

Tips on how to research family members from the First World War



1. There are a large number of websites that can help you:

- www.ancestry.co.uk
- www.forces-war-records.co.uk
- www.findmypast.co.uk
- <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- www.cwgc.org

Most of these charge for certain services but will offer a free month to new subscribers, so you can try them out and decide which are the most useful.

2. It helps to have as much information as possible before you start, especially if your ancestor has an “ordinary” name. A search for John Smith will give you thousands of records, but it will help if you have his date of birth/death or his service number. **Ancestry:**

This is possibly the most useful site.

Click on search and it will offer you a number of boxes to complete: Forenames; surname; where they lived; date of



birth. If you do not know the date of birth, a guess in the 1890s is a good start as it will search for +/- 5 years.

Click on "Show more options" and fill in any other information you may have.

Click on "Search" and look through the names offered.

You can filter your search to show census records or military records etc.

Once you have found the person you believe is the right one, the site will offer you other documents relating to them.

3. Forces War Records:

On entering this website you will see a search box just asking for the name. Enter this and press search to get the opportunity to give more information and to filter your results.



4. Find my past:

This is a very straight forward website - it starts with you and helps you work back through your family tree.

5. National Archives:

Under normal circumstances, a visit to the National Archives at Kew is a must where you can request sight of original records. You need to make an appointment and the staff are very helpful. The website has lots of background information and makes for interesting reading.

The War Diaries are available online (for a charge) and give details of operations on the front line. They occasionally have details of medals etc.

Many of the original military records were destroyed by fire but those that have survived provide a real insight into the person's service life as well as giving personal information such as colour of hair and eyes, height, weight and distinguishing marks.



6. Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CEGC)

This site will help you find your ancestor's grave or memorial. There can be interesting and useful information on a gravestone which can help with your search.

7. Other helpful sites

There are other sites which help with tracing your family history and they can be found through Google but we recommend that you start with the above.



- <http://mertonhistoricalsociety.org.uk/>
- www.Surreyinthegreatwar.org.uk
- www.Mitchamhistorynotes.com
- <https://mitchamwarmemorial.wordpress.com/>
- <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/> (The London Gazette)
- <https://photoarchive.merton.gov.uk/>
- <https://cis.photoarchive.merton.gov.uk/> (Carved in Stone)