On this sheet you will learn:
- Use basic sources to find out information about people named on a war memorial.

This can be used with our activity sheets, ‘Looking at a war memorial,’ and ‘Researching the names on war memorials’ which are available at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/general/7-10.

Why should you research names on war memorials?

Names make a war memorial more personal. Seeing the names shows the impact of war on the community and helps you understand how much it affected them.

By researching names you ‘get to know’ the people. By finding out who these people were, you realise why their families wanted to remember them, and knowing about what happened to them makes you continuing to remember them seem more important.

A war memorial might be the only record of those names. The two World Wars were a long time ago and there are not many people today who remember them clearly, so it is important that young people find out about them and the people involved, otherwise we will not know about them in the future.

What can you find out about the person you are researching?
- Their full name
- Their age when they became involved in fighting the war and, if they were killed during the war, how old they were when they died
- When they were born
- What relatives they had
- Which branch of the Armed Forces they were in
- Their rank and service number
- Where they are buried

Depending on the sources of information you use you might also find out something about the person’s life before the war, such as where they went to school and what job they had.

How to research names on war memorials

1. Look at the memorial
Looking at all the information on a memorial can reveal a surprising amount. Some memorials give a person’s age, rank, date of death and other facts that can help you build up a picture of them. Where the memorial is can also be a clue – if it is in a school you know that the person probably went to that school. Remember if you visit a memorial as part of your research, write down what you find out (use our activity sheet, ‘Looking at a war memorial’ at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/general/7-10).

2. Ask local people
It is worth seeing what older people can tell you – they often have fascinating stories that you won’t find recorded elsewhere! Even if no-one remembers the war or the people named on the memorial, many will remember previous events to do
with the memorial or know stories they were told, or have old photographs. Some people have even done their own research already. Always ask your parents or group leader before you approach other people, so that they can help you contact suitable people in the right way.

3. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is the organisation that looks after graves of people from Commonwealth countries who died fighting in the First or Second World Wars. They also look after memorials that list the names of people who died in these wars but have no grave because their body was never found.

The CWGC cares for the graves and memorials of almost 1.7 million men and women in 153 different countries. People were buried close to where they died so that everyone was treated the same and people that died together were buried together. Some graves are in the UK if the person died from illness or wounds after returning home or on active service in the UK.

The memorials that the CWGC looks after are not the same as the ones you find in towns and villages. These are for local people to remember their loved ones and the CWGC does not look after these.

The CWGC has a database of these people which you can use to research them. If you use this remember to ask permission to use the internet and follow the rules for staying safe online.

**To use the database:**
- Go to www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.
- Type in the surname and first name or first initial and select the war they died in.

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To use the database:
- Do not fill in anything else. The more information you put in the more likely you are to make a mistake and you won’t get any results.
- Click Search.
- You will see a table like this listing people that match your search.
• If you have lots of results you can filter them by adding more information to the search bar.

• You can use the key word box to search for the name of the place where the memorial is. If that place is on a person's record under ‘Additional Information’ they will show up in your results. A place name might be on a person’s record because it is where they, or their family, lived. This can be a clue that you have the right person because you know that they lived where the memorial is, and people were usually named on their local memorial.

If you get no results, check your spelling of the person’s name. In some cases the name of the person is different on the memorial and the CWGC’s database. This can be because of a spelling mistake, or they were known by a nickname and this is what they have been listed on the memorial as, but their official record is different. Try searching by different spellings of their surname if you think this has happened but make sure you check results carefully to be sure you have the right person.

• When you have found the record for the correct person, record the information on our ‘Researching the names on war memorials’ activity sheet.

4. Look at what you have found out
Record the information you have found from these sources on our ‘Researching the names on war memorials’ activity sheet.

5. Further research
There are other sources that tell you about the people named on your local war memorial, such as online census records, parish records and old newspapers. However, these are more difficult to find and use and you will need some help from an adult. War Memorials Trust has an information sheet for older children telling them what these sources are and how to find and use them at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/youth-groups/general/11-18. Links to useful websites can be found at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links.

Summary
• There are many sources of information on people who were killed in the First and Second World Wars.

• War memorials themselves often have lots of information on them. Local people can often tell you more about its history.

• The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has a database on its website that can be searched for information about war casualties.

• Other sources of information are more complicated but can be used to extend your research.