MARY FIRTH

COTTAGE: Arthur Thomas 13.6.1882

Beatrice Elizabeth 26.4.1892 (Mother). (m William FARLEY 7.1.1917)

Cyril George 6,8.1893 Leonard Llewellyn 1.1895 Harold Beversham 20,6.1897.

Migrated from England to Perth in 1912 on S S ORSOVA.

In W W 1 Cyril George & Leonard were killed in action & Uncle Harry suffered for the rest of his life with War Gas & Schrapnel wounds.

7th January 1917 my Parents were married in Perth. Uncle Arthur (an invalid) stayed with them. To help the war effort they made 100's of pairs of Khaki woollen socks on a special sock knitting machine they had acquired. When Uncle Harry returned & after much hospital treatment the 2 invalid batchelors settled on an orchard at Roleystone.

I am the youngest of 5 born (19.7.1927). During the horrible depression years we existed how we could – plenty of bartering & swapping & hand-me-downs. If we could acquire a pair of shoes at least we had socks to go with them-even if they had to be stuffed with paper to make them fit.

Mt Dad died in December 1933. (No Widows Pension or Child Endowment those days) We survived & existed on my Mother taking in laundry + the barter system. One of the reciprocal deals was with Gable-Williams School of Dancing & Acrobating who taught us girls & we became 2 of the Eight Rascals – performing for Charities.

During W W 2 we entertained the Troops of Australia & U S A (on R & R leave) with our routines – mainly at Government House Ballroom, The Embassy Ballroom & the Luxor Theatre. Sometimes we were taken to Army Camps – we were extremely popular with the troops. One night I recall one of the makeshift partitions gave way & I received a nasty gash by my ankle bone. The soldiers were wonderful to me & after treatment & much attention I was taken home in an Army Vehicle – excitement for me – caused quite a stir in Basinghall St East Victoria Park.

Besides our entertaining the troops which was weekly, we had fund-raising events – 1 being Popular Girl Competition based on who raised the most money (many concerts held which brought in considerable funds) which was won by meg sister.

I was 12 at the time W W 2 started & learnt to knit by making Khaki scarves for the Troops. My first attempt was a shocker, but I soon mastered the art & made many scarves & mittens. My Uncle again made socks on the machine – I was able to work the plain rounds with him doing the tricky heels.

When I went to Perth Central Girls School, James St, we learnt to cook Fruit Cakes for the Troops. These were cooked in biscuit tins – sometimes in special tins supplied with lids. I don't remember just how many of these we made. They were sealed, wrapped in Calico & sent away.

We were Family to many Naval Personel both Australian & English. An Officer was based on HMS MAIDSTONE, a Submarine Mother-ship, who helped immensely by supplying butter, tea & sugar. We raised chooks so had plenty of eggs & swapped coupons with neighbours for flour etc. My Uncles supplied us with home dried sultanas, currants, peel

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etc for the cakes. I read with interest my Father-in-Laws Diary 1917 where had received a Fruit Cake & how they had enjoyed it while fighting in France – so 60 years later it was lovely to hear how much the parcels meant to the young lads so far from home.

One Brother joined the Merchant Navy, my sister went to work in the Munitions Factory in Welshpool, the eldest sister's Husband was a RAAF Gunner- took part in the Battle of Britain. We helped look after the 2 children, staying with them. Perth was considered too dangerous so students were sent to various suburbs – mine Victoria Park. We had staggered hours – I attended in the morning before 8 am finishing around 1 pm (then the afternoon group started & finished 5 pm) The School was quite close to where my Married sister lived, & to the Hall where we had our dancing practice.

My eldest brother had Polio as a young boy & spent much of his youth in hospital or in plaster, but he, Mum, my Married sister kept the Laundry business going with help from the rest of us whenever possible.

We had to make all our own costumes for the concerts so had to swap lots of fruit & vegetables for clothing coupons. The Soldiers really enjoyed the Eight Rascals acrobatic routines the best, the Chorus with all the high-kicks & Tap dancing. My Toe Dancing solos were very popular.

There were sad times (Mum's 2 brothers who remained in England were killed in Air-raids) but there were happy times - being taken over the HMS MAIDSTONE, keeping the troops entertained when they were on R & R, memories that will live forever.

In 1945-47 I worked for the Repatriation Department, Riverside Drive, Perth (bottom of Supreme Court Gardens). It was an extremely busy time with Soldiers, Sailors & Airmen returning from active duties. Medical Reports to be typed, requests for Tools-of-Trade, Switchboard duties etc – we worked long hours. Many of the staff suffered injuries in the war, but they managed various jobs with their gripping attachments (claw for a hand) all types of physical damage & emotional stress. There was a job to do to rebuild their shattered lives – by working together as a unit, seeing a workmate suffering a bit more etc kept us tight together.

Australia has a lot to thank these people for all rhey did & how they overcame their problems, thus making Australia the Great Country it is today.

GIVING THEIR ALL WHEN MOST NEEDED...

MARY FIRTH MEE FARLEY -Born EAST VICTORIA PARK WA 19.7. 27

FARLEY STAND - WACA GROUND ERECTED IN APPRECIATION OF ALL HE HAD DONE (CRAND FATHER)

Australian Portable Diary 1917. No. 24. Thur 14 June Left Amesbury 12 noon arrived Southampton 2 pm left 6 pm & anchored off Isle of Wight to 9 pm arrived at 4 am at Havre. Went over on a paddle boat.

Fri 15 'Issued with gas helmets & Hat.

Mon 18 Went through two gas chambers up at the Bull Ring & passed in gunnery Mon 25 Marched out of Base Camp at 6 pm, entrained at Havre.

26th Arrived at Rouen 7 am & marched to rest hut. Left 11 pm

Arrived at Albert 9 am & marched out to Base Camp & joined 2nd Division.

29th Left camp Bousincourt via Albert to Montiany to join Trench Mortar School 30th Digging gun pits.

Sun 8 Loading ammunition on G S Wagon

9th Reveille 3 am left Avloy 6 am Stopped 3 pm Orville

10th Reveille 4 am left Orville 6 am stopped at Sartone 12 noon – per foot Reveille 4.30 am Left Sartone 7 am arrived Foufflin-Ricametz at 2 pm

12th Stopped at Foufflin-Ricametz in Chateau where german spies once lived & had wireless instruments - good billet.

13th Reveille 3.30 am left at 6 am passed through Pernes & stopped at Nedon overnight

Reveille 4 a m left at 6 am passed through Lillers & Aire - billeted at Rocqueur

Reveille 4.30 am left 6.30 am Rocqueur stopped 2 miles south of Eassel.

Reveille 3.30 am left 5 am passed through Eicke & stopped at Codewaersvelde Reveille 2,30 am left Codewaersvelde at 5 am & camped just behind firing line at 11 am near Peperinghe plenty of shell fire at Dickebusch. Had both in Shell hole. 19th Called out at 5.30 am & proceeded to Munition Dump at Clytte. Working 12 hr a day. Things very lively at night. We are on the Ypres front

Fritz's aeroplanes dropped bombs all around us at 11 pm

Still bombarding heavily

Bombs dropping just after dark.

Heavy rain ground Very Muddy

9/8 Fritz brought one of our balloons down in flames, & we got two of his ten

10th Left Ammunition dump in morning & joined Unit. In afternoon went to A S C Dump at Reninghelst

11th Out at 4 am to railway siding to get supplies

12th Went to Lecture on America & the War at Reninghelst YMCA

17th Fritz dropped bombs in Reninghelst - many friends killed.

18th Received letter from Lt Col Finlay O C 47th Battalion stating Jack Millar had been killed in action at Messines on 7th June 17 ** Went up on hill & could see Lille, Ypres & Aisne

**(Jack Millar married Ethel Dean Firth - their son John 12 months old) **

22nd Dived down & pulled up a man in swimming pool at Reminghelst, but he was drowned.

Sep 6 12 months since left home.

11th Up at 2 am & went to Gun Pits through Ypres. Digging gun pits. Fritz shelled very heavy at night sending over many gas shells.

12th Fired 12 rounds to find target. Fritz blew out two of our guns. When going up to push our gun back in pit Fritz dropped a shell by me & wounded me in three places at 7.30 pm. Had wounds dressed, & carried over to A M C hut to wait for motor which came at 9 pm & took me to Diskebruch to our A M C to get wounds dressed & left for Remy at 12,30 am

After about an hour I was operated on. Have been put on Red Cross Train.14th 14th Arrived at Etaples 2.30 am went under X-rays for ankle 10 am

22nd Left Camp at 10 am & train left Etaples at noon arriving Calais 5 pm & disembarked at Dover & entrained.

23rd Disentrained 1 am at Opington & motored to Ontario Hospital
 22/10 Motored from Ontario Military Hosp Orpington Kent to Dartford Hospital.
 17/12 Transferred from Westham Camp to Monte Video Camp Weymouth.

COTTAGE Leonard & Cyril killed in action at Gallipoli.

COTTAGE Harold Benjamen wounded in action in France & suffered gas damage. Returned to live at Roleystone, Perth.

Extracts from the diary of Gunner John Dean Firth No 28710 2nd D,A,C, A.I.F. Abroad.

Left Fremantle 6th Sept 1916 on troopship A 17 Port Lincoln. Anchored at Williamston at 6 pm on the 12/9/16. Left Williamston for Port Melbourne 6 am on 13/9/16 & disembarked at 9 am, then marched through the city to Flinders St Station & entrained at 11 am, detrained at Footscray & marched out to Maribymung about three miles with all our kit on & being a very hot day made us

Left Melbourne by troopship A 38 Ulysses at 3 pm on 28th Oct 16. The first port was Durban on 13th Nov at 2 pm. Wednesday 15th routemarch in morning. 16th Routemarch in morning & left Durban at 5.30 pm passing several ships on our way to Capetown where we arrived in the port at 7 am on Sunday morning but were not allowed to land & had usual church service, throw a few letters overboard, & left again at 3 pm. Sighted land 29th & 1 pm came into port at Sierra Leone. Here were four Cruisers & about eight transports. The natives came around our boat selling oranges 20 for 1/-

8th Remainder of Battleships went out.

9th two Troopships came back. Warships went out again.

10th French Warship came in

13th 9 Steamers came in including two Warships

14th in the morning two Warships went out & at 4 pm our ship with four other troopships & an auxiliary Cruiser left port.

15th Dec all 6 ships all about one mile apart & well out to sea.

21st Dec ship started taking a Zig-Zag course.

25th Dec Christmas Day not bad under conditions. In the afternoon we saw clouds of smoke on the horizon, which eventually turned out to be seven destroyers. They seemed just like so many flying fish cutting through the water at about thirty knots an hour.

27th Dec 16. Still at sea with destroyers all round us

28th Dec passed Lizard Hd lighthouse at 5 am, passed Eddystone at 8 a.m. & reached Plymouth at 10.30 am, here we anchored. At 5 pm entrained & first stop was Exeter at 10 pm here we had a bun & cup of tea provided by Mayoress of Exeter. Next stop was Amesbury at 2 am on 29 Dec 16, here we detrained and marched about 4 miles to camp where we arrived at 4,30 am at Larkhill Jan 1 1917 Monday Had gun drill all day on old 15 pound gun.

On Fatigue - Inoculations, training, gun drill, walking horses etc. Very cold

Thurs. Feb 1. 12 months since I went to Drill Hall & passed for A I F Fri 2 Put on Gas Helmet for first time.

Tue 6 Went into Gas Room for first time.

Wed 7 12 months since I went into camp with A I F

Tue 17 April Received by the King on Bulford Plains

Thur 7 June 17 Warned for Draft to France & medically examined.



	Certificate of Character on discharge of No. 2840 (Rank) Former
	(Name) FIRTH - John Deen-
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AUSTRALIAN	IMPERIAL



EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

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