

Researching Naval Personnel

This guide sheet provides information on how to research naval personnel including find an individual's service records.

The National Museum of the Royal Navy only holds a very limited number of service related documents as most are held by the Ministry of Defence or the National Archives.

Records for those serving before or during World War 1

Service records for all personnel who were in service before 1924 are held by The National Archives.

Guides covering how these records can be accessed are available on their website:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=military-and-maritime>

The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU Tel: 020 8876 3444

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Records for those serving after 1924

Records for all personnel who were in service after 1924 are held by the Ministry of Defence. They are generally only accessible to the individual concerned or their next of kin.

The correct forms and details of how to apply can be found by following the links from this site:

<https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records>

RN Disclosure Cell, Room 48, West Battery, Whale Island, Portsmouth, PO2 8DX

Medal entitlement Requests

If you are trying to find out the service medals you or a relative were entitled too please contact the follow:

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) (Joint Personnel Administration Centre), MoD Medal Office, Building 250, Imjin Barracks, Gloucester, GL3 1HW Medals@SPVA.mod.uk

Records held by the National Museum

The National Museum holds the following papers at its site at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton:

[RN and RNVR Ratings Engagement and Enrolment Papers 1888 to 1923:](#)

Note: There are significant gaps, notably the Royal Naval Air Service, for which most of the Engagement Papers were destroyed.

The records include papers for the following ratings:

- Continuous Service (CS)
- Non-Continuous Service (NCS)
- Special Service (SS)
- Seamen, Stokers
- Artificers; Artisans
- Ship's Police
- Sick Berth Attendants

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- Mine Clearance Service (MCS).

Royal Marine Attestation Packs:

Approximately 60,000 of these are held within the date range 1850 to 1923. Others can be found at the National Archives.

The records include:

- RMLI (Plymouth, Chatham & Portsmouth Divisions) Continuous Service (CS) & Short Service (SS)
- RMA CS & SS; RND (Divisional Engineers, Divisional Train, RM Medical Unit, Ordnance Company) Deal Short Service
- RMB - Royal Naval School of Music
- RM Labour Corps (New Formation) Short Service

WRNS Attestment Papers:

For WRNS Officers, First World War 1917-1919.

Royal Naval Reserve Ratings:

Original service cards (approx. A3 size) for 140,000 ratings. These relate to people who earned their living by seafaring but were also members of the RN Reserve, to be called up in case of hostilities.

Royal Naval Division:

Original service cards (approx. A5 size) for 50,000 RND officers and men.

Submarine Movement Cards:

Original service cards (approx. A5 size) for Submarine officer and ratings from 1914-1968. Note some of the later dated cards will be subject to data protection regulations.

Ship Movement Records:

First World War record for 1915-1922.

Second World War records held in 27 volumes. These indicate movements between ports but do not record time at sea. The ships include small vessels taken up from trade and some coastal forces.

Casualty Logs & Warship Logs:

Casualty logs, 10 volumes from 1939-45, and 1 volume of warship logs, 1939-1945.

These can be digitised and made available through our digitisation on demand service, please contact collections.research@nrmn.org.uk for more details.