A picture containing text

Description automatically generatedName of Serviceperson:

Service number of Serviceperson:

**Where to begin?**

*Use the following websites to find basic details about your serviceperson. As you find relevant documents about your serviceperson and keep a record of the sources you find for your biography’s reference list. Record the links to documents about your serviceperson to the VWMA profile (Step 5. Links). Refer to* [*Contributing information to a Profile*](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/176/original/Contributing_information_to_a_profile_(2).pdf) *for more guidance regarding how to enter details to the VWMA.*

**1**

Sign-In to the VWMA to find Your Project for the serviceperson you are curating. Check to see if any information is already loaded. Click on    . On page 2 below record the  already loaded to the serviceperson’s profile. Take note of any links loaded to profile, you may be able to skip some of the steps below

Search for your serviceperson on the [VWMA](https://vwma.org.au/) home page . Check whether the profile has any “Personal Stories” for your soldier – is there any interesting information recorded there that you could use in your biography? If you use this information, you must directly quote from the story and attribute the information to the contributor with an in-text citation and include it as a source in your reference list.



**2**

[AIF Project](https://aif.adfa.edu.au/aif/)

Search using the serviceperson’s family name and service (regimental) number. Click on the search result and you will be taken to a page with details about your serviceperson. Load the URL for this page to the serviceperson’s profile (5. Links). Complete any missing personal details for your serviceperson on page 3 below and load any missing information to the profile for your serviceperson (1. Details and 2. History).

[National Archives Australia](https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/NameSearch.aspx) (NAA)

Search to find your person’s Service Record. Click on ‘guest’ to begin a search session and place the service number into the ‘keywords field’. A list of possible matches will be provided. Look for the search result for your serviceperson with a ‘digitised item’ icon. Click on the icon and an original version of the Service Record will open. Click on the image of the Service Record and it will load so you can navigate through the pages and zoom in and out to read it.

Create a timeline of your individual’s service. Continue to record information about your serviceperson on page 2 and load information to the profile for your serviceperson (1. Details and 2. History). Add the URL for the Service Record to the profile (5. Links).

For help with reading the service record refer to [Reading a Service Record – First World War](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/digitize-vwma/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/962/original/Guide_to_Reading_a_WW1_Service_Record.pdf) and/or watch this short You Tube clip [‘Unlocking the World War I service records – Language’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2e6l3YqAOo) (3:53 mins).

For help with understanding the abbreviations used refer to the last page of this document and the VWMA [Abbreviations and Glossary](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/173/original/Abbrev___Glossary_(1).pdf). The [NAA abbreviation guide](https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records/researching-war-service/abbreviations-used-world-war-i-and-world-war-ii-service-records), and the [Australian War Memorial Glossary](https://www.awm.gov.au/learn/glossary) may also be helpful.

**3**

**Personal Details**

*The details in blue below are included on serviceperson’s profile (1. Details and 2. History) this along with other information you discover is needed to write a biography of your serviceperson.*

Place of birth: **Stanley was born in Eden Valley, South Australia, 14 August 1894.**

Job/occupation before enlisting: **N/A**

Address/hometown: **Stanley lived in** **Gawler, South Australia.**

Unit: **Stanley’s unit** **32nd Infantry Battalion.**

Embarkation details: **Stanley embarked on his journey on 18 November 1915 to the** **32nd Infantry Battalion and HMAT Geelong in Adelaide.**

Date of death: **Stanley October 2nd, 1972, age 78 years old.**

Place of death: **Stanleys location of death is unknown.**

Rank on enlistment: **Stanley’s rank on enlistment was Corporal.**

Conflict: **WW1**

Medals: **Stanley got the** **Star medal, victory medal, and the British war medal.**

Religion: **Stanley went to the Church of England.**

Marital Status: **Stanley is Married.**

Age at embarkation: **Stanley was 46 years old.**

Next of kin: **Stanleys wife.**

Enlistment date: **Stanley enlisted on the** **30th of June 1915.**

Place of enlistment: **Stanley enlisted in** **Adelaide south Australia.**

Unit name: **Stanley was the 32nd infantry Battalion.**

Fate: **Stanley died on the 2nd of October 1972 age 78 years old and was buried in Waikerie General Cemetery in South Australia.**

Other details from their service record (NAA)?

What questions did they answer yes to on their Attestation Form (first couple of pages of their service record)? For example: previous military service on record (e.g., involvement in cadets or another war) or previously been rejected as unfit for service, etc.

**Have you recorded the URLs for the AIF Project and the Service Record as links on the serviceperson’s profile (5. Links)?**

**Life during the war**

*Use the following websites to research your serviceperson’s war experience. This involves a two-part process:*

1. *To research information to build an understanding of what happened to them during the war. Answer as many questions as possible on pages 4 and 5.*
2. *Locate and add links to information that is specifically about the person to their profile (5. Links)*

[Australian War Memorial (AWM) People Search](https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people)

Search using the family name and service number of your serviceperson. If your serviceperson has a common family name like ‘Smith’ include the first and second name, if known (e.g., Smith, Percival Brian). You should locate the *Embarkation* and *Nominal Roll* for your serviceperson.

You may find other information such as the *Roll of Honour* details and perhaps even the *Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Files*. Remember to add any missing detail to the serviceperson’s profile (2. History) and load the URLs for the documents (5. Links).

You may not find records specifically created by your serviceperson (such as a diary), so you will need to research what happened to the unit they were with using the AWM Advanced Search.

**4**

[Australian War Memorial (AWM) Advanced Search](https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search)

Serviceperson Search

The AWM has a limited collection of private records. Search using your serviceperson’s name you may be lucky enough to find letters or diaries. Remember to add any missing detail to the serviceperson’s profile (2. History) and load the URLs to the information (5. Links).

Unit search

Search for your serviceperson’s unit. You might find heraldry, photographs and other images related to the unit or personal diaries and letters from other people in your serviceperson’s unit. Scroll down further to locate ‘Digitised Collection’, to find the Unit Diary for your person’s battalion.

Alternatively, a simpler way to find the Unit Diary, is to google ‘AWM Unit Diary [name of the unit]’. Check the results carefully to select the Unit Diary from the First World War.

Find the monthly sections of the Unit Diary relevant to your serviceperson. Cross check with the person’s Service Record timeline to work out when they were active with the unit.

Refer to [Guide to Reading a Unit Diary](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/002/821/original/Guide_to_Reading_a_Unit_Diary_2021.pdf). For help with understanding the abbreviations used refer to the last page of this document, plus the [Australian War Memorial Glossary](https://www.awm.gov.au/learn/glossary); the VWMA [Abbreviations and Glossary](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/173/original/Abbrev___Glossary_(1).pdf) and the [NAA abbreviation guide](https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records/researching-war-service/abbreviations-used-world-war-i-and-world-war-ii-service-records)

The AWM advanced search will also provide a link to information about the **Unit** (ensure that it is WW1). This information will explain where the unit fought and what happened to them. A list of battles the unit was involved with will also be provided. To find out what happened during these battles refer to the VWMA website.

**5**

[VWMA Battles](https://vwma.org.au/explore/conflicts/2)

Click on the relevant battles for your person’s unit on the right-hand side of the page to find out more, or alternatively use the timeline feature on the VWMA.

**6**

[Trove](http://trove.nla.gov.au/?q&adv=y)

Refine your search to ‘Newspapers and Gazettes’ and your serviceperson’s home state. Many local newspapers published articles about the men and women who went away to war. You may even find articles referencing your serviceperson before and after they went to war. Search with different with different variations of your serviceperson’s name and initials enclosed in inverted commas. Try their first and last name; use their initials only with their last name and try including their rank. For example: “Private Hewitt Henry Bell”, or “H. H. Bell” or “H. Williams”, or “Pte Hewitt Henry Bell”, or “Pte H.H. Williams”, or “Pte H. Williams”.

Click on  to find the reference details to use in your biography reference list and the page identifier URL to load to your serviceperson’s profile (5. Links).

For help refer to [Researching Trove](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/180/original/Researching_Trove__(1).pdf)

**7**

**8**

[Commonwealth War Graves Commission](https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/) (CWGC)

If your serviceperson died between 4 August 1914 and 31 December 1921 either in action or due to their wartime service, their grave should be recorded with the CWGC.

**9**

[VWMA](https://vwma.org.au/)

Revisit your search about your serviceperson. Were there any Personal Stories loaded to their profile? The information here could be useful to understand more about their life before, during and after their service.

**Information to look out for**

Where did their unit fight and what was the outcome? Create a brief timeline. Remember to cross check with your person’s Service Record timeline to ensure that your person was not absent during the battles the unit was involved with.

Were they posted (moved) to another unit (Hint: look for TOS or Taken on Strength):

Details of training and detachment to other units:

Did they get sick? How long were they in hospital?

Were they wounded or killed in action? What happened and where? Where are they buried/commemorated?

If they were killed or died, can you find out anything about their family and community? For example, is there an obituary notice in a local newspaper or an account of the funeral that lists family members?

Did they return from service? Die of illness?

Any other information you have found (e.g.: Absent without leave AWL)

Any honours or awards? This may be mentioned in their service record but also refer to [AWM Honours and Awards](https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Honours%20and%20Awards&people_roll_type=recommendation)

**Life after the war**

Use the following websites to research your serviceperson’s life after the war and answer the questions which follow. Record any other interesting information that you could include in their biography. Remember to add links to information that is specifically about the person to their profile (5. Links).

**10**

[Trove](http://trove.nla.gov.au/?q&adv=y)

Check Trove again for any articles about their life after their return from war. Their Service Record (NAA) may also provide some information about their life once they returned to Australia.

[Find a grave](https://www.findagrave.com/)

[Cemetery Search](https://austcemindex.com/)

If your serviceperson survived the war use the above websites to find where they are buried:

11

[VWMA](https://vwma.org.au/)

Revisit your search about your serviceperson to check if there is an RSL badge showing.

This indicates that the serviceperson joined the RSL. The RSL records information about their members including details related to their family members. Contact us to find out what information the RSL has [schools.program@vwma.org.au](mailto:schools.program@vwma.org.au) or phone 0439 559 759.

**12**



**Information to look out for:**

What did they do when they returned to Australia (if applicable)? There could be articles referring to their involvement in the community or their working life. Did they get married, remain married, have children? Did they serve in another conflict?

If they were killed or died, can you find out anything about their family and community? For example, is there an obituary notice in a local newspaper or an account of the funeral that lists family members?

Any other interesting information you have found?

**13**

**Finding Photographs**

Not every serviceperson has an individual photo, but you should be able to find relevant photographs of their unit, ships they were on, places they trained or fought etc. Refer to the guide [Finding Photographs.](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/digitize-vwma/comfy/cms/files/files/000/004/341/original/Finding_photographs.pdf) Load photographs to the serviceperson’s profile (4. Photos) following the instructions once on the page.

**Prepare your biography** for your serviceperson – For guidance refer to [Writing a VWMA Biography](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/rslvwm/comfy/cms/files/files/000/003/182/original/Writing_a_VWMA_Biography_(1).pdf)

**FIRST WORLD WAR – ABBREVIATIONS QUICK GUIDE**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| KIA | Killed in Action |  |
| TOS | Taken on Strength | Transferred to another unit |
| AWL | Absent Without Leave | Individual away from unit outside of approved leave |
| NOK | Next of Kin | Closest living relative, e.g., Father, Wife |
| Inf | Infantry | Soldiers marching and fighting on foot |
| Btn/BN | Battalion | A unit with a strength of 550 to 1000, made up of 4 companies |
| Ref | Reinforcements | More soldiers raised and sent to support the unit |
| FLD/FD | Field | Used to designate the role. For example, Field Companies of Engineers could be attached to an infantry brigade to provide engineering support in the field |
| COY | Company | A sub-unit with a strength of 100 – 225, made up of 4 platoons, commanded by a Major or Captain |
| CO | Commanding Officer | An officer of any rank who controls a group or operation |
| AIF | Australian Imperial Force | The military force provided by Australia to support Britain in World War One |
| BEF | British Expeditionary Force | The force that fought in Western Europe |
| MEF | Mediterranean Expeditionary Force | The force controlled from Salonika (Greece) and assembled to fight the Ottomans in the Mediterranean including the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaigns |