



Finding the Fallen

Basic Information and Research Resources

If you have found the name of a Service person on your local War Memorial or elsewhere and you want to discover the real person behind the name, there are plenty of resources for tracing military and other personnel who served in WWI. Caution does need to be exercised, however, and you should double-check names against dates, locations, Service Numbers, and relevant Regiments/units to ensure you looking at the correct person! Consider how many people named 'John Smith' will have served...

Forces War Records website

A fantastic, easy to use and straightforward website to search for Service personnel, and a simple starting point to identifying your chosen person. Many useful resources are free, but you may choose to pay the monthly subscription (£8.95) for a short while (you can cancel any time) to get access to lots more information. <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/>

National Archives website

One of best places to start is the medal rolls. Virtually every serving soldier, sailor or airman qualified for a campaign medal and that entitlement is recorded within the rolls, along with his Service Number. One of the most popular series of records to search is the World War One Campaign Medals Index, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/medals.asp

Once you have found which medals the Serviceman was entitled to, you should be able to identify the campaigns he was engaged in and the Regiment, Corps or units he belonged to. You may want to read his Regimental War Diary, which can help to build a daily picture of war service.

The content of these diaries varies, but they often mention the battles as well as the more mundane duties required of a unit in the field. However, it is rare to find individuals other than officers mentioned by name unless they did something extraordinary. Even so, it is possible to identify where a unit was at any given time during the war and what happened to it. A growing collection of War Diaries is available on the National Archives website, and many local libraries may have hard copies for local Regiments.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission website

The CWGC provides information about the location of graves and memorials around the world. The Commission has details of all service personnel who died between 4 August 1914 and 31 August 1921. The CWGC's website at www.cwgc.org contains an indexed database which can be searched by surname. CWGC headstones are distinctive in the region's cemeteries and you may even find that you can visit the grave of someone who died of injuries and was buried locally.

Libraries – Local History Section

Some hard copies of Regimental histories, diaries and general information about the area during WWI can be found in your local Library. Workington Library has a wonderful Local Studies section upstairs with lots of information, and all the area's libraries have small sections with useful resources for the WWI researcher.

Cumbria County Council website

Cumbria County Council have lots of pages dedicated to WWI. Here you can find out about Auxiliary Hospitals (and the staff), Belgian Refugees, Employees at War in local industries, the Lonsdale Battalion, Newspaper indexes, War Memorials and general information about West Cumbria at War. Visit:

https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/greatwarindexes.asp

Online Local Newspaper Archives

A wonderful resource is <http://ww1search.cumberlandnews.co.uk>. Sue Gallagher, of Port Carlisle and Sue Yardley, of Carlisle, spent almost two years compiling a list of about 22,000 names from editions of The Cumberland News between 1914 and 1919. With the help of history librarian Stephen White, they've compiled the first centralised index in the county. It lists the names of soldiers, sailors, airmen and medics who went to war, mentioning those injured, missing or killed, prisoners of war and those awarded gallantry medals.

If you want to find information which might help you build a picture of what happened locally during WWI, take a look at

https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/greatwar/newsindexes.asp. You can search names, places and keywords.

You can also access www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk to look for articles which may mention your Service Person. You'll need to register online, but it's free, and you can save the articles.

Good Luck and enjoy your detective work!

