THE TANK MUSEUM

FAMILY HISTORY ENQUIRIES



THE TANK MUSEUM
ARCHIVE AND OBJECT COLLECTIONS

INTRODUCTION.

At its heart, Family History is about stories. It's not just about learning who your relative was; it's about learning what they experienced. When you research your Family History, you will be delving into historical records and archives in the hope of building a narrative, a story, that you can then preserve and share through the generations. We know that at times researching Family History can be quite daunting.

How much information we will be able to provide on your relative depends on several factors such as when they served, what rank they held and where they were posted to. Although we have some material that relates to individuals, it is important to note that these do not cover every single soldier who served with the battalion/regiments our Archive covers.

The Tank Museum is the regimental museum of the Royal Tank Regiment and the corps museum of the Royal Armoured Corps. Our purpose is to tell the story of tanks and the crews who served in them. Our Archive is designated as a Place of Deposit and has been accredited by The National Archives (TNA). This national recognition reflects the care we take in looking after the collection, preserving it for the future, and making it accessible to researchers and families.

The Tank Museum does not hold individual service personnel records in our collection. These records are held either by The National Archives (TNA) in Kew or the Ministry of Defence Army Personnel Centre, depending on when your relative served. You will need to apply for these records separately. Further details and advice for applying can be found on the Government website: Get a copy of military records of service: Overview - GOV.UK.

This information pack has been written as a guide to what The Tank Museum's Archive can offer for people wishing to research their military relatives who served with the Regiments and Corps we cover.



FIRST WORLD WAR

·Heavy-Branch Machine Gun Corps (HB-MGC) March 1916 – July 1917
·Tank Corps (TC) July 1917 – October 1923

Originally formed in March 1916 as a section within the Machine Gun Corp, the Heavy/Branch Machine Gun Corps were the first unit to use tanks in combat. Owing to their success, they would separate from the Machine Gun Corps in July 1917 to become their own unit named the Tank Corps. Please note that our Archive only holds material relating to Heavy/Section and Heavy/Branch Machine Gun Corps. If your relative served in any other units of the Machine Gun Corps, please contact the National Army Museum in Chelsea: Home | National Army Museum

What we can provide:
Heavy Branch Machine Gun Corps/ Tank Corps Battalion War Diaries: During Wartime, military units were required to keep a War Diary to serve as an official record of their activities. These War Diaries tend to focus on the administration and operations of the unit they cover but they can contain information about individual personnel. When War Diaries do reference individuals, it usually relates to an Officer or an act of gallantry resulting in the award of a medal. However, even if your relative is not mentioned by name, War Diaries are useful documents that can help you trace your relative's journey with that Battalion and give you more of an idea what they may have been doing during their posting.

If you know, or if a staff member can trace which Heavy Branch Machine Gun Corps/ Tank Corps Battalion your relative was serving with during the First World War, we will be able to supply you with a Digital Copy or Transcript of that Battalion's War Diary.

Our staff will also check our records database system for any potential items in our collection connected to or mentioning your relative.





INTER WAR

·Tank Corps (TC) July 1917 – October 1923
·Royal Tank Corps (RTC) October 1923 – April 1939

In October 1923, the Tank Corps was granted the prefix 'Royal' by King Geroge V in recognition for its service during the First World War. The unit served in the United Kingdom, Palestine, Russia, and the North-West Frontier during this era. Men who served during this period were career soldiers.

What we can provide:
Royal Tank Corps Battalion War Diaries: During Wartime, military units were required to keep a War Diary to serve as an official record of their activities. These War Diaries tend to focus on the administration and operations of the unit they cover but they can contain information about individual personnel. When War Diaries do reference individuals, it usually relates to an Officer or an act of gallantry resulting in the award of a medal. However, even if your relative is not mentioned by name, War Diaries are useful documents that can help you trace your relative's journey with that Battalion and give you more of an idea what they may have been doing during their posting.
Only a limited number of RTC Battalions were involved in active operations during this period and therefore kept War Diaries i.e. 2nd Light Tank Company Royal Tank Corps who were involved in the Mohmand Campaign of 1935 along the North West Frontier (now modern day Pakistan). If your relative served with these Battalions during their operational period, we will be able to supply you with a Digital Copy or Transcript of their War Diary.

The "Tank Corps Journal": The Tank Corps Journal is a magazine series which began in May 1919 and is still being published today by the Royal Tank Regiment. The Journal features Battalion, and later Regimental, specific content which covers a wide range of topics such as:

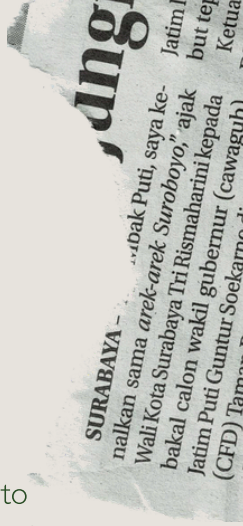
General activities/deployment of Battalions.
Inter-service sport competitions, including some photographs of teams.
Servicemen's promotions and postings. This is mostly related to the Officer rank. and Personnel Accounts.
Staff will search the relevant editions of the Tank Corps Journal for any mention of your relative.

Staff will also check our records database system for any potential items in our collection connected to or mentioning your relative.



SECOND WORLD WAR

·Royal Tank Regiments (RTR) April 1939 – present
·Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) April 1939 - present
·Reconnaissance Corps January (RECCE) 1941 – 1946



In April 1939, the Royal Tank Corps was renamed the Royal Tank Regiment and incorporated into newly formed Royal Armoured Corps alongside former calvary units mechanised in the 1920s and 1930s.

What we can provide:
TRACER Cards: If your relative was an 'Other Rank' (i.e. held the rank lower than Second Lieutenant) during this period it is likely we hold their TRACER card in our records. A TRACER card is a small card with clerical abbreviations on it that summarises the service history of an individual. While these cards don't go into detail, they do give you a snapshot picture of the serviceman's time in the army and dates for movements/postings and injuries. Through these cards, staff will be able to trace which Regiment(s) your relative served with.
Casualty Cards: If your relative was a 'Other Rank' (i.e. held the rank lower than Second Lieutenant) and died during the Second World War, it is likely we hold their Casualty Card in our Archive. A Casualty Card may also hold additional details such as dates for hospital admittance or cause of death.
Historical Army Lists: If your relative was an Officer (i.e. held the rank of Second Lieutenant or above) during this period it is likely we will be able to trace their career and any promotions through the Historical Army Lists in our collection. Please note that the Army Lists will not be able to tell us which Regiment your relative served with within the Royal Armoured Corps.

RTR, RAC and RECCE Corps War Diaries: During Wartime, military units were required to keep a War Diary to serve as an official record of their activities. These War Diaries tend to focus on the administration and operations of the unit they cover but they can contain information about individual personnel. When War Diaries do reference individuals, it usually relates to an Officer or an act of gallantry resulting in the award of a medal. However, even if your relative is not mentioned by name, War Diaries are useful documents that can help you trace your relative's journey with that Regiment and give you more of an idea what they may have been doing during their posting.
If you know, or staff member can trace which Regiment(s) your relative was serving with during the Second World War, we will be able to supply you with a Digital Copy or Transcript of their Regiment's War Diary.

The "Tank Corps Journal": The Tank Corps Journal is a magazine series which began in May 1919 and is still being published today by the Royal Tank Regiment. The Journal features Battalion, and later Regimental, specific content which covers a wide range of topics such as

General activities/deployment of Regiments.
Casualty Lists.
Prisoner of War Lists.
Sport competitions, including some photographs of teams.
Servicemen's promotions and postings.
This is mostly related to the Officer rank and Personnel Accounts.
Staff will search the relevant editions of the Tank Corps Journal for any mention of your relative.

Staff will also check our records database system for any potential items in our collection connected to or mentioning your relative.



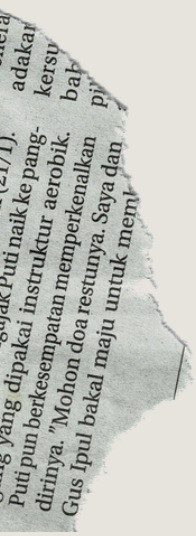
NATIONAL SERVICE: 1945 – 1963

·Royal Tank Regiments (RTR)
·Royal Armoured Corps (RAC)

What we can provide:
TRACER Cards: If your relative was a 'Other Rank' (i.e. held the rank lower than Second Lieutenant) during this period it is possible that we hold their TRACER card in our records. A TRACER card is a small card with clerical abbreviations on it that summarises the service history of an individual. While these cards don't go into detail, they do give you a snapshot picture of the serviceman's time in the army and dates for movements/postings and injuries. Through these cards, staff will be able to trace which Regiment(s) your relative served with.

Regimental War Diaries: During Wartime, military units were required to keep a War Diary to serve as an official record of their activities. These War Diaries tend to focus on the administration and operations of the unit they cover but may also contain information about individual personnel. When War Diaries do reference individuals, it usually relates to an Officer or an act of gallantry resulting in the award of a medal. However, even if your relative is not mentioned by name, War Diaries are useful documents that can help you trace your relative's journey with that Regiment and give you more of an idea what they may have been doing during their posting.

Only a limited number of RTR/RAC Regiments were involved in active operations during this period and therefore kept a War Diary i.e 8th King's Own Irish Hussars who were deployed in the Korean War. If your relative served with these Regiments during their operational period, we will be able to supply you with a Digital Copy or Transcript of their War Diary.





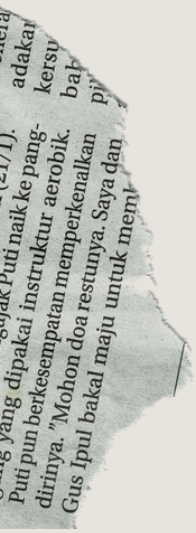
POST NATIONAL SERVICE: 1963 ONWARDS

·Royal Tank Regiments (RTR)
·Royal Armoured Corps (RAC)

What we can provide:
The "Tank Corps Journal": The Tank Corps Journal is a magazine series which began in May 1919 and is still being published today by the Royal Tank Regiment. The Journal features Battalion, and later Regimental, specific content which covers a wide range of topics such as:

General activities/deployment of Regiments.
Casualty Lists.
Prisoner of War Lists.
Sport competitions, including some photographs of teams.
Servicemen's promotions and postings, though this is mostly related to the Officer rank.
and Personal Accounts.
Staff will search the relevant editions of the Tank Corps Journal for any mention of your relative.

Staff will also check for any course photographs and unit documentation which may reference your relative and search our records database system for any items connected to or mentioning your relative.





WHAT INFORMATION WE CAN'T PROVIDE:

The Tank Museum does not hold any individual soldiers' personnel records. These records are held either by The National Archives (TNA) in Kew or the Ministry of Defence at the Army Personnel Centre Glasgow, depending on when your relative served.

You will need to apply for these records separately. Further details and advice for applying can be found on the Government website: Get a copy of military records of service: Overview - GOV.UK

Please note that The Tank Museum will only be able to answer enquiries relating to the Royal Tank Regiment and its predecessors, Regiments within the Royal Armoured Corps or and the Reconnaissance Corps. If you are interest in a soldier who served with another regiment, please use this link Regiments and Corps | National Army Museum to search the National Army Museum's webpage to learn which museum holds that Regiment's collection and contact them for assistance.

Although we can sometimes identify the type or model of tank your relative may have served in, it is often very difficult to identify the individual vehicle they were assigned to. This level of detail was rarely recorded in official military records, and it was not uncommon for personnel to be reassigned vehicles to meet regimental requirements or to replace casualties during wartime.



WHAT'S NEXT?

How to submit an Enquiry:

If you are researching your family history and would like us to carry out a search of our collection, you can by either send us an email at Archive@tankmuseum.org or visit our website and submit an Enquiry Form at: Archive & Supporting Collection - The Tank Museum.

When you get in touch, we would kindly ask that you share as many details as you can about your relative as possible. This information helps our team check the Archive and narrow down any potential results.

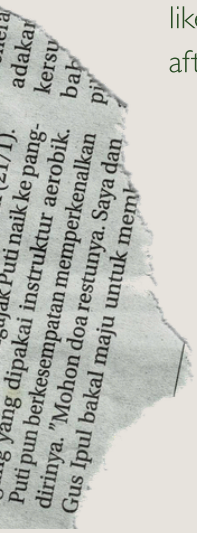
Examples include:

·The Soldiers' full name, including middle names.
·The Soldiers' Army Service Number, if known. (You can find this on any official army service documents such as a Paybook or Certificate of Service)
·Their Rank.
·When they might have served. For example, did they serve in the First World War, the 1930s (Inter War) or perhaps later during National Service?
·Any potential Regiment(s) they served with. If you are not sure and have a photograph of them in service uniform, please feel free to share this with us.

We might be able to conduct an enquiry even if you are unable to find information requested above, but the more information we have, the easier it is for us to search.

Once we have received your request, we will carry out a first-look search of our Archive to see what information we can find. We don't charge for this initial check, as there is a possibility that we are unable to assist you.

Once this is complete, we will update you with our results. Depending on what we discover, we may be able to offer you digital scanned copies or transcripts of documents. Alternatively, if you would like to view any Archive documentation in person you are welcome to pre-book morning or afternoon slot in our Reading Room.

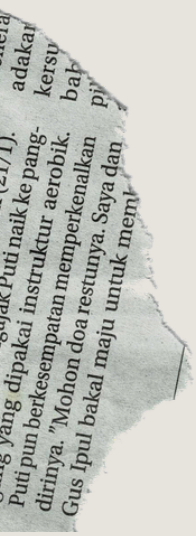




SERVICES & CHARGES

As a charity, the Museum charges fees for its enquiry services. These fees directly support the care and upkeep of our collection and help the Archive team continue assisting researchers. Our fees, as of 1 January 2026, are:

SERVICE	CHARGE
Initial search of the Archive.	*Free*
Digital Scan of a TRACER Card/Casualty Card.	£5* *Maximum of x10 TRACER/Casualty Cards can be scanned per enquiry.
Copy of Transcribed Regimental War Diary.	£10
Use of our Reading Room for a Research Visit.	£15 per ½ day, £30 for full day. AM slot: 10.00 – 13.00 PM slot: 13.00 – 16.00
Digital scanning of historical documents.	£0.50 per page* *Dependant on whether the document is deemed in suitable enough condition to copy.



OTHER SOURCES AVAILABLE:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission:

– Search their online database for information on War Dead, Cemeteries and War Memorials: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission | CWGC

The National Archive (TNA):

– Search their online database for Citations for Gallantry Medals between 1935 – 1990: Recommendations for military honours and awards 1935-1990 - The National Archives

– Individual Soldiers Personnel Records for pre-World War 2 Servicemen. Further details and advice for applying can be found on the Government website: Get a copy of military records of service: Overview - GOV.UK

MOD Personnel Centre:

– Individual Soldiers Personnel Records for World War 2 Servicemen onwards. Further details and advice for applying can be found on the Government website: Get a copy of military records of service: Overview - GOV.UK



OTHER SERVICES.

PRIMARY SOURCE RESEARCH PACKS

The Archive offers bespoke research information packs featuring carefully selected digitised materials from our collection. These packs are designed for individuals pursuing higher education in military history or those with a focused interest in specific periods of armoured warfare. Each pack consists of primary sources and citing information organised to develop subject-specific knowledge and to facilitate further exploration of the materials and resources within the Tank Museum Archive.

READING ROOM

The reading room is open to everyone and is a designated space to provide in-person access to The Tank Museum's Archive and Object Collections. During your visit the collections team will be on hand to offer guidance and can assist in locating relevant materials to support a wide range of research and enquiry.

Use of the reading room is by appointment only; bookings can be made by emailing archive@tankmuseum.org or by telephone.

DIGITISATION SERVICES

The Archive and Object Collections department offers digitisation services to scan and prepare digital copies of material within our collection, with exception for certain materials due to GDPR and preservation considerations, digitisation allows the museum's archival collection to be available to remote audiences allowing access to those to those unable to visit in person.
Digitisation services and digital copies are subject to charge and are for personal research only unless licencing agreements have been obtained prior to reproduction.



LOCATION & OPENING HOURS

The Archive and Object Collections team invites visitors to view the material within the Museum's reading room.

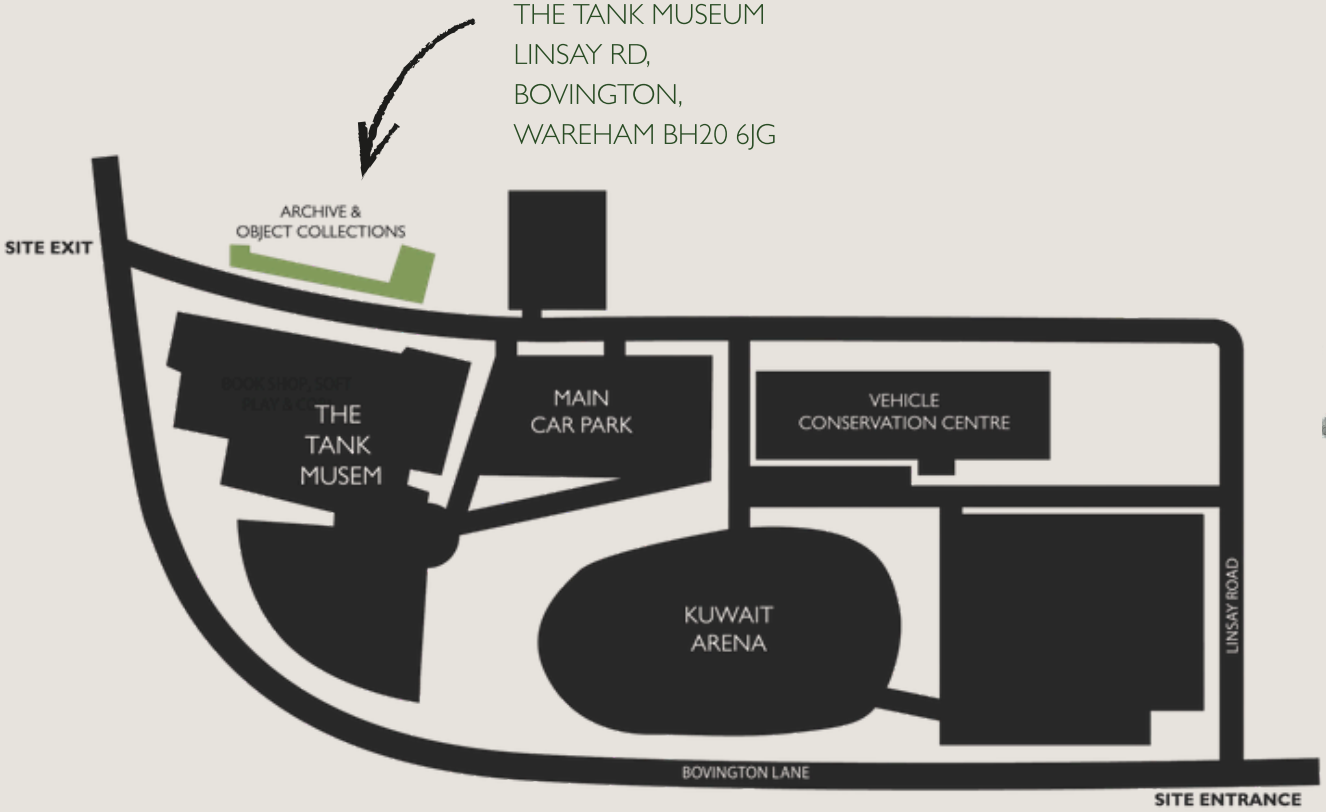
Visits to the reading room are by appointment only and are offered in half day or full day sessions from **10:00-13:00** & **13:30-16:30** Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays.

Visits are subject to a charge of £15 per half day (£15 full day charge for students). Other charges may apply (reproduction, photocopying, etc), including a consultancy fee if your visit is for commercial purposes.

You are welcome to bring pencil and paper or a laptop into our reading room, and we provide lockers for bags, food and drink.

If you would like to take photographs for personal use, a daily camera licence is available for £10 per visit.

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