

RFHG Rookie's Guide to Archives – to avoid my mistakes

Here is a note on Australian, India, Singapore archives + US/ Japan + UK

1. NAVIGATING AWM <https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search>
 - In all the searches, it shows every type of record available. Go to digitized collection & click on view all digitized collections.
 - The War Crime Trials are saved with the name of defendant, and not witnesses or victims. So, if you know your person of interest gave evidence against XYZ, then a search on XYZ will give you any trials that may have been held and your person should be there.
 - Sometimes, a trial record lists evidence from XYZ but it's not there. It may have had evidence of various crimes and is kept with the records of the other trial. Email digitised.collections@awm.gov.au they should be able to help.
 - Sometimes, record 100 and 102 are available online, but not 101 – it obviously exists, so email & they will send it normally within a day.
 - Sometimes they have it, but it's not digitized and you can pay & get it done, though it says 10-12 weeks. Not tried this yet.
 - If you are looking for something and don't know the reference, tell them as much as you can and you may be surprised. I got some gems I did not know existed.
2. NAA <https://www.naa.gov.au> GO TO RECORD SEARCH
 - Sometimes, AWM doesn't have the record even if it has an AWM reference number. Then contact National Archives Australia who actually are the repository of the file and they will send it to you. Sometimes they too don't have it, but that's been rare. ref@naa.gov.au
3. National Library Australia has an online archive of newspapers, very useful:
<https://trove.nla.gov.au>
4. Singapore
 - National Archives of Singapore <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/>
 - It contains items from other archives and that's how I found one key document I was looking for. These include items in UK archives & you can view them here instead of going all the way.
 - Some items can only be viewed at main Library (equivalent of BL). Follow the process to create your ID and book a visit.
 - Some with sensitive information can only be viewed at Fort Canning. When you get your email confirming it's ready to be viewed, see location – it'll either be Library or Fort Canning.
 - Newspaper archive <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/advanced>

NAI (National Archives of India)

5. Vast online records at www.abhilekh-patal.in. You can search without an ID, but to see a file, need to create one, quick process, though I found clicking on "Agreed terms" difficult. If you take time doing this, refresh the CAPTCHA before you submit, else it would have expired & you have to repeat. Note that the dates, eg War Diary for unit XYZ, 1947 is the last date covered by the War Diary and often contains information from earlier years, so

do have a look at 1947 even if you are only interested in 1942. When you find a document, you can view each page (view full screen). Easy to navigate – down arrow for next page, zoom etc. If you need a hard copy, you can ORDER PAGES ON DEMAND, either the whole document or specific pages. It gets added to your “LIST”. They have a similar process like UK National Archives here. When you checkout, you have to pay Rs 10 per page (c10p). The main page has a 5-Step User Guide, Tips and How to Use Digitized Demand.

6. If you want to visit the archives on Janpath Road, New Delhi: Before you arrive, you must have:
 - An invite letter from your university/ institution with same topic of study and period for which research to be done.
 - If not an Indian citizen, an invite letter from High Commission/ Embassy
 - Wifi in yr phone/ computer

Upon arrival, yr car can be parked inside:

- You need to have yr pass made at the main gate – they will give you a one-page Form 8 that you need to fill in, with subject same as University /Embassy invite letter + copy of ID (passport/ visa if foreign, AADHAR if Indian)
- Email images of these to researchroomnai1@gmail.com
- They will email you back an acknowledgement with a ref #. This normally happens in a few minutes.
- Once this is one, the entrance desk will issue you a pass for the day. Then you can walk to the annexe, about 200m away where you can access the documents.
- When you return the next day, show them the email and they'll issue a new pass for the day.
- When you enter the annexe, walk through the foyer and then on the right is the registration room. At the entrance is a green plastic box that contains keys to lockers. Each has a locker# and nearby is the locker room where you can keep what you not allowed to take in
- You can take in your laptop, pencils, paper, but not yr phone.
- After you put all this away, go to the Reference Room. There is always a person there. It has a register listing about 200 items and if any interests you, ask and they will provide it – they are all in the Reference Room in a cupboard on the left (as you enter)
- Reference Room right wall has several cupboards containing lists of other items. If anything in these lists' interests you, need to fill up a form and give it to the ref room person. They collate all requests and send them to archives for retrieval at 10AM, 2PM, 4PM and need the individual requests 30 min earlier. It normally takes an hour for retrieval.
- If you want to take images, another form to be filled in at Registration room at a cost of Rs 500 (approx. GBP 5) per document.

6. Japanese Archives https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/index_e.html

If the website comes up in Japanese and you need English, Click on English in top right.

Then Go to Search our Holdings. Of course most of the records I searched for were in Japanese, though the descriptions are in English.

UK

7. British Library

- Could not find anything on website so wrote to apac-enquiries@bl.uk Very quick.
- India Office Records War Staff papers are listed here: https://hviewer.bl.uk/lamsHViewer/Default.aspx?mdark=ark:/81055/vdc_10000000015_0x0000b5. In this listing, the date helps you narrow down your search. When you click on an item, the title/ description tells you more. If it says in 3 parts, that means this document is 1 of 3 in consecutive sequence, when IOR/L/WS/1/1576 on Indian National Army in 3 parts was followed by 1577 & 1578.
The date of creation is when the documents contained were created (in many other archives date of creation is when the archive record was created often decades later)
- As I was looking for copies of documents that were not digitized, I had to visit. Its open Mon-Sat most of the day, book in advance by creating online Readers Ticket. Before actually viewing, you need to go to registration to get a physical Readers Ticket - take along proof of ID with photo & proof of address. You're only to take in pencils (you can buy one at the shop if you forget), laptop, phone and sheets of paper for notes. There is a cloakroom or locker facility. Wifi available.
- You can take images, but not of manuscripts.
- You can order up to 10 items on 1 day. Suggest you book max 8 before arriving. Once you there, bound to find couple other Refs you need to look up, so those can be your No 9 and 10 of the day.

LOOK UP AND ENJOY THE FANTASTIC PAINTINGS IN THE ASIA READING ROOM – I ALMOST MISSED THEM ON DAY 1

8. National Archives Kew <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

I found all the award recommendations digitized, can be downloaded free (max 100 in 30 day periods) by creating an ID. If not digitized, visit details same as above. Once you are there you can submit additional requests at terminals there (they say max 3 per hour, but you can submit more). These come quickly, within 30-60mins in my experience. You can take images. They have a stand above most desks you where you can attach your camera to click with a button.

You can search for specific things of course (use advance search, exact words, date range). It's also useful to look up series that can be of help, depending on your interest eg:

WO 203 SEAC (SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMAND)

WO 235 and 238 (WWII WAR CRIMES)

WO 325 WWII WAR CRIMES SOUTHEAST ASIA)

WO 373 (Award Recommendations)

Cabinet Office Series CAB 106, Far East Sub-Series

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C92734>

I haven't found a listing of each series, but you can start by going here with main WO hierarchy: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C259> By clicking each item it lists the various series under it.

9. Researching Awards/ Medals at NA Kew/ London Gazette

- WO 373 in NA has recommendations & often the gazette and other related correspondence. It can be searched by the recipient's name.
- Often the WO record includes other Indian FEPOWs in the same recommendation that can lead you to more cases.
- If you are just trawling, you can narrow it down by looking at those where for Theatre of Combat or Operations, it says Escape and Evasion, OR London Omnibus
- If you know the Gazette date, you can find it here:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:London_Gazette_Index/19
- Sometimes you'll find that the gazette date isn't listed. That's because it was a supplement to an earlier gazette. Eg <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/37558/data.pdf> This is the Supplement dt May 9, 1946 to the May 7 gazette. The WO record will say gazetted May 9, while the gazette listing https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:London_Gazette_Index/19/1946#May shows May 7 supplements and 3 supplements to May 7 without specifying which date the supplements were issued. This is the 1st supplement No 37758.
- Another way of finding more cases is by looking at the supplement. Similar cases are gazetted together, such as the 15 MBEs awarded to Indian FEPOWs at the start of this gazette.

10. IWM Images, some oral histories digitized, but few documents. Visits can be booked thrice a week 11am-4pm and 10 slots per day. Must book in advance. No ID required. Locker needs a GBP 1 coin.

11. US National Archives go to <https://catalog.archives.gov>
Online, I could only download 1 page at a time. Not sure if I'm missing something.
I have not visited personally so am unaware of that process.

12. Don't do what I did: when visiting archives (my 1st time), I was overwhelmed by the material and kept clicking away where allowed. I was lost in 100s of images, sometimes forgetting which file I was looking at, not taking notes. I got diverted by fantastic but off-topic material in the same file. I had trouble downloading my phone images – they appeared jumbled on my laptop. Then I moved my phone images into folders in the phone and uploaded them into the cloud – something I had been avoiding so far. That sort of worked, though some images still seemed jumbled, though less so.