

D55 John Robertson Hawke – World War 1 Letters

Creator: John Robertson Hawke, 1890-1965

Historical Note: John Robertson Hawke was born in Burnbank, Scotland on 17 May 1890, the son of Richard and Grace Hawke. The family emigrated to Australia around 1908 and settled at Balmain. John worked as a warehouseman prior to his enlistment in the army at the Victoria Barracks in Sydney on 21 June 1915. He commenced basic training at the Liverpool Camp on 29 June 1915. Following a course of instruction at the Melbourne Signal School, he returned to Liverpool and was posted to the 10th Reinforcements, 1st Brigade of the AIF (Australian Imperial Force). On 8th October 1915 the Battalion left Sydney on the troop ship Warilda for Egypt and subsequently served in Egypt, France, Belgium and England. During 1917 John served with the 61st and 62nd Battalions AIF in England. He rejoined the 1st Battalion at Ypres in Belgium in October 1917 and served with that battalion throughout the remainder of the war. He died in 1965. The collection comprises some 200 letters written by John Robertson Hawke to his parents and family during World War 1. The subjects include comments on both army life and the effect of the war on civilian life in Europe and Britain.

Record Summary: Personal records – letters, postcard and memorabilia

Date Range: 1915-1919

Quantity: 22 cm (2 boxes comprising 204 items)

Access Conditions: Available for reference. Contact Archivist in advance to arrange access.

Note: Transcripts available for the following selected letters 82, 109, 114, 118, 139, 148, 149, 153, 155, 162, 163, 171, 175, 177, 178, 179, 180, 192, 193, 200. Contact Archivist for details.

Inventory: Compiled 19 September 1977. Last revised 22 October 2010

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Item List

Note: In the ensuing list, place names in parentheses were added to the letters after they were received in Australia. Once the troops left Australia, they were not permitted to mention place names nor to discuss troop movements in their letters. Some of the letters bear the signatures of military censors who were responsible for deleting classified information from letters. The length of each letter has been given in folios or sheets (eg 10pp.)

Items 1- 200: Letters

1. 7 October 1915 (Liverpool, NSW) 2pp.
2. 11 October 1915 At sea (TS Warilda, Great Australian Bight) 6pp.
3. [n.d.] At sea (TS Warilda, Indian Ocean) 10pp.
4. [n.d.] At sea [to his brother, Tommy] 11pp.

The Warilda put in at Fremantle on 15 October 1915 and the troops were given shore leave. The vessel reached Suez on Friday 5 November. The troops were disembarked and entrained for Heliopolis on 8 November.

5. 9 November 1915 - Egypt (Heliopolis) 2pp.
6. 17 November 1915 - Heliopolis, Egypt 4pp.
7. 23 November 1915 - Heliopolis, Egypt 4pp.
8. 28 November 1915 - Heliopolis 3pp.
9. 7 December 1915 - Abbassia Camp 3pp.
10. 13 December 1915 - Abbassia Camp 10pp.
11. 21 December 1915 - Abbassia Camp 2pp.
12. 25 December 1915 - Abbassia Camp 4pp.
13. 28 December 1915 - Abbassia Camp 4pp.
14. 2 January 1916 - Abbassia Camp 2pp.
15. 9 January 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 4pp.
16. 16 January 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 4pp.
17. 18 January 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 4pp.
18. 22 January 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 2pp.
19. 24 January 1916 - (Egypt) [to his brother, Tommy] 2pp.
20. 29 January 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 4pp.
21. 6 February 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 8pp.
22. 12 February 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 6pp.

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23. 19 February 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 3pp.
24. 24 February 1916 - (El-Tell-el-Kebir) Egypt 4pp.
25. 1 March 1916 - (Serapeum) 5pp.
26. 4 March 1916 - (Suez Canal) Egypt 8pp.
27. 12 March 1916 - (Serapeum) 2pp.
28. 15 March 1916 - (Serapeum) 5pp.
29. 18 March 1916 - (Serapeum) [Censored] 4pp.

The 1st Battalion left Alexandria on 23 March 1916 aboard the converted Cunard liner Invernia for Europe. The Invernia reached Marsalas on 29 March. The troops arrived in Hazebrouck (Flanders) on 2 April 1916.

30. 25 March 1916 - at sea (TS Invernia, Mediterranean Sea)
31. 1 April 1916 - (Wallon Cappell) [Censored] 3pp.
32. 7 April 1916 - (Wallon Cappell, France) 3pp.
33. 13 April 1916 - (Oultersteene) 6pp.
34. 20 April 1916 - Rue-de-Bois in action 3pp.
35. 25 April 1916 - Rue-de-Bois 4pp.
36. 29 April 1916 - (Rue-de-Bois, front line) 3pp.
37. 5 May 1916 - Rouge-de-Bout supports 3pp.
38. 8 May 1916 2pp.
39. 19 May 1916 1pp.
40. 21 May 1916 - (Leut de Sac Farm, Sailly-sur-la-Lys) 6pp.
41. 22 May 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] [Censored] 1p.
42. 28 May 1916 - (Leut de Sac Farm, Sailly-sur-la-Lys reserves) 3pp.
43. 3 June 1916 - (Leut de Sac Farm, Sailly reserves) 3pp.
44. 7 June 1916 - (Leut do Sac Farm reserves) 4pp.
45. 11 June 1916 - (Fleurbaix Line) 5pp.
46. 16 June 1916 - (Fleurbaix Line) 3pp.
47. 22 June 1916 - In a dirty lousy dug-out (Fleurbaix Line) 3pp.
48. 25 June 1916 - (Fleurbaix supports) France 4pp.
49. 6 July 1916 - (Leut-du-Sac Farm reserves) 3pp.

The Battalion left Flanders on 11 July 1916 for Fienvillers in the Somme district.

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50. 12 July 1916 - (Vignacourts, Somme) [Censored] 1p.
51. 14 July 1916 - (Allonville, Somme) 3pp.
52. 17 July 1916 - (Warloy-Bailon, Somme) [Censored] 1p.
53. 29 July 1916 - (Bonneville, Somme) 5pp.
54. 31 July 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] 1p.
55. 1 August 1916 - [typescript copy to his brother, Tommy] 3pp.
56. 5 August 1916 1p.

The Battalion returned to Flanders on 22 August 1916 and saw active service in the trenches around Ypres.

57. 12 August 1916 - (Moquet Farm, Poziers) 2pp.
58. 25 August 1916 - (Eric Camp, Poperinge) 3pp.
59. 25 August 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] 2pp.
60. 28 August 1916 - (Railway Dugouts, Ypres supports) 6pp.
61. 5 September 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] 2pp.
62. 13 September 1916 - (Devonshire Lines, Poperinge) 2pp.
63. 13 September 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] [Censored]
64. 19 September 1916 - (Thames St Line, Ypres) 3pp.
65. 23 September 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] 1p.
66. 24 September 1916 - (Thames St Line, Ypres) 3pp.
67. 28 September 1916 - [to his brother, Tommy] [Censor's mark] 1p.
68. 30 September 1916 2pp.
69. 4 October 1916 - (Thames St) Belgium 7pp.
70. 8 October 1916 - Swan Chateau, Belgium 3pp.
71. 11 October 1916 - (Devonshire Lines, Poperinge) 2pp.
72. 18 October 1916 - (Nort-Leulinghem) France 5pp.

On 19 October 1916, the Battalion again left Flanders for the Somme area. In early November, increased disability due to rheumatism resulted in Hawke's evacuation to England for convalescence at the 3rd Southern General Hospital in Oxford. Following his discharge, he was attached, first to the 61st Battalion and then the 62nd Battalion of the AIF at various camps in Wiltshire, England.

73. 10 November 1916 - 3rd Southern General Hospital, Oxford, England 3pp.
74. 17 November 1916 - 3rd Southern General Hospital, Oxford 3pp.

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75. 24 November 1916 - Oxford, England 3pp.
76. 30 November 1916 - Hospital, Oxford 3pp.
77. 7 December 1916 - Hospital, Oxford 3pp.
78. 10 December 1916 - Oxford [to his brother, Tommy] 1p.
79. 15 December 1916 - 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital Harefield Park, Middlesex, Eng. 1p.
80. 19 December 1916 - Morfret Camp, Wareham, Dorset, England 3pp.
81. 27 December 1916 - Burnbank 13pp.
82. 5 January 1917 - Wareham, Dorsetshire [includes itinerary 21 June 1915 to 4 January 1917] 8pp.
83. 11 January 1917 - Somewhere on Salisbury 4pp.
84. 20 January 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury [to his brother, Tommy] 2pp.
85. 20 January 1917 - No 1 Camp, Parkhouse, Salisbury, Wiltshire 5pp.
86. 28 January 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury 3pp.
87. 31 January 1917 - Parkhouse, Wilts 2pp.
88. 4 February 1917 - Parkhouse, Wilts 3pp.
89. 5 February 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury 2pp.
90. 8 February 1917 - Salisbury, Wilts [to his brother, Tommy] 3pp.
91. 9 February 1917 - Salisbury, Wilts 7pp.
92. 19 February 1917 - Parkhouse, Wilts 5pp.
93. 25 February 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury, Wilts 3pp.
94. 5 March 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury, Wilts 5pp.
95. 6 March 1917 - Parkhouse, Salisbury, Wilts [to his brother, Tommy] 3pp.
96. 12 March 1917 - Salisbury, Wilts 3pp.
97. 18 March 1917 - Perham Downs, Hants 2pp.
98. 27 March 1915 (?) - A Coy 61st Batt. AIF 3pp.
99. 1 April 1915 (?) - A Coy. 61st Batt. AIF 4pp.
100. 3 April 1917 - Wareham, Dorset – 1p.
101. 7 April 1917 - Perham Downs, Hants 4pp.
102. 14 April 1917 - A Coy. 62nd Batt. AIF 4pp.
103. 21 April 1917 - Perham Downs, Hants 5pp.

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104. 28 April 1917 - Headquarters Signallers 62nd Bn. AIF Abroad, Windmill Hill Camp, Ludgeshall 4pp.
105. 4 May 1917 - HQ Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 6pp.
106. 13 May 1917 - Headquarters Signallers 62nd Bn. AIF Abroad, Windmill Hill Camp, Ludgeshall 3pp.
107. 17 May 1917 - Headquarters Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 2pp.
108. 3 June 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 2pp.
109. 7 June 1917 Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 3pp.
110. 17 June 1917 Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 2pp.
111. 24 June 1917 Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 3pp.
112. 1 July 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 5pp.
113. 8 July 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 3pp.
114. 18 July 1917 - Fovant, Salisbury 4pp.
115. 22 July 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 4pp.
116. 29 July 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 3pp.
117. 7 August 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. Fovant, Salisbury 3pp.
118. 13 August 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF - 2pp.
119. 19 August 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 7pp.
120. 25 August 1917 - Signallers, 62nd Bn. AIF 6pp.
121. 2 September 1917 - Fovant, Salisbury 4pp.
122. 9 September 1917 - Fovant, Salisbury 5pp.
123. 15 September 1917 - Fovant, Salisbury, Wilts. 7pp.
124. 23 September 1917 - Larkhill, Durrington, Salisbury, Wilts 5pp.
125. 30 September 1917 - Durrington, Wilts 5pp.
126. 7 October 1917 - Durrington, Wilts 3pp.
127. 13 October 1917 - Sutton Veny, Warminster, Wilts.

Hawke returned to France on 19 October 1917 and rejoined the 1st Battalion at Hopoutre in Flanders.

128. 23 October 1917 - France (Ceastre, Belgium) 2pp.
129. 26 October 1917 - Belgium (Patricia Lines, Ypres) 3pp.
130. 2 November 1917 – Belgium 2pp.
131. 12 November 1917 - France (Halifax Camp, Poperinge) 5pp.

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132. 20 November 1917 - France (Menty) 3pp.
133. 24 November 1917 - France (Menty) 5pp.
134. 2 December 1917 - France (Menty) 3pp.
135. 8 December 1917 - France (Menty) 2pp.
136. 9 December 1917 - France (Menty) 2pp.
137. 18 December 1917 - (Rossignot Camp, Kemmel) 3pp.
138. 25 December 1917 - France (Rossignot Camp, Kemmel) 6pp.
139. 1 January 1918 - Same old Somewhere (Quaret Farm Line, Messines) 2pp.
140. 7 January 1918 - France (Line Quaret Farm) 2pp.
141. 15 January 1918 - France (Line Quaret Farm) 2pp.
142. 22 January 1918 - France (Wytchaete supports) 2pp.
143. 27 January 1918 – France 1p.
144. 31 January 1918 – France 13pp.
145. 10 February 1918 - France (Meteren) 4pp.
146. 19 February 1918 - France (Meteren) 3pp.
147. 22 February 1918 - **Some** old Somewhere (Meteren) 5pp.
148. 3 March 1918 - Same old “Somewhere” (Line Hill 60) 3pp.
149. 10 March 1918 - Still in Somewhere (Line Hill 60) 4pp.
150. 17 March 1918 - France (Larchwood Tunnels supports) 3pp.
151. 23 March 1918 - France (Ridgewood Camp, Dickebusch) 4pp.
152. 30 March 1918 - France (Dickebusch) 2pp.

The Battalion entrained for Amiens in the Somme area on 6 March 1918. From 12 May until 8 June, Hawke attended a signals school at Selles in France.

153. 8 April 1918 - Somewhere in the Mud (Allonville, Somme) 2pp.
154. 15 April 1918 - France (Borres Wold) 7pp.
155. 21 April 1918 - Still Sticking it in somewhere (Borres) 4pp.
156. 1 May 1918 - France (Meteren Supports) 1p.
157. 6 May 1918 - France (Meteren) 6pp.
158. 13 May 1918 - France (Arques) 3pp.
159. 19 May 1918 - France (Selles Sig. School) 5pp.
160. 25 May 1918 - France (Selles) 4pp.
161. 4 June 1918 - France (Selles) 10pp.

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162. 11 June 1918 - France (Mowlanaker Farm, Strazeele Line) 2pp.

On 9 June 1918, Hawke rejoined his battalion at Hondeghem in Flanders.

163. 17 June 1918 - France (Borne South) 4pp.

164. 22 June 1918 - France (Hazebrouck reserves) 5pp.

165. 2 July 1918 - France (Hazebrouck) 5pp.

166. 8 July 1918 - France (Line Strazeele) 4pp.

167. 16 July 1918 - France (Bde. Reserve, Hazebrouck 3pp.

168. 22 July 1918 - France (Hazebrouck) 3pp.

169. 28 July 1918 - France (Bde. Reserve, Hazebrouck) 5pp.

170. 4 August 1918 - France (Racquinghem) 4pp.

The Battalion returned to the Somme area on 6 August 1918 and remained there until it returned to England on 29 September 1918. During the ensuing furlough, Hawke visited Burnbank in Scotland.

171. 17 August 1918 - France (Mericourt supports) 5pp.

172. 25 August 1918 - France (Chuignes) 4pp.

173. 1 September 1918 - France (Morcourt) 3pp.

174. 15 September 1918 - France (Bresle) 7pp.

175. 29 September 1918 - London [includes itinerary 3 January 1917 to 28 September 1918]
8pp.

176. 29 September 1918 – London 1p.

177. 8 October 1918 - Burnbank (pt. 1) 11pp.

178. 8 October 1918 - Burnbank (pt. 2) 12pp.

179. 9 October 1918 – Burnbank 6pp.

Hawke returned to France on 12 October 1918 and the battalion was stationed in the Avesnois and Hainault regions until 16 December when it moved to Gounis in Belgium.

180. 15 October 1918 - France (Buigny L'Abbe) 3pp.

181. 25 October 1918 - France (Villers-sous-Ailly) 4pp.

182. 3 November 1918 - France (Buigny L'Abbe) 7pp.

183. 14 November 1918 - France (Busigny) 12pp.

184. 18 November 1918 - Susigny, France 4pp.

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- 185. 24 November 1918 - Acesnelles, France 4pp.
- 186. 27 November 1918 - Solre-Le-Chateau, France 6pp.
- 187. 8 December 1918 - Solre-Le-Chateau, France 3pp.
- 188. 21 December 1918 - Gougnies, Belgium 3pp.
- 189. 26 December 1918 - Gougnies, Belgium 5pp.
- 190. 29 December 1918 - Gougnies, Belgium 6pp.
- 191. 5 January 1919 - Gougnies, Belgium 3pp.
- 192. 8 January 1918 [1919?] - 1st Aust. Inf. Bn. Gounies, Belgium 3pp.

By 22 January 1919, the Battalion had been removed to Sutton Veny in Wiltshire, England. The last letter was written from Codford, Wiltshire on 16 March 1919. The date of Hawke's return to Australia is not mentioned.

- 193. 22 January 1919 - Sutton Veny, Wilts. 1p.
- 194. 30 January 1919 – London 4pp.
- 195. 8 February 1919 - Sutton Veny, Wilts 5pp.
- 196. 16 February 1919 - Sutton Veny, Wilts. 3pp.
- 197. 21 February 1919 - Codford, Wilts. 4pp.
- 198. 1 March 1919 – Codford 3pp.
- 199. 8 March 1919 - Codford, Wilts. 2pp.
- 200. 16 March 1919 - Codford, Wilts. 5pp.

Items 201-204: Miscellaneous Items

- 201. Soldier's Pay Book for use on Active Service, issued to JR Hawke, 3 June 1916 – 20 December 1916
- 202. Field Medical Card for JR Hawke 2 November 1916
- 203. Leave or Duty Ration Book issued to JR Hawke for the period 24 January 1919 – 7 February 1919
- 204. Undated postcard to his sister, Suzie