

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Kenneth (Ken) Barlow received a Comfort Package or a Money Order from the King Island (Tasmania) War Service Fund, and then corresponded with the Fund.

In August 1940, the Island Fund was formally approved to operate independently from the State of Tasmania. It was run by a group of volunteers, led by Mr John (Jack) Marshall. John was an ex WW1 soldier, also the President of the local Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA), founded on King Island in 1919. This is now known as the Returned and Services League (RSL) and the King Island RSL Sub branch is still in operation.

The fund distributed packages to locals who had enlisted and other people who had no connection with King Island. As a mark of respect 139 service personnel wrote letters of thanks, totaling approximately 530 letters – they form the basis of the collection. Further information on the Fund and its operation can be found on the Community Page.

The challenges for a service person during World War 2 to write a letter was to firstly find the inclination (often directly related to their mental condition due to combat), time, paper, a writing implement and a place under cover. Occasionally a letter was typed and the paper ranged from high quality to loose scraps, and as the war progressed supplies dwindled. With letterhead paper, naming a unit or organisation, do not assume that was where the person was when writing. Paper was borrowed and passed on to mates. Occasionally, a Telegram was sent where the emphasis was on brevity as each word added more to the cost.

The standard of writing is directly related to the standard of education and sometimes a friend or a Chaplain would write a letter on a person's behalf. Many of the letters were addressed to Mr Marshall (or just Jack), his wife, a member of the voluntary committee, or the RSSAILA. Some letters are very brief while others are detailed and mention other people, or events they have witnessed. The Marshall's also lost their son John while on Active Service, and some writers asked about John or acknowledged his death to the family.

For most of the war, letters were subject to censorship and this is often observed in a cutout section on a page – if the other side was written on it was also deleted. Many letters have the initials or the signature of the person who checked them prior to posting.

What follows is a scan of the original letter and a typed transcript, based on the original. Grammar or spelling has not been changed or corrected, and if more than one letter was written they follow in date order. Some of the original letters, although stored correctly, are very faint and fragile, but all have been included along with undated letters. They are perhaps the only surviving documents written by this person.

Ken wrote two letters, both undated but are considered to be in the correct order.



AUSTRALIAN
COMFORTS FUND

In Conjunction with

Y. M. C. A.

(Use Military Address only)



No. 18690 Sig Barlow
Signal Section
12th Aust. Inf. Bde
Australia

M^r Davies,

I am writing a few lines to ask you to do me a favour in thanking the Ladies of the K. I War Service Funds for the splendid efforts they are doing towards comforting the boys in camp. On behalf of myself I would like you to thank them and yourself for the parcel I received just recently, and I can assure you I do appreciate the interesting work you ladies are doing for us. I trust you are keeping well yourself also M^r Davies and Joan. I understand Dad is in Camp Somewhere doing the same as the rest, so will you kindly give him my regards when you write to him again. I am in the "Portlem Territory" myself and if I had my choice I know where I would sooner be. Often get a letter from them so I usually manage to get a bit of the Island news. It is that long since I left here that I forget all about it.

MAIL YOUR LETTERS A.P.O.

DO NOT MENTION MILITARY ACTIVITIES



AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND

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Y. M. C. A.

(Use Military Address only)



No.

2

194....

But I often look back and think of the
good times I spent there. It is not the
worst place in the world, as I have found
out. Well Mr Davis there is it much
to write about up here so I will conclude
and hope this finds you all well

All the Best

Few

P. M. Harris

TX13690 Sig Barlow

Signal Section
12th Aust. Inf. Bge
Australia

Mrs Davies,

I am writing a few lines to ask you to do me a favour in thanking the Ladies of the K.I War Service Funds for the splendid efforts they are doing towards comforting the boys in camp. On behalf of myself I would like you to thank them and yourself for the parcel I received just recently, and I can assure you I do appreciate the untiring work you ladies are doing for us. I trust you are keeping well yourself also Mr Davies and Joan I understand Des. is in Camp Somewhere doing the same as the rest so will you kindly give him my regards when you write to him again. I am in the "Northern Territory" Myself and if I had my choice I know where I would sooner be. Often get a letter from Mum so I usually manage to get a bit of the Island news. It is that long since I left there that I forget all about it. But I often look back and think of the good times I spent there. It is not the worst place in the world, as I have found out. Well Mrs Davies there isn't much to write about up here so I will conclude and hope this finds you all well.

All the Best
Ken.



TX13690. Sig Barlow
Sig Section
12th Aust. Inf. Bde
Australia.

Dear Sir,

I would very much like to take this opportunity of thanking you & your members, for parcel & canteen orders I have received &c. &c. The good work your branch is doing for the boys is appreciated very much, and I can assure you, your untiring efforts, and the good work your Branch is doing towards making us comfortable, is something that I will always remember. I hope in the very near future that I am able to go back and renew acquaintances with you all. Would you please give my regards to all members.

70 Gaudet

Sig. Barlow.

TX13690. Sig. Barlow
Sig Section
12th Aust. Inf. Bde.
Australia.

Dear Sir,

I would very much like to take this opportunity of thanking you & your members, for parcel & canteen orders I have received O.K. The good work your branch is doing for the boys is appreciated very much, and I can assure you, your untiring efforts, and the good work your Branch is doing towards making us comfortable is something that I will always remember. I hope in the very near future that I am able to go back and renew acquaintances with you all. Would you please give my regards to all members.

Sig. Barlow.