



Lieutenant Joseph William COSTIN

[1891 – 1915]



9th Infantry Battalion

Joseph William Costin was born in Brisbane on 1 September 1891, the only son and eldest of the four children of William Charles Costin (Clerk of Parliament) and Ellen O'Donnell Costin (nee Sutton).

He was educated at Brisbane Grammar School between July 1905 and December 1908 when he was successful in the Sydney Junior Examination.

Joe was described as *quite short-sighted and slight of build*. His employment was recorded as telephone and telegraph engineer (Junior Assistant Engineer in the Post-Master General's Department).

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He acquired some military experience prior to the Great War; three and half years in senior cadets, and three and half years in the militia (Moreton Regiment).

Costin applied for a commission when enlistments for the AIF commenced and was appointed Lieutenant, 9th Battalion on 20 August 1914.

Three weeks after he had joined the AIF, Joe became engaged to Miss Viola Foss Larsen on 9 September 1914.

9th Battalion was the first ashore at Gallipoli, landing under rifle fire. The troops pushed inland until Turkish reinforcements held them and forced them back on 400 Plateau. Lieutenant Costin was the battalion's Machine Gun Officer and although he and his section landed in the second line of infantry, he was one of the leaders in the advance from the beach.

Lieutenant Costin was killed by a direct hit by shellfire later that day, 25 April 1915. He was one of 12 USC members killed in action at Gallipoli, and one of three from 9th Battalion killed on the first day.

Three eyewitnesses described the circumstances of his death:

...the men speak in the highest terms of their officers. Joe Costin.... did great work with his machine gun.... all of his men had been shot down, and he and his sergeant were firing two guns themselves.

About 12 o'clock I came across the Queensland machine gun section of the 9th Battalion. They were putting up a magnificent fight and drawing the fire of guns and machine guns on to themselves all the morning. There was only Bob Luckett and Lieutenant Costin left in the section when I joined it and if ever two men deserved the D.S.O. those two did. Then Luckett was wounded in the leg and Costin took the gun himself until he was wounded.

Lieutenant Costin ...would stop at nothing. Unfortunately, a shell burst and killed him instantly. Next morning (Monday) there were only two machine gunners left out of the 14 who landed.

A nurse in Cairo recorded what she had heard from patients:

Joe Costin (Lieutenant J. W. Costin) did grand work, they say. All his men were out, they say - and the last the boys saw of him was alone at his gun working for all he was worth...

Lieutenant Costin was only 23 years old. His remains were never recovered.

He is commemorated at the Lone Pine Memorial above Anzac Cove.



Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents