

# West Sussex Record Office



**Searchroom Leaflet No 11:**

## Tracing Military Ancestors

**This leaflet highlights some of the main sources available at WSRO. You may also need to use sources at The National Archives (TNA) at Kew and at a relevant regimental museum.**

**The principal collection at WSRO is that of the Royal Sussex Regiment. This was deposited by the Regimental Museum. It is an extensive collection consisting of over 250 boxes of documents, 40,000 photographs, 1,000 printed books and 50 cinefilms.**

### Original Records

**Royal Sussex Regiment Archives:** A large and growing collection containing official records (such as battalion orders, muster rolls, photograph albums) and personal papers of former soldiers (including letters, personal diaries, photographs, service papers). The WWI war diaries we hold for the RSR are now available on the WSCC website: [www.westsussexpast.org.uk](http://www.westsussexpast.org.uk)

**Parish Records:** These contain a variety of sources including rolls of honour, parish magazines and militia papers.

**Quarter Sessions Records:** The baggage returns in QS rolls can help track the movement of regiments in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lieutenancy records for Sussex (at The Keep, East Sussex) include militia records for the Napoleonic period and later.

**Absent Voters Lists:** Compiled for the General Election in 1918 these are useful for tracing servicemen, aged 21 and over, serving abroad (where the lists survive). Description of service includes: Ship, regiment, number, rank. We hold lists for: Horsham and Worthing Division 1918 and 1919; Chichester Division 1918 and 1919.

**Other Records:** School admission registers, school magazines, Home Guard muster rolls, trade directories.

### Printed Sources

**Army Lists:** These are annual lists of officers dating back to 1740. We have a selection, consisting of 80 volumes. Complete series can be seen at TNA and at the British Library in London.

**West Sussex Newspapers:** These date back to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. First World War newspapers are a rich source for letters home, casualties, reports of honours and awards. Some are available on searchable DVDs here at WSRO.

**Books on Military History:** Part of the Royal Sussex Regiment collection is a large library of books relating to all aspects of the Army. In the searchroom a shelf of books relating to World War One is also available to researchers.

## Online Resources

WSRO has subscription websites Ancestry.com Library Edition and Findmypast.co.uk available for free on our public access computers. Databases include:

### ANCESTRY

Casualties of the Boer War 1899-1902 (UK)  
Waterloo Medal Roll 1815 (UK)  
British Army WWI Service Records 1914-1920 (only 40% have survived)  
British Army WWI Pension Records 1914-1920  
British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914-1920  
Silver War Badge Records 1914-1920 (UK)  
Commonwealth War Graves 1914-1921 and 1939-1947  
Soldiers Who Died in the Great War (UK) 1914-1919  
Navy Lists 1888-1970 (UK)

### FIND MY PAST

Napoleonic War Records 1775-1817  
Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902  
British Army Service Records 1760-1915 (including Chelsea Pensioner Records 1760-1913 and Militia Services Records 1806-1915)  
British Army Service Records 1914-1920 (surviving WWI Service papers; Pension papers)

Royal Sussex Regiment Southdown Battalions 1914-1918  
Harold Gillies Plastic Surgery Archives from WWI 1917-1925  
WWI Ships lost at sea 1914-1919  
Merchant Seamen (British Merchant Navy Records) 1835-1941  
Military Nurses 1856-1994

### Census Returns 1841-1911:

Includes details of soldiers and ex-soldiers. Soldiers in barracks are also listed. Census returns can be searched on Ancestry.com and Findmypast.co.uk at WSRO for free.

### The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

website has a free searchable database of those who died in the two world wars.

The **London Gazette** website enables you to search to see if an individual was awarded civilian or military medals between 1914-1920 and 1939-1948.

## Records Held Elsewhere

**TNA** holds official records relating to the Army, Navy and Air Force.  
**Regimental museums** hold collections of regimental archives (as do some local record offices).  
**Other museums** include The Imperial War Museum, The National Army Museum, The National Maritime Museum and The RAF Museum.  
**Libraries** have collections of newspapers, local history material, and online sources.

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County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RN  
Visit: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro)  
Email: [record.office@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@westsussex.gov.uk)  
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A large-print version of this leaflet is available in a special folder in the searchroom.