



The story of Driver

Transcript

Hello, my name is Johanna, welcome to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Today I'm joining you from Ngunnawal country, and I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal elders past and present, and also acknowledge the elders from the land on which you are joining us today. We're going to take you on a short tour, to learn about one little Australian dog from the First World War.

Here is a photo of a terrier named Driver, who was born in Sydney in 1915. Fred Roberts was working as a driver with the Australian Imperial Force, and decided to take the dog with him overseas.

When they finally arrived in France in March 1916, Fred had to leave the unit, and so he gave the dog to a man named Leslie Ross.

Let's take a look at some of the things that Driver would have seen and experienced in France. Driver was attached to the transport section and lived in the horse lines. He liked to sit on Leslie's feet, and due to his love of scraps, was good friends with the cook.

Driver would have heard lots of loud noises from exploding shells and gunfire. Leslie said that Driver's hearing was so good, that he could tell the difference between friendly and enemy planes. As soon as he heard the German aircraft, Driver would run and hide.

In the trenches, Driver was known for being a good rat catcher, and so the soldiers enjoyed his company even more.

At the end of the war, the Australians were told not to bring animals back with them. But they were not going to leave Driver behind, and took him on the ship back home, departing England in 1919.

During the voyage, Driver was hidden from the Captain and the Officers, but he was eventually found. Fearing that customs officials would be waiting to take Driver when the ship reached Sydney, a volunteer agreed to smuggle him off at an earlier stop in Melbourne. The men made a little pocket in a greatcoat, just big enough for Driver to hide in.

The volunteer then left the ship with the coat and the dog, and stood still for 20 minutes while his kit was being inspected. Driver did not move or make a sound. Once they left the port, Driver was put on a train and eventually made it to Sydney, where he lived the rest of his life with Leslie Ross' father.

Craft instructions

So today we're going to make our own little Driver hiding in the coat pocket, and here are the materials that you'll need.

- Textas
- Scissors
- Glue
- Driver template

1. Colour in Driver and the jacket
2. Cut out Driver in his pocket, and the jacket
3. Put some glue on the X, and stick Driver on to the coat jacket

Once you've made your paper version of Driver hiding in the coat pocket, you might like to look for other materials around your house. We found some felt and all we've done is drawn around the jacket template to make our own little felt version. This felt material is similar to the real material that was used on Australian uniforms in the First World War. I've got an example with me today. This is a First World War tunic and if we look inside, we can see a little pocket, and Driver would have hidden in this space here, although he would have been in a larger pocket.

I hope you have enjoyed learning about Driver and looking around the Australian War Memorial. If you would like to learn about other animals who have served for Australia, you can check out this book on our website, called M is for Mates. Thanks for joining us today, at the Australian War Memorial.

Images from the Memorial's collection



Driver after his return from the First World War, c 1920.
AWM A02639



Driver (right) with his daughter Minnie in France, 1919.
AWM C04359



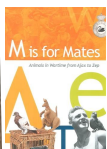
Australian soldiers arriving in Melbourne after the First World War.
AWM H13025



Kit inspection on the way to England, 1915.
Albert William Savage, AWM P11305.033



Soldiers have their bags inspected on a ship during the First World War, 1914-1918.
Phillip Frederick Edward Schuler, AWM PS0187



M is for Mates book:
https://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/m_is_for_mates.pdf

A dog named Driver

1. Colour in the First World War tunic and the dog in the pocket.
2. Cut out both items.
3. Glue the pocket and driver to the X on the tunic.

And there we have Driver, hiding in the coat pocket.

