

Letters from
L/ Cpl John Robertson Hawke
A. I. F. 3164 B
from
Sutton Veny, Wiltshire
1917 & 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 – 4 letters were written from Sutton Veny, 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 Sutton Veny - 1917

My Dear Ain Folk
Two week I received another letter from you dated Aug 10th and by it I see that you are all well. Needless to say I am pleased to know that Mum has quite recovered from her recent illness. I am also glad that you like the Wallham photo. It is a better likeness than the Strand one as I don't look quite so "liery" (?) in it. Of course the differences in the ___ation account in some measure for the difference in expression. You can take it from me, who knows something about the dear old Strand that it is "sure some place" as our Yankee friends would say. Evidently Clara's queer (quiet?) sort of nature is going to land her into hot water now that she had fallen foul of Gran Cook and Aunt Polly (to use the names they are known by). I suppose Rachel the Vulture smells a row from afar and won't be satisfied until she has a finger in the pie. I haven't heard from Tommie now for about a month but we must expect erratic delivereis of mail from him. The last five pounds I cabled for has arrived but for

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Sutton Veny
Warminster Wilts
13/10/17

My Dear Ain Folk

This week I received another letter from you dated Aug 10th and by it I see that you are all well. Needless to say I am pleased to know that Mum has quite recovered from her recent illness. I am also glad that you like the Wallham photo. It is a better likeness than the Strand one as I don't look quite so "liery" (?) in it. Of course the differences in the ___ation account in some measure for the difference in expression. You can take it from me, who knows something about the dear old Strand that it is "sure some place" as our Yankee friends would say. Evidently Clara's queer (quiet?) sort of nature is going to land her into hot water now that she had fallen foul of Gran Cook and Aunt Polly (to use the names they are known by). I suppose Rachel the Vulture smells a row from afar and won't be satisfied until she has a finger in the pie. I haven't heard from Tommie now for about a month but we must expect erratic delivereis of mail from him. The last five pounds I cabled for has arrived but for

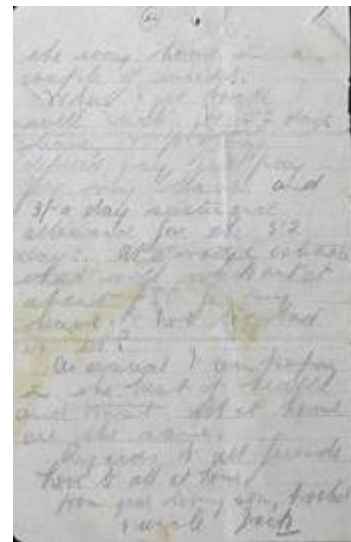
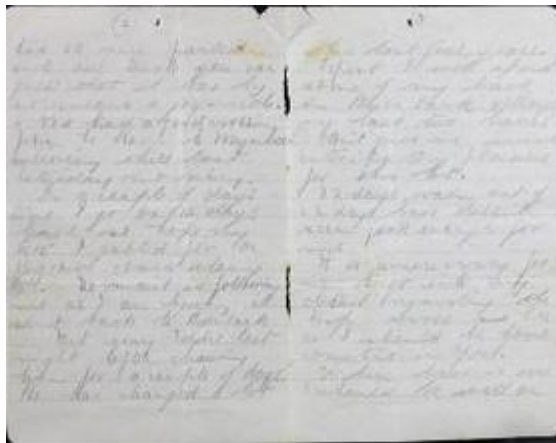
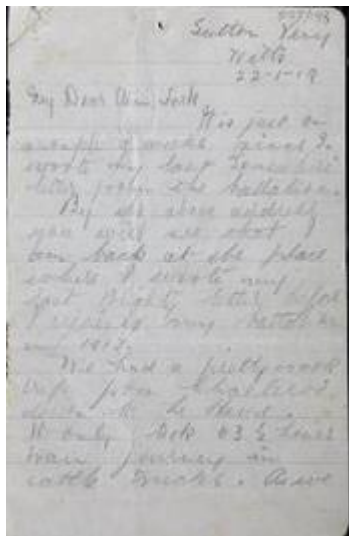
reasons I will tell you after I can't get it for some time. I have also had the usual mail from T. Holmes & Eddie and as usual they both report "all well". It is just a year ago since I manufactured my Xmas cards at Swan Chateau in the Ypres sector. This year I will have to content myself with buying them. I also received the weekly letter from Bobbie. All are well in Burnbank and have just received a rise of 1/6 a day. Even that is not enough as prices are enormously high. Butter is 4/- a pound and eggs 3/4 a dozen. Every other thing is correspondingly high and living in any decent style is almost out of the question. You will see by the top of my letter that I have moved again, as I told you last week. This is a much warmer place as we are sheltered by the hills and not exposed to the bitterly cold winds as we were at Larkhill. There is a fair-sized town about a couple of miles away (Warminster). It was out of bounds to the British troops because of some trouble with the Scots Fusiliers. Evidently we are improving as it has been placed within bounds to us although we are on our honour to play the game.

The letter from the bank informing me about the arrival of the £5 was posted in London on Sept 28th. It arrived here on Oct. 12th as it had been sent on to the 62nd Bn. Then back to the Base Post Office for redirection. The reason why I can't use it is simple. Today I was warned to hold myself in readiness to proceed to France on Monday. I had to pass the dentist and the doctor. The dentist turned me down as unfit but I went and seen the adjutant and got through all right. The doctor sounded my heart and passed me as fit without a second's trouble so my old friend rheumatism has failed to affect my heart yet. Guess I must have a heart like a horse to be able to withstand the repeated attacks of the "scruos" (?). It is now close on 12 months since I left the boys who have carried on and I reckon it's up to me. I have had a good spell and am willing to go back and try my luck again. Nothing venture nothing win and I should like to be in at the finish. When I left front line trenches at Ypres twelve months is now a succession of tents and huts. With Russia practically out of it Haig has managed to hammer Fritz at his strongest point and beat him on the hardest part of the line. The weather has been all against him but Fritz is slowly but surely breaking up and will hardly stand this winter. I could have got out of this draft if I liked, in fact my name was being scratched off the roll but a vein of pure cussedness made me make myself a nuisance to all concerned until they put me back. I started a volunteer and please God I will come through as a volunteer. I go back to my old unit which has always held my army love. To me it is the best unit of the lot. For close on 3 years it has taken a goodly share of the hardest fighting. Many of its best men have paid the full price, and only once has it had a set back, Anzac, Lone Pine, Pozieres, Guidicourt, Bullecourt, Menin Road, Broodsinde are but a few of its victories. Flirs (?) is the only place where it ever wrote failure. Well I will have to wind up. I am keeping in the best of health and trust you are all the same. My "fiver" at the bank will be available for me when I am back in Blighty again. If you have sent on the ten pounds to Sammy it will save me the trouble of cabling for it again. Let my luck but stick to me again and I may yet see Christmas in Blighty. I have no fear of a knock-out. I still retain my old confidence in my ability to get through. I will wind up now trusting that I will still be able to beat Fritz. My regards to all friends. Love to all at home from your loving son brother & uncle

Jack

P.S. I received a parcel during the week from the Blackwell family of Pelaw Main. I am writing to thank them for it, but would like you to do the same. It was a good parcel and it was very kind of them to send it.

Jack



Sutton Veny
Wilts
22-1-19

My Dear Ain Folk

It is just on a couple of weeks since I wrote my last "Somewhere" letter from the battalion.

By the above address you will see that I am back at the place where I wrote my last Blighty letter before I rejoined my battalion in 1917.

We had a pretty crook trip from Cha___ down to Le Havre. It only took 63 ½ hours train journey in cattle trucks. As we had 29 men packed into our truck you can guess that it was by no means a joy-ride. We had a good crossing from Le Havre to Weymouth arriving there last Saturday morning.

In a couple of days time I go on 14 days leave so hope my £15 I cabled for on Dec 12th comes along o.k. No mail is following me as I am having it sent back to Burnbank.

Met young Eddie last night after chasing him for a couple of days. He has changed a lot this last few years. Expect I will spend some of my leave in Burnbank although my last two "leaves" don't give me much anticipatory pleasures for this lot.

22 days rain out of 22 days leave doesn't seem good enough for me.

It is unnecessary for me to go into any detail regarding the trip across here as I should be home sometime in April.

When leave is over I should be well on the way home in a couple of weeks.

When I get back I will "_ick" for 52 days leave, 75% of my deferred pay, full pay for my leave and 3/- a day

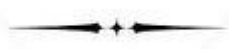
sustained allowance for the 52 days. At a rough estimate that will work out at about £80 for my leave. Not too bad is it?

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

Regards to all friends

Love to all at home

From your loving son, brother & uncle *Jack*



2078
Letter from
20452
3-1-19

My dear Mrs. Jack

The week as you can see by the sheet, was not a very busy one. I have spent a good deal of my time in writing letters and in the evening in reading. I have also had a few letters from home and I have been very glad to hear from you all. I have also had a few letters from your mother and I have been very glad to hear from her too. I have also had a few letters from your father and I have been very glad to hear from him too. I have also had a few letters from your sister and I have been very glad to hear from her too. I have also had a few letters from your brother and I have been very glad to hear from him too. I have also had a few letters from your friends and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your neighbors and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your acquaintances and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your relatives and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your friends and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your neighbors and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your acquaintances and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your relatives and I have been very glad to hear from them too.

2079

I have not much to write to you at present. I am still in the best of health and I am very glad to hear from you all. I have also had a few letters from your mother and I have been very glad to hear from her too. I have also had a few letters from your father and I have been very glad to hear from him too. I have also had a few letters from your sister and I have been very glad to hear from her too. I have also had a few letters from your brother and I have been very glad to hear from him too. I have also had a few letters from your friends and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your neighbors and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your acquaintances and I have been very glad to hear from them too. I have also had a few letters from your relatives and I have been very glad to hear from them too.

2080

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2082

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Sutton Veny
Wilts
8-2-19

My Dear Ain Folk

This week as you can see by the above I am once more back in camp. My leave finished yesterday and according to rumour it will be a couple of weeks or so before I can say goodbye to Blighty's frozen shore.

I did not spend so much of my leave in Scotland this time as I did on my two previous visits. As I told you I expected to meet Tommy and for that reason I stayed in London. He came up from Devonport on Thursday Jan 30th and we both went up to Glasgow on the Friday night arriving there on the Sat. morning.

Things and people up there are much the same as usual. For a detailed account of them I will wait until I get home. It is unnecessary for me to dive into detail at this stage of the proceedings.

Tommy and I weighed ourselves one day to see who was the heavier. I won, by 9st 10lb to 9st 9lb. So you can see that I am still in a position to call him my little brother. He was looking and keeping real well although he was a bit thinner than when I left. As soon as I saw him I noticed a very strong resemblance to Eddie which I hadn't noticed before.

Industrially things don't look too good over here. Every blighter wants more money and less work. The miners all coming out in a week's time for 6 hours a day £1 a shift, no income tax and five days a week. It is to be hoped they get it then a few discharged soldier-miners may get a job. At present they can't get near a job.

Cousin John has been discharged and is "bogey-man in the "splint. How all the mighty have fallen.

I left Tommy in Glasgow as he met a mate off the "Swan" and as they both had about a week to go it was hardly worth his while coming back to London with me as I had only one day to go.

Aunt Jessie (Jake's wife) is sending you some present or other by Tommy.

Donald Crossan is marrying Jimmie's Emily in a week or so.

I ordered seven photos to be sent to you. They deal with various phases of life in and around the line.

The weather is bitterly cold at present. Plenty of frost and no water in the pipes. I won't be at all sorry to be back round the equator soon.

Have not had any mail for weeks. In fact my last mail from you was dated Oct. 25th and reached me about Christmas.

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

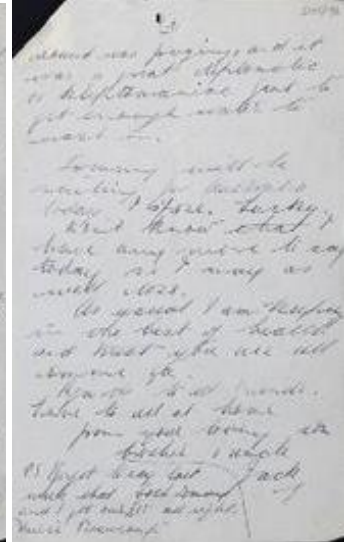
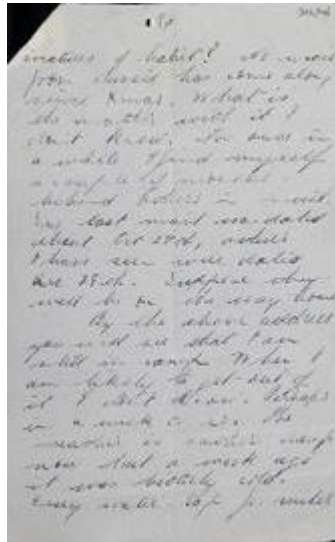
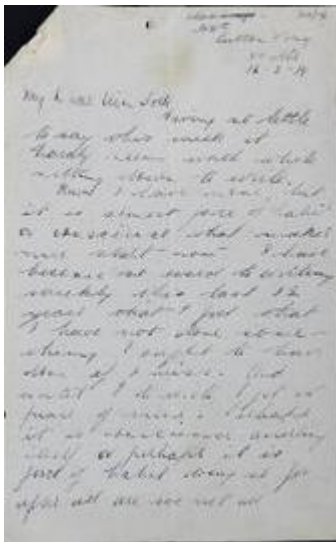
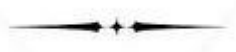
Don't know that I can say any more just at present so will close.

Regards to all friends. Love to all at home.

from

Your loving son brother & uncle

Jack



Sutton Veny
Wilts
16-2-19

My Dear Ain Folk

Having so little to say this week it hardly seems worth while sitting down to write. News I have none, but it is almost a force of habit or conscience that makes me start now. I have become so used to writing weekly this last 3 1/2 years that I feel that I have not done something I ought to have done if I miss. And until I do write I get no peace of mine. Perhaps it is conscience asserting force of habit doing so for after all are we not all creatures of habit? No mail from Aussie has come along since Xmas. What is the matter with it I don't know. For once in a while I find myself a couple of months behind others in mail. My last mail was dated about Oct 27th, others I have seen were dated Dec 28th. Suppose they will be on the way home.

By the above address you will see that I am still in camp. When I am likely to get out of it I don't know. Perhaps

in a week or so. The weather is rather damp now but a week ago it was bitterly cold. Every water-tap for miles around was freezing, and it was a great diplomatic or kleptomaniac feat to get enough water to wash in.

Tommy will be sailing for Australia today I s'pose. Lucky.

Don't know that I have any more to say today so I may as well close.

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

Regards to all friends.

Love to all at home from your loving son brother & uncle

Jack

P.S. Forgot to say last week that both Tommy and I got our £15 all right.

"Merci Beaucoup"