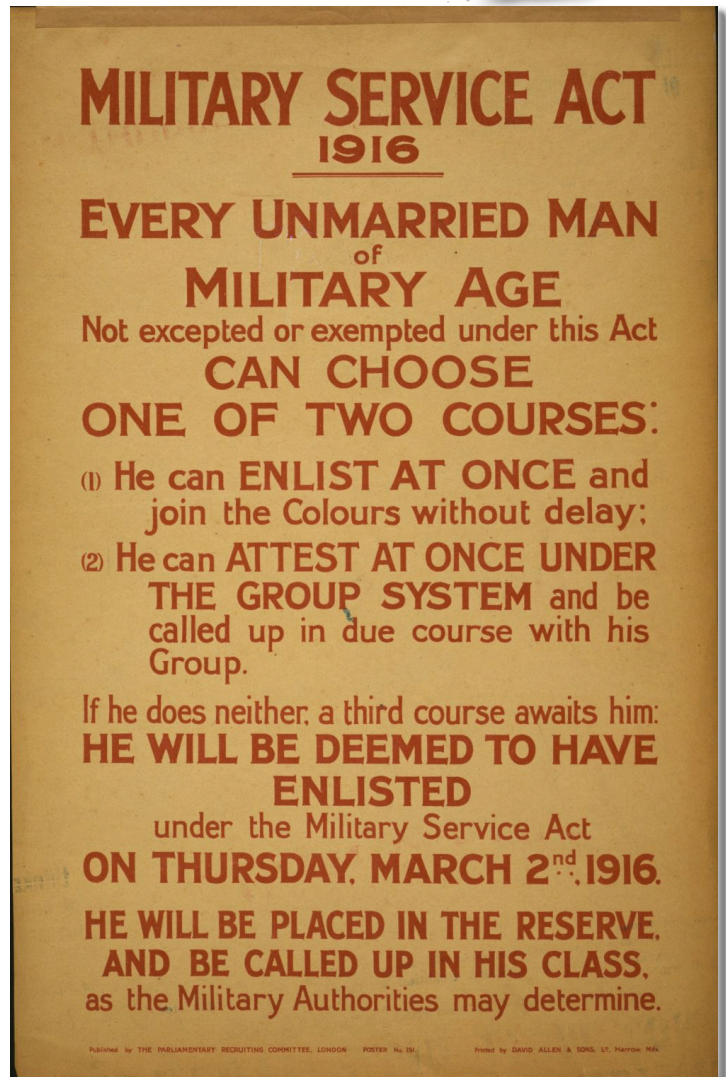
Appeal Dismissed: The First World War Tribunals in Wales

“Claim Disallowed, Appeal Dismissed, Application Refused, Service not Indispensable...” These were the words scrawled in ominous, inky finality on the majority of forms that went before the UK’s First World War tribunals after they considered claims for exemption from military service.

In January 1916, as the war continued unabated, the Military Service Act became law in the UK, after which time all men between 18 and 41 years old had to enlist with the military unless they had been awarded an exemption certificate. There followed a flurry of applications for exemption that went before around 2,000 local tribunals.

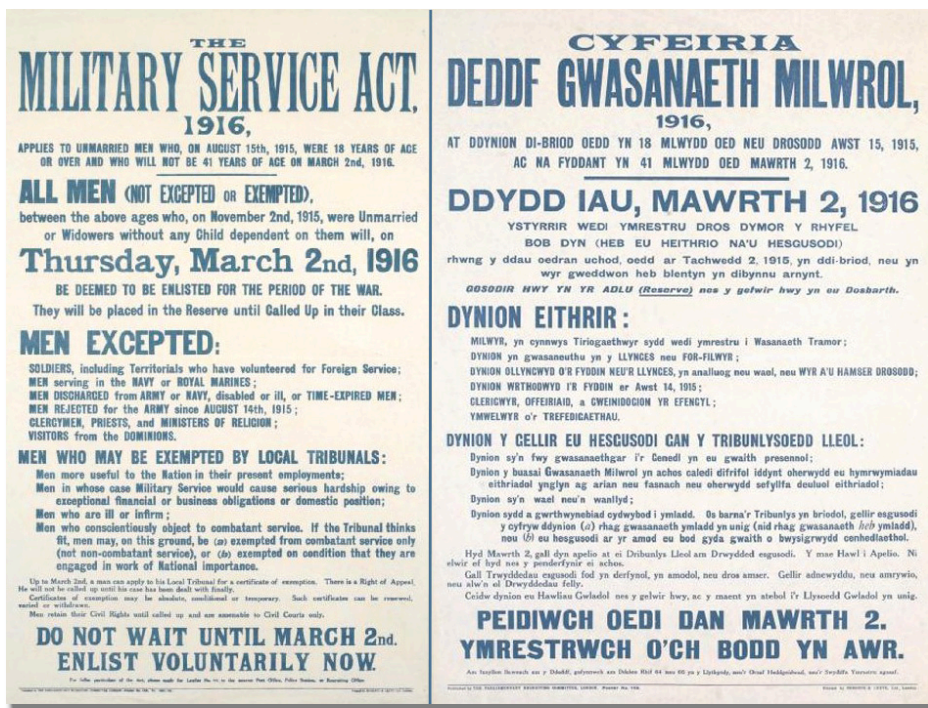
The tribunal panels were kept busy as they considered the cases of thousands of men. The records created by that process provide us with a glimpse of the fears and anxieties felt not only by the men who were called up for military service, but also by their employers, families, and communities who were faced with the loss of skilled workers, income, and, very often, households’ main breadwinners. The associated documents reveal some very personal details that otherwise go unrecorded on official sources. In addition to the tribunals’ final decisions, they often refer to matters of health and conscience, and they sometimes outline the nature of the men’s work. All of this is information that family historians would find extremely valuable.

Unfortunately, however, the government ordered the vast majority of the UK’s tribunal records to be destroyed in 1921, and retained only two



Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Poster_Military_Service_Act_1916_Every_Unmarried_Man_of_Military_Age.jpg

complete sets for preservation, namely those relating to Lothian & Peebles in Scotland and Middlesex in England. However, by a very fortuitous quirk of fate, some other records elsewhere in the UK survived this edict. In Wales, only Cardiganshire’s Great War Tribunal records have survived, and since 2018 this collection has been digitised by the National Library of Wales and is available to browse and to view online.*



Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Military_Service_Act_1916_poster_IWM.jpg and https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Military_Service_Act_1916_Welsh_poster_IWM.jpg.

Each application provides us with brief, often poignant, sometimes heart-wrenching insights into the lives of ordinary men who fatefully lived during a time when the dark shadow of novel industrial warfare hung over Europe. Some had great domestic or occupational responsibilities, whilst others had firm issues of conscience with regards to war in general. The applications reveal personal stories and provide us with hints as to some of the attitudes towards the ongoing hostilities. They include the men's own pleas for exemption, backed up by evidence in most cases, including support from employers, and in some other cases petitions from the wider community.

Take the case of John Edward Jones, a 34-year-old tailor from Lampeter who was in the employ of E.A. Williams of Aberaeron. The letter written by his employer to the tribunal brings home the reality of life for businesses in the small towns and villages of rural Wales, far removed from the hostilities, who were clearly struggling as their young men were called up one-by-one. "I really need this man," implored E.A. Williams who was

weak and had failing eyesight and could not continue to ply his trade without John's assistance. "I used to employ 3 or 4 men" he wrote, "but now have only this one man and a young girl as an apprentice, two who used to work with me have already joined."

John's application was refused by the local tribunal, but he immediately appealed, at which time his employer added that John had been "examined by one of the leading medical men and pronounced absolutely unfit for military training by a defective heart." But the employer's intervention was to no avail. John's appeal was firmly dismissed.

The initial application of John Jones, an egg merchant of Felinfach, was similarly rejected. He too appealed, claiming that the initial decision was "unjust." "I am the only son of the family and the home depends wholly upon me" he said, adding, "taking me away would be a ruin to my father and mother and myself. My father is an invalid person, and can do nothing for himself and my mother is over 60 years of age." John appealed twice, but both appeals were dismissed.

William Morgan Lewis, aged 27 and also of Felinfach, was called up in January 1916 immediately after the Military Service Act came into law. He appealed in February 1916. His employer was his father David Lewis, who outlined the grounds for his exemption: "He suffers badly from asthma," he told the tribunal. "So he cannot bear being out in the damp. For that reason he has for several years been employed almost wholly as a cowman. I could not do without him as he has the care and feeds 40 Head of Cattle. I have two daughters (one is in rather delicate health) and they have quite as

"ABSOLUTE EXEMPTION" FOR LLANELLY TEACHER AND "CO."

WOULD FIGHT GERMANS OVER HERE.

At the Llanelly Tribunal, Daniel F. Griffiths, a certified teacher and a well-known member of the I.L.P., asked for exemption on conscientious grounds, and repeated the reasons given on the previous occasion. The applicant said absolute exemption could be granted.

The Chairman: We understand that exemption can be granted if in the opinion of the Tribunal it is desirable.

Mr. Griffiths added that teaching was now considered a work of national importance.

Mr. M. R. Richards: You do not suggest that you are unfit?

The Chairman: The appeal is on conscientious grounds only. We can only go on the grounds in the appeal.

Mr. Griffiths said he was always opposed to war.

Mr. Richards: Do you object to industrial fighting with stones and brickbats?

Mr. Griffiths: Certainly, I would not use force in any form in an industrial dispute.

The Chairman said that was contrary to what Mr. Griffiths said on the last occasion.

Mr. Richards: You are a servant of the State, and the State is based on force. You are prepared to earn your bread and cheese out of a State based on force.

Mr. Griffiths: One is bound to follow the dictates of society in many ways.

Replying to a further question, Mr. Griffiths said he had no right to expect the protection of the Navy.

Mr. Richards: I cannot imagine a pugnacious man pleading against fighting.

Mr. Griffiths: I am not a pugnacious man. My record is an educational one.

"Going on Your Record."

Mr. Richards: I am going on your record.

The Chairman: There are people who hold that men opposed to the war should not teach.

Mr. Richards: Your objection is a political one rather than conscientious.

Mr. Griffiths said he would not say that he was not prepared to fight against the Germans in this country, neither would he object to assist a wounded soldier.

The Tribunal granted absolute exemption.

much work as they can do to nurse their mother and attend to Household duties, and if he is taken away I have no one else to take care of the cattle and the stock would then suffer."

William's appeal, like the majority, was dismissed. His surviving military service papers reveal that he was mobilised in December 1916, and was a few months later transferred to the army reserves rather than to the frontlines in France or Belgium. But we discover that later, in November 1917, he was discharged completely from the army without having ever seen active service. Written on his service papers is the reason why—he was "no longer physically fit for war service" as a result of "50% permanent incapacity"—due (yes, you've guessed it) to the asthma his father said would make him unfit for service.

The case of John Benjamin Jones, a carpenter and builder from the tiny hamlet of Bwlchyllan, shows how the move to draft men for military service had started to affect the community, for his neighbours and others who employed him arranged a petition in support of his application. He himself implored: "I am the only son of my widowed mother who is in a very delicate state of health being subject at times to a very depressed state of spirits and must not therefore be left alone. I am the main stay of my mother and the home." He also pointed out that "Men of my calling are scarce, the nearest carpenter to my home being about two miles away. In proof of the general feeling in the district for retaining my services, I beg to attach herewith a petition signed by the surrounding fathers." Twenty-four of Bwlchyllan's farmers and residents signed the petition, but despite their support, John's appeal was dismissed on 15 March 1916.

Also among this collection are the applications by those who claimed exemption on the grounds that they were conscientious objectors—or "conchies" as they were widely referred to. A large number of those men were theological students and ministers, including John David Davies, a teacher from Swyddffynnon who was

South Wales Weekly Post, 20 May 1916 – this article can be viewed on the National Library of Wales newspapers website: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4092865/4092867/22/>

at the time studying theology in Aberystwyth. A large number of the Aberystwyth tribunal's applications in fact came from the town's theological student community. John stated: "I claim under the act exemption from combatant service — but I am ready to serve my country in any non-combatant capacity. When attesting I specially applied to be attached to the R.A.M.C. [Royal Army Medical Corps] (ministerial unit)." The tribunal in his case accepted his reasoning and the supporting evidence by declaring, "Appellant should join noncombatant service."

Another conscientious objector was Robert Rees of Trinity Place, Aberystwyth. He was then 24 years old and working as a railway clerk. During his second appeal, he revealed his fundamental antipathy to war: "the primary grounds of my appeal is that I have been always strenuously convinced War under all circumstances to be Evil and have religious convictions I cannot undertake any Military Duties which pertain to its propagation." His first tribunal had granted him a limited exemption, which was extended on appeal, at which time the tribunal nevertheless ruled that his exemption was "conditional upon [him] being forthwith engaged for service with the Friends Ambulance Unit (British Red Cross Society) or some other work of national importance approved by the committee . . . on the grounds that [he] has satisfied the Tribunal that he is a conscientious objector within the meaning of the Act." Like many theological students and other conscientious objectors, his non-combative role involved serving as a stretcher-bearer on the frontlines in Europe. On his eventual discharge from the unit at the end of the war, he was ordained a Congregational minister.

Others were granted an exemption because their work was considered to be "of national interest." One such man was 19-year-old Jenkin Rees of Albert Square, Aberaeron. He was a blacksmith



Many of WW1's stretcher-bearers were conscientious objectors who, like Robert Rees of Aberystwyth, had refused to enlist in a combative role because of their anti-war stance. This image shows stretcher-bearers struggling through the mud to rescue an injured man during the Third Battle of Ypres in Flanders/Belgium, August 1917. Imperial War Museum / Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_team_of_stretcher_bearers_struggle_through_deep_mud_to_carry_a_wounded_man_to_safety_near_Boesinghe_on_1_August_1917_during_the_Third_Battle_of_Ypres._Q5935.jpg.

who had, in his words, "all the work of the said town and also all the agricultural work around the urban area of the town. I am also making Horses' shoes for the Government" — a reminder of course that horses played a key role during the war on the frontlines. His application, however, was initially refused by the local tribunal, but his appeal only two days later resulted in an exemption that was conditional upon "his remaining in his present occupation."

Outside of Cardiganshire, even though all the other Welsh counties' tribunal records have not survived, all is not lost, for if you wish to search for potential appearances before a tribunal, you may find references to them in newspapers that published a majority of tribunal decisions. Journalists would normally attend the hearings, and they would sometimes report on them in detail, as occurred with the case of Daniel F. Griffiths, a teacher from Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. The *South Wales Weekly Post* went further than the normal reporting of tribunal



Horses played a major role during the First World War, and many blacksmiths were able to secure an exemption from military service and combative roles as their work making horseshoes for the war effort was deemed to be of national importance. National Library of Scotland / Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NLS_Haig_-_C.O._of_the_Royal_Scots_Greys_with_his_staff.jpg.

decisions by publishing parts of Daniel's cross-examination. He was a conscientious objector who also explained to the panel that his work as a teacher was now considered "a work of national importance." The panel members' questions and their replies to Daniel's own statements as printed in the article are noteworthy as they are in themselves representative of certain viewpoints of the time.

Some narratives relating to the First World War suggest that civilians were very keen to enlist in order to fight "for King and country." While many men did indeed step up to the plate with little coercion, the reality is far more nuanced. Some refused the draft completely out of personal, religious, and moral convictions, and others because of their family circumstances. The attitudes towards the war in Welsh communities were, similarly, not black-and-white. We often think that those who refused the government's call to arms were ostracised by their neighbours, but its effects on families, businesses, and communities more generally meant that many supported men's applications for exemption. The

records of the First World War Tribunals highlight all of this, but they can also provide us as family historians valuable insights into our ancestors' lives.

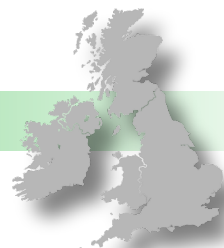
** You can view and browse the surviving Cardiganshire tribunal records for free on the National Library of Wales's website, www.library.wales/discover-learn/digital-exhibitions/archives/cardiganshire-great-war-tribunal-appeals-records, as well as the newspapers that reported on the tribunals' hearings across Wales: <https://newspapers.library.wales/>.*

Eilir Ann Daniels has been studying family history for well over 30 years and, as the founder of the research service Your Welsh Ancestors, has been working as a professional researcher since 2009.



Eilir is a Full Member of AGRA (the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives), and is a Pharos Tutors instructor, teaching "Researching Your Welsh Ancestors and Tracing Living Relatives" courses. She provides research services for private clients and solicitors and carries out research for the BBC's Who Do You Think You Are? and for programs on S4C (the national Welsh language TV channel) and BBC Radio Cymru.

She is a native Welsh speaker, and her academic background, which includes a degree focused on the development of Welsh and UK society after the Industrial Revolution, provides the basis for her genealogical work today.



Researching Irish Soldiers in the British Military

There are many service records available online that can help to trace the story of Irish soldiers who served within the British military, but in many cases a Chelsea or Kilmainham pension record may provide only a part of the story. Indeed, in some cases, such records may be of no use whatsoever if a soldier did not remain in his regiment long enough, or if he died whilst in service.

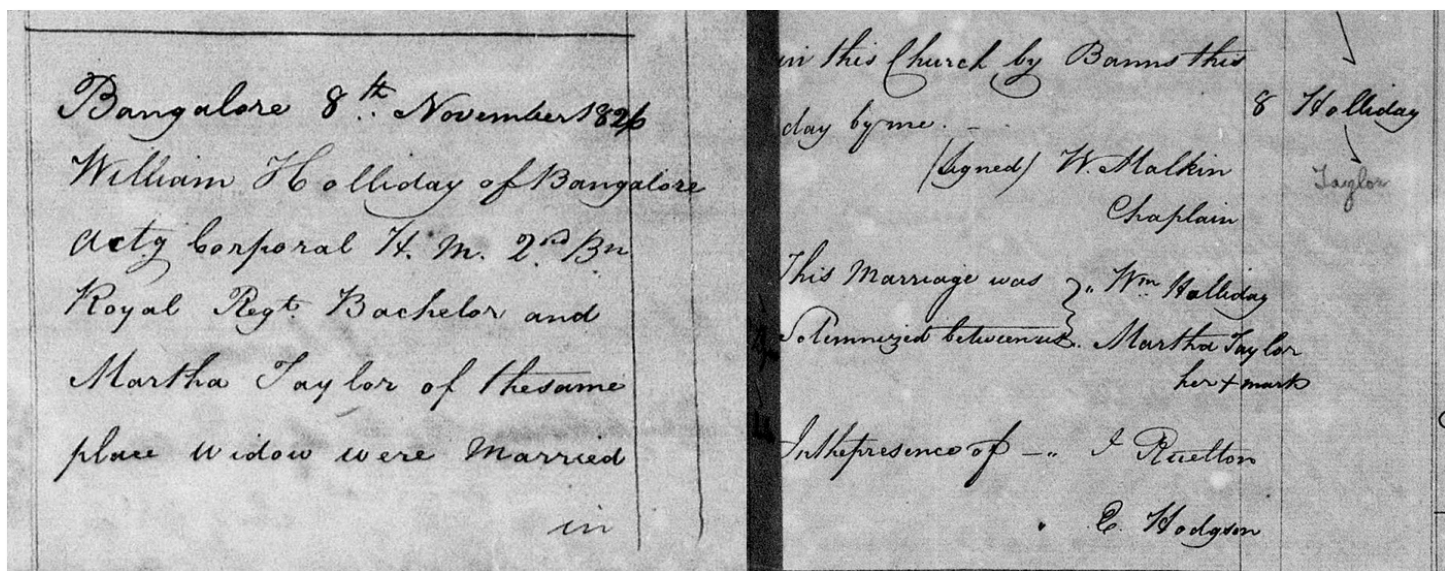
This was the case when I researched the history of my 4th great-grandfather, William Alexander Halliday. I first encountered William whilst researching his son, Alexander, who I discovered was born in India on 4 November 1829 at Bangalore, from records I discovered from the British Library, now also hosted on Findmypast (www.findmypast.com). William was noted as a private in the 2nd battalion of the “Royal Regiment,” otherwise known as the Royal Scots or 1st Regiment of Foot. He had married a widow called Martha Taylor in Bangalore on 8 November 1826, with the record noting him to be an acting corporal at this time. Try as I might, however, I could find no eventual discharge record for him from service, and thus could not initially identify where he came from. The only option before me was to visit the UK National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) to try to piece together his story by other means.

Using regimental muster rolls, I tracked back from William's marriage in 1826, and discovered that he had already spent several years in India, but disappointingly, the regimental muster rolls from September to November 1820 stated simply that he had “transferred from Europe,”



Kilmainham Hospital, Dublin, where many surviving Irish soldiers were discharged to pension. In the absence of a pension record, however, other sources need to be used to establish the soldier's service (author's image).

with no indication of his prior service given. From the rolls, I worked out that William had served at Trichonopoly (Tiruchirappalli) until June 1825, before moving to Madras, and then Calcutta, and in late 1825, he helped to suppress a mutiny by native troops within the regiment at Barrackpore. In early 1825, the 2nd battalion participated in many actions against the Burmese Army, capturing forts such as Promé and Donabew, as part of the Anglo-Burmese War. I also learned that in 1826, William was sick and off duty for



The marriage record of William Alexander Halliday to Martha Taylor in Bangalore, India, in 1826. (Findmypast, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BL%2FBIND%2FM%2F89419%2F1&tab=this>).

periods at Rangoon and Madras, and by September 1826, he had reached Bangalore, where he married Martha.

William's regimental battalion remained at Banglaore until April 1830, before serving short stints at Poonamallie and then Madras. However, his luck ran out when the regiment was ordered to return to Europe. A regimental roll from the end of the year notes that William Halliday sadly died whilst sailing from India towards Scotland on 6 November 1831, with no cause of death recorded (TNA: WO12/1967). The only other information given was that the value of his effects, after necessary deductions for debts to the company, was £4 7s 11d, which was duly paid to his widow, Martha.

At this point, with no Chelsea pension record to provide further information, I was stuck in trying to identify where William had originally come

from. It was not until a colleague suggested looking at the regimental description books that I finally broke the brick wall. Available on Ancestry as the "UK, Regimental Registers of Service, 1756–1900" collection, I discovered that William had in fact initially joined the 1st Regiment of Foot's first battalion. The same record also informed me that William had been born in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Ireland, in 1797, where he had previously worked as a servant before joining the British Army. He attested for the military service at the age of 22 in December 1819, at Dublin City, at the headquarters of the 1st Regiment of Foot. A description of him was also recorded, describing him as 5 feet, 10 inches tall, with a pale complexion, hazel eyes, and black hair. Crucially, the record also noted that he had been transferred to the 2nd Battalion on 30 March 1820 (TNA: WO25/309), confirming that his transfer from Europe was in fact from

Willard John	15	Fair Grey Hair, Round Fermanagh Enniskillen	Labourer Dublin Dublin
Menaghan Patrick	25	Black Dark Black Full Keshmunn Athlone	Labourer Dublin Dublin
Halliday William	22	Pale Hazel Black Fermanagh Enniskillen	Servant Dublin Dublin
Higgins William	25	Fair Grey Hair Oval Wexford Ferns	Labourer Dublin Dublin

Details from the regimental description book noting William Alexander Halliday's origins in Enniskillen, and attestation in Dublin. (Ancestry)

one battalion to another within the same regiment.

In researching William's son, Alexander, who was born in India in November 1829, I established that he had also served with the British Army, in this case, 2nd battalion of the 2nd Regiment of Foot, also known as the Queen's Regiment. As with his father, Alexander also had no Chelsea pension record from which I could build up his service, and so I once again had to make my way to the National Archives at Kew to build this up from the muster rolls. Alexander served in many theatres across the world, including the Crimean War, with further postings in Quebec, Halifax, and even in Ireland from 1850-1854, with postings in Limerick, Athlone and Dublin. His eventual billet, however, was in Bermuda, where on 31 January 1866, he died. Whilst the cause of death was not listed in his muster roll, it seems likely to have been yellow fever, which had hit the regiment hard in the previous year. His final entry noted that he had had no former trade prior to enlisting, confirming other evidence suggesting that he had enlisted as a boy soldier. After his debts were paid off, his widow Teresa was given just eight shillings and a ha'penny to make her way home to Ireland with their two children. (For more on Teresa's story, see my article in *British Connections*, 3rd quarter of 2024 (25.3).)

Shortly after Teresa's return to Ireland, Teresa and Alexander's son, also called Alexander, continued the family's military tradition, by enlisting with the same regiment as his father from 1880. However, prior to this, Alexander was also found in the records of another institution

RETURN of the Non-Commissioned Officers, Trumpeters, Drummers, &c. and Privates of the 1 st or 2 nd Battalion of the 2 nd Regiment of Foot, or who have been TRANSFERRED to some other Regiment, Discharged, or DESERTERS from other Corps, or who have been TRANSFERRED to some other Regiment, Discharged, whose Deaths, &c. having happened previously, have been ascertained in the Course of the Quarter; also of those not then made up.													
No. of Separate Document.	Regimental Number.	Rank.	Surname.	Christian Name.	HOW BECOME NON-EFFECTIVE, Whether Killed in Action, Dead from Wounds, Invalided, Transferred to another and what Regiment, Deserted, or Missing; to be so stated.	Place where, and Day on which became Non-Effective.	Amount of Effects and Credits, including the Value of the Necessaries left, after deducting the Debts.						Name of the Person to whom paid, and what other next of Kin or how otherwise entitled.
							Deducted in this Pay-List.			Of Deceased Men, paid at the Regiment.			
							£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	
✓ 144		Private	Dacey	William	Died	1831 H. Sea 26 Aug ^r	2	18	9	"	"	"	
✓ 145		"	Ringo	Edward	Died	1831 H. Sea 14 Dec ^r	7	6	9	"	"	"	
✓ 146		"	McLorie	John	Died	1831 H. Sea 14 Sept ^r	3	1	2	Account ^d			only 4/40
✓ 147		"	Jeffrey	Robert	Died	1831 H. Sea 11 July	1	19	1/2	"	"	"	Account ^d
✓ 148		"	Hughes	Robert	Died	1831 Chatham 1 Dec ^r	6	1	"	C143524			
✓ 149		"	Smith	James	Deserted	1832 Edinburgh 5 Feb ^r	"	"	"	"	"	"	reynolds
✓ 150		"	Green	William	Died	1831 H. Sea 23 Feb ^r	1	5	1/2	"	"	"	
✓ 151		"	Allen	Daniel	Died	1831 Chatham 28 Jan ^r	"	"	"	✓ 1	3	"	Account ^d by Reg ^t
✓ 152		"	Hooper	Philip	Died	1831 H. Sea 1 Nov ^r	"	"	"	✓ 3	"	"	Account ^d by Reg ^t
✓ 153		"	Halliday	William	Died	1831 H. Sea 5 Nov ^r	"	"	"	✓ 17	11	"	Account ^d by Reg ^t

The muster roll recording the death of William Alexander Halliday in 1831. (TNA, Kew; author's photo).

connected to the military—the Royal Hibernian Military School in Dublin—where he was admitted on 1 August 1878 by his mother, at the age of just 11 years and 11 months. The enrollment record held at the UK National Archives, and available on Findmypast, confirms his date of birth, and states that his height was recorded as 4 feet, 4 inches; his weight as 4 stone 8 pounds; his chest as 24.5 inches; and his religion as Established Church (Church of Ireland). By the time he left, he had gained one mark for good conduct, and no trade had been learned by him.

Aged just 13 years and 11 months, Alexander then officially joined the 48th Brigade on 17 August 1880, with his attestation witnessed by Staff Sergeant Michael Hogan. His medical just a few days earlier in Dublin on the 13th provides another description of him again at this age. He was now 14, 4 feet 9¼ inches tall, had a chest measurement of 27 inches, a fresh complexion, blue grey eyes, brown hair and was Church of England by way of religion. He had a scar on the back of his neck and one on the back of his right hand. Shortly after this, he transferred to the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Foot, with whom he saw



The UK National Archives at Kew (author's image).

service until 1902, including a period in India, as his grandfather before him had done, and where his father had been born.

Following Alexander's discharge from the army, he initially became a motorman, and then a tram driver in Dublin, and in 1913, he was one of the tram drivers who abandoned their trams, kicking off the Dublin Lockout.

For further details on records of Irish soldiers who served with the British military, consult the UK National Archives detailed website guides at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=military-and-maritime.

Based in the Ayrshire town of Stewarton, Northern Irish-born Chris Paton runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (<https://scotlandsgreateststory.co.uk/>) and the daily

Scottish GENES genealogy news blog (<http://scottishgenes.blogspot.com>). Amongst his many publications are Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet (2nd edition), Tracing Your Irish Ancestors Through Land Records, and Tracing Your Belfast Ancestors from Pen and Sword, as well as Sharing Your Family History Online. Chris also tutors short courses through Pharos Teaching and Tutoring Ltd, including two Irish-themed courses, Progressing Your Irish Research Online and Researching Irish Land Records.





From Bootcamp to Victory: My Two-Part Strategy To Research Any American WWII Veteran

Military research requires a clear strategy on which you can build a solid foundation. When I began researching my World War II family members 15 years ago, all I heard was, “All the records burned.” This isn’t true and there are many records to help you piece together your veteran’s service. To help others find the answers to their family’s military questions, I developed a two-part military research strategy to research any veteran from World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, even if the records burned. Regardless of war or branch, the research process, which includes where you find the records, and the initial records, are the same.

Part 1 of the Military Research Strategy focuses on the preparatory steps required to help you find the information. We begin by gathering personal information about the veteran and their footsteps during service. We create a Timeline of Service and learn what units, ships, or stations someone was assigned to and exactly where they served. Once we have this, we can learn what happened to them while they were in service.

IMPORTANT! The records and repositories I share are the starting point for your research. It is impossible for any author to list every record set available and the locations of all those records.

Part 2 of the Strategy focuses on locating unit-level records to understand the context of a veteran’s experiences. What happened to them? Where were they? Who was with them? How

might their experiences have impacted the rest of their lives?

Finally, I invite all researchers to write their veteran stories. Once information is placed and sourced in the Timeline of Service, you have the foundation for a story. Are you ready to learn the research strategy?

The Research Strategy Part 1 – Personal and Footsteps Research

Our goal in Part 1 is to locate all the units to which someone belonged if they were in the Army, Army Air Force, or Marines. In general, for those in the Navy, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines, we are seeking the ships on which they served, the stations (facilities on land), and sometimes a unit. Through this exploration we will also discover where someone was at certain points of their military journey.

Start by documenting what you know. To help you with this task, I have created a Military Service Questionnaire for you to download. It is the most important document you will use to begin this work. <http://bit.ly/3QdhFne>

Step 1: Locate the necessary information.

You will need a few pieces of required information: Military branch; full name of veteran; date and place of birth; date and place of death; Serial Number/Service Number; a ship on which one served or a unit in which one served. You might find this information on a Discharge paper, Death File, Grave, or other genealogical papers.

IMPORTANT! You must have unit information at some point in time if you are researching Army or Army Air Force/Air Force service. If the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) burned, you will need a unit and date to search Payroll Reports, Rosters, and Morning Reports.

Step 2: Locate home sources.

All research, whether genealogical or military, should begin with home sources. A home source is a document, photograph, piece of memorabilia, or ephemera that provides clues to the puzzle you are attempting to solve.

Step 3: Document what you know in a Timeline of Service.

Gather your information and create a Timeline of Service. A timeline shows the chronological events in a service member's history. It organizes the multiple dates, places, and service information you find in family letters, photographs, diaries, oral histories, service records, and company, unit, and division level records. Timelines can also show errors or where gaps in service occur.

I create my Timelines in Word using a table with three columns. Column #1 is for the date of the letter, document, photo, or other piece of information I'm looking at. Column #2 is for the Unit and Location of that unit. This could also be the Ship or Station. Column #3 is where I put the information from the letter, document, or photo along with a footnote where I cite the source.

IMPORTANT! You must cite your sources so you know where you obtained the information. Military records do contain errors. We may also transcribe something incorrectly, which leads to an error. As you add records to your project, you may also discover discrepancies between dates and events. Referring to your original documents will help clear up any issues you encounter.

Step 4: Start the military records request.

When you have compiled the basic information on your Military Service Questionnaire, started your timeline, and located all your available records at home, it is time to start requesting military records.

The starting point for all military research is the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri. This applies to World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. There are three main files you may need from the NPRC.

Required Records to Obtain

Indexes

The VA Index Card or Veterans Administration Index Card. This record will provide you with necessary details to start a research project.

Personnel Files

The Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) which contains the service history of a veteran and death files. The OMPF exists at the NPRC for Army, Army Air Force/Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Merchant Marines.

Military Death Files

During World War I, if your veteran died while in military service, NPRC has the World War I Burial File. If your veteran died while in military service, is still Missing In Action (MIA) or unrecoverable during World War II/Korea/Vietnam, then you also need the Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF).

To obtain records from the NPRC you have three options, all of which will require money for expenses or records.

1. Go there yourself. Schedule an appointment at the NPRC to view the records for your veteran. Rules at the NPRC change often so you must check their website or call to inquire about current visitor rules and requirements.
2. Request records through the website. You can request records through the NPRC website: <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center>
3. Hire a professional researcher.

Do I have to be next-of-kin?

A common question asked about obtaining records is, "Does one need to be next-of-kin to receive information?" The short answer is no. NPRC uses a 62-year rolling date to determine if records are Archival records. Archival records are available to the general public and anyone can access them. To be more specific, this means if your veteran died or was discharged by 62 years ago today, the records are Archival and available. If that 62-year mark doesn't hit for two

more months, then it is best to wait so you don't receive a one-page history or redacted paperwork.

Records that haven't hit the 62-year mark are considered Federal records and require a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to access. You must be the veteran or next-of-kin to receive these records. The next-of-kin can be any of the following: surviving spouse that has not remarried, father, mother, son, daughter, sister, or brother. As next-of-kin, you must provide proof of death in the form of a death certificate, obituary, funeral cards, or other documentation.

Step 5: Perform online and offline research.

While you wait for your military records request to be processed, you can search for online information. Please be aware that online information may lead you to undigitized sources at other major repositories like museums, libraries, archives, and historical societies. If so, you will have the option to visit the repository, request a search if those services are offered, or hire a researcher. You may be surprised at what you can find!

IMPORTANT! Not everything you discover online will be accurate. If you find a biography or story written about your veteran, take the information with a grain of salt and do your own research to verify what was written.

Step 6: Document the personal and company-level information.

When you receive the military records you requested, continue filling in your Timeline of Service. The OMPF is not the entire story of a veteran's service. It contains puzzle pieces to help you reconstruct military service. Everyone is reconstructing service because one file or document never provides the entire story.

Here are a few records that are vital to obtain when you start research so you can put together a Timeline of Service. There are many more you can seek out but these are the go-to records to start research.

Army and Army Air Force: Payroll Records, Rosters, Company Morning Reports. These are held at the NPRC but you must go there or hire someone to pull these records. Archivists will not do this work for you. You can also search NARA for digitized Morning Reports as some are now available. FamilySearch has World War I Rosters and Fold3 has World War I era through 1939 Morning Reports.

Navy: Use Ancestry or Fold3 to locate the Naval Muster Rolls. This will help you track the movements of your sailors.

Marine Corps: Use Ancestry to locate the movements of your Marine through Marine Corps Muster Rolls. Only January, April, July, and October are indexed, but all exist if you search the rolls.

Coast Guard: Check with the Coast Guard for Muster Rolls.

Merchant Marines: Ancestry has a few Merchant Marine collections that may help you learn more about your veteran.

Now that we've traced the footsteps and units of our veteran, let's find out what their experience was while overseas.

Research Strategy Part 2 – Discover the Context

The starting point for contextual records is NARA, specifically the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. This facility houses the unit-level records you need to understand the combat or overseas experiences of your veteran. You may find some records were digitized and placed in NARA's Catalog, Ancestry, Fold3, and branch-specific museums and archives. Regardless of branch, these are the types of records you can find within the archives. These records are a limited example of what is available and some of my go-to records for projects.

IMPORTANT! These records may contain graphic and gruesome accounts of battles, wounds, deaths and burials, and liberation of

POW and concentration camps. Additionally, there are abbreviations, code names, and acronyms that require you to learn a whole new language. Luckily there are many dictionaries available online.

Unit Histories: These often take all available records created for a unit or ship/station and combine them into a high-level written narrative. These histories may also be broken down into other levels of the overall unit or command. For example, 90th Infantry Division history; 358th Infantry Regiment history.

Unit Journals: Journals are written on a day-by-day basis with timed entries relating to messages, orders, and movements.

After Action Reports or Mission Reports: Mission reports document specific things and can be written for any branch, although we might associate them more with Army Air Force and bombing runs. These reports are specific to missions, battles, or campaigns, and those time periods. The After Action Report contains similar information and is documented over the period of a month for a unit.

WWII War Diaries (Fold3): These are ship/station and unit level histories, primarily for the Navy and Marine Corps, that provide details about sailings, campaigns, battles, and other high level details. In some of these you may discover maps, photographs, ship architectural plans, and many other interesting documents. You may find a few Army and Army Air Force reports as well because the branches worked together on campaigns.

Naval Deck Logs or Other Ship Logs: Ships' logs normally document the daily events on the vessel. You will learn if there was enemy contact, daily events, calls to action, and occasionally see the names of those who caused trouble. The logs also document where a vessel was sailing, the cargo they carried, and details about ports.

Maps & Photographs: Photographs and maps may be scattered within unit records or held in

separate collections. These provide great visuals for you and your readers if you write the stories to go with your narrative.

There are so many other potential unit level records you can obtain that I recommend you search NARA's Catalog to see what other records exist or email NARA to request a copy of the Finding Aid of all records for a specific unit, ship, or station. You can also search the NARA History Hub (<https://historyhub.history.gov>). I've found many helpful resources there along with information on newly digitized records.

Learn More

There are so many more things I could tell you about World War II research that just don't fit into one article. I invite you to explore the WWII Research and Writing Center website for 10 years' worth of articles, videos, how-to's, and document examples at <https://wwiirwc.com>. There you will also find my research books. Be sure to watch the website this summer for the release of my comprehensive new military research and writing book. It takes my strategy into greater depths and also contains a section on how to write the story with over 500 writing prompts.

Jennifer Holik is a genealogical and military research expert, author of more than 20 books on those topics, and an intuitive healer specializing in inherited and war trauma, and ancestral healing. She helps people understand why their family is the way they are and helps them heal. Learn more at www.ancestralsoulswisdomschool.com





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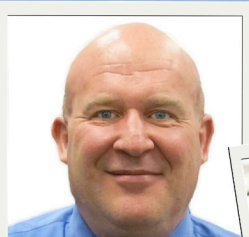


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Todd Knowles



Dan Poffenberger, AG[®]

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TODD’S PROGRAMS

Jamaican Research

Jamaica, an island nation located in the Caribbean Sea, is known for its rich culture, history, and natural beauty. Join us in learning about its culture, geography, history, politics, government, and religion, and discover how to conduct genealogical research here.

West Indies Research Case Studies

Case studies are used to investigate a particular topic or problem and gather data that can contribute to theory-building and understanding. Commonly used in research, this technique will allow us to explore real-life contexts, providing understanding of situations, illustrating genealogical problem solving, and offering solutions to research dilemmas.

DAN’S PROGRAMS

The British West Indies: History and Immigration

History and immigration are deeply interconnected, as patterns of migration have significantly influenced the development of societies, economies, and cultures throughout the world. The movement of people has shaped the history of nations, and this class will introduce you to the British role in the Caribbean countries and British Overseas Territories.

A Brief Overview of British West Indies Research: Records of the former British Colonies and Records at The National Archives

A country’s national archives establishment serves as a custodian of the nation’s history, identity, and rules of governance. It preserves a country’s most important historical, legal, and cultural records, and is a vital resource for research. Come along and island-hop with me as we discover where to look for documents.