

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Gordon Towns 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.

Gordon wrote one letter to the Fund in 1944 while in Queensland. He thanks everyone for the items sent him including a Canteen Order from the King Island Branch of the Country Women's Association.

AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND
VICTORIAN DIVISION

With Which is Affiliated

R.S.L. War Service
Fund

Y.M.C.A.



The Salvation
Army

Y.W.C.A.

VX 66334

Gnr. G. Powners

2/8 Aust Id Regt

A.I.F. Australia

To. Mr Marshall

I wish to thank
you and all members of the King
Island War Service Fund for
the parcel and Canteen Order
which I received a few days before
Xmas, and I certainly appreciated
them very much, I should have
written to you before this, but
I have been fairly busy of late
so I hope that you will forgive
me. I also ask you if you don't
mind, if you would convey my
thanks and best wishes to the
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the Canteen Order which I
received from them, as I could
not place the signature of the
President.

I guess you will notice
by the address that I have been
transferred to another Unit, where
I have met a few Lads from the
island also quite a few Tasmanians
who have been over there some
time or other, so I have quite
a lot of company, also I have
met a few of the Islanders &
from other Units, two of the
Farrell boys are camped only
a few miles from us so I see
quite a lot of them. Since
arriving here we have been
camped within twelve miles

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of a fairly nice township
which we visit two or three
times a week to the pictures
or dance which ever we of
prefer, so we are a lot better
off than we were before.

Well Mr Marshall.

seeing that I am not much of
a letter writer I will close now
with my kind regards and best
wishes to all the family and
everyone on the island.

Yours

Vx 66334 Gordon Towns.

VX 66334
Gnr. G. Towns
2/8 Aust Fd. Regt
A.I.F Australia.

To Mr Marshall

I wish to thank you and all members of the King Island War Service Fund for the parcel and Canteen Order which I received a few days before Xmas, and I certainly appreciated them very much. I should have written to you before this, but I have been fairly busy of late so I hope that you will forgive me. I also ask if you don't mind, if you would convey my thanks and best wishes to the Country Women's Association for the Canteen Order which I received from them, as I could not place the signature of the president.

I guess you'll notice by the address that I have been transferred to another Unit, where I have met a few Lad's from the island also quite a few Tasmanians who have been over there some time or other, so I have quite a lot of Company, also I have met a few of the Islanders from other Units, two of the Farrell boy's are camped only a few miles from us so I see quite a lot of them. Since arriving here we have been camped with in twelve miles of a fairly nice township which we visit two or three times a week to the pictures or dance which ever we prefer, so we are a lot better off than we were before.

Well Mr. Marshall seeing that I am not much of a letter writer I will close now with my kind regards and best wishes to all the Family and everyone on the island.

From
VX66334 Gordon Towns