

## The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Sydney Millar 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.

Sydney wrote a letter to the Fund on 3 December 1941 while in Wangaratta, Victoria. He had a connection with King Island before enlisting and the 'abroad perhaps' did soon occur. His Army Record shows he was posted to the 2/9 Field Ambulance (not the 2/5) and disembarked in Singapore on 26 January 1942. Three weeks later he was reported missing in Malaya and then listed as a POW. Tragically Sydney died on 29 April 1945 while a prisoner of the Japanese.

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 abroad, or any other information which, if intercepted, would be of value to the enemy.



(affiliated with the Aust. Comforts Fund)

From No. *VX54642* Name *Pte. S. B. Miller* Unit *A. I. No. 1*

Date *3-12-42*

*Wangaratta*

Dear Sir or Madame

I wish to thank you for the parcel I receive a while ago from you.

It was very welcome & made me think of home once again.

I may come over & see all your good people before I sail for Overseas I hope.

I have seven days final leave starting from Friday, till the 15th of Dec.

I will close hoping to see you all before I go.

Your faithfully,

*Pte. S. B. Miller*

*VX54642*

*2/5 Field Ambulance*

*Wangaratta for a while yet  
& then a broad perhaps*

From No : VX57462

Name: Pte. S.B. Millar

Unit: AAMC

3-12-41

Wangaratta

Dear Sir or Madame

I wish to thank you for the parcel I received a while ago from you.  
It was very welcome & made me think of home once again

I may come over & see all you good people before I sail for Overseas I hope  
I have eleven days final leave starting from Friday till the 15<sup>th</sup> of Dec.

I will close hoping to see you all before I go

Your Faithfully

Pte SB Millar

VX57642

2/5 Field Ambulance

Wangaratta for a while yet  
& then abroad perhaps