

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Thomas (Tom) Bertram 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.

Tom wrote three letters – 7 July 1943, 2 February 1944 and the last on 21 February 1945. Over the period of two years, he travelled the World and made interesting observations on the parcels he received along with other items.



ON ACTIVE SERVICE

7-7-1943

Yc King Is
War Service Fund

I am writing in ~~an~~ acknowledgement of your gift of comforts & enclosed card dated May 14th 1943. You can't possibly imagine how grateful I was for these articles. There was a fine variety & everything arrived in perfect condition, due I guess to the expert packing.

It is certainly great to know the people at home are thinking of us & are helping to make our life happier until the great day when we return. I think King Is. folks treat their boys much better than most localities. I certainly consider myself very lucky.

I am probably the only King Islander in Canada but there are about fifty Australians in the camp. I am the

only ^{my} Tasmanian here although there
are about half a dozen of us that trained
together at Western Junction. This is
really a very nice station, one of the
best in the country from what we hear.
We Australians manage to lead quite
a happy life.

The cost of living over here is
very high & little necessities such as
you sent me are very dear so you can
see why I am so grateful for the Parcel.
Things are dearer still in the States.

Well I guess I shall stop now,
I hope I have conveyed fully, my
appreciation.

Thanking you once again.

Yours truly
J Bertram

AUS.428037
L.A.C. BERTRAM T.H.
14 S.F.T.S.
AYLMER
ONTARIO
CANADA
7-7-1943

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The cost of living over here is very high & little necessities such as you sent me are very dear so you can see why I am so greatful for the parcel. Things are dearer still in the States.

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T Bertram



ANZAC CLUB

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA



AUS 428037

Sgt Bertram T.H.

"AUSPO"

LONDON

2-2-44

Dear ladies

I know that's the wrong way to start this kind of a letter & I apologize for my surprising display of ignorance - please don't laugh.

This is, I will admit, a very belated effort at showing my appreciation for the last parcel I received from you - I ask your forgiveness.

If I remember correctly the parcel was despatched to me in early October. I kept the card with that information on for some considerable time wrote little bits of important data on the back of it (not addresses) & then lost the damned thing. I do hope my memory serves me correctly.

The said parcel came into my



ANZAC CLUB

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA



loving & appreciative case about the middle of December. It had apparently partaken ~~of~~ a most interesting journey through the length & breadth of Canada even to Prince Edward Is. (a miserable place) before finally reaching me in Halifax. It was by the way a wonderful example of perfect packing & that to use slang is "dinkum".

Please excuse the paper & its most misleading letter-head but it's the result of a little poverty & most acceptable in this place. To quote a King Islander I know "paper is as scarce as hens teeth over here". What we do get is I am sure made for some other purpose than for writing.

I have travelled quite a way since receiving the parcel & for all I know will have travelled much further before you receive this. I'm afraid the



ANZAC CLUB

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA



mail is very slow having to be paddled to Australia per canoe per person perhaps.

But to be serious once more I really am grateful for the things in that parcel, more so here than in Canada. We found the rationing rather hard to knuckle down to.

Still we fare like Kings compared to some. As a matter of fact we just about live on bread, potatoes broussel sprouts & sausages with no meat in them. There's some chooks down the road though & I'm going to accidentally strike one with a stick & have to eat it soon. We have a bottle of nice fresh milk now again too, but then we are lucky enough to be out in the country.

I still haven't met any fellow King Islanders in my wanderings



ANZAC CLUB

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA



but they are rather a rare creature
arent they? I run into the occasional
Tasmanian. There are of course a
lot of R.A.A.F in England but you must
realise that when you read how high
the morale is over here. We couldnt
keep it to this high standard with a
mere handful of Australians.

Incidentally I spent Xmas in
England, only just though. We had
only just arrived & didnt enjoy it
much (dont tell Mum that though)

Well I hope I return soon, then
I can personally thank the people
responsible for the parcel.

Thanks a lot anyways
yours sincerely

Tom Bertram

P.S. Anyone like some Brussels Sprout
seed.

SS.

AUS 428037
Sgt Bertram T.H.
"AUSPO"
LONDON
2-2-44

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The said parcel came into my loving & appreciative care about the middle of December. It had apparently partaken of a most interesting journey through the length & breadth of Canada even to Prince Edward Is. (a miserable place) before finally reaching me in Halifax. It was by the way, a wonderful example of perfect packing & that to use slang is "dinkum"

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I still haven't met many fellow King Islanders in my wanderings but they are rather a rare creature aren't they. I run into the occasional Tasmanian. There are of course a lot of R.A.A.F in England but you must realise that when you read how high the morale is over here. We couldn't keep it to this high standard with a mere handful of Australians.

Incidentally I spent Xmas in England, only just though. We had only just arrived & didn't enjoy it much (don't tell Mum that though)

Well I hope I return soon, then I can personally thank the people responsible for the parcel

Thanks a lot any way

Yours sincerely

Tom Bertram

Write in the BLOCK letters in the panel below.
To address must NOT be typewritten.



TO - KING ISLAND SERVICE FUND
KING ISLAND
TASMANIA
AUSTRALIA



14424

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Name & Address: AVE. 220071, F.S. RECTOR, MTH 272 SAN C.M.P.

21-3-45

The Secretary

I was very grateful to receive your canteen order recently and especially to realize that I am not forgotten by the folk back home. Recently I also received a parcel of K. Is Mews & it's great to read of all the good work you people are doing. As I have said before I'm sure I could be a especially if King Is leads the way with comfort to its servicemen. The A.I.C.F. was right on the dot with my Xmas hamper which contained quite a useful & tasty assortment.

You will probably wonder why I only just received your letter but I have been on the move & as you see I'm on a new Squadron now.

We are getting more Australian products in our stores & canteens every day - Aussie tinned butter, cheese, fruit & even lamb & green peas! Not to mention our little dresses & even toilet soap.

Here's hoping I get a chance to fly over to K. Is before many more Xmas'es. Thank everyone concerned for their generosity. I know I'm only one of a great many who fully appreciate your good work.

P.S. JUST RECEIVED YOUR
PARCEL OF STUFFS THANKS ALL
OVER AGAIN IT'S A VERY ACCEPTABLE
PARCEL

Yours sincerely
off
Sartnam

This space should not be used.

TO KING IS WAR SERVICE FUND
KING ISLAND
TASMANIA
AUSTRALIA

AUS 828037

F/O BERTRAM T.H 272 SQN C.M.F.

21- 2 - 45

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Yours Sincerely

T Bertram