



Letters from

Pte John Robertson Hawke

A. I. F. 3164 B

from

Larkhill, Durrington, Wiltshire

1917

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.

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](#).

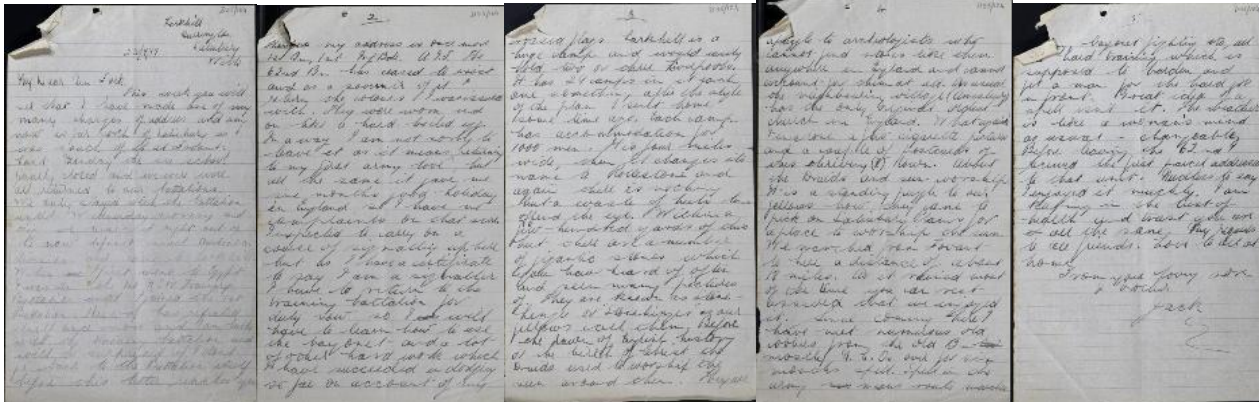
Of these 200 letters that are in the Collection –the 3 letters were written from Larkhill, Durrington, Wiltshire in 1917 when John Robertson Hawke was a Private.



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Letters from Durrington- 1917

(#1)



Larkhill. Durrington.
Salisbury. Wilts
23/9/17

My Dear Ain Folk

This week you will see that I have made one of my many changes of address and am now as far north of Salisbury as I was south of it at Fovant. Last Monday the sig school finally closed and we were all returned to our battalions. We only stayed with the battalion until Wednesday morning and then we marched right out of the now defunct signal Australian division and came to Larkhill.

When I first went to Egypt I was in the 1st NSW Training Battalion until I joined the 1st Battalion. History has repeated itself once more and I am back with the Training battalion and will be surprised if I don't go back to the Battalion itself before this letter reaches you. Therefore my address is once more 1st Bn, 1st Inf Bde. A.I.F. The 62nd Bn has ceased to exist and as a souvenir of it I return the colours I was issued with, They were worn end on like a hard boiled egg. In a way I am not sorry to leave it as it means returning to my first army love but all the same it gave me six months good holiday in England so I have no complaints on that score. I expected to ally on a course of signaling up here but as I have a certificate to say I am a signaler I have to return to the training battalion for duty now so I will have to learn how to use the bayonet and a lot of other hard work which I have succeeded in dodging so far on account of my crossed flags. Larkhill is a huge camp and would easily hold two or three Liverpools. It has 29 camps in it each one something after the style of the plan I sent home some time ago. Each Camp has accommodation for 1000 men. It is four miles wide, then it changes its name to Rollestone and again there is nothing but a waste of huts to offend the eye. Within a few hundred yards of this hut there are a number of gigantic stones which you have

heard of often and seen many pictures of. They are known at Stonehenge or "Stonehinges" as our fellows call them. Before the dawn of English history or the birth of Christ the Druids used to worship the sun around them. They are a puzzle to archeologists who cannot find stones like them anywhere in England and cannot account for them at all. As usual the neighbouring village (Amesbury) has the only original oldest church in England. What again? I enclose a few cigarette pictures and a couple of postcards of this thriving (?) town. About the Druids and sun-worship. It is a standing puzzle to our fellows how they came to pick on Salisbury Plains for a place to worship the sun.

We marched from Fovant to here a distance of about 18 miles. As it rained most of the time you can rest assured that we enjoyed it. Since coming here I have met numerous old cobbies from the old Bn mostly N.C.O.'s over for six

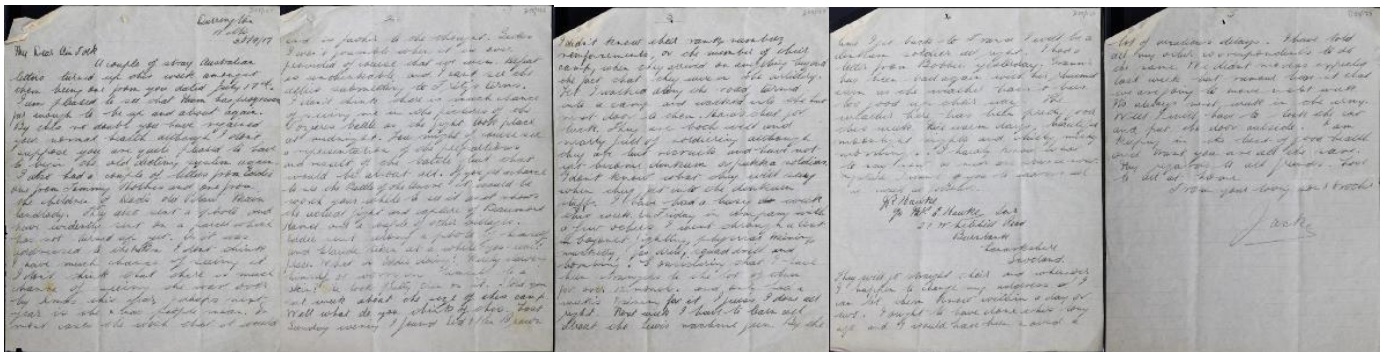
months spell. Spell in the army means route marches _____, bayonet fighting etc, all ____ hard training which is supposed to harden and fit a man for the hard job in front. Great idea of a spell isn't it. The weather is like a woman's mind as usual – changeable. Before leaving the 62nd I received the first parcel addressed to that unit. Needless to say I enjoyed it muchly. I am keeping in the best of health and trust you are all the same. My regards to all friends. Love to all at home.

From your loving son

& brother

Jack

(#2)



Durrington
Wilts
30/9/17

My Dear Ain Folk

A couple of stray Australian letters turned up this week amongst them being one from you dated July 17th.

I am pleased to see that Mum has progressed far enough to be up and about again. By this no doubt you have regained your normal health although I don't suppose you are quite pleased to have to by in the old dieting system again. I also had a couple of letter from Eddie one from Tommy Holmes and one from the children of Dad's old Pelaw Main landlady. They also sent a photo and have evidently sent on a parcel which has not turned up yet. As it was addressed to the 1st Bn I don't think I have much chance of seeing it. I don't think that there is much chance of seeing the war over by Xmas this year, perhaps next year is the xmas people mean. In most cases the wish that it would end is father to the thought. Guess I won't grumble when it is over provided of course that we win. Defeat is unthinkable and I can't see the Allies submitting to Fritz's terms.

I don't think there is much chance of seeing me in the pictures of the Pozieres battle as the fight took place at midnight. You might of course see a representation of the preparations and result of the battle but that would be about all. If you get a chance to see the Battle of Ancre it would be worth your while to see it as it shows the actual fight and capture of Beaumont Hamel and a couple of other villages.

Eddie sent along a photo of himself and Claude taken at a while-you-wiat place. What is Eddie doing? Merely starving himself or worrying himself to a skin? He looks pretty thin on it. I told you last week about the size of this camp. Well what do you think of this. Last Sunday evening I found Sid & Ken Brown. I didn't know their ranks, numbers, reinforcements, or the number of their camp, when they arrived or anything beyond the fact that they were in the

artillery. Yet I walked along the road, turned into a camp and walked into the hut next door to them. How's that for luck. They are both well and nearly full of soldiering although they are but recruits and have not yet become dinkum or pukka soldiers. I don't know what they will say when they get into the dinkum stuff. I have had a busy week this week. On Friday in company with a few others I went through a test in bayonet fighting, physical training, musketry, gas drill, squad drill and bombing. Considering that I have been strangers to the lot of them for over 12 months and only had a week's training for it I guess I done all right. Next week I have to learn all about the Lewis machine gun. By

the time I get back to France I will be a dinkum soldier all right. I had a letter from Bobbie yesterday. Grannie has been bad again with her rheumatism as the weather hasn't been too good up their way. The weather here has been pretty good this week. Nice warm day, beautiful moonlight nights and chilly, misty mornings. I hardly know what to say now as news are scarce now. In future I want you to address all my mail as follows

JR Hawke
c/o Mrs E. Hawke Senr.
27 Whitehill Road
Burnbank
Lanarkshire
Scotland

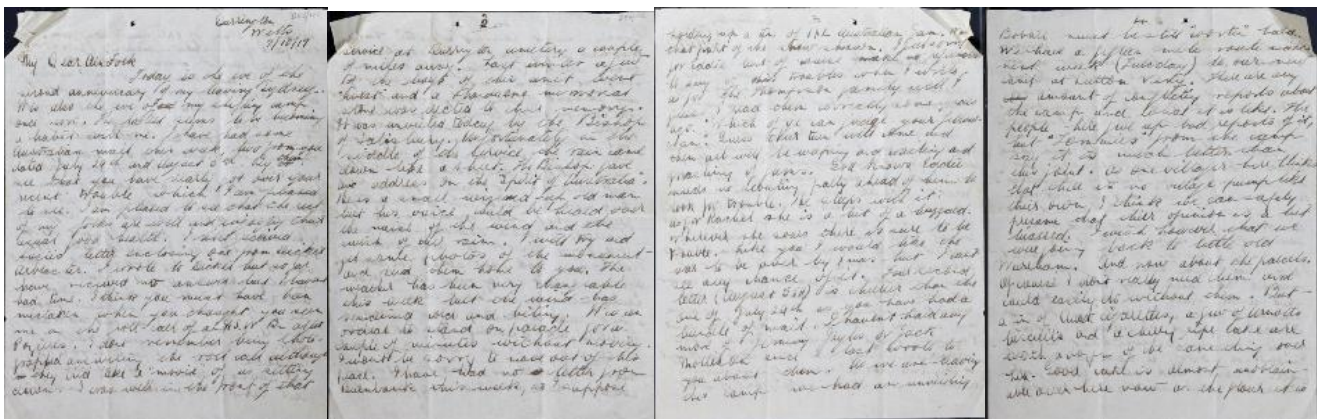
They will go straight their and whenever I happen to change my address I can let them know within a day or two. I ought to have done this long ago and I would have been saved a lot of vexatious delays. I have told all my other correspondents to do the same. We didn't move as expected last week but rumour has it that we are going to move next week. It's always next week in the army.

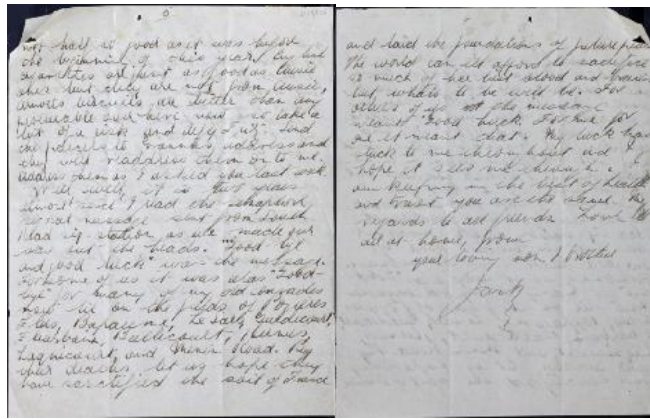
Well I will have to lock the cat and put the door outside. I am keeping in the best of good health and trust you are all the same.

My regards to friends. Love to all at home.

From your loving son & brother
Jack

(#3)





Durrington
Wilts
7/10/17

My Dear Ain Folk

Today is the eve of the second anniversary of my leaving Sydney. It is also the eve of my shifting camp once more. The latest it seems to be becoming a habit with me. I have had some Australian mail this week, two from you dated July 29th and August 5th. By them I see that you have nearly got over your recent trouble which I am pleased to see. I am pleased to see the rest of my folks are well and enjoying their usual good health. I also received Susie's letter enclosing one from Dickie Arblaster. I wrote to Dickie but so far have received no answer but I haven't had time. I think you must have been mistaken when you thought you seen me in the roll-call of an N.S.W. Bn after Pozieres. I don't remember being photographed answering the roll call although they did take a "movie" of us sitting down. I was well in the front of that service holding up a tin of IXL Australian jam. Was that part of the show shown. I feel sorry for Eddie but of course make no references to any of his troubles when I write. As for the Thompson family well I guess I read them correctly some years ago. "Which of ye can judge your fellow-man." Guess their turn will come and then all will be weeping and wailing and smashing of gums. God knows Eddie needs a scouting party ahead of him to look for trouble. He sleeps with it. As for Rachel she is a bit of a buzzard. Wherever she soars there is sure to be trouble. Like you I would like the war to be over by xmas but I can't see any chance of it. Your second letter (August 5th) is cheerier than the one of July 29th as you have had a bundle of mail. I haven't heard any more of Jimmy Myles or Jack Mollison since I last wrote to you about them. As we are leaving this camp we had an unveiling at Durrington cemetery a couple of miles away. Last winter a few of the boys from this unit went "West" and a handsome memorial stone was erected to this memory. It was unveiled today by the Bishop of Salisbury. Unfortunately in the middle of the service the rain came down like a sheet. The Bishop gave an address on the "Spirit of Australia." He is a small wizened-up old man but his voice could be heard over the noise of the wind and the swish of the rain. I will try and get some photos of the monument and send them home to you. The weather has been very changeable this week but the wind has remained cold and biting. It is an ordeal to stand on parade for a couple of minutes without moving. I won't be sorry to move out of this place. I have had no letter from Burnbank this week, so I suppose Bobbie must be still "coortin" baid.

We have a fifteen mile route walk next week (Tuesday) to our new camp at Sutton Veny. There are any amount of conflicting reports about the camp and what it is like. The people here give up bad reports of it, but "Tommies" from the camp say it is much better than this joint. As one villager here thinks that there is no village -pump like their own I think we can safely presume that their opinion is a bit biased, I wish however that we were going back to little old Wareham. And now about the parcels. Of course I don't really need them and could easily do without them. But a tin of Aust cigarettes, a few of Arnotts biscuits and a cherry ripe cake are worth a dozen of the same thing over here. Good cake is almost unobtainable over here now as the flour it is not half so good as it was before the beginning of this year. English cigarettes are just as good as Ausie ones but they are not from Ausie. Arnotts biscuits are better than any procurable over here now so take a bit of a risk and defy Fritz. Send the parcels to Grannies address and they will readdress them on to me. Address them as I asked you last week.

Well well, it is two years almost since I ___ the semaphore signal message sent from South Head sig. station as we made our way out the heads. "Good-bye and good luck" was the message. For some of us it was alas "Good-bye" for

many of my old comrades now lie on the fields of Pozieres, Flers, Bapaume, Le Sars, Guedecourt, Fleurbaix, Bullicourt, Hermies, Lagnicourt and Menin Road. By their deaths let us hope they have sanctified the soil of France and laid the foundations of future peace. The world can ill afford to sacrifice so much of her best blood and brains but whats to be will be. For others of us the message meant Good Luck. For me for one it meant that. My luck has stuck to me throughout and hope it sees me through. I am keeping in the best of health and trust you are the same. My regards to all friends. Love to all at home, from

Your loving son & brother
Jack
