## 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.

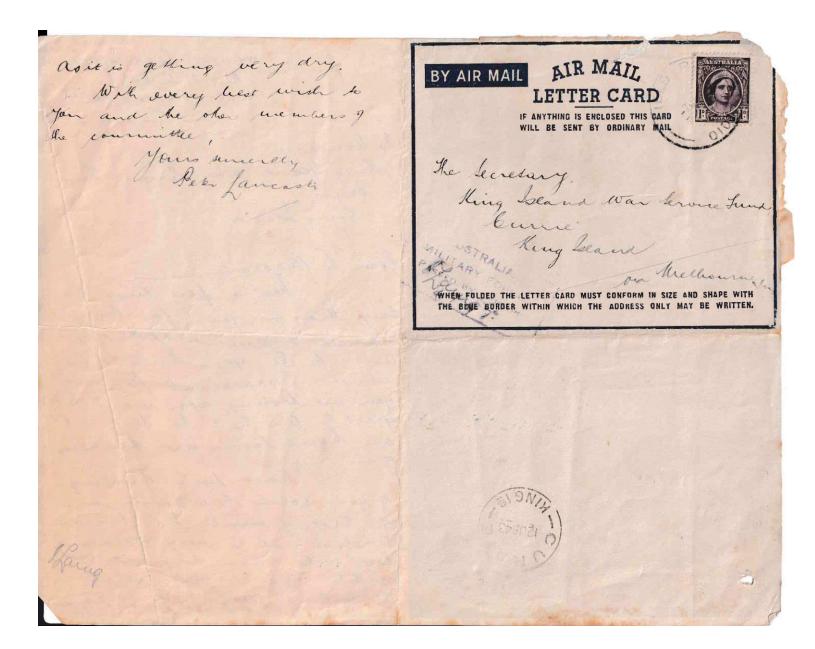
The standard of writing is directly related to the standard of education and sometimes a friend or a Chaplain would write a letter on a person's behalf. Many of the letters were addressed to Mr Marshall (or just Jack), his wife, a member of the voluntary committee, or the RSSAILA. Some letters are very 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 for LANCHSTER PM. 5 AUST M. G. BN. TORRES STRAIT FORCE 6 Jus. 113 The Secretary. Hong Island was Servia Luce King Island Lear Si Madam, pust a few lines to Say thank you for the harce I received yesterday, and to be you know how much x appreciate the way you are looking after me. It is great to feel that he fach at on home town are thinking have been thruling of you down here lately in the throes of wines. It is hard to believe - it is very pleasant here with warm day and coll nights. We comed will to with a little of your hair,



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



NAME SGT LANCASTEK P.W.
UNIT OR GROUP 5 AUST MG Bu.

Z6 DEC 1943

Australian Comforts Fund
USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

Dear Mon Marshall his a few lines, to hank you and the menders of the K. I. RSS. I A 11.9 for your Ehrestmas greelings and canteer how ate these little messages from the folk hack home for us It is great to think that although so far away, yer are thinking of us. circumstances we had Just a good Christmas. The cooks excelled hemselves and puton an excellent dune for us - stree 1 is not the same. Les us hope that ned you all this trouble and we were are he hack

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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



NAME SCT LANCASTER PW UNIT OR GROUP & AUST M G BW AUST R ALL A 26 10 ec 1943.

## Australian Comforts Fund USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

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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

VALIZZE SET LANCASTER. P.W. Bn 11. Q. 5 AUST M.G. BN (AIT) AUSTRALIA The President King Island War brovie Fund. Dear Maram, Lever so many hanks for the parcel that arrived several darp ago. It is very kind of you to pensember me and to appreciate it. I am hoping to be do con on leave before very long. How is the weather? not too coed I hope you will be very envious of our lovely warm sunny days - the clumation the dry season here is ideal beautype warm punny days with cool mights. I am looking forward to seeing K. ! again after two years - Dexpect there were he lats of changes. With my kindest pegaras to your galeato Hours smerely

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 SET JANCASTER P.W. year Mr Mrs Marshace, Very many thanks for the parce which glad brought home carey this week. I did appreciate it. Well my leave has just about come to any eur - much to my great sorrow. Ties it has been a low holian and I have Morangely enjoyee every moment of it. Lowever - ace God things come to an end. I just don't know what I am Jing back to as yet - I am awaiting a mend posting - so am going hack with quite mixed feelings. I am hoping this change may lake me a his further afield. Jours sincerey. the fundy send heir 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 11238 b Sot Januar It 2/105 Aud ben Tot boy 30 Dear 1944 Den Vor Mrs Marshace, Shope it wice he permissible to do levo ples in one with this letter. I have to acknowledge canteen orders from the King Island R.S. L. and a hange from the War Service hund. Blease extered my surceest hanks and appreciation to both organisations for heikend hought. I do appreciate the way the Island folk remember no at Christmas as well as other times during the year. I can imagine just

what a lot of work it means for you ace. you seem to be having a humper peason over there this year. It is good to know that you are not being worned with water shortages and extreme drough conditions as so many people are. It is impossible to magine just what some of these outhork places can be like. This locality is particularly perties and having had good paires de Mronger, is a prêture. The slock are are fat and healthy looking. It was a treat being he greenness when arriving up here from the dry old Southern facts. where scraggy heasts were picking at practically nothing.

Only a pew miles from here is some of the wost beautique country thank ever seen. One day we went to see a terripie waterface - it must have been koo feel hige at least. here was not a great dear of water about the day we were there, but after a flood is wored he a magnificent light. The huse is very dense around here and is not the Jame monotomo green of the usural audralian bush, lowe of he tree are quite a yellowy green while others vary from light to dark greens, and some ever have a shade of marve in them. It is all very heartyne inheed. My home leave now seems

to be nothing but a very pleasant dream tow - it is only just over three months time & left K. ? Thave covered a lot of ground since then too, I am hoping to be home again in few months time unless we go further afreed in the meantime. I expect quite a pers of he Islande hoys are home on leave the dinner care has pust gone so must secot. It is a like his late to send along seasonal greetings but do wish you were the hest for With kind regards to you are Spires survey Peter Janeash

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

NX 112386 SGT LANCASTER P.W. H.Q. YIOS AUST GEN TAT COY 10 JUN 45 Dear by offers Marshall, I have to acknowledge another parcel from the war dervie Fund. Very many Kunks it arrived at a most appropriate have be day before my birthay! this parcel has a much longer pinnes than the frevious one. I am now enjoying life in the bropies again - camped hight on he waterfront in a cocount plantation. Kaker a vince Shot but he odow at low hice is even worse han he keppie

2 Benchilson beare! Spice it is unce looking out to sea and we get any breeze has is blowing. We are in continuou. langer hough of heing but on the head by a facing cocount! It would be a most herori ena! I believe Lylvia and Doroky are having a holiday in Tasmania. I have no donde they are having a marvellors line - it is a great place, for a holiday. I am hoping to hear some good news of Unichall John Son Betty will be having a very working time. It is terrible when such little chiedren get Sick - here seems nothing you

Can do for them. Unst scool off for my oat. The tea going just gone! The long have been having no end of fun the last couple of days hundring rapts so they can do a shot of deep sea preling! The first two launcher propelly his the bottom, he third was more Inccessful and after a comple of hours fishing the party returned disgusted without even a liste to their crest! Once again ever so many tranks for remembering me some again and with my kindest jugards to you all Jours very surely I Feter Januader

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.

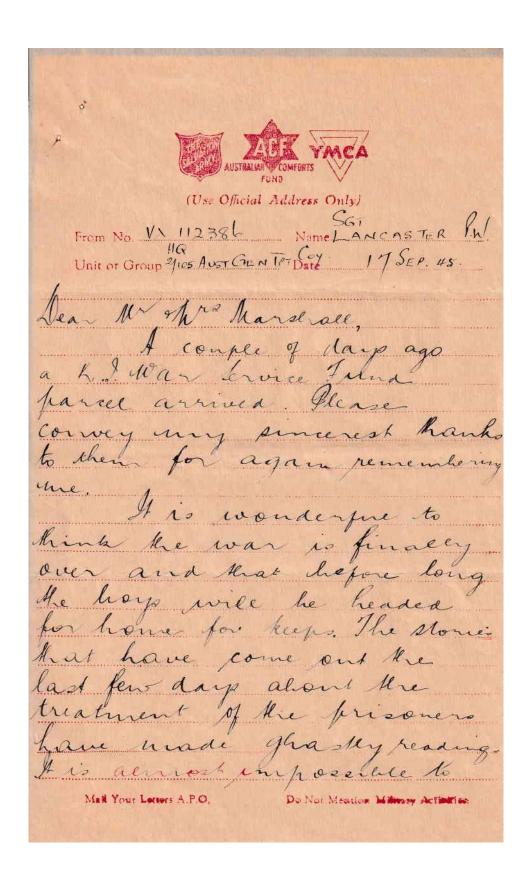
I am hoping to hear some good news of Michael John. Betty will be having a very worrying time. It is terrible when such little children get sick – there seems nothing you can do for them.

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.



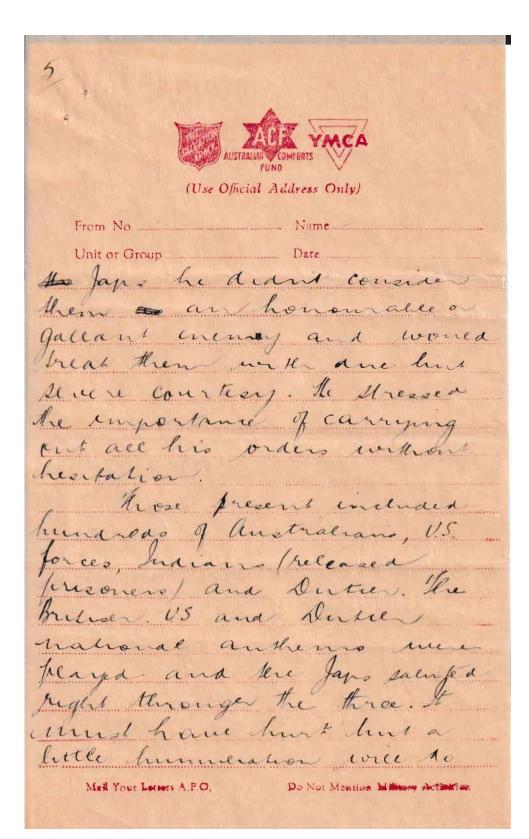
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SGT

VX112386

LANCASTER P.W.

HQ

2/105 AUST GEN TPT Coy.

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