

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Myra (Royce) Percy 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.

Royce wrote on letter to the Fund in 1942 when she was in the Middle East on the nursing staff of an Army Hospital. She provides an overview of life in a hospital noting that her colleagues are mainly from NSW and the Matron is a Queenslander.

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Red map
6 a. G. H. a. a. L. S.
a. L. S. Abroad,
18/2/42.

The Secretary,
War Service Fund,
King Island.

Dear Mr Marshall,

I want to thank you
and the members of the King Island
War Service Fund for the Christmas
hamper which I received yesterday.

Everything carried exceptionally
well & was much appreciated by
all - it is a great thrill to get
parcels from home.

Needless to say, we are all
very worried about home and
wish we were there to help,
but there is still a lot of work
to be done here & while there is
any we have to stay.

Aming nursing is grand -
the patients appreciate everything so

much, that it is a pleasure to work
a little longer or a little harder.
This unit is practically all W.I.'s,
there are only four of us from
Tasmania, but we manage to
get along very well, and the
staff are all very nice. Our
baker is a W.I. and an
absolute pet - she is always
arranging trips for us & likes
us to see all we can.

I have met quite a lot of our boys
over here, they all look very well
but are very keen to get home.

Thank you once again for the
much appreciated parcel and
I wish you all the best.

I remain

Yours Sincerely
Royce Tandy

T.X6104. R Percy
6 A.G.H A.A.N.S.
A.I.F. Abroad,
18/2/42.

The Secretary,
War Service Fund,
King Island.

Dear Mr Marshall,

I want to thank you and the members of the King Island War Service Fund for the Christmas Hamper which I received yesterday. Everything carried exceptionally well & was much appreciated by all – it is a great thrill to get parcels from home.

Needless to say, we are all very worried about home and wish we were there to help, but there is still alot of work to be done here & while there is any we have to stay.

Army nursing is grand – the patients appreciate everything so much that it is a pleasure to work a little longer or a little harder. This unit is practically all N.X.'s, there are only four of us from Tasmania, but we manage to get along very well, and the staff are all very nice. Our matron is a Q.X and an absolute pet – she is always arranging trips for us & likes us to see all we can.

I have met quite alot of our boys over here, they all look very well but are very keen to get home.

Thankyou once again for the much appreciated parcel and I wish you all the best.

I remain

Yours Sincerely

Royce Percy