

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, John Smith 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.

Corporal Smith wrote one letter to the fund in 1945, noting that Raymond was his second name which he used in preference to John. He is an example (of many) who was sent a parcel without a connection to King Island.



Use Official Address Only.

From No.: VX133764
Name: Cpl. R. Smith
Unit or Group: 2nd Aust. Mech. Equip. Bn.
R.A.E. A.I.F.
Date: Australia
12-4-45.

Dear Sir or Madame.

Just a few lines to thank you for the comforts fund parcel of which I received a few days ago. It was a real treat, & the best I have received since being in the army. Everything was in good condition too. All the boys were very pleased with them, & know that they are not forgotten over here.

I just couldn't work out the address for a while, but I soon realized where King Island was. I come from Gulong myself, so am not very far from there. It is almost 12 months since I was home, but it feels like being another 12 before I get home. Still the war news is extra good, & we may hear big things in the near future.

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.



Use Official Address Only.

From No.:

Name:

Unit or Group:

Date:

2

Well, I will conclude this short note by thanking
you all again at King Island. Christ, & all the
best, & hope all the boys are home soon.

[Handwritten signature]

Yours Sincerely
A. Smith

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.

VX133764
CPL. R. Smith.
2 AUST. MECH. EQUIP. PLN.
RAE. AIF.
Australia
12- 4- 45.

Dear Sir or Madame.

Just a few lines to thank you for the comforts fund parcel of which I received a few days ago. It was a real treat, & the best I have received sinse being in the army. Everything was in good condition too. All the boys were very pleased with them, & know that they are not forgotten over here.

I just couldn't work out the address for a while, but I soon realized where King Island was. I come from Geelong myself, so am not very far from there. It is almost 12 months sinse I was home, but it looks like being another 12 before I get home. Still the war news is extra good, & we may hear big things in the near future. Well, I will conclude this short note by thanking you all again at King Island. Cheerio, & all the best, & hope all the boys are home soon.

Yours Sincerely.
R. Smith.