

Researching the names on a war memorial



War Memorials Trust

There are two elements of a war memorial that can be researched - the physical object and those commemorated by the memorial. This helpsheet provides advice on the researching of those recorded on the memorial.

Please see War Memorials Trust's 'Researching the history of a war memorial' helpsheet for further information about researching the physical object.

Why undertake research?

Uncovering the stories behind the names commemorated on a war memorial, how old they were, what they did before the war, what their connection to the local community was, can be fascinating. It also helps to bring the war memorial to life and so highlights the importance and significance of the memorial and encourages the local community to look after it.

Carrying out the research

Please note that there are no definitive 'rules' about the names on war memorials. Different criteria for inclusion were used by different communities and so who is commemorated and the form in which their name appears varies from memorial to memorial. This is why some war memorials only include those who fought and died, whilst others also include those who fought and survived, and why some include civilian as well as service casualties.

There are a number of sources that can be used to uncover the history of those commemorated on a war memorial.

- **Check other local war memorials**

Check the list of names on the war memorial against the names on other war memorials in the same locality, e.g. on the roll of honour board or individual family memorials. These additional memorials may have extra information, such as dates of birth and death, location of death, family details, etc. Remember to check local civic/public buildings where there may have been a roll of honour book which sometimes contain family, education and employment details and maybe even photographs.

- **Check the local churchyards**

Local churchyards may include family headstones which mention those commemorated on the war memorial. Also check church fittings and furnishings - clocks, bible stands, bells, organs, etc, may have been dedicated as individual war memorials. Remember to check churches of all denominations.

- **Use the local press**

An article in a local newspaper or newsletter may result in the local community providing

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further information. Also, if the local newspaper dates back to the time of the creation, check their archives for articles covering the fundraising for the memorial and the dedication. These articles can be detailed and often contain extra information about those commemorated.

- **Use the local archives/libraries/museums**

These may hold further information about the war memorial and those recorded on it. Also Parish registers of births, marriages and deaths can help to fill in a person's background and family history, as can local school records.

- **Contact relevant regiments**

Many regiments kept war diaries documenting their movements and the actions in which they were engaged. After the end of conflicts, these diaries were often used to produce regimental histories which maybe of use.

- **Consult national records**

Below are the contact details of several organisations which maybe able to provide further information about individuals:

- **The Ministry of Defence**, Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, Norcross, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 3WP, T: 0800 169 2277, E: veterans.help@spva.gsi.gov.uk, W: www.veterans-uk.info/ www.mod.uk

- **The Commonwealth War Graves Commission**, 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7DX, T: 01628 507200/634221, W: www.cwgc.org.uk

- **The National Archives**, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU, T: 020 8876 3444, W: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

- **The Imperial War Museum**, Family History (Printed Books Department), Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ, T: 020 7416 5320, W: www.iwm.org.uk

- **The War Memorial Register**, c/o Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ, T: 020 7207 9851, E: memorials@iwm.org.uk, W: www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/search

What to do with your research

- **Inform the current custodian**

Ensure that the current custodian of the war memorial has a copy of your research or is aware that you have the information.

- **Share with the community**

Think about how you might be able to share your research with the local community, e.g. giving talks to local groups or writing an article for the local newspaper.

- **Expand your research**

You could continue your research of the war memorial by researching the actual memorial. Please see War Memorials Trust's 'Researching the history of a war memorial' helpsheet for further information.

- **Inform the War Memorial Register**

If the details the Inventory already holds are limited, then your research could be added to it.