

Letters from
L/ Cpl John Robertson Hawke
A. I. F. 3164 B
from
Codford, Wiltshire
1919



The University of Wollongong Archives holds around 200 letters written by John Robertson Hawke to his parents & family during World War 1. The Collection can be seen [here](#).

Of these 200 letters that are in the Collection –the last 4 letters were written from Codford, Wiltshire.



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John Robertson Hawke

John Robertson Hawke was born in Burnbank, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Scotland on 17th May, 1890 to parents Richard & Grace Hawke.

The 1891 Census for Scotland recorded John Hawke as a 10 month old living with his parents at No. 5a Gladstone St, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Scotland. Also included were his parents – Richard Hawke (aged 27) & Grace Hawke (aged 27) & older brother Edward (aged 2).

The 1901 Census for Scotland recorded John Hawke as a 10 year old living with his parents at 14 Stewart St, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Scotland. Also included were his parents – Richard J. Hawke (aged 37) & Grace Hawke (aged 37). Five children were included in the household – Edward (aged 12), then John R., Susan (aged 9), Thomas R. (aged 3) & George (aged 9 months).

John Hawke, aged 17, departed from London on the *Marathon* & arrived in Australia (Brisbane & Sydney) on 22nd June, 1908. Also listed in the passenger list was Mr Grace Hawke (born 1866), Mr Edward Hawke (born 1889), Miss Susan Hawke (born 1893) & Master Tom Hawke (born 1899).

John Robertson Hawke enlisted with 1st Infantry Battalion, 10th Reinforcements of the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) on 21st June, 1915 at the age of 25 at Liverpool, NSW. He was a Coal Miner living at Alfred house, 33 Llewellyn Street, Balmain, Sydney, NSW. His next of kin was listed as his father – Richard James Hawke of 33 Llewellyn Street, Balmain, Sydney, NSW. His religion was listed as Presbyterian & his service number was 3164.

Pte John Robertson Hawke embarked from Sydney on 8th October, 1915 on HMAT *Warilda* (A 69). 10th Reinforcements embarked at Tel el Kebir, Egypt on 6th January, 1916.

Pte John Hawke was admitted to Hospital from 20th January to 24th January, 1916 suffering from Diphtheria then rejoined his Battalion.

On 22nd March, 1916 Pte Hawke proceeded from Alexandria, Egypt to join British Expeditionary Force in France. He disembarked at Marseille on 28th March, 1916.

Pte John Hawke was evacuated sick from his unit on 2nd November, 1916 & embarked for England from Havre on 8th November, 1916 where he was then admitted to No. 3 Southern General Hospital in England, suffering from severe Rheumatic Fever. On 8th January, 1917 Pte Hawke was transferred to Hospital at Bulford, transferred to Park House & discharged on 15th March, 1917.

On 23rd March, 1917 Pte Hawke was transferred to 61st Battalion, then to 62nd Battalion at Wareham on 4th April, 1917.

Owing to a duplication of Regimental numbers, Pte Hawke's service number had a "B" attached to his number from June, 1917 – 3164 B.

On 12th June, 1917 Pte Hawke was admitted sick to 16th Field Ambulance Hospital. He was then transferred to 1st Battalion. From 3rd September, 1917 Pte Hawke was attached to 16th Brigade Signal School at Fovant, Wiltshire. He was then transferred to 1st Training Battalion at Durrington on 19th September, 1917.

On 18th October, 1917 Pte Hawke proceeded overseas to France from 1st Training Battalion at Durrington. He disembarked at Havre, France on 19th October, 1917 & rejoined his Unit on 21st October, 1917.

Pte Hawke was On Leave to Paris from 30th January, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion on 8th February, 1918.

On 12th May, 1918 Pte Hawke was appointed Lance Corporal whilst in France. He was On Leave to UK from 26th September, 1918 & rejoined his Battalion on 14th October, 1918.

Lance Corporal Hawke was On Draft to Australia from France on 12th January, 1919 & marched out to England from Havre on 17th January, 1919.

On 18th January, 1919 L/Cpl Hawke was marched in to Sutton Veny, Wiltshire from France & then on 19th February, 1919 L/Cpl John Hawke was marched out of Sutton Veny & marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Codford, Wiltshire.

Lance Corporal John Hawke left Devonport, England on 21st March, 1919 for Australia on *Kildonan Castle* troopship.

Lance Corporal John Hawke was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War & Victory Medals.

The Electoral Roll for NSW showed that in 1930 John Robertson Hawke was living at Main Road, Corrimal, NSW & was a Miner.

The Electoral Roll for NSW showed that in 1933 John Robertson Hawke was living at Nattai River, NSW & was a Miner.

A Statutory Declaration is included in Lance Corporal John Hawke's Service Records. During the Anzac Day March, in 1939, John Hawke lost his Victory Medal whilst at the Domain Service. The Statutory Declaration was dated 15th September, 1939 & his address was listed as 32 Oxlade St, Warrawong, via Port Kembla, NSW. A duplicate Victory Medal was received by John Hawke on 23rd September, 1939.

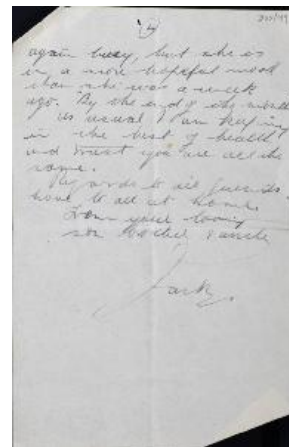
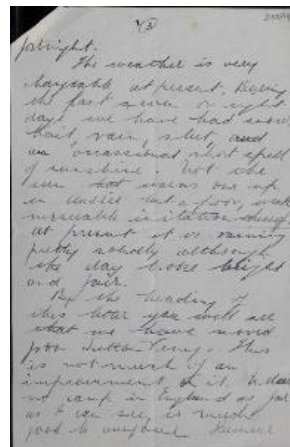
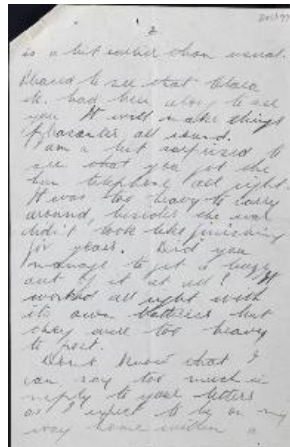
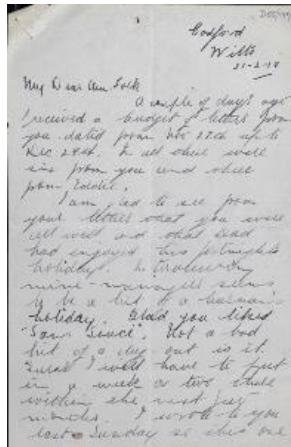
The Electoral Roll for NSW showed that in 1936, 1943, 1949, 1954, 1958 & 1963 John Robertson Hawke was living at Station Road, Albion Park, NSW & had no occupation.

A death was registered in 1965 in the district of Kiama, NSW for John Robertson Hawke. (His parents names were recorded on NSW Births Deaths & Marriages as Richard James & Susan Muir Hawke. A death was registered in 1924 for Grace Robertson Hawke).

John Robertson Hawke, of Albion Park, NSW, was awarded the Imperial Service Order (I.S.O.) medal for services to ex-Servicemen and the community in the Queen's New Year Awards. (Source: The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper 1st January, 1967).

The London Gazette for 1st January, 1967 lists John Robertson Hawke as the recipient of the British Empire Medal (Civil Division) for services to ex-Servicemen and to the community of Albion Park, NSW.

Letters from Codford - 1919



Codford
Wilts
21-2-19

My Dear Ain Folk

A couple of days ago I received a budget of letters from you dated from Nov 27th up to Dec 29th. In all there were six from you and three from Eddie.

I am glad to see from your letters that you were all well and that Dad had enjoyed his fortnights holiday. _____ seems to be a bit of a busman's holiday. Glad you liked "Sans Souci". Not a bad bit of a dug-out is it. Guess I will have to put in a week or two there within the next few months. I wrote to you last Sunday so this one is a bit earlier than usual.

Pleased to see that Clara etc had been along to see you. It will make things pleasanter all round.

I am a bit surprised to see that you got the _____ telephone all right. It was too heavy to carry around, besides the war didn't look like finishing for years. Did you manage to get a buzz out of it at all? It worked all right with its own batteries but they were too heavy to post.

Don't know that I can say too much in reply to your letters as I expect to be on my way home within a fortnight. The weather is very changeable at present. During the past seven or eight days we have had snow, hail, rain, sleet and an occasional short spell of sunshine. Not the sun that warms one up in Aussie but a poor, weak miserable imitation there of. At present it is raining pretty solidly although the day broke bright and fair.

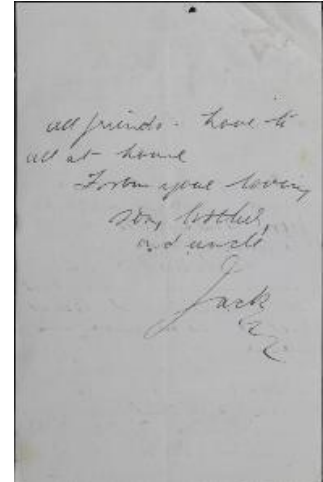
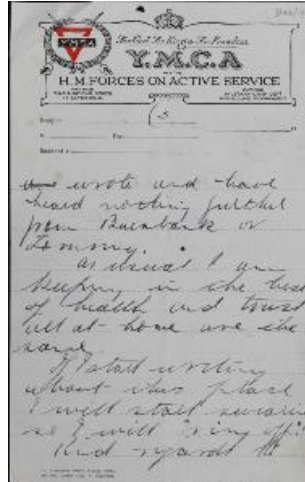
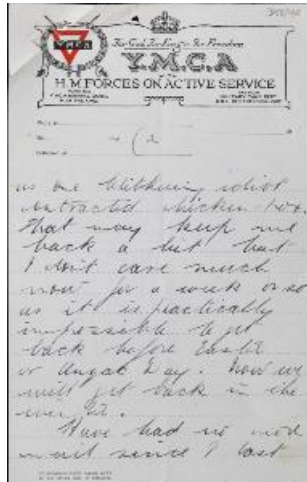
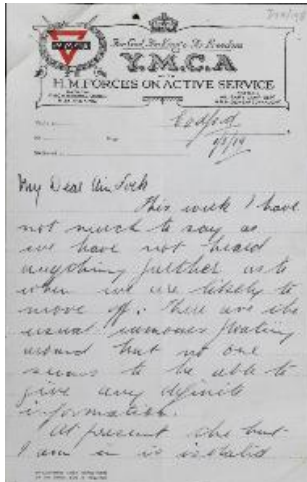
By the heading of this letter you will see that we have moved from Sutton Veny. This is not much of an improvement on it. Indeed no camp in England as far as I can see, is much good to improve. Rumour again busy, but she is in a more hopeful mood than she was a week ago. "By the end of the month".

As usual I am keeping in the best of health and trust you all are the same.

Regards to all friends. Love to all at home.

From your loving son brother & uncle Jack

Letters from Codford - 1919



Codford
1/3/19

My Dear Ain Folk

This week I have not much to say as we have not heard anything further as to when we are likely to move off. There are the usual rumours floating around but no one seems to be able to give any definite information.

At present the hut I am in is isolated as one blithering idiot contracted chicken-pox. That may keep me back a bit but I don't care much now for a week or so as it is practically impossible to get back before Easter of Anzac Day. Now we will get back in the winter.

Have had no more mail since I last wrote and have heard nothing further from Burnbank or Tommy.

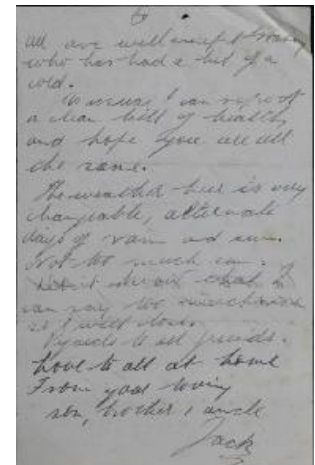
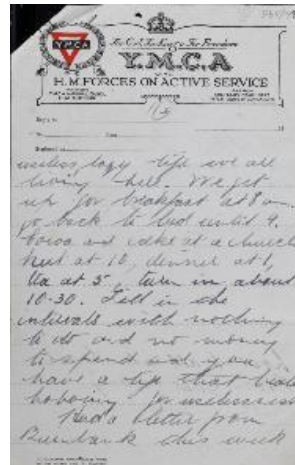
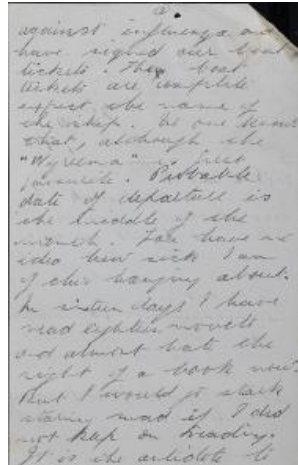
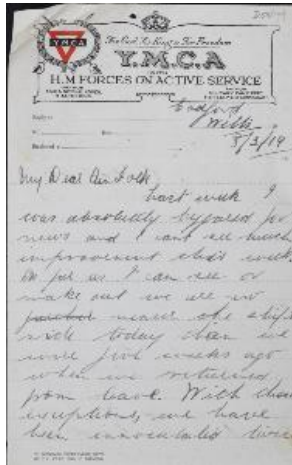
As usual I am keeping in the best of health and trust all at home are the same.

If I start writing about this place I will start swearing so I will "ring off".

Kind regards to all friends. Love to all at home.

From your loving son, brother,
and uncle
Jack

Letters from Codford - 1919



Codford Wilts
8/3/19

Mr Dear Ain Folk

Last week I was absolutely bygaled for news and I can't see much improvement this week. As far as I can see or make out we are no nearer the ships side today than we were five weeks ago when we returned from leave. With these exceptions, we have been inoculated twice against influenza and have signed our boat tickets. The boat tickets are complete except the name of the ship. No one knows that, although the "Wyreema" is first favourite. Probable date of departure is the middle of the month. You have no idea how sick I am of this hanging about. In sixteen days I have read eighteen novels and almost hate the sight of a book now. But I would go stack stating mad if I did not keep on reading.

It is the antidote to useless, lazy life we all living here. We get up for breakfast at 8 am. go back to bed until 9. cocoa and cake at a church hut at 10, dinner at 1, tea at 5, turn in about 10.30. Fill in the intervals with nothing to do and no money to spend and you have a life that beats hobbing for uselessness.

Had a letter from Burnbank this week. All are well except Granny who has had a bit of a cold.

As usual I can report a clean bill of health, and hope you are all the same.

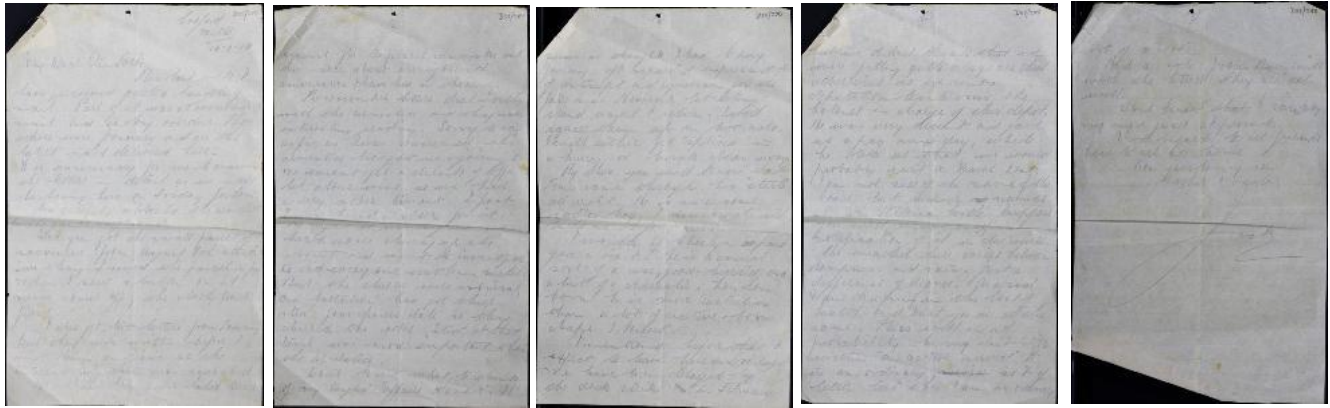
The weather here is very changeable, alternate days of rain and sun.

Don't know that I can say too much more so I will close.

Regards to all friends. Love to all at home From your loving son, brother & uncle

Jack

Letters from Codford - 1919



Codford Wilts
16.3.19

My Dear Ain Folk

This last week I have received quite a bundle of mail. Part of it was November mail and is long overdue. The others were January and all the latest mail delivered here.

It is unnecessary for me to answer the letters in detail as we will be leaving here on Friday for home. You certainly celebrated the armistice (as the yanks say) "so me".

Glad you got the small parcel of souvenirs from August 8th "stunt". Sure thing I sewed the parcel up. When I sew a button on it never comes off, the cloth tears first.

I also got two letters from Tommy but they were written before I met him on leave so the interest in them was squashed.

We have been inoculated twice against flu. As far as I can make out this makes about the eighteenth inoculation I have had in the army.

The November letters deal mostly with the armistice and they make interesting reading. Sorry to say as far as I was concerned the armistice brought no rejoicings. We couldn't get a drink of coffee let alone wine so we had a very sober turnout. In fact I never heard a cheer for it.

The night it was reported we heard some cheering up the street and went to investigate. So did everyone within miles. But the cheers were ironical, one battalion had got there stew four hours late so they cheered the cooks. Stew at that time was more important than the armistice.

Don't know what to think of my tangled "affaire d'amour". It seems as though I had to pay for my oft repeated expressions of contempt and cynicism for the fail _____. However let things stand until I return. I will square them up in two acts. I will either get "spliced" in a hurry or break clean away.

By this you will know that Tom came through his "stunts" all right. He is sure some sailor boy. I daresay he will be home before me.

I wonder if Cheslyn paid you a visit. He is a casual sort of a cuss, good-hearted and a bit of a character. London born he is more Australian than a lot of native-born chaps I know.

I mentioned before that I expect to leave here on Friday. We have been delayed by the dock strike in February but we didn't think that we were getting quite a square deal otherwise so we sent a deputation to interview the Colonel in charge of this depot. He was very decent and gave us a pay next day, while he told us that we would probably sail on March 21st. I am not sure of the name of the boat but rumour names it the "Kildonan Castle". I suppose you will receive an official notification of it in due course.

The weather here varies between dampness and rain. Just a difference of degree. As usual I am keeping in the best of health and trust you are all the same. This will in all probability be my last letter written "on active service". It is an ordinary sort of letter but then I am an ordinary sort of a "cove".

Had a note from Burnbank with the letters. They are all well.

Don't know that I can say anymore just at present.

Kind regards to all friends. Love to all at home.

From your loving son

Brother & uncle

Jack