



Members of the Honourable Artillery Company and its Regimental Units in the Second World War: A Researchers' Guide

1. Please note that we DO NOT hold formal military service records, although a number of sources for HAC membership and regimental service for 1939-1945 are held by the HAC Archives.
2. The Archives holds a variety of Company membership and HAC regimental service records since 1611.
3. The key source for the Second World War is the WWII record card index which was compiled during and after the war. It does not provide a formal service record but each card generally shows when a man joined his HAC unit, with some brief details on where he served and if he was killed or taken prisoner. It might also include his army number and other army service details, especially if he was commissioned. Only the man's last name and initials are given, not his first name(s).
4. These WWII record cards have now been digitised and are available via Findmypast.co.uk, a commercial family history website which is free for a basic search. A subscription or pay-as-you-go access will allow you to view images of the actual records and also basic FMP transcriptions.

The HAC Archives will receive a share of your subscription if you subscribe using [this link](#) or the HAC/Findmypast partnership banner below or use a similar one that can be found towards the bottom of the [Archives page](#) on the HAC website.

Press Ctrl and click on the FMP/HAC banner below to start searching:



5. The Company has also produced annual or periodically printed lists of its members since the late-eighteenth century. For the WWII-era, one was printed in 1939 and the next in 1946. Others have been produced every few years since.

These HAC printed membership lists are available to consult in hard copy at the City of London's Guildhall Library - <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/guildhall-library/visit-us/Pages/default.aspx>

Two, covering the years 1915 and 1919, are also available online via Findmypast.

6. Only the HAC's artillery units were mobilised for WWII. Many members in the HAC's Infantry Battalion obtained commissions in other military units when it was disbanded on the outbreak of war and became an infantry training unit (162 [HAC] OCTU). A few members served with the 30th [earlier 13th] (HAC) Bn Royal Fusiliers. A number of members serving in the HAC's artillery units were also commissioned into the Royal Artillery, many passing through the HAC's 121 OCTU especially. Around 4,000 HAC members received commissions during the war (a similar number to those serving in WWI).
7. However, please note that most men who fought with the HAC's artillery units in WWII were never actually enrolled as members of the Company when they were serving and they usually only joined an HAC regimental unit for the duration of the war. Such a man's name will therefore not be included in the printed Company membership lists. If he was a commissioned officer, it is possible he may then or later have been admitted to the Company.
8. After the war, many members of the HAC's artillery units often joined the Company's Old Comrades Association (OCA) and the surviving HAC OCA members were admitted into the Company as honorary members from 1999. (But again, not all WWII soldiers serving with the HAC's artillery regiments joined the HAC OCA after the war).

9. If you haven't already obtained copies of formal service records and medals awarded, you can contact the Army Personnel Centre (APC) in Glasgow for details on how to go about this (usually proof of next of kin or similar is required as well as a fee). See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records>

The Ministry of Defence's APC holds the records of soldiers who left the Army in January 1921 (or later) and officers who left the Army after March 1922 (or later). Other MoD record offices hold service records for naval and air force personnel.

10. The MOD's website provides information on WWII medal entitlement and other medal information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#world-war-2-medals>
11. The National Archives may sometimes also have information about recommendations for medals awarded for WWII. See its research guide: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/recommendations-military-honours-awards-1935-1990/>
12. The officially printed *Army List* also contains basic service details and promotion dates for officers and can be consulted at the National Archives or a good reference library.
13. The *London Gazette* has information on promotions and awards etc. for officers – and this is additionally available in physical form at the National Archives or can be accessed free online via <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>
14. For WWII casualties, please see the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's online database - <https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead>
15. For information on Prisoners of War in WWII please contact the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/request-information-about-individuals-detained-during-second-world-war-or-spanish-civil-war-quota>
16. You might like to see if you can find locally *Regimental Fire: The Honourable Artillery Company in World War II*, by RF Johnson, London [1958]. This book can be consulted at the Guildhall Library, the British Library or other good reference libraries; it can sometimes also be bought secondhand.
17. The service of HAC units in WWII can briefly be summarised as follows:

In March 1939, the HAC formed an anti-aircraft regiment to defend London. This became the 86th (HAC) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA with three batteries (273, 274 and 275). Later in 1939, the Territorial Army was doubled in

size and the HAC's existing A and B Batteries became the 11th (HAC) Regiment RHA whilst two new batteries, C and D, formed the 12th (HAC) Regiment RHA. In November 1940, these two regiments were expanded by the addition of E and F Batteries respectively. The 11th Regiment deployed to North Africa at the end of 1941 and the 12th Regiment followed at the end of 1942. Both regiments later fought in Italy. The 86th (HAC) HAA Regiment RA, by then comprising 273, 274, 383 and 446 Batteries, landed in France on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Similarly, the 13th (HAC) Regiment RHA, which had been raised in December 1940 with G, H and I Batteries, landed in Normandy on 15 June. Both regiments fought through to Belgium and on into Germany.

On the outbreak of war, the HAC Infantry Battalion was converted into the 162 (HAC) Officer Cadet Training Unit and supplied officers to other regiments. Two HAC companies in the 30th [originally 13th] (Home Defence) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, defended the East London docks. The Cadet Battalion was formed in 1942.

Around 4,000 members of the HAC were commissioned into other units of the armed forces during WWII. Over 700 men serving with HAC units, and Company members serving with other units, lost their lives in this war.

18. The *HAC Journal* has been published since October 1923 and contains a number of useful articles on the activities of HAC units and their members during the Second World War. The *HAC Journal* from October 1923 to Autumn 2021 (500th issue) can be searched online via [Findmypast](#). Physical copies of the *Journal* can be consulted at the Guildhall Library, the British Library and the Bodleian Library in Oxford.
19. The National Archives at Kew in the War Office record series (WO) holds originals of the various **war diaries** for the 11th, 12th, 13th (HAC) Regiments RHA and also for the 86th (HAC) HAA Regiment RA. (War diaries for other military units and higher level formations can also be found here too). The National Archives' Discovery catalogue can be found via this link <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>. (If you can't find the WO series references, please let me know).

A useful guide to researching WWII operations and unit war diaries can be found on the website for the National Archives: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-operations-second-world-war/#3-unit-war-diaries>. The National Archives also has an ongoing project to make WWII unit war diaries (1939-1946) available online. Search for these online records, by names, units and other details, at Ancestry.co.uk (charges apply).

20. The HAC's Infantry Battalion became an Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) for the duration of the war, known as 162 (HAC) OCTU as noted above. The

- National Archives has some files on Officer Cadet Units (OCTUs) which might be of interest in series WO 365. The HAC's artillery officer cadet training unit was I21 (HAC) OCTU.
21. This National Archives guide to Territorial Army records might also be useful: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/volunteers-territorials/>
 22. If your ancestor also served in the Royal Artillery, you might like to contact the Royal Artillery archives. These are now based at Larkhill, Wiltshire. Please see: <https://www.facebook.com/RoyalArtilleryArchive/>
 23. The National Archives also provides other useful information in its guides on how and where to trace information on military personnel who served in WWII; see: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/?research-category=military-and-maritime>
 24. If your ancestor also served in WWI, you might like to know that the membership and regimental service records held by the HAC Archives and dating 1848-1922 have been digitised and are also available for researching online via [Findmypast](#). A Researchers' Guide for the First World War is available from the HAC Archives on request or can be found via the [Archives page on the HAC website](#).
 25. For background on the HAC in general over a longer period you can also see *Honourable Artillery Company 1537-1987* by G. Goold Walker.
 26. Online catalogue descriptions (created before the year 2000) of the Company's archives appear on the websites for the [National Archives](#) (Discovery) and a summary on the [AIM25 Project](#) website (for archives in London and the M25 area). A new HAC Archives catalogue is in progress.
 27. A short bibliography of HAC-history-related titles can be found via this link: https://hac.org.uk/images/PDFs/Archives_Bibliography.pdf
 28. Details on the history of the HAC, useful books and how to research members can also be found via this link <https://hac.org.uk/where-we-come-from/history/archives>
 29. We welcome donations of items! The Company preserves records of its property and activities and collects the personal papers and other items belonging to its members wherever possible. If you have any papers, diaries, photographs, ephemera, medals or other memorabilia and artefacts that you would like to present, please do contact the HAC Archivist. Please note that all donations to the HAC's archives and collections are unconditional and we cannot promise to display items, nor are we able to take items on a loan basis.

30. The HAC is a charity and we do not charge for research but, if you feel able to, a financial donation to our Archives Fund is always greatly appreciated. Please contact the Archivist for details via jtaylor@hac.org.uk.

Justine Taylor, Archivist, last updated 1 February 2023