Australian prisoners-of-war: First World War

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

Overview


Key resources in the Memorial

- **Prisoner-of-war statements, 1914–18 War** (Official record series AWM30) can be searched on the RecordSearch database [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/] using names of individuals or units. Example: J. E. Thomas (phrase), 11th Battalion (phrase)

- **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.

- **Australian Red Cross Society files** (Private record series 1DRL/0428) are divided into two sections. A prisoner of war was likely to have files in both sections.

The full-text of **Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau** files are available online [www.awm.gov.au/research/people/wounded_and_missing/]. They may contain some or all of the following:
  - the Red Cross Bureau’s Searchers’ 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.
Red Cross files from the South Australian office are held in the State Library of South Australia.

**Location of prisoner-of-war camps**


**Germany**


**Turkey**


**The prisoner-of-war experience**

Use the Memorial’s website to identify relevant material.

- **Collections database** [www.awm.gov.au/search/collections/]
  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)** [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/]
  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** [www.awm.gov.au/collection/books/]
  May identify published personal accounts of captivity, escape maps and government publications.

- **Online encyclopedia** [www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/]

- **Ephemera** [www.awm.gov.au/findingaids/]
  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).