

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, William (Bill) Phelps corresponded with the King Island (Tasmania) War Service 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.

Bill wrote two letters to the Fund in 1944. He was 40 years old when he enlisted in 1939 and was not eligible to serve overseas. He writes mainly on behalf of others and was able to use a typewriter. Bill served all of WW2 and was finally discharged on 12 March 1947.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES—TASMANIA FORCE.

Please quote this Number when replying.

--	--	--

30 Aust Grn Coy,
Broadmarsh Rd Camp,
Brighton, Tas.
11 May 44.

Mr J. Marshall,
Fraser Rd, via Currie.

Dear Mr Marshall,

I received a letter today from old Ted
Holbrook at Naracoopa, He asked me if it was possible to send
him some books or reading ^{MATTER} and he would return some he has.

I thought perhaps that your association could lend him some
reading matter as it is such a long distance to send any from here.

I would be very much obliged if you could manage this for me,
I know you did a lot for the boys when I was over there.

Please give my regards to Mrs Marshall, your son and the girls,
I hope they are all keeping well,

With regards and best wishes.

Bill Phelps

T255444 Sgt W. Phelps.

*Answered
13th May 44
J.E.H.M.*

30 Aust Grn Coy,
Broadmarsh Rd Camp,
Brighton, Tas.
11 May 44.

Mr J. Marshall,
Fraser Rd, via Currie.

Dear Mr Marshall,

I received a letter today from old Ted Holbrook at Naracoopa, He asked me if it was possible to send him some books or reading matter and he would return some he has.

I thought perhaps your association could lend him some reading matter as it is such a long distance to send any from here.

I would be very much obliged if you could manage this for me, I know you did a lot for the boys when I was over there.

Please give my regards to Mrs Marshall, your son and the girls, I hope they are all keeping well,

With regards and best wishes.

Bill Phelps

T255444

Sgt W. Phelps.

Mr J.E.Marshall,
"Eldorado"
Currie.

30 Aust Grn Coy,
Broadmarsh Rd Camp,
Brighton, Tas.
16 May 1944.

Dear Mr Marshall,

Your letter arrived this morning, many thanks for sending the parcel of reading matter on to Ted.

Re your enquiry about K.I. chaps in this camp, I think that Earl Smith is the only one left, I saw Roy Thompson at Brighton about a fortnight ago but I expect you have his address.

Jock Stuart is caretaker at Milford where he has been I think about nine months. Milford is a Camp site about four or five miles out from Conara, formerly occupied for training 2/40 and 12/50 but is now only ^{used} occasionally as a cadet camp, all the huts are there so they had to have someone to look after the place, I suppose it suits Jock. I do not understand why he didn't receive your letter and canteen order, or if he did why he didn't acknowledge it. His address is as follows:
T23396 Cpl J Stuart, 30 Aust Grn Coy, Milford Camp, Conara, Tasmania.

Cheerio for the present, if there are any other addresses you want, let me know and if possible I will get them from Records, Hobart.

Best wishes to all,

Yours sincerely,

Bill Rhea

30 Aust Grn Coy,
Broadmarsh Rd Camp,
Brighton, Tas.
16 May 1944.

Mr J.E. Marshall,
"Eldorado"
Currie.

Dear Mr Marshall,

Your letter arrived this morning, many thanks for sending the parcel of reading matter on to Ted.

Re your enquiry about K.I. chaps in this camp, I think that Earl Smith is the only one left, I saw Roy Thompson at Brighton about a fortnight ago but I expect you have his address.

Jock Stuart is caretaker at Milford where he has been I think about nine months. Milford is a Camp site about four or five miles out from Conara, formally occupied for training 2/40 and 12/50 but is now only used occasionally as a cadet camp, all the huts are there so they had to have someone to look after the place, I suppose it suits Jock. I do not understand why he didn't receive your letter and canteen order, or if he did why he didn't acknowledge it. His address is as follows: T23396 Cpl J Stuart, 30 Aust Grn Coy, Milford Camp, Conara, Tasmania.

Cheerio for the present, if there are any other addresses you want, let me know and if possible I will get them from Records Hobart.

Best wishes to all,

Yours sincerely,
Bill Phelps.