

War Poets Collection



Writing Home - 2

Letter writing was an important aspect of life for soldiers on the Front. Not only was it a good pastime, but it kept the soldiers up-to-date with what was happening at home, with their families and loved ones. Parcels of food, clothing and other essentials would also be sent to the soldiers. Such home comforts were always greatly appreciated.

The following letter was written by a soldier called John Henry Carmichael, or 'Jack', to his mother, Williamina on 16th October 1917.

Jack's grandfather was the Head Gardener at Craiglockhart and his family lived there for many years. When Jack was in France, at war, he wrote many letters home to his family, at Craiglockhart.

France, Tuesday, October 16th 1917

My Dear Mother,

Your parcel arrived safely on Sunday last and was much appreciated by the boys and myself. The dumpling was A.1! Just like the ones you used to make. I can tell you it went down fine for tea on Sunday night. I also got father's letter and wee Jimmie's. I have written father, tell wee Jimmie I will send him a nice postcard whenever I can get one, he is getting a good writer isn't he?

I haven't any news to give you at present mother, I hear they are going to send as many as possible on leave now, so if they keep it up I should be home about the end of this year with a little luck.

Now, mother you were saying that you couldn't always send money, don't bother you're head about that, send the parcel only, that is quite enough for me. We get 5 francs (3/7) in English money every week or so so that does me all right. I only buy cigarettes and something for eating occasionally, so mind keep all the money for yourself.

I think I will close now, I sent father's letter away this morning. Give wee Jimmie, Dougal and Kate my love and not forgetting yourself and father.

From your affectionate son,

Jack

France.

Tuesday.

Oct. 16th 1871

My Dear Mother,

Your parcel arrived
safely on Sunday last was much
appreciated by the boys & myself.
The Dumpling was A.1. just like
the ones you used to make. I can
tell you it went down fine for
tea on Sunday night. I also got
Father's letter & see Jimmie's. I have
written Father, tell see Jimmie
I will send him a nice postcard
whenever I can get one. He is
getting a good writer isn't he.
I haven't any news to give you at
present mother. I hear they are
going to send as many as possible

2.
or leave now, so if they keep it
up I should be home about the end
of this year with a little luck.
Now, mother you were saying that
you couldn't always send money,
don't bother you're dead about that,
send the parcel only that is quite
enough for us, we get 6 francs 1/2
in English money very well as
that does us all right, I can
buy cigarettes & something for
eating occasionally, so mind
keep all the money for yourself.
I think I will close now, I sent
Father's letter away this morning,
give it to wee Jimmie, Dungal, & Kate
my love not forgetting yourself &
Father.
From your affec. son.
Jack

Letter from John Henry Carmichael to his mother Williamina, dated 16th October 1917
from the collection of Edinburgh Napier University.

With kind thanks to the late Dr Peter Carmichael for donating these letters to the collection.

Questions

Q1. Parcels were always welcomed by soldiers on the Front. What did Jack's mother send him in a parcel that he and the boys very much appreciated?

Q2. What did Jack say about the parcel?

Q3. When does Jack think he might get leave to come home?

Q.4 How much money does Jack get “every week or so”?

Q5. What did Jack say he spends his money on?

RSVP

In his letter, Jack tells his mother he is going to send wee Jimmie a postcard. Imagine you are Jack and are writing the postcard to send to wee Jimmie.

Put yourself in Jack’s shoes. Think about the kind of things he might want to tell wee Jimmie.

Perhaps he is looking forward to seeing him. Perhaps he will tell him about what it is like in the trenches. What is the food like? Are the beds comfortable? What is the weather like?

Try to write in the same style as Jack. He seems to be quite cheery, despite being on the Front.

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