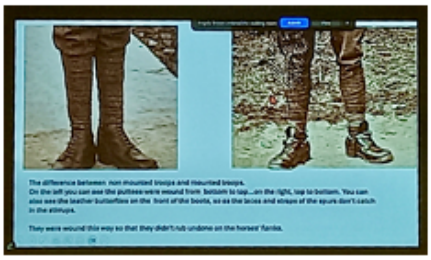
# LOOKING AT MILITARY RECORDS
# by Graham Bandy

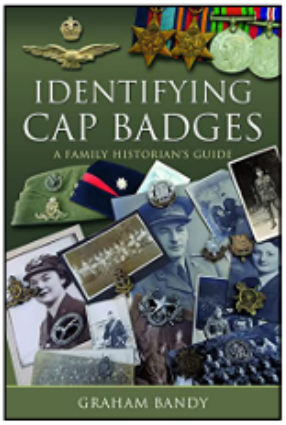
At a recent meeting, members of the Alde Valley Suffolk Family History Group were treated by Graham Bandy to a master class in ways to identify service records and the history of their ancestors by identifying pieces of kit and uniforms. The meeting was held at the Fromus Centre, Saxmundham on Monday 16th February. Graham started his talk by telling us of his long term interest in the Armed Forces and military history from a young age. He had served in the Army twice, once in the Royal Military School of Music and for a second time as an Army nurse. He writes articles each month for Family Tree magazine.



Looking at photographs of people in uniform he was able to correctly identify which units they had served in and at what time. If there was a picture of a First World War soldier wearing or carrying a steel helmet the photograph was taken in 1916 or later. Graham told us that Britain didn't use steel helmets until then. It seems easy if you know your uniform items and Graham certainly did. Where a badge was placed on a tunic or sleeve told him during which period the item was worn. Cap badges, medals, styles of headgear, belts, collar badges and cuffs all help to date the uniform wearer accurately. These also help him to identify in which theatre of war they served.

To find out more about our ancestors it would be easy if we could ask them what we want to know. Unfortunately most of us don't think to do that until all family members, who would know the answers to our questions, are no longer with us. So we need to look at surviving documents and old photographs. The census may help, rolls of honour, birth, marriage and death certificates can also give clues. If your soldier is seated on a horse a military horse will be wearing two lots of reins.

The senior service is the Royal Navy which has been in existence for more than one thousand years. Naval officers' records starting in 1660 can be found at The National Archives. Any surviving documents prior to that date will be found at The National Archives under the State, Chancery and Exchequer series. Searching The

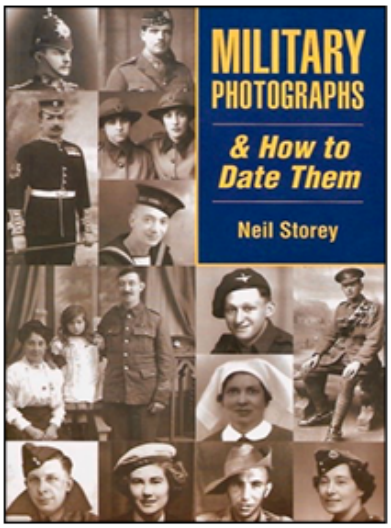



National Archives website for your sailor ancestor should prove fruitful. Army lists for Officers started in 1703 and have been published annually from 1740. Lists for other ranks began in 1809. The Royal Air Force began officially on 1st April 1918. The Air Force lists have been published since 1919 and are available at The National Archives.

All in all a most interesting afternoon and very useful for anyone wanting a steer on how to find out more about the military history within their family. One piece of warning from Graham – Artificial Intelligence cannot be trusted, so tread carefully!!

Pat Carter

Following Graham's talk, our photo-dating-expert member Janet Huckle says "Our members might be interested in this book. 1865-1945. Lots of pictures to illustrate identifying features. Also information on other sources."




## Guide to Navy Records...

FindMyPast has produced a helpful guide to finding British Royal Navy Records here:
https://www.findmypast.co.uk/guides/find-royal-navy-records

## ..and to Military Records in general

Forces War Records has a field guide to common questions encountered when exploring British military ancestors and families who lived through wartime.
https://blog.forceswarrecords.com/military-family-history-common-questions