

In NZ today we are safe and enjoy freedom because of what our fore-bearers fought for and sacrificed 100 years ago in WWI and again 76 years ago in WWII.

100 years since it almost feels like now.

As I revisit my family history and focus on my grand uncles that fought in North Africa at and the Eastern European Front, I read the final three letters from three brothers to sister Milly at home. Hunter Fairbairn was involved in fighting the Turks at the Suez Canal and surrounded by death and wounded. The realism in their writings feel like it is an event currently existing.

At the start of WWI the Fairbairn family had three sons who enlisted to go to war. Hunter joined the Otago Infantry Regiment of the NZ Expeditionary Force 14/8/1914. Hunter died of wounds receive in the Dardanelles on 3/5/1915 age 21 years, buried in Turkey.

Brothers Hedley and Colin joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces as they were living and farming in Canada at the time. Hedley was gassed in France and hospitalized while most of his fellow soldiers were killed or wounded. He soon recovered and returned to the battle front in France where he was able to survive the war. Colin followed Hedley to France after his training at Otterpool Camp in Kent, England. He was killed in action along with many other good men and is buried in Lochre Cemetery in Belgium.

Three sons fighting a war on the other side of the earth in different countries, for different armies, against different enemies, in crazy situations and horrific conditions in order to preserve the peace of our country, and others, that we cherish today. **Lest We Forget**

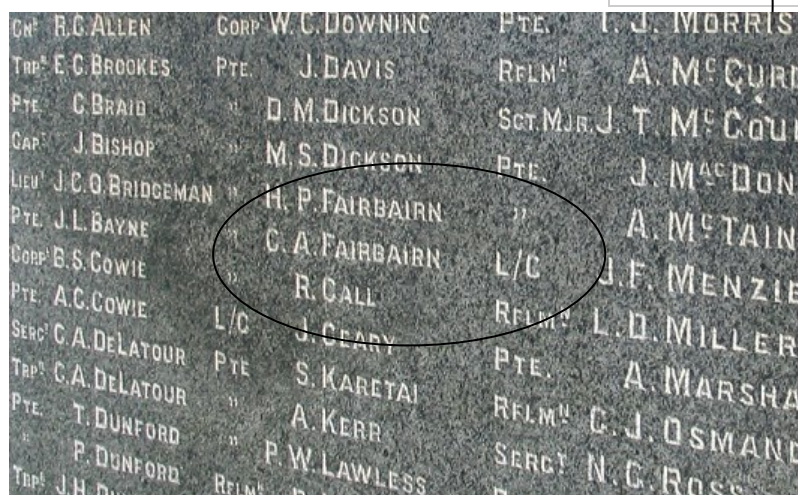
Over the page you can read Hunter's letter to his sister Milly.



Mike Donaldson, Ex RNZN and North Shore Boy in a memorial ride to Gallipoli in April 2015

We are very proud of you Mike. What a great honour.

Lest We Forget



Otago Peninsula Former Soldiers Memorial Plaque

In early December 1917, in the mountains around Jerusalem, two British Army officers were discussing the war and its probable aftermath on the eve of a battle. One of them, in a premonition of his death, requested his fellow officer to remember him and the millions of others who would die during the War: "Lend us a moment of it [your time] every day and through your silence is greater than you know". The following day the speaker, as he had foretold, was killed. His companion, Major W. Tudor Pole, never forgot his comrade's last request and at the outbreak of the Second World War campaigned tirelessly to implement a daily observance of silent prayer. **"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them".**

Zeitoun Camp,
Cairo. Feb. 3. - 13

Dear Milly,

I was very glad to receive your letter last week, but it was very short and sweet. We were up at the Suez Canal at the time, having a bit of fun with some Turks, as I suppose you will know, but it all ended too quickly for our liking. We were about five weeks away altogether, just arriving back here last Friday night, where, I think, we will be only stopping a short time by the sounds of things. We heard today that we would be away within a week, but where it is hard to say. Some say one place and some say another, but we don't know, and don't care much either.

Our reinforcements, the first lot, have arrived, and starting their training the same as we did. We were rather glad to see them, for they brought butter, sugar, milk and all sorts of things that we were out of. Up at El Kubri we had to go rather hung,



sometimes, for the first week or so, we had only one feed per day issued to us, and for the rest, if you could steal, it was a case of go without. So you may be sure we did a bit of rooking from the natives and the supply stores, but today we had bread, butter and jam for dinner, a thing we could not even dream of before.

You were saying you had called the baby Hunter, well the girls told me so but I thought it was only in fun. ~~for they say anything.~~ But I must so. I wish I could just drop in some of these afternoons again as I did in Taku and see him and you all again, but I will do that to again, but I rather think it will be some time yet by the way things are going. Our chaps are all very strong and fit just now and are tanned as brown as berries with the sun. We are all used to sleeping out in the open at nights too, for we had to do so most of the time we were up at El Khabri, which,

by the way, is a Turkish Port about six miles out of Suez, where all our supplies came from.

It was rather more exciting up there, then it is here, you see there was hundreds of boats of all kinds warships and all, going through the canal, and then we were always expecting an attack at anytime, and we could watch the airships from Suez, going out every day scouting. At first we all thought an airship a wonderfull thing, but now, when they fly over our heads we don't eve go out of our tents to see them, unless it happens to be a new kind.

Well Mill, I am afraid I must stop for I have some great holes in my socks to darn tonight before the others come in, for there won't be any room then, our tents are so full. But if you write again I will always answer you if possible.

So I will close, with love to all.

From Egypt.

Hunter

As I put this document together, I realise that there are thousands of families that have also experienced great losses through wartime exposure and it saddens us that we lost very, very, good people and so many loved ones. I take strength from having a better understanding of that period of time through these precious letters I have. I have one each from Hedley and Colin and although I've never met them, I now feel as if I have. My dad's brother was killed in WWII in a POW camp in Italy just a few days after the armistice was signed ending the war and my own brother Jack was killed in Vietnam in 1969 at 21 years of age as part of the NZ Army deployment there. This is a very special time for me and my family so we will be on parade on ANZAC Day to remember and give thanks that we are able to live free in this great country of New Zealand and never forget the lives those killed never got to live.

This link is well worth opening as there are some very moving and informative stories from our NZ troops and exploits:
www.anzacsightsound.org

Safe families using safe beaches and living in a safe land.



Jack



For many years, the numbers attending our Anzac Parades around the country have steadily increased and this year will be no different except that the increase is likely to be huge. If you have never attended a Dawn Service before, I strongly urge you to consider doing so on Saturday. Parades start about 0545 hrs marching to the respective cenotaphs and the experience will be something that will stay with you for many years to come. There will be old war veterans marching on what may seem to be their last legs but they manage and treasure this special day. I'll be in the Browns Bay parades so perhaps I'll see you there.

Contact: wayne@safernorth.nz

Ph 09 929 2313