

# Codford War Graves



*Lest We Forget*

## World War 1



*In Loving Memory of*

MY COMRADE

No 1870 **CPL A. E. BUTTON**

51<sup>st</sup> BATTN. A. I. F.

KILLED NOV. 23 RD. 1916

*'THY WILL BE DONE'*

(\* The initials on the headstone are incorrect – should be A.J. Button)

## Albert James BUTTON

Albert James Cecil Button was born in Melbourne, Victoria in 1892 to parents Albert & Margaret Button (nee Ross).

Albert James Button married Gladys M. Crowle in Fremantle, Western Australia in 1913. They had a daughter - Inez, born 1913.

Albert Button was a 23 year old Hotel Clerk from Fremantle, Western Australia when he enlisted at Perth, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1916 with the 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 1870 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Gladys Button, 58 Stirling Street, Fremantle, Western Australia. From his attestation papers, Albert Button had previously served for a total of 4 years with the Army in Victoria.

Whilst engaged in Training in Australia, Pte Albert Button was promoted to Sergeant in 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1916 then Sergeant of 3/51st Battalion on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1916.

Pte Albert James Button embarked from Fremantle on HMAT *Seang Bee (A48)* on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1916. His rank reverted back to Private on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. These were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Albert Button was promoted to Acting Corporal of 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1916.

Cpl Albert James Button was injured in a bombing accident at No. 4 Camp Codford on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1916 & was admitted, dead, to No. 3 New Zealand Hospital.

From the Medical Case Sheet for A/Cpl Button: *This man was brought to NZ Hospital No 3 Codford DEAD at 6 p m tonight. He had been wounded by an accidental Bomb explosion about an hour previously. On Examination- The bullet has entered in front of the right ear and passing through the brain emerged two inches behind the left ear. The entrance wound was small, the Exit wound had torn away a portion of the skull. Some small superficial wounds appeared on both legs. Death must have ensued rapidly after the injury was received.*

*(P Clennell Fenwick O C N Z Hospital No 3).*

**Inquiry into the death of Cpl Albert James Button 1870** held 24th November, 1916 by order of Lieut. Colonel W.E.Cass. Commandant "D" Group.

1st Witness Lieut. E.D. McBURNIE, 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion, now attached to 13<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, being duly sworn states:-

*At 4.15 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Inst., I was acting as Instructor in a bat at the Group Bombing pitch. The man I was instructing had thrown his grenade. 2/Lieut. Swann then ordered the second detail to throw. Immediately afterwards I heard 2/Lieut. Swann call out "For God's sake get out of the bay." The Sergeant (Sgt Brown) at the same time called out "Get out of the bay". I then looked towards the bay where the throwing was taking place, and noticed a live grenade on the parapet. The grenade rolled into the bay and exploded. I then went out from my bay and attended to the wounded. 2/Lieut. Swann meanwhile had sent messengers to Group Headquarters and A.M.C. H'Quarters. In my opinion the grenade had a short fuse, about 3 seconds which did not allow the men sufficient time to leave the bay.*

*(Sgd) E. D. McBurnie. Lieut.*

2nd Witness 2/Lieut. J. W. SWANN, 45<sup>th</sup> Battalion, AIF now attached to "D" Group Headquarters, Codford, being duly sworn states:-

*A serious accident occurred at the live bomb-throwing pitch "D" Group, at 1620 on 23<sup>rd</sup> inst. A bomb was thrown by 2264 Pte Taylor T., 4/50<sup>th</sup> Battn, attached to 13<sup>th</sup> Training Battn. It was thrown against the top of the parapet to the rear of the thrower. It passed in front of the wire-netting, and owing, probably, to the spin of the bomb, came back*

and dropped at the adjoining bay about 2 feet from the inside edge of that adjoining bay. 4543 L/Sgt. Brown R.P. 4<sup>th</sup> Training Battn. was acting as Instructor. The N.C.O. has a Lyndhurst certificate. The men in the adjoining bay and 2/Lieut. Maunder D.S. were immediately warned by me, and endeavoured to reach cover with the exception of 1870 Cpl. Button A.J. 3/5<sup>1st</sup> Battn. who seemed paralysed with fear. Corpl Button remained in the bay, and was discovered after the bomb had exploded lying across the sandbags at the entrance, which are placed there to prevent bombs which are thrown against the parapet from rolling into the open. The other men were wounded by the shrapnel effect of the Mills Grenade, No. 8, as they did not fall down flat, when at some distance from the grenade, but continued to run. The bomb in my opinion was not a 5 second bomb, but exploded in about 3 seconds. My position was at the observation bay, about 10 yards in rear of the throwing bay. Orders to throw and general discipline were given by me.

To the Court. In my opinion the accident was due to nervousness on the part of the thrower who held on to the bomb too long.

(Sgd)- John Swann 2/Lieut.

3rd Witness 2/Lieut. Maunder D.S. 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion, now attached to 13<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, being duly sworn states:-

About 4.30 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst. I was on duty at "D" Group live bomb pitch, when I heard somebody call out "For God's sake get out of the bay." Thinking that something had gone wrong with one of the bombs I immediately rushed out of the bay. I had gone about 10 or 15 yards when I heard an explosion, and felt myself hit on the back of the head and the arm. I looked round and saw several men lying on the ground. I noticed Lieut. McBurnie attend to the wounds of Cpl. Button who appeared to be badly wounded. 2/Lieut. Swann immediately after the explosion sent a man for the ambulance and a written report to "D" Group Headquarters.

(Sgd) D. Maunder 2/Lieut.

4th Witness Capt. Kenihan R.L., A.M.C. attached to the 13<sup>th</sup> Training battalion, being duly sworn states:-

At about 5 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst., I heard that an accident had occurred on the bombing pitch. I immediately proceeded to the scene of the accident accompanied by three A.M.C. men and met our patient being taken from the scene of the accident whom I afterwards found to be Cpl. Button. Cpl. Button appeared to be badly wounded about the head. He had already received first aid treatment, his head being bandaged, and I sent him to the Ambulance car, to the New Zealand General (3<sup>rd</sup>) Hospital. After seeing him off I proceeded to the bombing pitch and attended to the men who were also wounded.

(Sgd) R. L. Kenihan Capt. A.M.C.

5th Witness Capt. Goode A., A.A.M.C. attached to "D" Group Headquarters Staff, being duly sworn states:-

At about 6 p.m. 23<sup>rd</sup> Inst., I first heard of the bombing accident and immediately proceeded to the scene of the accident where I found five men who had been injured, in good condition, and I did not interfere as the 13<sup>th</sup> Training Btn. A.M.C. had already dressed them. I accompanied the men into Codford N.Z. Hospital and saw them dressed.

(Sgd) A. Goode Capt. S.M.O.

6th Witness 4543 L/Sergt. Brown R.P. , 14/16<sup>th</sup> Battn. now attached to 4<sup>th</sup> Training Battn. being duly sworn states:-

I was Instructor in the bay from which the bomb was thrown. At about 4.20 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst., Pte Taylor threw a bomb. He threw with a round arm motion instead of over-arm as he had been instructed, and did not release it until his arm had completed practically a half circle. The bomb hit the top of the parapet and rolled to the left, twisting into the next bay. Mr Swann called for everyone to get out of the bay. I also called out at the same time. The men continued to rush out of the bay on my left until the bomb exploded. I then noticed several men had been wounded. In my opinion the bomb exploded prematurely, otherwise all the men would have had time to get out of the bay.

(Sgd) R.P. Brown L/Sgt. 4543

7th Witness 2264 Pte Taylor. T. 4/5<sup>1st</sup> Battalion, now attached to 13<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, duly sworn states:-

At about 4.30 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst., I was at bombing practice at "D" Group live bombing pitch. I threw a live bomb. As I threw the handle of the bomb appeared to catch on my thumb. As soon as I threw I ducked down as instructed thinking the bomb had gone over the parapet. I then heard the Officer in charge calling out to the people in the next

bay to get out as quickly as possible, and heard the explosion in the next bay. I then came out of my bay and saw several men wounded.

(Sgd) – T. Taylor

The finding of the COURT.

The Court is of the opinion that the occurrence was purely accidental partly owing to the inexperience in live bomb throwing, and consequent slight nervousness of the thrower, and partly that the lever of the bomb may have caught in his thumb, and so causes it to twist to the left and fall into the next bay instead of going forward over the parapet. Also that no blame is attachable to any of the persons concerned in the practice.

(Sgd) J.C. Brown Capt. PRESIDENT.

(Sgd) Stanley Vanstan Lt )

) MEMBERS

“ F. Albrecht. “ )

The following details were located within Cpl Button's Service record papers:

Inquiring into the death of a soldier in that he on 23.11.16 at Codford whilst in the Bay of a live Bomb throwing pitch was killed. The Bomb was thrown by 2264 Pte Taylor of 50<sup>th</sup> Btn now attached to the 13<sup>th</sup> Trg Btn, which struck against the top of the parapet to the head of the thrower. Owing probably to the spin of the bomb it came back & dropped on the inside edge of the next bay. All men were warned & endeavoured to reach cover, with the exception of 1870 Cpl Button A.J. 51<sup>st</sup> Battn. who seemed paralysed with fear. He remained in the bay & was found after the explosion lying across the sandbags which were placed at the entrance to prevent the Bombs which were thrown against the parapet from rolling into the open. Other soldiers were wounded by shrapnel affect, because instead of falling sown flat when a short distance from the bay continued to run. The bomb not being as was thought a five second bomb, exploded in three seconds (witness 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut J. W. Swann 45<sup>th</sup> Bn.) attached C D Group H Qrs. Codford). The Court declared that the occurrence was purely accidental owing to the inexperience of live bomb throwing & nervousness on the part of the thrower, also that no blame is attached to any persons concerned in the practice.

President Capt. C. Browne 15<sup>th</sup> Btn L.R. 5025

Details in a letter sent from the Coroner's Office, Trowbridge dated 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1916 to Headquarters A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom, Tidworth:

I hereby certify that at an inquest held by me at the Military Hospital, Codford- St. Mary, on the body of Cpl. A.J. Button, 51<sup>st</sup> Australian Imperial Forces, the following verdict was returned:-

“Death from fracture of the skull caused by explosion of a bomb throwing practice at Codford, Wilts on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1916.”

(Sgd) F.A.P. Sylvester

A death for Albert J. Button, aged 23, was registered in the December quarter, 1916 in the district of Warminster, Wiltshire. From information filled out by Albert's wife, for the Roll of Honour, she listed his age as 24 years. (Newspaper notices inserted by his wife & his parents, list Albert Button as 32 years)

Corporal Albert James Button was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Codford in Grave no. 47 on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1916.

From the Red Cross Society's Wounded and Missing File on Corporal Albert James Button, in reply to a request for further information into his death, the following letters were found:

Died of Wounds 23.11.16

*I have been told he was killed by a bomb while at practice at Salisbury. Almost anyone in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements could give information of the truth of this report.*

*( E. E. Miller 3427 51<sup>st</sup> Batt AIF.)*

*D/W November 23<sup>rd</sup>. 1916*

*He was killed accidentally in No. 4 Camp, Codford, England, through an explosion of a bomb, at the bombing school. I was talking to him a couple of hours before the accident happened. He is buried in the Military Cemetery at Codford. I saw the funeral. He comes from Fremantle. His people live at Midland Junction, W. Australia. He used to belong to C. Coy.*

*(Pte F. W. Treby 2017 C. Coy)*

*Died of Wounds 23/11/16*

*He was killed by accident at Codford Camp Salisbury on 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. during bombing instruction. Died in the N.Z. Hospital there three hours after the explosion. Eight others were wounded at the same time. Button came from W.A. with me. His people are advised.*

*(1920 F.G. Hawkins 51<sup>st</sup> Batt. AIF)*

*Died of Wounds (Accident) 23.11.16*

*Cert by AIF Headquarters 12.12.16*

*Died of wounds received in a bombing accident. Already dead when admitted to New Zealand Hospital, buried St. Mary's Cemetery Codford, on 27.11.1916 and had a Military funeral.*

*Cert: by Letter from Captain Harrington 12<sup>th</sup> Train. Battn. Codford 19.2.17*

Cpl. A. J. Button is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 152.



*(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)*

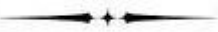


*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

Cpl. A. J. Button was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Plaque Scroll & King's letter were also sent to Cpl Button's wife – Mrs G. M. Button at Summer Hill, NSW but were returned unclaimed "Not at Address" in July, 1922. A letter was sent, in 1923, to the Post Office where Cpl Button's widow was collecting her pension & they advised the Base Records Office that the widow of Cpl Button had remarried & her details were now Mrs Bell of 6 Canza Flats, East Crescent St, McMahon's Point, NSW. Cpl Button's medal & Memorial Scroll & Plaque were received by his widow, now remarried – Mrs G Bell, in 1923.

(97 pages of Cpl. Albert James Button's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Reports**

### **DIED, CAUSE NOT STATED**

A.-Cpl. A.J. BUTTON, Fremantle

(*The Daily News*, Perth, Western Australia, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1916)

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### **DEATHS**

BUTTON - Sergeant A. J. Button, dearly beloved husband of Gladys, and father of Inez, met his death, by a bomb accident in England, on November 23, aged 32 years.

Though death divides two loving hearts,  
'Tis only till the breaking of the day;  
Then I shall see my loved one's dear face, never to part again.

- Inserted by his loving wife. Melbourne papers please copy.

BUTTON – In loving memory of our dearly beloved eldest son, Sergeant A. J. (Bert) Button, who was killed in England, on November 23, brother to Ben, Violet, Lily, Edith, Ella, Ernest and Charlie, aged 32 years.

So dearly loved and deeply mourned.

- Inserted by his sorrowing parents, sisters and brothers.

BUTTON – Sergeant A. J. Button, died the result of a bombing accident, dearly beloved son-in-law of Mr and Mrs N. Cowle, and loved brother-in-law of Ida, Irene, Amy, Ethel, Edward and Gordon.

We little thought his end so near,  
God called him home,  
It was His will,  
But in our hearts he liveth still.

- Inserted by his father-in-law and mother-in-law and family.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1916)

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## MISCELLANEOUS

Following is a copy of a letter which has been received from Major Herbert by Mrs A. J. Button, of Fremantle, widow of the late Sergeant A. J. Button, who was killed at a training camp in England on November 23, as a result of a bombing accident –

“Dear Mrs Button, - I regret to have to write and sympathise with you in your recent sad loss. Your husband’s demise came as a shock to one and all in this training battalion. His company officers report to me that he was a soldier and a man. He was popular with all ranks, and he was a first-class non-commissioned officer – a lad who would have done well at the front. You have, one consolation, my dear Mrs Button, and that is, that he died in harness and although not at the front, he died for his country. I hope you look at his death in this light.- Yours sincerely, (signed) M. J. Herbert, major, commanding 13<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion.”

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1917)

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Probates and Administrations :- The following list was issued by the Supreme Court yesterday :-

Probates : Albert James Button, late of Fremantle, to Gladys May Button, £285 10s. 8d. ;

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1918)

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## IN MEMORIAM

Anzac Heroes

BUTTON – In loving memory of my dearly beloved husband, Albert James (Bert), late of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion who was killed through a bombing accident in England.

Three years ago, so sad to recall,  
‘Tis a day of remembrance to all.  
Sudden on us or sorrow fell,  
To part with one we loved so well.  
Inserted by his sorrowing wife and little daughter Inez.

BUTTON – In loving memory of Sergeant A. J. (Bert), late of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion, A.I.F., who was accidentally killed at Codford, England, on November 23, 1916; dearly beloved eldest son of Mr and Mrs A. Button, and brother of Ben, Violet, Lily, Edith, Ella, Ernest and Charlie, Spring Park Hotel, Midland Junction.

His cheerful face, his loving smile,  
Are pleasant to recall.  
He had a kindly word for each  
And died beloved by all.

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1919)

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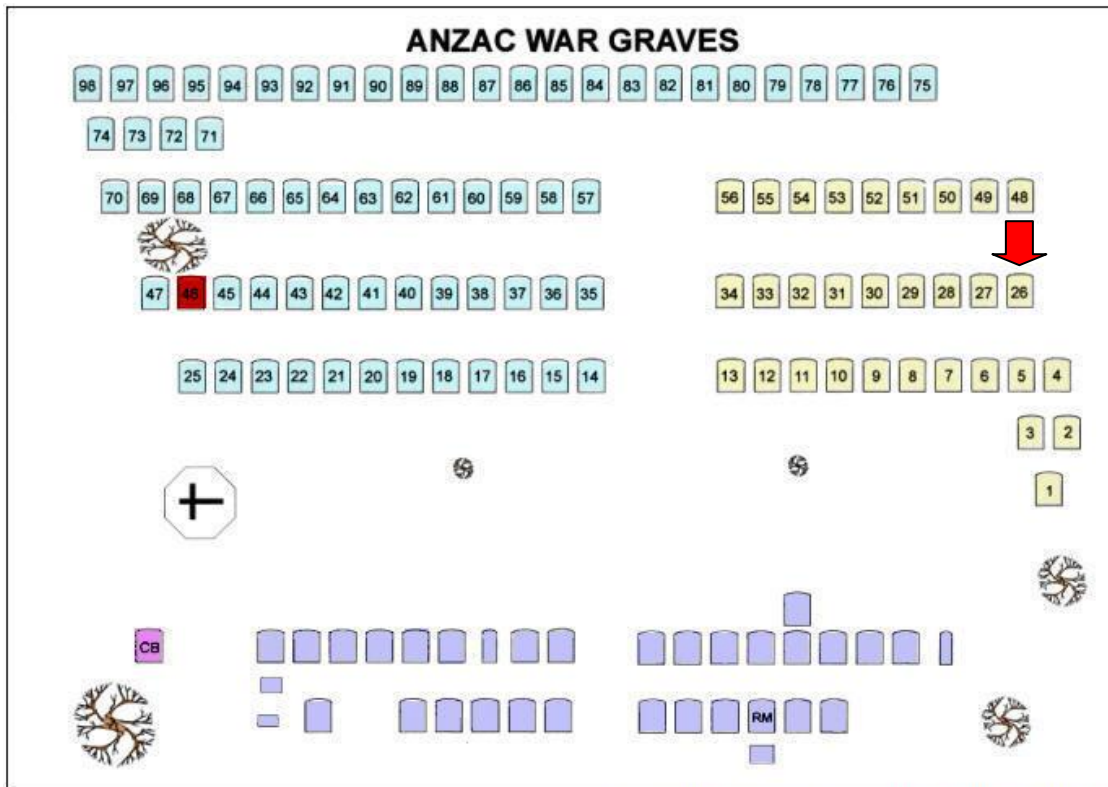
Cpl. A. J. Button does not have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone. Photo of Cpl A. J. Button's Headstone at Codford Anzac War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



*(Photo courtesy of Romy Wyeth)*



A Headstone for Cpl A. E. Button is located in Main Second Row (Right hand side)  
 Grave Plot #26 of Codford War Graves Cemetery (CWGC Reference - Grave #47)



- Australian Soldiers
- Welsh Soldier
- New Zealand Soldiers
- Local Burials
- UK Soldier

Codford War Graves map adapted from Brian Marshall  
 courtesy of Romy Wyeth



(Photo by Romy Wyeth 2013)



*(Photo by Romy Wyeth 2013)*