

# COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

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



This bitesize guide is designed to help you research a soldier 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 British and Commonwealth soldiers 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  
  
 Match this search term exactly

**First name**  
Enter a first name  
  
 Match this search term exactly

or

**Initials**  
Enter initials  
  
 Match this search term exactly

**Service Number**  
Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols  
  
 Match this search term exactly

**Regiment**  
Find records that relate to a particular regiment  
  
 Match this search term exactly

**Served with (country)**  
Served With   
 Match this search term exactly

**Served in (army etc.)**  
Served In   
 Match this search term exactly

**War**  
Select War  
 First World War  Second World War

Fill in the name of the soldier 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 soldier

If you already have some more details about your soldier 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 soldier died, for example, you can put this into the Additional Information box.

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

Home > Find Records > Find War Dead > Search Results

**YOUR SEARCH RESULTS**

Last Name:  First Name:

SHOW 10 OF 71227 WAR DEAD

[Download all results](#) Sort by: Relevance

Name, Rank & Service No.	Regiment, Unit & Country of Service	Date of Death	Commemorated at
<b>THOMAS ATKINS</b> Private Service Number: 635454	Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment 6th Bn. United Kingdom	Died 21 May 1940 21 years old	DOULLENS COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION NO.1 Plot 7, Row A, Grave 10. France
<b>THOMAS ATKINS</b> Private Service Number: G/37874	The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment) 1st Bn. United Kingdom	Died 26 September 1917 35 years old	LJSESSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY XXV, D, 12A. Belgium
<b>THOMAS ATKINS</b> Private Service Number: 994	Australian Infantry, A.I.F. 8th Bn. Australian	Died 29 April 1915 20 years old	LONE PINE MEMORIAL 30. Turkey (including Gallipoli)
<b>THOMAS ATKINS</b> Private Service Number: 12507	King's Own Scottish Borderers 6th Bn. United Kingdom	Died 25 September 1915 25 years old	LOOS MEMORIAL Panel 53 to 56. France
<b>THOMAS ATKINS</b> Private Service Number: 14632	Worcestershire Regiment 2nd Bn. United Kingdom	Died 26 September 1915 19 years old	LOOS MEMORIAL Panel 64 and 65. France

**Be aware,**  
CWGC records don't always include details about where a soldier 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 soldier, 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

If your soldier has a CWGC headstone, you will find any personal inscription engraved upon it listed here.

Name and Rank  
**PRIVATE THOMAS ATKINS**  
Service Number: G/37874

**Regiment & Unit/Ship**  
The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)  
1st Bn.

**Date of Death**  
Died 26 September 1917  
Age 35 years old

**Buried or commemorated at**  
LJSESSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY  
XXV, D, 12A,  
Belgium

**Country of Service** United Kingdom

**Additional Info** Son of T. and A. Atkins; husband of Jane Atkins, of Botleys Lyne, Chertsey, Surrey, Native of Chertsey.

**Personal Inscription** AT REST

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 soldier. 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 soldier 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**. 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: In the line of duty: Where your soldier fought and with which unit...

Log on to [www.longlongtrail.co.uk](http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk) Here you can find details about the Divisions, Regiments and Units these soldiers served under, and even the battles they may have fought in. Make sure you have the research details of your soldier so far including their name, rank, regiment, and date of death, and where they are buried or commemorated.



- Select **ARMY**, then **THE REGIMENTS AND CORPS**
- Find the unit in the list (for many soldiers you will need to select 'The Infantry Regiments')
- Find the name of the regiment/unit, then scroll down until you find the information on the battalion/unit which you discovered earlier e.g. Thomas Atkins served with the 1st Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment. This will also tell you the Division that unit was part of
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the relevant Division link
- Using the history of the Division page, you will now be able to discover the battles the soldier fought in



**When they died?** Using the list of battles on **The Long, Long Trail**, try and work out in which battle the soldier died. You will need to work out when the battles were fought and see if your soldier's date of death matches any of these. From the place of burial or commemorations and the location of the battle you may be able to work out where they died.

## Step 4: Searching for additional information online



The **IWMs Lives of the First World War** website is a memorial to those who served in the First World War. Enter the name and service number of your soldier to get the best results. Many stories were added during the First World War Centenary. You might even find a photo! <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/>

**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>

