

Are you researching a soldier of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, or its predecessor units, the 16th Foot or Bedfordshire Regiment? Then, this guide is for you! 1st edition: August 2019

I am Nigel Lutt, and you are welcome to contact me by e-mail nigel.lutt2@virginmedia.com or by telephone 0750 401 5313. E-mail is best for complex enquiries. I am a volunteer (one of the Regiment's Trustees, and a former local government archivist) and I aim to respond to all enquiries within a few days. I am also glad to answer regimental enquiries which are not family history in nature.

SECTIONS:

1-3: INTRODUCTION & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

4: NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

5: SERVICE PAPERS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

6: ARCHIVE SOURCES FOR FAMILY HISTORY

7: PHOTOGRAPHS: GENERAL ADVICE

8: PUBLISHED BOOKS & WEBSITES

But, before you contact me please read on:

(1) The Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment collection is split between two locations. Bedfordshire Record Office, based in Bedford, holds the regimental collection of papers and photographs (class reference X550), while the Regimental Gallery and reserve collection at Wardown Park Museum, Old Bedford Road, Luton LU2 7HA, holds most of the uniforms, medals, artefacts and 3-D items (but there is room to display only 10-15% of the collection). **However, both collections contain comparatively little information on individual soldiers.**

(2) When you contact me please say briefly what you know already, and how you know it (family tradition, papers held by the family, information from on-line subscription websites; please cite website and sources used) and what you are trying to find out. I am glad to spend 15-30 minutes per enquiry, and do not generally charge as we have no facilities to accept payment on-line. **Donations by cheque can be made out to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regimental Museum Trust and posted c/o Wardown Park Museum, Old Bedford Road, Luton LU2 7HA**

(3) Frequently Asked Questions?

(3.1) The Hertfordshire Regiment has a separate museum of its own run by Hertford Museum, 18, Bull Plain, Hertford SG18 1DT. We do have very limited material on the Hertfordshire Regiment (e.g. **6.24** below), and can normally give researchers some advice before referring them to Hertford Museum.

(3.2) The Bedfordshire Yeomanry, which were cavalry to 1920 and gunners thereafter, does not have any links to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment. I am glad to give what advice I can on the sources. No museum exists, but the Higgins Museum, Bedford, holds some items of uniform and memorabilia.

(3.3) Something to donate? We are always glad to accept donations of new material or original research to our museum or archive, or suggest a new home for it if it doesn't fit with our collecting policy

(4) Newspapers: many local and national titles are now digitised on the British Newspaper Archive subscription website and can be searched by name, subject matter and place. The website is also available if you subscribe to Find My Past, or you may find that it is accessible via your local library. Local newspapers are particularly good for WW1 obituaries and occasional photographs, but the WW2 editions are less useful as they were heavily censored.

(5) The Regimental Collections do not contain service papers of any kind. These papers are held elsewhere and cover three major periods

(5.1) Pre-1914: original papers held by the National Archives, Kew, where digital versions can be consulted on site. On-line versions are on the *Find My Past* and *Ancestry* subscription websites; I have access to the latter. Success rate: around 50%

(5.2) 1914-1919: First World War. Original papers held by the National Archives, Kew, where digital versions can be consulted on site. On-line versions are on *Ancestry* subscription website, to which I **do** have access. Success rate: around 30% as many papers were bombed in 1940. First World War medal cards are also available: 95%+ survive.

(5.3) 1920 on, also including men who served any portion of their service after 1920. Service papers are only held by the Army Personnel Centre, Glasgow. (Google their details for an on-line application form). Charges applies (£30 per enquiry at the time of writing, and there are a number of rules concerning access. These service papers do not appear on –line anywhere.

(6) **The archive sources** (see section 7 for photographs) to which I have immediate access are:

General

(6.1) the Bedfs & Herts regimental magazine, *The Wasp (later The Wasp and The Eagle)*, 1922-1939, 1945-1964, which I have card indexed for many names, notably obituaries and births, marriages and death etc.

Pre-1914

(6.2) 1st Battalion, Bedfs Regt. Magazine, June 1895, includes list of men serving at the Relief of Chitral, company by company (also Beds Record Office ref: X550/2/9)

(6.3) 1st Battalion roll of men entitled to the India General Service Medal, with clasp Relief of Chitral, 1895 (also on Ancestry)

(6.4) 1st Battalion men entitled to other clasps of the India General Service Medal, 1895 (also on Ancestry).

(6.5) List of men of men from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Volunteer Battalions on embarkation to South Africa. (Beds Times, 23rd February 1900)

(6.6) List of men (all units) on the South African War memorial, Bedford (also Beds record Office ref: LC/Cha3)

(6.7) List of men of the 2nd Bedfs regt Mounted Infantry and other units captured at Vlakfontein, 19th September 1901, and findings of Court of Enquiry.

(6.8) Bedfordshire Regiment casualty list (killed, died of disease or accident, wounded and prisoners) for South African war (also on Ancestry)

(6.9) Dunstable Roll of Honour for the Boer War, 1899-1902 (all units)

(6.10) List of donations and subscription to the regimental Benevolent Fund, 1911 and 1912 (but only about half the men paid in). (Also Beds Record Office X 550/15/2-3)

First World War, 1914-1919: see also section 4

(6.11) 4th Bedfs Regt muster list, c1916 (Original at Herts Record Office)

(6.12) B Company, 6th Battalion Bedfs regt roll, c1916.

(6.13) List of Bedfs Regt soldiers condemned to death, 1914-1918 (all reprieved)

(6.14) List of past students serving with the forces; Queen's Engineering Works magazine, Bedford, January 1915.

(6.15) Harpur Trust Boys' School roll, Bedford. Beds Record, 21st December 1915

(6.16) List of Bedfordshire regiment and Hertfordshire Regiment awards of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1914-1919

(6.17) List of Bedfs Regt soldiers awarded the Military Medal for Bravery, 1916-1919

(6.18) Borough of Luton Roll of Honour (dead only) for the Great War, compiled May 1922. Detailed and covers all units. (also Beds Record Office ref; P135/28/2)

(6.19) Roll of sergeants and officers who served with the Bedfordshire Brigade, Army of the Rhine, 1919 (from the Wasp vol 5 page 413)

(6.20) Benevolent Fund subscription list, 1919-1920 (also Beds record Office ref: X550/15/4)

(6.21) Details of the (few) men entitled to post-WW1 clasps of the India general Service Medal, e.g. Afghanistan and North West Frontier 1919

(6.22) 8th Battalion (WW1) Old Comrades Association membership lists, 1919, 1922, 1925, 1931

(6.23) Lists of old comrades attending the reunions of 1936 and 1937 at Bedford (from The Wasp)

Second World War, 1939-1945

(6.24) 1st battalion, the Hertfordshire Regiment casualty list (killed, wounded, missing and pows) for the Italian Campaign, August 1944 – January 1945, compiled from contemporary magazines.

(6.25) WW2 roll of awards and fatal casualties (from The Wasp)

(6.26) 5th battalion Roll of Honour for the Far East, 1941-1945.

(6.27) Luton Borough Roll of Honour (all units and civilians), from Luton News publication *Luton At War*.

Post-1945

(6.28) List of Bedfs & Herts regiment deaths in service, 1946-1965.

(6.29) Partial list of 2nd Battalion personnel for embarkation to M.E.L.F c.1947 (also at Beds record Office ref: X550/3/12)

(6.30) disposal lists of 2nd Battalion personnel on disbandment, 1947-48 (also Beds Record Office ref: X550/1/58)

(6.31) Nominal roll of regular and short service officers, 1st May 1951 (from The Wasp vol 13 page 100)

(6.32) Seniority roll of Warrant and Non-commissioned officers, corrected to 31st January 1954 (from The Wasp vol 14, page 100)

(6.33) Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire regiment old Comrades Association membership list, December 1953 (also at Beds record Office X550/15/7)

(7) Photographs. We are often asked if we can find a photograph of a particular soldier; as a rule the higher the rank and the longer the service then the better the chances. Most of the photographs are held in the Regimental

Collection at Beds record Office, so it is only possible to give general advice here. Most loose photographs are indexed for names on the Beds record Office website, but only some of the photographs in the albums.

(7.1) Private soldiers are usually depicted in their company groups (80 to 100 men) but they are hardly ever named. The only exception is a group photograph of E Company 1st Battalion at Aldershot in 1889.

We have no enlistment photographs of First and Second World War soldiers at all. Training Squad photographs exist, 1924-1939 (Beds Record Office ref X550/1/99various. **I have an overall names' index of these, so it is worth asking me first**). Post-WW2 training photographs from the 1950s are often to be found in the Regt magazine, *The Wasp*, but there are few originals in the collection

If a private soldier was a sportsman (football, hockey, boxing, running etc.) then he might appear in a named group, even before the 1914 period. The 2nd Battalion *Games Book* of photographs, 1902-1922, is useful (Beds record Office ref: X550/1/78, but there is no index of names)

(7.2) Non-commissioned officers: corporals, sergeants etc.

Named group photographs of sergeants start in the 1880s, becoming more common c.1900 from which time they tend to be taken every 3 to 5 years. The 2nd Battalion album of sergeants' portraits, c1887-1905, and recommenced 1934-38 is particularly good (Beds Record Office ref; X550/1/72). By contrast, photographs of corporals only start in the 1920s.

(7.3) Commissioned Officers. Photographs exist from the 1860s until the late 1930s when they start to tail off. Generally, you have an approx. 70% chance overall of finding a photograph of an officer, provided that he served with the Regiment for longer than a year or two. The following photograph albums of officers' portraits and groups are particularly notable:

1st Battalion, c1860-1899, including some of officers commissioned even earlier (Beds Record Office ref: X550/1/70).

2nd Battalion album, 1858-1921 (Beds RO ref: X550/1/71)

2nd Battalion, 1915-1918 (Beds RO ref: X550/1/81)

3rd Battalion, including those whose transferred out on active service, 1914-1918 (X550/1/82)

(8) Published works & Websites. I have concentrated on the publications which have good indexes of names and places which will assist both family historians and other researchers. Some of these books are out-of-print, but may be obtainable via inter-library loan, or by looking on the Internet (but do compare prices before buying)

(8.1) *The Story of The First-Fifth Bedfords*, by Edmund Rimmer, published by Manchester Co-op printing Works, 1917. No index, but especially useful for the history of the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, and contains some photograph portraits of men killed in action.

(8.2) *The History of the Fifth Battalion, Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment (T.A.)*, by Captain F.A.M. Webster. Frederick Warne and Co, publishers. 1930. Especially useful for the WW1 history of the Battalion, and includes casualty lists and holders of gallantry awards.

(8.3) *The Shiny Seventh. The 7th (Service) Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment at War, 1915-1918*, edited by M.G. Deacon. Bedfordshire Historical record Society, volume 83. Pub: 2004. Contains the Battalion war diaries in full, as well as the personal diary of 2nd Lt Henry J. Cartwright

(8.4) *The Story of The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment (The 16th Regiment of Foot)*. Vol one, 1688-1913, Vol Two, 1914-1958. Published 1986. The only books which cover all battalions of the Regiment, but the periods when the Regiment was on garrison duty rather than in action are poorly covered.

(8.5) *Cap Badge. The Stories of Four Battalions of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment and the Hertfordshire Regiment (TA), 1939-1947*, by R.H. Medley. Leo Cooper, published 1995. Lively and detailed accounts

of the 2nd Bedfs & Herts and the 1st Herts during WW2, and less detailed coverage of the 2nd Herts and 5th Bedfs & Herts regiment. **A limited number of copies of this volume only are available, as new, from the Regimental Museum, £15 plus postage (published price was £19.95)**

(8.6) *The 2nd Bedfords in France and Flanders 1914-1918*, by Martin Deacon. Bedfordshire Historical record Society, volume 89. Pub: 2010.

(8.6) *1st Bedfordshire: Part One. Mons to the Somme. 1st Bedfordshire: Part Two. Arras to the Armistice*, by Steven Fuller. Pub: 2012. Based on the 1st Battalion war Diaries

(8.7) *National Roll of the Great War*, volumes Five (Luton) and Twelve (Bedford & Northampton). Published c.1920 Contains potted service details of approx.. 20% of local men (all regiments) during WW1, including survivors as well as war dead. The volumes also give details of some Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and north Hertfordshire men.

(8.8) Steven Fuller's website contains transcripts of the First World War battalion war diaries and much else besides. <http://www.bedfordregiment.org.uk/>