

Major Alexander Arthur Evans MC DSO



By Nicole Patrick

Early Life

Major Evans was born on the 3 November 1881 in Launceston, Tasmania. When Alexander was born, his father, Alexander, was a 36 year old soap manufacturer and his mother, Elizabeth, Grace (nee Groom), was 33 years old. Alexander Senior's factory, the *Steam Soap, Candle and Soda Crystal Works*, was located on the banks of the North Esk River. The factory was destroyed by fire in 1883 and later was rebuilt in Invermay. For some years the family lived in Foster Street and the Government Cottage in City Park, Launceston. Evans had five siblings, three brothers and two sisters. Of his three brothers, Theo, Robin and Frank, only one fought in World War One. Frank worked as a fitter and turner at Salisburys Foundry in Launceston prior to enlisting in 1914. Frank died of wounds on the 29 May 1915 on board the HS Gascon and was buried at sea between Imbros and Gaha Tepe. He is commemorated at the Lone Pine Memorial on panel seven.

Major Evans attended Launceston Church Grammar School, serving four years in the school cadets. He was a great student, playing many sports such as Rowing, Football and cycling for his school and becoming head boy.



Above: Alexander Evans
Elizabeth Grace Evans (mother)
Elizabeth Helen (Nellie) Evans (sister)

Nellie married Frederick George Dougharty, a bank clerk on 8 December 1915 at St John's Church, Launceston. They lived at 9 Brisbane Street; Launceston. Fred was killed in action on 23 April 1918 aged 41 and was buried at Meteren Military Cemetery. Mrs Dougharty was involved in many charitable organisations and fund-raising activities in Launceston, organising many children's balls at the Albert Hall. Nellie left Launceston in 1955 and died in Queensland on 8 August 1968, aged 82.

The Boer War

Evans served in the South African War with the 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen from March 1901 to May 1902 and was wounded, mentioned in dispatches and promoted from private to sergeant. He left for South Africa in 1901 from Hobart on the '*Chicago*'. He served in the Cape Colony, taking part in multiple operations against Scheepers Commando at Ganna Hoek in May 1901. For part of his service he was also a 'galloper' (mounted orderly) to the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Redvers Buller. He left Durban on the 22 May 1902 on the '*Manilla*' and arrived back home in Tasmania on the 25 June.





On returning home he maintained his great interest in the army, serving for five years with the Launceston artillery, and was appointed lieutenant in the senior cadets in 1912 and second lieutenant in the field artillery, Australian Military Forces (militia) in February 1914. By this time he had also distinguished himself as a great sportsman. He rowed for Tasmania, won major cycling events and represented the State in road races, sailed and played club football. On 7 July 1910, at St John's Anglican Church, Launceston, he married Gladys Jeanette Luttrell.

Enlisting In World War One

3rd Lt. A. B. de. Am. Col. **C.M. Form A. 22.**
(Revised 1.7.14.)

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

Application for a Commission in the *Australian Expeditionary Force*

No.	Particulars.	
1.	Surname ... } Other names (in full) }	<i>EVANS</i> <i>Alexander Arthur</i>
2.	Educational Qualifications... <small>(Certificate to be attached for notation at District Head-quarters.)</small>	<i>Full</i>
3.	Military Qualifications (previous Military Service, if any, to be stated) <small>(Attention is directed to third sub-para. of C.M. Regulation 66.) Present rank and corps to be stated.</small>	<i>5 years Australian Army</i> <i>1 " 40th B. F. A.</i>
4.	Date on which applicant qualified at a competitive examination for first appointment as 2nd Lieutenant (U.T. Regulation 132)	
5.	Present Civil Employment	<i>None</i>
6.	Date of Birth, and Age ... <small>(Certificate of Birth or Statutory Declaration to be attached for notation at District Head-quarters.)</small>	Date of Birth: <i>2/11/81</i> Age: <i>32</i> Years. <i>9</i> Months.
7.	If a British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject ... <small>(In the case of the latter, date and place of Naturalization to be stated.)</small>	<i>Yes.</i>
8.	Married or Single	<i>Yes.</i>
9.	Postal Address ... <small>PAY BOOK No. <i>70457</i></small>	<i>Forster St</i> <i>Launceston</i> Battalion Area.
10.	Next of Kin	<i>Mrs. A. Evans Forster St</i> <i>Launceston</i>

Date: _____ (Signature of Applicant) *Alex Evans*

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE.

In the cases of Candidates for Commissions in the Permanent Forces, Proceedings of Medical Board, in accordance with instructions contained in "Standing Orders for the Army Medical Services," will be substituted for this Certificate; such Board, however, will not be assembled until after the nomination of the Candidate to undergo examination has been approved by the Military Board of Administration.

I, _____ do hereby certify to the correctness of the following particulars respecting the above-named applicant. I further certify that the applicant is not ruptured, has not been operated on for Hernia, and is capable of bearing the fatigue incident to the performance of military duty.

Height *5 ft 7 in* Weight *10 - 2*
Chest Measurement *32 1/2 37* Eyesight *Good*

Signature of the Examining Medical Officer: *N. R. Katten Capt*

RECOMMENDATION AND CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.
(Not required in the cases of Candidates for Commissions in the Permanent Forces.)

I recommend that the candidate above named be appointed a _____ in the Corps under my command, and I certify:—

- That such appointment will be within the authorized establishment for the current year.
- That the provisions of U.T. Reg. 33 have been fully complied with, or
- That the provisions of U.T. Reg. 132 have been fully complied with.
- That all candidates higher in order of merit, by competitive examination, have been absorbed.

On appointment the candidate will be posted to _____ Squadron, Battery, or Coy., &c.

Date: _____ Commanding _____ Regt. or Corps.

RECOMMENDATION OF DISTRICT COMMANDANT.
Recommended, candidate considered suitable.

Date: *4th September 1914* *N. J. Clark* Colonel
Commandant *6th* Military District.

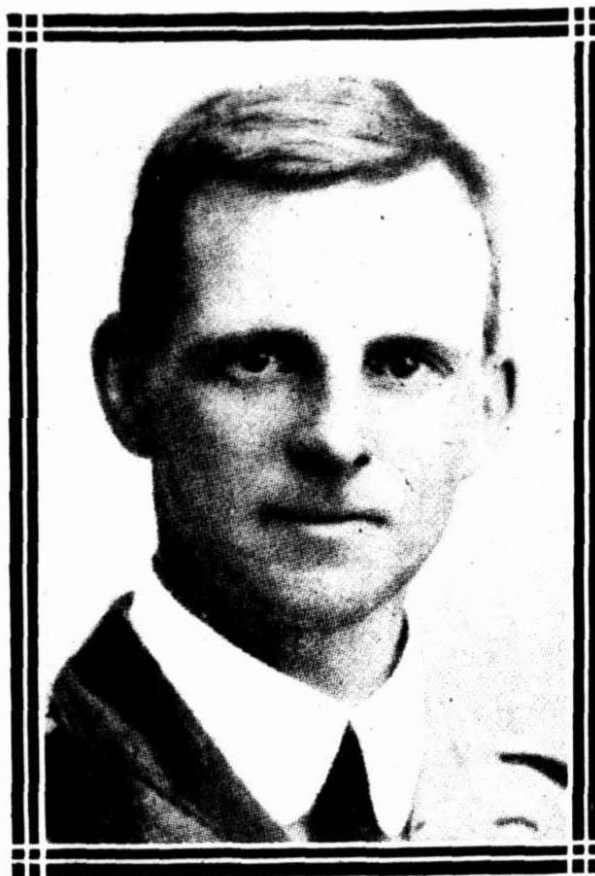
† Sub-para. not applicable to be struck out.
N.B.—Record of War Service (if any) to be shown on back of Form.
Seniority of Candidates as determined by competitive examination to be stated when two or more applications are forwarded on the same date.
D.367(7.14)—C.7218.

Gallipoli

On the 18 August 1914, Evans enlisted in the A.I.F and was appointed 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade Ammunition Column. He had two children, Beverley, born at Devonport on 31 December 1910 and two sons, born in Launceston; Alexander Lexican on 24 August 1913 and another son; Francis Raymond who was born on 3 July 1915.

He embarked for Egypt on the 20 October 1914 and was promoted to first lieutenant at Mena Training Camp in Egypt on the 16 February 1915. He reached Gallipoli on the 25 April, though his battery's guns were not taken ashore until early May. The 7th Battery went ashore at Anzac Cove on the 5 May 1915 and was transferred to the 9th battery a week later. He served with the 9th Battery at Razorback Ridge and Lone Pine. He was mentioned in dispatches and also received special mention in divisional orders for conspicuous gallantry in May and June. On the 7 August that year, Evans was wounded in the left arm and was only able to rejoin the battery again on the 22 September. He was awarded the Military Cross for his action when a Turkish shell struck a gun-pit, setting fire to ammunition and surrounding scrub. Dazed by the explosion, and at great personal risk, he organised survivors and extinguished the fire.

Suffering from slight concussion after the shell incident, Evans was away from the Peninsula from 11 November to 11 December and was only back ashore for eight days before evacuating Gallipoli with the rest of the ANZACS.



Lieut. A. A. Evans, M.C.

THIS gallant young officer belongs to the 9th Battery (Tasmania), 1st Division. He was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry under exceptionally trying circumstances on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Lieut. Evans served throughout the Boer War. His parents live at Launceston, Tasmania.



*For conspicuous gallantry at Anzac, Gallipoli Peninsular. When one of the enemy's shells fell in a gun pit, exploded seven rounds of 18lb ammunition and set fire to the brushwood covering the pit, Lieutenant Evans, though dazed by the explosion, assisted by only a few men, beat out the fire. He and his party were in great danger of being blown up by the explosion of a magazine which was threatened by fire.' **Military Cross Awarded 15 March 1916***

France & Belgium

Evans continued to serve as an artillery officer in France and Belgium in 1916-17; his units including the 9th, 103rd and 110th Batteries. He also served briefly as an artillery staff officer at 4th Division Headquarters. He was promoted to captain in July 1916, major in September 1917 and at the close of hostilities commanded the 10th Field Artillery Brigade as a temporary lieutenant-colonel. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in the King's birthday honours in 1918, was twice mentioned in dispatches and was wounded several times.

He fought at Fromelles as a member of the 110th Howitzer Battery, 5th Australian Division, in July 1916. He then fought in the Ypres Salient between 27 August and 10 November 1916, before moving to the Somme on November 25 and staying there until 25 February 1917.

After The War

After the war, Major Evans returned to his home town of Launceston and to Gladys and his three children. They were to have one more child, a second daughter named June, born on 19 September 1924. Evans continued to have great involvement in the local armed services. He played a significant part in the business and political life of Tasmania. After a short career in farming at Mangalore in Victoria and the Derwent Valley in Tasmania, he turned to accountancy in Launceston, becoming in 1922 a founding member of Evans & Garrott accountants and secretaries. He began a career in politics in the 1920's and was an alderman between 1922 and 1931 and became the mayor of Launceston in 1925. He entered parliament in 1936 and remained a member of the Legislative Council for Launceston until 1942.

He died on the 3 June, 1955 as a retired man in Hobart. He left behind his two sons, two daughters and his wife. Years after Evan's death, Rose Rae, one of Evans' daughter's daughters (his grand-daughter) wrote a 'memoir' about him. She wrote:

"My mother Beverley Evans was the eldest child of Major Alexander Evans MC DSO. She was four years old when her father went to Gallipoli and ten when he finally returned home to Launceston seven years later. Like many children at the time she was eager to support any effort to help with funds to help the soldiers fighting for their country.

The photo shown here is of a group of children in a fund raising pageant in Launceston in about 1917. My mother is the artillery Queen in the middle. She cherished this photo and was very proud of her father and his achievements in WWI. Alexander Arthur Evans was born in 1881 in Launceston, Tasmania and later died in 1955. He was educated at Launceston Grammar School and became a clerk. Evans served in the South African War

with the 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen from March 1901 to May 1902. He was wounded, mentioned in dispatches and promoted from private to sergeant. When back home Evans was a sportsman. He rowed for Tasmania, won major cycling events and represented the State in road races, sailed and played club football.

When war began in 1914 Evans was appointed as a second lieutenant in the 3rd Artillery Brigade and embarked in October with the first contingent. He was promoted lieutenant in February 1915 and reached Gallipoli on 25 April, though his battery's guns were not taken ashore until early May. During this service Evans received the Military Cross medal in Gallipoli and the Distinguished Service Order for his 'tireless work and valor' on the Western Front. He went on to be Mayor of Launceston twice and was an Independent in the Legislative Council. He called himself 'the soldiers' voice!'.



Children in a fund raising pageant in Launceston – Beverley Evans in the centre



Evans as Mayor of Launceston in 1925

A Pilgrimage to Evans

Dear Alexander,

I am standing here today in the place where you stood. Where you stood with so many other men. You fought the battle that raged on behind me, you fought with all you could.

In Launceston you were born and raised, you loved sport, just like me. You played footy and rowed for Grammar and joined the school cadets, then shortly after leaving school, the Boer War began. You served with the Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen, and experienced the 'adventure' of war. You returned home with only a minor wound, some would say you were lucky, but others would say it wasn't that brutal because only six Tasmanians died. But that was just the beginning of the horrors you would see.

On returning home, you would have been a changed man, you had experienced something that is hard for me to even image, you had experienced the war. You saw your brothers die, but I don't think the war ruined you, in fact you seem as though war inspired you to continue to serve your nation.

When war broke out again in 1914, you eagerly signed up. So once again on ship from Hobart, off to war you went. You left Tassie in October, trained in Egypt and then finally arrived on the shores of Gallipoli in early May. From the first days in combat you showed your true colours. You were strong, fierce and brave and not only protected yourself but also protected many other men. Stepping into that combat must have been so different from that in South Africa, yet you stayed strong, stayed tough and made sure you and many of your comrades made it out of that death trap alive.

And then, when you thought you had seen the worst of the war, you came here, to the land of snow and mud. You fought within the trenches and watched as they became filled with blood. I thank you for your service, in the war and back at home and leave you this token of thanks, to remember all you did. This is what I leave: a tie from your old school. A tie that my peers wear, just as you would have done. I leave this here in remembrance of you, because although you did not die upon this

battlefield, nor upon any other, I know a part of you would have been destroyed here. As a piece of every soldier is always left behind.

So whilst you got a military cross, and many other mentions for 'your service and valor' that is not what makes me remember you. The medals, rankings and mentions cannot bring to light what you experienced and cannot do justice to the bravery and camaraderie you showed. To be out on the battlefields would have been truly horrifying. But to stand along your brothers, to fight along your new found friends, I think that's what gave meaning to your sleepless weeks on end. That's what I'll remember today, as I stand where you once stood.



The Battle is Done

The battle is done, the battle is won
I hear my sergeant cry
But how? I still hear the thundering
Of shells falling from this dismal sky

I cry out in the darkness
But no one hears my call
I am alone in this carnage
This battle that consumes my all

I close my eyes and there he is
Lying helpless on the ground
I hear him whisper 'brother, please'
Alas, there the death bell sounds

There was is nothing that could save him
There was nothing I could do
His body is still forevermore
And my soul was split in two

So there he sleeps as in childhood
Untroubled where he lies
While a lullaby of whistling shells
Engulfs me-I am trapped beneath this vaulted sky.

A poem in memory of Major Evans to commemorate his effort in war and bring to light the mental trauma that almost all soldiers endured with little to no recognition of their condition.

