

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Leslie (Les) Stansfield 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.

Les wrote his letter on 5 January 1945 and for security reasons gave his address as Australia. He was actually near Madang in New Guinea and would soon go into battle on Bougainville, then part of the Solomon Islands. Ironically, Les and his family moved to King Island in 1956 as Soldier Settlers and were allocated a sheep farm. The toll of war and farming resulted in Les dying in November 1961 at the young age of 40.



Use Official Address Only.

From No.: NX88525

Name: W. L. Stangfield

Unit or Group: "A" Coy

74 Austral. Abnd. Regt: Australia

Date: 5 January 45

The King Island was Service Land
Currie

King Island.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to thank you for your
Christmas Hampers. It reached me safely, in excellent condition.

I am grateful for the work and the
care involved in packing; but more, I am grateful for the
thought it carries. I would like to convey my appreciation
to all who have given their time to us.

There is no article in the hamper which
will not be useful; and many articles will be enjoyed as
luxuries. It does contain our Christmas Dinner; we will enjoy it.

Yours Faithfully
W. L. Stangfield

IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:

The name of your transport, or other transports in your convoy . . . dates of sailing . . . ports of call . . .
destination, descriptions of troops, or other information which, if intercepted, will be of value to the enemy.

NX 83525

Tpr L. Stansfield
"A" Sqn.
2/4 Aust. Armd. Regt: Australia
5 January 45

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Currie
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Yours faithfully
L Stansfield.