

## **The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund**

During World War 2, John (Jack) Keating 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, such as Jack asked about him.

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.

Jack wrote three letters to the Fund; the first two did not include the year, but based on his Army File they were written in 1941 and 1942. His last letter was dated the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, and was sent from New Guinea.

TX 1320

A. Company  
12<sup>th</sup> Bn.

H.I.F. Abroad  
Dec 12 <sup>94</sup>

Dear Jack

Am writing you a few lines  
to let you know how things are going  
over here - I have received two parcels  
from the island in the last three weeks -  
one was posted in August and the other  
one in September - I want to thank  
you and the people on the island very  
much - All of the articles were in good  
order - and I can assure you very  
welcome - There are a lot of parcels  
coming in now for all the boys from  
all parts of Aussie -

I am in Syria at present - been up  
here a few months - it is just starting  
winter here and believe me its cold  
too - especially of a night - we have  
had a few wet days this week and  
they were very miserable - We get  
a lot of fun shooting duck and geese



There are a lot of them about here at present — I had a few days leave down in Palestine about a fortnight ago and had a great time too — I met Dick Thompson down there the first time I had seen him since he left Aussie — He looked well and fit — I am getting my mail very regular now — so I hear most of the news and gossip — Well Jack I had better knock off now — I wish you and the people over there all the best for the coming year — Hope to be back again with you soon —

Yours

J. Keating

*Cherry*

BY AIR MAIL AIR MAIL  
LETTER CARD

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS CARD  
WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL

34 AUSTRALIA

Mr. J. Marshall  
Currie  
King Island  
Tasmania.  
AUSTRALIA.

Greetings from the  
A. S. S. Middle East  
Xmas - New Year  
1941-42

378

WHEN FOLDED THE LETTER CARD MUST CONFORM IN SIZE AND SHAPE WITH  
THE BLUE BORDER WITHIN WHICH THE ADDRESS ONLY MAY BE WRITTEN

TX1320  
A. Company  
12<sup>th</sup> Btn.  
A.I.F. Abroad  
Dec 12<sup>th</sup> [1941]

Dear Jack

Am writing you a few lines to let you know how things are going over here – I have received two parcels from the island in the last three weeks – one was posted in August and the other one in September – I want to thank you and the people on the island very much – All of the articles were in good order – and I can assure you very welcome – There are a lot of parcels coming in now for all the boys from all parts of Aussie –

I am in Syria at present – been up here a few months – it is just starting winter here and believe me it's cold too – especially of a night – we have had a few wet days this week and they were very miserable – We get a lot of fun shooting duck and geese there are a lot of them about here at present - I had a few days leave down in Palestine about a fortnight ago and had a great time too – I met Dick Thompson down there the first time I had seen him since he left Aussie – He looked well and fit – I am getting my mail very regular now – so I hear most of the news and gossip –

Well Jack I had better knock off now – I wish you and the people over there all the best for the Coming Year – Hope to be back again with you soon –

Yours  
J. Keating

TX1320

H.Q. Company

2/12 Battalion

A.I.F. Aus.

July 12<sup>th</sup>

Dear Jack

Am writing you a few lines to let you know how things are going - I have received two parcels and a canteen order since I arrived back from leave - one parcel and the canteen order had been to the East and back so they done a good job catching up to me with them - I want to thank you very much for sending them - I can assure you they are very much appreciated - They usually manage to arrive just when they are needed most -

We are having wonderful weather here - a bit different to what you are getting I guess - I think we are lucky in a way being in a warm climate for the winter - The country here looks real well - any amount of grass and all the stock are in the pink - Though the "cockys" here tell us we have struck it at a good time - but there is some wonderful country here - I have seen thousands of acres just like Egg Lagoon country -

I hope you still hear from John regular - though I guess the mail is a bit slow from him at times - Well Jack I had better stop now - hoping

Yours truly

Do see you all again soon - All the worry about is the home leave - Thanks again for all you have done and are doing -  
Yours sincerely  
John F. Keating



TX1320  
H.Q. Company  
2/12 Battalion  
A.I.F. Aus.  
July 12<sup>th</sup> [1942]

Dear Jack/

Am writing you a few lines to let you know how things are going – I have received two parcels and a canteen order since I arrived back from leave – One parcel and the canteen order had been to the East and back so they done a good job catching up to me with them – I want to thank you very much for sending them – I can assure you they are very much appreciated – They usually manage to arrive just when they are needed most – we are having wonderful weather here – a bit different to what you are getting I guess – I think we are lucky in a way being in a warm climate for the winter – The country here looks real well – any amount of grass and all the stock are in the pink – though the “cockys” tell us we have struck it at a good time – but there is some wonderful country here – I have seen thousands of acres just like Egg Lagoon country –

I hope you still here from John regular – though I guess the mail is a bit slow from him at times –

Well Jack I had better stop now – hoping to see you all again soon – all we worry about is the home leave – Thanks again for all you have done and are doing –

Yours Sincerely  
(Pte) J. Keating.

TX 1320  
Cpl. J. Keating  
H.Q Coy  
2/12 Bn.  
A.I.F. Aus.  
10-11-43.

Dear Jack/

Received parcel two days ago  
Thanks very much - Contents were all  
in good order and believe me ~~were~~ very  
acceptable - Everything in 'picturesque'  
New Guinea is about the same - no  
changes much -

Well Jack I will close now - wishing  
you and all the folk over there - the  
very best -

Yours Faithfully  
Jack

TX 1320  
Cpl. J. Keating  
H.Q Coy  
2/12 Bn.  
A.I.F. Aus.  
10-11-43.

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