

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

During World War 2, Joseph (Pat) Holmes 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.

Pat wrote one letter to the Fund in 1940, while in training at the Puckapunyal Army Camp in Victoria. Being the early years of the war, his daily routine gives a good idea of the hours worked per day.

VX 3121

B. Coy

2/6 Batt.

Ruchapuryal

11-3-40

Dear Jack, & M. Marshall,

Which ever you prefer for a title. This is the first occasion I have taken the pen, presented to me by the R.S.B.L of K.I. so I thought I'd let you as president of same have the first note that comes from its nib.

Well sir, we are safely back at camp again, and what a change, after the island. For the weather is just like midsummer, and we have to toil out in the open, and do the lads moan; They reckon niggers are better off, for at least they get a siesta during the middle of the day.

And the higher-ups are tightening up, with the work, for instead of 9 o'clock parade we now start at 7.45 AM. Rise at 6 AM. Breakfast 6.45 AM then out to the parade ground or the range from 7.45 AM until 12.30 PM. then lunch 12.45 parade again at 1.45 PM until 4.30 PM. Tea at 5.30 PM. then more likely than not an N.C.O.s class at 8 PM until 10 PM. And I forgot to mention we now do night stunts three nights a week.

ROBERT C. HENRY  
COMMISSIONER  
WILLIAM N. DALZIEL  
LT.-COMMISSIONER



TERRITORIAL HEADQUARTERS  
SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA: 69 Bourke St., Melbourne.  
EASTERN AUSTRALIA: 140 Elizabeth St., Sydney.

RED SHIELD HUTS-HOSTELS

FOR AUSTRALIAN TROOPS

I suppose by the time you get this, your own boy will be home, so I'm enclosing a snap of myself in case we ever meet on the other side, as it doesn't look as though we will meet here. And I should very much like to see him.

I am also forwarding separately a magazine which I think you'd like and it saves me a lot of writing for I think it describes the doings of this camp far better than I could ever hope to do.

So Adieu until the next

Yours sincerely  
Capt. P. Halmes

Pat for Short

VX 3421  
B.Coy  
2/6 Batt.  
Puckapunyal  
11-3-40

Dear Jack, or Mr Marshall,

Which ever you prefer for a title. This is the first occasion I have taken the pen, presented to me by the RS.S.L of K.I. so I thought I'd let you as president of same have the first note that comes from its nib. Well sir, we are safely back at camp again and what a change, after the island. For the weather is just like midsummer, and we have to toil out in the open, and do the lads moan; They reckon niggers are better off, for at least they get a siesta during the middle of the day.

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So Cheerio until the next  
Yours Sincerely  
Cpl. P. Holmes

Pat for Short