

Researching the people named on war memorials



War Memorials Trust

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).



A child looking for information on a war memorial © J Peach-Miles, 2012

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.



A CWGC cemetery © Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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.

Find War Dead

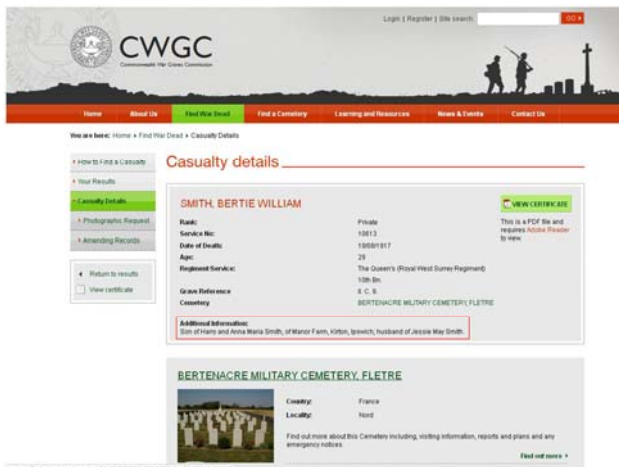
Our search database lists the names and place of commemoration of the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth Forces who died during the two world wars.
It also records details of the 67,000 Commonwealth civilians who died as a result of enemy action in the Second World War.
Use the filters below to search our records.
It is possible to search by surname, date of war, rank, regiment, or any combination of these criteria.
Search results can be sorted by column heading, printed and clicked on for access to more information.
Remember to save your casualty or cemetery search results.

The CWGC's website showing the boxes to fill in on the casualty 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.

No	Surname	Rank	Service Number	Date Of Death	Age	Regiment/Service	Nationality	Grave/Memorial Ref.	Cemetery/Memorial Name
1	BASCOMBE, ARTHUR STANLEY	Second Engineer		11/04/1917	31	Mercantile Marine	United Kingdom		TOWER HILL MEMORIAL
2	BASCOMBE, CHARLES EDWARD	Private	56859	18/02/1918	35	Devonshire Regiment	United Kingdom	B. 9A.	PORTSDOWN (CHRIST CHURCH) MILITARY CEMETERY
3	BASCOMBE, C. R.	Second Lieutenant		10/10/1917	Unknown	Royal Flying Corps	United Kingdom	52. 117.	BURY ST. EDMUNDS CEMETERY
4	BASCOMBE, ERNEST FRANK	Private	202415	27/04/1917	19	Somerset Light Infantry	United Kingdom	Panel 12.	BASRA MEMORIAL
5	BASCOMBE, H.	Private	12528	05/08/1916	Unknown	The King's (Liverpool Regiment)	United Kingdom	C. 18.	PEMBROKE DOCK MILITARY CEMETERY
6	BASCOMBE, HERBERT LANGFORD	Sapper	522449	26/10/1918	28	Royal Engineers	United Kingdom	A. 217.	ALEXANDRIA (HADRA) WAR MEMORIAL CEMETERY
7	BASCOMBE, JOSEPH WILLIAM	Private	1432	27/07/1916	24	Royal Fusiliers	United Kingdom	II. E. 26.	HELLY STATION CEMETERY, MERECOURT L'ABBE
8	BASCOMBE, ROLAND ARTHUR	Private	M2/167613	12/11/1918	23	Army Service Corps	United Kingdom	DD. 37.	RAHLEH WAR CEMETERY
9	BASCOMBE, R. J.	Private	535078	20/10/1918	Unknown	London Regiment (Prince of Wales Own Civil Service Rifles)	United Kingdom	B. 5. 158.	SOUTHAMPTON (HOLLYBROOK) CEMETERY
10	BASCOMBE, S. W.	Private	10787	09/04/1917	Unknown	Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)	United Kingdom	II. E. 11.	FELCHY CHAPEL BRITISH CEMETERY, WANCOURT
11	BASCOMBE, WILFRED ALBERT	Lance Corporal	17542	18/09/1916	19	Dorsetshire Regiment	United Kingdom	Pier and Face 7 B.	THEIPAL MEMORIAL

- 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.



The CWGC's website showing the 'Additional information' that might be known about a casualty's home and family.

- 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.