

Research

Researching the military side of Family History has become a popular pastime in recent years and there is a vast amount of archive material available online that will serve as a starting point for your research. The following notes outline some of those sources of information that are available to you on a self-help basis; some are free-to-use, and some on a purchase/subscription basis.

It is unlikely that a single source will provide all the answers to your research. Even the most authoritative sources sometimes contain errors of fact and/or spelling. It is recommended therefore that you cross-reference facts through a variety of available sources.

If you run into a brick wall or dead-end, the Association may be able to help put you back on the right track - further details are at the bottom of this page.

Abbreviations

Military forces around the world use a bewildering range of acronyms and abbreviations in their day-to-day business. For the researcher this can present problems from the outset. The most common abbreviations used during WW2 may be found listed on this [website](#)

Air Operations (contemporary documents)



[National Archives, Kew](#). The files catalogued under department code AIR at the National Archives hold a wealth of information about RAF operations and, to a lesser degree, personnel during the war. The catalogue (known as *Discovery*) on the website allows you to check what files are kept on record. There are many files that are now available for download for a modest fee. During current COVID restrictions, files are available free of charge. Other files can be copied on your behalf for a fee by a researcher at Kew.

Of the routinely helpful AIR series listed below, only AIR 27 is available digitally for downloading documents up to the early 1960s. For other series and later years, documents are open and available in person at Kew to researchers and record agents. See the online descriptions for precise details.

[AIR 14 Bomber Command: Registered Files](#). This series consists of Bomber Command records dealing with operational and technical matters. It includes reports dealing with aircraft, aircraft losses, armaments, bombing techniques, navigational and photographic aids, and other equipment. There are also Air Ministry Directives, orders of battle, raid reports, and files on individual operations involving Bomber Command. There are Group summaries of events and intelligence, reports from Groups and Squadrons on operations, and station operation room and flying control logbooks.

[AIR 24 Operations Record Books, Commands](#).

Daily record of events in each Command or Force entered on 'Form 540' with appendices which contain documents illustrating and expanding the record. The records are arranged chronologically under each Command and include those of the Directorate of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

[AIR 25 Operations Record Books, Groups](#). This series consists of Operations Record Books (form 540) and appendices (form 541) for RAF Groups. The series also includes some ORBs for Royal Canadian and Indian Air Force Groups which served under RAF command during the Second World War.

[AIR 26 Operations Record Books, Wings](#). This series contains 'Form 540' and appendices arranged chronologically under Wings (not relevant to Bomber Command).

[AIR 27 Royal Air Force Operations Records Books \(ORB\)](#). The ORBs, in series AIR 27, were created to provide a complete record of a unit from the time of its formation. Each book includes an accurate record of operations carried out by the unit. The online collection also includes some operations record books for dominion and Allied Air Force squadrons under British Command.

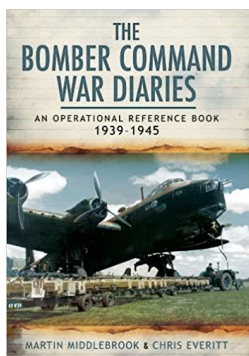
The ORBs comprise of:

- 'summary of events' forms (also known as Form 540)
- 'detail of work carried out' forms (also known as Form 541)
- appendices where applicable (which may include operational orders, bombing photos, personnel lists, combat reports, miscellaneous reports and telegraphed messages)

[AIR 28 Operations Record Books, Royal Air Force Stations](#). This series consists of Operation Record Books (form 540) and appendices (form 541) for RAF Stations. Also included are some Operation Record Books for RAF Stations which, although under British command, were used by Dominion and allied air force units.

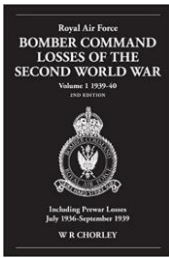
The 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association has access to a complete set of the AIR 27 ORBs for 57 Squadron from 1931-1960 inclusive and for 630 Squadron from its formation in 1943 to its disbandment in 1945.

Reference Books



The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book 1939-1945 by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt provides a complete review of all the raids and the background stories to the WWII Bomber offensive. The book documents every Bomber Command operation and draws on information from local archives in Germany, Italy and the occupied countries, on the effects of the raids.

A copy of this book is held by the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association as a reference source. Copies are available commercially online in hardback, paperback and Kindle formats for [purchase](#)



Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War by W R Chorley is perhaps the definitive record of the period. The nine volumes in this series, many of which have been updated and reprinted over the years, provide a comprehensive listing of all Bomber Command aircraft losses between 1939 and 1947 in the European theatre of operations, along with information about the fate of the aircrew on board each individual aircraft. The nine volumes cover:

Volume 1: 1939-1940

Volume 2: 1941

Volume 3: 1942

Volume 4: 1943

Volume 5: 1944

Volume 6: 1945

Volume 7: Operational Training Losses 1940-1947

Volume 8: Heavy Conversion Units and Miscellaneous Units, 1939-1947

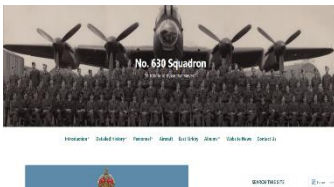
Volume 9: Roll of Honour 1939-1947

A copy of Chorley Volumes 1-6 is held by the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association as a reference source. Copies are available commercially online for [purchase](#)

57 & 630 Squadrons' Association

The Associations website contains many stories and photos covering the entire period that these two squadrons have been in active service. These appear in the individual squadron sections of the website and, for 57 Squadron, are further [sub-divided](#) into various periods of time.

New stories, and periodic updates on old stories, are published each year in the Associations Annual Newsletter. Back copies of the Newsletter to 2004 are available [here](#)



A comprehensive narrative history of 630 Squadron has been developed by Association Member Peter Sharpe and colleagues. This has taken many years to assemble and continues to be updated. The website draws on a huge range of other sources and contains a rich photographic record. You can access this website [here](#)



Peter has recently commenced work on a new project to develop a similar narrative history for 57 Squadron. This is a mammoth undertaking and you can see some of the early work on this website [here](#)

Personal Records



[The National Archives](#) provides a comprehensive guide on how to find records of airmen and officers of the Royal Air Force (RAF). The Archives contain predominantly records of service prior to 1939. RAF service records created since the beginning of the Second World War remain in the custody of the Ministry of Defence and are accessible only to the service personnel themselves or their next of kin. For more information, see the section below on accessing service records from the MOD.



[The International Bomber Command Centre \(IBCC\)](#). The IBCC holds a comprehensive record of Bomber Command and has a searchable Losses Database relating to Bomber Command operations staged from UK bases. The Losses Database also contains details and links to information about crew members. The IBCC's Digital Archive provides an extensive repository of the personal stories of those who served.



[The Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#). If you are beginning to research an individual who lost his or her life while on military service, this is an excellent place to start. The site allows you to search for anyone who died in the two World Wars and other conflicts. If you identify the individual you are looking for, you should find details of their service number, unit, parents and place of burial or commemoration.



[The Gazette](#) The Gazettes are official journals of record and the website provides a searchable database that includes records of appointments to commissions, promotions, retirements, and award of honours. Military announcements are listed in the Supplements to each Gazette.



The MOD is the custodian of the records of service personnel and Home Guard records until they are opened to general public access at The National Archives. Request records of deceased service personnel are handled by disclosures at RAF Cranwell and an administration fee of £30 which is payable in most cases. Past living members of the Armed Forces may obtain their military service records free of charge. There is a comprehensive guide for obtaining your own records, and/or those of a deceased relative on the UK Government [website](#)

The following postal addresses may also be useful:

Enquiries about officers and airmen records of service: RAF 3rd Party Disclosure Team, Trenchard Hall, RAF Cranwell, SLEAFORD, Lincs, NG34 8HB

For records of decorations and citations: MOD Medal Office (MODMO), Room 36, Innsworth House, Imjin Barracks, Innsworth, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL3 1HW

Veterans and their families can apply for military campaign medals that have not been presented. You can download an [application form](#) from the Gov.UK website.

Other Information Sources

The following list provides a range of potential information sources to aid your research. Some have been developed and are maintained by national authorities and major heritage or research organisations, while others are the result of painstaking work by individuals or groups of enthusiasts. We encourage you to engage with the owner of these websites. Where there are inconsistencies, you are invited to challenge facts, and encouraged to ask questions of website owners and other researchers. If you have information or material that you are willing to share, this will invariably be welcome.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

[The National Archives of Australia](#) contains over 1.5 million defence and war service records in its collection. Many records are available digitally online. Each service record documents an individual's career with the Royal Australian Air Force since its formation in 1921. Other useful records include casualty files and unit records.



[Library and Archives Canada](#) holds an extensive collection of records of the Canadian men and women who have served their country in the military. The records include muster rolls, military service files, unit war diaries, medal registers, photographic collections, documentary art and posters and cover the First World War and World War II.



[Archives New Zealand](#) provides a portal through which to search for First World War military personnel files, First and Second World War unit diaries, Defence Department archives, and maps and plans. Some records are digitised and available online.



[Imperial War Museum](#) holds around 800,000 items by the museum since 1917. These include audio files from veterans - some of which you can find in the Forums area of the 57 & 630 Squadrons' Association [website](#). The IWM provides a comprehensive guide to [researching family history](#) of Royal Flying Corps and RAF personnel, and links to free and subscription services.



[RAF Museum Hendon](#). The RAF Museum has a collection of photographic and printed material which may yield some information. All the archive is the result of donations and it is not a source of official information. However, it is well worth writing to the Department of Research outlining the specific nature of your research and including as much information as you know such as Squadron, dates, aircraft etc.



[BBC WW2 People's War](#) contains 47,000 stories and 15,000 images from members of the public who contributed their memories to the project between 2003 and 2006.



[Forces War Records](#) is a subscription service providing service records for over 26 million Commonwealth Servicemen and Servicewomen.

[Air of Authority - A History of RAF Organisation](#) provides a collection of information and material under a single banner which has predominantly been published on other specialist sites.

[Aircrew Remembered](#) contains over 400,000 records and stories of people connected with aviation, from wartime experiences to those in peacetime. The site also provides access to a database of Luftwaffe claims and aces.

[Royal Air Force Commands](#) contains chat forums on topics relating to RAF operations and service.

[WW2 Talk](#) is a free to use chat forum site which is arranged by topic and theme. Engage with other enthusiasts and researchers to ask questions and seek answers.

[AirWar over Denmark](#) is a free-to-use website established to commemorate the Allied and German aircrew that flew over Denmark during the Second World War and in some cases lost their lives in Denmark and the surrounding seas.

[France Crashes 39-45](#) is a free-to-use website cataloguing allied aircraft that crashed in France during the period 1939-45 and includes a searchable database of aircraft lost, casualties and POWs

[World War II Allied Aircraft Crashes in The Netherlands and the North Sea](#) is a free-to-use website detailing aircraft losses and includes crew information, crash site details and some photos.

[WWII Netherlands Escape Lines](#) contains information about assistance given to aid given to downed Allied airmen by the Resistance during World War II in The Netherlands, Belgium, and France.

Overseas Associations

[Bomber Command Association in Australia](#)

[Royal Canadian Air Force Association](#)

[New Zealand Bomber Command Association](#)

Museums

Museums can provide a rich source of archive material, especially photographic records. At some point in your research a visit to an associated museum might help. These range from national institutions to local heritage organisations. Here are a few that may be relevant to research in to 57 and 630 Squadrons:

[Imperial War Museum \(London\)](#)

[Imperial War Museum \(North\)](#)

[Imperial War Museum \(Duxford\)](#)

[RAF Museum \(London\)](#)

[RAF Museum \(Cosford\)](#)

[Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre](#)

[RAF Scampton Ethos & Heritage Centre](#)

[RAF Marham Aviation Heritage Centre](#)

If you are travelling overseas, these Museums may also help in your research:

[Australian War Memorial](#) in Canberra, ACT

[Bomber Command Museum of Canada](#) in Nanton, Alberta

Associated Genealogy

Various subscription-based ancestry websites provide opportunities to research family trees and trace relatives. Some have discrete military research options, and this can often be a good way of making contact with families of other crew members. Sites include:



Summary

We are certain that you will discover many fascinating facts during your research using the resources outlined above. However, if you run into a brick wall or dead-end, there may be something else that we can suggest.

In addition to access to 57 and 630 Squadron ORBs and the reference books mentioned above, the Association can draw on considerable 'corporate knowledge' about these two historic squadrons which is not necessarily publicly available - and, of course, we have considerable experience in conducting research ourselves.

After exhausting your leads, and if you would like some more help with your research, please do consider contacting us. You can use the form below or email our Information Officer at infoofficer@57-630sqnassoc.org. If emailing us, please be sure to include the Squadron and

Name being researched in the Subject line of your message to help us track enquiries. Due to the volume of enquiries we receive, and complexities of some of them, replies may take a few weeks - but we will get back to you.

Finally, if you are willing to share your research results, we will be happy to do this for you via the Association website or our annual Newsletter. Who knows, reading a story online might just solve some unanswered questions or open-up new avenues for research. Good hunting!