

Records of British migrants held in Canberra

Since European settlement to Australia began in 1788 more migrants have come from Great Britain to settle in Australia than from any other country.

Prior to Federation in 1901 each colony administered its own immigration programs. All encouraged migration from Great Britain under schemes designed to fill gaps in the population or labour force. While Federation provided the Commonwealth government with the power to make laws in relation to immigration, programs for British migration often involved both the Commonwealth and state governments.

From 1920 many of these programs, although in receipt of Commonwealth funding, were administered by the state governments. Most case files for migrants who settled under these schemes, or who arrived in Australia before 1901, were maintained by the state (or colony) to which the person migrated and – if they have survived – will be held by the respective state government archives. Please see *Fact sheet 2 – Addresses of Australian archival institutions* for contact details.

Many policy and general files relating to these programs and which include the names of migrants, as well as some individual case files, are held in Canberra. Many other records relating to British migrants, including passenger lists and naturalisation files, are also held by the National Archives.

Group Settlement (1921–37)

The Group Settlement scheme was designed to increase the population in sparsely settled rural areas while also providing work for migrants as farm labourers. Migrants were settled in groups on rural blocks and provided with equipment and funds to establish a viable farm. Records held by the National Archives include many policy and administrative files of the agency responsible for the scheme – the Prime Minister's Department Development Branch – mainly in series [A786](#). These records include case files for a small number of group settlers, and files that include information on specific farms.

British ex-servicemen and women

Pensions for British ex-servicemen and women who later became residents of Australia were administered by the Australian Government. The Canberra office holds case files for individual

servicemen in the series listed overleaf. Access to these files is usually restricted to the subjects themselves or their direct descendants. Relevant series are also held by other offices of the National Archives.

Assisted migration after 1950

Selection documents for British people who migrated to Australia under assisted passage schemes after 1950 are held in series [A1877](#). Further information is available in *Fact sheet 66 - Migrant selection documents held in Canberra*.

Selected records relating to British migration held in Canberra

Group settlement schemes

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Group settlement – Western Australia	1921–28	A786, X22/5 part 1
Group settlement – Western Australia	1932–34	A786, X22/5 part 3
Miscellaneous records of the Development Branch	1922–35	CP272/4, bundle 1
Land settlement – Victoria	1926–27	A786, J22/2 part 2
Land settlement – Victoria	1925–31	A786, J22/2 part 4
Group settlement – Western Australia – Catterick settlers	1929–30	A786, AC22/5
Group settlement – Western Australia – Valuation Board reports	1929–30	A786, AE22/5
Migrant settlers – individual complaints	1927–31	A786, 61/2

War service pension case files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
British pensions – 1914–18 war	1923–	A2808
British pensions – 1939–45 war	1940–	A2809
British pensions – merchant seamen – 1939–45 war	1940–	A2810
British pensions – civilians – 1939–45 war	1943–73	A2811
British Service Department Pensions – Commonwealth Relations Office	1954–73	A2812
British Service Department Pensions – Admiralty	1954–73	A2813
British Service Department Pensions – Air Ministry	1954–73	A2814
British Service Department Pensions – War Office	1954–73	A2815
British Service Department Pensions – Crown agent colonies	1954–73	A2816

Assisted migration

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
British migrant selection documents – Commonwealth nominees	1950–73	A1877

Professional British migrant selection documents	1947–66	A12548
Professional Non-British migrant selection documents	1954–65	A12569

British citizenship and naturalisation

Prior to 26 January 1949 the process of naturalisation conferred British nationality on applicants. Residents of British (or naturalised British) status were therefore not required to seek naturalisation in order to become Australian citizens. As a consequence there are no naturalisation records for British migrants before 1949.

The concept of a separate Australian nationality was only recognised when naturalisation legislation was amended on 26 January 1949. After this date British migrants who wished to become Australian citizens were required to apply for naturalisation. Naturalisation records are held for British people who applied for Australian citizenship after January 1949. Please see *Fact sheet 68 – Naturalisation records held in Canberra* for further information.

Child migration

Migration of children, usually under schemes such as Dr Barnardo's, Big Brother or Fairbridge Farm Schools, was also actively encouraged. Please see *Fact sheet 124 – Child migration to Australia* for further information.

Other sources for British migration

Other sources of information on British migrants, including passenger lists and migrant selection documents, may be found in the following:

- the National Archives' research guide, [More People Imperative: Immigration to Australia, 1901–39](#), by Michelle Langfield, and
- *Fact sheet 38 - Passenger records held in Canberra*