

First World War: sources for research



Bristol Archives holds numerous sources related to the First World War. Selected collections and papers are described here, although this is not a comprehensive list.

Further First World War material is listed on our online catalogue, often amongst the papers of organisations, businesses, schools and churches.

To search thoroughly, try different search terms, such as 'First World War', 'Great War', 'World War One', 'World War 1', 'WW1' and 'WWI'. Searching for material dated 1914 to 1918 is also useful.

Online catalogue
Website

archives.bristol.gov.uk
www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives

Email
Telephone

archives@bristol.gov.uk
0117 922 4224

Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped to identify and catalogue these collections.

Service records

In general, we do not hold military service records. Key sources for information about Bristol servicemen are:

- The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum:
www.soldiersofglos.com
- The Somerset Light Infantry Archive at Somerset Heritage Centre
www1.somerset.gov.uk/archives/sli
- The National Archives
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/first-world-war/
- The Commonwealth War Graves Commission
www.cwgc.org
- Ancestry.com (free access is available in our searchroom)
www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/uk/world-war-1

In addition, the Bristol 2014 website contains a guide to researching Bristolian ancestors in the First World War: see www.bristol2014.com/your-family-history.html

We do hold a small number of records containing details of military service, such as:

- St Mary Redcliffe school: register of military records of former pupils, 1900-1928 ([Ref. 40477/MR/1](#))
- National Union of Teachers War Record, 1914-1919 ([Ref. 32225/88](#)) - a national, published list of teachers who served in the war.

Recruitment

- Minutes of the Bristol Citizens' Recruiting Committee, 1914-1920 ([Ref. 44937](#)) and 1915 ([Ref. 11927](#)).
- Sheet music for the recruiting song 'Bravo Bristol,' by Fred Weatherly and Ivor Novello, 1914 ([Ref. 12631/16](#)).
- Souvenir history of 'Bristol's Own' volunteers (the 12th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment), July 1915 ([Ref. 42302/1](#)). This names all the regiment's companies and soldiers.

Municipal records

- Records of the Prince of Wales War Relief Fund, 1914-1940, which assisted military families in financial difficulty: committee minutes ([Ref. M/BCC/RPW](#)), City Treasurer's records ([Ref. 09069](#)) and correspondence ([Ref. LM/C/LM12](#)).
- Papers kept by the Lord Mayor's office ([Ref. LM/C](#)), especially ([Ref. LM/C/LM1](#)). These include brief files of news cuttings, correspondence and other material on wartime activity, particularly fundraising and entertainments for wounded soldiers
- Papers of individual Lord Mayors, including photographs, news cuttings, event programmes and other items: Barclay Baron ([Ref. 36819](#)), Frank Sheppard papers ([Ref. 11173](#)) and miscellaneous photographs ([Ref. 11176](#)) and Henry W Twiggs ([Ref. 32759](#)).

Political papers

- Bristol Trades Council speeches, leaflets and anti-conscription literature, 1914-1919 (Ref. 32080).

Munitions factories

- Plans showing Number 23 National Filling Factory at Chittening, no date (Ref. 35749/95/a-b).
- Plans of the Ministry of Munitions West of England Instructional Factory at Gloucester Road, 1917 (Ref. 42054.G.Drawer 4/16919 to /16934).

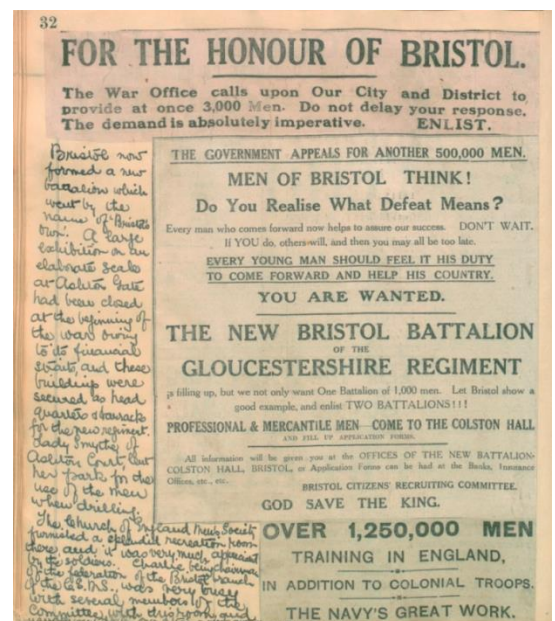
Records of W D & H O Wills, tobacco manufacturers, 1914-1964 (Ref. 38169)

Relevant material includes army supply contracts and wartime cigarette cards, plus material gathered for a 50th anniversary publication, including employees' reminiscences and original photographs taken in France

Personal papers

We hold a number of personal collections donated by individuals or families, often containing service papers, identity cards, ration books, photos and correspondence. Some key collections are:

- **Scrapbooks of Maude Boucher, 1914-1921 (Ref. 44859):** 21 volumes giving a personal perspective on Bristol's war, through photos, news cuttings and handwritten notes.
- **Letters from Roy Palmer to his cousin in Bristol, 1913-1916 (Ref. 42737/1/2):** early letters describe his eagerness to join up and complaints about women entering the workplace; later letters record service in France and Belgium before he was killed in 1917.
- **Letters between Florence and Grantley Cottle, 1916-1918 (Ref. 44775):** Grantley Cottle was in the Royal West Kent Regiment and his fiancée Florence lived in Easton. Most letters were written by Florence, giving insight into a woman's experience of the Home Front.
- **Papers of Stanley Booker, c1907-c1924 (Ref. 40715/Pers/SCB):** photographs, military badges and letters to his family, written during service in England and at the Front. He died trying to rescue a fellow soldier.
- **Papers of the Watson-Williams family, 1905-2000s (Ref. 41987):** the papers of army officer Guthrie Watson-Williams include his letters and reminiscences about duty at the Front and in Bristol. His sisters were Margaret, who worked with Belgian refugees, and Marjorie, better known as the artist Paule Vézelay, who illustrated *A Diary of the Great War* by Samuel Pepys Jr.



The Vaughan postcard collection

This collection includes about 200 local First World War postcards showing troops, hospitals, Belgian refugees, peace celebrations and war memorials ([Ref. 43207](#)).

The catalogue is arranged by theme. Wartime postcards can mainly be found at Refs. [43207/7](#), [43207/8](#), [43207/26](#) and [43207/27](#) but it also helps to search the collection by keyword.



Postcards of the 1914 International Exhibition - the 'White City' which was converted into soldiers' barracks - can be found at [Ref. 43207/22/3](#).

Honour and remembrance

- Roll of Honour of Bristol officers, NCOs and men awarded decorations during the Great War, 1919 ([Ref. 39769/1](#))
- Rolls of honour were also created by other organisations, such as Bristol Corporation, local employers, schools and churches - these can be found by searching our online catalogue.

Post-war developments

- Bristol City Council housing estates terrier, 1919-1925 ([Ref. 42098](#)), with details of council housing developed in accordance with the Housing Acts of 1919-1925.
- Minutes of the council's Relief Committee, 1920-1933 ([Ref. M/BCC/REL](#)), established in 1920 to relieve distress caused by post-war unemployment.
- Report of a Bristol conference on the position of women in industry after the war, 1918 ([Ref. 40458](#)).
- Report of the Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties ([Ref. Pol/PM/4/1](#)), set up following the appointment of female police during the war.

Other sources

Material available at Bristol Central Library includes:

- Reports of the Bristol branch of the British Red Cross, 1914-1919
- *Bristol and the War* magazine, 1914-1917
- *Bristol Boy Scout* newspaper, 1916-1919
- Local newspapers

Images shown

- The Black Watch leaving Bristol, 1915 ([Ref. 43207/7/57](#))
 - Page from Maude Boucher's scrapbook, August 1914 ([Ref. 44859/1, p32](#))
 - Bristol's Own: fatigue party, 1915 ([Ref. 43207/8/47](#))
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