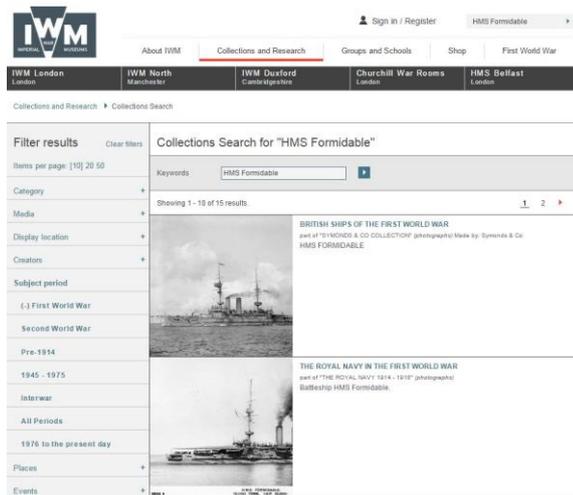
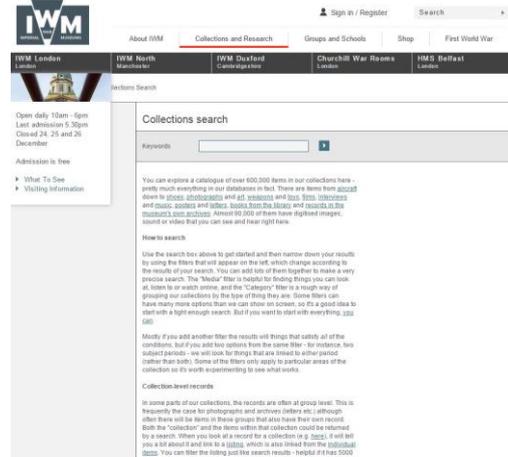


Imperial War Museum

www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search

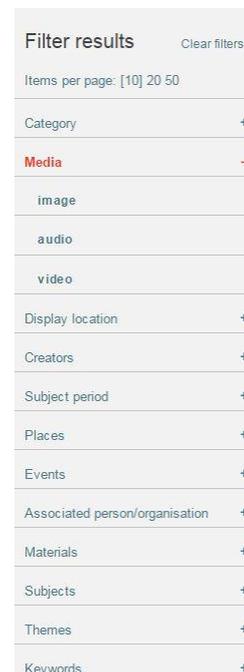
The Imperial War Museum holds a vast collection of material in its archive. The majority of official photography from both World Wars was deposited with the IWM under the 1958 Public Records Act; it continues to receive MoD photographs today. Alongside this, it has one of the largest film archives in the world and a substantial audio library. It also holds a large art collection plus its massive artefact collection.

It's possible to search their collection catalogue on their website. This is especially useful for materials that have been digitised (such as images, videos and oral archives), but the searches also highlight other materials that they have within their collection that can be viewed at the museums.



A simple search can be done by typing the name of the person, unit, event or ship into the search bar and seeing what turns up. This will produce a list of results in the main window. Ship prefixes tend to be more widely used on the IWM site, although it is worth attempting searches both with and without them.

The results are usually arranged with the most closely related results at the top (often where the search term is found in the item's title) and possibly less relevant results near the bottom (where the search term appears in the item description).



However, there is often crossover with other events or names that may be totally different. Searching for "Battle of the Falkland Islands" for instance, throws up results from both the 1914 sea battle and the 1982 conflict. As many ships have often taken the same name, it is possible that a search for a ship such as "Ark Royal", will produce 1326 results relating to four different 20th century warships.

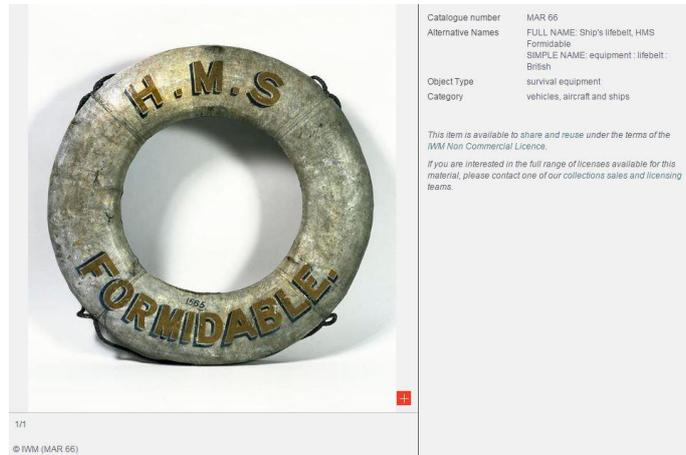
For this reason, it's worth using the filters on the left hand side of the screen to refine your search to the specific aspect you are researching. From here you can amend details such as the period and theme, as well as the type of media you are looking for.

Selecting a filter narrows the search down accordingly and several filters can be applied to the search. When a filter is active, a (-) sign appears to the left of that filter name. Clicking on this will remove the filter from the search again.

In theory these filters should make it easier to narrow down the search results to a specific event, period, person, ship or unit. In practice it isn't quite fool proof. It relies on tags being assigned to each item in the collection on a standard basis and unfortunately, that isn't always the case.

For instance, not every record from the First World War has been appropriately tagged with "First World War". This means that selecting the First World War option in **Subject period** doesn't return every item that relates to the First World War – only those that have been appropriately tagged.

In the case of the pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Formidable*, searching "HMS Formidable" selecting First World War in the **Subject period** option, reduces the 628 initial results to 14. Unfortunately, it means that any records that haven't been tagged with the keyword 'First World War' will not be included in the filtered search results. This is a pity, because a particularly interesting artefact ([one of Formidable's lifebelts](#)) does not appear in the filtered search. It has been tagged with 1914-1918 **Themes** instead.



1/1
© IWM (MAR 66)

Label

This lifebelt, from HMS Formidable, was washed up on the Dutch coast during the First World War and stored in Magazine Kattenburg, Amsterdam. It was later handed over by the Dutch authorities to Captain S C Manning, who presented it to the Imperial War Museum in June 1920. HMS Formidable was a pre-dreadnought battleship, built in 1901. She was obsolete by the outbreak of the First World War, when she was in the 5th Battle Squadron. She was sunk on 1st January 1915 in the English Channel, off Portland Bill, by torpedoes from the German U-Boat U-24. 547 men were lost, from a complement of 760. The high loss of life was attributed to the speed of her sinking, combined with bad weather.

Catalogue number MAR 66
Alternative Names FULL NAME: Ship's lifebelt, HMS Formidable
SIMPLE NAME: equipment - lifebelt - British
Object Type survival equipment
Category vehicles, aircraft and ships

This item is available to share and reuse under the terms of the IWM Non Commercial Licence

If you are interested in the full range of licenses available for this material, please contact one of our collections sales and licensing teams.

Associated people and organisations

Manning, S C
Royal Navy, FORMIDABLE (HMS), pre-dreadnought

Associated places

Channel and North Sea
English Channel

Associated themes

Naval Warfare 1914-1918
Royal Navy 1914-1918

For this reason, if your search returns a particularly large number of results (628 records for *Formidable* is a bit much to search through without using filters!) it's worth experimenting with the filters. Some of the ones worth trying include those found in **Subject period**, **Places**, **Events** and **Themes**. It is worth turning off each filter before switching a new one on.

As the Imperial War Museum is a museum and archive, its catalogue details the artefacts in their possession, not necessarily the content of those artefacts. For instance, the IWM has personal diaries and similar such material in its collection – the catalogue will tell you they have them, but not provide their content.

However, the IWM is progressively digitising its collection and more and more content is added to the catalogue each day. There are a lot of digitised photos (although they still only represent a small part of their collection), some archival film footage has been turned into online footage, sound archives have been digitised and some material, such as books or papers have also been digitised in full so that their content can be viewed online.

Accordingly, there are usage rights attached to many of these online materials. When you view individual results, you'll see these rights in italics on the right of the image box. Many of the records have text stating that "This item is available to share and reuse under the terms of the IWM Non Commercial Licence." This means that it can be re-used in non-profit materials (such as displays or on websites) as long as it is correctly attributed to the IWM. Most period photography falls into this category because of its age and the circumstances under which it was taken. Other material may say something like "All Rights Reserved"; as the IWM has received material from a wide range of private archives, some of it, despite its age, might still be protected by copyright.