



Major Erle Finlayson Denton
FETHERS

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Major Erle Finlayson Denton

Officer Commanding A Company, 5th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force

Born 11th May 1887, East Malvern, Melbourne Victoria
[Birth certificate: 1887 12671 Malvern Vic]

Educated: Malvern Grammar School, Victoria

Single; Bank accountant, of Finch Street, East Malvern, Melbourne, Victoria

Next of Kin listed as: Father; James Denton Fethers. Mother; Amelia Charlotte Fethers (née Hooper), of Finch Street, East Malvern, Melbourne, Victoria

Photos of Major Fethers are known to exist in the following locations: Osboldstone Vic. Vol. Melbourne *Punch* 17 Sept 1914 p512 & 12 Nov 1914 p845 & 13 May 1915 p668. Melbourne *Herald* 5 May 1915 p1. *Argus* 6 May 1915 p8. *Age* 6 May 1915 p8. *Sydney Mail* 12 May 1915 p10. *Table Talk* 13 May 1915 p18

**Killed in action
25th April 1915
on the '400' (Lone Pine) Plateau
Aged 28**



5th Battalion, A.I.F.

Grave:

Lone Pine cemetery

Epitaph:

**In Loving Memory
Son Of Mr. & Mrs. J.D. Fethers
Melbourne**

Notes:

Previously served in Victoria Scottish Regiment. 2nd Lieutenant 1906, Lieutenant November 1907, Captain January 1912. Transferred to 48th (Kooyong) A.I.R. July 1914.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists NOK address as: 'Weyanoke', Kooyong Rd, Caulfield, Victoria. [This would be after the war, probably in the early 1920's).

Worked at National Bank of Australasia, Bairnsdale branch.

Brother of Major W.K. Fethers. Volunteered in Tasmania, where he was on business when war broke out.

'...started his military career very early in life as a bugler in a Scottish regiment, and worked his way up to a commissioned rank. Four or five years ago he was selected by the military authorities to go to India, where he spent six months with the British troops in training. On returning to Victoria he obtained his captaincy. ... He was promoted to the rank of major in Egypt.' Commanded 'A' Company. *Kalgoorlie Miner* 6 May 1915 p5).

'Major E.F.D. Fethers, of the 5th Battalion, was 28 years of age, and received his first commission in the Victorian Scottish Regiment in 1906 as 2nd lieutenant. He was appointed lieutenant in November, 1907, and promoted captain in January, 1912. He was military adjutant from 1908 to 1910, and was on the unattached list in India from 1910 to 1911. He was transferred to the 48th Infantry in July, 1914. His father (Mr. J.D. Fethers) lives in Finch street, East Malvern.' (*The Daily Herald*, Adelaide, 6 May 1915 p5).

Killed on the Lone Pine Plateau, 25th April: 'The scrub on Lone Pine was so thick that the men of Fethers' company had been lost to view before Saker's company went over the crest. Like Saker, Fethers, finding no firing line, had advanced his company through the scrub in search of one. He was a young Victorian accountant, a man of high ideals and well beloved by his men. He had led his company some 200 yards beyond the crest, when he fell dead, shot by a sniper. But the company went on.' (Bean Vol. 1 p382-4, 388 quoted, 389, 402).

'Of the third company of the 5th Battalion - Flockart's - a portion, in moving onto the Jolly, came upon the body of Flockart's bosom companion, Major Fethers. Flockart dropped down beside it and covered his friend's face with his cap.' (Bean V1 p389).

Mentioned in a letter from Lieutenant R.D. Fethers, *Argus* 14 June 1915 p7: 'I was unable to find anyone alive, so returned, and found Erle and Flock [Major E.F.D Fethers and Captain Flockart] with their company just behind the crest of the hill. I believe that a few minutes after Erle was hit, and died very heroically.'

'Fethers was killed by a sniper after advancing about 200 yards.' (Speed p40).

'Of course you know about poor Erle, we were standing quite close together, in fact he almost fell on me, got a bullet near the collar bone that evidently went right into his lungs, he only gave a gasp and went right out, poor chap - he was one of the best and one of the few who couldn't be spared. We were close together too when I got my bit, then we separated and when I saw him again he had got a nasty one in the leg. He was killed on the first day just about mid-day.' (Letter from Major R.P. Flockart [also later killed at Gallipoli] to his mother, dated 28 April 1915, 'at sea').

Lest We Forget