

The King Island World War 2 War Service Fund

During World War 2, Thomas Wilshire 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.

Tom wrote two letters to the Fund, most likely in 1941; they are brief and express his thanks to the Fund. Interestingly, John did not give an address on the letterhead.



AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND

WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED

R.S.L. War Service Fund, The Salvation Army and Y.M.C.A.

Dear Mr Marshall.

In receipt of
the canteen order, received a
few days ago, I wish to express
my sincere thanks to you &
all members of the King Island
war service fund. I assure you
it was very much appreciated.

I wish to express my best wishes
to Mrs Marshall, yourself, & Arthur.

I remain
Yours Sincerely
TN. Wilshire.

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I wish to express my best wishes to Mrs Marshall, yourself, & Arthur.

I remain
Yours Sincerely
TN. Wilshire.

17-6-41

Dear Mr Marshall

In receipt of the banteen order, which I received safely, I wish to sincerely thank the comforts fund. I wish to state that it was very much appreciated
And also to know the King Island folk remember us.

A.C.1. Wilshire T.P.W.

17-6-41

Dear Mr Marshall

In receipt of the Canteen order, which I received safely, I wish to sincerely thank the Comforts fund. I wish to state that it was very much appreciated
And also to know the King Island folk remember us.

A.C.1. Wilshire T.P.W.