



# Research Reconnaissance

The newsletter for researchers of the Herts at War Project  
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*This newsletter analyses the research and its progress in more detail than our general newsletter, the 'Battledress Times', and it is directed at our researchers, but may also be of interest to those wishing to understand the project in more detail.*

## Research Progress

Generally, if you have any questions or want anything covered or explained in the next newsletter, do let us know.

It would not be right to report progress without beginning with a huge thank you to you, our researchers, who should get all the credit. The number of active researchers has reduced since the heady days of the centenary, but nevertheless, and with your expertise and effort, we still see great progress. Thank you to all of you, and if anyone else reading this would like to help, please do consider joining their ranks in any capacity, any help required will be given ([jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk](mailto:jontywild@hertsatwar.co.uk)).

So where are we currently? The biographies are graded 1 to 5, 5 being the best and we aim for grades 3 or 4. I last reported on these in November 2025 and the progress for WW1 war dead is shown in the following table:

Please always remember the grades are rough and done very quickly.

The main thing to take from this is the healthy increase in quality, as you will know it is relatively easy to move up in quality through the grades 0 to 2 – providing the man can be identified – a little harder from 3 to 4 and harder from 4 to 5, because so much will have already been done.

Grade	Nov 25	Mar 26
0	839	859
1	2,907	2,661
2	1,447	1,427
3	1,957	1,943
4	5,250	5,601
5	99	100
Ungraded	138	0
Total (men & women)	12,499	12,591
With a biography	93%	93%
3s and above	5,487 (43%)	5,701 (45%)

You may also spot the following:

**The total number has increased by 92** –this is partially explained by new memorials being identified, e.g. a photograph of a London Colney Orphanage Memorial was received which added 18 new names. To be honest I am not 100% sure how to account for the others, possibly they are connected with the work I have been doing (see below) which means that I have identified names not originally recorded as on a memorial, and split some names when I have realised they are not the same man. These will be very low numbers, but I guess they all add up.

**Increase in Grades** - We (obviously that's predominantly you!) have moved 351 to Grade 4. I understand the work that is involved in doing that, so thank you.

Those with good memories may recall that we did have a lot of ungraded biographies, which I had reduced in number by the last newsletter, to 169, well now I don't think there are any. Grading these might have distorted the figures. I did not analyse these, but I think they were fairly evenly spread across the grades.

## Roll of Honour Research Coordinator Work

Just so you know what I have been up to!

**Hitchin:** Because of a personal commitment to the original research provider (David C Baines) I have been working on Hitchin:

- **WW1 war dead:** I have been through all 551 biographies and added the information that is now more readily available than was the case when he did the research (e.g. Censuses). Although this has improved the biographies most were already grade 4, and remain so, so this has had no real effect on the Stats.
- **WW2 war dead:** I have added his information for 214 men.
- **Boer War:** I think there are 9 of these and I have yet to put them up.

**General Corrections:** I took a database export of 12,666 records and through a mixture of Excel filtering, targeted formula and observation, I populated missing fields, e.g. date of birth (Other Research), when it was contained in the biography text, made minor corrections, e.g. 2016 for 1916, made housekeeping corrections, e.g. Census Records reading 'Please Select' were changed to 'Yes, and used when found'. when the information was in the Biography text.

What has been significant, is that I have reviewed the records where a birth location is given in the biography and in quite a number of cases have then added a location for the man/woman in question, even though they were not on that location's memorial(s).

I also, with less success, tried to look for spelling errors or made changes for consistency. I did successfully identify quite a few duplicated biographies, which then needed combining.

This all took many hours and will need doing again periodically, but I should find less each time.

**Memorials and Name Listings:** I am looking through each memorial in each location, checking that the memorial is correctly attributed, and rechecking the names appearing from the photographs we have. Much of this was done years ago, mostly by me, and I have found a number of missing names. These are not necessarily missing from the location, but sometimes the names were not attributed to every memorial they appear on. Given that we have over 12,500 names, it isn't surprising that some errors exist. I have also found one or two memorials incorrectly listed in a location when they should be in another – this is not always immediately obvious, and I did find a St Stephens Church – same church, same memorial listed in two locations!

At the same time, using analysis spreadsheets I have created, I have:

- Been checking whether the box is correctly 'ticked' to confirm whether the name is on a location's memorial or not.
- Whether all the names appear, adding those that do not – often adding a new biography of grade 0 or 1.
- Analysed the naming of each memorial in a location and changed the names for consistency.
- These same spreadsheets check the numbers of biographies and their grades, and I then add the totals to the master spreadsheet to record progress and better target research.

This is ongoing but so far (missing a few awkward ones to go back to!), I am up to locations starting with 'S' and have reviewed 276 locations and 9,568 names.

## Research Work

The following is something I would welcome your thoughts on.

**Work Packages:** I currently still issue research packages based on locations (Towns, Villages etc.), but we have made great progress and that means that there are virtually no locations where no biographies (biogs) exist.

As you will know, because men are often listed on multiple locations, even when a location has not formally been researched, it already has biographies. Also, the project's main aim should probably be identifying men with no biography or improving those graded 1, 2 or 3. So this begs the question whether I should continue issuing research in the same way?

1. I could carry on issuing locations where the most work is required, i.e. the highest numbers of low graded biogs. Drawing your attention to the names that actually need most work.
2. I could issue batches of low graded biogs, irrespective of where they are. Say in batches of 25, 50 or whatever.
3. I could target just grades 0, 1 and 2s.
4. I could even target just 0s (no identification) however many of these will prove frustrating as others will have tried before – mind you it is doubly rewarding when successful.

My feeling is that you would probably prefer to continue with locations where a variety of work is required, i.e. 1 above.

**Work on the horizon:** We have a few large locations which we have not yet formerly researched, e.g. Barnet, Royston and St Albans spring to mind - Barnet has been explained in this month's general newsletter the 'Battledress Times'. The others I have been putting off, partly because of their size – St Albans for instance has about 1,150 names, but more so because I know or believe that both have been extensively researched by other projects and it would seem rather a waste of effort to start over - much better to build on what has gone before and share the results. I believe that I have the right contacts for Royston, so I will be exploring the possibilities for sharing in the next few months, however St Albans is a more difficult case.

My belief is that St Albans, or sections of it, have been extensively researched, but the results probably only appear in book form, for which I have no record. I really need to find out much more before we commit to starting research. The question is am I right? Do any of you know of books or have contact for anyone who undertook research or knows of it? If so please let me know.

Also relating to St Albans - Diocesan Book Of Remembrance. Now I have seen this myself and have a few photographs. I thought that it only recorded the names that appear on the street memorials - as suggested by a note on the glass case, but I now believe that to be wrong. Looking more carefully there are far too many names listed for that. I then hoped that, in addition, it might just include the names on the main memorial (roughly 645). If so then it would not be too much of a problem, i.e. I would just have to add a reference in the 'UK & Other Memorials' field – a lot of work, but hey ho! Now forgive me but I do not really understand what a Diocese is, and on closer inspection I fear the book may contain the names of men who appear on (some) memorials across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire – the latter with no other connection to Hertfordshire other than it is the Diocese for their parish church. This could be a lot of names, so I am seeking clarification from the Cathedral. If I am right and lots more names are therefore commemorated within Hertfordshire, I will have to work out a way of dealing with them.