

Tairāwhiti's Second World War memories

Invitation to participate



It is now more than 80 years since New Zealand entered the Second World War and 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the war. There are still many members of our community who lived through those times and we believe their collective memories will be an invaluable resource for future generations, both as a reminder of the way in which our local history is part of the history of the world as a whole, and as an example of the way communities adapt to cope with hardship.

The experiences of members of the armed forces have already been extensively documented, and several books have been published on the experiences of civilian. However, they deal with New Zealanders in general and contain few references to Tairāwhiti. We had therefore decided to embark on a project inviting people to contribute their memories of the war years as experienced on the East Coast. This was put on hold due to uncertainty about the impact of Covid-19, but it is perhaps now more appropriate than ever to recall that there have been other times when New Zealanders have needed to adapt to restrictions on the freedoms we have not only enjoyed but maybe taken for granted.

How to contribute

Write or record your memories of the war years, and the immediate post war period (the 1940s). You can also record stories you might recollect hearing from other family members about their experiences during the war years in Tairāwhiti.

Your memories can be any length and you can record your memories in any form: on the computer, in long-hand, or by doing an audio or video recording.

Make sure to record your full name, date of birth, address and any contact information clearly on your document.

Once you've submitted your memories you will need to sign a form to confirm that the museum can retain your document in the museum's collection and make it available to researchers and the public online and in exhibitions in the future.

You can email your document to Christine Page (Museum Archivist) at christinepage@tairawhitimuseum.org.nz

You can also post your memories to the museum but please be aware that we will not be able to respond until the end of Level 4 restrictions as museum staff are working from home.

PO Box 716
Tūranganui-a-Kiwa / Gisborne 4040
Aotearoa /New Zealand

A friend or family member may be able to assist by helping you get set up to write, or be willing to transcribe your written or recorded memories remotely. Museum staff are also able to assist remotely by phone or email.

Second World War photographs, archives and objects

While you are thinking about this time you may come across photographs, archives (letters, diaries) or objects at home. If you have something that you believe may be of interest for the museum collection we are still able to consider potential collection donations while we are working from home as long as you can send us photographs and information by email. You can find more information on our website.

<https://tairawhitimuseum.org.nz/collections/donate-to-collection/>

Want to record your memories but not sure where to start?

These are some possible topics you may be able to write about:

- Non-combatant / reserved occupations (we know that children sometimes accompanied their parents to work)
- Food and rationing
- Clothing, make-do-and mend
- Patriotic organisations and their activities
- Armed forces – how the families felt about farewells, return on leave, final return, rehabilitation
- Travel restrictions, black outs



John Harold (Jack) Hollamby. Collection Tairāwhiti Museum, 80-1

We have put more information about these themes on our website to help jog your memory.