

# RESEARCHING THE NAMES ON YOUR OXFORDSHIRE FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL

## Suggested sources and techniques

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### BEFORE YOU START YOUR RESEARCH

**Have a look at other projects which have already been done e.g.**

- [www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/stfrideswide/index.html](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/stfrideswide/index.html)
- [www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/stmargaret/index.html](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/stmargaret/index.html)
- [www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/66-men-of-grandpont-1914-18](http://www.southoxford.org/local-history-in-south-oxford/66-men-of-grandpont-1914-18)

**Think about what the outcomes of your research might be, because this will influence how you go about the research and what information you collect**

For example, outcomes might include:

- A website
- An exhibition
- A book
- A trail around the local area
- A play or other performance
- An illustrated talk
- A book of remembrance
- A film
- Updates to other local and national resources

The projects mentioned above include some of these outcomes, and there is information about them on their websites.

### Think about funding

The outcomes above will cost money to produce, so you may need to get funding. There are potentially lots of sources:

- Local charities and trusts (including church funds)
- The Greening Lamborn Trust - <http://oxfordshirelocalhistory.modhist.ox.ac.uk/about-this-site/greening-lamborn.html>
- Local businesses
- Crowdfunding
- Oxford colleges if they have a connection with your area
- Heritage Lottery Fund ([www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/first-world-war-then-and-now](http://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/first-world-war-then-and-now)) – though beware that HLF will only fund projects which have not yet started

## Set up a website

It's a really good idea to set up a website if possible, and to put information about your project, and the information that you are finding, on it as you go along. This is because soon people who are doing their family history research will find your website on-line, and hence you will make contact with descendants of the men named on your war memorial. These people will be invaluable sources of information and of photographs and other memorabilia.

## Advertise your project

Let as many people in the local community as possible know what you are doing, because they will be able to help you, and can sometimes provide very useful information. That way you can also build up excitement about your exhibition, book, talk or whatever it is going to be! The *Oxford Mail* and BBC Radio Oxford are always interested in local projects like this and can help you appeal for information from living descendants.

## STARTING YOUR RESEARCH

### Commonwealth War Graves Commission

[www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx](http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx)

The first thing to do is to try to identify all your men on the CWGC listing of people who died in WWI. This should give you their service number, rank, regiment, date of death, place of burial, age and full name (sometimes) and (if you're lucky) their address and next of kin. Make sure that you look at any associated documents on each man's record – for example grave registration records, as these can sometimes give additional information.

**Remember that throughout the research process it's *really* important to write down exactly where you got each piece of information from – the full name of the source, the date that you looked at it, the dates of publication, editions, page numbers, reference numbers etc. This will help you when you need to go back to check information [which you undoubtedly will] and it will also allow other people to follow up your research.**

### Google

Once you have the man's service number, Google his surname and the service number and see what comes up (it's surprising what does). You can also try combinations of surname, first name(s)/initials, 'first world war' and the name of your parish. Men were often listed on more than one memorial – where they grew up, where they lived in 1914-18, where their family moved to after the War, where they went to school, where they worked (e.g. college or workplace memorials) etc. Googling may bring these up, and you may find that someone else has already done a biography. A lot of memorials have already been documented – see for example: [www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/index.html](http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/index.html) and [www.roll-of-honour.com/Oxfordshire](http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Oxfordshire).

### Look for possible addresses in street directories

Local Kelly's and other street directories are available in printed format at the Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC) on Temple Road in Cowley ([www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshirehistory](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshirehistory)). It is worth looking in directories before, during and after the War (up to 1922) because people often moved and the CWGC records (above) come from information gathered after the War, by which time men's families may have moved.

## CONTINUING YOUR RESEARCH

### 1911 census, previous censuses and other personal records

Once you've got the basic details about each man, you can start to research his life more fully – where he was born and grew up; his parents, siblings, wife and children; where he went to school and where he worked etc. All the 10-yearly censuses (1851-1911), and registers of births, marriages and deaths, plus a whole load of other personal records (including military records), are available via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) and [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk).

These are subscription services, but you can access them for free at computers on the top floor of the

Oxford Central Library at Westgate in Oxford, at OHC, and at all Oxfordshire branch libraries. Alternatively, you can pay to take out a subscription for just a month and access them via your home computer. If possible, it's worth looking for people via both [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) and [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) because they contain slightly different databases and their search engines work in different ways, so they can throw up different results. If you are lucky enough to find a man's military records [90% were thrown away] then these will give you a wealth of information.

**Remember that it's always worth taking copies (either digitally or on paper) of any records that you find, so that you can easily look at them again later. New questions will almost always occur to you when you find information from further sources. Be as systematic as possible in recording the information you find – a standard research template or an Excel spreadsheet may help.**

### Parish registers

Available via [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk). These give details of baptisms, marriages and burials, and can be very useful in piecing together a man's family history.

### The electoral register

Available on microfilm at OHC and useful in providing addresses in the years up to, during and after the War. Even more useful is the Absent Voters' List, published in 1918, which lists (by address) all the people who were away fighting, and gives their rank and regiment as well.

### *The Oxford Journal Illustrated* photo index 1912–1928

Over 900 images from this newspaper's Heroes of The War series have been digitised and can be seen online at <http://bit.do/OJlheroes>. You can search by name within this series. To get a photograph of the man you are researching, go to OHC or the top floor of the Oxford Central Library and ask to see the newspaper itself on microfilm (you will need to know the date and page number, using the index above). You can then make a copy of it, either on paper, or by photographing the screen with your camera (this works remarkably well).

### Obituaries and 'In memoriam' notices in other local newspapers

Unfortunately the *Oxford Chronicle*, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* and *The Oxford Times* are not yet indexed for this period, but once you know the date of a man's death you can look through the newspapers (on microfilm, at Oxford Central Library or at OHC) for the few weeks after his death and with luck you will find an obituary. This is likely to give you a lot of detail about his life. There may also be *In memoriam* notices from members of the family, and these will appear later as well, on the anniversary of the death.

## **Regimental records**

Many of your men will have joined one of the two Oxon regiments, the Oxf & Bucks Light Infantry and the Oxfordshire Yeomanry (also known as the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars). The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust ([www.sofo.org.uk](http://www.sofo.org.uk)) holds the records of these regiments. They're not available on-line yet, but you can request a search from SOFO. Other regimental websites may contain information, including war diaries which will tell you what was happening at the front on the day a man died (and may even mention his name. There are also: <https://oxfordshireandbuckinghamshirelightinfantry.wordpress.com> and [www.lightbobs.com](http://www.lightbobs.com)

## **School records**

If you find out where a man went to school as a child then there may be information about him in the school's logbooks or in other school records. Many of these are held at OHC.

## **Workplace records**

If you find out where a man worked then there may be company archives available – particularly if he worked at an Oxford College or at a large business which is still in existence. College archivists are usually happy to help (find them via the college website). Approach businesses directly to see whether they have any archives. They may have a WWI roll of honour, for example, or even a physical war memorial listing employees who died in the War.

## **Cemeteries**

Botley Cemetery contains several hundred First World War graves. Other churchyards and cemeteries in Oxford also have a few war graves and there are occasions where sons who have no other known grave are mentioned on their parents' grave. British War Graves: [www.britishwargraves.co.uk](http://www.britishwargraves.co.uk) will help; try also [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

## **Parish records**

It can be useful to know when your war memorial was erected, and the parish accounts or parish newsletter may be able to tell you this. These should either be held in the parish church or at OHC.

## **The National Archives**

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=first-world-war](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=first-world-war)

Hold files on some men who fought in WWI, notably officers.

## **Living descendants**

Hopefully you'll be able to track down and contact some living relatives who can supply further info and photographs and who will be willing to be interviewed for your exhibition, book or film. [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) and [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk) sometimes provide links to people's family history research sites and it is always worth contacting them if you are pretty sure that the person you are researching was a member of their family. Living descendants can be very rich sources of information, photographs and memorabilia, but be aware that the information they have may not always be accurate, and needs careful (though discreet) checking against other sources such as those outlined above.