

A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 2689
Name: Albert Henry HOPPING
Nickname: Bert



Medals and Decorations

1914 - 15 Star
British War Medal
Victory Medal

Rank: Private
Service: Army
Enlisted: 19 May 1915
Discharged: 22 Jan 1917

Albert (Bert) was born at Spalding (SA) on 17 Sep 1883 to Henry Hopping and Catherine Hopping (nee McInnes). There were 3 boys in the family, of which Bert was the eldest. His father had migrated from the UK in 1847, originally settling in Adelaide before moving to Spalding and then onto Caltowie; they had a farm in this latter location.

Bert went to school in Caltowie, leaving at the customary age of 14 and working with his father before gaining employment with Eudunda Farmers. He was their representative in the Mallee area until he enlisted in the army.

He enlisted at Keswick (SA) in May 1915 and was posted to 6th Reinforcement Unit, 27th Battalion (Bn), a Bn that had only been raised in Mar 1915. The Bn left Australia in Jun 1915 and, after 2 months training in Egypt, landed at Gallipoli on 12 Sep 1915 – the Bn, as part of 7th Brigade, remained on the Peninsula until Dec 1915. Bert's brother, John, had been killed at Gallipoli on 30 Jun 1915, but the family were not informed of this until Nov 1915!

After another stint in Alexandria (Egypt), where the unit was retrained and re-equipped, the Bn – still part of 7th Brigade – embarked for France to become part of 2nd Australian Division. The 27th Bn entered the front line trenches of the Western Front on 7 Apr 1916 and participated in its first major battle at Pozieres between Jul-Aug 1916. After a spell in a quieter sector of the front in Belgium, the 27th Bn returned to the south and took part in two attacks to the east of Flers in the Somme Valley, both of which floundered in the mud.

The horror of life in the trenches is borne out by the number of amputations that occurred as a result of infection: this was apart from the casualties from war. The smallest scratch would become infected and gangrene was the likely result. Unfortunately, Bert

succumbed to such an infection and on 9 Aug 1916 was evacuated to the Military Hospital at Trent Bridge (UK) where part of his left foot was amputated; in the vernacular this was referred to as “Flat Foot”.

On 28 Aug 1916 Bert was embarked on the “*Ajama*” for return to Australia. On arrival he was transferred to 10th Bn and sent to the Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Haberfield (NSW). He was to remain here, recovering for 5 months, until being discharged as medically unfit on 22 Jan 1917. He had to wear an elevated boot on his left leg for the rest of his life.

Bert returned to Adelaide and after a further period of repatriation, resumed his job with Eudunda Farmers, again in the Mallee area. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Adeline May Watkins, a school teacher. They were married at St Paul’s Church at Naracoorte on 8 Nov 1922. There were 7 children in the family; 2 boys and 5 girls. Two of the children still live locally; Dean and Barbara (Fauser).

After marriage, Bert moved to Port Lincoln and started a business in partnership with his brother, Arthur. In 1925 the partnership was dissolved and Bert bought McFarlane Bros. in Tumby Bay (the shops occupying the first block on the North of Lipson Road). These were hard times as the depression was beginning. The farmers in the area paid there accounts once a year, after harvest, with no interest! Bert gave credit for the necessities, but not for smokes or lollies. Of course the store keeper still had to buy stock and the terms from the suppliers were not so generous.

After the depression the business grew: In the early 50’s the grocery section was separated from the main store, sold to Jock Ramsay, the then manager, and re-located to the corner of Lipson Rd/Bratten Way (currently Neindorf’s): also a gift store was established in Spencer St. (currently part of the nursery) and an outlet was opened in Ungarra; this was later sold to the then manager, Jim Rogers.

Bert also started the first “Father Christmas” event in Tumby, providing ice cream for the children at his own expense. In 1953, at the age of 70 years he bought his first new car, a Ford Customline, the first in Tumby Bay. Unfortunately he never drove the vehicle. However, it is rumoured that the boys did give this vehicle a workout!

Bert had been a keen horseman before the war but because of his injuries this activity was precluded on his return home. As part of his therapy after the operation on his foot

he had learnt to play the violin in the UK. He brought the violin home with him and became a talented player. The violin is still in the possession of the family.

He was an active member of the Tumby Bay Sub Branch of the RSL.

Bert died on 26 Jan 1962. Both he and his wife are buried in the Tumby Bay Cemetery.

