

**Private Albert Henry Boxall**  
**6543 / 6543A**



**Part A**

Albert (“Bert”) Henry Boxall was born in Port Elliot on 31 March 1885 to William and Fanny Boxall (Figure 1).

| 1885. District of Encounter Bay            |                     |      |                             |  |                                |   |                  |                                  |   |
|--|---------------------|------|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| When Born.                                 | Name, if any.       | Sex. | Name and Surname of Father. | Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.     | Rank and Profession of Father. | Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant. | When Registered. | Signature of District Registrar. | Name, if child after registration of birth. |
| March 31 <sup>st</sup> 1885 at Port Elliot | Albert Henry Boxall | Male | William Henry Boxall        | Fanny Elizabeth Boxall formerly Rogers | Masterminded of Port Elliot    | William Henry Boxall Father Port Elliot             | May 11 1885      | Chas N Coleman                   |   |

Entered at the District Registry Office, this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May 1885.

Chas. N. Coleman  
District Registrar.

Figure 1: Birth certificate <sup>1</sup>

Bert was the third of six children. Bert enrolled at Port Elliot Primary School in 1891 aged 6 (Figure 2). His records show that he was at school 1891-1894.

Figure 2: School register <sup>2</sup>

Bert was sent to the Walkerville Children’s Home in 1894 (an orphanage run by the Anglican Diocese). I infer that as his father, William, died suddenly in 1894, his mother couldn’t manage six small children herself.

<sup>1</sup> Source: South Australian Government (2025). Births, deaths and marriages - www.sa.gov.au

<sup>2</sup> Source: Archives SA Port Elliot Primary School Admissions Register Vol 1 1877-1943: SRSA GRS/18331 Consignment 00001 pp30-31 pupil records: Albert (pupil number 237)

The 1914 Wimmera electoral roll shows that Bert moved to Rainbow, Victoria and worked as a farm labourer.<sup>3</sup> He played football for the Rainbow and Yaapeet football clubs.<sup>4</sup>

Bert returned to enlist at Parkside, Adelaide, and was assigned to the 19th Reinforcements / 27th Battalion, Royal South Australia Regiment. Bert's service records indicate (Figures 3 / 4) he was 31 ½ yrs old, 5"2 tall and 135 lbs (61kg). Bert was quite short, so it is likely he could not sign up until mid 1915 when the enlistment requirements were lowered from 5"6 to 5"2<sup>5</sup>.

The image shows two pages of military records for Albert Henry Boxall. The left page is an 'Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad' from the Australian Imperial Force, dated 1915. It contains handwritten details for Albert Henry Boxall, including his name, age (31 1/2), height (5'2"), and weight (135 lbs). The right page is a 'CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION' and a 'CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER' for the same individual, dated 1915. The medical certificate states that Boxall is fit for service and has no physical defects. The commanding officer's certificate confirms that Boxall is fit for service and has no physical defects.

Figures 3 / 4: AIF records<sup>6</sup>

Prior to deployment, Bert returned to Yaapeet in 1916. Bert was presented with a watch by the Rainbow Patriotic Committee (later corrected to be presented by residents of Yaapeet).

<sup>3</sup> Source: [Ancestry.com.au](https://www.ancestry.com.au) - Electoral Roll Division of Wimmera 1914, Subdivision of Rainbow, p3 line entry 154

<sup>4</sup> Source: Trove [Rainbow Argus](https://trove.nla.gov.au) Friday 18 May 1917 page 2 under the heading "Football"

<sup>5</sup> Source: [Australian War Memorial](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/enlistment#:~:text=The%20requirements%20in%20August%201914%20were%2019%E2%80%93338,lowered%20again%20to%205ft%20in%20April%201917) - Enlistment Standards: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/enlistment#:~:text=The%20requirements%20in%20August%201914%20were%2019%E2%80%93338,lowered%20again%20to%205ft%20in%20April%201917>

<sup>6</sup> Source: [National Archives Australia](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.au) - B2455, BOXALL A H, Series number: B2455 Title: Boxall Albert Henry: SERN 6543A: POB Port Elliot SA: POE Adelaide SA: NOK M Boxall Fanny Elizabeth p2 and p11

**TRÖVE**

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Further rain fell in this district on Wednesday afternoon, and in the evening the downpour was exceptionally heavy. The local registration was 46 points.

**Harvest Labor.**  
Farmers requiring harvest hands are requested to apply to the Government Labor Bureau. Application forms may be obtained from the local railway station and also at the office of this journal.

**Leaving for the Front**  
Private A. H. Boxall, who volunteered some time ago and who spent his final leave in the district, was entertained at Yaapeet on Tuesday evening. Cr. A. K. Marshman presided and in a few well-chosen remarks congratulated the guest on the step he had taken and also presented him with an illuminated wristlet watch on behalf of the Rainbow Patriotic Committee. Messrs. S. Fisher, J. Butler, A. Sleep, G. Byrne and Cr. T. Raggatt endorsed the Chairman's remarks. Private Boxall making an appreciative reply. Harmony and recitations were rendered by Misses Effie Fisher, Eva Barnby, Henman (2), Mrs. A. Henman and Messrs. E. Millard and J. Butler. Supper was provided by the ladies and an enjoyable evening was brought to a close with a dance.

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realised that the advance involved about £18,000,000. There were no means whatever of raising such a sum inside Australia, and as there was only one source from which the money could be obtained—and as that source was one from which much was expected—the problem was not altogether an easy one.

The luminous watch presented to Private Boxall at Yaapeet last week was purchased by the residents of Yaapeet, and not by the Rainbow Patriotic Committee.

Figures 5 / 6: articles 7

Bert underwent basic training in Mitcham and sailed on the SS *Miltiades* A28 on 24 January 1917. Bert was stationed at various training depots (Figure 7) including Rolleston and Fovant, which were used by the AIF for training, mobilisation and medical care.

CASUALTY FORM—ACTIVE SERVICE. Army Form B. 103.

6543

Regiment or Corps *4th Battalion A.I.F.*  
 Regimental No. *6543* Rank *Pte* Name *Boxall Albert H. Henry*

Enlisted (a) *14-10-16* Terms of Service (a) Service reckons from (a) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Promotion to present rank \_\_\_\_\_ Date of appointment to lance rank \_\_\_\_\_ Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.'s \_\_\_\_\_

Extended \_\_\_\_\_ Re-engaged \_\_\_\_\_ Qualification (b) \_\_\_\_\_

| Date     | Report. From whom Received. | Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case. | Place.     | Date.    | Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents. |
|----------|-----------------------------|--|------------|----------|--|
|          | O.C                         | Embarked Adelaide 20-1-17<br>Disembarked Adelaide 24-1-17<br>Disembarked Devonport 27-5-17   | Adelaide   | 24-1-17  | L.R. 1044<br>23-3-17   |
| 14-17    | 7th Aug Bn                  | 4th Bn from Anzac<br>Miltiades   | Rolleston  | 28-3-17  | L.R. 1543 Doss/E 5/5/17<br>2952  |
| 8-11-17  | 6th Aug Bn                  | Pte by sea from 7th Aug Bn   | Fovant     | 8-11-17  | L.P. 10414 S/O. 2910 28-10-17  |
| 4-11-17  | 4th                         | Pte sent to 6th Aug Bn   | Fovant     | 4-11-17  | L.P. 10415   |
| 28-11-17 | 6th Aug Bn                  | Pte Proc. seas to France to reinforce 28th Bn ex Fovant  | Folkestone | 28-11-17 | L.P. 11005 B086<br>6-12-17   |
| 30-11-17 | 2nd A.D.B.F.                | ADMITTED FROM ENGLAND  | Harve      | 30-11-17 | H.K. 12984   |

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into section D, Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.  
 (b) e.g. Signaller, Shoeing Smith, etc., etc., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties.

NAA: B2455, BOXALL A H

Figure 7: AIF record 8

7 Source: Rainbow Argus Friday 24 November 1916 page 2 and Friday 1 December 1916 p2

8 Source: National Archives Australia - B2455, BOXALL A H, Series number: B2455 Title: Boxall Albert Henry: SERN 6543A: POB Port Elliot SA: POE Adelaide SA: NOK M Boxall Fanny Elizabeth p13 showing training at Rolleston, Fovant and Folkestone, before deployment to La Havre on 30 November 1917

Bert qualified as a signaller, although his service records do not show this. Contemporaneous newspaper articles state that he completed signaller training by November 1917 and refer to him as Signaller Boxall.<sup>9</sup>

On 28 November 1917, his unit departed for France to reinforce the 28th Battalion. Bert arrived in La Havre in December of 1917, and he transferred from the 27th to the 28th Battalion. At this point, the letter A was added to his service number, so Bert's regimental number became 6543A.

The 28th Battalion was a reinforcements battalion. While on the Western Front, they spent most of the bitter winter of 1917-18 fortifying and rebuilding less intense battle sections in Belgium. This involved trench duty, local patrols and reinforcements, as the 28th Battalion had suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Bullecourt, Broodseinde and the Battle of Menin Road.<sup>10</sup>

Bert's records indicate that he got trench foot and frostbite. He was admitted to the 7th Australian field ambulance and taken back to England in January 1918. He was discharged on January 15th, 1918, and was sent to No.4 Convalescent depot in Hurdcott, from where he moved out to overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill and then back to Europe.

In April 1918, the Germans began their spring offensive, which started to threaten Allied lines. The 28th Battalion shifted from Belgium to the Somme, which saw some of the most brutal fighting of the war. Bert fell ill, this time with fever. He was hospitalized in Rouen in early May 1918, then rejoined his unit in Havre not long after.

According to the 28th Battalion's official war diary entry, around midnight on the night of May 31st - June 1st, 1918:

*"... an enemy plane appeared overhead. Apparently, the Company was observed by the pilot, who, in quick succession, dropped two bombs which unfortunately fell on that Company, killing 27 and wounding 1 officer, 39 other ranks and 3 horses killed."*

Among the 27 dead was Private Albert Henry Boxall. He was only 33 years old.

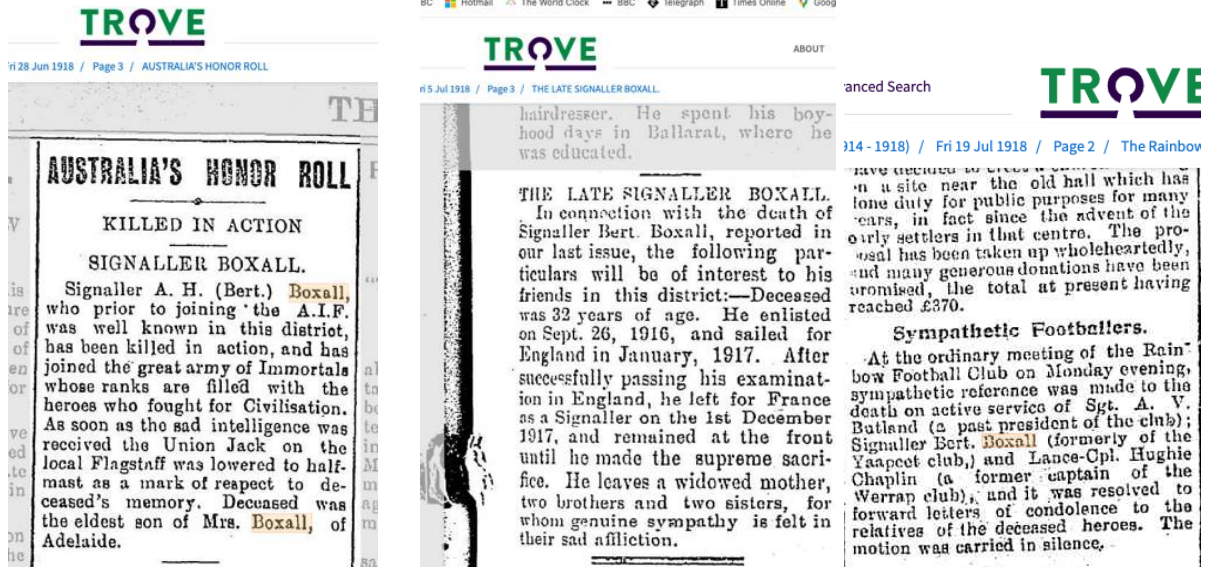
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<sup>9</sup> Source: see obituaries below for references to Bert Boxall as a Signaller

<sup>10</sup> Source: *The Blue and Brown Diamond, A History of the 27th Battalion Australian Imperial Force 1915-1919* by Lieut. Col W Dollman, VD and Sgt HM Skinner MM (printed and published Adelaide, Lonnen & Cope, Chesser Street 1921) digital version



Various obituaries were written about him:



Figures 11 / 12 / 13: Obituaries <sup>14</sup>

Bert lies in the Franvillers Communal Cemetery, France. Under his Will, his belongings were returned to his mother, Fanny. She was presented with his British War Medal and Victory Medal, together with a Memorial Plaque and Scroll.

Although Bert was serving in the 28th Battalion at the time of his death, he was included in the 27th Battalion’s special war grave photography project. This was because he originally enlisted with the 27th Battalion. The Australian War Memorial records that this project was a post-war initiative by Lt Colonel F.R. Chalmers to document scattered graves in France. Bert’s grave was among the 66 that were photographed.



Figures 14 / 15: AWM Roll of Honour <sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Source: *Rainbow Argus* and the *Adelaide Register*, 15 June, 5 and 19 July 1918

<sup>15</sup> Source: Roll of Honour ([awm.gov.au/collection/R1673038](http://awm.gov.au/collection/R1673038)) Photograph J00014 - photo of Boxall’s grave captured by the photography project by Lt Colonel F.R. Chalmers (Australian War Memorial [awm.gov.au/collection/C1648](http://awm.gov.au/collection/C1648)) and Figure 21: how it is today (Office of Australian War Graves)

Bert is listed on panel 112 of the National War Memorial, Canberra and on the South Australian National War Memorial under the 28th Battalion. At the request of his family, Bert is commemorated on the War Memorial in Rainbow, Victoria.<sup>16</sup> Although having spent a third of his life in Port Elliot, his name is omitted from our War Memorial. Until now, perhaps his connection to Port Elliot had been lost to time?

## ANZAC Spirit

I have chosen the characteristics of perseverance and courage to explain how Bert demonstrated the Anzac Spirit. “**Perseverance**” is persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. Meanwhile, “**courage**” is the ability to do something that frightens one.

Bert enlisted not long after being able to meet the relaxed height enlistment requirements. This was midway through WW1, when news would have been filtering back to Australia about how brutal, gruesome and horrendous the war was (courage).

Bert’s battalion were involved in major engagements on the Somme in 1918, which meant enduring relentless trench warfare, gas attacks and artillery barrages. As evidenced by the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s war diaries, these circumstances would have required significant mental toughness; casualties were high, he was constantly exposed to danger and he carried on, knowing that every day he could die (courage).

Bert was in the Australian army, be it in the freezing cold or getting sick and injured multiple times and still getting back up, rising to the challenge in the name of his country time and time again. This would have taken exceptional resilience (perseverance).

Serving in the war until his death demonstrates Bert’s profound bravery, courage and perseverance. This is the Anzac Spirit; it’s not only about people who were remarkable beforehand, nor people who became famous with lots of medals. I think that the Anzac Spirit is the capacity of ordinary people to do extraordinary things in the face of adversity. Bert was a mere, unmarried farm labourer. There was nothing special about Bert, but with immense courage and perseverance through the most awful battle conditions, he demonstrated the Anzac Spirit which ultimately resulted in him losing his life.

**Part A word count: 1,500 (excluding footnotes)**

**HaSS Wordcount: 1042**

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour Circular: [awm.gov.au/collection/R1673038](http://awm.gov.au/collection/R1673038)

## Part B

To gather evidence about Bert, I recalled going to our local Anzac Day dawn service, which I go to every year with my family. This is always held on The Strand in Port Elliot around the corner from my house. At one of these more recent services, our Port Elliot RSL President spoke about Bert Boxall during his address, wondering why he was not listed on the Port Elliot War Memorial when he came from Port Elliot. This got me interested in the missing man from our monument and I wanted to know more.

I felt it was personal because there were three connections to me:

- Bert is from Port Elliot where I live now with my family, around the corner from the War Memorial and on the same street as where we believe his family may have once lived
- he lived in Rainbow and Yaapeet where all my mum's family comes from, and where my distant cousins still live
- he enlisted from Parkside near where my grandparents live today

When I learned about this competition, I figured it was the perfect opportunity to connect all these aspects and tell Bert's story. Even though Bert didn't have a long or distinguished war service, his story was interesting; from hardship and deprivation to building a new life in Victoria before heading overseas to serve – I thought Bert typified the ordinary person and the extraordinary Anzac Spirit – endurance, facing adversity and in the end, sacrifice.

I first contacted my local RSL and got some of their information about Bert. I then looked at the Australian War Memorial and the Virtual Australian War Memorial websites. I found Bert's service records on the National Archives website and did some research on Trove to find newspaper articles and any other relevant records. I looked up Bert and his family tree on ancestry.com and found records, like the electoral roll which I thought was helpful to pinpoint where he was before the war. I also visited the South Australian National War Memorial. My mum helped me to contact the Rainbow Historical Society to get a copy of his photo and the South Australian State Records centre to see if there were any school records confirming he went to school in Port Elliot. My dad helped me to understand the old-fashioned handwriting as the war diaries are very difficult to read.

I also looked up the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, to find his grave and the Monuments Australia website to find the Rainbow War Memorial. I have been to this memorial before writing this essay; my great grandfather served in the RAAF and was also from Rainbow. I would have told his story (but he is Victorian)!

I spent a lot of time on Google to find other sources including *The Blue and Brown Diamond* and various other webpages to learn more generally about the military campaigns of the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Battalions in 1917 and 1918.

**Part B word count: 495**

**HaSS Wordcount: 493**

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