

Valentine was born in 1895 in Sydney, the son of Edward Gilbert Flemming and Julia Marguerite Flemming, nee Rose. He was one of seven children and his father, Edward who was some 22 years older than his mother, died in 1905, when Valentine was about 10 years old.

On 11th August 1914, Gilbert joined A Company, AN&MEF and was assigned the role of bugler. On his attestation papers, he stated that he was a motor driver, single and gave his mother, at 15 Council Street, Waverley, as his next of kin.

Whilst in Rabaul he forfeited 2 days pay for “refusing to obey and order” and reverted to private. He collected a German Bugle and drum whilst there, and these were donated to the Australian War Memorial, by his mother in 1925.

Valentine returned from Rabaul and was discharged, term expired, on 4th March 1915 after 206 days service.

Nine days later, on 13th May 1915, he joined the 6th reinforcements of the 4th Battalion, reg number 2262, again as a bugler, and departed Sydney aboard the KAROOOLA on 16th June 1915. Unbeknown to him at that time, his younger brother Geoffrey Lionel Flemming, number 1874, was killed on the same day, on Gallipoli. Geoffrey who was a “boy” soldier enlisting at under 16 years of age. His story is recounted in “The Lost Boys”, Paul Byrnes, Affirm Press, 2019.

His older brother, 2/Lt Richard Alfred Flemming was also at Gallipoli and was wounded on 13th May 1915 and was repatriated to Australia in October 1915. Valentine arrived on Gallipoli on 4th August and was taken on strength by the 4th Battalion. Two days later he was killed at Lone Pine. He was initially reported as missing and his death was confirmed only through reports from his compatriots – his body was never found. Private F McCormack, 2195 stated in an interview on 6th March 1917 – “I have already given information with reference to this man to the Red Cross Searchers at Malta, and again here, previously. I knew Flemming well. He came. I think, from Granville. He was a bugler in the 6th Reinforcements. He was very tall and thin and fair. He joined about a week before we left Liverpool. I saw his dead body in the second line of Turkish trenches, shot through the heart. His coat was torn off. I passed quite close to him, and am quite sure it was him. This was on Saturday, 7th August 1915. At Lone Pine. I do not know whether he was ever buried. I was by myself when I passed him. We always held this line of trenches, as we took and held the third line.”

The confusion about his death arose as one witness who knew him reported that he had seen him in Cairo on 31st August who stated that “...apparently Flemming had lost his memory.” Such was the fog of war.

He is remembered at the Lone Pine Memorial #2, and on Panel 40, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.