

[A view of the facade of the State Library of New South Wales, intercut with shots of old books and photo albums.]

[War stories. Our stories. Your stories.]

[Stretcher Bearer Diaries.]

[A woman is seated in front of a wood catalogue cabinet.]

[Elise Edmonds, State Library of NSW World War One curator.]

[ELISE EDMONDS]

0:07 – 0:14 William Ifould was the principal librarian in charge of the State Library of New South Wales during and after World War I.

[A sepia-toned photograph of William Ifould.]

[ELISE EDMONDS]

0:15 – 0:25 He really recognised that soldiers' diaries and letters were going to be really important historical resources for future generations of Australians.

[A bound volume filled with pages of handwriting.]

[MAN]

0:26 – 0:33 "A chap has just been brought in and is sitting by my side. Poor devil. His whole body is shaking. His nerves must be shattered."

[A photograph of soldiers carrying a wounded man on a stretcher on their shoulders, next to an overturned cart.]

[ELISE EDMONDS]

0:34 – 0:43 We have around 20 diaries written by stretcher bearers. William Burrell enlisted as a stretcher bearer and he served in France and Belgium.

[An old photograph of a man in a field, carrying a white flag.]

[MAN]

0:44 – 0:48 "Put a tourniquet on and was bringing a stretcher when a shell landed behind me and blew me down."

[A WWI photograph shows the aftermath of battle. A line of soldiers, some bearing wounded men on stretchers, winds past some wreckage in the distance. In the foreground, a soldier kneels amongst bodies strewn across the ground.]

[MAN]

0:50 – 0:56 If we're going to look at experience in the Great War, because often the stretcher bearers are forgotten, it's only when the fighting starts...

[A man is seated in front of shelves filled with old books.]

[Peter Cochrane, military historian.]

[PETER COCHRANE]

0:58 – 1:07 ..and the soldiers in the trenches and on the battlefield suddenly realise, "If I'm wounded, these men are going to have my life in their hands."

[A photograph of a battle in progress. Men wielding bayonets advance across the bare earth while biplane fighter aircraft fly overhead. The air is full of smoke from nearby explosions.]

[MAN]

1:07 – 1:11 "Lost a lot of blood and was very weak but managed to hobble out."

[ELISE EDMONDS]

1:11 – 1:19 Burrell received his Military Medal for bravery in the field from continually going back and forward, rescuing men.

[PETER COCHRANE]

1:20 – 1:23 Well, the value of the diaries is just... It's hard to put a value on them.

[A World War I diary.]

[PETER COCHRANE]

1:23 – 1:31 They're priceless as historical documents, offering up a range of experiences from the Great War that you won't get anywhere else.