

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

During World War 2, Harold Last 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.

Harold wrote one letters to the Fund in 1941. He was in the Middle East at the time, hence the reference to Hitler, but his letter is upbeat and very respectful to those who served in WW1. Harold was discharged in May 1944 and returned to farming.

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 1941.

Private Post. H. E.

T. X. 3229.

M. T. Section.

H. Q. 12<sup>th</sup> Aust. Corps.

A. I. S. Abroad.

King L. Comforts Encl.

I must ask you to accept an apology from me for not writing before this, but as you will understand that we do not get very much time to keep up our mail.

But now the opportunity has come when I can write a few lines of thanks to you all for the great thoughts you have shown towards us fellows over here.

You can not imagine how we feel when we are told that there is a parcel in the office for us, the boys all crowd round to see what is in it, then as you "Old Diggers" know how we all share the contents amongst the boys, it sure is great.



to all the "Old Diggers" as we young ones  
refer to you meaning no offence of  
course we now realize what you  
"Diggers" went through last time.  
We often go on tours & it is  
is great to see the places that you  
fellows fought on, you sure done a  
great job.

Well I must say that I have had  
some great thrills & been in some  
jams but have come out unscathed.  
I tell that not even Hitler himself  
could keep me down.

Once again I must thank you &  
the others members for their grand  
thoughts & doings, which are heartfelt  
by me.

I shall have to end this short note  
now.

Wishing that we will all be to-  
gether in the near future.

Wishing you <sup>all</sup> Merry Xmas & Happy New Year.  
H. E. East.

H. E. East

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 1941.  
Driver Last. H.C.  
T.X.3229.  
M.T. Section.  
H.Q. 1<sup>st</sup> Aust. Corps  
A.I.F. Abroad

King Is. Comforts Fund,

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Well I must say that I have had some great thrills & been in some jams but have come out unscathed. & feel that not even Hitler himself could keep me down.

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Hoping that we will all be together in the near future.

Wishing you all Merry Xmas & Happy New Year.

From. H.C. Last.