

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

During World War 2, John (Jack) Lancaster 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.

Jack wrote seven letters to the Fund; two in 1941, four in 1942 and one in 1943. Jack was born on King Island but was educated in Melbourne, hence his comment about receiving items from the Fund. Each letter reflects a relaxation in writing style including his signature. In his final letter he mentions his marriage and brother Peter (VX12386). Tragically, Jack died on 8 April 1943 when his plane crashed in the Gulf of Carpentaria, killing all the crew.

Telephone: JX 1114



H01847  
JCH Lancaster J. G.  
Ait 104

No. 2 INITIAL TRAINING SCHOOL  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE  
LINDFIELD, N.S.W.

27<sup>th</sup> May 1941.

The Secretary,  
King Island War Service Fund,  
King Island.

Dear Sir.

It was with great pleasure and a little surprise that I received a cheque order sent by you and wish to thank you for your kind thought. I say surprise because I expected that my absence from King Island for so long would have perhaps disqualified me from any such privilege. However I am pleased that this is not so and am still regarded as one of the King Island boys, and can assure you that a gift such as this is highly appreciated.

Once again thanking you and with good wishes for your association and its work.

Yours truly,  
John G. Lancaster

401847  
ACII Lancaster J.G.  
Hut 104

27<sup>th</sup> May 1941.

The Secretary,  
King Island War Service Fund,  
King Island.

Dear Sir.

It was with great pleasure and a little surprise that I received a canteen order sent by you and wish to thank you for your kind thought. I say surprise because I expected that my absence from King Island for so long would have perhaps disqualified me from any such privilege. However I am pleased that this is not so and am still regarded as one of the King Island boys, and can assure you that a link such as this is highly appreciated.

Once again thanking you and with good wishes for your association and its work.

Yours truly,  
John G. Lancaster



401847

AC Lancaster J.S.

14 Course

Deserovers

No 1, A. N. S.

Royal Australian Air Force Station

Lakeba, N.S.W.

4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1941

The Secretary  
King Islands War Service Fund  
King Islands.

Dear Sir.

Will you please convey to the  
members of your organisation my sincere  
thanks for the packet and good wishes  
I have this week received. The thought is  
much appreciated and the contents being  
of a more business nature than the  
service issue are more acceptable. My  
Australian training being nearly completed  
I hope shortly to be able to visit King  
Island before going elsewhere.

Once again many thanks,  
Yours sincerely  
J Lancaster

401847  
LAC Lancaster J.G.  
14 Course  
Observers  
No 1 A.N.S.  
Parkes, N.S.W.  
4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1941.

The Secretary  
King Island War Service Fund  
King Island

Dear Sir.

Will you please convey to the members of your organisation my sincere thanks for the parcel and good wishes I have this week received. The thought is much appreciated and the contents being of a more luxurious nature than the service issue are most acceptable. My Australian training being nearly completed I hope shortly to be able to visit King Island before going elsewhere.

Once again, many thanks,

Yours sincerely  
J G Lancaster





90 Lancaster J. G.  
OFFICERS' MESS,  
NO. 3 SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL,  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE,  
AMBERLEY, Q'LD.

4<sup>th</sup> Jan'y 1942.

Dear Mr Marshall:

Before leaving King  
Island from final leave I  
received a parcel of soap  
having requisites and etc  
and am writing to thank  
you and others responsible  
for this and the kind  
thoughts behind it. The warden  
Mr Miller also presented me  
with a fountain pen,  
engraved and forming a  
most useful memento of friends  
on King Island.

The RAAF moved rapidly  
and as soon as I arrived  
in Melbourne received orders  
to proceed by the earliest  
train to this place. It is a

good station, situated only  
~~some~~ twenty odd miles  
inland from Brisbane. At  
this time of the year the  
weather is hot a contrast  
to the cooler climate down  
south. However as far as is  
possible the program is  
arranged to allow a sickle  
during the work hours of  
the day. During the period  
of training most of us were  
hoping to be able to go to  
England, to gain experience  
on larger types of aircraft  
and also to look around  
the country. With the entry  
of Japan through the situation  
is changed and it appears  
as if we may take part  
in the direct defence of  
our own country.

Kind regards to all  
Yours truly  
Jack Lancaster

P/O Lancaster J.G.  
OFFICERS' MESS,  
NO. 3 SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL,  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE,  
AMBERLEY, Q'LD.

4<sup>th</sup> Jan'y 1942.

Dear Mr Marshall:

Before leaving King Island from final leave I received a parcel of soap shaving requisites and etc and am writing to thank you and others responsible for this and the kind thought behind it. The Warden Cr Miller also presented me with a fountain pen, engraved and forming a most useful memento of friends on King Island.

The RA.AF moved rapidly and as soon as I arrived in Melbourne received orders to proceed by the earliest train to this place. It is a good station, situated only some twenty odd miles inland from Brisbane. at this time of the year the weather is hot a contrast to the cooler climate down south. However as far as is possible the program is arranged to allow a siesta during the worst hours of the day. During the period of training most of us were hoping to be able to go to England, to gain experience in larger types of aircraft and also to look around the country. With the entry of Japan though the situation is changed and it appears as if we may take part in the direct defense of our own country.

Kind regards to all

Yours truly

Jack Lancaster





**Australian Comforts Fund**

P/O Lancaster J. G.  
RAAF

Port Moresby.  
19th July 1942.

The Secretary  
King Island War Service Fund

Dear Sir.

I was very pleased to receive early this week your parcel with its most acceptable contents. Will you convey to those responsible for this thought my sincere thanks. Coming from King Island makes the pleasure even greater and I always feel as though it were a link with home and friends. At the present I am camped some way from Port Moresby itself and seldom go in and use the canteen facilities available.

The position in these parts seems to change little, as can be read in the press we exchange blow for blow. Beneath it all though I feel

**Australian Comforts Fund**

there is a desire among the men daily growing, to have a go at the Japs. We all hope that the planning of strategy will soon make this possible and something decisive accomplished. The men are in a very fit condition and can be relied upon to do their best.

Climatic conditions are best at this time of the year, a cool sea breeze rises and blows daily. The A.C.F. is active and entertainments are organised. In some camps an open air theatre has been in operation. An inter-service swimming carnival has been held.

once again thanking you  
and with every good wish  
for your organisation  
Yours truly  
HCB  
H. H. Hancock.

P/O Lancaster J.G.  
RAAF  
Port Moresby.  
19<sup>th</sup> July 1942

The Secretary

King Island War Service Fund

Dear Sir.

I was very pleased to receive early this week your parcel with its most acceptable contents will you convey to those responsible for this thought my sincere thanks. Coming from King Island makes the pleasure even greater and I always feel as though it were a link with home and friends. At the present I am camped some way from Port Moresby itself and seldom go in and use the canteen facilities available.

The position in these parts seems to change little as can be read in the press we exchange blow for blow. Beneath it all though I feel there is a desire among the men daily growing, to "have a go" at the Japs. We all hope that the planning & strategy will soon make this possible and something decisive accomplished. The men are in a very fit condition and can be relied upon to do their best.

Climatic conditions are best at this time of the year, a cool sea breeze rises and blows daily. The A.C.F. is active and entertainments are organised. In some camps an open air theatre has been in operation. An inter-service swimming carnival has been held.

Once again thanking you and with every good wish for your organisation

Yours truly

J G Lancaster.



F/O Lancaster J.H.  
Group 821.

RAAF.

Cairns Q.

21-11-42.

The Secretary.

King Island War Service Fund.

Dear Sir.

Some weeks ago I received a  
concern order from you and by this letter  
with <sup>no</sup> thanks you and others responsible  
for the kind thought. We have been on  
the move of late and I am afraid  
my acknowledgment has been rather delayed.  
However it is now all settled and  
I can assure you these links with King  
Island friends are always much appreciated.

Not so long ago I had the good  
fortune to visit Melbourne for a couple of  
days not sufficient time to be able to  
visit King Island. That is something to look  
forward to at some later date.

After leaving Port Moresby I had several weeks  
at Bowen a town some hundred and  
twenty miles south of Townsville. It is a  
quiet place and full of interest there,  
a population of three thousand people. One



feature was a beautiful swimming pool and  
ground more popular with the ladies. The  
open sea in these parts is not good  
for swimming, too many sharks. In  
addition the beaches are mostly very poor,  
a lot of the coastline being mangrove  
swamps and mudflats. This is due to  
the Barrier Reef lying several miles out  
and preventing any sea coming in. The  
reef itself is interesting and a mass of  
colors when seen from the air. I hope  
to be able to see it from the surface  
too. I believe maps can be had in glass  
bottomed boats for that purpose.

Cairns is a good town, well planned  
and contains many well known business  
houses. It is what I always imagine to be  
typically tropical, the design of the buildings  
and growth of palms and such vegetation.  
On three sides of the town are  
mugged mountains thickly wooded. The  
rainfall is high and comes during the  
summer months making conditions very  
humid and unpleasant.

Once again thanking you and with  
best wishes for your association.

Yours truly,  
Jack Lancaster.



F/O Lancaster J.G.  
Group 821  
RAAF.  
Cairns Q  
21-11-42.

The Secretary.

King Island War Service Fund.

Dear Sir.

Some weeks ago I received a canteen order from you and by this letter wish to thank you and others responsible for the kind thought. We have been on the move of late and I am afraid this acknowledgement has been rather delayed. However it is nonetheless sincere and I can assure you these links with King Island friends are always much appreciated. Not so long ago I had the good fortune to visit Melbourne for a couple of days, not sufficient time to be able to visit King Island. That is something to look forward to at some later date.

After leaving Port Moresby I had several weeks at Bowen, a town some hundred and twenty miles south of Townsville. It is a quiet place and little of interest there, a population of three thousand people, one feature was a beautiful swimming pool and proved most popular with the lads. The open sea in these parts is not good for swimming, too many sharks. In addition the beaches are mostly very poor, a lot of the coast line being mangrove swamps and mudflats. This is due to the Barrier Reef lying several miles out and preventing any seas coming in. The Reef itself is interesting and a maze of colors when seen from the air. I hope to be able to see it from the surface too. I believe trips can be had in glass bottomed boats for that purpose.

Cairns is a good town, well planned and contains many well known business houses. It is what I always imagined to be typically tropical, the design of the buildings and groups of palms and such vegetation. On three sides of the town are rugged mountains thickly wooded. The rainfall is high and comes during the summer months making conditions very humid and unpleasant.

Once again thanking you and with best wishes for your association.

yours truly

Jack Lancaster.

To Lancaster J. H.  
Group 821

RAAF

Carrist G.

26.12.42.

Dear Mr Marshall.

Some two weeks ago I received a parcel with cards from the H. B. War Service Fund and R.I.D. S. L. A. however as I believe you and Mrs Marshall are responsible for this kindness I am writing personally to say how much I appreciate all you do. These links with things behind - always remind me of many friends here and happy associations of the past. At the same time we look forward to the day when all this trouble is ended and some sort of reunion is possible.

My present situation is a good one and I am better placed than many chaps serving in the forces. Even so the contents of your parcel were enjoyed. A happy atmosphere of sharing exists in the unit and seldom a parcel comes without a number

coming in for a share in some way.

We are fortunate in being close to Curio. With a population of 1400 it is a fair sized town and quite a prosperous one in normal times. Sugar is grown in the district and also coconuts. On the rich alluvial lands mangrove is quite an important industry. In the town itself is a collection of business houses, representatives of some well known banks and branches of the banks and leading insurance companies.

The climate is not so hot and opposite to Victoria or Suva. The rains fall during the summer months, the wet season having just begun with a steady rain. Things fairly hot conditions become humid and trying. It brings about an abundant growth however and everything is very green.

With kind regards to Mrs Marshall and family.  
Yours truly  
Jack Lancaster.

F/O Lancaster J.G.  
Group 821  
RAAF  
Cairns Q.  
26.12.42.

Dear Mr Marshall.

Some two weeks ago I received a parcel with cards from the K.I. War Service Fund and R.S.S.I.L.A. However as I believe you and Mrs Marshall are responsible for this kindness I am writing personally to say how much I appreciate all you do. These links with King Island always remind me of many friends there and happy associations of the past. At the same time we look forward to the day when all this trouble is ended and some sort of reunion is possible.

My present station is a good one and I am better placed than many chaps serving in the forces. Even so the contents of your parcel were enjoyed. A happy atmosphere of sharing exists in the unit and seldom a parcel comes without a number coming in for a share in some way.

We are fortunate in being close to Cairns. With a population of 16,000 it is a fair sized town and quite a prosperous one in normal times. Sugar is grown in the district and inland, up on the rich Atherton Tablelands dairying is quite an important industry. In the town itself is a collection of business houses, representatives of some well known down south and branches of the banks and leading insurance companies.

The climate is not the best and opposite to Victoria or Tasmania. The rains fall during the summer months, the wet season having just begun with a steady rain. Being fairly hot conditions become humid and trying. It brings about an abundant growth however and everything is very green.

With kind regards to Mrs Marshall and family.

Yours truly  
Jack Lancaster



Flo Lancaster J. H.  
Group 82  
RAAF

Carrut O.

13.2.63.

Dear Mr Marshall.

Now that all the excitement is dying down and I am back again with my wife I am endeavouring to bring my correspondence up to date. This is a note to thank you on behalf of my wife and myself for your letter of good wishes and the enclosure. The latter we have placed along with others in a fund we are keeping until



we can use it to the  
best advantage.

The wedding was a  
happy event and we  
both enjoyed ten days  
down at Cowes and  
Phillips Island afterwards  
I was fortunate in  
being able to obtain  
leave at this period  
of the year. My brother  
Peter was hoping to be  
down but at the  
last moment was moved  
further north.

Will you also thank  
those responsible for  
the catering order.

With kind regards

yours sincerely

Jack Lancaster

F/O Lancaster J.G.  
Group 821  
R A A F  
Cairns Q.  
13.2.43.

Dear Mr Marshall.

Now that all the excitement is dying down and I am back again with my unit I am endeavouring to bring my correspondence up to date. This is a note to thank you on behalf of my wife and myself for your letter of good wishes and the enclosure. The latter we have placed along with others in a fund we are keeping until we can use it to the best advantage.

The wedding was a happy event and we both enjoyed ten days down at Cowes on Phillip Island afterwards I was fortunate in being able to obtain leave at this period of the year. My brother Peter was hoping to be down but at the last moment was moved farther north.

Will you also thank those responsible for the canteen order.

with kind regards

yours sincerely

Jack Lancaster