

Extract from *"The Fighting 10th"*, Adelaide, Webb & Son, 1936 by C.B.L. Lock;  
kindly supplied courtesy of the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn AIF Association Committee, April 2015.

## **STEELE, Alexander DCM MID DSO**

Born 20 August 1888 at Mount Gambier, South Australia.

Son of Dugald STEELE and Mother Elizabeth Burton (nee LAYWOOD).

Educated at the Mount Gambier Grammar School.

As a youth he worked for a bootmaker by the name of 'Beevor', who was a member of the local volunteer corps, and whilst at this occupation undoubtedly became determined to embark upon a military career.

On 16 August 1910, he joined the Instructional Staff of the Australian Military Forces, and for some considerable time was stationed at Gawler.

He was subsequently transferred to the Royal Military College of Australia at Duntroon, where he was instructing at the time of joining the AIF.

He was one of the first permanent officers to offer his services for overseas, and enlisted in the 9th Battalion at Brisbane, his regimental number being '41'.

He was subsequently appointed a Staff Sergeant-Major, and placed in charge of the Machine Gun Section of the 9th Battalion.

In 1914 he accompanied the original 9th Battalion on the *Omrah* to Egypt, and later proceeded on the *Ionian* to the Dardanelles, where he participated in the historic landing at Anzac on 25 April 1915.

He distinguished himself in the early fighting at Anzac, and was awarded the **DCM**, vide London Gazette on 3 June 1915, the official citation being:

*"From 25th to 29th April 1915, during operations near Gaba Tepe, for distinguished conduct in manning and maintaining his machine gun, which he continued to work after the remainder of his section had been killed or wounded."*

His rise to commissioned rank in the AIF was rapid.

On 28 April 1915, at Anzac, he was promoted to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, and on 4 August 1915, also at Anzac, he was made a Lieutenant.

He was promoted to the Temporary Captain whilst at Gebel Habieta, Egypt, on 28 January 1916 and attained his full captaincy on 20 February 1916.

He accompanied the 9th Battalion to France, where he received his majority on 5 August 1916, having previously been appointed to the Command of the 3rd Machine Gun Company.

He Temporarily Commanded the 10th Battalion during the absence on furlough of Lieutenant-Colonel R B Jacobs from 27 April to 11 May 1917. During this period the Battalion moved into billets at Bancourt, and then into trenches via Fremicourt, the Bullecourt operation ensuing. This was the third occasion that an officer from another unit temporarily commanded the 10th.

He was **Mentioned In Despatches** (MID), and received the **Distinguished Service Order** (DSO), which was promulgated in the London Gazette amongst the New Year Honours on 1 January 1917.

He Commanded the 3rd Machine Gun Company from 1916-17 and was killed in action at Broodseinde on 7 October 1917, whilst temporarily Commanding the 11th Battalion.

He was engaged to be married, and went over the top singing "Drink to me only with thine eyes," but never completed the first line.

He was regarded as a capable officer, keen on details, and a good soldier.

It is interesting to note that "Steele's Post" on Gallipoli was not named after him, but after Major T H Steel, of the 14th Battalion AIF.