

Researching names on an honour board

Honour boards and rolls were erected in many local schools, halls, churches and offices as a means of acknowledging the commitment made by the community to the military forces.

The criteria used for inclusion of names on an honour board were determined by those creating the board and can vary. For example, the board may only include those who were born in the town, those who enlisted in the town, those who were living or working in the town when they enlisted or veterans who became associated with the area after the war when the honour board was being created. Some honour boards include all those who served and others only list those who died in the war. In some cases an individual may appear on more than one honour board.

The sources outlined below can assist you with researching the names on an existing honour board, or creating a list of names for a new honour board or roll.

Nominal rolls

Nominal rolls can provide some basic information about a soldier such as service number, rank, date of joining and other details. The Memorial's People search [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people] enables several nominal rolls to be searched simultaneously. These sources include:

- First World War Embarkation Roll [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=First%20World%20War%20Embarkation%20Roll]
- First World War Nominal Roll [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=First%20World%20War%20Nominal%20Roll]
- Red Cross Wounded and Missing files [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Australian%20Red%20Cross%20Wounded%20and%20Missing%20Files] (information about some Australian soldiers who were reported wounded or missing during the First World War)

The First World War Embarkation Roll typically includes the individual's address on enlistment and their next of kin's address. The other nominal rolls will help confirm if someone served but not if they are from your area.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) maintains nominal roll (nominal-rolls.dva.gov.au/) for the Second World War, Korean War, Vietnam War and First Gulf War. The information for the Second World War can be searched for either place of birth or place of enlistment. The Korean War, Vietnam War and Gulf War nominal rolls can be searched for place of birth, but not for place of enlistment.

Personal service records

Personal service records are files created for individuals during their military careers. The contents and detail of service records vary in quality and amount from conflict to conflict. For most servicemen and women, this will be the only official documentation for them as individuals.

Service records are held by the National Archives of Australia. First World War service records have been digitised and are available to read online. Second World War service records have been listed but they are only digitised and made available online at the request of researchers. Service records can be searched and if digitised viewed via the National Archives of Australia's RecordSearch database. The descriptions of the service records include the individual's place of birth and place of enlistment. More information about service records is available at www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/defence/service-records/index.aspx.

Those who died while serving

The Roll of Honour [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Roll%20of%20Honour] records the names of servicemen and women who died while serving with Australian forces during wartime. Records in the Roll of Honour database contain the personal particulars, unit and the date of death of each person. Some records may contain cause of death, next of kin, town of enlistment and cemetery or memorial details. More than half the Roll of Honour records have digital images attached to them from records known as the Roll of Honour circulars. Not all names on the Roll of Honour have a circular, however the circulars often include additional information about the individual.

Discovering Anzacs

The National Archives of Australia's "Discovering Anzacs" website [discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/] can help locate service personnel from the First World War. Servicemen can be identified either by place of birth or place of enlistment. This website includes links to the personal service records, which include information about the name and address of next of kin and the person's address on enlistment.

Other sources of information

- Local newspapers could include information about those from the town who were serving and those who were killed during the war. Some Australian newspapers published during the war years have been digitised and can be viewed on Trove (produced by the National Library of Australia) [trove.nla.gov.au/].
- Honour rolls, commemorative plaques and other memorials (DVA) [www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/publications/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves]
- Department of Veterans' Affairs grants to assist with commemorative projects such as honour rolls [www.dva.gov.au/consultation-and-grants/grants/grant-and-bursary-programs/saluting-their-service-commemorative]
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission [www.cwgc.org]
- Local museums, libraries and archives
- Local RSL branches and historical societies