

# A step-by-step guide to searching for Naval Service Records

Provided by the Naval Historical Society of Australia

## Overview

### Naval Service Records => National Archives of Australia

Naval Service Records can be obtained through the National Archives of Australia.

- For **service before 1970**, information is on the web and you can do a free web search. Just follow our step-by-step guide.
- For **service after 1970**, the information is not on-line. You must make a formal, written application to the National Archives. Our guide shows you how to do that.

### What's so special about 1970?

In 1970, the Navy computerised its personnel records.

Prior to 1970, Service Records were recorded manually on paper. All of those paper-based records have been scanned and can be viewed on the National Archives website.

From 1970 on, the paper records stopped and all Service history is recorded in the Navy's personnel computer system which is held by the Department of Defence. These records are not accessed via the web. You must ask the National Archives for the records and they, in turn, may have to request the records from Defence. The whole process is more complicated.

Pre-1970 Service Records	Post-1970 Service Records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ National Archives website</li><li>▪ Immediate</li><li>▪ Free</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Request to National Archives</li><li>▪ May take a few months</li><li>▪ May involve a cost</li></ul>

### Where to from here?

Our step-by-step guide will explain in detail how to make your search for Naval Service Records.

Start your computer, open your favourite internet browser, and go to the website for the National Archives of Australia ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)).

If you're not sure how to go to the NAA website, then enter the NAA's website address ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)) in the browser's Address field - that's where the browser displays the internet address of web sites –and then press Enter.

Now, follow the step-by-step guide...

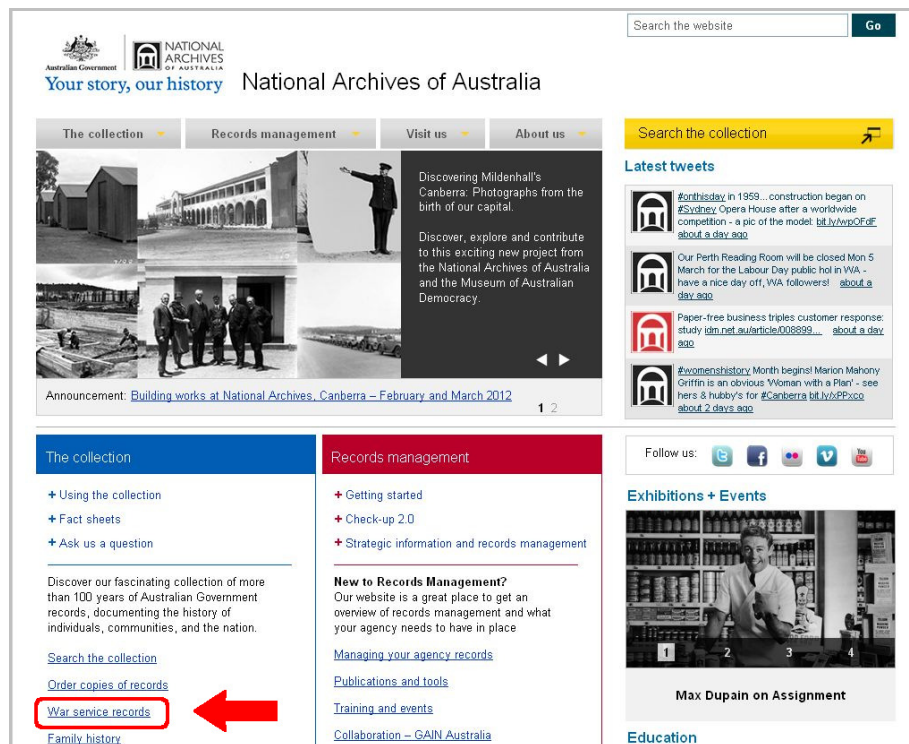
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## Step 1

### National Archives

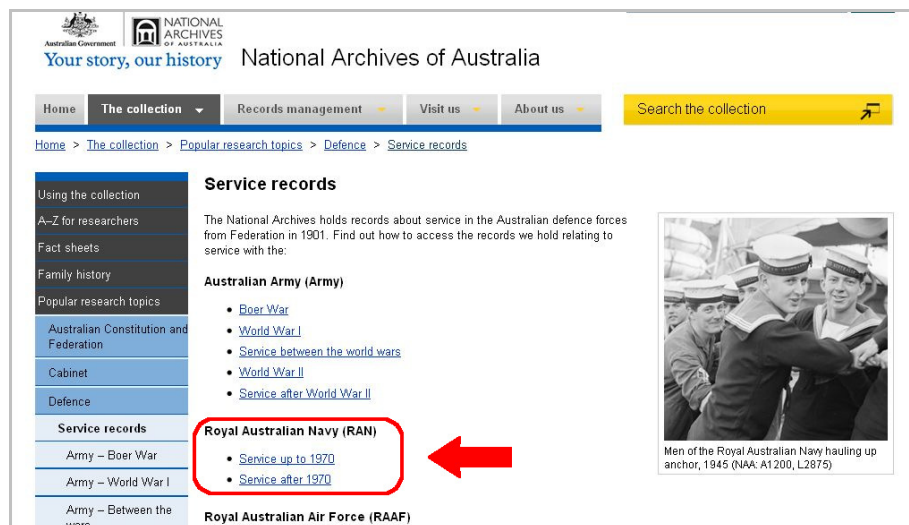
- Use a web browser to go to the National Archives of Australia website ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)).
- Scroll down until you can see the link for “War Service Records” (it’s a sub-heading on the left-hand side under the blue heading called “The Collection”).
- Click the link to go to the Service Records page.



## Step 2

### RAN Service Records

- Midway down the page you should see the heading for “Royal Australian Navy (RAN)”.
- Click either “Service to 1970” or “Service after 1970”.



## What era are you searching for?

- If you’re searching for **pre-1970** records, then proceed to step 3 of this guide.
- If you’re searching for **post-1970** records, then jump to step 9 of this guide.

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## Pre-1970 Service Records

### Step 3

#### Start search

- You're on the page for Royal Australian Navy service records for the service period that you chose earlier.
- Scroll down to the heading "Find and view a Navy service record online".
- Click the link for "Go to Name Search".

National Archives of Australia

Home The collection Records management Visit us About us Search the collection

Home > The collection > Popular research topics > Defence > Service records > Navy – Up to 1970

Using the collection  
A–Z for researchers  
Fact sheets  
Family history  
Popular research topics  
Australian Constitution and Federation  
Cabinet

**Royal Australian Navy from 1911**

**Navy service records**

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was established in 1911. The main records are service cards. In addition to the service records the Archives holds Naval Officers' confidential reports and ships' ledgers for Her Majesty's Australian (HMA) ships.

Another useful series is held at the [Australian War Memorial](#) – the Naval Force (ANF) Engagement and Service records (1903–11).

The table below outlines the records held at the National Archives. They are listed in chronological order.

**Collection references**

Snapshots of the collection  
Publications and podcasts

There are usually one or two cards for each person.

**Find and view a Navy service record online**

All Navy record of service cards (series A6769 and A6770) have been digitised and are available to view online.

1. Go to [NameSearch](#).
2. Enter the family name of the service person – make sure it is the name used at enlistment.
3. Select 'Navy personnel records 1911–1976' from the dropdown menu.
4. Search.
5. Display the results of your search. If there are too many, you can refine this search result, and then enter the person's given names and/or service number.
6. Use the link to 'View digital copy'. You can also print a copy of the record.

### Step 4

#### Search as a guest

- You're on the "Search the Collection" page.
- Click on the box that says "Search as Guest"

National Archives of Australia

Home The collection Records management Visit us About us Search the collection

Home > The collection > Using the collection > Search the collection

Using the collection  
Search the collection  
Order collection items  
Step-by-step guide for researchers  
What's in the collection  
Ask us a question

**Search the collection**

You can search using: [Basic search](#), [Advanced search](#), [NameSearch](#), [PhotoSearch](#) or [Passenger arrivals index](#).

**Search as a guest**

Registering as a researcher allows you to set preferences, view previous searches and request to have records issued to a reading room.

**Register**

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## Pre-1970 Service Records (continued)

### Step 5

#### Enter search details

- The RecordSearch page has several tabs. Click the "Name Search" tab

- In the data entry box to the right of Family Name, enter the Surname followed by all, full, Christian names. Do not enter a comma between the surname and the first Christian name.

In this example, we are searching for the service records of John Leonard Smith. So, under family name we would enter:

Smith John Leonard

- In the drop-down box for "Category of Records", choose "Navy personnel records".
- Click "Search" to start the search.

RecordSearch

Exit RecordSearch View previous searches Help

RecordSearch - Basic search RecordSearch - Advanced search **NameSearch** PhotoSearch Passenger arrivals index

Basic search for items You are logged in as guest

Bringing Them Home name index

Keywords

Date from  to

Search Clear

Need help?

[Doing a basic search](#)

[Step-by-step guide for researchers](#)

[RecordSearch tutorials](#)

[RecordSearch Forum](#)

NameSearch

Exit RecordSearch View previous searches Help

RecordSearch - Basic search RecordSearch - Advanced search **NameSearch** PhotoSearch Passengers arrivals index

NameSearch You are logged in as guest

Family name

Category of records

☒ Use exact spelling

Search Clear

Tips on searching [RecordSearch Forum](#)

Other records of interest:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander records
- Australian Federal Government employee records
- Northern Territory evacuees records
- Australia's Prime Ministers

Information about the collection and the different types of records held by the Archives.

### Step 6

#### NameSearch results

- Click on "Display" to see the details.

If there is more than one match, then you'll have a chance to drill down to your selection on the next screen.

NameSearch results You are logged in as guest

Family name	How searched	Category	Number of matches
Smith John Leonard		Navy personnel records	2

Display Refine this search result New Search




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## Pre-1970 Service Records (continued)

## Step 7

### Item Details

- The “Item list” screen provides some basic information to confirm your selection.
- There is on-screen option to view this information as a “List report” or a “Detailed report”.
- If there is more than one item, review the item details.
- Choose the line that fits your search. To view the digitised service record, click the icon marked Digitised Item (or “View digital copy” on the Detailed report”).

Your story, our history

NameSearch

[Exit RecordSearch](#)
[View previous searches](#)
[Help](#)

[RecordSearch - Basic search](#)
[RecordSearch - Advanced search](#)
[NameSearch](#)
[PhotoSearch](#)
[Passengers arrivals index](#)


Item list

You are logged in as guest

[New search](#)
[View selection](#)
[Return to search result](#)

Display 20 search results per page  
 Displaying 1 to 2 of 2



View as:
 ☒ List report
 ☐ Detailed report

Select	Series no.	Control symbol	Item title	Date range	Digitised item	Item barcode
<input type="checkbox"/>	A6770	<a href="#">SMITH, J L</a>	SMITH JOHN LEONARD : Service Number - PM7407 : Date of birth - 08 Jun 1926 : Place of birth - PRAHRAN : Place of enlistment - PORT MELBOURNE : Next of Kin - SMITH MARGARET	1939 - 1948		4539431
			Access status: Open Location: Canberra			
<input type="checkbox"/>	A6770	<a href="#">SMITH, J L</a>	SMITH JOHN LEONARD : Service Number - PA2649 : Date of birth - 10 Aug 1922 : Place of birth - RENMARK SA : Place of enlistment - PT ADELAIDE : Next of Kin - LEONARD	1939 - 1948		4539432
			Access status: Open Location: Canberra			

## Step 8

## Digitised record

- The original service record opens in a pop-up window. You can scroll through the pages and/or print the record.



 NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA  
 Your story, our history

Read  
 Enlarge

Page 1 of 2

How to view and print this page  
 Copyright  
 Exit digital copy

1926/30  
 1926 to 1930 INC.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVAL RESERVE.  
 RECORD OF MOBILIZED SERVICE.

NAME of full (Date of Birth) **SMITH John** **1 June 1926**  
 Next of Kin (relationship and address) **John Smith, 22 St John St, Graham**  
 Place of Birth **Graham**  
 Religion **E. of E.**  
 Home Port or Port Division **PORT MELBOURNE**

Entered in Ledger List No. **7407**  
 Signature of Accountant Officer

Trade **Pay Book**  
 The above-named man has been mobilized for service by proclamation. He reported for duty on **MAY 2 - 1944**  
 Rank or Rating **Pay Book**  
 Specialist Qualifications or Non-substantive Rating  
 Service to which allocated on Mobilization  
 Date **MAY 2 - 1944**  
 Signature of Accountant Officer **RANK**  
 Commanding Officer **HMAS LONSDALE**

The above-named man has been medically examined and is fit for service.  
 DESCRIPTION OF MEMBER  
 Height **5' 8"** **5' 8"** **5' 8"** **5' 8"** **5' 8"** **5' 8"**  
 Weight **140 lbs** **140 lbs** **140 lbs** **140 lbs** **140 lbs** **140 lbs**  
 Hair **Brown** **Brown** **Brown** **Brown** **Brown** **Brown**  
 Eyes **Blue** **Blue** **Blue** **Blue** **Blue** **Blue**  
 Complexion **Medium** **Medium** **Medium** **Medium** **Medium** **Medium**  
 Marks, Wounds, and Scars **Scar L Arm** **Scar L Arm** **Scar L Arm** **Scar L Arm** **Scar L Arm** **Scar L Arm**  
 Date **MAY 2 - 1944**  
 Signature of Member **John L. Smith**  
 Signature of Commanding Officer **RANK**  
 Date **MAY 2 - 1944**

EXAMINATIONS AND NOTATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO MOBILIZATION  
 Date **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44**  
 Particulars **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0** **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0** **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0** **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0** **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0** **O.H.S. 1 day. 1st class. 12.30/1.0**  
 Date **3 JAN 1947** **3 JAN 1947** **3 JAN 1947** **3 JAN 1947** **3 JAN 1947** **3 JAN 1947**  
 Particulars **Deferred Pay Paid** **Deferred Pay Paid** **Deferred Pay Paid** **Deferred Pay Paid** **Deferred Pay Paid** **Deferred Pay Paid**  
 Date **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44** **10. 11. 44**  
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**This is the last step for searching for pre-1970 Service Records.**

NHSA Searching for Naval Service Records120607.doc

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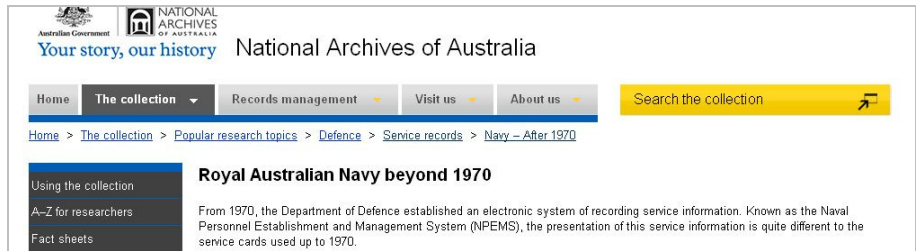
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## Post-1970 Service Records

### Step 9

#### Former Servicemen

- Refer the **GREEN** arrow
- Contact DOD



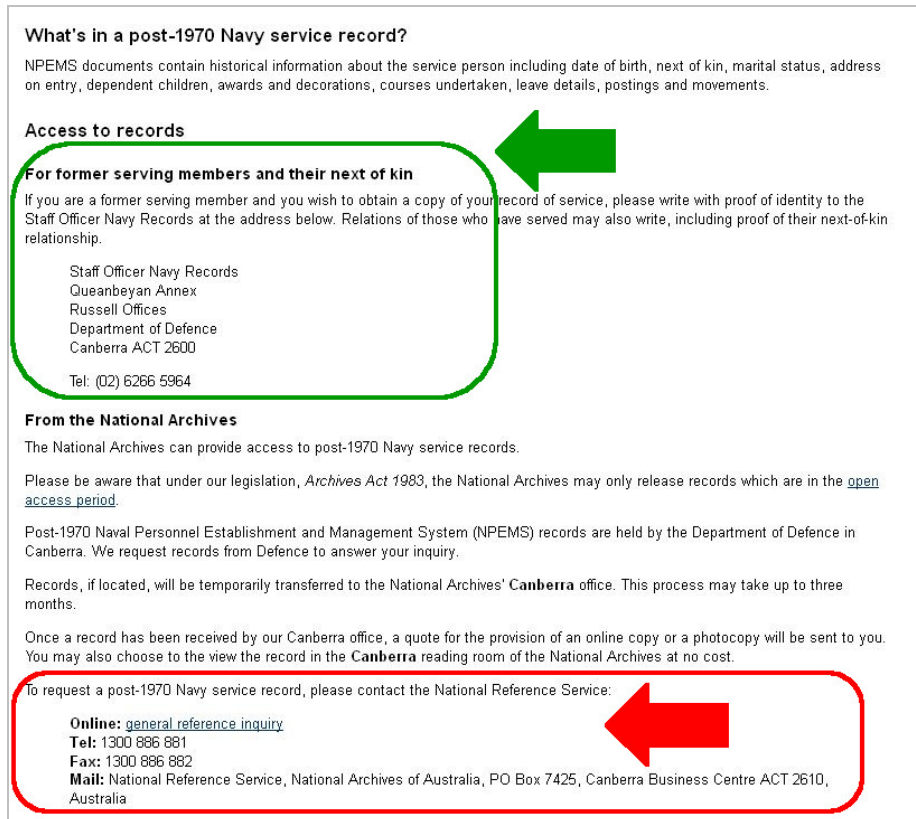
### Step 10

#### National Archives

- Refer the **RED** arrow
- Contact National Archives.

#### Note:

- It may take months for the records to become available.
- Records can be viewed **ONLY** in Canberra.
- A fee applies to make copies



This is the last step in the guide.