



FAMILY HISTORY Federation

Supporting Family Historians since 1974

REALLY USEFUL Bulletin No 31

March 2023

Welcome to the March edition of the *Really Useful Bulletin*

inside find...

Lead article this month is *IT'S ALL IN THE NUMBERS: using regimental numbers*
plus news from local FHS and from the Federation



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Really Useful Bulletin

IT'S ALL IN THE NUMBERS

Using regimental numbers to unlock military service

by Paul Nixon

During my British Army Detective keynote talk at the *Really Useful Show* last November, I spent a little bit of time focusing on British Army regimental numbers and how these can help tell us more about a soldier's service. I want to elaborate on that in this article, and I'll be focusing on the period from July 1881 - when county regimental titles replaced the old regiment of foot titles - and August 1920, when a new system of army regimental numbers was introduced.

From the 1st July 1881, and with the singular exception of the Rifle Brigade (note below), all British Army line infantry regiments began new regimental numbers beginning with the number 1. A man's army career began when he attested for service, but his regimental number was not issued to him until he presented himself for duty at his regimental depot. That regimental number would be written on to his attestation paper and his details would also be entered into a regimental enlistment register. These registers, where they survive, are useful surrogates if a service record no longer exists, and some of these have already been published online by The National Army Museum and Findmypast.

Numbers were issued sequentially which means that if you know that number 1 was issued on the 1st July 1881, and number 100 was issued on the 1st November 1881, numbers 2 to 99 must have been issued between these two dates. I go into a lot more detail about this, and give regimental number sequences for all regular

infantry, cavalry, yeomanry and many other units, on my army service numbers blog: <https://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.com/>.

Do be advised that every line infantry regiment worked from its own regimental number series and that the numbering that I have outlined thus far, just applies to men joining the regular battalions; that is to say, men who joined the army as career soldiers. All line infantry regiments had a regimental depot and most had two regular battalions, with one stationed overseas and one stationed at home in the UK or Ireland. A man could move between the depot and the regular battalions and his regimental number did not change. Similarly, after discharge from the army at the end of his term of service, he could choose to enlist as a Section D reservist up to six months after his discharge, and still retain his regimental number. Section

D reservists essentially extended their period of reserve service for a further four years, and earned 6d per day for doing so.

In addition to these regular battalions though, regiments also had militia battalions (from 1908 the militia was replaced by the special reserve and extra reserve) and many also had affiliated Volunteer Force battalions (Territorial Force from 1908) which also had their own unique regimental number series. Let me give an example of my own local infantry regiment, the Essex Regiment, from 1908. One regimental number series was shared by the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion had its own regimental number series, and each of the five Territorial Force battalions each had their own regimental number



One of these two men is T/88 Sgt Charles Frank Farr of the 1st South West Mounted Brigade, Army Service Corps. Born in about 1871 Charles had originally joined the 1st Wiltshire Volunteer Rifle Corps in 1890 and served with it until 1908. When the Volunteer Force was replaced by the Territorial Force in 1908 he joined the Army Service Corps and served with it until December 1914. He posted this card home in August 1908.

Note: The Rifle Brigade simply carried on with the same regimental number series they had been using before Cardwell's reforms were effected. By July 1881 the regiment was issuing numbers in the 4000s.



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series as well. Now multiply this scenario by all of the line infantry regiments in the British Army and you will soon see that there was mass duplication of regimental numbers.

7686 Bandmaster, later Warrant Officer, Class II William J Dunn was a long-serving soldier with the King's Royal Rifle Corps and would add to the medals he wears in this picture with a First World War trio and Military Cross. His regimental number dates to August 1892.



In the early 2000s, it seeming like a good idea at the time, I began logging regimental numbers and dates of attestation. I had been researching the lives of soldier patients at two convalescent hospitals in Chailey and Newick in Sussex during the First World War and I later expanded this research to include serving villagers as well. Frustrated by missing papers as a result of bombing during the Second World War, I began paying closer attention to regimental numbers, convinced that there must have been some logic to the way in which these were issued. That research evolved into the army service numbers blog.

Cardwell's re-numbering exercise in July 1881 only affected the infantry, but all other regiments also operated their own logical regimental numbering sequences. Numbering remains largely logical, sequential and uncomplicated up until August 1914, with the singular exception of men who joined Volunteer Service Companies during the Boer War. On the 2nd January 1900, following reversals in South Africa during the so-called 'Black Week' in December 1899, a special Army Order was issued calling upon members of the Volunteer Force to provide trained men to reinforce the army in the field. These men were to be formed into special 'Volunteer' or Active Service Companies, with each company comprising 116 officers and men. Men joining these companies were issued with regimental numbers from the series used by the regulars but with a clear gap of 1000 numbers between the last number issued to an ordinary recruit, at the date on which the Volunteer numbering began. Typically, not all regiments followed the instruction to the letter.

Using regimental numbers to plot your ancestor's service

If you're lucky, you will know your ancestor's regimental number, and if he served overseas in a campaign, you may have medal roll references as well – but this may be the only information you have. In order to work out when he joined up, do have a look at my army service numbers blog which covers most regiments up until 1914. If your ancestor joined up from 1914, or if you want to narrow down his date of joining still further, you'll need access to Findmypast. In the example which follows, I am using Richard Stevens, whom I cited in my talk, and who served overseas with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. His medal index card gives his regimental number as 38028 and also notes that he later had two regimental numbers with the 3rd London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers), these numbers being 85263 and 255432.

My first task was to try and find out when the regimental number 38028 would have been issued. Going to Findmypast and searching in All Records for British Army Service Records I typed *Corn* in the regiment field and 380* in the service number field. The asterisk wildcard picks up text either side of that asterisk and so typing *Corn* should catch all regimental variations of Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, whilst 380* will pick up all numbers beginning with those three digits. Lo and behold, when the results were returned, I saw many numbers beginning 380* including one number, for Alfred George James, who had the number 38029. In other words, his regimental number would have been issued immediately after Richard Stevens was issued with his number.

And when I clicked on Alfred James's record, I saw too that he also had a 3rd London Regiment number, 85264, which was one digit higher than Richard Stevens's number. The rest of Alfred's file was a revelation and I could now be pretty certain that Richard joined the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry on the 3rd January 1918 and was transferred to the 3rd London Regiment on the 16th August 1918. Knowing this was crucial because it enabled me to download the relevant war diaries – still free of charge at the time of writing – from the National Archives website.

Make Findmypast's wildcard your friend

As far as I am aware, no other family history website offers the same flexibility of wildcard searching that Findmypast offers. On the Findmypast site you can use the wildcard as often as you like and with as few or as many characters or numbers as you like. It's a



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Members of the Special Reserve and Extra Reserve kept their regimental numbers when they were posted to regular battalions. This man is 3/9461 Pte George Byrom who enlisted with the 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion, Cheshire Regiment in September 1913 and was captured by the Germans in October 1914 whilst serving with the 1st Battalion. This photo was taken in a POW camp in 1917.

tremendously helpful tool, and it has been invaluable to me over many years of research.

Use the steps that I have outlined above to narrow the focus for your own military ancestor and remember that the same logical issuing of regimental numbers was not restricted to the infantry. Use this technique to find ancestors who served in other army corps as well.

In this article, as I said at the beginning, I have focused

on the period 1881 to 1914, but the regimental numbering logic extends way beyond this. Earlier this week, I was researching a man who served with the 64th Foot before transferring into the 31st Foot. Using the wildcard techniques outlined above I was able to ascertain that his 64th Foot number dated to November 1844, whilst his 31st Foot number dated precisely to the 1st January 1860. Furthermore, I quickly realised that he was one of a number of men who transferred from the 64th Foot to the 31st Foot on that date. When searching for his regiment on Findmypast, I had simply typed in *64* and *31* in the regiment field.

I wish you all happy hunting.

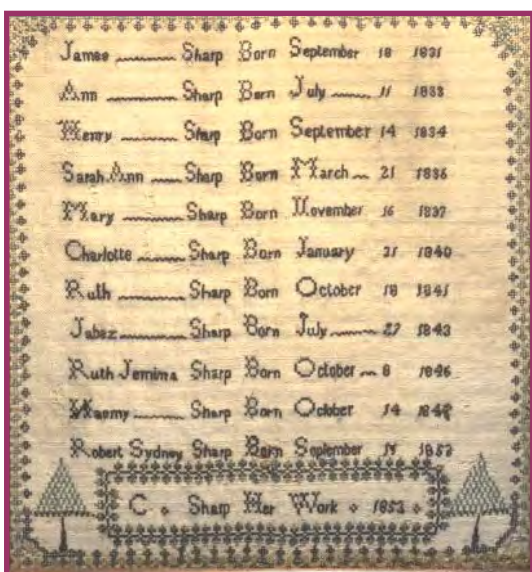
About Paul Nixon

In 2017 Paul launched www.britisharmyancestors.co.uk/; a free resource which has become the largest single online archive for photos of named British Army soldiers who served between 1850 and 1945.

Paul publishes a number of military themed blogs and, since 2010, has worked in the content licensing team at Findmypast. He is Findmypast's military expert and he leads the company's UK licensing effort.



“Lost” Family Heirlooms



Above: SHARP births. A little research found a probable family in Star Lane, Wokingham in 1851. The father was a day labourer.

Google is a powerful tool for finding material, but searching your family surnames may not lead you to a treasure such as a sampler worked by a family member. It is amazing what appears online for sale but you need to be inventive with your searches. “Victorian samplers” will provide you with a selection to search through. Some are modestly priced, some not so. What would you pay for the list of births shown left? Others are more colourful. Not all are named or dated. That said, a set of initials might just be your *Eureka* moment!

Have a rummage online and do let us know if you find a sampler for sale worked by a long-gone member of your family.

These examples were on eBay in early March.



Top right is LOCKEY.

Bottom right: PROCTER family names; this sampler is “his work” so not always a pursuit for the girls!



Family History Societies



Dalton Genealogical Society

Annual Gathering 2023

LINCOLN 3rd and 4th OCTOBER

The society will be visiting Lincoln on the above dates for our annual gathering.

We hope to find places and items of interest that we can visit that relate to the surname Dalton. You will be able to visit the famous castle and cathedral. The nearby International Bomber Command Centre Museum is where the annual dinner will take place.

Lincolnshire has a long history of connections with the Dalton surname.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone of that name or who has an interest in it.

Full details for the Gathering:

[www.daltongenealogicalsociety.org/
events/2023_Gathering_Form.pdf](http://www.daltongenealogicalsociety.org/events/2023_Gathering_Form.pdf)

For any further information please contact:

Howard Dalton. Tel: 01751477806

Email: howard.dalton@hotmail.co.uk

Society website: www.daltongenealogicalsociety.org/



The Chadwick Centre at IBCC



East Surrey Family History Society

Virtual Family History Fair

Hilary Blanford

Saturday 28 January saw the society's second virtual family history fair, which was attended by twenty-seven other societies. While most attendees came from the UK, we also had visitors from New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the USA. The chairman of another family history society enthusiastically described our fair as being unique! At the end of the afternoon session, we also held a communal discussion (three screens in gallery view, so almost 75 people) and agreed to hold another virtual fair next year on 27 January. This date has already been placed on the GENEVA site (the events section on the GENUKI website).

Although we were visited by Zoom gremlins in the second half of each session, they only affected a few people who were prevented from moving out of the main room. So, at the end of the morning, we simply handed the main room over to the Manchester and Lancashire FHS and enjoyed the masterly demonstration of their website.

Another attendee wrote to say, 'A physical fair is always fun, but on Zoom, you can screen share to show your problem. And the stallholders can screen share, to show some of the answers. The high point of my day was Geoff (Fairbairn, East Surrey) showing another attendee the house where her ancestor had lived, and the map demonstrating the changes that had taken place.'

We received lots of very nice comments in the chat boxes and in emails and a new member wrote to me afterwards to say, 'I joined the ESFHS a few weeks back not only because I kept attending Zoom talks and wanted to support the society, but also because I thought it was impressive that you were bringing together so many organisations from around the country for the Fair!'

Next year – the world! Do join us in 2024 as we had a lot of fun in 2023.

Visit our website:

www.eastsurreyfhhs.org.uk/





Family History Societies



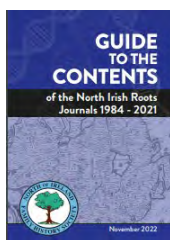
North of Ireland Family History Society

NEW Publication

Introduction to a Searchable Guide to the Contents of the North Irish Roots Journals (volumes 1984-2021)

The North of Ireland Family History Society is over forty years old and in that time has regularly produced a highly-regarded journal, packed with useful information for people researching their roots. Although the journal is available online within the Ireland Collection on JSTOR, until now there has not been an easily accessible guide to the wealth of content the volumes contains.

Over the last eighteen months, the Journal Editor (Audrey McKeown) has co-ordinated an international team of NIFHS members to produce an electronic guide of the contents of the previous North Irish Roots Journals. The team members were from the USA, the Canadian Maritimes, Australia, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. The searchable Guide of 262 pages covers seventy-five volumes of the Journal.



The newly-completed Guide will enable members to search for their ancestral names as well as places where their ancestors may have lived both in Ireland and worldwide. They can also find key and less well-known family history resources including websites, transcriptions, books reviews, etc.

The North Irish Roots Journals are stored electronically within the **Ireland Collection on JSTOR**. This is a digital library of journals, books, and primary sources. **Free membership is available to people when they join NIFHS.**

Already, members have been expressing their thanks for the usefulness of the guide. One member commented *"What an achievement this is. I love receiving the journal and always find something of interest in it. So this makes my heart sing! Wonderful to have all these past journals so accessible."*

How to obtain the new guide?

It is a benefit that is provided free to members of the Society. If you would like a copy, join NIFHS as an Associate member - it is just £18 for 2023. NIFHS membership also provides free online access to the Irish Collection on JSTOR, the digital library where copies of the journal are available to read. Additionally, if you are interested in improving your Irish genealogy or connecting with others researching the same area, the Society organises over 100 meetings and talks each year, most of which are now online.

Useful Links: Find out more about the journal here:

www.nifhs.org/resources/north-irish-roots/

Find out more about membership here:

www.nifhs.org/membership/associate-membership/

NIFHS COURSES SPRING 2023 PROGRAMME

Starting Out on Irish Family History—Audrey McKeown
Thursday 23 & 30 March 2023 (2.30pm also at 7pm)

Ideal for beginners to Irish records and those wanting a refresher, this two-session course has been developed to help you find useful up-to-date resources and websites. You will be introduced to records for your family history research, including civil, church, census, burial and land records. This also covers the resources made available to NIFHS members.

Look-Up Live—NIFHS Volunteers

Wednesday 19 April 2023 (7.00pm) FREE

Our popular evening returns to give opportunity to reap the benefits of our society look-up service. Find out more about items that the society holds in its research library. Come along and ask a question - you may even get a lookup done during the session! If you are interested in attending then send an email to education.zoom@nifhs.org for the zoom link.

Paternal and Maternal DNA Matches - Martin McDowell

Friday 21 April 2023 (7.00pm)

Dividing up your DNA matches into maternal and paternal can be a useful first step in working out how you are related to your DNA matches. This class explains how to do this and looks at how the companies provide this information.

Tips for breaking through brick walls—Martin McDowell

Friday 5 May 2023 (7.00pm)

We all encounter brick walls at some point in Irish genealogy. Whilst some of these may seem insurmountable, sometimes there is information awaiting you that can help to break these down. This class provides some tips that could be useful!

DNA Ethnicity Estimates—Anne Johnston

Wednesday 17 May 2023 (7.00pm)

This session will explain how ethnicity percentages are calculated and how they can be useful in analysing your DNA cousin matches.

Using WikiTree—Anne Johnston

Wednesday 31 May 2023 (7.00pm)

WikiTree is a free genealogy website that allows users individually to research and contribute to their own personal family trees, whilst building and collaborating on a single worldwide family tree within the system. It also allows users to record DNA tests, linking them to relevant cousin profiles. This course will provide an introduction to WikiTree and by the use of practical examples it hopes to encourage you to join the WikiTree community with the overall aim of linking our shared heritage in the North of Ireland and beyond.

Things I wish I had known when I started Irish family history

Friday 2 June 2023 (7.00pm) FREE

NIFHS Volunteers

Tips and tricks regarding Irish research with discussion amongst those present. Topics to be discussed will include: is it better to record a family tree online or off-line? How do you record sources? How should you handle variants of names and townlands? How can the society help with your research?

Full details of courses: www.nifhs.org/courses/



Family History Societies

**Tay Valley Family History Society
invites you to our**

Family History and Local History FAIR

**Saturday 15th April
Glasite Hall, St Andrew's Church
King Street, Dundee
10.00-16.00**

Meet Family History societies
incl. Tay Valley, Highlands, Fife, Lanarkshire...
Stalls from Local Archives and Museums,
Abertay Historical Society
Books on history and genealogy
... And a raffle!

Admission free.

Tay Valley Family History Society tayvalleyfhs.org.uk

Tay Valley FHS is a member of the Scottish Association of Family History Societies
which is a member of the Federation.



Really Useful Bulletin

News from the Federation

The Bottle Top Family Tree

Family historians have ingenious ways of displaying their family history research. At hobbies events, the Federation has often displayed some of the family history craft items produced by Marie Manning. These have attracted attention and interest, noticed by event organisers. As a result, chairman Steve Manning, hosted workshops at the recent *Creative Crafts* event at SEC, Glasgow. The workshops provided all the necessary parts to enable crafters to take home a completed work. The roundels are bottle tops which form an attractive raised frame for each small photograph enhanced with decorative tree and edgings, set in a display “box” frame. Those who brought photographs were able to incorporate them into their design on the day.

[R] Two participants at Glasgow proudly display their results.



Out and About

The Federation will be at the ICHF ***Creative Craft Shows*** around the country promoting member societies and family history generally:

Birmingham NEC: 16—19 March

Birmingham NEC: 23—25 June

Farnborough: 1—3 September

Exeter: 21—23 September

Glasgow: 26—29 October

Birmingham: 2—5 November

The Federation will also be at ***The Family History Shows*** where the bookshop will be available:

York Racecourse: 25 June

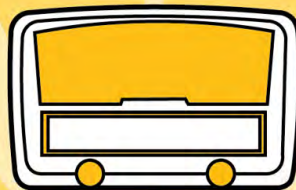
Kempton Park Racecourse: 24 September

If you are attending any of these, please visit the stand and talk to our volunteers.

There are a number of societies holding fairs, see:

www.familyhistoryfederation.com/events

Also check the lists on Genuki/Events for events near you.



• REALLY USEFUL • • PODCAST •

www.familyhistoryfederation.com/podcast

The podcasts are open for listening!

Series 2 topics already online include:

Beginning Your Family History

Online Resources

Talking to Relatives

Historians Collaborate

Occupations: Work, Leisure, Health

Series 1 editions are also available.

These are all free!

Simply go to:

www.familyhistoryfederation.com/podcast

Scroll to the topic of your choice, click and listen.

STOP PRESS: We understand that the CWGC War Graves Week is to take place 20-28 May.

Join your local family history society—full list at www.familyhistoryfederation.com/societies-az



Really Useful Back Page

Family History Research Aids from the Experts



Parish Chest, a service from the Family History Federation, has over sixty family history societies and some twenty-plus traders, at a one-stop online shop, offering a wide range of family history materials in some sixteen categories including:

- Parish register transcriptions and more from local FHS
- Memorial inscriptions information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHS
- Nonconformists: Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers and many more nonconformist lists
- Wills and Probate Indexes of wills and administrations
- Folders, printing facilities, giftware
- ..and more!

Societies and suppliers regularly add new lines, so visit to see what is there to help you add to your family tree.

www.parishchest.com

Societies and others interested in joining Parish Chest should initially contact:

admin@familyhistoryfederation.com



FAMILY HISTORY BOOKS

www.familyhistorybooksonline.com

Family History Books (FHB) is an online bookshop and publisher; it is owned by the Family History Federation and the aim is to provide a service to the genealogical community. Family History Books offers a range of relevant titles relating to family history research.

The latest title is ***Dating by Design Volume 2 – Twentieth Century***. This is a follow-on volume for dating photographs.



Will this month's lead article tempt you to explore your military forebears? ***Tracing your***



First World War Ancestors is a comprehensive guide to researching men and women from Britain and its dominions and colonies who took part in WWI at home or on the front. This book will enhance your progress! Available in the FHB online shop:

10% discount (see cover).

In addition to its [online shop](http://www.familyhistorybooksonline.com) FHB can also be found at major live family history events around the country. Come and visit us and see all the latest titles available. The stall is always very popular!

Happy browsing!

Please explore the range, and place your orders, at

www.familyhistorybooksonline.com



The REALLY USEFUL Family History Show

17-18 November 2023



Please view www.fhf-reallyuseful.com for details



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