

# VIRTUAL WAR MEMORIAL AUSTRALIA

## GUIDE TO READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

P. DATA EX DATE

A.A. Form A280  
(Revised July, 1940)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

Army No. 51663

SURNAME RIGGS Christian Names Henry Oliver

4 GARRISON BATTALION.

Enlisted for war service at South Australia (Place) 28 July 1941 (Date)

## Second World War (1939-45)

Service Records often hold the key to understanding the experiences of men and women before, during and after conflict. But they are not always easy sources to read.

This guide will help you to understand Australian service records from the Second World War. It contains:

- I. AIF/CMF Service Records (i.e. the land forces)
- II. RAAF Service Records (air force)
- III. RAN Service Records (navy)
- IV. Reading handwriting
- V. Keywords and abbreviations
- VI. Handwriting exercise
- VII. Where to go for more help

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES. A.A. Form A280.

ATTESTATION FORM  
FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. YX. 13361

Surname FOGARTY Other Names Brian Desmond

Unit 1st Coy (Place) Victoria (State) 13-8-40 (Date)

Enlisted for service at Victoria (State) 13-8-40 (Date)

Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.\*

1. What is your name? ... FOGARTY
2. Where were you born? ... Glasgow, Scotland
3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced. ... Yes
4. What is your age and date of birth? ... 21 years
5. What is your trade or occupation? ... Houseman
6. Are you married, single or widower? ... Single
7. Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm? ... No
8. Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship—wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) ... John FOGARTY, Mother
9. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... R.C.
10. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... R.C.

do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Witnessed by H. N. Thompson Major (Signature of Attesting or Attesting Officer)

Brian FOGARTY (Signature)

\* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.



# AIF/CMF SERVICE RECORDS

P. DATA EX DATE  
AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.  
MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM  
be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.  
Army No. 31663  
Surname RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Name Henry Oliver  
4 GARRISON BATTALION.  
Enlisted for war service at Sandhurst (State) 28 July 1941 (Place) (Date)

## Parts of AIF/CMF Service Records

During the Second World War, Australia maintained two armies: the **Second AIF** (for overseas service) and the **CMF** (also known as the **Militia**, for service in Australia and New Guinea). **AIF members' service numbers contain an X.**

Service Records normally contain three groups of documents:

**1. Attestation Paper.** In the CMF this was the *Mobilization Attestation Form* and in the Second AIF it was the *Attestation Form for special forces raised for service in Australia or abroad*. It was completed on enlistment and normally gives address, next of kin, age as well as date and place of birth.

### 2. Service and Casualty Form.

For officers, this was the *Officer's Record of Service*, which had a slightly different format. This form shows movements, transfers between units, absences through wounds or illness, promotions and decorations.

**3. Other documents.** These include discharge forms, correspondence with the serviceperson or their family, and receipts for medals.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES A.A. Form A286  
ATTESTATION FORM  
FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.  
Army No. YX. 13361  
Surname FOGARTY (BLOCK CAPITALS) Other Name Brian Desmond  
Unit (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
Enlisted for service at Fitzroy (State) 13-8-40 (Place) (Date)  
Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.\*  
1. What is your name? 1. Surname FOGARTY (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
2. Where were you born? 2. In or near the town of Glasgow (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced. 3. In the state or country of Scotland (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
4. What is your age and date of birth? 4. Age 21 years  
5. What is your trade or occupation? 5. Date of Birth 17-8-1918  
6. Are you married, single or widower? 6. Single  
7. Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm? 7. No  
8. Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship—wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister)  
9. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so)  
10. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so)  
3. Brian Desmond Fogarty  
above answers made by me to the above questions are true and that I am willing to serve in the Australian Military Forces within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.  
Witnessed by H. N. Humphries Major (Signature of Attesting or Attesting Officer)  
Brian Fogarty (Signature)  
\* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.



## READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# AIF/CMF SERVICE RECORDS

P. DATA EX DATE \_\_\_\_\_ A.A. Form Mob. 1 (Revised July, 1940)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

to be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

My No. 31663

Name RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Henry Oliver

By 4 GARRISON BATTALION

Enlisted for war service at Keswick (Place) 28 July 1941 (Date)

The **Attestation Paper** is a two sided form, sometimes compressed into one page. The front page gives personal information, such date of birth, address, occupation, and next of kin. The person enlisting signed the form at the bottom; if the signature is readable, you can use it to check the spelling of his or her name. The second page records the medical examination and (sometimes) the oath. Soldiers had to be passed medically fit (Class I) or an explanation given for how they could serve. The actual enlistment date is the day the oath was taken.

A.A. Form A.200.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

ATTESTATION FORM

FOR SPECIAL FORCES RAISED FOR SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA OR ABROAD.

Army No. T4194

Surname SHEEHAN (BLOCK CAPITALS) Other Names Reginald

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Enlisted for service at Launceston (Place) Tasmania (State) 13/10/39 (Date)

A

Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for voluntary enlistment.\*

1. What is your name? ... 1. Surname SHEEHAN (BLOCK CAPITALS) Other names Reginald

2. Where were you born? ... 2. In or near the town of Launceston in the state or country of Tasmania

3. Are you a natural born or a naturalized British Subject? If the latter, papers are to be produced. ... 3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age and date of birth? ... 4. Date of Birth 4/7/1912

5. What is your trade or occupation? ... 5. Motor Mechanic

6. Are you married, single or widower? ... 6. Single

7. Have you previously served on active service? If so, where and in what arm? ... 7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship:—wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) ... 8. Name Mildred Mary Sheehan Address South St. Launceston Relationship Mother

9. What is your permanent address? ... 9. South St. Launceston

10. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to doing so) ... 10. R.C.

**DISCHARGED**

3. Reginald Sheehan do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Witnessed by [Signature] (Signature of Attesting or Witnessing Officer)

13/10/39

\* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Act.

Date of enlistment

Date of birth & Occupation

Next of kin, address and relationship

This is the date Reg Sheehan took the oath: 13/10/39. This made him legally a soldier.



## READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# AIF/CMF SERVICE RECORDS

P. DATA EX DATE 1/1/41 A.A. Form Mob. 1 (Revised July, 1940)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

to be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

My No. 31663  
Name RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Henry Oliver  
By 4 GARRISON BATTALION  
Listed for war service at Reserve (Place)  
Sand Bastien (State) 28 July 1941 (Date)

The **Service and Casualty Form** (or **Officer's Record of Service**) is where you will find most of the information about what happened during the period of service.

- Transfer from one place, hospital or unit to another
- Changing status (e.g. promotion, disciplinary action, decorations)
- Wounded, missing, dead

It often also contains other medical information. Please treat this information with respect when writing your biography, particularly if it is not related to service. So instead of stating specific illnesses, you could write that the serviceman was hospitalised for an infection.

A Casualty Form was written on by many different military clerks, often with quite different handwriting, and contains many abbreviations and acronyms. It is often hard to read.

Army Form B. 103 - 1 (Adapted) (Revised July, 1940)

Service and CASUALTY FORM

Army No. YL 45220

Rank Cpl Christian Names Ronald James Surname BARASSI

Date of Enlistment 15th July, 1940. Marital Condition Married.

Place Caulfield. Victoria. Next of Kin Elza Bryant Barassi

Date of Birth 24/10/1913. Address of Next of Kin 10 Howard Street,

Place of Birth Guildford. Victoria. Brunswick. Victoria.

Trade or Occupation Motor Driver. Relationship Wife.

Religion Church of England. Identification—Colour of Hair Fair Eyes Blue.

Medical Classification—Class I. (On Enlistment) Distinctive Marks Appendix Scar.

REPORT		Date of Casualty	Place of Casualty	Authority W.3011, B.3069, or other Document	Signature of Officer Certifying Correctness of Entries
Date	From whom received				
15/7/1940.	O.C.R.D. Taken on strength R.R.D.	15/7/1940.	Caulfield.	R.O. 148/38/40.	
22/7/40.	O.C. 15 T. Bn Tfd to 15 Inf Training Bn, from R.R.D.	22/7/40	Shepparton	9705 3 7/40/40	
27.7.40	cc Supply Col Posted from 15 Inf Bn's Shepparton	25.7.40	Shepparton	42011 5/40	
26-7-40	McC 15 T. Bn Tfd from 15 T. Bn Shepparton to A.S.C. Supply Col 7 Aust Bn	25.7.40	Shepparton	42011 5/40	
18.10.40	cc Supply Col Embarked Unit "Green Arrow"	18.10.40	Bedford	4206	
12.12.40	2nd Ech Disembarked	16.11.40	at East	1570 1/141	
24.3.41	cc Supply Col Unposted to 15 Inf Bn	1.12.40		4205 23/1940	
14.4.41	cc Supply Col Promoted Cpl	20.3.41		4354 23/1940	
23/4/41	cc Supply Col Discharged 1941 (Plantar Cellulitis R.L.)	20.3.41		44770 29/11/41	
5.5.41	cc Supply Col High Unit from 1 O.B.P. and struck off a list	1-4-41		5118 23/11/41	
18.8.41	cc Supply Col Home 4 A.F.C.H. mail B.W. Chest & trans to X dist	25.7.41		10349 1/20/45	
4.9.41	cc Supply Col Killed in action (Cable)	31.7.41		10349 1/20/45	
6.9.41	cc Supply Col Killed in action	31.7.41		10349 1/20/45	

13 JUN 1946. GRANTY CHECKER

When the event was reported, not when it happened. **Note the unit**; otherwise ignore.

This is the most important field: **what actually happened.**

When and where the event actually happened: **this is important.** Often quite generic: O'seas, ME (Middle East).

References to the military filing system; this can be safely ignored.



## READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# AIF/CMF SERVICE RECORDS

P. DATA EX DATE 1/1/1942 A.A. Form Mob. 1 (Revised July, 1940)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

my No. 31663

Name RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Henry Oliver

4 GARRISON BATTALION

listed for war service at Reserve (Place) Sand Barren (State) 28 July 1941 (Date)

**PART B—Personal details—compiled by Unit:**

1. Home address 15A GASTON ST. YEWVILLE, N.S.W.

Date commenced F.T.D. 30/12/41 Date of Birth 1/5/1923

State whether: Married, single, divorced, widower. No. of Dependents in respect of whom dependant's allowance is being paid: 0

ca-widower MARRIED Under 16 yrs. 1 16 yrs. & over 1

2. Present Description of Soldier:—

Age 24 yrs. 5 months

Height 5 ft. 8 ins. Eyes BROWN

Complexion MEDIUM Hair BROWN

Marks/Scars

Trade Group in which employed

3. Operational Service:—

(a) Overseas area of service Embarked from Aust. 1-7-44 Disembarked in Aust. 1-8-44

NEW GUINEA 31/5/43 1-8-44

POKORNI 31/5/43 1-8-44

(b) N.T. (North of Par. 14<sup>th</sup> Sth.) or Torres St. Is. 1 1 1

Part B compiled by: [Signature] (Officer's signature and rank)

Date 22 OCT 1946

**PART C—Compiled by Ech. and Rec.:**

4. Non-effective Service:\*

TOTAL NON-EFFECTIVE SERVICE 339

INSIDE AUST 339

OUTSIDE AUST

**PART D—Compiled by Ech. & Rec.:**

5. Details for Certificate of Discharge No. 474849

Unit (for discharge purposes) CMF from 30/12/41 to 30/10/42

Served on continuous Full Time War Service in the AIF from 31/10/42 to 29/10/46

for a Total Effective Period\* of 1421 days, which included Active Service in Australia† 308 days and Active Service O/S Australia† 408 days

Decorations and Awards‡ during that Service:

War Badge Class and No. N/L Entered Badge Register

Discharged from the AIF and discharge confirmed vide Schedule NNM 4414 to take effect on and from 1/1 Officer i/c Ech. and Rec.

6. Details compiled by [Signature] checked by [Signature]

A.A.F. A.101 written by [Signature] Entered Discharge Certificate Register

A.A.F. A.131 obtained by [Signature] Entered "Will" Register

**PART E—To be signed by Soldier on discharge:**

7. I hereby acknowledge receipt of:—

(a) Certificate of Discharge No. 474849

(b) Army Form A.131 purporting to contain my Will.

(c) War Badge No. N/L

Date 1/1/44 Signature of Soldier [Signature]

Place [Signature] Signature of Witness [Signature]

\* "Effective Period" means the period of service, less any consecutive 21 days or more for which the soldier was not entitled to pay.

† Australia means the mainland of Australia and Tasmania.

‡ Does not include War Medals.

Service Records sometimes contain discharge papers, which can provide a wealth of information. This man served in the CMF 1940-42 and in the Second AIF 1942-46, before being discharged for disciplinary reasons.

This document shows the **service** (or **campaign**) **medals**, issued to all soldiers who met the eligibility criteria.

Charles Coombs served in the Pacific Theatre and so received the **Pacific Star**. He also received the **1939/45 Star**, the **Defence Medal**, the **War Medal** and the **Australia Service Medal**. See [www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Imperial/WWII](http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Imperial/WWII).

NAME COOMBS, C. M. No. 812557

Address 40 E. Maple, Renmark

1	1939/45 STAR	
2	AFRICA STAR	
3	„ with 1st Clasp	
4	„ with 8th Clasp	
5	ATLANTIC STAR	
6	A.C. EUROPE STAR	
7	ITALY STAR	
8	FRANCE & G. STAR	
9	PACIFIC STAR	
10	BURMA STAR	
11	DEFENCE MEDAL	
12	WAR MEDAL	
13	A.S.M.	
14		

Recorder [Signature]

Checker [Signature]

AWARDS WITHHELD

Serials: \_\_\_\_\_

REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

AUTHORITY: \_\_\_\_\_

Packer \_\_\_\_\_

Despatcher \_\_\_\_\_

TO WHOM DESPATCHED PO Box 557 - Renmark

SA 5341

Reg'd Parcel No. 9446 DATE 18/12/81

RECEIPT

Serials \_\_\_\_\_ Sig. \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

AHQ Press—3443—9/46—710m



# RAAF SERVICE RECORDS

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# RAAF SERVICE RECORDS

Before compiling this form read the notes to A.A.A.F.  
Supplement to Appendix III (Part II) War Manual Part II.

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.**

IAC

AIRMAN'S RECORD SHEET - (Active Service - Overseas).

Official No. H12963 HOLMES William James IAC #4

(In full in block capitals, surname (Or acting first) appointment)

Enlisting Cum gratia Special Qualifications.....  
Pilot (e.g. Instructor, Fire Fighter, Bombing Instructor)

Date of birth 12.8.20 Religion R.C.D. Occupation Radio Announcer  
Civil Life Married  
Last Enlisted 15.8.41 Current Engagement forward three years

If Reservist..... Whether married.....  
Which Class ("B"-1-5)..... Single or widower..... Single

Name and Address of person (or persons) to be informed of Casualties :  
Thomas Thomas Holmes (Father)  
P.O. White House N.S.W.

Relationship Father (in pencil)  
(in pencil)

Any alteration to above (e.g. Promotions) to be made by crossing out and writing above.

SECTION 1. Movements and Casualties.				Section 2. Promotions, Acting Appointments, (Paid or Unpaid) Extensions, Re-enlistings.			
Unit from which.	Unit to which.	Date of effect.	Authority.	Description.	Date of effect.		
10 EFTS (P.O.R. Not yet)	4 V.42		10 EFTS POA 6/6/41 10 EFTS PER 6/6/41	Kelowna AAC Archer HP	8/11/41		
			11 FTS P.O.M. 10/10/41	(Grounded 7/1941) P.O.M. 10/10/41	15/10/41		
11 FTS	2 E.B.	7/6/10/42	Actg. 11/43	Prom. 8/11/41	15/11/43		
2 E.B.	HAWKIN	14/11/42	11 FDS (AR 214/43)	Transferred to RCAF			
1 E.P.H. RAE	RAF	2.11.41					
	G.E.A.M.	15.1.43					
	11 P.D.R.C.	15.3.43					
" P.D.R.C.	20(1) A.V.U.	15.5.43					
20(1) A.V.U.	18 OTV	24.7.43					
18 OTV	RAE	28.10.43					
A.C.G.V.	11 P.D.R.C.	10.11.43					
P.O.M.C. O.S.N.A.	O.S.N.A.	10.11.43					

When on active service overseas, the authority to be quoted will be the serial number of the S.P.S.O.'s Casualty Form.

Appointed to a commission & discharged from the R.A.A.F. under L.A.A. 15/4/44. (Req. for m. 27/12/44)

The file often contains a head-and-shoulder **photograph** of the person taken at enlistment. Zoom in as far as you can and take a screenshot of this photo, so you can use it as your person's **Key Image**. Make sure you note information for the **Caption** (in the format "Enlistment Photo of Person X, Service Number") and the **Attribution** ("From NAA Personnel File" with link).





# RAN SERVICE RECORDS

# 1911 TO 1920 INC. RECORD OF SERVICE. (PETTY OFFICERS AND MEN.)

PHOTOGRAPHED

NAME **GYSSE Louis Anton**

OFFICIAL NUMBER **22598**

Date of Birth **7 July 1920**

Place of Birth **Alberton S.A. Aust. Religion Methodist**

Port Division **Melbourne**

Next of Kin (relationship and address)

**Father Louis Gysse, Palm Avenue Royal Park S.A. 15/4/38**  
**Wife Doris M. Gysse, 10 Derby St, Collingwood 3, Vic. 53/1564/2/17/41.**

Trade **Driver**

## ENGAGEMENTS.

Date of Commencement. Period.

15 Nov 1938 12 years.

Date of 1st Entry in R.A.N.

15.11.38

R.N. Service.

## MEDALS, CLASPS, ETC.

Nature of Decoration.

82 Religion St. Adelaide NSW Aest. 14/8/41

278 Young St. Fitzroy Vic. Aest. 29/8/41

✓ Palm Avenue Royal Park Adelaide SA. Aest. 29/8/41

## SECOND CLASS FOR CONDUCT (Inclusive dates).

From.

To.

From.

To.

## TIME FORFEITED.

Date.

No. of Days.

P. C. C.F. W.T. or D.

Date.

No. of Days.

P. C. C.F. W.T. or D.

## DESCRIPTION OF PERSON.

Occupation.

Height.

Colour of

Mark, Wounds, and Scars.

Ft.

In.

Hair.

Eyes.

Complexion.

On Entry ~~any~~ any .. ..

On Advancement to Man's Rating or on Entry under age 25 .. ..

On Re-entry or on Entry after age 25 .. ..

Further description, if necessary .. ..

5'

7 3/4"

Brown

Brown

Fair

Tattoo: L forearm Butterfly design and "Mother". Rigs forearm heart with blasphemous

## EXAMINATIONS AND NOTATIONS.

Date.

Particulars.

Date.

Particulars.

22 Dec 38 P.P.T. (Good) Corb 1650 HT.  
 20 Jan 39 Qual. A.G. 2. Days 1598 HX.  
 125 3 39 145/205/1633 Heart 3315.  
 29 Aug 40 145/205/1633 Heart 3315.  
 16 1 40 145/205/1633 Heart 3315.  
 24 July 41 145/205/1633 Heart 3315.

WAR GRATUITY

CLAS NO 22220

AMOUNT £138-15-8

INITIAL

## GOOD CONDUCT BADGER

Date. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Granted, Deprived, Restored. Date. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Granted, Deprived, Restored.

1st 1st Granted ✓

Wounds received in Action, and Hurt Certificate; also, any Meritorious Service, Special Recommendations, Praise, or other Graces.

Date.

Paid £231 18/3 in Lieu of 23 Days Accrued

S. Leave—Account No. .... Dated .....

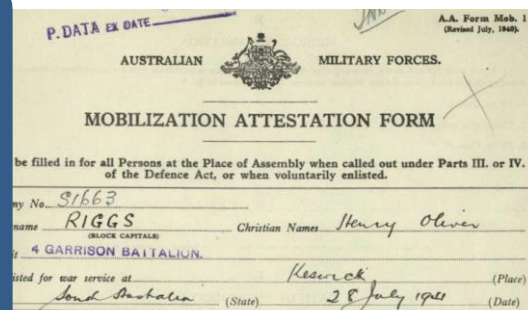
H. S. Leave Due,

C1594

Name of Ship.	Rating.	From.	To.	Character.	Efficiency.	Date Assigned.	Remarks.
Cerberus Hobart	STOKER II	15-11-38	11-4-39	VG	✓	31-12-38	Rated Stoker 14.9.39 Hobart AS161 No 553X.
—	—	12-4-39	13-9-39	VG	✓	31.12.39	Rated 9/4/40 (Ly) 17 Dec 40. Hobart AS161 No 553X.
—	Stoker.	14-9-39	16-12-40	VG	Super	31.12.40	—
—	9/4/40 (Ly)	17-12-40	22-1-41	—	—	—	—
Cerberus	—	23-1-41	21-7-41	—	—	—	—
Wollongong	—	1-8-41	29-9-41	—	—	—	—
—	—	30-9-41	16-12-41	—	—	—	—
—	—	17-12-41	28-3-41	—	—	—	—
VAMPIRE	A/578 P.O (Ly) (1.1.42)	1-3-42	9. 4. 42	—	—	—	—

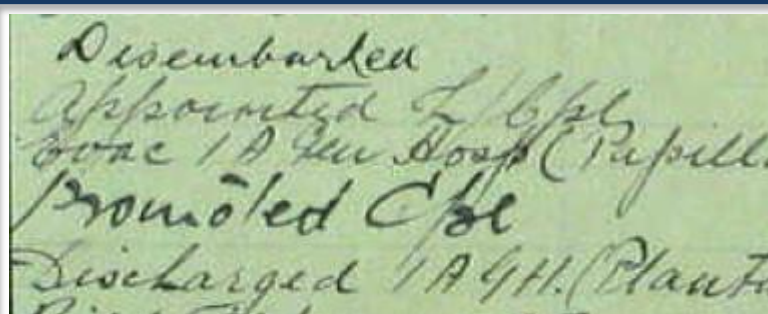


# READING HANDWRITING

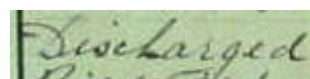
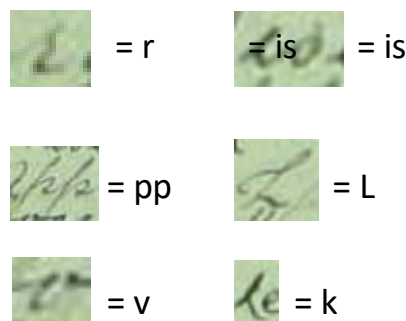


This can be the trickiest part of reading Second World War service records, but don't let it stop you from understanding the document. Think of it as a puzzle or a coded message: start by finding words that you can read easily. Write it all out; this ensures you read every word and helps you spot gaps.

Follow the steps below, stick with it and you will get there.



Disembarked  
Appointed L/Cpl  
Evac 1 A Gen Hosp (Papill...  
Promoted Cpl  
Discharged 1 AGH.



## A few techniques for reading those difficult words:

- **Use the context.** Can you guess the uncertain word from those around it? Can you at least work out what sort of word it is (e.g. a name, a rank).
- Bear in mind this was written by a clerk who was probably in a hurry. He may not have crossed his t's or dotted his i's. He may have had difficulty fitting his letters into the space.
- **Compare** the difficult letters with other letters in words you can read. Perhaps the clerk has an unusual way of writing an S or a D, and you've seen it written in another word. **Writing out these letters to form a "letter key"** (as above) is a really helpful technique. But not foolproof: note the similarity between k and L in the example above.
- Beware of letter combinations. The letters *in* often look like *m*; *h* can look like *k* or *d*; *n* can look like *u*.
- **Write down the possibilities** in a difficult word: (1) the letters you're certain of, (2) the letters where it might be a *d* or a *h* or a *k*, and (3) the letters you have no idea of. Work through the various combinations until you have one which fits.
- Isolate the difficult words and **get someone else to look at them** – without telling them what you think the word is.



## READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# KEYWORDS AND ABBREVIATIONS

P. DATA EX DATE \_\_\_\_\_ A.A. Form Mob. 1 (Revised July, 1940).

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

No. 31663

NAME RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Henry Oliver

4 GARRISON BATTALION.

listed for war service at Reswick (Place) 28 July 1941 (Date)

Although it is great to be able to read every word in a Service Record, sometimes even professional historians find this difficult. You can get around this by looking for important keywords that will help you to discover and tell the story of your soldier. Below are some of the main keywords and their common abbreviations, so you know what to look for. Remember: different clerks might use different abbreviations.


Term	Common abbreviation	What it means	Example
Lines of Communication Area	<i>L of C Area</i>	An Australian state (e.g. Qld, SA), for army support purposes.	<i>Lost Area</i>
Marched In/Out	<i>M/I, M/O</i>	To join or leave a unit (often with ex = 'from, our of').	<i>MARCHED IN Ex</i>
Admitted	<i>Adm</i>	Admitted to hospital, sick or wounded.	<i>Adm (M. Umps)</i>
Take on Strength	<i>T.O.S.</i>	Transferring to a unit, and so being counted as part of its 'strength'.	<i>Taken on strength</i>
Absent Without Leave	<i>A.W.L</i>	A crime: being away from one's unit without permission.	<i>A.W.S. Disembarked</i>
Transferred	<i>Tfd or Transfd</i>	Moved to another unit or hospital.	<i>Transfd from R.A.E.</i>
Embarked / Entrained / Emplaned	<i>Emb.</i>	Got on a ship (or train or aeroplane)	<i>Embarked in ME</i>
Ditto	<i>do or "</i>	The same as above	<i>do</i>



## READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# EXERCISE

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be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act, or when voluntarily enlisted.

My No. 31663

NAME RIGGS (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Henry Oliver

4 GARRISON BATTALION.

Listed for war service at Keswick (Place) Southern Australia (State) 28 July 1941 (Date)

Those are the techniques.  
Let's practice.

Enlisted A.I.F. allotted army no HX148969  
info to LTD for 24 days rec. leave.  
Rejd unit ex do  
Reverted to Plt by C.O. (lft to 54/3164/43)  
Offence: drunkenness

Here are five lines from a Casualty Form for a Second AIF soldier who fought in New Guinea. Bearing in mind there are abbreviations here, make a list:

- Which words can you read easily?
- Which can you probably read, or read with difficulty?
- And which can't you read?

Let's narrow down that middle list, the words you can read with difficulty:

- Which letters are you sure of? **Write them out.**
- Of the letters you're not sure about, **do any resemble letters in the words you know?**
- **Apply the techniques** we learned on previous pages. Look at the list of common abbreviations.
- What was his offence? And what was the punishment?

Now you probably have most of the words figured out, with a few you're still not sure of. What type of word needs to go in that spot? Is it a place name? Ask other students, or your teacher. If you still can't work it out, take a screenshot, attach a link and email the Schools Program Manager: [schools.program@vwma.org.au](mailto:schools.program@vwma.org.au).



READING WORLD WAR II SERVICE RECORDS

# FINDING MORE HELP

Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just cannot find the information you need. That is ok; there is a lot of help out there.

For help with understanding abbreviations, see our [Abbreviations and Glossary](#) on the VWMA website, plus:

Australian War Memorial Glossary: <https://www.awm.gov.au/learn/glossary>

National Archives of Australia Abbreviations used in WW1 and WW2 Service Records:

<https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records/researching-war-service/abbreviations-used-world-war-i-and-world-war-ii-service-records>

Can't find the answer there, or have other questions about the service records? Visit the Virtual War Memorial Schools Program page on Facebook and post your question. We will answer your questions as quickly as we can. Or email us at: [schools.program@vwma.org.au](mailto:schools.program@vwma.org.au)

A group at Headquarters 11 Division listening to the radio for news of the projected Japanese surrender.

Australian War Memorial,  
095256 .



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Ground Floor  
Torrens Training Depot  
1 Victoria Drive  
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Phone: 0493 559 759

[www.vwma.org.au](http://www.vwma.org.au)

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