

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Albert (Bert) Misson 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.

Bert wrote four letters to the Fund; in 1941, 1942 and two in 1943. He was 32 years old when he enlisted and wrote far more detailed letters than his younger counterparts. He travels to the Middle East, then back to Australia at Kapooka (near Wagga NSW), then up to New Guinea. He writes of leisure time, the countryside and insects, reflecting on his life in the bush.

RED SHIELD HUTS AND HOSTELS

FROM :—

No. _____

NAME _____

UNIT _____



Remember the loved ones far away,
And write them a message of cheer to-day.

TK3982

Sgt A. H. Minson

No 2 Section

2/9 Aust Field Coy R.A.C.

A.I.F. abroad

20/11/41

Dear Jack.

Just a few lines to let you know how things are going with me over this side of the world - I've been going to write to you several times but never seem to have been able to make a start - Well I've had a pretty fair spin so far as regards health, I've not had near as much sickness over here as I did in Fessie - although I spent three weeks in hospital a little while ago with diphtheria - I didn't have it very bad though, after I'd been there for about a week I felt quite alright but had to stay in bed for another fortnight just to make sure - We had a pretty good spin coming up through Syria a few anxious moments at times but we all came through O.K. - but still I don't like the damn shells when they get close, they have a nasty whang with them kind of sticks the wind up for a while - but we all manage to see the funny side after it's all over - at the present time we are living in huts just as well too, as the weather is turning rather cold now - last night it poured rain & this morning there was mud & water all about the huts but this afternoon the sun came out so it has dried up a bit but there is still plenty of mud

PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

I had a fortnight camping out in the bush a little while back - four of us were living in a tent - we had a fairly good time while we were there as I only had about a quarter of an hour's work each morning - I tried a bit of snaring in my spare time trying to catch jackals - they used to come down from the hills at night & howl around the tent & keep us awake - I wanted to get one just to see what they are like - but did not do much good as I couldn't find a decent stick for a springer - I got one in a snare, but it was not strong enough to hold him - seems a funny old war when a man goes trapping in his spare time doesn't it?

Anyhow I was relieved on Sunday last & came back here to the section - We get leave every night to the town near here - I've been in a couple of times this week to the pictures - there are four or five theatres in the place & they put on some very good shows - with a change of programme every week - so we are having a fairly good time - The parcels are coming along pretty regular, thanks Jack - there is one thing about the K.I. people they certainly look after their soldiers - I seen Mick Thompson yesterday had just come back from hospital, he told me he had met sister Lindsay while he was there - How are things on the second Thursday of the month? I wrote to Guthrie Hardman a while back but so far have

RED SHIELD HUTS AND HOSTELS

FROM : —

No. _____

NAME _____

UNIT _____



3

19__

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Bowling is W.M. this year. Has there been
any new recruits since I left? Thanking
you & your helpers once again for the funds
I have rec. I will close. Wishing you & your
family a merry Xmas.

Cheers Jack

With best regards

from Bert Minson

Marked

PLEASE WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

TX3982
Spr A.H. Misson
No. 3 Section
2/9 Aust Field Coy
R.A.E.
A.I.F. Abroad
20/11/41

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Cheerio Jack

With best regards

From Bert Misson

Adelaide

May 16. 1942

Dear Jack

I had a letter from home saying that you were inquiring about me so I will drop you a few lines to let you know how things are. I wrote to you from Syria but have not heard whether you got the letter or not. quite a lot of mail & parcels go astray these days - I recieved a parcel from the K.I. War Service Fund a few days before we went on leave. Thank you for same. I was hoping to get enough time to get home but they cut it down at the last minute so I couldnt make it this time but next leave will see me home. at present we are billeted in a suburb of Adelaide quite a good place & nice people. We are expecting to move out sometime next week to Alice Springs. but of course nothing is certain. The army changes its mind three or four times a day. However if we go up there it will be a bit warmer than here. The weather has been pretty wet & cold since we came here. there is a scarcity of fire wood which makes matters worse. I've been into Adelaide two or

three times - its far the nicest city I've seen so far - beautiful wide streets plenty of trees & gardens - every thing is neat & clean different to cities in the S.E. they are something awful the smell of them used to make me feel sick. I can tell you I'm glad to be back out of the place.

Mary tells me quite a few of the K.I. boys have been home on leave has John been home yet - or is he still overseas. I met quite a lot of K. Islanders in Palestine & Syria but no one seemed to know where John was - I suppose everyone is getting along alright at Nagaria I'll have to do a lot of brushing up when I get back - I've only been to one meeting since I left K.I. at Caulfield before we embarked for overseas - I was walking along the street when I seen the place all lit up so I strolled in & made my self known to the Tyler & had quite an enjoyable evening - there are a few brethren in the company so we may be able to find a lodge that's meeting somewhere about here before we leave. Well Jack this is all for to day - so I will say. Cheers

(Answered
30th May 42.)

Wishing you & your family all the best
I am yours ever
Berl. Mission

Adelaide
May 16. 1942

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Wishing you & your family all the best

I am yours ever

Bert. Mission

TX 3982
Sp. A. H. mission
703 section
2/9 Aust Field Coy HQ
A. J. J. Aust
Feb. 16. 1943

Dear Jack

Just a few lines to let you know that I received the parcel & canteen order safely - for which I thank both you ~~your~~ fellow workers of the H.I. War Service Fund - It took me nearly a month to get back to my unit after I left the Island - had delays all the way up at different places - I had four days in Melbourne & had a bit of leave from the camp - I went out to Brunswick & spent one day with Mr. & Mrs. Cummins they have quite a nice place out there - Mrs. Cummins is enjoying better ^{health} there than she had on H.I. - The old boy is just the same - plays with all the kids about the street - I also had a few days in Adelaide but I don't like the place much - I arrived back at the unit two days before we all left to

come south again - so I had all
 that travelling for nothing - I was
 pretty well fed up with travelling
 in trains & trucks by the time we
 got here - I didn't think much of this
 camp when we arrived - it was a hot
 windy day & dust was blowing about
 the camp in clouds - but the weather
 has cooled down considerably since
 then - I've had to run my blankets
 up into a bag to keep the cold
 out during the night - I spent last
 Saturday & Sunday afternoons in Wagga
 which is the nearest town to the
 camp - I must find out where the M.I.
 is next time I'm in there - maybe
 I'll be able to manage a night
 sometime - as we get leave a couple
 of nights during the week as well
 as weekends - I'm getting pretty rusty
 these days & could do with a bit of
 a brush up - well Jack I will now
 say therio - Wishing you & your family all the
 best. I am yours truly Bert Johnson.

TX3982
Spr. A. H. Misson
No. 3 Section
2/9 Aust Field Coy RAE
A.I.F Aust
Feb. 16. 1943

Dear Jack

Just a note to let you know that I recieved the parcel I thank you and your fellow workers of the K.I War Service Fund – It took me nearly a month to get back to my unit after I left the Island - had delays all the way up at different places – I had four days in Melb & had a bit of leave from the camp – I went out to Brunswick & spent one day with Mr. & Mrs Cummins they have quite a nice place out there - Mrs Cummins is enjoying better health there than she had on K.I. – the old boy is just the same - plays with all the kids about the street - I also had a few days in Adelaide but I don't like the place much – I arrived back at the unit two days before we all left to come south again – so I had all that travelling for nothing – I was pretty well fed up with travelling in trains & trucks by the time we got here - I didn't think much of this camp when we arrived – it was a hot windy day & dust was blowing about the camp in clouds – but the weather has cooled down considerably since then - I've had to sew my blankets up into a bag to keep the cold out during the night – I spent last Saturday & Sunday afternoons in Wagga which is the nearest town to the camp - I must find out where the M.T. is next time Im in there. Maybe Ill be able to manage a night sometime – as we get leave a couple of nights during the week as well as weekends – Im getting pretty rusty these days & could do with a bit of a brush up – well Jack I will now say Cheerio – wishing you & your family all the best.

I am yours truly
Bert Misson.



From No. TX3982 Name Sgt. A. B. Myerson
Unit or Group 2nd Aust. Field Coy R.A.E.
Date Nov 27. 1943

USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

Dear Jack

I received my parcel from the Service trunk a couple of days ago, for which I thank you. The card was dated Oct 6th so you see it takes a fair time for parcels to get up here - well Jack I heard before we left Australia that this was a terrible place to live in - but so far, it's not so bad - it gets a bit monotonous at times being on the same old job all the time. a while back we were working seven days a week wet or fine, but we're back to six days a week now - a man certainly does want a day off now & again - the climate is good, not as hot as one would expect this far

IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:

The name of your transport, or other transports in your convoy . . . dates of sailing . . . ports of call . . . destination, descriptions of troops, or other information which, if intercepted, will be of value to the enemy.



From No. Name

Unit or Group

2

Date

USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

north, but as we are well up above sea level helps a lot. In the lower country it's rather hot & very humid - native villages are everywhere, & the natives keep us well supplied with fruit & vegetables. They usually come to the camp on Sundays to do their trading. There's only ten of us in this camp, but the cookhouse looks like a fruit shop on Sunday afternoons, when the natives have finished trading - bananas, pine apples, paw paws, lemons, sweet-potatoes onions etc. - as you see we get a fairly good variety. Bully beef, salt & tinned makes are what they mostly want for their produce & there's some wonderful land over

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From No. Name

Unit or Group 3

Date

USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

here. it looks as though it would grow any thing. at one place we camped, a couple of months ago, the country was clear of trees & covered with grass two feet high, thousands of acres of it. but I've been told cattle don't do much good here, as they get T.B. pretty bad & are also affected by malaria - the mosquitos don't trouble us much at present as there are very few here, just an occasional one or two that make it necessary to sleep under the net - some places we struck them pretty bad though, millions of the things. Jeff Wright (Keith's brother) is in the army now & is trying to get a transfer to this unit, but is

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From No. Name

Unit or Group..... 4

Date

USE OFFICIAL ADDRESS ONLY

having a lot of trouble getting away from his present unit. I'd like to see him with us as he is a great chap. George Tatham is stationed up here, I passed his camp one day, but didn't find out he was there till a few days afterwards. He called at our camp one Sunday, but I'd gone up to one of the villages in the hills so missed him again. but better luck next time. Myk Thompson of course, is up here he is in a different platoon to me, but I see him now & again. Well Jack this will be all for tonight so with kind regards to you & your family I will say cheerio

Yours Truly Bert. Wilson

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TX3982 Spr A. H. Misson
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