

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

During World War 2, Albert (Bert) Conley 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.

Bert wrote one letter to the Fund in December 1941 while he was stationed in Darwin. He writes on behalf of himself and three mates, noting that it is believed that the William brothers were unable to write. Bert was discharged in December 1943, so he could return to farming.

VX53196

Gen A H Conley  
14 Anti Tank Bpt  
A I F Darwin  
15-12-41

Dear Mrs Marshall

We were pleased to  
get your parcels, from over there.  
And its great to know people has not  
forgotten us yet, There are four off us together  
two William's Bill Boag & myself.  
Lets hope you all have a merry Xmas  
And all the other old pals over there  
I dont like how chance off getting home  
for a long time, But lets hope the  
day will soon come, When we can go back  
to work, We are all well and fit  
ready for anything any time.  
The weather is always hot here, never gets  
cool, we dont have to wear shirts only  
shorts & Boats, But will be pleased to have  
a good old drink off Boag's Bitter again  
Just remember us to the thoughtful people  
over there and thank them, for the parcels  
And we wish you all the very Best off Luck  
And a Happy New Year, So Cheers & keep the  
chin up.

From Linny Malcolm Bill & Bend

VX53196  
Gnr AH Conley  
14 Anti Tank Bty  
AIF Darwin  
15-12-41

Dear Mr Marshall

We were pleased to get how parcle's, from over there,  
And its great to know people has not forgot us yet, There are 4 off us together two William's  
Bill Boagie & myself,  
Let's hope you all have a Merry Xmas and all the other old pals over there,  
Don't like how chance off getting home for a long time, But let's hope the day will soon come.  
When we can go back to work, We are all well and fit ready for anything any time.  
The weather is always's hot here, never get's cool, we don't have to wear shirts only shorts &  
Boots', But will be pleased to have a good old drink off Boag's Bitter again Just remember us  
to the thoughtfull people over there and thank them, for the parcle's, And we wish you all the  
very Best off Luck And a Happy New Year, So cheero & keep the chin up.

From Linsy Malcolm Bill & Bert