

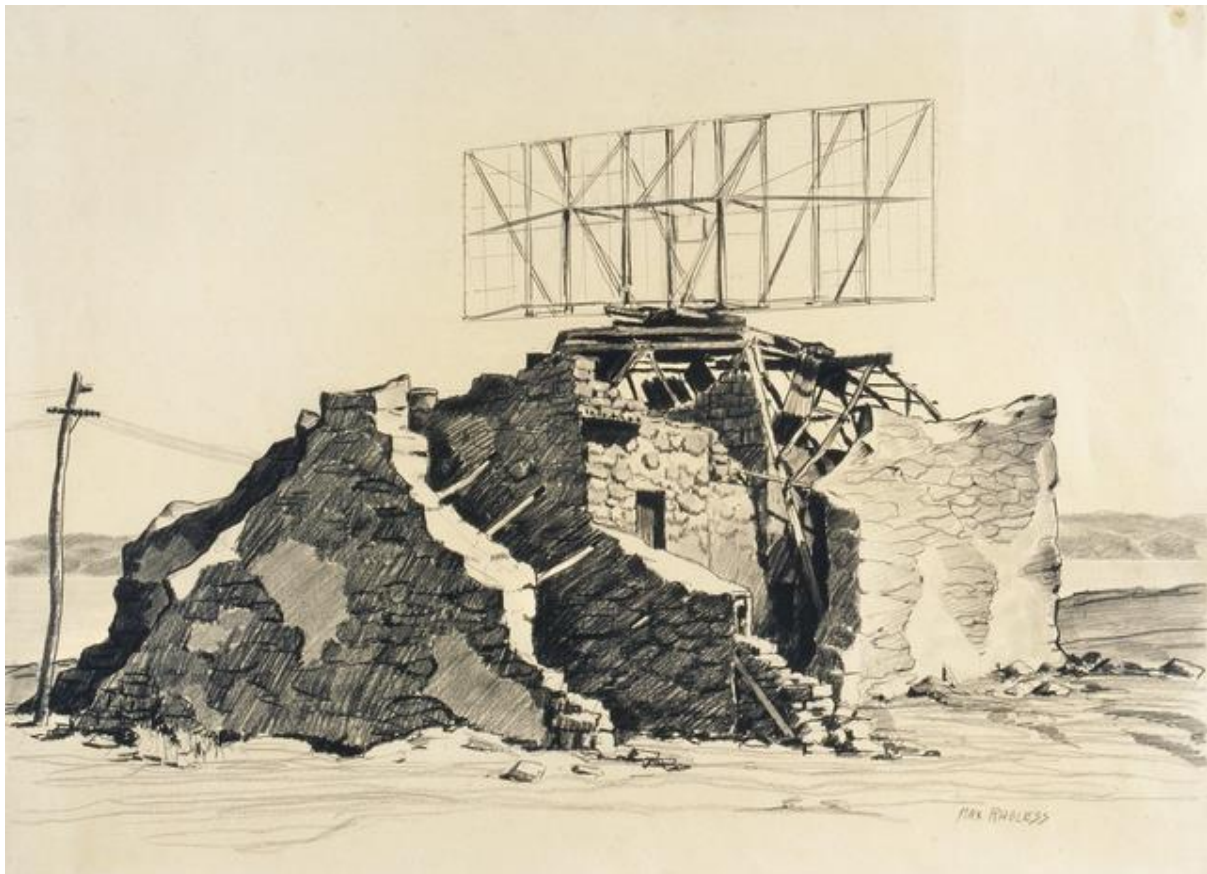
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM

SIGNIFICANT AVIATION EVENTS

WWII Radar Units in South Australia

Nos. 7 and 10 Radar Stations

Two RAAF radar units operated in South Australia during WWII at Cape Jervis and Wedge Island. These locations covered the shipping lanes to both Adelaide and Whyalla. While the chances of enemy aircraft operating over these areas was remote, for a twelve-month period from mid-1942 until mid-1943 the Japanese submarine threat to shipping operating along the Australian coast was very real. As well as aerial targets, the radar stations could detect contacts such as surfaced submarines which might try and approach these areas under the cover of darkness.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART30198

A 1944 impression of the Cape Jervis radar station drawn by war artist Max Ragless. A ruined building has been used to help camouflage the facility. (Australian War Memorial)

Both Nos. 7 and 10 Radar Stations were established at Parafield on 1 March 1943, each with a personnel strength of around 40. A week later No. 10 Radar Station moved to its permanent location at Cape Jervis, while No. 7 Radar Station did not become operational at Wedge Island until 30 April.

No. 10 Radar Station was situated on the western tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula, where the Cape Jervis lighthouse had been in operation since the 1870s. The unit had an

accommodation camp at Yankalilla, some 20 miles up the coast towards Adelaide. A unit truck was used to maintain regular contact with both the radar site and No. 4 Initial Training School at Victor Harbor from where the unit drew its pay and rations. Life appears to have been reasonably good, with the unit fielding teams in Yankalilla sporting competitions and being able to attend dances at Rapid Bay. Unit strength included several WAAAFs.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00664.002

Accommodation hut of No. 7 Radar Station at Wedge Island, circa 1944. (Australian War Memorial)

In comparison, the experience of No. 7 Radar Station on isolated Wedge Island presented far more of a challenge. This was a small island at the entrance to Spencer's Gulf where a lighthouse had been operating since 1911. The unit was supplied by the lighthouse supply ketch from Port Adelaide which arrived approximately once a month. Ketches were also used to maintain communications with Port Lincoln where an administrative shore base was maintained. However, this was still some 45 miles away over seas that were often rough.

Given its isolated location, the Wedge Island station maintained two guard posts equipped with Bren Guns. Problems were experienced with water supply and radio communications with Adelaide, together with the timely supply of spare parts for the radar set. Nevertheless a 24-hour radio watch was maintained and from February 1944 regular weather reports were sent to Parafield, Mallala, Port Pirie and Mount Gambier. Ansons from Mallala were used as practice targets for the radar stations.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00664.005

The ketch Tempest at Wedge Island, circa 1944, after bringing supplies from Port Lincoln. (Australian War Memorial)

While Japanese submarine activity off the Australian coast effectively ceased in June 1943, for several months these stations must have had a frontline feel. However, the cost of maintaining such stations was significant, especially in a broader environment where there was a shortage of skilled labour.

In January 1944 the Wedge Island station had its establishment reduced to 31 personnel. Subsequently during 1944 all stations south of a line from Brisbane to Geraldton were placed on standby and only operated for a few hours each day. Both Nos. 7 and 10 Radar Stations were disbanded on 15 September 1944.

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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00664.001

Pilot Officer JW Measday at Wedge Island, who took command of No. 7 Radar Station in May 1944. (Australian War Memorial)