

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Harry Drake 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.

Harry wrote three letters to the Fund; the first in 1942 followed by two in 1944. Interestingly, his first letter, sent from Northern Australia, is written on paper from the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut and Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park Sydney. By 1944 his letters show that he is now a signaller. His letters are 'newsy', noting that "buck shee" means no charge.

Sir John Monash Recreation Hut

and

Anzac Buffet TX6681

Hyde Park, Sydney.

DRAKE H.F.

North Australian Observation Unit

A. G. F.

Australia.

1. 8. '42

Dear Mr Marshall.

I am writing to you
thanking you for that comforts
food parcel I received while in
Tasmania. I appreciated very
much. The balaclava helmet
has been very useful.

At the present I am not
in the best of health as I am
just getting over the measles.
but I will come right.

Yours faithfully

TX6681.

H.F. Drake P.T.E.

TX66.81
DRAKE. H.F.
North Australian Observation Unit
A.I.F.
Australia
1.8.'42

Dear Mr Marshall.

I am writing to you thanking you for that comforts fund parcel I recieved while in Tasmania. I appreciated very much. The balaclava helmet has been very useful.

At the present I am not in the best of health as I am just getting over the measles. but I will come right.

Yours faithfully
TX6681.
H.F Drake (PTE).



Dated 2-12-'44

From No. T.X. 6681.

(Use Official Address Only)

Name SIG. DRAKE H.F. Unit or Group "B" SECTION.

Sigs.

7. AUST. DIV.

AUSTRALIA

Dear Mr Marshall.

I'm afraid I have been rather slow in telling you know about your last parcel, ^{which} arrived in good condition.

Have forgotten exact date of arrival, it was about three months ago while I was Bongilla.

Quite a few other men get parcels from the same organization as you run. For the last one I wish to thank you & the rest War Service Fund for it.

As you can see I have left Bongilla & am some distance

Mo Your Letters A.A.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities.



AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS
FUND

Date *Jan 21/19*

From No. *111*

(Use Official Address Only)

Name *Harry Drake*

Unit or Group *111*

from there now, was glad to get out of the place, now I am reasonably happy here, fit for a few years soldiering on yet. Can you supply me with an address of King Island bay, in the Seventh Division, if you know of any would you please let me know. I expect there is a few knocking around in this area.

I hope you are all well at your place.

Have^{you} seen much of my father lately. from what I can gather he is kept pretty busy with the cows. & wouldn't be able to get around much.

Will finish off this letter now. until some other time

P.S. Although I am a little ~~preoccupied~~ I wish you all a merry xmas & a prosperous new year.

Yours Faithfully
Harry Drake

SIG. DRAKE H.F.

2-12-'44.
T.X.6681
'B' SECTION.
SIGS.
7. AUST. DIV
AUSTRALIA

Dear Mr Marshall.

I'm afraid I have been rather slow in letting you know about your last parcel which arrived in good condition.

Have forgotten exact date of arrival, it was about three months ago while I was Bongilla.

Quite a few other men get parcels from the same organization as you run, For the last one I wish to thank you & the War Service Fund for it.

As you can see I have left Bongilla, & am some distance from there now, Was glad to get out of the place, now I am reasonably happy here, fit for a few years soldiering on yet.

Can you supply me with and addresses of King Island boys in the Seventh Division, If you know of any would you please let me know. I expect there is few knocking around in this area.

I hope you are all well at your place.

Have you seen much of my farther lately from what I gather he is kept pretty busy with the cows. & wouldn't be able to get around much.

Will finish off this letter now. until some other time

P.S. Although I am a
little previous I wish
you all a merry xmas & a
prosperous new Year.

Yours Faithfully
Harry Drake



"USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY"

From No. T.X.6681 Name Sgt. H.F. DRAKE
Unit or Group "B" SECTION Date 26-12-44
Sigs.

7 AUST. DIV.
AUSTRALIA.

Dear Mr Marshall.

To-night I am writing this letter to thank you for so kindly seeing along ^{at home} ~~arrived~~ here on the 23rd of this month. Took sixteen days to reach here.

Having a very quiet Xmas again this year yesterday morning two bottles of beer was issued to each man, one bottle was "buck shee" Payed 1/4 for the other bottle.

I expect it has been a quite Xmas over on the Islands this year too.

Suppose you have heard that Leam & Rod are going for a short holiday to Tassie. Will be Rod's first trip away from the Island.

Did you receive my letter alright?

This is rather a short letter I've written but will try and do better some other time.

Yours faithfully.

Harry Drake.

(Leam)

T.X.6681.

'B' SECTION.

SIGS.

SIG. H.F. DRAKE

26-12-'44

7. AUST. DIV.

AUSTRALIA.

Dear Mr Marshall.

To-night I am writing this letter to thank you for so kindly sending along a parcel. Arrived here the 22nd of this month, Took 16 days to reach here,

Having a very quiet xmas again this year yesterday morning two bottles of beer was issued to each man, one bottle was "buck shee" Payed 1/9 for the other bottle. I expect it has been a quite xmas over on the Island this year too.

Suppose you have heard that mum & Rod are going for a short holiday to Tassie.

Will be Rod's first trip away from the Island.

Did you receive my letter alright?

This is rather a short letter I've written but will try and do better some other time

Yours faithfully.

Harry Drake.