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Finding a D Day service person from your local area and how to research more about their life

6 June 2024 marks the 80th anniversary of D Day; the first day of the allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War. On this date in 1944 a joint air and seaborne invasion, officially named Operation Overlord, was launched on the beaches of Normandy in Northern France. The subsequent battles, which are marked as a turning point for the Allies in Second World War, are sometimes known as the Normandy Campaign

Planners of Operation Overlord had feared huge casualty rates for the initial assault. Whilst the number of casualties on D Day was fortunately lower than expected, thousands were killed or wounded on the beaches and the subsequent battle for Normandy was very bloody. Lives were also lost at sea as Allied ships crossed the Channel repeatedly to bring troops and supplies to the Normandy campaign.

The first part of this guide will show you how to use the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) (CWGC) website to find local service people who died because of their involvement in the Normandy Campaign. Once you have found a local service person, you can use the websites in the second part of this guide to find out more about your person.

Option 1: A person search on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website

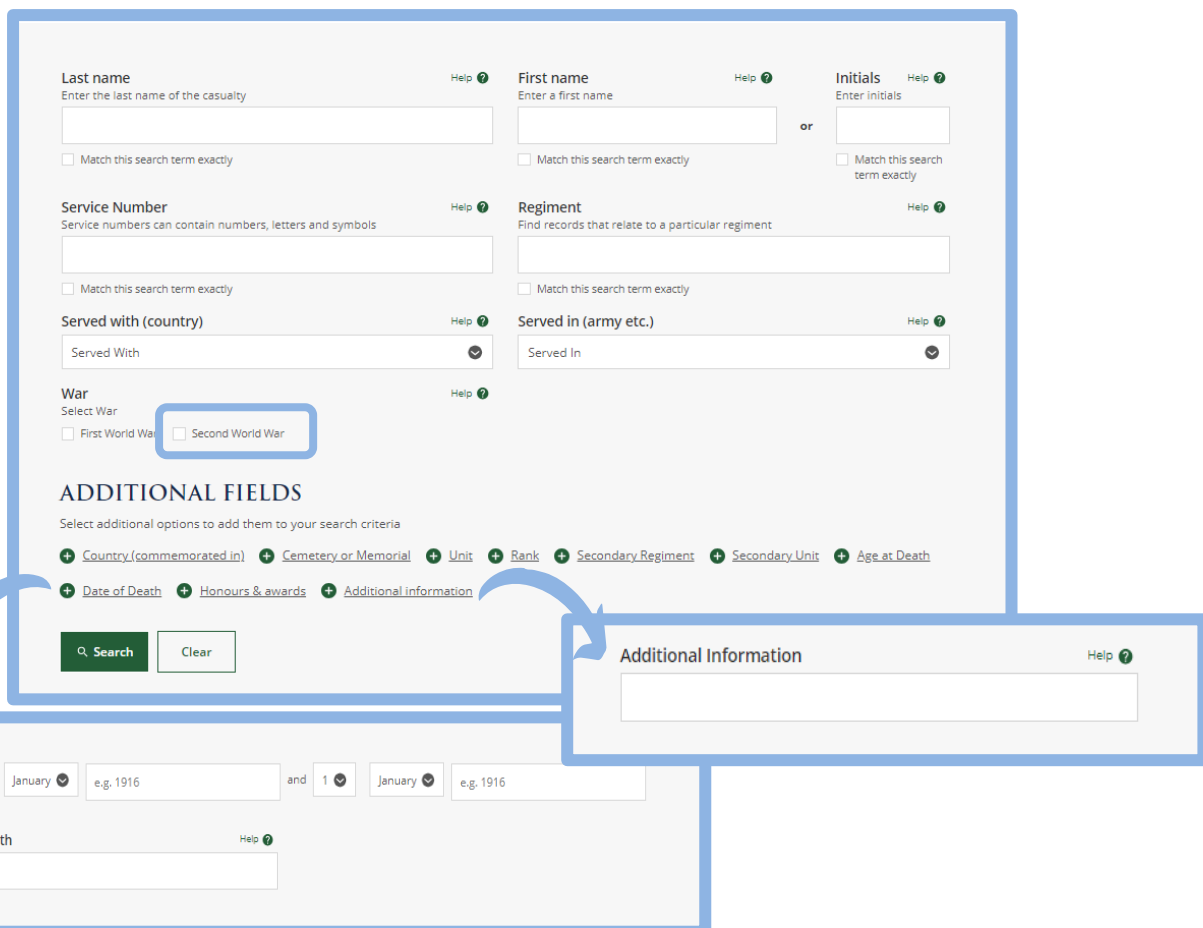
- Visit the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) website.
- Click on "FIND RECORDS" and "Find War Dead".



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- Scroll down the page, select “Second World War”.
- Under “ADDITIONAL FIELDS” select “Date of Death”. If you want to focus on a particular day of the Normandy Campaign (for example D Day, 6 June 1944) type this in to the “Exact Date of Death” field. If you would like to expand your search to include more of the Normandy Campaign, select your required dates.
- Under “ADDITIONAL FIELDS” select “Additional Information”. Type in the name of your closest city, town or village.
- Click on Search.

There are different opinions on the end date for the Normandy Campaign. Some historians identify 24th July 1944 as an end date, as Allied troops turned their attention to Northern France and the liberation of Paris. Others point to 30 August 1944.



The screenshot shows the search interface for the Normandy Campaign. The main search form includes fields for Last name, First name, Initials, Service Number, Regiment, Served with (country), Served in (army etc.), and War. The 'War' section has radio buttons for 'First World War' and 'Second World War', with the latter selected. Below this is the 'ADDITIONAL FIELDS' section, which includes a list of criteria: Country (commemorated in), Cemetery or Memorial, Unit, Rank, Secondary Regiment, Secondary Unit, Age at Death, Date of Death, Honours & awards, and Additional information. The 'Date of Death' section is expanded, showing a date range selector and an 'Exact Date of Death' field with a 'DD/MM/YYYY' placeholder. The 'Additional Information' field is also expanded, showing a text input box. A 'Search' button and a 'Clear' button are located at the bottom of the main search form.



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You have now found one or more local people who may have died because of their involvement in the Normandy Campaign. Jump to “Important Questions” section or try a memorial search below.

The list of results may include:

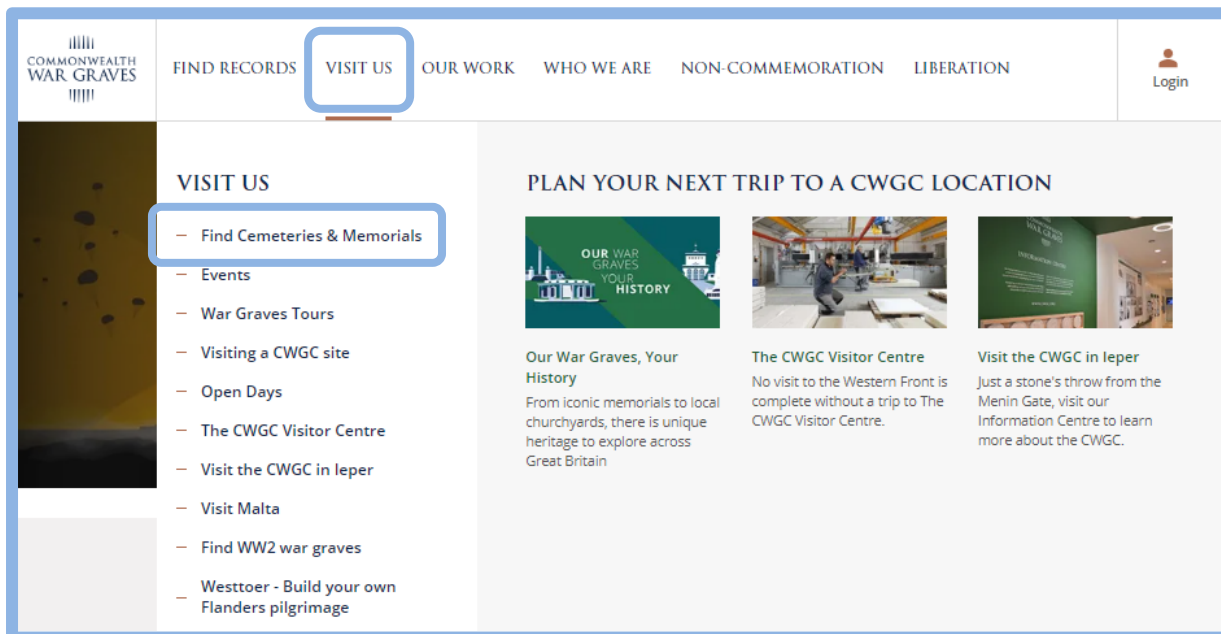
- People who are from the specified city, town or village who died during this period in the Second World War
- People who died during this period and are buried or remembered in the specified city, town, or village
- People from the armed forces, who died during this period, **and** civilian casualties
- People whose first or surname is the same as the specified city, town, or village. Watch out for rogue results!

Option 2: A search of the Bayeux Memorial

The Bayeux Memorial stands in Bayeux Cemetery in Northern France. It remembers 1800 men of the land forces who died during the Normandy Campaign but have no known grave. This may include people from your local area.

To find casualties listed on the memorial....

- Click on “Visit Us” and then “Find Cemeteries and Memorials”.





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- In the "Name" field type in "Bayeux Memorial" and click on "Search"

A search form with the following fields: Country (dropdown), Locality (dropdown), Name (text input, highlighted with a blue box), Number of casualties (dropdown), War (checkboxes for First World War and Second World War), and a Search button (highlighted with a blue box) and a Clear button.

- Click on "More details" to find out more.

Name	Location	Number of Casualties
BAYEUX MEMORIAL	Calvados France	1792

[More details](#)
[Save to My list](#)

- Click on "Find these casualties" next to the number of people remembered on the memorial.

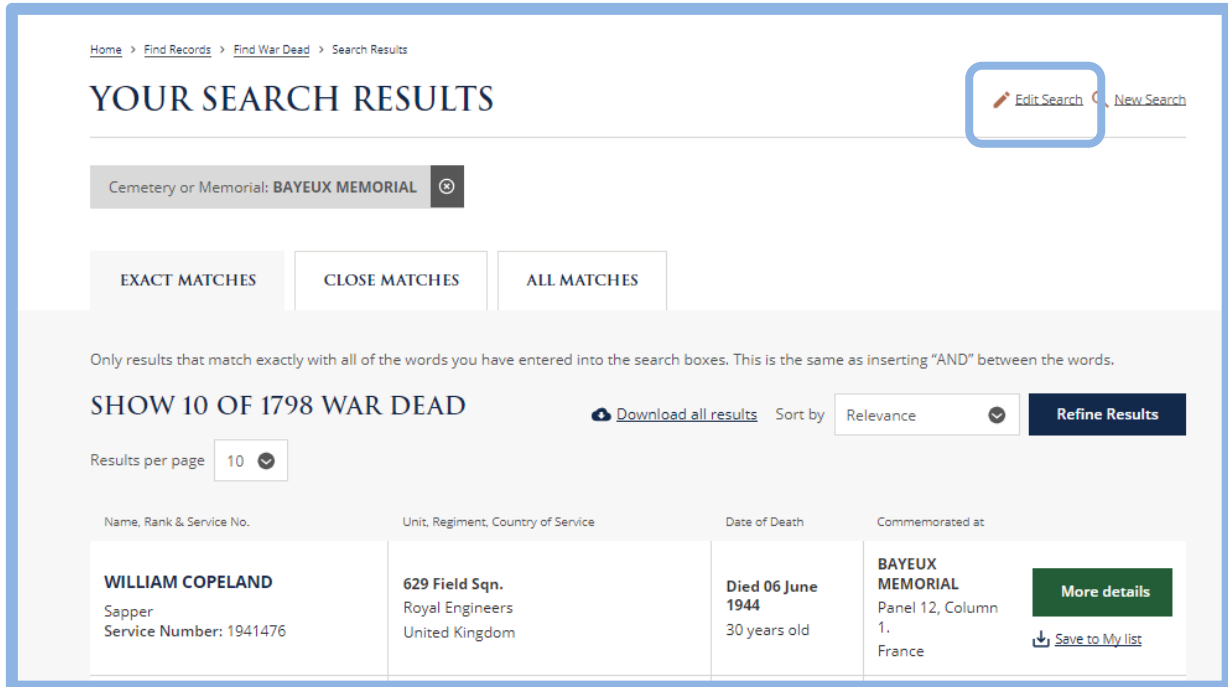
BAYEUX MEMORIAL

Country	France	Total identified casualties	1792 Find these casualties
Region	Calvados	Identified casualties from	Second World War
GPS Coordinates	Latitude: 49.27423, Longitude: -0.71383		

To find local casualties listed on the memorial.....

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- Click on “Edit search”



Home > Find Records > Find War Dead > Search Results

YOUR SEARCH RESULTS

[Edit Search](#) [New Search](#)

Cemetery or Memorial: **BAYEUX MEMORIAL**

EXACT MATCHES CLOSE MATCHES ALL MATCHES

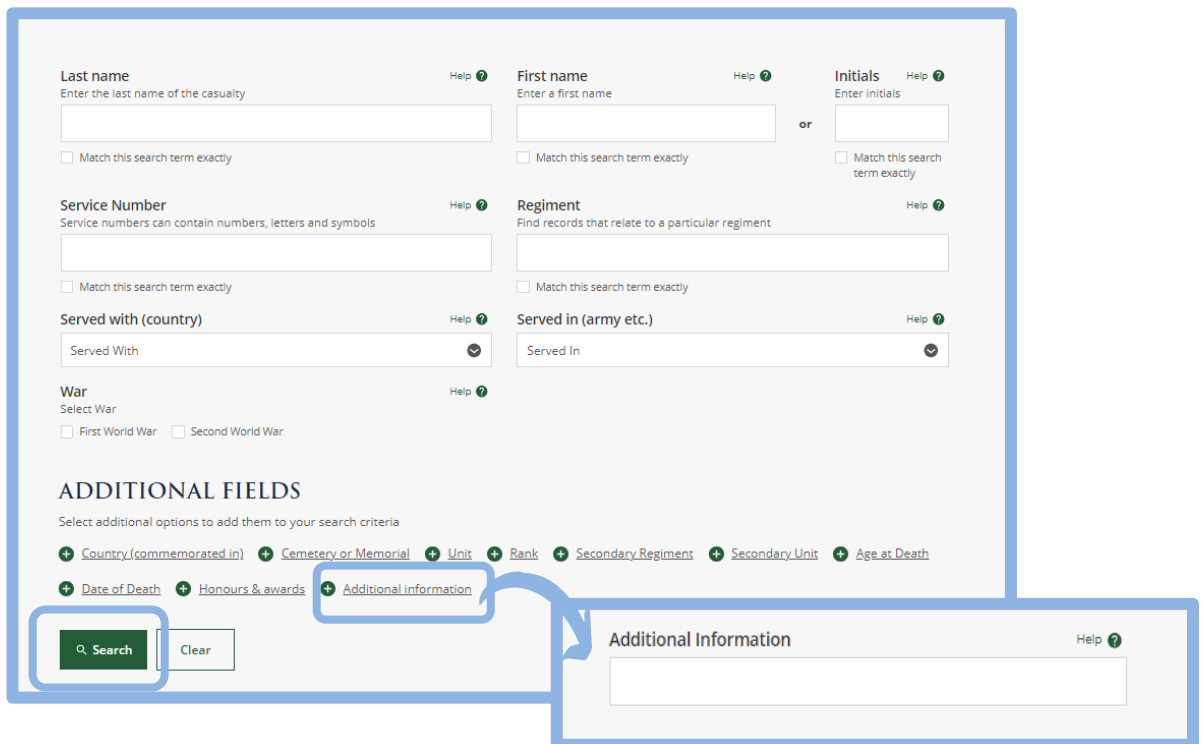
Only results that match exactly with all of the words you have entered into the search boxes. This is the same as inserting “AND” between the words.

SHOW 10 OF 1798 WAR DEAD [Download all results](#) Sort by Relevance [Refine Results](#)

Results per page 10

Name, Rank & Service No.	Unit, Regiment, Country of Service	Date of Death	Commemorated at
WILLIAM COPELAND Sapper Service Number: 1941476	629 Field Sqn. Royal Engineers United Kingdom	Died 06 June 1944 30 years old	BAYEUX MEMORIAL Panel 12, Column 1. France More details Save to My list

- Under ADDITIONAL FIELDS select “Additional Information”. Type in the name of your closest city, town or village.
- Click on Search.



Last name [Help](#) Enter the last name of the casualty

First name [Help](#) Enter a first name

Initials [Help](#) Enter initials

Service Number [Help](#) Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols

Regiment [Help](#) Find records that relate to a particular regiment

Served with (country) [Help](#) Served With

Served in (army etc.) [Help](#) Served In

War [Help](#) Select War
 First World War Second World War

ADDITIONAL FIELDS

Select additional options to add them to your search criteria

Country (commemorated in)
 Cemetery or Memorial
 Unit
 Rank
 Secondary Regiment
 Secondary Unit
 Age at Death

Date of Death
 Honours & awards
 Additional information

[Search](#) [Clear](#)

Additional Information [Help](#)



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You have now found one or more local service people who may have died because of their involvement in the Normandy Campaign. See “Important Questions” or try a search of one or more Naval Memorials below.

The list of results may include:

- People who are from the specified city, town or village who are listed on the Naval Memorial selected and died during this period in the Second World War
- People whose first or surname is the same as the specified city, town or village. Watch out for rogue results.

Option 3: A search of Naval Memorials

Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth Naval Memorials remember sailors of the First and Second World War who have no known graves. Most of these deaths occurred at sea, where no permanent memorial could be provided.

The First World War memorials at each of these sites are identical. After the Second World War it was decided that the naval memorials should be extended to provide space for commemorating the naval dead without graves of that war, but since the three sites were dissimilar, a different architectural treatment was required for each.

All three memorials include the names of British navy personnel who were lost at sea in the Normandy campaign.

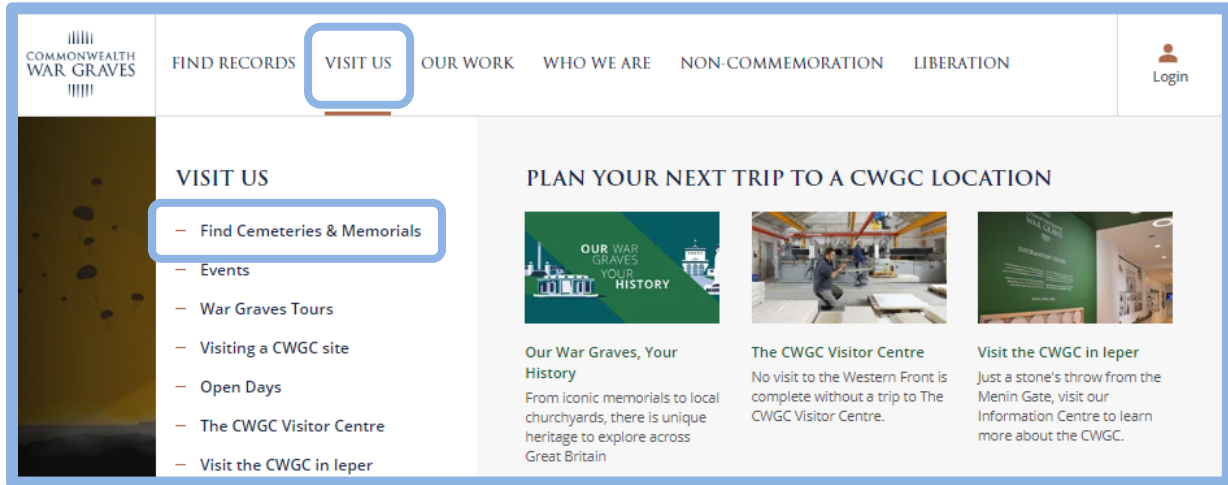
To search for local sailors listed on each of the memorials you will need to do a separate search of each one.

To find the memorial....



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- Click on "Visit Us" and then "Find Cemeteries and Memorials".



- In the "Name" field type in the name of the memorial, for example "Portsmouth Naval Memorial" and click on "Search"

The search form includes fields for "Country", "Locality", "Name", and "Number of casualties". The "Name" field is highlighted with a blue box. Below the form are radio buttons for "War" (First World War, Second World War) and a "Search" button, which is also highlighted with a blue box.

- Click on "More details" to find out more.

Name	Location	Number of Casualties	
PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL	Hampshire United Kingdom	24574	More details Save to My list



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To find local people listed on this memorial who may have died as a result of their involvement in the Normandy Campaign.....

- Click on “Find these casualties” next to the number of people remembered at the memorial.

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Country	United Kingdom	Total identified casualties	24652 Find these casualties
Region	Hampshire	Identified casualties from	First & Second World War

- Click on “Edit search”

Home > Find Records > Find War Dead > Search Results

YOUR SEARCH RESULTS

[Edit Search](#) [New Search](#)

Cemetery or Memorial: PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

EXACT MATCHES

CLOSE MATCHES

ALL MATCHES

Only results that match exactly with all of the words you have entered into the search boxes. This is the same as inserting “AND” between the words.

SHOW 10 OF 24652 WAR DEAD
[Download all results](#)
Sort by Relevance
[Refine Results](#)

Results per page 10

Name, Rank & Service No.	Unit, Regiment, Country of Service	Date of Death	Commemorated at
GEORGE WILLIAM BUSH Stoker 1st Class Service Number: P/KX 163927	518 L.C.A. Flotilla Royal Navy United Kingdom	Died 06 June 1944 21 years old	PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL Panel 91. United Kingdom

[More details](#)



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- Select Second World War
- Under ADDITIONAL FIELDS select Date of Death. If you want to focus on a particular day of the Normandy Campaign (for example D Day 6 June) type this in to "Exact Date of Death". If you would like to expand your search to include more of the Normandy Campaign, select your required dates.
- Under ADDITIONAL FIELDS select "Additional Information". Type in the name of your closest city, town or village.
- Click on Search.

There are different opinions on the end date for the Normandy Campaign. Some historians identify 24th July 1944 as an end date, as Allied troops turned their attention to Northern France and the liberation of Paris. Others point to 30 August 1944.

The screenshot shows the search interface with the following fields and options:

- Last name:** Enter the last name of the casualty. Includes a checkbox for "Match this search term exactly".
- First name:** Enter a first name. Includes a checkbox for "Match this search term exactly".
- Initials:** Enter initials. Includes a checkbox for "Match this search term exactly".
- Service Number:** Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols. Includes a checkbox for "Match this search term exactly".
- Regiment:** Find records that relate to a particular regiment. Includes a checkbox for "Match this search term exactly".
- Served with (country):** Served With dropdown menu.
- Served in (army etc.):** Served In dropdown menu.
- War:** Select War. Radio buttons for "First World War" and "Second World War".
- ADDITIONAL FIELDS:** Select additional options to add them to your search criteria. Includes links for: Country (commemorated in), Cemetery or Memorial, Unit, Rank, Secondary Regiment, Secondary Unit, Age at Death, Date of Death, Honours & awards, and Additional information.
- Search:** Search and Clear buttons.

Two callout boxes are present:

- Date of Death:** Shows "Between" date pickers (e.g., 1 January) and an "Exact Date of Death" field with a DD/MM/YYYY format.
- Additional Information:** A text input field for entering a city, town, or village name.



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You have now found one or more local sailors who may have died because of their involvement in the Normandy Campaign. See “Important Questions” below.

The list of results may include:

- People who are from the specified city, town or village who are listed on the Naval Memorial selected and died during this period in the Second World War
- People whose first or surname is the same as the specified city, town or village. Watch out for rogue results.

Important Questions

Question 1: How likely is it that your soldier was involved in the Normandy Campaign?

Click on “More details” by the side of the name of a soldier or sailor you are interested in finding more about. Make sure that the person you are looking at is a member of the armed forces and that they are remembered in a cemetery or on a memorial in France, or one of the naval memorials listed above. Click on the name of the cemetery or memorial. Under Location Information, if in France, is it close to the beaches, towns and villages linked to the Normandy Campaign? In “History Information” it may mention that service people from the Normandy Campaign are buried or remembered there.

Question 2: Is there enough information about your service person to enable you to research further?

Click on “More details” by the side of the name of a soldier or sailor you are interested in finding more about. Under “additional information” are any relatives listed and the area in which they come from? If not, you may need to find another person!

If your service person died during the dates of the Normandy Campaign and is buried or remembered near to the areas in which the fighting occurred, it is highly likely they were involved in this event. If there is also some additional information available, about your service person's family, you may now be able to use the information below, to help you find out more about your service person.

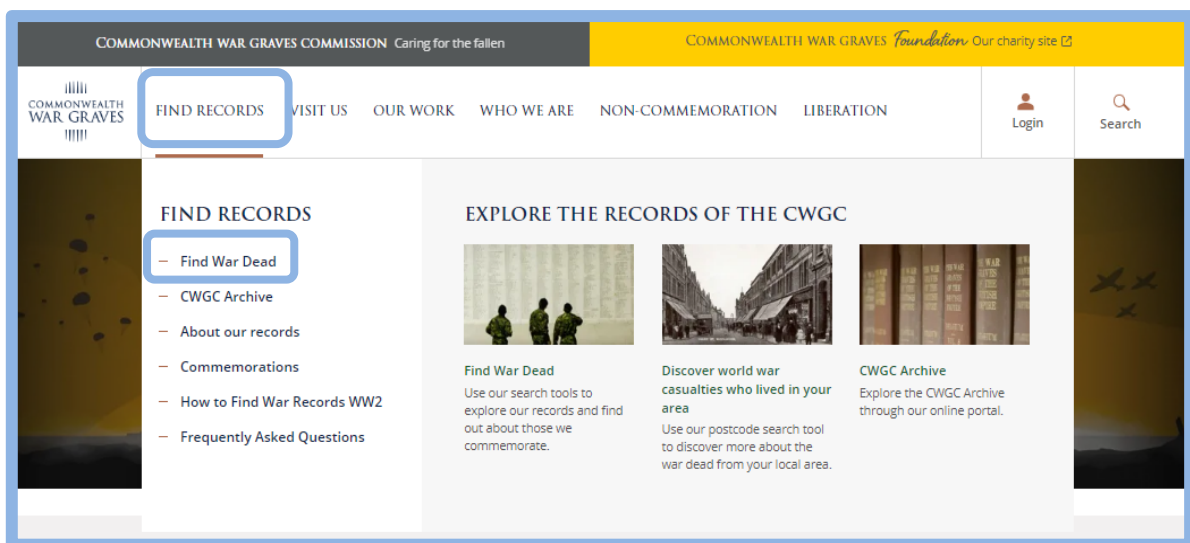


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Finding out more about a D Day service person from your local area

Use the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Website to find out more about your service person.

- Go to the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](https://www.cwgc.org/) website. Click on "FIND RECORDS" then "Find War Dead".





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- Type in the name of your soldier and select "Second World War". Click on "Search"

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields and options:

- Last name:** Enter the last name of the casualty. Includes a "Match this search term exactly" checkbox.
- First name:** Enter a first name. Includes a "Match this search term exactly" checkbox.
- Initials:** Enter initials. Includes a "Match this search term exactly" checkbox.
- Service Number:** Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols. Includes a "Match this search term exactly" checkbox.
- Regiment:** Find records that relate to a particular regiment. Includes a "Match this search term exactly" checkbox.
- Served with (country):** A dropdown menu with "Served With" selected.
- Served in (army etc.):** A dropdown menu with "Served In" selected.
- War:** Select War. Radio buttons for "First World War" and "Second World War" (highlighted).
- ADDITIONAL FIELDS:** Select additional options to add them to your search criteria. Includes links for Country (commemorated in), Cemetery or Memorial, Unit, Rank, Secondary Regiment, Secondary Unit, Age at Death, Date of Death, Honours & awards, and Additional information.
- Buttons:** A green "Search" button (highlighted) and a "Clear" button.

- Click on "More details" next to your service person's information.

Name, Rank & Service No.	Unit, Regiment, Country of Service	Date of Death	Commemorated at
GEORGE FENTON Private Service Number: 3656562	1st Bn. South Lancashire Regiment United Kingdom	Died Between 06 June 1944 and 07 June 1944 25 years old	BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY X. H. 20. France

[More details](#)
[Save to My list](#)

You now have lots of information about your service person!



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Full name and rank

Service Number - useful for identifying your soldier on other military records.

Regiment and battalion

Age and date of death

Cemetery / Memorial where person is buried or remembered. Click on the name to visit the Cemetery Information page. Find out more about the location and history. Download a spreadsheet of all casualties here. How many are there? Are any more from your local area? Did anyone else die on the same date?

Download a commemorative certificate.

Burial plot or site of remembrance. If there is a cemetery plan on the Cemetery Information page, download it and use this number to work out where your person is buried or remembered.

Family information, often including where they lived.

Gravestone inscription

Grave Registration. Grave Concentration and Headstone Reports provide more information about burial and headstone if applicable.

Record Content:
 PRIVATE
GEORGE FENTON
 Service Number: 3656562
 Regiment & Unit/Ship: South Lancashire Regiment 1st Bn.
 Date of Death: Died Between 06 June 1944 and 07 June 1944. Age 25 years old.
 Buried or commemorated at: BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY, X. H. 20, France.
 Country of Service: United Kingdom
 Additional Info: Son of George and Evelyn Fenton, of Salford, Lancashire; husband of Kathleen Fenton, of Pendleton, Salford.
 Personal Inscription: IN SAFE KEEPING FROM SORROW
 Download certificate button
 FROM THE CWGC ARCHIVES
 GRAVE REGISTRATION (2) [Click to view]
 CONCENTRATION (1) [Click to view]
 HEADSTONE (1) [Click to view]

You can use this information to do some more research.....



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Battalion Research	Genealogy Websites
<p>Do an internet search for your service person's battalion or regiment.</p> <p>There may be websites, or social media groups dedicated to your service person's regiment or battalion. It is always worth a general internet search.</p> <p>Can you find out anything about the experience of the regiment or battalion before and during the Normandy Campaign? (Where did they fight? Were they involved in any other well-known campaigns? What did they do in the Normandy Campaign?)</p>	<p>The best-known genealogy websites in the UK are Ancestry and Find My Past. One or both sites are usually available and free to use at libraries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Military Records to see whether there are any records for your service person. (Make sure you have the correct service person by cross-referencing their service number. This can be found on the information about your service person on the CWGC website) • If your soldier is old enough, see if they are listed in the 1911 Census or the 1921 Census (Find My Past only). Can you find out their address and occupation before the war? Can you find out more about their family? If you can't find your service person, try searching for their parent or spouse. • Explore The 1939 England and Wales Register. Can you find out where your service person lived in 1939, his occupation and whether he, or anyone in his family, had an additional war role (ARP warden for example)? If you can't find your service person, try searching for their parent or spouse.
Find a Grave Website	Newspapers
<p>The Find a Grave website provides photos of the gravestones, or names on memorials, of many service people who died in the Second World War.</p> <p>Search by name to find images of your soldier's headstone / name on memorial.</p> <p>You may find that someone has left virtual flowers to remember the service person. Sometimes someone has even added additional information about your service person, or a photograph.</p>	<p>British Newspaper Archive is a searchable database of newspapers from across the country, dating from the 1600s to the present day. You can search the website for free, but you need a subscription to view articles. You can often get free access in libraries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the search box, type in the name of your service person. • Use the filters on the left-hand side of the page to explore local papers from around the time that your service person died. <p>N.B. Information about your service person's death may not appear for several days, weeks or even months after the date of death listed on the CWGC website.</p> <p>You can often access old copies of local newspapers at local studies libraries and archives (usually based within lending libraries).</p>