

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Lewis (Garth) Batten 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.

Garth wrote four letters, two undated and two partially dated. Based on a check of his RAAF File, it is believed the first two were written in December 1940, the third on 21 December 1942 and the last on 16 December 1944.



R.A.F. Station.
Laverton.

No. 30549.
A.C.I. Bal 5th Gd.
Squad. 251.
A Squadron.
No. 1 Rec. Dep.
R. A. A. F.
Laverton.

Dear Mrs. Marshall,
I must thank
you very much for the wallet
and chocolates, that was given me
on the day of leaving King Island.
I am ~~leaving~~ liking camp life
very much, although the drilling
is very hard on a chap at first.

Hoping to see you all on my
final leave.

From,
Yours Faithfully,
Garth Blatten.

No.30549.

A.C.1. Batten. G. L.
Squad. 251.
A Squadron.
No. 1. Rec. Dep.
R. A. A. F.
Laverton.

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R.A.F. Station.
Laverton.

No 549)
A. G. I. L. G. Batten
A. Squad. 251.
No. 1. Rec. Dep.
R. A. A. F.
Laverton,
Victoria.

Dear Mr. Marshall,
I received your parcel with thanks, this morning, and found the chocolate very satisfying, after a hard morning's drilling on the square.

I am liking the camp life over here very much indeed, although the drill is rather hard.

Will you kindly thank the persons on the committee, of the King Is. War Service Fund, for me. I would like them to know ~~how~~ how much I appreciate, their kind thoughts, and parcels.

Yours Faithfully
Garth Batten.

No. 30549.

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A. Squad. 251.
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Your's Faithfully
Garth Batten.

Aus. - 30549.
L.A.C. Batten h.g.
Postal Group
1607.

R.A.A.F.,
Darwin
Dec. 21. ST

Dear President,

I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your parcel and can assure you the contents were appreciated very much indeed. I also take this opportunity in thanking you for the Canteen Order which I received, and omitted to acknowledge previously.

I fully realize the great work the King Island War Service Fund has undertaken in providing comfort for the troops. In conclusion, I wish you all the Best, in the forthcoming year.

I Remain,

Yours Faithfully,
(L.A.C.) Garth Batten.
C.

Aus. - 30549.

L.A.C. Batten, L.G.

Postal Group. 607.

R.A.A.F.

Darwin.

Dec. 21ST.

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I fully realise the great work the King Island War Service Fund has undertaken in providing Comforts etc. for the troops. In conclusion, I Wish you all the Best, in the forthcoming year.

I remain,

Your's Faithfully,

(L.A.C.) Garth Batten.



From No. 30549 Name LAC Batten. LG
Unit or Group Group 889 R.A.A.F.
(Use Official Address only) Date Pacific
Dec. 16th

President
H. Is. R. S. L.
Currie,
King Is.
Tas.

Dear Sir,

Many thanks
for Canteen Orders. I assure you they were
greatly appreciated. Needless to say it did
not take me very long to cash same at
Canteen for my weekly ration of beer which
gave me great pleasure drinking to the
success of your Association, and wishing
your Members A Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year.

Yours Faithfully
Garth Batten

IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:
The name of your transport or other transport in your country . . . dates of sailing . . . ports of call . . . destination,
description of troops, or other information which, if intercepted, will be of value to the enemy.

30549. L.A.C. Batten. L G.
Group 889. R.A.A.F.
Pacific.
Dec. 16TH.

President,
K. Is. R. S. L..
Currie,
King Is.
Tas.,

Dear Sir,

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Your's Faithfully
Garth Batten.