

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Peter 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.

Peter wrote eight letters to the Fund; three each in 1943 and 1944, and two in 1945. Like his brother John (401847), Peter was born on King Island but educated in Melbourne. As the years pass his letters include more information such as the worry of sick relatives. After his leave on King Island in 1944 he returned to his unit perhaps invigorated as his letters show. His last letter records the details of the Japanese surrender on Morotai including the children finally enjoying themselves.

VX 112386 Lt LANCASTER PW
5405T M. G. BN.
TORRES STRAIT FORCE.
6 June 13

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Just a few lines to
say thank you for the
parcel I received yesterday,
and to let you know how
much I appreciate the way
you are looking after me. It is
great to feel that the folk at
our home towns are thinking
of us.

I have been thinking
of you down here lately in
the throes of winter. It is hard
to believe - it is very pleasant
here with warm days and cold
nights. We could well
do with a little of your rain.

As it is getting very dry.

With every best wish to
you and the other members of
the committee,

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster

Harvey

BY AIR MAIL

AIR MAIL
LETTER CARD

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS CARD
WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL



The Secretary,
King Island War Service Fund
Currie
King Island
via Melbourne

AUSTRALIA
MILITARY POST
P. 10

WHEN FOLDED THE LETTER CARD MUST CONFORM IN SIZE AND SHAPE WITH
THE BLUE BORDER WITHIN WHICH THE ADDRESS ONLY MAY BE WRITTEN.



VX112386 Sgt LANCASTER. P.W.
5 AUST M.G.BN.
TORRES STRAIT FORCE.
6 Jun. 43

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

Dear Sir / Madam,

Just a few lines to say thank you for the parcel I received yesterday, and to let you know how much I appreciate the way you are looking after me. It is great to feel that the folk at our home towns are thinking of us.

I have been thinking of you down there lately in the throes of winter. It is hard to believe – it is very pleasant here with warm days and cool nights. We could well do with a little of your rain as it is getting very dry.

With every best wish to you and the other members of the committee,

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster



FROM No. VX 112386
NAME SGT LANCASTER P.W.
UNIT OR GROUP 5 Aust MG Bn.
AUSTRALIA
21.6 DEC 1943

Australian Comforts Fund
USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

Dear Mr Marshall,
Just a few lines
to thank you and the
members of the K.I. RSS. LAILA
for your Christmas
greetings and canteen
order. You have no idea
how all these little messages
from the folk back home
brightened up our Christmas
for us. It is great to think
that, although so far away,
you are thinking of us.

Under the
circumstances we had
quite a good Christmas.
The cooks exceeded themselves
and put on an excellent
dinner for us - sure it is
not the same.

Let us hope that
next year all this trouble
will come to an end
and we will all be back



FROM No.

NAME

UNIT OR GROUP

194

Australian Comforts Fund

USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

with our loved ones.
It is quite some time
now since I was home
but am hoping in the
near future that I may
be able to have a few
days on K. I.

The home folk have
had rather a tough time
this year. It makes things
difficult when sickness
upsets the work - it is hard
enough to manage if
everything goes right without
sickness cropping up too.

Mummy Phil seems to have
made a complete recovery.
It will be a great relief for
them.

Well I must close.

My kindest regards to
you all and once again
many thanks.

My best wishes to all for
the coming year.
Yours sincerely
Doris Lancaster

VX112386
SGT LANCASTER. P.W.
5 AUST M.G.Bn
AUSTRALIA
26 DEC. 1943

Dear Mr Marshall,

Just a few lines and the members of the K.I. R.S.S. & AILA for your Christmas greetings and canteen order. You have no idea how all these little messages from the folk back home brightened up our Christmas for us. It is great to think that, although so far away, you are thinking of us.

Under the circumstances we had quite a good Christmas. The cooks excelled themselves and put on an excellent dinner for us – still it is not the same.

Let us hope that next year all the trouble will come to an end and we will all be back with our loved ones.

It is quite some time now since I was home but am hoping in the near future that I may be able to have a few days on K.I.

The home folk have had rather a tough trot this Year. It makes things difficult when sickness upsets the work – it is hard enough to manage if everything goes right without sickness cropping up too.

Aunty Phyl seems to have made a complete recovery. It will be a great relief for them.

Well I must close.

My kindest regards to you all an once again many thanks.

My best wishes to all for the coming year

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster



FROM No. VX 112386
NAME SGT LANCASTER, PW/
UNIT OR GROUP 5 AUST M.C.B.
AUSTRALIA
26 Dec. 1943.

Australian Comforts Fund
USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

Dear Mrs Barr,

Just a few lines
to say many thanks to
you and other members
of the War Service Fund
Committee for the hamper
which arrived early last
week.

It was great to feel
that, although so far
away, we are not forgotten.
Our Christmas has been
brightened up by greetings
from the folk in our
home towns, and we do
all appreciate the excellent
job you are doing in
providing us with these
comforts.

I do hope that before
next Christmas we may
all be home for good. What
a great day that will be!
After so long in camp



FROM No.

NAME

UNIT OR GROUP

194

Australian Comforts Fund
USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

is hard to realise what
it will be like to return
to our civilian jobs!

It is now over eighteen
months since I was last
home so I guess I will
find a few changes in
the old home town. I am
longing to get home for
a few days and hope it
will not be too long
before that wish is realised.

I must close

Once again many
thanks and may I wish
you all every best wish
for a very happy new
year.

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster

Peter

VX112386
SGT LANCASTER P.W.
5 AUST M.G.Bn
AUSTRALIA
26 Dec. 1943

Dear Mrs Barr,

Just a few lines to say many thanks to you and other members of the War Service Fund Committee for the hampers that arrived early last week.

It was great to feel that although so far Away, we are not forgotten. Our Christmas has been brightened up by greetings from the folk in our home towns, and we do all appreciate the excellent job you're are doing in providing us with these comforts.

I do hope that before next Christmas we may all be home for good. What a great day that will be! After so long in camp it is hard to realise what it will be like to return to our civilian jobs!

It is now over eighteen months since I was last home so I guess I will find a few changes in the old home town. I am longing to get home for a few days and hope it will not be too long before that wish is realised.

I must close.

Once again many thanks and may I wish you all every best wish for a very happy new year.

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster

VA112386 SGT LANCASTER. P.W.

Bn H.Q.

5 AUST M.G. Bn (AIF)

AUSTRALIA

4 JUN 44.

The President,
King Island War Evic Fund.

Dear Madam,

Ever so many thanks
for the parcel that arrived several
days ago. It is very kind of you
to remember me and I do
appreciate it.

I am hoping to be down
on leave before very long. How is
the weather? Not too cold I hope. You
will be very envious of our lovely
warm sunny days - the climate in
the dry season here is ideal. Beautiful
warm sunny days with cool nights.
I am looking forward to seeing K.I.
again after two years - I expect there will
be lots of changes.

With my kindest regards to you
and the other members of your committee.
Yours sincerely
D.W. Lancaster.

Gileato

VX112386 SGT LANCASTER. P.W.

Bn H.Q.

5 AUST M.G.Bn (AIF)

AUSTRALIA

4 JUN 44.

The President,
King Island War Service Fund.

Dear Madam,

Ever so many thanks for the parcel that arrived several days ago. It is very kind of you to remember me and I do appreciate it.

I am hoping to be down on leave before very long. How is the weather? Not too cold I hope. You will be very envious of our lovely warm sunny days - the climate in the dry season here is ideal. Beautiful warm sunny days with cool nights. I am looking forward to seeing K.I. again after two years – I expect there will be lots of changes.

With my kindest regards to you and the other members of your committee.

Yours sincerely

P.W. Lancaster

VX 112386 SGT LANCASTER, P.W.
KING ISLAND

16 SEP 44.

Dear Mr Mrs Marshall,

Very many thanks for
the parcel which glad brought home
early this week. I did appreciate it.

Well my leave has just about
come to an end - much to my great
sorrow! Still it has been a long
holiday and I have thoroughly enjoyed
every moment of it. However - all
good things come to an end.

I just don't know what I am
going back to as yet - I am awaiting a
new posting, - so am going back with quite
mixed feelings. I am hoping this change may
take me a bit further afield.

Once again very many thanks
and with my kindest regards to you all.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Lancaster.

The family send their kind regards.

VX 112386 SGT LANCASTER, P.W.
KING ISLAND

16 SEP 44.

Dear Mr Mrs Marshall,

Very many thanks for the parcel which Dad brought home early this week. I did appreciate it.

Well my leave has just about come to an end – much to my great sorrow! Still it has been a long holiday and I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. However – all good things come to an end.

I just don't know what I am going back to as yet – I am awaiting a new posting, - so I am going back with quite mixed feelings. I am hoping this change may take me a bit further afield.

Once again very many thanks and with my kindest regards to you all.

Yours sincerely.

Peter Lancaster.

The family send their kind regards.

VX 112386 Sgt Lancast PW

H.Q.

2/105 Aust Gen Ipt Coy.

Australia

30 Dec 1944

Dear Mr & Mrs Marshall,

I hope it will be
permissible to do two jobs in one
with this letter. I have to
acknowledge canteen orders from
the King Island R.S.L. and a
hamper from the War Service Fund.
Please extend my sincerest thanks
and appreciation to both
organisations for ^{their} kind thought.
I do appreciate the way the Island
folk remember us at Christmas
as well as other times during
the year. I can imagine just

2.

what a lot of work it means for you all.

You seem to be having a bumper season over there this year. It is good to know that you are not being worried with water shortages and extreme drought conditions as so many people are. It is impossible to imagine just what some of these outback places can be like.

This locality is particularly fertile and having had good rains all through, is a picture. The stock are all fat and healthy looking. It was a treat seeing the greenness when arriving up here from the dry old southern parts where scraggy beasts were picking at practically nothing.

3.

Only a few miles from here is some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. One day we went to see a terrific waterfall - it must have been 100 feet high at least. There was not a great deal of water about the day we were there, but after a flood it would be a magnificent sight. The bush is very dense around here and is not the same monotonous green of the usual Australian bush. Some of the trees are quite a yellowy green while others vary from light to dark greens, and some even have a shade of maroon in them. It is all very beautiful indeed.

My home leave now seems

4.

to be nothing but a very pleasant dream ~~now~~ - it is only just over three months since I left K.I. I have covered a lot of ground since then too. I am hoping to be home again in a few months time unless we go further afield in the meantime.

I expect quite a few of the Islands boys are home on leave now.

The dinner call has just gone so must scot.

It is a little bit late to send along seasonal greetings but I do wish you all the best for 1945.

With kind regards to you all
Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster

VX112386 Sgt Lancaster P.W.
H.Q.
2/105 Aust Gen Tpt Coy.
Australia
30 Dec 1944

Dear Mr Mrs Marshall,

I hope it will be permissible to do two jobs in one with this letter. I have to acknowledge canteen orders from the King Island R.S.L. and a hamper from the War Service Fund. Please extend my sincerest thanks to both organisations for their kind thoughts. I do appreciate the way the Island folk remember us at Christmas as well as other times during the year. I can imagine just what a lot of work it means for you all.

You seem to be having a bumper season over there this year. It is good to know that you are not being worried with water shortages and extreme drough conditions as so many people are. It is impossible to imagine just what some of these outback places can be like.

This locality is particularly fertile and having had good rains all through, is a picture. The stock are all fat and healthy looking. It was a treat seeing the greenness when arriving up here from the dry old Southern parts where scraggy beasts were picking at practically nothing.

Only a few miles from here is some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. One day we went to see a terrific waterfall - it must have been 600 feet high at least. There was not a great deal of water about the day we were there, but after a flood it would be a magnificent sight. The bush is very dense around here and is not the same monotonous green of the usual Australian bush. Some of the trees are quite a yellowy - green while others vary from light to dark greens, and some even have a shade of mauve in them. It is all very beautiful indeed.

My home leave now seems to be nothing but a very pleasant dream - it is only just over three month since I left K.I. I have covered a lot of ground since then too. I am hoping to be home again in a few months time unless we go further a field in the meantime.

I expect quite a few of the Island boys are home on leave now.

The dinner call has just gone so must scoot.

It is a little bit late to send a long seasonal greetings but I do wish you all the best for 1945.

With kind regards to you all

Yours sincerely
Peter Lancaster

VX 112386 SGT LANCASTER P.W.

H.Q. 2/105 AUST GEN TPT Coy

10 JUN 45.

Dear Mr & Mrs Marshall,

I have to acknowledge another parcel from the War Service Fund. Very many thanks - it arrived at a most appropriate time the day before my birthday!

This parcel had a much longer journey than the previous one. I am now enjoying life in the tropics again - camped right on the waterfront in a coconut plantation. Rather a nice spot but the odour at low tide is even worse than the keppie

2

Bentilton beach! Still it is
nice looking out to sea and
we get any breeze that is
blowing. We are in continuous
danger danger of being hit on
the head by a falling coconut!
It would be a most heroic end!

I believe Sylvia and
Dorothy are having a holiday
in Tasmania. I have no
doubt they are having a
marvellous time - it is a great
place for a holiday.

I am hoping to hear some
good news of Michael soon.
Betty will be having a very
worrying time. It is terrible
when such little children get
sick - how seems nothing you

3

Can do for them.

Must scoot off for my cat.
The tea going just gone!

The lads have been having
no end of fun the last couple
of days building rafts so they
can do a spot of deep sea
fishing! The first two launched
promptly hit the bottom, the
third was more successful
and after a couple of hours
fishing the party returned
disgusted without even a bite
to their credit!

Once again ever so
many thanks for remembering
me ~~and~~ again and with
my kindest regards to you all

Yours very sincerely
Peter Lancaster.

VX112386 SGT LANCASTER P.W.
H.Q. 2/105 AUST GEN TPT Coy
10 JUN 45.

Dear Mr & Mrs Marshall,

I have to acknowledge another parcel from the War Service Fund. Very many thanks - it arrived at a most appropriate time – the day before my birthday!

This parcel had a much longer journey than the previous one. I am now enjoying life in the tropics again – camped right on the waterfront in a coconut plantation. Rather a nice spot but the odour at low tide is even worse than the kelpie Benhilton beach! Still it is nice looking out to sea and we get any breeze that is blowing. We are in continuous danger though of being hit on the head by a falling coconut! It would be a most heroic end!

I believe Sylvia and Dorothy are having a holiday in Tasmania. I have no doubt they are having a marvelous time – it is a great place for a holiday.

I am hoping to hear some good news of Michael John. Betty will be having a very worrying time. It is terrible when such little children get sick – there seems nothing you can do for them.

Must scoot off for my oats. The tea gong just gone!

The boys have been having no end of fun the last couple of days building rafts so they can do a spot of deep sea fishing! The first two launched promptly hit the bottom, the third was more successful and after a couple of hours fishing the party returned disgusted without even a bite to their credit!

Once again ever so many thanks for remembering me again and with my kindest regards to you all

Yours very sincerely

Peter Lancaster.



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. VX 112386 Name SGT LANCASTER P.W.
Unit or Group HQ 2/105 AUST CHENT PT Coy. 17 SEP. 45. Date

Dear Mr & Mrs Marshall,

A couple of days ago a R.I. War Service Fund parcel arrived. Please convey my sincerest thanks to them for again remembering me.

It is wonderful to think the war is finally over and that before long the boys will be headed for home for keeps. The stories that have come out the last few days about the treatment of the prisoners have made ghastly reading. It is ~~almost~~ impossible to

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. _____ Name _____

Unit or Group _____ Date _____

realize human beings could be so cruel and ruthless. It makes us all the more thankful the Japs didn't reach Australia.

We have seen a few Japs on Morotai recently. Our first meeting was when the Jap hospital ship was brought in here. You no doubt read of the incident in the papers.

About 1500 Japs were crammed on to the ship, which was only quite small, and as they came off they were a sorry sight. A very sheepish incoherent looking

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities

3



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. Name

Unit or Group Date

Crowd and you would see they were absolutely scared to death. Very likely they had seen their own men treating their prisoners so dreadfully and were expecting like treatment. I have no doubt they were very surprised, and not a little ashamed of themselves, when they found they were regarded as human beings.

Our second meeting was with Lt Gen Ishima GOC of the Jap Second Army who came to Morotai to surrender his forces totalling

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities

4.



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. _____ Name _____

Unit or Group _____ Date _____

about 126,000 men, to General Blarney. It was a public ceremony and I was fortunate enough to be there. The Jan party were marched right past where our little group was and we all had a great view of them. The general himself showed no sign of emotion whatsoever. He had a very stern face and I guess he was a very callous and ruthless man. The whole ceremony was most impressive and Blarney made a very good and forceful speech. He told the

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities

5



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. _____ Name _____

Unit or Group _____ Date _____

~~The~~ Japs he didnt consider them ~~as~~ an honourable or gallant enemy and would break them with due but severe courtesy. He stressed the importance of carrying out all his orders without hesitation.

Those present included hundreds of Australians, U.S. forces, Indians (released prisoners) and Dutch. The British, U.S and Dutch national anthems were played and the Japs saluted right through the three. It must have hurt but a little humiliation will do

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities.



(Use Official Address Only)

From No. Name

Unit or Group Date

There a lot of good.

Quite a few prisoners
and civilian internees from
the Celebes and surrounding
islands are on Morotai
at the moment. I was in
their camp on Sunday
and there was a great
sight - men, women and
children everywhere. The
little children were having
a wonderful time clambering
over trucks and jeeps!

I must close or this
will miss the mail.

Once again many thanks

Yours very sincerely
Pete Lancaster

Mail Your Letters A.P.O.

Do Not Mention Military Activities

VX112386

HQ

2/105 AUST GEN TPT Coy.

SGT

LANCASTER P.W.

17 SEP. 45.

Dear Mr & Mrs Marshall,

A couple of days ago a K.I. War Service Fund parcel arrived. Please convey my sincerest thanks to them for again remembering me.

It is wonderful to think the war is finally over and that before long the boys will be headed for home for keeps. The stories that have come out the last few days about the treatment of the prisoners have made ghastly reading. It is almost impossible to realise human beings could be so cruel and ruthless. It makes us all the more thankful that the Japs didn't reach Australia.

We have seen a few Japs on Morotai recently. Our first meeting was when the Jap hospital ship was brought in here. You no doubt read of the incident in the papers. About 15,000 Japs were crammed on to the ship, which was only quite small, and as they came off they were a sorry sight. A very sheepish insolent looking crowd and you could see they were absolutely scared to death. Very likely they had seen their own men treating their prisoners so dreadfully and were expecting like treatment. I have no doubt they were very surprised, and not a little ashamed of themselves, when they found they were regarded as human beings.

Our second meeting was with Lt. Gen Tishima G O C of the Jap Second Army who came to Morotai to surrender his forces totaling about 126,000 men, to General Blamey. It was a public ceremony and I was fortunate enough to be there. The Jap party were marched right passed where our little group was and we all had a great view of them. The general himself showed no sign of emotion whatsoever. He had a very stern face and I guess he was a very callous and ruthless man. The whole ceremony was most impressive and Blamey made a very good and forceful speech. He told the Japs he didn't consider them an honourable or gallant enemy and would treat them with due but severe courtesy. He stressed the importance of carrying out all his orders without hesitation.

Those present included hundreds of Australians, U.S. forces, Indians (released prisoners) and Dutch. The British. U.S and Dutch national anthems were played and the Japs saluted right through the three. It must have hurt but a little humiliation will do them a lot of good.

Quite a few prisoners and civilian internees from the Celebes and surrounding islands are on Morotai at the moment. I was in their camp on Sunday and there was a great sight – men, women and children everywhere. The little children were having a wonderful time clambering over trucks and jeeps!

I must close or this will miss the mail.

Once again many thanks.

Yours very Sincerely

Peter Lancaster