

# COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

## RESEARCHING A MERCHANT SAILOR WHO DIED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR - GUIDANCE SHEET



This bitesize guide is designed to help you research a sailor who served in the Merchant Navy and who died in the First World War. Firstly, you will need to decide who you will research... this might be a relative, or you could choose a name from a local war memorial, or you might select a name from a Commonwealth War Graves (CWGC) headstone in one of our cemeteries, or within a parish churchyard local to you.

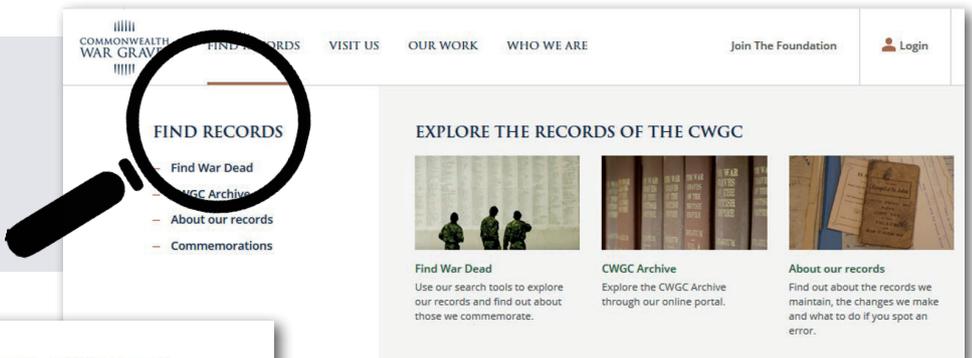
The first stage of your research starts with the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission Casualty Database**. At CWGC, we keep a record of the place of burial or commemoration of all the men and women of the Britain and Commonwealth who died in the First and Second World Wars.

### STEP 1: Visit our website at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)



**Need help..?**  
Watch the 'How to search' video tutorials

Using the dropdown **FIND RECORDS** menu, select 'Find War Dead'



**FIND WAR DEAD**  
EXPLORE THE RECORDS OF THE 1.7 MILLION COMMONWEALTH MEN AND WOMEN THAT WE COMMEMORATE

**Last name**  
Enter the last name of the casualty

**First name**  
Enter a first name

**Initials**  
Enter initials

**Service Number**  
Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols

**Regiment**  
Find records that relate to a particular regiment

**Served with (country)**  
Served With

**Served in (army etc.)**  
Served In

**War**  
Select War

First World War  Second World War

Fill in the name of the sailor you are researching

Select **First World War** box



**Research tip**  
Records use different combinations of full names, name and initial, and initials only – you may have to try several of these to find your sailor

If you already have some more details about your sailor such as their age, service number, date of death, or any medals they received, you can add these into the **ADDITIONAL FIELDS** section.

**ADDITIONAL FIELDS**

Select additional options to add them to your search criteria

[+ Country \(commemorated in\)](#)
[+ Cemetery or Memorial](#)
[+ Unit](#)
[+ Rank](#)
[+ Secondary Regiment](#)
[+ Age at death](#)
[+ Date of Death](#)

[+ Honours & awards](#)
[+ Additional Information](#)

If you know where your sailor died, for example, you can put this into the Additional Information box.

You will then get a list of the results...

SHOW 10 OF 11844 WAR DEAD Download all results Sort by Relevance

Name, Rank & Service No.	Unit, Regiment, Country of Service	Date of Death	Commemorated at
<b>Y ARAI</b> Sailor	S.S. "Camellia" (North Shields) Mercantile Marine United Kingdom	Died 27 November 1917 26 years old	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL United Kingdom <input type="button" value="More details"/>
<b>H ADAMS</b> Sailor	S.S. "Red Tail" (Runcorn) Mercantile Marine United Kingdom	Died 13 June 1917	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL United Kingdom <input type="button" value="More details"/>
<b>JAMES FREDERICK ADAMS</b> Skipper	"Loch Fyne." Mercantile Marine United Kingdom	Died 06 September 1915	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL United Kingdom <input type="button" value="More details"/>
<b>T KVIST</b> Fireman	S.S. "Don Arturo" (London) Mercantile Marine United Kingdom	Died 17 June 1917 33 years old	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL United Kingdom <input type="button" value="More details"/>
<b>C LAGOPOLOS</b> Sailor	S.S. "Bayreuth" (London) Mercantile Marine United Kingdom	Died 20 October 1916 26 years old	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL United Kingdom <input type="button" value="More details"/>

**Be aware,**  
CWGC records don't always include details about where a sailor was from, or exactly where they died. Our records are centred around where a person is buried or commemorated.



If you have not found who you are looking for, you can refine the results

If you think you have found your sailor, select 'More details' and you will get an at-a-glance record

**Did you know...?**  
Wherever possible, the relatives of a casualty were offered the opportunity to have a small, personal inscription listed on their headstone.

If known, the Additional Info can include next of kin details and address

**SAILOR**  
**Y ARAI**

**Regiment & Unit/Ship**  
Mercantile Marine  
S.S. "Camellia" (North Shields)

**Date of Death**  
Died 27 November 1917  
Age 26 years old

**Buried or commemorated at**  
TOWER HILL MEMORIAL  
United Kingdom

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**Country of Service** United Kingdom

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**Additional Info** Born in Japan.

COMMONWEALTH  
WAR GRAVES

**FROM THE CWGC ARCHIVES**

**GRAVE REGISTRATION (2)**

Click to zoom in

**HEADSTONE (2)**

Click to zoom in

Lower down the page you will find a link to our **CWGC Archives** and any additional information which is held about this sailor. You can find several different types of official CWGC reports here. Find out more about these on page 3.

### What are **Headstone Reports**?

These provide details of what is inscribed on an individual's headstone. The main purpose of these reports was to help manage the enormous programme of headstone production and engraving embarked by CWGC during the world wars.

### What are **Grave Registration Reports (GRRs)**?

These forms detail the graves we are responsible for within a particular burial site. Each grave is listed by Plot, Row and Grave number. These reports often provide basic details of the individual such as their name, service number, rank, regiment, unit and date of their death, when known to us.

### What are **Concentration Reports**?

These record details of individuals who were originally buried in smaller or isolated cemeteries, but who, at a later date, were exhumed and reburied in 'concentrated' war cemeteries. This enabled CWGC to fully commemorate and look after otherwise unmaintainable graves.

Further down on your search page you can find more details about the cemetery where your sailor is buried, or the memorial upon which they are commemorated.



#### Did you know...?

The CWGC maintains more than 200 memorials across the globe. These record nearly 700,000 names of those who have no known grave, were buried at sea or cremated

#### BURIED AT

##### LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY

West-Vlaanderen  
Belgium

Number of casualties: 10786

[View cemetery details](#)



## Step 2: Exploring additional resources to find out more about the individual



You need to check if there are any the Enquiry Files held by the **CWGC Archives** <http://archive.cwgc.org> These contain correspondence between the family of those killed and the Commission. Only a small number of these files still survive.

Enquiry Files cover a range of subjects, including:

- Attempts to locate a missing individual
- Requests for the remains of a casualty to be returned to the country they came from, known as the 'repatriation of remains'
- The addition of a personal inscription to a CWGC headstone
- Requests for a photograph of a grave
- Issues about the maintenance or upkeep of a grave
- The exhumation and reburial of a casualty
- The return of wooden crosses to families



#### Did you know...?

The Imperial War Graves Commission was founded in 1917. Before that, an army unit, Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquires (DGRE) began the work of recording details of those who had died

# Step 3: Searching for additional information online

**A Street Near You** uses maps to locate where those who died in the First World War originally came from and where they are now commemorated. You can search by lots of different terms so see what you can discover. It also provides links to other archives.

<https://astreetnearyou.org>

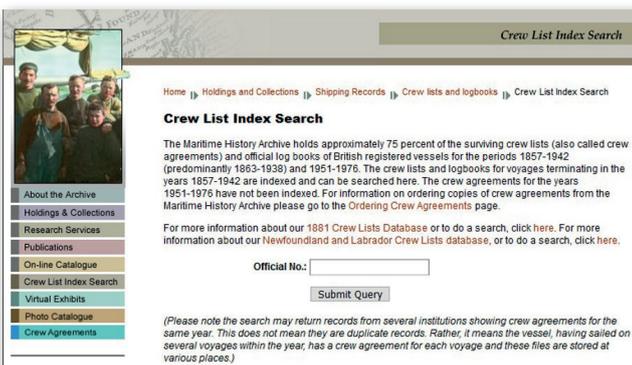
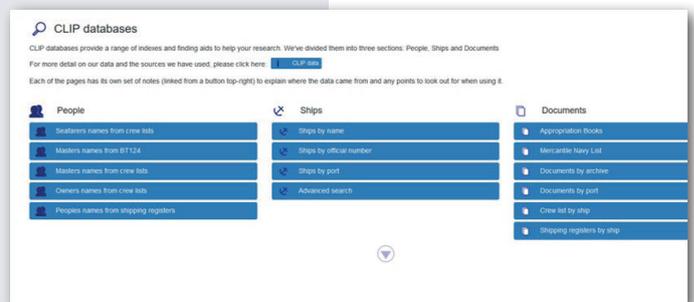


The **National Maritime Museum** has created number of very useful research guides to help you develop your research further. They outline other resources that are available, and how best to use them.

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/researchers/research-guides/research-guide-c1-merchant-navy-tracing-people-crew-lists>

**Crewlist.org.uk** provides information about British merchant shipping with the records of every British ship registered from 1855 to the 1950s - all 200,000 of them. The data is focused on tracking down crew lists, but it provides other resources such as indexed images of the Mercantile Navy List, as well as a comprehensive set of links to other sites.

<http://www.crewlist.org.uk/>



The **Memorial University of Newfoundland, Maritime History Archive** holds around 75 per cent of the surviving crew lists (also called 'Crew Agreements') and official log books of British registered vessels for the periods 1857-1942.

<https://www.mun.ca/mha/holdings/searchcombinedcrews.php>