



Members of the Honourable Artillery Company in the First World War: A Researcher's Guide

1. The HAC Archives holds a variety of Company membership and regimental service records from 1611. However, please note that we do not hold formal military service records.
2. The WWI membership and regimental service records held by the HAC Archives have been digitised and are available for researching online via **Findmypast**, a leading UK commercial family history website.

It is free to search and a subscription to Findmypast enables access to images of the actual record showing a man's entry and also a basic transcript.

The HAC Archives will receive a share of your subscription if you subscribe to Findmypast using the HAC/Findmypast partnership banner below or use a similar one that can be found on the HAC website (www.hac.org.uk).

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



The HAC record set currently on Findmypast comprises the following items selected from the membership and regimental service records in the HAC Archives:

- a. Company admission registers, 1848-1914;

- b. individual WWI record cards, 1914-1919;
- c. regimental number registers, 1914-1919;
- d. a register of members of the 1st Battalion, 1914-1919;
- e. rolls and papers for the 2nd Battalion, 1916-1919;
- f. WWI-period signature membership books, 1908-1922;
- g. printed lists of members' published in June 1915 and December 1919;
- h. a small collection of photographs and letters (1915-1919) from members of the next-of-kin of men who died in WWI.

More details on these particular records can be found via the Honourable Artillery Company 'Search' screen on Findmypast. Some of these records are highly abbreviated and an HAC glossary is also provided via a link on this Search page to help you understand a man's entry.

3. The HAC's service in WWI can be briefly summarised as follows:

Two HAC infantry battalions and five artillery batteries were mobilised for active service overseas during the First World War. After the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, the existing half Infantry Battalion was brought up to full strength and became the 1st Battalion, serving in France and Flanders from 18 September 1914. The 2nd Battalion was raised in September 1914 and sailed for France on 1 October 1916 and saw active service in France, Flanders and Italy. The Reserve (or 3rd) Battalion supplied the other two battalions with drafts from England.

The existing A and B Batteries of horse artillery were brought up to strength and sailed for Egypt on 9 April 1915, serving both separately and together there and elsewhere in the Middle East. The 309th (HAC) Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery and the two second-line horse artillery batteries, 2/A Battery and 2/B Battery, saw action in France and Flanders from April and June 1917 respectively. The three (later two) reserve batteries remained in England.

Around 13,000 men served with the HAC during the war and over 4,000 members were commissioned into other units. The Company's casualties during this conflict totalled about 1,650 men who died serving either with HAC units or with other units of the armed forces.

See below for more information on how to research the activities of HAC units during WWI.

- 4. The periodic and sometimes annually HAC printed membership lists date from around 1774 and most are also available to consult in hard copy at the City of London's Guildhall Library – see: <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/archives-and-city-history/guildhall-library/Pages/default.aspx>
- 5. As well as the more informal membership and regimental service records now available on findmypast, formal military service records and any medals awarded may be found at the UK's National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>) at Kew. However, please be aware that a large number of these WWI military records were destroyed by enemy bombing in September 1940.

You can access those records which have survived for free if you visit the National Archives or research from home (or perhaps a local library) and for a fee download or print images of medal cards through the National Archives's Discovery catalogue (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/>) or via the commercial family history website Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk).

6. If you haven't been able to find a medal card for your ancestor this is perhaps because he remained in the UK in a reserve battalion or battery and didn't serve overseas in France or another theatre of war and therefore wasn't entitled to a service medal.
7. For more information on WWI medals see the National Archives guide to its service medal index cards (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/medal-index-cards-wwi.htm>) and its research guide to gallantry medals (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/medals-british-armed-services-gallantry.htm>).
8. For officers whose service ended after April 1922 and for soldiers whose service ended after January 1921, copies of formal service records can be obtained from the Army Personnel Centre (<https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records>) and details on how to do this are explained in this guide (http://www.veterans-uk.info/pdfs/service_records/army_pack.pdf).
9. If he was a commissioned officer, you might like to check the annually printed *Army List*, which is available at the National Archives or other good reference libraries.
10. The *London Gazette* may also mention any promotions or awards for officers. This gazette is available online via <http://www.thegazette.co.uk/> and also can be consulted in hard copy at the National Archives.
11. Other records might also be found on available online, for example via Findmypast and Ancestry.
12. This National Archives guide to Territorial Army records in general might be useful. (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/army-auxiliary-1769-1945.htm>)
13. If your ancestor also served in the Royal Artillery, you should know that Firepower the Royal Artillery's Museum in Woolwich, has now closed. Enquiries may be answered via the Royal Artillery's Archives in Larkhill – see: <http://www.salisburyplainheritagecentre.com/>
14. If your ancestor died in the war, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's casualty register (www.cwgc.org) will also provide some information on him and where he is buried or commemorated if there is no known grave.

15. On application to the General Register Office, you might be able to obtain a death certificate which could provide more details on cause of death. See:
<https://www.gro.gov.uk/GRO/content/certificates/default.asp>
16. For WWI Prisoners of War records, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) now has a web search facility via website: <http://grandeguerre.icrc.org/> . The UK's Red Cross website also has further information on how to obtain PoW records, see: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/en/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Resources-for-researchers/Records-of-prisoners-of-war>
17. Like WWI army service records, many army medical records were also destroyed in 1940. This blog has details on surviving medical records:
<http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/125.html>
18. As noted above, two HAC units of infantry and five units of artillery fought in this war. Official war diaries for the HAC's 1st and 2nd battalions (some digitised) and for its A and B Batteries can be found via the National Archives' Discovery catalogue (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>). These are gradually being digitised, but check with the National Archives for latest details.

War diaries have not yet been found for the other artillery units. However, higher level diaries might be found which might cover the activities of 2/A and 2/B Batteries and also the 309th Siege Battery RGA.

19. For published histories of the HAC units during WWI please see G Goold Walker's *The Honourable Artillery Company in the Great War* (London: 1930). This book is available at the Guildhall Library and the British Library or it can be bought online second hand or as a reprinted paperback edition.

London Gunners by WR Kingham (published in 1919) provides a record of the 309th Siege Battery and this account is summarised by Kingham for the Siege Battery chapter in *The Honourable Artillery Company in the Great War*. *With Our Army in Palestine* by A Bluett (1919) provides a personal account of the activities of A Battery in the Middle East. Other published personal accounts by infantrymen include *Fire-eater: Memoirs of a VC* by AO Pollard (1932), *Over the Top: a PBI in the HAC* by A Lambert (1930) and *Mud and Khaki: the Memories of an Incomplete Soldier* by HS Clapham (1930).

20. A book entitled [***Reflections of a Regiment: the Honourable Artillery Company and the Great War in Pictures***](#) was published in 2016 to commemorate the service of HAC members in the First World War. A key centenary project, this publication's extensive illustrations have been principally drawn from the HAC's photographic archives, supplemented by reproductions of items from the Company's other treasured collections.

A two-volume 'pocket' guide to HAC graves and memorials 1900 to 1923 was published in 2014 is available from the HAC. Please see the [**order form**](#) for further information. Entitled ***Remembered with Honour***, this small-sized publication lists the names and graves and memorials of HAC members (and men known to have

attached to HAC units) who were casualties of the First World War and several other conflicts. The graves and memorials are to be found in Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries and a number of other burial grounds. Book I covers France and Book II covers the rest of the world. Simple country sketch maps and a name index have also been included.

21. The *HAC Journal* was published from 1923 onwards and copies can be consulted at the Guildhall Library, the British Library and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This *Journal* contains a number of useful articles on the First World War activities of HAC units and their members in its earlier issues.
22. The National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/>) can provide other useful information on how and where to trace information on military personnel who served in WWI.
23. The Army Museum Ogilby Trust has a list of regimental museums (<http://www.armymuseums.org.uk/ancestor.htm>)
24. If your ancestor also served in the HAC in the Second World War, please check the HAC website for our WWII 'Researchers' Guide'. Our WWII record cards are now also online via [Findmypast](#).

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