

Australian prisoners of war: First World War

Overview

This guide provides information to assist research about Australians imprisoned by the Germans and Turks during the First World War.

Key resources in the Memorial

Prisoner-of-war statements, 1914-18 War (Official record series AWM30)

The series [<http://www.awm.gov.au/cgi-bin/Search?Number=AWM30>] comprises statements made on repatriation by Australian Imperial Force personnel who were prisoners of war of Germany and Turkey. Search RecordSearch [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/] using a soldier's surname or service number, or his unit, or place of capture, and enter AWM30 in the Series Number field.

- **AWM30, B18.1**, Nominal roll of prisoners of war of Turkey, shows unit, date and place of capture, etc. A similar list is held by the National Archives of Australia, and is available online through RecordSearch: series MP1565/4 [recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=395661], Prisoners of War Australians Captured in Turkey.
- **AWM30, B18.7**, German lists of Australian prisoners of war (30 July 1917 to 8 May 1918), includes a nominal roll of Australian civilian prisoners.

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

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

- Digitised images of **Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau** files are available online [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Australian%20Red%20Cross%20Wounded%20and%20Missing%20Files]. 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, a physical description of the soldier, his last known sighting, 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 a soldier's relatives or friends, and the Bureau's replies.
 - 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 comprise 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 his family.

These files are arranged alphabetically by name. Printed indexes are available in the Research Centre Reading Room.

Location of prisoner-of-war camps

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

John Coates, *An atlas of Australia's wars* (2nd ed.). *The Australian centenary history of defence, volume 7* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006), maps 150 and 164 (Europe and Turkey)

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

The prisoner-of-war experience

Additional relevant material can be identified using the following resources.

- **Collections database** [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search] Search by names of individuals or camps to find photographs and private records (such as personal diaries, letters and memoirs) and other items. A general search, such as *prisoners Germany* and selecting the *First World War, 1914-1918* filter can also be useful.
- **RecordSearch** [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/] Search for official records held in the Memorial and the National Archives of Australia using the names of individuals or camps.
- **Books database** [www.awm.gov.au/collection/books/] includes publications of government and non-government organisations, personal accounts of captivity, escape maps and general and scholarly histories.
- Mary Elizabeth Chomley collection (private record 1DRL/0615 [www.awm.gov.au/collection/C93630]) M.E. Chomley was secretary of the Australian Red Cross Society and Prisoner of War Department. This large collection includes correspondence with current and former prisoners of war, as well as administrative and financial records.
- **Ephemera and souvenirs** include some material relevant to First World War prisoners of war, such as concerts and theatre programs. Finding aids describe the content and arrangement of these collections. Some finding aids [www.awm.gov.au/collection/accessing-records-at-the-memorial/findingaids] are available online, and additional finding aids are available in paper form in the Reading Room of the Research Centre.