

Australian prisoners of war

First World War

This sheet provides information for those who are seeking information about individuals who were imprisoned by the Germans and Turks during the First World War.

Key resources in the Memorial

Prisoner-of-war statements, 1914-18 War

The official record series AWM30 comprises statements made on repatriation by Australian Imperial Force (AIF) personnel who were prisoners of war of Germany and Turkey during the First World War. The series includes a nominal roll of prisoners of war in Turkey (Official record series AWM30 B18.1). Lists officers and other ranks, showing unit, date and place of capture, etc.

AWM30 can be searched using RecordSearch, www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch.aspx, by names of individuals or units. Example: Search using J E Thomas 15th Battalion as keywords and enter AWM30 into the Reference number field.

Australian Red Cross Society files (Private record series 1DRL/0428)

The files are divided into two sections - Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau and the Prisoner of war Department. A prisoner of war was likely to have files in both sections.

The Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau files have been digitised and are available at <http://www.awm.gov.au/redcross/index.asp>. They may contain some or all of the following:

- The Red Cross Bureau's Searcher's report.
- Eyewitness accounts by men who knew the soldier concerned or statements by men who served in the same unit or the same action as that soldier. These statements may include such information as the circumstances of the death or wounding, or a physical description of the soldier and the place of burial. (NB The truth and accuracy of this information was dependent on the memory and reliability of the soldier giving the statement).
- Letters sent to the Bureau by relatives or friends.
- The Bureau's replies to enquiries.
- Correspondence between the Bureau and the wounded or missing man.

Prisoner of war Department files consist of records of assistance given to individual AIF personnel held in Germany and Turkey. They may contain:

- Names of camps in which the individual was imprisoned.
- Records of parcels sent.
- Postcard acknowledgements of parcels received.
- Correspondence between the Department and the prisoner and/or family.

The files are arranged alphabetically by name, and printed indexes are available in the Research Centre Reading Room.

Location of prisoner-of-war camps

John Coates, *An atlas of Australia 's wars* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), map 150.

Germany

[Mrs] Pope-Hennessy, *Map of the main prison camps in Germany and Austria* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1989). Originally issued c.1920.

Turkey

Fred and Elizabeth Brenchley, *Stoker's submarine* (Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins, 2001). Map opposite p. 48.

The prisoner-of-war experience

Use the Memorial's website to identify relevant material.

- Collections Search, <http://www.awm.gov.au/database/collection.asp>
Search by names of individuals or camps to find photographs and private records such as personal diaries and memoirs. A general search such as prisoners Germany (in the "all words" field) with First World War from the Conflict pull-down menu can also be useful.
- Official records (RecordSearch), <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch.aspx>
Joint database for official records held in the Memorial and in the National Archives of Australia. The National Archives also holds files relating to prisoners of war. Search by the names of individuals or camps.
- Books database, <http://www.awm.gov.au/firstopac/>
May identify published personal accounts of captivity, escape maps and government publications.
- Online encyclopedia, <http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/index.htm>

Ephemera

The Research Centre holds collections of ephemera, some of which relate to First World War prisoners of war, e.g., prisoner-of-war concerts (Souvenir collection). Finding aids to these collections are available at <http://www.awm.gov.au/findingaids/index.htm>.