

British Army operations in the Second World War

This paid search guide will help you to decide whether to use The National Archives' paid search service.

What information can you find out?

We will always carry out a search of our records to a high standard based on our expertise and professionalism. With any search, there is never a guarantee that you will find the information you are looking for. There are often a number of possible reasons for an unsuccessful search, including the possibility that records were destroyed or lost, or that there are multiple records for individuals with identical names and we have insufficient information to distinguish between them.

Search 1: details from unit war diaries

This is a search in record series WO 165-WO 179 and DEFE 2. War diaries contain daily or monthly accounts of unit operations and reveal what action a particular Army unit or units were engaged in during the war. These records may include:

- names of people (normally officers only)
- names of places
- maps
- orders
- intelligence summaries

It is unlikely that we would find a specific mention of an individual soldier but mentions of individual officers are more likely.

Search 2: details from military headquarters papers

This is a search in record series WO 197-WO 205, WO 219 and DEFE 2. These are the records created by the headquarters in each theatre of operations, such as the Middle East or North-West Europe. There is one series of papers for each campaign or force. They are more useful for tracing the overall history of an operation.

These records provide details of:

- planning of operations
- organisation of forces
- intelligence
- some summaries of operations at the higher level of command
- some maps

They do not include names of soldiers, except senior officers. These records are almost complete, but there are some gaps.

Search 3: details from War Office directorates papers

This is a search in WO 106, WO 107 and WO 193. These records relate to more specialised functions in the Army but often include summaries of operations. They can include:

- reports
- maps

They do not include names of soldiers, except senior officers. The records do not cover every operation that took place during the war.

What are the charges?

Search 1

Standard charge: £84.06 for a single month in a unit diary or five dated events and then £56.04 for each additional month or five dated events.

You may have independently located document references for a unit's war diaries and wish simply to pay for copies to be sent to you. However, there may be a paid search charge for locating a required date period within the diaries and "marking it up" ready for copying. This will usually be in addition to the copying fee.

Our standard charge for research and "marking up" is £84.06 per document reference.

Search 2

Standard charge: £168.12

Search 3

Standard charge: £168.12

What information do we need for a search?

Please send as much information as you can. The following details are either essential or desirable for a search at our standard charge:

Essential	Desirable
the name of the unit or force	the name of the operation or battle
the date or dates	the name of particular places or people

If you would like to request any of the paid searches listed in this guide, please contact us either by completing our [online enquiries form](#) or by completing one of our paper response forms.

You may decide, instead, to do the research yourself. For advice on conducting your own research you should consult the relevant research guides, accessible through our online [guidance index](#).

Research guidance

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