

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Ronald (Ron) Stillman 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.

Ron wrote two letters to the Fund, the first in 1940 and the last in 1943. In his brief letters he expresses thanks for the parcels and provides updates on other people. Note the different service numbers in the two letters – he enlisted three times and was discharged three times.

VX28111

Mr. Roubt. Stillman
21 Ant. Tank by
Puckapunyal

The President.

King Island War Service Fund.
King Island.

Dear Sir

I wish to thank you
for the presents which I received
through your Association.

I appreciate your kind
thought very much & assure you
that where ever I may be I shall
remember my King Island friends.

Once again thanking you
I am

Yours Faithfully
Roubt. Stillman

Ben Huddle } received Receipts.
J. Barnes } 20/9/40

VX28111
Pte Ron H Stillman
21st Anti Tank Coy
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Yours Faithfully
Ron. Stillman

Ben Heddle } Received parcels
J Barnes 20/9/40

VX79560

Sgt. Stillman

C. Squadron

2/10 Aust. Armd. Regt.

Australia

President.

War Service Fund

Currie

Dear Mr Marshall

I received a parcel from the War Service Fund a few weeks ago & was very pleased with the contents.

Parcels are always welcome here & it is great to know that the folk back home are thinking of us & I think it is marvellous the way they so willingly give up their time to provide these comforts for us.

We have been out on manoeuvres for a couple of weeks & it is quite a change to get away from the camp for awhile as it gets rather monotonous at times although on the whole I like the life.

Well Mr Marshall it is very hard to find any news here so I'll close asking you & your committee to accept my thanks & appreciation.

B. H. Mohan

Yours sincerely
Ron Stillman

VX 79566
Spr. Stillman
C. Squadron
2/10 Aust Armd Regt.
Australia
[1943]

President.
War Service Fund
Currie

Dear Mr Marshall

I received a parcel from the War Service Fund a few weeks ago & was very pleased with the contents.

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Yours Sincerely
Ron Stillman