



# **Somerset Archive and Record Service**

## **Information Leaflet**

# **Army Records in Somerset**

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### ARMY RECORDS



### Introduction

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the county of Somerset had links with a number of army groups, namely the Somerset Light Infantry, (from 1959-1968 the Somerset and Cornwall Light Infantry); the Yeomanry brigades, including the West Somerset Yeomanry and the North Somerset Yeomanry; and the militia units, including the Somerset Rifle Volunteers and later the territorial units.

### The Records

All official army records, such as service records, pension records, medal rolls, records of court martial and casualty returns are held at the National Archives. Their website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) contains many useful leaflet guides on researching the British Army and on the documents they hold. Post 1922 service records are still held by the Ministry of Defence. They can be obtained by the next-of-kin (or with the permission from the next-of-kin) for a fee of £30 by application to:

Army Personnel Centre,  
Historical Disclosures,  
Mail Point 400,  
Kentigern House,  
65 Brown Street,  
Glasgow,  
G2 8EX

Applications should be supported by proof of death and kinship. As much information as possible should be included to speed the application, although it can take around six months for them to be processed.

### The Records of the Somerset Light Infantry, 1706-2005 (DD/SLI)

This collection contains the material collected by the regiment during its lifetime. Although not containing service records, and thus little information about the individual men who served with the regiment, it does include rich and varied material on the regiment's history and background, the conflicts in which it served and information on its successor and affiliated regiments. It also contains a vast photographic record of the regiment from the 1860s through to the present day.

Notable and useful classes of records are:

- **Digests of Service (DD\SLI/1) and War Diaries (DD\SLI/2)** The Digests of Service record operations during peace time and often include details on the movement of the battalion, changes in senior personnel, deaths of officers and visits by noteworthy officials. The War Diaries record the events of the battalion whilst on active service, including details on daily operations, numbers of casualties, acts of recommendation or bravery and the deaths of senior personnel. War Diaries for all battalions on active service are also held at The National Archives.
- **Militia Rolls (DD\SLI/3)** A small selection of militia returns covering limited parts of the county, 1758-1878.
- **Medal Rolls (DD\SLI/5)** A select number of copies taken from those held at The National Archives, they include those for the majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century conflicts in which the regiment served, gallantry awards and the General Service Medal.
- **Army Issue Maps and Plans (DD\SLI/14)** Includes operational maps for the Crimea, World War I, Monte Cassino during World War II and the Malayan Emergency of the 1950s.

**Photographs (DD\SLI/15)** Over 2000 photographs of the regiment and its activities. This series includes many formal group shots, along with some individuals, locations and personal photograph albums.

- **Soldier's Personal Papers (DD\SLI/17)** A small selection of personal ephemera collected by the regiment, alongside a number of personal diaries and correspondence.
- ***The Light Bob Gazette and The Silver Bugle* (DD\SLI/18/1)** The Regimental Journal containing details on sporting events, social events and changes of senior personnel. A very good source of informal background information for the period 1893-1973.

A full list of all classes of records, along with a brief history of the regiment is included in the introduction to the catalogue.

### **The Records of the North Somerset Yeomanry, 1790-2000 (DD\NSY)**

A smaller collection of records collected by the North Somerset Yeomanry including:

- **World War I casualty lists (DD\NSY/3/1)** These volumes provide details of the soldier's name, number, rank, date of injury, type of injury or illness and further remarks. They cover the whole period of the War. Also available are field service records for those soldiers who died on active service during World War I (DD\NSY/3/2).
- **Correspondence, 1804-2001 (DD\NSY/5)** Detailing the actions of the Regiment, especially comprehensive for the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- **Photographs (DD\NSY/9)** A small selection of images, mainly detailing the life of the Regiment during the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Regimental Histories (DD\NSY/11)** Mainly research notes for the compiling of a Regimental History.

A full list of all the classes of records, along with a brief history of the regiment is included in the introduction to the catalogue.

### **Army Records in other collections**

There is a considerable amount of army related material in other private collections, especially concerning the militia and yeomanry forces. Private gentlemen who raised militia units often kept their own records and these can often be found in family collections, such as the Malet family (DD\MAL), Sanford family (DD\SF), Phelips family (DD\PH) and the Trevelyan family (DD\WO). Parish collections also often hold details on the upkeep and raising of parish militia units. We also have a growing number of personal papers and memoirs, especially for World War II. Unfortunately we do not hold the regimental papers of the West Somerset Yeomanry, although a number of items are included within the Somerset Light Infantry papers and other private collections.

### **Further Reading**

H Everett, *The History of the Somerset Light Infantry 1685-1914* (1934)  
 E Wyrall, *The History of the Somerset Light Infantry 1914-1919* (1927)  
 L Grant, *The Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) 1685-1959* (2004)  
 Capt. R. Boyle, *A record of the West Somerset Yeomanry 1914-1919*  
 G Fisher, *The History of Somerset Yeomanry, Volunteer and Territorial units* (1924)  
 J Gibson, *Militia lists and musters 1757-1876* (1994)  
 S Fowler and W Spencer, *Army Records for Family Historians* (1998, reprinted 2000)  
 F Wilkinson, *Badges of the British army, 1820-1960* (1980)  
 G Hamilton-Edwards, *In Search of Army Ancestry* (1977)

### **Contact details**

Somerset Record Office  
 Obridge Road  
 Taunton  
 TA2 7PU

Tel : 01823 337600 (Appointments)  
 01823 278805 (Enquiries)  
 01823 325402 (Fax)

Website : [www.somerset.gov.uk/archives](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/archives)

Email: [archives@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:archives@somerset.gov.uk)