

James Samuel Denton



James Samuel Denton was born on the 11th of December 1875 to parents Cincinnatus Denton, a shipwright, and his wife Margaret Denton (née Smith) in Port Adelaide, South Australia. In 1887 the family moved to Melbourne where Denton began receiving an education, at age 12. From there James himself moved to Western Australia to work in the booming mining industry, joining the Western Australian Department of Mines and Railways on the 18 of November 1896 as a clerk, where he gained experience quickly and was employed as second in charge of a well known workshop on the West Midlands. He also met his wife in Western Australia, marrying Eleanor Annie Hembry in St. Paul's Anglican Church in Perth on the 5th of July 1899.

Denton was commissioned to the 11th Australian Infantry Regiment, or militia, as Second Lieutenant on the 22nd on November 1899, eventually promoted to Captain in 1907. Five years later he transferred to the 88th Infantry of Perth and was elevated to the rank of Major on 3rd of August 1914 although he restationed himself on the 18th of August to the Australian Infantry Forces. He was appointed as Captain and assigned to Officer Commanding 'D' Company of the 11th Battalion. The 11th Battalion left from Fremantle on board HMAT (Her Majesty's Australian Transports) *Ascanius* on the 2nd of November 1914 after only 2 weeks of initial training and arrived in Egypt to continue in early December.

The 3rd brigade, consisting of the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Australian Battalions, acted as 'cover' for the ANZAC forces during the Gallipoli landing on the 25th of April 1915. Denton came ashore just after 4.30am but was immediately shot in the leg by the Turkish troops strategically stationed on the surrounding cliff faces. However, he stayed on duty, relaying messages between the naval ship's guns and the field or mountain batteries. Further into the Gallipoli invasion Denton and 20 of his men held a trench from unwavering Turkish attacks for six days, it was only after then Denton decided he needed to visit the hospital ship for treatment to his festering wound.



(ANZAC, The Landing: A painting of the Australian troops landing in Gallipoli)

Denton returned to the trenches on the 12th of May 1915, the ANZAC troops were desperately holding the defensive line on the beachhead and he was eager to return to his mates on duty. The next month Denton was awarded the 'Distinguished Service Order' for demonstrating 'gallantry and devotion to duty', becoming the first in his brigade to receive this noble award. Despite Denton and the ANZAC's gallantry the Gallipoli battle was being lost and the Allied Forces were becoming overwhelmed. Denton was forced to evacuate on the 18th of July and was hospitalized on the small island of Malta, in the middle of the Mediterranean.



('Distinguished Service Order' medal)

The final ANZAC troops were evacuated from Gallipoli on the 20th of December 1915, with the last British troops leaving early the next month. Denton was cleared to join his mates of the 11th Battalion back where they started, in Egypt, in January 1916 and was promoted to Second in Command. Here, they welcomed reinforcements after some troops were relocated to the 51st Battalion to bring it up to full strength, and continued their training for the front line. Garrison (guard) duties were also carried out by the troops in and around the Canal Zone.



(11th Battalion colour patch)

The 3rd Brigade set sail for France on the 30th of March 1916 and the 11th Battalion was stationed at the small town of Fleurbaix, France on the 20th of May 1916, getting their first taste of action on the Western Front. From there they moved south into one of the better known battles of World War One; the battle of Pozières in the Somme Valley, between July and August 1916. It was a two week struggle and Australian units took heavy casualties, including many from the 11th Battalion. The Allied forces successfully drove back the (mainly German) Central Powers and took the surrounding plateaus. Pozières was described by Charles Bean, an Australian historian, as "more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on Earth." (*CEW Bean Letters from France Melbourne, 1917, pp.113-4*)



(A memorial representing the Australian troops that fought in Pozières)

From Pozières, Denton and his troops were ordered back up the line to Ypres, Belgium. Denton was also temporarily appointed as Lieutenant Colonel and Commander of his men. He led the 10th Battalion between the 27th and 30th of September 1916 at the famous battle of Hill 60 but was relieved of his duties on the 3rd of October 1916; Denton was then granted leave to return home to Australia to visit his gravely ill wife.



(A scene from the movie *'Beneath Hill 60'*)

3 months later Denton returned to Europe, he was briefly assigned to the 79th Battalion in England before crossing the English Channel on the 10th of September 1917 to join the 49th Battalion as Commanding Officer. The Battalion was stationed at Ypres, Belgium, and was heavily involved in the vicious trench warfare throughout the surrounding area, Denton was wounded only 3 weeks after arriving in France but continued to fight against the German forces.



(49th Battalion colour patch)

By this stage the Germans had broken the Russian border and were now focusing their manpower on the Western Front, Denton went onto command the 49th in various battles around Ypres until he was eventually injured again during gunfire in the battle of Dernancourt on the 22nd May 1918. Denton was ordered to return to England for treatment as he was in nowhere near a fit enough state to remain in the depths of the trenches and was evacuated against his will.

Denton never returned to the front line, instead being assigned as commander to the 3rd Training Brigade on Salisbury Plains, England where Australian troops arrived to complete their training for the front line after 1917. He stayed there until January 1918, after the armistice was signed, when he decided it was time to head home. Although his A.I.F appointment didn't finish until August that year Denton came back to Australia not long after January, over 3 years after his initial embarkment in Fremantle. His name was placed on the Army Reserves as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Once home Denton practically started a new life. He took up a career as a farmer before moving into politics. He became a member of the legislative Assembly for Moore on the beliefs that returning soldiers, like himself, would not be offered satisfactory rehabilitation unless political powers were made aware of the situation. Denton took it upon himself to improve life for returning ANZACS, attempting to catch people's attention and make them aware of their positions. Denton also married his second wife, Alice Donovan, in St Thomas Catholic Church, Claremont on the 22nd of February 1922. He spent the rest of his life in and out of politics, making a name for himself in West Australia by challenging the traditionalists. Denton passed away on the 3rd of June 1963 at age 87, survived by his wife, Alice, and son.

Denton demonstrated why the ANZAC spirit is so strong, in his efforts in the Battle of Gallipoli and the Western Front. Denton showed amazing Australian spirit, fighting on for his mates and the freedom of his country after taking a bullet on the Gallipoli Peninsula. He found himself in the same situation on the Western Front, and once again had the will power to seem immune to an injury most people would spend weeks in hospital for. This is a great example of a true ANZAC; a person who takes on what others wouldn't dare even dream of, Denton faced the horrors of war but still cared for his mates over anything else. The Australian troops of World War One showed extreme bravery in the face of a heartless slaughter and sometimes imminent defeat which is something I certainly am, and all Australians should be, proud of.



(The Rising Sun; the badge of The Australian Army)

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AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. *125-101* Name (Surname) *W. G. B.*
 in full (Christian Name) *James Lawrence*
 Unit *11th Field Battalion* *Reforming Unit*
 Joined on *August 11 1941*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? *W. G. B. James Lawrence*
2. In the Parish of *St. Michael*
 in the County of *South Australia*
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, please to be shown.) *No*
4. What is your Age? *32*
5. What is your Trade or Calling? *None*
6. Are you or have you been in Apprenticeship to a trade, and for what period? *No*
7. Are you married? *No*
8. Who is your next of kin? (A. Name and relationship to be stated)
 The names of any other persons shall be stated in the nature of a list. *None*
9. What is your permanent address in Australia?
10. Do you ever belong to, or have you ever served in, the Majesty's Army, the Marine, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state when and if not now serving, state nature of discharge.
11. Have you taken the oath, if any, of your previous service?
12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds?
13. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mothers.)
 Do you understand that no regular or allowance can be received in respect of your service abroad as long as you are together with pay would reach eight shillings per day?
14. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever?

I, *James Lawrence* do hereby certify that the above answers were by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and freely volunteering myself to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to abstain from any other employment of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my *wife* and children.

Date: *1/1/41* Signature of person enlisting: *J. Lawrence*

* This document should be stored out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 16 years of age. If there are children these should be stated.

Casualty Form - Active Service.

Regiment or Corps **11th Parachute (Repeating Unit)**
 Surname **DENTON** Christian Name **Thomas Thomas**
 Enlisted (a) _____ Terms of Service (a) **1941-45** months from (a) _____
 Date of promotion to present rank _____ Date of appointment to last rank _____
 Extended _____ Re-engaged _____ Qualification (b) _____
 or Corps Trade and Rate _____

Rank _____ Grade _____

Place of Birth _____

Date of Enlistment _____

Date of Discharge _____

Number of Years of Service _____

Number of Days of Service _____

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 149th Par Bn Lt Col. B. 213 from Harb. Capt. Eng Bn. 11/2/42
 AMEXPS, relinquishes appointment of Lt Colonel
 Official Comm. 11/2/42

216/114

BASE RECORDS OFFICE, A.I.F.F.
23rd November 1915.

29310

Dear Madam,

I am directed to forward herewith the following extract from the Third Supplement No. 29180, dated 3rd June 1915, to the London Gazette of the 1st June 1915, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by your husband, Major J. S. Denton B. S. O.

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COMPANION OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Major James Samuel Denton, 11th Australian Infantry Battalion (West Australia).

" During the operations in the neighbourhood of Mena Taps on the 25th April, 1915, for valuable service in obtaining and transmitting information to ships' guns and mountain batteries, and subsequently for holding a trench, with about twenty men, for over six days, repulsing several determined attacks."

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The above has been promulgated in Australian Military Orders No. 547 of 1915.

Yours faithfully,

Capt.
Officer i/o Base Records.

Mrs. E. A. Denton,
"Farnham"
Strathcona Street,
WEST PERTH W.A.

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Pictures

Personal Records- Mapping our ANZACS: James Samuel Denton (online) available at:
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Picture 1- Gallipoli Album: James Samuel DENTON (online) available at:
http://alh-research.tripod.com/gallipoli_album/index.album/james-samuel-denton?i=260&s=1, upload date unknown.

Picture 2- George Lambert: ANZAC, The Landing (online) available at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Anzac_the_landing_1915.jpg, uploaded 22nd June 2005.

Picture 3- Robyn Van Dyke: Distinguished Service order (online) available at:
<http://www.awm.gov.au/blog/2007/06/18/two-distinguished-light-horse-officers-named-donald-cameron/>,
uploaded 18th June 2007.

Picture 4- Australian War Memorial: colour patch of the 11th Battalion (online) available at:
http://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11198.asp, upload date unknown.

Picture 5- Gallipoli bike tour: Pozières (online) available at:
<http://www.gallipolibiketour2015.com/Plan/Plan.html>, upload date unknown.

Picture 6- Paramount pictures: '*Beneath hill 60*' (online) available at:
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Picture 7- Australian War Memorial: colour patch of the 49th Battalion (online) available at:
http://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11236.asp, upload date unknown.

Picture 8- anzacday.org.au: Rising Sun badge (online) available at:
<http://www.anzacday.org.au/education/afor/afor-r.html>, copyright 1998.