

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Easton Johnstone 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.

Easton wrote two letters to the Fund; the first in 1943 while he was in hospital, and then in 1944. His Army record states the reason for hospitalization was pneumonia and he was finally released back to General Duties in January 1944. In his second letter he mentions being on an island - his record states it was Bougainville, then part of the Solomon Islands. The clearing of the Japanese forces resulted in significant losses on both sides.

Australian Red Cross Society
Incorporated by Royal Charter 1941.

(UNOFFICIAL)

FOR SAFETY.

IN YOUR LETTERS DO NOT REFER TO:-

The name of your ship or other ships in the convoy or its escorts;

The date of sailing, ports of call, or probable destination;

The description of troops aboard, any other information which, if intercepted, would be of value to the enemy.

VX 123377

Cpl E. Johnstone

115. A. G. H.

Heidelberg

Ward. 9.

To the President
King Island
War Service Fund

Dear Sir

~~your most welcome~~
your most welcome parcel which I was pleased to get while I am in hospital I am now much better & hope I will be able to be leaving before Xmas & hope I will be able to take part in the finish of this war

Thanking you once again.

I remain

Yours Faithfully
Eaton Johnstone

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Easton Johnstone
VX123377

115. A. G. H.
Heidleberg
Ward. 9.

From No. VX 123377 Name E.L. Johnstone
 Unit or Group H.Q. Coy. 16 H.F.D. A.I.F. Australia
 (Use Official Address only) Date 19-12-44

To President (Mr. Marshall.)
 and members of the
 King Island Sub Branch R.S.L.

I hereby wish to thank you
 for your Christmas gift which I received today.
 I am somewhere in the South West Pacific on an
 island which I hope we are not left here too long,
 as I am not in love with the place, but I hope now
 to only go back home when this whole show is over,
 hoping we are all together next Xmas.
 Thanking you all once again.
 I am
 Easton L. Johnstone
 VX123377

IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:
 The name of your transport or other transports in your convoy . . . dates of sailing . . . ports of call . . . destination,
 description of troops, or other information which, if intercepted, will be of value to the enemy.

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