Family History

British Army in Colonial Australia

Four companies of Marines arrived in 1788 and twenty-five regiments of British Infantry came between 1788 and 1870. Men of the Royal Marines served aboard Royal Naval vessels based at Sydney until 1913.

Activities of the British Army in Australia

The duties of the military in Australia are a useful guide to available records. The soldiers' duties involved guarding convicts, monitoring Aborigines, pursuing bushrangers, working as mounted police, guarding gold transports, assisting in exploration and the construction of roads, bridges and buildings. Many soldiers settled in Australia permanently and acquired land grants.

How can I find out about an ancestor who served with the British Army in Australia?

In searching for a military ancestor:
- work backwards from yourself.
- use family sources such as birth, death or marriage certificates, stories of specific battles, diaries, photos, medals, and uniforms to help identify the time and place that events took place.
- note the key features of army records:
  - **Regiments** have remained the basis by which the army maintains records.
  - **Officers** and **Other Ranks** (Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Private Soldiers) are the main groupings that records are divided into.

What resources does State Library of Queensland hold?

The following are just a selection of the military resources held by State Library.

An Introduction to the British Army: Its History, Tradition and Records by Iain Swinnerton (PAM 355.00941 1996), explains the structure of the British army, how it developed, the organisation of records and the meaning of terminology.

How to Trace your Military Ancestors in Australia and New Zealand by R.H. Montague (FAMHIS 929.1 1989), outlines the development of the army in Britain and a brief history of it in Australia. It includes information about each regiment stationed in Australia, a useful guide to records and glossary.

A Soldier in the Family: A Source Book for Australian Military Genealogy: The First Fleet to the Gulf War by Allan Box (FAMHIS 929.1072 1994), provides a brief background to each military event relevant to Australian military genealogy and sources of information about it. It provides a synopsis of each British regiment's activities, publications about it and the address for that regiment's museum. Each regiment is listed in chronological order by date of service in Australia.

My Ancestor was in the British Army: How can I find out more about him? by Michael J. Watts & Christopher T Watts (PAM 929.3 1992), provides some strategies for locating British military ancestors, officer, and particularly ordinary soldiers, using army and non-army sources. It also provides a detailed explanation of the available material at the British Public Records Office.

Tracing your Family History in Australia: A National Guide to Sources by Nick Vine Hall (FAMHIS 929.394 2002), has a concise section on military records available and tips for using them.

Quarterly Return: Newsletter of the British Army in Australia Research Group (MAG 355), published by the Military Historical Society of Australia is a research forum.

The Remote Garrison: The British Army in Australia 1788-1870 by Peter Stanley & Lindsay C. Cox, (G 355.00994 1986), outlines the history of the British Army in Australia with guidelines for the family historian. It includes illustrations of uniforms.

A Military Research Guide for Family Historians: British Units in Australasia by Ralph Sutton, (PAM 929.1072 1988), provides a guide to the Public Records Office sources and Australian Joint Copying Project reels for the various British regiments in Australia.

Does the State Library hold military personnel lists?

Army Lists provide an outline of an officer's career.

Army Lists 1754- (Great Britain War Office) show only officers, not ordinary soldiers. These begin with a list of officers by rank providing their name and the date they received their commission to that rank. Then the officers and their assignments are listed by regiment, beginning with the cavalry and moving through the regiments of foot. It will also show if the regiment served at an overseas station. Each list has an alphabetical index which helps if the regiment is unknown.

Holdings on microfiche: MFC 355.30941 1995

1761, 1773, 1776; 1826; Aug. 1853; Jan. 1858; Sept 1881; Aug. 1882; Jun. 1883; Jan. 1885; Oct 1886 (surname index); Apr. 1891; Apr 1905 (surname index); Jan. 1917 (surname index); Jun. 1919 (surname index).

Holdings in print: REF 355.42; UL 355.42 Latest issue on REF; previous in U.L.
For the quarter ending 30th June 1897. Quarterly Army list, 1913
Annual Holdings: 1897-1903; 1905-1909; 1911; 1950-1951; 1962; 1964; 1970-1997 (imperfect)

Hart's Army Lists, published by M.M. Publishing [microfiche] (MFCS 355.3320941). Hart's new annual army list contains detail on the services and medals of officers, information not provided in the official list. Holdings: 1844, 1861, 1875, 1884.

Army lists on CD-ROM:
- *The Army index 1787* (QCFS 355.332 2003)
- *Army & Navy lists 1841* (QCFS 355.30941 2005)
- *The Army list 1842* (QCFS 355.332 2004)
- *The Army List 1863* (QCFS 355.332 2004)

See also a select range of military records on **FindMyPast**, available onsite at State library.

Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) War Office Records

These are records from the Public Records Office in London relevant to Australia. The guide for military records, the War Office handbook, provides information about the regiments that served in Australia, the period for which records are available, and the nature of those records.

Muster rolls and pay lists (WO12). Muster lists were compiled quarterly. They are arranged in volumes covering one year. Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers are ordered by rank, and the private soldiers are listed alphabetically. The records can be useful in establishing dates of enlistment, discharge or death. The collection covers the time immediately prior to embarkation for Australia, the length of duty in Australia and New Zealand, and the time immediately following departure from Australia.

The first entry for each soldier should indicate his age. The last entry should show his birthplace, non-military occupation and enlistment date. Other useful documents include the paymaster's declarations, stoppages of pay for imprisonment or time in hospital. Each pay sheet shows the number of days each soldier was entitled to pay, where stationed at the time of the Monthly Muster and how he was employed, if not on normal guard duty. Tracing a soldier's records over the period he was enlisted provides a picture both of his military life and more personal dimension.

Monthly Returns (WO17). The Returns are primarily numerical summaries of regiments. These provide monthly information about when a regiment was stationed in the colony. They make it possible to pinpoint the time of arrival more exactly and to determine the location of troops. If information about the soldier's regiment or family detail is unavailable, knowing the colonies in which he was stationed is useful as regiments remained in one or two regions. Returns are available for the following:

NSW	1790-1854
Western Australia	1837-1865
All Australian colonies	1854-1865
New Zealand	1849-1865
Engineers: NSW and Tasmania	1849-1865

Embarkation and Disembarkation Returns (WO25/3502); reel 1303. These show only officers' names and not all regiments that served in Australia are listed.

Muster Master List General's Index of Casualties (WO25/1342); reel 1302 may show the date of a soldier's discharge, death, desertion or transfer which may be unavailable any other way. 'Casualty' has a wider meaning than death.

Out-Pensions Records, Royal Hospital Chelsea (WO22) There is a variety of records here. Some of the records are details of Army pensioners who were warders on convict ships that landed in Western Australia (1862-67). These are on reel 1302. Official proposals regarding discharge of troops in Australia and New Zealand are on reel 1506.

AJCP War Office records have been digitised and are available online through the National Library of Australia. https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-728664549/findingaid

Colonial Secretary's Papers 1788-1825, NSW State Archives & Records, [microfiche] (MFC 929.3944 1989) & [microfilm] (MFL 929.3944 1989), provide important material related to early settlement of NSW. The records reflect all aspects of that life: civil and military administration; granting and settlement of land; the activities of the convict system; exploration, and relations with Aborigines. Petitions and memorials present a picture of the range of the early community's people. The papers can be searched by name. Index is available online through NSW State Archives & Records https://mhnsw.au/indexes/colonial-secretary/colonial-secretarys-papers-1788-1825/

The British Army in Australia 1788-1870: Index of Personnel by James Hugh Donohoe [microfiche] (MFC 355.3520994 1996) & (FAMHIS 355.3520994 1996), identifies over 34 000 army personnel of all ranks from payrolls, organises the list alphabetically and links them to their military unit. It outlines difficulties in finding and identifying others. It is a useful start when the regiment is unknown.

A Biographical Register 1788-1939: notes from the Name Index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, by H.J. Gibbney & Ann G. Smith (REF 920.094 1987), indexes the military among others.

Land Grants, 1788-1809 by R J Ryan (SBG10822), is a way of identifying military who acquired land and features of that land.

Specific Regiments

A & C Clyde in **Redcoats Down-Under** [microfiche] (FICHE 929.394 red) have extracted and collated information for each soldier in the 46th Regiment from AJCP records.

Third Foot Regiment (Buffs) Papers, 1826 [microfilm] (MFLCA 356.116 1985)

A Colonial Regiment: New Sources Relating to the New South Wales Corps, 1789-1810 by Pamela Statham (FAMHIS 356.18909944 1992), indexes the names of over 1600 officers and men, giving details of their military service.

Soldiering fifty years ago : Australia in 'The Forties' by Major de Winton (G 994 1898), covers the story of the 99th Regiment from leaving England in 1842 to its various postings in Australia and New Zealand. The Bathurst gold discoveries and the New Zealand war get specific mention. The major retired in 1857 and ends his account there.

Where can information on army pensioners be found?

Check section on **Australian Joint Copying Project War Office (AJCP) records**.

British Army Pensioners Abroad, 1772-1899 by Norman K. Crowder (FAMHIS 929.341 1995), indexes Chelsea regimental pension registers of British veterans who settled abroad with an army pension. The registers are held in the Public Records Office. A number of pensioners came to Australia.

Soldiers Index...1806-1838 [microfiche] by J.D. Beckett (MFC 929.341 1990), covers 1st - 104th Infantry Regiments and is a reproduction of Index to Chelsea out pensioners ... 1806-1838; Public Record Office Ref. Nos. WO 120/23 - 120/30.

Check **FindMyPast**, available onsite at State Library (under Military < British Army Service Records 1760-1913), to locate and view Chelsea Pensioners records (WO 97) or search "British Army Pensioners - Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Ireland, 1783-1822" for soldiers discharged from Irish units.

Check **ancestryLibrary edition**, available onsite at State Library, for "Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Admissions and Discharges, 1715-1925" (WO 116).

The Convict Ships: 1787-1868, by Charles Bateson (SBG13129) (Australian edition), is an excellent starting point to find out about the role of the military on convict transports. Many of them were army pensioners.

Are there any records of the descendants of early military personnel in Australia?

The descendants of the early military have been recorded in the following:
- *A Genealogical History of Pioneer Families of Australia*, 4th edition, by P.C. Mowle (FAMHIS 929.20994 1968)
- *The 1788-1820 Association's Pioneer Register: Containing Details of Five Hundred Pioneers, Their Children & Grandchildren*, 2nd edition, by C.J. Smee (FAMHIS 929.394 1981).

How can newspapers help in researching a military ancestor?

Newspapers often mention conditions at military posts, various activities in which the military were involved and track the movements of personnel. Check the following on microfilm:

The Hobart Town Courier [microfilm] (MFS 0252) Holdings: October 1827-December 1843. Contains an exact reprint of every official notice in the Hobart Gazette of the day.

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser [microfilm] (MFS 0135) Holdings: March 1803-October 1842. This is indexed in the below resource.
- Index to the Sydney Gazette [microfilm] (MFS 135a). Names and subjects are interfiled.

Sydney Morning Herald, [microfilm] (MFS 0008) Holdings: 1842- 1861.

Also check **Trove – Digitised newspapers and more** (https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/) for digitised early Australian newspapers.

Are there lists for military deserters?

These lists can provide detailed descriptions of soldiers and clues to where they may have absconded.

Army Deserters from H.M. Service 1853-58 by Yvonne Fitzmaurice (PAM 929.3945 1988) has been compiled from the Victoria Police Gazette and other original records.

Deserters in Australia and New Zealand, 1800-65 by Rae Sexton (CHG 355.1334 1985).

The deserter index 1828-1840 [CD-ROM] (QCFS 929.341 1999) is an index to soldiers of British army regiments, Royal Marines and the Honourable East India Company's Service who deserted their units and whose names were published in the Police Gazette between 1 January 1828 and 31 December 1840. It contains details of over 36 500 soldiers with name, age, birthplace, trade, regiment and date of first publication of the notice in the Police Gazette.

How can I find British military births, deaths and marriages abroad?

Great Britain General Register Office, *Army Returns and Consular Returns: Indexes to Births, Deaths and Marriages 1761-1965* [microfiche] (MFC 355.30941 1995), contains Indexes of GRO births abroad 1966-1994, GRO Army Chaplains' births 1796-1880, GRO Chaplains' returns marriages 1796-1880, and GRO Army Chaplains' death 1796-1880. See also **FindMyPast**, 'British Armed Forces and Overseas ...' records, available onsite at State Library.