

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

During World War 2, Colin Gunter was sent a parcel from the King Island (Tasmania) War Service Fund, but never have received it, as a Ship's Chaplain advised in correspondence to 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.

The Reverend C.D. Alcorn, Chaplain on HMAS Shropshire, wrote to the Fund on 23 November 1945 advising that Able Seaman Gunter had left the ship and the parcel could not be posted on to him. The padre advises that he can pass on the contents to Gunter's shipmates. Given that this is a typed form, with ink amendments, implies that it must have been occurring on a frequent basis. AB Gunter served almost 13 years in the RAN, being discharged in July 1953.

Smiling,  
Wey Lewis Jones,  
Key Island.

Rev. C. D. Alcorn  
Chaplain R. N.  
H. M. A. S. Shropshire  
23rd November 1945

Dear Smiling:

This is note to acknowledge the receipt of a parcel from you addressed to *AB C. H. GUNTER* aboard this ship. Unfortunately the above named rating has left this ship and we are not allowed to post the parcel on to him.

Whenever practicable I will pass on the contents to his mess mates or use them where they would be most helpful. I trust this ~~will meet~~ with your approval.

Believe me to be

Yours sincerely

(SGD) C. D. Alcorn.

Chaplain R. A. N.

Paul Jones  
Dated July 14/46

Secretary  
War Service Fund,  
King Island

Rev. C.D. Alcorn  
Chaplain R.A.N.  
H.M.A.S. Shropshire  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 1945

Dear Secretary

This is note to acknowledge the receipt of a parcel from you addressed to AB C.H.GUNTER. aboard this ship.

Unfortunately the above named rating has left this ship and we are not allowed to post the parcel on to him.

Whenever practicable I will pass on the contents to his mess mates or use them where they would be most helpful. I trust this will meet with your approval.

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Yours sincerely

(SGD) C.D. Alcorn.

Chaplain R.A.N.