21502 CORPORAL
PERCY C BOXALL
ROYAL FLYING CORPS

Percy Charles Boxall
Tillington Church Choir c1912

The original Attestation (enlistment) Certificate for
the 4th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment signed by
Percy Boxall on 21st September 1914

Percy Charles Boxall was born in Tillington in Autumn 1893 and christened at All Hallows' Church on November 26th of the same year.

In 1911 Percy was 17 years old, a carpenter and living with his parents at Firgrove, Tillington. On September 21st 1914 Percy made his way to the Armoury in Petworth and attested (enlisted) in the 4th Reserve Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. After basic training Percy transferred to the Senior 4th Battalion where he completed his training in Cambridge and Bedford.

On July 2nd 1915 the battalion received orders to sail to Gallipoli. They left Devonport on July 17th aboard 'HMAT Ulysses' bound for Alexandria and then on to Sulva Bay where they landed on August 9th. This landing and the major landings two days before were uncoordinated and chaotic and many men were lost.
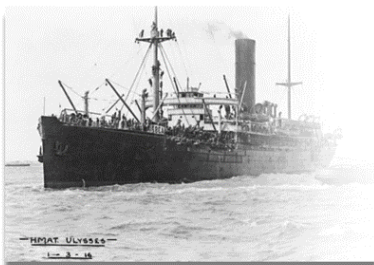

'Conditions on Gallipoli defy description. The terrain and close fighting did not allow for the dead to be buried. Flies and other vermin flourished in the heat, which caused epidemic sickness. Of the 213,000 British casualties on Gallipoli, 145,000 were due to sickness: chief causes being dysentery, diarrhoea and enteric fever'.
THE LONG LONG TRAIL 1914-18

On September 27th 1915 Percy was removed from Gallipoli and admitted to the 19th General Hospital at Alexandria suffering from dysentery. He returned to the UK aboard the Hospital Ship 'Asturias' arriving on November 8th when he was again admitted to hospital.

He recovered and on January 3rd 1916 Private Boxall returned to the reserve 2nd/4th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. On March 4th he was technically discharged from the Territorial Force, at his own request, so that he could re-enlist in the regular army to join the Royal Flying Corps (which was still part of the Army).

On March 5th 1916 Percy enlisted for the 'duration of the war' in the RFC. According to his RFC Attestation papers he was 22 years 151 days old, 5 feet 8½ inches tall and he had a 'fully expanded girth' of 37 inches. As a skilled carpenter he became a 'carpenter for rigger' at a pay of two shillings per day. He was posted to RFC Central Flying School at Upavon, Wiltshire where he must have found plenty of work repairing the wooden frameworks of early aeroplanes crashed by trainee pilots.

Central Flying School, Upavon,

Avro 504
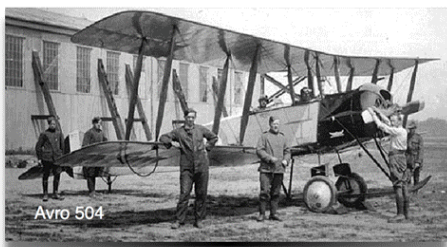
For the next eighteen months Percy enjoyed an uneventful period until the celebration when he was promoted to Corporal. Tragically this came to an end when on the morning of Wednesday December 19th 1917, at the age of 24, he was killed on the airfield at Upavon. An inexperienced pilot of an Avro 504 lost control of his aircraft as he taxied and his left wing collided with the left wing of a Moraine aeroplane which was about to take off. The left wing of this plane was being steadied at the time by Corporal Boxall and the right wing by another airman, as was usual for take off, and Percy was crushed between the two wings, killing him almost instantly.

Medal Card showing medal
entitlement

Corporal Percy Boxall's body was returned to Tillington and he is buried in the cemetery beneath a stone cross carved with the initials of the Royal Flying Corps, alongside his parents.

Moraine aeroplane

1914-15   British War   Victory
Star   Medal   Medal

*Have you forgotten yet?....
Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that
you'll never forget.*

Aftermath - Siegfried Sassoon