



Virtual War Memorial Australia

Writing Personal Stories

PERSONAL STORIES



“A Pomeranian hidden in the kitbag of a soldier when he left Australia for the battlefield. That they did, carting the dog from battlefield to battlefield in their kitbags and eventually to the ship to transport them home. These things did not go so well, with a Non-Commissioned Officer determining the dog should be put down. The soldiers thought otherwise and guarded it constantly in shifts all the way home. Sister Anne Donnell was so incensed that she fronted the captain's table to plead for the dog's life. The official line was that it was dead. But she went on to record sighting on the wharves at journey's end.”

“Isn't she a beautiful darling?” Sept. 1915. Anne Donnell holding Col. Fiaschi's child? No. 19 British General Hospital (Deaconesses' Hospital), Alexandria. Sourced by Julianne T. Ryan, courtesy of NLA MS 3962.

What is the difference between a personal story and a biography?

A personal story can be anything that gives us a glimpse into the life and character of an individual who served.

While a biography narrates the events of a person's life, a personal story allows you more freedom to help us understand your individual. A personal story could include a story passed down through generations, a poem or, as in the case of Sister Anne Donnell, it could be an event, a snapshot in time, in which their individual character shines through.

Personal stories:

- Can be found in anything from letters to diaries to official reports.
- Do not need to be very long to give us a sense of the person they are about
- Can be added to at any time. The more stories about an individual, the easier it is for us to begin to understand who they were.