

## **The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund**

During World War 2, Charles (Charlie) Thow 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.

Charlie wrote one letter to the Fund in 1941 while he was in an Army General Hospital in the Middle East. He describes problems with his knee and people he has met, including Sister Milsom from King Island. Charlie never overcame the damage to the knee and was discharged medically unfit in October 1942.

17.11.41

TX428  
Pte G.V. Thow  
7th Aust Gen. Hosp.  
Ward 11  
A.I.F. ABROAD

Dear Sir

Just a few lines hoping they find you in the best of health. As this leaves me doing pretty well now. I have had quite a while in hospital about 8 weeks now. It is ~~at~~ 34 days since I was operated on. I got a little bit of a knock on my right knee and broke a small bone in a few pieces, so I had it operated on and they took two pieces of bone out but I think there is still another piece floating around under the knee cap which is causing a lot of fluid. 8 day after I had the operation I got quiddy 2 days later I had that opened so I seemed to have struck a spot of trouble all at once. I feel well apart from my ~~right~~ knee. Without another operation I will be here another couple of months.

I have seen quite a lot of Sister Millson when I first came in this hosp one of the Sisters told me she was here. So I dropped her a line and got one of the Sisters to put it in her mail box and she came up to see me that night. I have saw her quite a lot since I have been in here.



Sister Millson told me she had written to you last week. I have not saw anything of your son since I came to the East. I sure would like to drop on to some of the boys. Archie Jackson is about some-where one of his mates is in the same ward as myself but I have not been able to get word to him so he could drop in some time. I saw young East quite a few months ago in fact it was early in March. ~~of~~ Young Jones I think his name is. you might know that boy that was with Fred Woods some years ago I saw him in August last. I was under the doctor at the time when I first came out of action I had five different doctors try to put my knee right without an opp on it but they failed. Jack Whitty works here at this hospital I see him every day. I have not saw any of the boys in the 12 Batt since Sept. So I don't know how Pete Your Jack Keating, or Bluey Rowe or Lance Tanagers is getting on but I hope to hear from Jack Keating any day now. I thought it was a good hint to send me three envelopes and a few sheets of paper to drop you a line I wrote to Les Birch some months ago I have got no answer yet I don't know if he received ~~it~~ <sup>my letter</sup> or not. I received a parcel from you the other day I have not been getting your parcels up till this last couple off

months. I had five month action without a break  
one was lucky to get his letters without any  
thing else. So guess what sort of a joint I was in.

Please remember me to all the old Diggers tell  
them the only thing I have left is a strong heart  
and that smile the humn will never knock  
that of my face. Well fuck I thank you very much  
for the parcels that I have received hope to  
hear from you at a later date.

I had a letter from a Pal of mine that was  
at a send off to some of the boys at the hall.  
I must close now for I have quite a bit  
of pen pushing to do. So all the best to  
you and family.

Merry Xmas. AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

I Remain

Yours Old Pal

Charlie

*7 months on*



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Merry Xmas. AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

I Remain

Your Old Pal

Charlie