

Enquiries

Staff are unable to undertake extensive research for enquirers but will try to answer simple queries and advise on likely sources for the information requested. We aim to reply to queries within 20 working days.

No charges are made for access to the reading room or for answering queries, although charges are made for copying records.



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Introducing the Department of Research & Information Services

This leaflet describes the records available at the Royal Air Force Museum's Department of Research & Information Services.

The Department was formed by the merger of the former Departments of Aviation Records and Printed Books. It therefore looks after the Museum's Archive and Library collections, and makes them available to researchers.

Access

Material held in the Museum's Library and Archive can be consulted in our Reading Room at Hendon. It is open for research, by appointment, Tuesday to Friday, from 10am to 5pm. Researchers wishing to view material should make an appointment by telephone, fax or e-mail well in advance of their proposed visit.

A selection of material from the Library and Archive can also be browsed online via <http://navigator.rafmuseum.org/>



Archive Collection

The Archive collection has been built up through the donation of various types of material by individuals and organisations.

Personal Papers

This part of the collection includes material such as letters, log books, memoirs and diaries. We hold the papers of important RAF and aviation figures such as Lord Trenchard, Sir Arthur Harris, James McCudden VC, Amy Johnson and Jean Batten but the collection also contains much material relating to ordinary airmen and women.

Aircrew Logbooks

We have an extensive collection of aircrew logbooks, covering all aircrew trades, periods and theatres, although the majority are from the two World Wars. The archive also includes small numbers of logbooks for fighter controllers and air ambulance orderlies, as well as members of the Air Transport Auxiliary and some civil logbooks. These form a very useful resource for researching the history of a particular unit, station, aircraft or campaign.

Record Cards for Aircraft, Vehicles and Marine Craft, and Aircraft Accidents

These cards (Form 78) record the movement history of aircraft, vehicles and marine craft. We also hold a collection of aircraft accident cards (Form 1180) which cover accidents taking place mainly dating from 1929 onwards. Copies are available to consult on microfilm.

First World War Casualty Cards

We hold an extensive set of record cards relating to deaths, injuries and illness suffered by Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force personnel from around 1914 to 1928.

ATA Records

We hold several hundred personnel files relating to members of the ATA who served during World War Two. These are available to next of kin only.

Propaganda Leaflets

We have several volumes of leaflets dropped over Europe during World War Two. The volumes include translations of the leaflets. We also have many unbound examples of leaflets. A small number of leaflets intended for use in other theatres is also held.

Company Papers

We hold extensive archives of several of the British aviation companies including Fairey, Supermarine and Handley Page.

Site Plans and Building Drawings

The Museum has over 2000 site plans of airfields and non-flying stations in the UK and abroad. Most of the buildings found on RAF stations were, until relatively recently, built to standard designs and the Museum has a large collection of these drawings. Copies are available to consult on microfilm.

Library Collection

The Museum's library holds tens of thousands of printed works ranging from the 18th Century to current publications. These include:

Books and Periodicals

Our earliest volume dates from 1783 and new material is added almost daily. The collection ranges from memoirs and historical studies to the more technical aspects of aviation. In addition to commercially published magazines from 1909 to date (such as Flight and The Aeroplane) we hold a substantial collection of periodicals produced by RAF stations and units, which provide a fascinating insight into service life.

Official Publications

One of our largest collections is the series of manuals - known as Air Publications - issued by the RAF and its predecessors, of which we hold around 60,000 volumes. These include technical manuals for virtually every type of aircraft and engine used by the RAF, policy material such as the RAF War Manual and training material for most RAF trades. Recruiting pamphlets and official histories are also held.

Complementing the Air Publications are Air Diagrams: instructional posters issued from the First World War onwards which cover a multitude of topics ranging from the operation of piston engines and weapons to flight safety and fighter operations.

Maps

The Library holds a significant collection of aeronautical maps, including navigational charts and material produced for special purposes such as escape maps and target maps. Some German material is also held including four sheets showing defences on the South Coast of Britain, each about 15 feet long!

Ephemera

Some of the more unusual types of printed items in our collection include: cigarette cards and tea cards with aviation themes, air display programmes, aviation calendars, RAF concert programmes and recruiting material.

Donations

If you would like to donate material for our collections we would be very pleased to hear from you, but would request that you contact us before sending material to Hendon. We are particularly keen to add material to the collection which relates to operations in the Middle and Far East, Special Duties and service in the post-1945 period.