

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

During World War 2, William (Colin) Hays 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.

Colin wrote two letters to the Fund, the first in January 1944 and the last a year later. At the time his Service Records show that he was in the Northern Territory, during this time period. His letters are brief and none of the content would have upset the Army Censor.

Tx 12743,

Div Hays. W. C.  
7 Platoon. H. Q. Coy.,  
12/50, Aus. Inf. Bn..

1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1944, Australia

Dear Mr Marshall,

Just a few lines to  
thank you & members of the  
R.S.S. & A.I.L.A. for your gift &  
best wishes to me for Xmas  
& the New Year, so I return  
you my greetings for the New  
Year.

I have been in  
hospital since 18<sup>th</sup> of Dec &  
was sorry I couldn't spend Xmas  
with the boys, but I'll soon be  
back & at it again.

Hoping that you  
are all well on the Island  
& that I am lucky enough to  
see you all again before long

Once again wishing you  
all the best. From,  
Dance Colin Hays.

TX 12743,  
Dvr Hays. W.C.  
7 Platoon. H.Q. Coy.,  
12/50, Aus. Inf. Bn.,  
1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1944, Australia

Dear Mr Marshall,

Just a few line to thank you & members of the R.S.S.& A.I.L.A. for your gift & best wishes to me for Xmas & the New Year, so I return you my greetings for the New Year.

I have been in hospital since 18<sup>th</sup> of Dec & was sorry I couldn't spend Xmas with the boys, but I'll soon be back & at it again.

Hoping that you are all well on the Island & that I'm lucky enough to see you all again before long

Once again wishing you all the best. from,  
Colin Hays,.



Tx 12743 Dir - W. b. Hays  
H. Q. Coy, 12/50 Aust. Inf Bn.,  
A.I.F. Australia.  
7 Jan 1945.

To,  
President & members of the K.I. Sub-Branch  
R.S.L.

A few lines of thanks for  
your caution orders & parcel which I received in  
good order. I appreciate your kind thoughts very  
much. In ~~not~~ return I wish you all the very  
best for 1945 & that before it is through we  
are all back with our folk again.

There is not much in the  
way of entertainment up this way & we are  
forced to make as much as possible amongst  
ourselves. We play a fair amount of sport, of  
an evening we play Basket ball with the aid of  
electric light. A couple of games make the time  
ten or half past by the time they are finished  
& it breaks the monotony a lot. We have  
pictures once a week, with an occasional concert  
party. Altogether we are not so hard done by.

Everything has been the same here  
for the last 12 months so there is nothing I  
can write about, so hoping this finds you all the  
same as it leaves me. In the best of health, I'll  
close with thanks to you all Yours sincerely W. b. Hays

TX 12743 Dir. W.C. Hays  
H.Q. Coy 12/50 Aust. Inf. Btn.,  
A.I.F. Australia.  
7 Jan 1945.

To,  
President & members of the K.I Sub- Branch  
R.S.L.

A few lines of thanks for your canteen orders & parcel which I received in good order. I appreciate your kind thoughts very much. In return I wish you all the very best for 1945 & that before it is through we are all back with our folk again.

There is not much in the way of entertainment up this way & we are forced to make as much as possible amongst ourselves. We play a fair amount of sport, of an evening we play Basket ball with the aid of electric light. A couple of games make the time ten or half past by the time they are finished & it brakes the monotony a lot. We have pictures once a week, with an occasional concert party. Altogether we are not so hard done by.

Everything has been the same here for the last 12 months so there is nothing I can write about, so hoping this finds you all the same as it leaves me, I the best of health, I'll close with thanks to you all

Yours sincerely  
W C Hays