

Information on Aces and Units of most nationalities, and on American Personnel in British/French Service:

C F Shores, N L R Franks & R Guest, *Above the Trenches. A Complete Record of the Fighter Aces and Units of the British Empire Air Forces, 1915-1920* (Grub Street, 1990); also by the same authors: *Above the Trenches: Supplement* (Grub Street, 1996).

N L R Franks, R Guest & G Alegi, *Above the War Fronts. A Complete Record of the British Two-Seater Bomber Pilot and Observer Aces, the British Two-Seater Fighter Observer Aces, and the Belgian, Italian, Austro-Hungarian and Russian Fighter Aces 1914-1918* (Grub Street, 1997).

J J Sloan, *Wings of Honor* (Schiffer Military/Aviation History, 1994). Gives information on US personnel, including those in British and French service, and on US units; casualty information on US personnel in British service is in *Airmen Died in the Great War*.

N L R Franks & F W Bailey, *Over the Front. A Complete Record of The Fighter Aces and Units of the United States and French Air Services, 1914-1918* (Grub Street, 1992).

N L R Franks, F W Bailey & R Guest, *Above the Lines. A Complete Record of the Fighter Aces of the German Air Service, Naval Air Service and Flanders Marine Corps, 1914-1918* (Grub Street, 1993).

Further Research

Additional material is available at the Royal Air Force Museum and elsewhere: please write to the Department of Research and Information Services if you require further advice. Information on many more RFC and RAF sources, such as unit records and combat reports in the AIR 1 class at TNA, is given in: S Fowler, P Elliott, R C Nesbit & C Goulter, *RAF Records in the PRO* (PRO Publications, 1994).

TNA's website also gives advice on using the records held there.

Addresses

The National Archives
 Ruskin Avenue
 Kew
 Richmond
 Surrey
 TW9 4DU
 Tel: 020 8876 3444
 www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
 2 Marlow Road
 Maidenhead
 Berkshire
 SL6 7DX
 Tel: 01628 634221
 www.cwgc.org

Department of Printed Books Imperial War Museum
 Lambeth Road
 London
 Tel: 020 7416 5000
 www.iwm.org.uk

British Library Official Publications & Social Sciences Reading Room
 96 Euston Road
 London
 NW1 2DB
 Tel: 020 7412 7536
 www.bl.uk

RAF Disclosures
 Room 221b
 Trenchard Hall
 RAF Cranwell
 Sleaford
 Lincs.
 NG34 8HB

Fleet Air Arm Museum
 Box D6
 RNAS Yeovilton
 Ilchester
 Somerset
 BA22 8HT
 Tel: 01935 840565
 www.fleetairarm.com

The Guildhall Library
 Aldermanbury
 London
 EC2P 2EJ
 SE1 6HZ
 Tel: 020 7606 3030

**Department of Research & Information Services
 Information Sheet No.1
 Personnel Records, First World War
 RFC, RNAS, RAF, WRAF**

This leaflet describes the many sources available to those wishing to trace the career of a former member of the RAF or its predecessors, the RFC (Royal Flying Corps: existed 1912-1918) and the RNAS (Royal Naval Air Service: existed 1914-1918). Information on the service of individuals is held by a number of organisations, including The National Archives (TNA – formerly the Public Record Office), the Royal Air Force Museum and the Ministry of Defence.

Researchers wishing to view material held in the Royal Air Force Museum's library and archives should make an appointment by telephone, fax or e-mail with the Department of Research and Information Services well in advance of their proposed visit. Enquiries should be made in writing (enclosing an SAE) and should contain as much detail as is already known, in particular the individual's name, service number, rank and approximate dates of service, also mentioning any sources which have already been consulted.

The titles of books are given italics.

**Department of Research & Information Services
 Royal Air Force Museum, Grahame Park Way, Hendon,
 London NW9 5LL Tel: 020 8205 2266 Fax: 020 8200 1751**

**website: www.rafmuseum.org
 e-mail: research@rafmuseum.org**

For a more detailed guide to researching air services personnel see: W Spencer, *Air Force Records for Family Historians* (Public Record Office, 2000).

The names of officers serving in the RFC are given in the monthly Army List, which is held by the Royal Air Force Museum, TNA and the Imperial War Museum. RNAS officers appear in the Navy List (held at TNA), and RAF officers are in the Air Force List, which is held by the Royal Air Force Museum, TNA and the Imperial War Museum. The service medal rolls at TNA can be used to confirm the rank and dates of service of a member of the RFC or RNAS: see the appropriate TNA information sheet.

Early RFC and RNAS pilots who learned to fly at civilian schools obtained an Aviator's Certificate from the Royal Aero Club. The Royal Air Force Museum can provide copies of the Certificate Record Cards, which give the pilot's rank or profession, and frequently also a photograph.

Brief biographies of the over 1,400 NCOs and other ranks who joined the RFC before the outbreak of war, some of whom later became pilots, are given in: I McInnes & J V Webb, *A Contemptible Little Flying Corps* (London Stamp Exchange, 1991).

Service records: officers

All records are at TNA, unless the officers served beyond 1920. First check in the AIR 76 class. If the officer served before 1 April 1918, check the appropriate class: RFC officers: WO 339 (indexes in WO 338) and WO 374. RNAS officers: ADM 273. The Fleet Air Arm Museum also holds copies of records similar to AIR 76 and ADM 273.

Service records: NCOs and airmen

- **RFC (discharged or died before 1 April 1918):** Many of these records were destroyed during the Second World War. The surviving records are available at TNA in the WO 263 and WO 364 classes.

- **RNAS:** Records of all ratings who served in the RNAS at any point are at TNA in class ADM 188.

- **RAF (discharged or died between 1 April 1918 and 1920):** These records, which include the majority of RAF NCOs and airmen of the First World War, are in TNA class AIR 79 (indexes in AIR 78). The Royal Air Force Museum and TNA hold copies of the Muster Roll compiled on the formation of the RAF (1 April 1918), which gives brief details of all NCOs and airmen then in the service, but they are only listed in order of service number, and there is no alphabetical index.

- **RNAS personnel:** further information: In addition to the above, the Fleet Air Arm Museum holds the Enlistment Papers of some RNAS personnel (those who did not transfer to the RAF, and officers who enlisted as ratings but were later commissioned).

- **Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF):** Records of members of the WRAF, which existed 1918-1920, are at TNA in class AIR 80.

RAF service after 1920

The service records of officers and airmen who continued to serve in the RAF after 1920 are held by the MOD at RAF Cranwell, and are normally only released to next of kin, on payment of a search fee. The Royal Air Force Museum produces a separate leaflet about such records, which is available on request.

The Air Force List, published monthly 1918-1945, and less frequently thereafter, gives each officer's branch, rank and date of seniority. Those issued between 1920 and 1938 also show the officer's unit and date of posting. Most large libraries hold copies of *Who Was Who* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which give details of the careers of senior officers.

Casualties

Information on place of burial or commemoration can be obtained from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; they can also supply some military and personal details. Searches can be made via the Commission's website. The Imperial War Museum also holds copies of the Commission's registers, although these are not indexed.

Officer, airman and airwoman casualties for the war are listed in the following books:

- C M Hobson, *Airmen Died in the Great War* (J B Hayward & Son, 1995): RFC, RNAS, RAF, WRAF and Australian Flying Corps casualties of all ranks, listing casualties in chronological and unit order.
- T Henshaw, *The Sky Their Battlefield* (Grub Street, 1995): details the circumstances of Allied air casualties due to enemy action, including wounded and prisoners of war.
- E W Martyn, *For Your Tomorrow: Volume 1: Fates 1915-1942* (Volplane Press, 1998): casualties (including training and non-flying) to New Zealanders from 1915.
- H J Williamson, *The Roll of Honour: Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force for the Great War 1914-1918* (Naval & Military Press, 1992).
- S D & D B Jarvis, *Cross of Sacrifice*, 4 volumes (Roberts Medals Ltd, 1993-96).

The Royal Air Force Museum holds an incomplete series of RFC/RAF casualty cards from the years 1914-1925, which include training accidents in the UK.

Other sources of casualty information include the weekly Rolls of Honour in the London Gazette (held by TNA, the Guildhall Library and the British Library) and the magazines *Flight* and *The Aeroplane* (both held by the Royal Air Force Museum). The Imperial War Museum holds copies of the Rolls of Honour of many schools, businesses and other organisations.

Medals and Awards

Enquiries regarding unclaimed medals should be made to RAF Disclosures at Cranwell. Rolls for service medals, and some material relating to awards for bravery, are held at TNA.

Citations for medals and other awards were sometimes given in the London Gazette (www.gazettes-online.co.uk) To find a citation, you will need to know the approximate date of the award.

Also see: B Austerberry, *Gazetted Awards to NCOs and other ranks of the aerial forces, 1914-1924* (Jade Publishing, 1999).