

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Graham Birch 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.

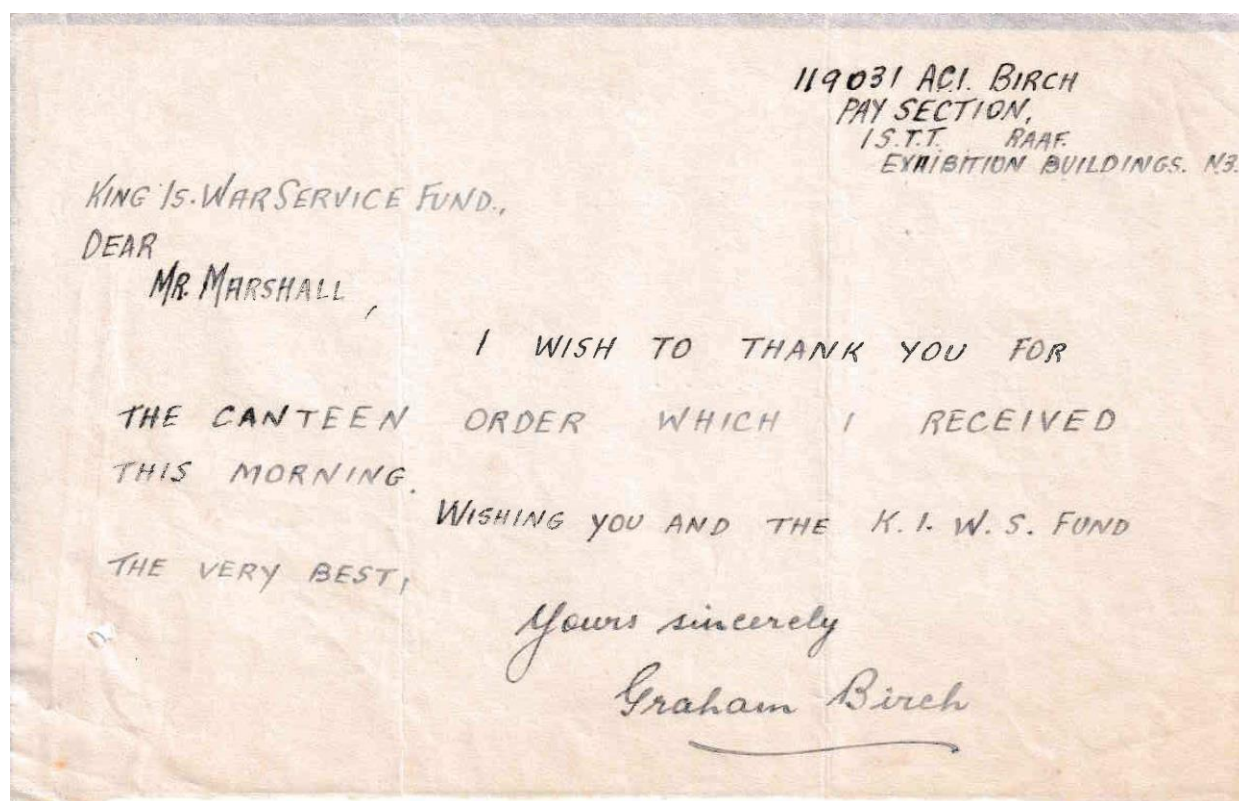
The challenges for a service person during World War 2 to write a letter was to firstly find the inclination (often directly related to their mental condition due to combat), time, paper, a writing implement and a place under cover. Occasionally a letter was typed and the paper ranged from high quality 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.

Graham wrote eight letters from 1942 until October 1945. His later letters give more details on life in Camps and his final letter discusses his feelings for the RAAF – this is in regard to delays with demobilization which many service personnel found very frustrating.



119031 A.C.1. BIRCH

PAY SECTION,
1S.T.T. RAAF.
EXHIBITION BUILDINGS N.3.

KING IS. WAR SERVICE FUND.,

DEAR

MR. MARSHALL,

I WISH TO THANK YOU FOR THE CANTEEN ORDER WHICH I
RECEIVED THIS MORNING.

WISHING YOU AND THE K.I.W.S. FUND THE VERY BEST,

Yours sincerely
Graham Birch



AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND

WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED

R.S.L. War Service Fund, The Salvation Army and Y.M.C.A.

119031 A.C.I. BIRCH G.
SQUAD 802, R.A.A.F.
No. 1. R. D.
SHEPPARTON. VIC.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

I regret not having
done so before; but wish
to thank you very much
for the wallet and the
canteen Order.

I appreciate your
gifts very much, and
wish your organisation
every success.

Yours faithfully,
Graham Birch.

119031 A.C.1. BIRCH G.
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Royal Australian Air Force

STATION 1/S/T/T/ Exhibition
Buildings N.3.

Pay Sect.

14/12/42.

19

The Secretary,
King Island War Service Fund,
Currie, K.I.

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank your organisation

for your kindness in sending me a Xmas Parcel , which
I received a few days ago . I feel sure now that Xmas
will be just as bright as it has ever been before.

Wishing your organisation every success,

I remain

yours Sincerely,

Graham Birch

1/S/T/T/ Exhibition
Buildings N.3.
Pay Sect.
14/12/42.

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Wishing your organisation ever success, I remain

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Graham Birch

119031 Lac. Birch G.
Group 860.

bairns,
A. land.
20/11/23.

Mr. J. E. M. Marshall,
King Island War Service Fund.

Dear Sir,

Many thanks
for your very warmly apprec-
iated Xmas Parcel, which I
received a couple of days ago.
Wishing The K. I. War Service Fund
all the Best, for their good
work.

I remain,

Yours sincerely

Graham Birch

119031 Lac. Birch G.
Group 860.

CENSORED

Cairns,
Q,land.
30/11/43.

Mr. J. E. M. Marshall,
King Island War Service Fund.

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Many thanks for your very warmly appreciated Xmas Parcel, which I received a couple of days ago. Wishing the K.I. War Service Fund all the Best, for their good work.

I remain,

Yours sincerely
Graham Birch

119031
LAC. BIRCH G. L.
GROUP 860,
A.F.P.O. 72,

CAIRNS
QUEENSLAND.
21. 12. 43.

The President,
H. I. Sub-Branch
R. S. S. & A. I. X. A..

Dear Sir,

I received your banded
Order today, for which I send my
sincerest appreciation.

Wishing your organisation every
success,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Graham Birch

21/12/43

119031
LAC. BIRCH G.L.
GROUP 860,
A.F.P.O.72,
CAIRNS,
QUEENSLAND.
21.12.43.

The President,
K.I. Sub-Branch
R.S.S. & A.I.L.A..

Dear Sir,

I received your Canteen Order today, for which I send my sincerest appreciation.

Wishing your organisation every success,

I remain

Yours sincerely,
Graham Birch

119031

LacBireh G.K.

Group 456.

RCAF Pacific.

10.9.44.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Your K.I. War Service Parcel reached me in good order & condition yesterday for which I thank you very deeply. It's really great to receive such welcome comforts when so far away from civilisation, and believe me I appreciate very greatly the marvellous job you are doing.

Life is very quiet up this way now, as I have had time to get well settled in this my fifth place of abode. Comforts, such as flooring boards (of a kind), yanky stretchers, jungle sheets, and sundry food stuffs have been "acquired" by some means or other & tend to make life quite comfortable. The presence of a really good beach at a very short distance from the camp makes things really great. Swimming is a daily routine, and lends naturally to our health & fitness. We "acquired" a motor launch just recently which is now serving us as a pleasure launch for use when off duty, so you can see what I mean

119031
Lac Birch G.L.
Group 456.
RaaF. Pacific.
10.9.44.

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I follow with interest the local news of K.I. and am pleased to hear that quite a number of the chaps have been back on leave. My turn may come someday I hope, but not for a while yet.

Will you give my kindest regards to Mrs. Marshall, Dorothy, Sylvia and Arthur - wishing them the very, best, with hopes of joining you again very shortly .

One can't comment very successfully on the (great situation), as the War is here today and gone tomorrow - according to "Paris"! according to the RAAF. "Its here today and gone tonight!"

Well I must draw to a close now as there is not very much more I can say at the moment, except that my appreciation of your good work, and those who help in purchasing & packing the parcels for us, is of the highest degree.

I Remain,

Yours sincerely

G Birch.



From No.: 119031
Name: Lac. Birch G.K.
Unit: Group 744.
R.A.A.F.
Date: Pacific.
24.12.44.

USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Once again
I am writing in thanks for
your Xmas Parcels, which
I have received. I wish to
thank your organisations
most sincerely for helping
to make my Xmas a
happy one.

Xmas time is hardly differ-
ent from any other time
during the year, when a
chap is away from home,
but when we receive
such thoughtful gestures
as these parcels which you
send, it makes a hell of

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.



From No.: _____

Name: _____

Unit: _____

Date: _____

USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY.

2

a difference.

I have hopes of a spot of leave in the new year, so I am looking forward to seeing you again. I suppose I will nearly freeze to death when I land on King Island after the sweating I've done up here.

The weather is very damp and uncomfortable now, as the "rainy season" is on, however she shouldn't last very long, then it's quite a good climate.

I wish to be remembered to all my friends, and send

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From No.: _____

Name: _____

Unit: _____

Date: _____

USE MILITARY ADDRESS ONLY.

3

them my best wishes, and
thanks for everything they are
doing to help us service-
men.

Special wishes go to
Mrs. Marshall and the family;
hoping you had a very
happy Xmas yourself.

In closing I must apologise
for the shortness of this note,
as it is very difficult to think
up much for letters.

Yours sincerely,
Graham

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R.A.A.F.
Pacific.
24.12.44

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Xmas time is hardly different from any other time during the year, when a chap is away from home, but when we receive such thoughtful gestures as these parcels which you send, it makes a hell of a difference.

I have hopes of a spot of leave in the New Year, so I am looking forward to seeing you again. I suppose I will nearly freeze to death when I land on King Island after the sweating I've done up here.

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I wish to be remembered to all my friends, and send them my best wishes, and thanks for everything they are doing to help us service-men.

Special wishes go to Mrs. Marshall and the family; hoping you had a very happy Xmas yourself.

In closing I must apologise for the shortness of this note, as it is very difficult to think up much for letters.

Yours sincerely,

Graham



No. 119031.

L.A.C. Birch, G.L.E.

R.A.A.F.

Group No. 27.

PACIFIC

9. 10. 1945.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Once again I am happy to be able to acknowledge receipt of a comforts parcel from the War Service Fund; believe me, its a marvellous morale lifter.

There is a hell of a lot of bungling going on in this Air Force, and its really gratifying to know that we are being looked after by the folks back home.

I am looking forward to the day when I can return to N.I. for good; with no restriction on leave. I guess all the other chaps have "had it" too!?

Its damn good news about our



2

No. 119031.

L.A.C. Birch, G.L.E.

R.A.A.F.

Group No.

194

King Island boys being liberated - I hope they are all located. I have seen quite a number of Aust. P.O.W's, but so far havnt found any of my robbers.

I am expecting to return to Aust. any old day now, providing the great organising bodies of this Air Force wake up a bit. We have been packed for eight weeks expecting transport to take us back.

Well I hope soon to be back home to stay anyway; and if anyone asks me to stay in the permanent Air Force pitky help him !!

My regards to Mrs. Marshall & the family.

Yours sincerely, *Graham Birch*

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L.A.C. Birch, G.L.E.
R.A.A.F.
Group. No. 27.
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