

MacFarlane's Lantern

Newsletter of the Clan MacFarlane Society, Australia, Inc.



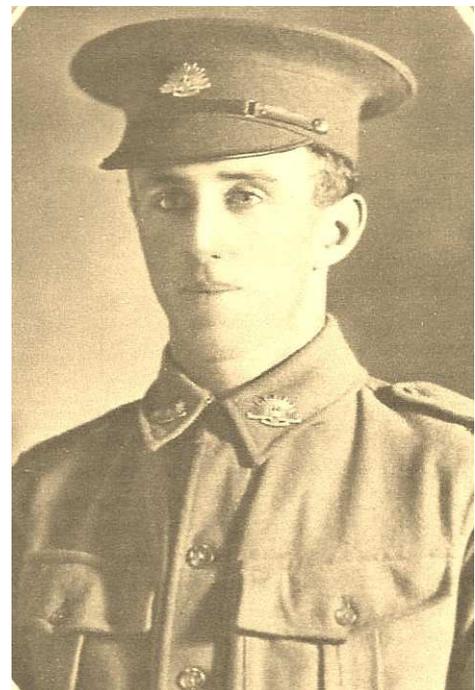
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As this year also marks the Centennial Anniversary of the start of World War 1, we are proud to remember and honour the many brave Australians who volunteered and served their country during that tragic period.

In 'Lantern' No. 130 we ran the story 'Cardross MacFarlanes and Australian Descendants.' The soldier pictured here is Private Albert Leslie (Les) McFarlane (1888-1973), 2nd son and one of eight children of John and Annie McFarlane (nee Peterson) of Nicholson, Victoria, whose family featured in our previous article in March this year.



Les enlisted at Bairnsdale on 20th March 1915, and resigned from the volunteer 13th Australian (Gippsland) Light Horse Regiment - Bairnsdale (previously called the 10th Australian Light Horse Regt. No 4 Squadron) in which he had served for 5 years. After basic training at Broadmeadows and Seymour camps, he sailed from Sydney Harbour on SS *Ceramic* (A40), on 25th June 1915. The following extract from his diary includes his experiences over a two week period from the point of embarkation in Egypt on August 1st 1915 as one of the 37,000 troops who took part in the second major offensive at ANZAC on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Les was taken on strength of Battalion at ANZAC on 5th August 1915. The second offensive was launched on the 6th August with a diversionary attack on Lone Pine, which in three days of frantic hand to hand combat cost over 2,000 Australian lives. Les McFarlane was held in the reserve trenches but was wounded by shrapnel on August 11th suffering a compound fracture of his right arm and right leg and was evacuated by hospital ship to St Elmo Hospital Valetta Malta, where his right leg was subsequently amputated below the knee on 20th August. Following two months convalescence he embarked HS *Kanowna* at Malta for Australia on 5th October, arriving at Melbourne on November 22nd 1915. After further hospitalisation and rehabilitation he was declared medically unfit for further duty and was discharged from the AIF on June 1st 1916. Les returned to farming in East Gippsland, and in May 1923 he married Gertrude Logan of Bairnsdale. They raised three children John (Jack), Jean and Heather on their Johnsonville property.

Although Australia had legally become a country in its own right in 1901, militarily it remained loyal to the United Kingdom during the next two major wars. Thus, Australian service personnel took the following:

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY PERSONS BEING ENLISTED

I Albert Leslie McFarlan swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord in the Australian Imperial Force from [insert date] until the end of the War, and a further period of four months unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed or removed therefrom; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law. So Help Me God. [Signature of person enlisted].

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This group photo shows Les, standing (right), with family members and friends about the time of his enlistment. The soldier (left) is Private Edward Stanley Burt, a good mate who marched off to war with Les and served at Anzac: he survived and returned home but died in 1919.



Most of what we know about Les McFarlane comes from official Australian Infantry records and his own written diary. Although not generally encouraged by military top brass, many common soldiers kept written notes about their active army life – what follows are a few extracts from Les's diary, which relate to his experiences over a two-week period from the point of embarkation in Egypt on August 1st 1915 as one of the 37,000 troops who took part in the second major offensive at 'ANZAC' on the Gallipoli Peninsula, to his time waiting on a hospital ship at Imbros.

MONDAY 2ND AUGUST 1915 (Mediterranean Sea).

(Sic) "Day fine and warm. Steaming slowly across the Mediterranean, passed one or two vessels. Assisted the doctor with the sick parades, and wrote some cards to home. We were each issued with one hundred and fifty rounds of ball ammunition, made me feel as though I was now a fair Dinkem soldier. Now travelled at night with lights out. Blew fairly hard through the night and the sea was pretty rough. Post card to Duncan and Aunt E. and home."

THURSDAY 5TH AUGUST 1915 ANZAC (Assault on Lone Pine)

(Sic) "Spent the day in the trenches With (no) food or tea, just had our water bottles which have to last us 48 hours. Shells were flying about in every direction and a continuous rifle fire is kept. The Turks are entrenched about 15 yd to 450 yd? Aeroplanes are continually flying over us and dropping bombs. Stan and I are split up. Went to sleep close to the firing line as supports."

SATURDAY 7TH AUGUST 1915 ANZAC

(Sic) "Day very busy and our boys advanced in many places and captured more trenches and took a good many prisoners. The Tommies affected a landing at Salt Lake and advanced several miles inland. The warships took a great part in the attack. It was a great sight to see the war vessels firing their broadsides. Have not seen Stan since Thursday and spent most of the day carrying rations."

WEDNESDAY 11TH AUGUST 1915 ANZAC

(Sic) "Still lying in our Saps and it was at 12 noon that a high explosive shell burst through the roof of our Sap and caught three smashing my foot and making a lot of small wounds on my legs and arms and breaking another man's nose, the third only received small scratches. I was completely knocked out by the explosion and the pain was very great had it dressed and was removed to the beach then to the hospital ship where they took my foot off in front of the ankle".

Fate moves mysteriously in wartime conditions. Here we see how Les McFarlane, like thousands of other fit young Australians, stepped forward to serve his country in March 1915. In August same year in Gallipoli, having had little or no direct contact with enemy forces and located in a comparatively 'safe' area as a reserve, he was badly wounded by enemy shrapnel which rendered him unfit for further active service and leading to his ultimate discharge on 1st June 1916. From what we know, it appears that Les's good mate Pte. Stan Burt fared not much better, having contracted Jaundice shortly after arrival, in Gallipoli which resulted in a history of ill health, leading to other respiratory ailments. He was drafted back to Australia in April 1916.



Once again we are indebted to Researcher **Pam Sherlock (photo left)** for her valuable input to this article and for the further notes on Gippsland shown elsewhere in this edition. **(See Page 10).**