

# Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize 2025

STU048

Year 9



**PTE. Bertram Peter George Weston**

25<sup>th</sup> October 1917 – 30<sup>th</sup> March 1990

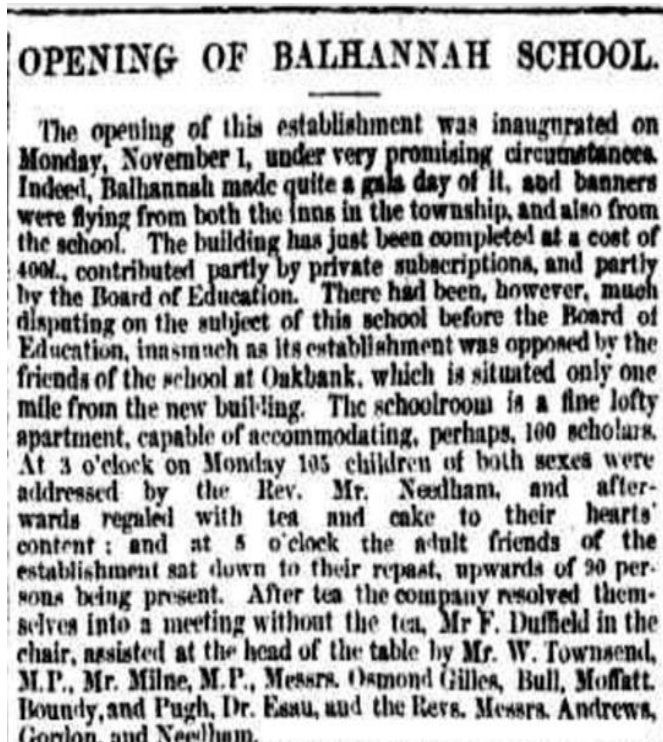
2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> A.I.F

### **Background Before War – Footy and Family**

On 25 October 1917, Thomas and Marion Weston welcomed their fifth and youngest child, Bertram Peter George Weston, in Hahndorf, South Australia. His parents had migrated from England in 1910, and while they worked hard, the family often struggled to make ends meet. They never owned their own home, moving frequently between rentals, but remained close and resilient.

Although the Weston's lived mainly in Balhannah, official records list Hahndorf as Bertram's birthplace. If accurate, he was most likely born in what is now known as the Hahndorf Academy, which operated as a hospital and nursing home between 1917 to 1937 (Hahndorf Academy, n.d).

Bertram and his siblings attended Balhannah Public School, which first opened on the 1 November 1858 (see Figure 1, Trove, 1858). His education ended early, leaving school aged 11 to help support his family (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025).



**Figure 1 – Opening of Balhannah School**

From then on, Bertram worked on local farms, where heavy labour built the resilience that would later help him endure war. Like many country kids, he loved sport, excelling in cricket, golf, cycling, and most passionately, Australian Rules Football. His commitment to footy continued after the war where he played and served on club committees. These early qualities of hard work, loyalty and mateship not only supported his family but also reflected the ANZAC values he would come to embody.

Though untrained in military life, Bertram's choice to enlist revealed courage and a willingness to sacrifice for his country. Leaving behind rural life and sport, he prepared for the uncertainty of war alongside his mates (C. Weston, personal communication, 6

June 2025). His loyalty, endurance, and camaraderie echo the Anzac values that became so prominent during the Second World War, where bonds of teamwork and mutual support were essential not only to his survival but also to the team morale.

### A Young Lad Off to War

Enlisting was not only a patriotic act but a personal risk, especially for someone with no prior combat experience (see Figure 2, enlistment photo). Bertram was among the first of 1,100 people to voluntarily enlist in World War II, demonstrating significant courage and initiative (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025). Bertram enlisted in Adelaide on the 20 November 1939, receiving **Army No. SX1100** joining the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF (Virtual War Memorial Australia. n.d).



**Figure 2 - Enlistment Photo**

Bertram commenced training at Woodside under Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Verrier. Woodside, close to Oakbank and Balhannah, where he grew up, was the start of his army journey (Australian War Memorial. n.d). A newspaper clipping from this time (see Figure 3) shows Bertram as a young man with a love for sport, birds and flowers, capturing the life he left behind. The battalion later moved to Greta and Ingleburn in New South Wales for further preparation. On the 5th of May 1940, Bertram said goodbye to home and embarked for active service in the Middle East (National Archives of Australia. 2025).



**Figure 3 – Newspaper Clipping of Enlistment**

The 2/10th Battalion, made up of South Australian soldiers joined other battalions to form the 18th Brigade of the 6th Australian Division (Australian War Memorial. n.d). Each battalion had its own identifying colour patch (see Figure 4). Interestingly the 6th Australian Division comprised mostly younger men. Most were aged below twenty-nine, and like Bertram, were unmarried, blue-collar labourers who never finished or



went to high school and may have enlisted as a way of escaping from hardship and earning an income, with the forces offering a weekly pay (History Guild. n.d). Coming from a struggling family, Bertram likely viewed enlistment as a way to escape his family's poverty and hopefully be able to support his loved ones by sending some money home (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025).

**Figure 4: Colour Patch – 2/10th Battalion AIF**

While heading overseas on a transport ship, the battalion was diverted to Gourock, Scotland after the fall of France to support the British Forces. It was here that the realities of war first struck when one of Bertram's mates, Private Webb, was killed in a German strafing attack. The loss of a friend and the stress of war likely weighed heavily on him, and records show he briefly went AWOL on the 14 September 1940. Consequently, he was fined three pounds and the forfeiture of two days' pay (National Archives of Australia, 2025).

On 17 November 1940, the battalion left the UK for Egypt, later transferring to the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division (Australian War Memorial, n.d). While D company of the 2/10th reinforced the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Battalion in its attack on Giarabub in March 1941, the whole battalion did not see major action until early April when it was moved to Tobruk.

Bertram was thrust into the Siege of Tobruk, where Australian troops resisted Rommel's Afrika Korps in harsh desert conditions of heat, sandstorms, and constant bombardment (Dean, 2023). Despite dwindling supplies, the ANZAC'S held firm through perseverance and mateship (Australian War Memorial, 2021). Mocked as "Rats of Tobruk" for living in dugouts, they embraced the name as a badge of honour.

During this campaign, Bertram was wounded in close combat and sustained bullet wounds to his left arm (see Figure 5). His service record shows he was evacuated to hospital and placed on the X list on 3 May 1941 (National Archived of Australia, 2025). His son, Chris Weston, later recalled the two bullet scars that remained for life (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025). Despite his injuries, Bertram demonstrated courage, resilience and loyalty to his mates by returning to his unit and continuing the fight until the battalion's withdrawal in August 1941.

11.11.40	Embarked H.M.S.L. 13	30/1/44	17.11.40	Glasgow
1.12.40	Disembarked		31.12.40	Muslast
4.5.41	Wounded in Action	33/2/42	3.5.41	
5.5.41. 4 Dist. G.H.	Evacuated to Hosp. Blast & trauma to chest	36/2447	4.5.41.	

**Figure 5: Wounded in Action in Tobruk**

After Tobruk, Bertram sailed home aboard the Nevasa, leaving on 11 February 1942 and arriving in Adelaide on 28 March 1942 (National Archives of Australia. 2025). Bertram's service did not end with Tobruk. He soon re-joined with his battalion in the Pacific, where the fighting in New Guinea proved just as stressful. Combat was fought at close quarters in dense jungle, often within 30–50 metres of the enemy. According to his son Chris, Bertram rarely spoke of this campaign, sharing only two stories due to the graphic incidents and trauma he carried. Alongside combat, he battled tropical disease and was hospitalised several times with malaria (National Archives of Australia. 2025). The relentlessness of jungle warfare left physical and psychological scars, and like many veterans, he endured memories that never truly faded. Despite this, he pressed on with courage, driven by duty to his mates and the unspoken Anzac spirit that valued resilience, sacrifice, and camaraderie in the face of overwhelming hardship (Australian War Memorial. 2023).

Eventually, Bertram was medically discharged on 31 August 1945, likely due to the combined effects of war wounds and repeated bouts of illness. His service took him across the world from the United Kingdom and the Middle East to Libya, New Guinea, and Port Moresby. His name is now preserved on a memorial board at the War Memorial in Canberra (National Archives of Australia. 2025).



Figure 6: Roll of Honour photo supplied by the Weston Family.

### Life after the war – Footy, Family, Mates and Mental Health

After Bertram's medical retirement, he returned to the Adelaide Hills and rented a property on Grasby Road opposite, "Pugh's Barnhouse". He soon met and married Jean Disher, with their wedding held at a church on North Terrace, Adelaide (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025). Together they had two sons, Christopher, born December 1948, and Andrew, born January 1951 (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025). Post-war, Bertram worked at the Balhannah Sawmill before becoming a linesman on the telephone wires for the Postmasters' General Department, now known as Telstra (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025).

Although never formally diagnosed, Bertram likely suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of close combat. At the time, PTSD was not recognised medically, and there was little support for soldiers who had witnessed the deaths of mates or lived daily in "kill or be killed" conditions (Hunter. 2022). His family recalled how sudden noises, like a door slamming, could trigger angry outbursts, showing how the war left lasting effects. Despite this, they also remembered his sharp intellect and keen sense of humour, and passion for sport.

Football remained central to Bertram’s life. He played until the age of 40, likely for the Woodside Army Football Team until 1957 where he found the same sense of mateship he had in the army. In 1967, when the club merged into the Onkaparinga Valley Football Club at Balhannah Oval, he became heavily involved, serving as treasurer and committee member, and is honoured as a life member (see Figure 8).

LIFE MEMBERS			
J Davies +	M Stanbury	L Fishlock +	P Camac
K Alley +	J Paschke +	W Spoehr +	C King +
T Floyd +	G McNabb	H Faust +	J Drummond
M Spoehr	E Boulton +	G Oliver +	R Davies +
L Braun +	L Pohl +	K Harrold	R Goode
T Lorke +	K Robinson	DCH Paschke	P Brown
G Harten +	P Johns +	G Nicol +	A Goode
AH Martin	G Paine	E Langbein	R Strudwick
B Harten +	R Hanson	<b>B Weston +</b>	G Medlow
FN Moller +	W Pohl	L Paul +	R Roberts +
T Hollitt	C Paschke	V Goode +	R Naumann
P Mangelsdorf	S Jefferies	J Kemp	W Masters
B Wuttke	S Masters	M Hughes	P Jefferies
R Schmidt	A Adcock	G Moyle	A Stanbury
K Langbein	N Davies	B Abraham +	M Milton +
C Tanner	M Amtsberg	P Sampson	R Corbin
T Higginson	R Grivell	K Green	P Tanner
S Stanbury	D Westcombe	S Tanner	S Huxley
J Raymond	T Kerber	D Rowe	D Wilson
B Schoell	J Abraham	B Marcus	S Collins
A Galvin	A Klun	G Tanner	M Francis
C Sinnott	A Thompson	S Martlew	D Green
J Pool	R Tanner	C Collins	

**Figure 7: Life members of the Onkaparinga Valley Football Club**

Bertram spent his later years quietly devoted to his football club, his family, and his love of bridge, and avoiding the spotlight of military recognition (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025). He passed away peacefully in his sleep in Woodside, aged 72, from heart problems linked to years of heavy smoking. He was buried at Balhannah Uniting Church with his parents and wife, who later remarried (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025).



**Figure 8: Visiting Bertram's grave at Balhannah Church.**

### The ANZAC Spirit in Bertram Weston

Bertram Weston demonstrated the Anzac Spirit most clearly through perseverance and mateship.

One strong example of perseverance was how he kept serving despite setbacks. His service record shows he was wounded at Tobruk and later hospitalised with malaria in New Guinea, yet he returned to his unit each time until his medical discharge (National Archives of Australia, 2025). What also stands out is how he persevered after the fighting stopped. His family described how trauma, likely PTSD, continued to affect him for life at a time when there was no recognition and limited support for mental health in veterans. Bertram still built a family, held steady work, and contributed to his community.

Mateship is another defining quality. In Tobruk, survival depended on comradeship especially under constant bombardment, and Bertram's choice to return to his unit after being wounded demonstrates his loyalty to his fellow soldiers (Australian War Memorial, 2021). After the war, mateship carried into his involvement with football. He played with friends, and later served his club in various roles, receiving a life membership (C. Weston, personal communication, 6 June 2025)

Together these examples show how he lived the ANZAC spirit during war and in the life, he built after.

**HASS word count: 1533**

## References (APA 7th Edition)

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## Picture References

### **Figure 1: Newspaper clipping of the opening of the Balhannah School House.**

Trove. (1858). *Opening of the Balhannah School House*. The South Australian Advertiser. Retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/785031>

### **Figure 2: Bertram's Enlistment Photo.**

National Archives of Australia. 2025. *WESTON BERTRAM PETER GEORGE : Service Number - SX1100 : Date of birth - 25 Oct 1917 : Place of birth – HAHNDORF SA : Place of enlistment - ADELAIDE SA : Next of Kin - WESTON THOMAS*. Retrieved from <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6643812&S=5&R=0>

### **Figure 3: Bertram's Enlistment Newspaper Clipping. Provided by C. Weston via email.**

### **Figure 4: Colour Patch – 2/10th Battalion AIF**

Australian Militaria Sales. (n.d). <https://www.militaria-sales.com.au/product/colour-patch-2-10th-battalion/>

### **Figure 5: Bertram's Service Records, identifying wounded in action.**

National Archives of Australia. 2025. *WESTON BERTRAM PETER GEORGE : Service Number - SX1100 : Date of birth - 25 Oct 1917 : Place of birth – HAHNDORF SA : Place of enlistment - ADELAIDE SA : Next of Kin - WESTON THOMAS*. Retrieved from <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=6643812&S=5&R=0>

### **Figure 6: Honour Roll. Photo Supplied by Weston Family.**

### **Figure 7: Life members of the Onkaparinga Valley Football Club.**

Onkaparinga Valley Football Club. (n.d). *Life Members*. Retrieved from <http://www.onkas.com.au/HISTORY/LIFEMEMBERS.aspx>

### **Figures 8: Bertram's gravestone at Balhannah Church. Photographs by STU048 (2025)**

## **Part B: Reflection on the Research Process**

Researching the life and service of Bertram Weston presented me with challenges and valuable learning experiences. One of the hardest tasks was understanding his service records. These documents were written in shorthand with military terms and abbreviations I didn't understand. Entries such as "X list" or abbreviations for injuries and transfers were confusing, and it took time to work out how they related to his experiences in Tobruk and New Guinea. To help, I hand-wrote many pages of a timeline from his records, setting out what he was doing, where, and why, which became the basis of his story.

Another challenge was the limited availability of information. Unlike well-known Australians of the Second World War, little has been published about Bertram, likely because of the quiet country life he returned to. Searching his name brought almost nothing, so I had to change my search terms constantly. Using specific combinations like "2/10th Battalion," "Tobruk," and "New Guinea campaign" alongside "AIF World War Two" gave me more material. This allowed me to place Bertram's story within the bigger picture of his battalion's movements and battles. Even when he wasn't named, I could match his service records to places and events.

Because of these gaps, I relied on both primary and secondary sources. A key primary source was a family interview with Bertram's son Chris, who also provided photographs and service records. These gave authenticity and personal detail, while secondary sources such as the National Archives and Australian War Memorial sites helped me connect his service records with wider historical events.

I also researched the effects of PTSD on veterans. Today, there is much information on this, but I needed to balance it so that it supported rather than overshadowed Bertram's story. PTSD is vital to understanding post-war life and how far society has come in recognising veterans' struggles, but I focused on showing how Bertram's experiences aligned with what many faced after returning home. This perspective gave depth to his story of courage, mateship, and service.

A breakthrough came when I found out that members of the Weston family still live locally and run a business in the area. Unsure of the connection, I emailed them in hope, which led me directly to Bertram's son Chris Weston. He kindly shared insights and memories that became a big part of my ability to tell Bertram's story. His information filled gaps that official records and online searches could not, adding a personal voice to the research.

Linking Bertram's life to Anzac values of courage and mateship was another learning curve. Unlike decorated heroes written about in books, Bertram's story survives through family memory and service records. I had to interpret how his loyalty to his battalion at Tobruk, his resilience after being wounded, and his post-war dedication to football and community reflected these values. In doing so, I was able to connect his service and his life after the war to the enduring spirit of Anzac. *HASS word count: 492*