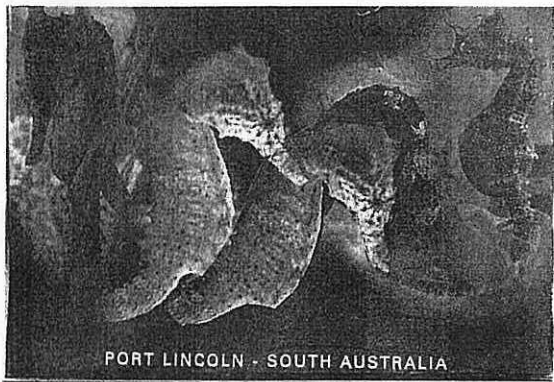


MEMORIES OF WEDGE



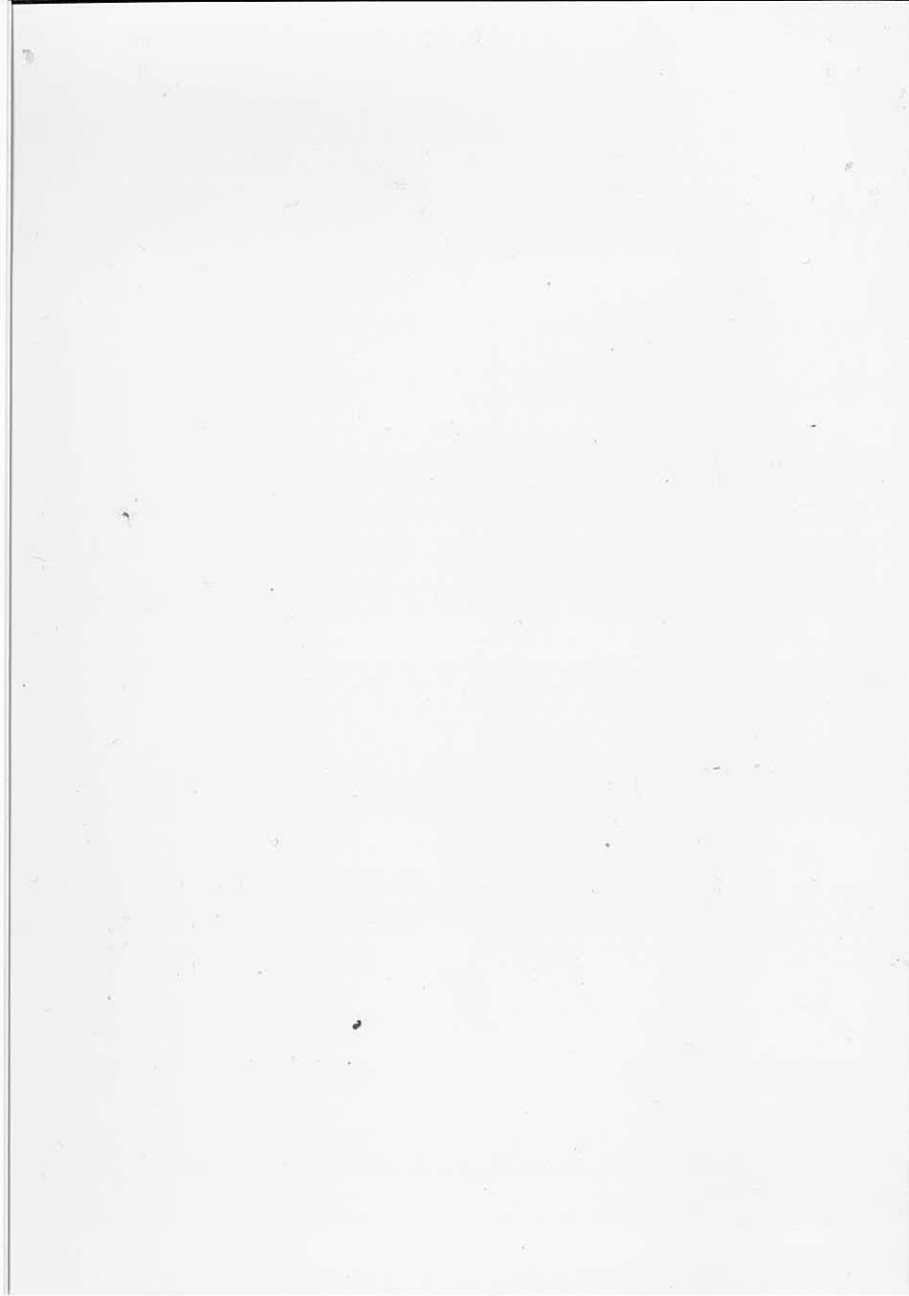
7 RADAR,

1943 – 1944

**WEDGE
ISLAND**

From Ron Cassidy

21st REUNION 2009



7 WEDGE RADAR REUNION 2009 – 21 YEARS ON

A very warm welcome to the 21st 7 Radar Wedge Island Reunion- being held on 31st March 2009. This year brings a change of venue to the Adelaide Pavilion. We hope you enjoy the peaceful setting of Veale Gardens which surrounds the venue.

Thanks to Doug and Rhonda Cocks for beginning the reunions in 1988.
They still continue today – 21 years later. Morrie Fenton

In this Booklet of Memories, published for the 21st reunion of 7 Radar, the author has completed an interesting and informative picture of the history of Wedge Island in the years before, during, and after the occupation by the Air Force.

It is a fitting addition to the previous booklets, and serves as a reminder to the servicemen of those earlier days, and of the friendships formed there. The author has done much to encourage those associations with his yearly publications.

For the wives and families of the men, there is an understanding of life during the war on a small and lonely island. The numerous photos make this picture even more vivid.

Many valuable and enduring friendships have been formed among the families and are set to survive well into the future. This is in large measure because of the dedication and efforts of the author. We thank and congratulate him. Stan Moss

The history of our 7 Radar reunions is mostly made up of three phases Doug Cocks, Morrie Fenton, and the rest of us. When Doug came to me 21 years ago for a little help during several days working on telephone books and electoral rolls, I didn't dream that we would go on into the 21st century. We have renewed friendships, made new friendships, and got to know extended families.

The life of No. 7 was quite short, luckily because war didn't come its way, and so it wasn't further needed for war duties. After it closed down we were all scattered far and wide until 1989. A number have died, and of course we are sorry, but grateful for having known them; at an average age now of over 80 years we have been lucky.

Radar officers were often only 21 years of age, acting as foster fathers to a team of 40 or more. In general, each made a personal success and helped build a good team. I certainly enjoyed my stints on radar stations and bigger units. Jack Measday

OUR WEDGE REUNIONS

We've now enjoyed 21 happy Wedge reunions, and in a fit of nostalgia, I looked back over the photographic records. There I found mainly happy memories, and just a few sad reminders of those good folk who no longer join with us on that one day of the year.

The first reunion evidently was in 1989, though Doug did start his marshalling program in 1988 -all quite a long time ago now. Until 1994 we gathered at the Italian Club in Carrington Street, with one exception in 1991 when we assembled at the CTA Club in North Terrace which was a comfortable and roomy place I recall.

Since 1995, all our 'get-togethers' have been in the Mitchell Room at the Marion Hotel where we have been welcomed and well looked after. This year brings a change of venue to the Adelaide Pavilion.

As our reunions have more or less coincided with the big National Reunions, it's been natural to 'show and tell' much from those big shows interstate when any number up to 500 attended, with 160 at the national show at Geelong. Our biggest gathering was 50 which for a tiny speck of land out in Spencer Gulf was pretty good really, and quite enough to look after, particularly as our first show in 1989 attracted only 14.

Since then the folk of 7 Radar and Wedge have come from every state except the Northern Territory, and the faithful still come from afar, even from over the border, and regularly too.

We've had personal reminiscences, a video or two, photo displays and radar displays of various stations where the Wedge men were posted and some of those were pretty weird and hairy too. We've even seen a model of Flinders' "INVESTIGATOR" sailing across our Anniversary cake - and a model of our old island Doover seeking out the secrets of the room. Every reunion has had its strange and wonderful gimmicks and all these have been worthwhile - for a novel approach is necessary each time to maintain interest.

We introduced a cake as a novelty, and John Beiers joined us for the first time in 1994 - a happy encounter that one, for over the succeeding years he has exerted his talents and influence from the top table to make everything go well. And apart from that he piloted a Cessna over to Wedge with 3 passengers each time on board.

Now we hear there are a few new homes on Wedge - no B. and B's mind you - but I guess the really keen fishermen who have enjoyed Wedge in the past will still be content to sleep on the beach or stick up a tent there.

But it's all been good, enjoyable fun - more like a family gathering, for we all know each other, and we all look forward to the Annual Wedge Do when we meet old friends again.

OUR WEDGE FRIENDSHIPS



First reunion – June 1989

Friendships first forged on Wedge Island some sixty odd years ago have lasted so well that they can be called "Life time" friendships – particularly those that began on those choppy seas between Thistle Island and Wedge. They have continued on troop trains and troop convoys – in slit trenches and every type of circumstance unimaginable.

Strangely, often these friendships have continued through a succession of radar stations featuring English, Australian and American equipment – even Canadian gear which was perhaps the most fastidious of all equipment in the N.W. area. Even in that carefully hidden section at the bottom of the camp area, verbal pleasantries were exchanged so cementing friendships lasting many, many years.

The radar fraternity is spread across every part of Australia so that recognition of an old mate often took place on arrival at a station – a renewed friendship that had first begun on Wedge Island, somewhere out from Lincoln. And we have seen friendships blossom and continue through the many years since as reunions began the very enjoyable task of locating old mates via mail, news, letters and some other means.

Few friendships enjoyed the bonds of friendships witnessed again and again by the radar bodies and on so many areas, before continuing on through the years, enriched by memories of so many places and incidents. And many began on Wedge.



The most recent reunion – April 2008

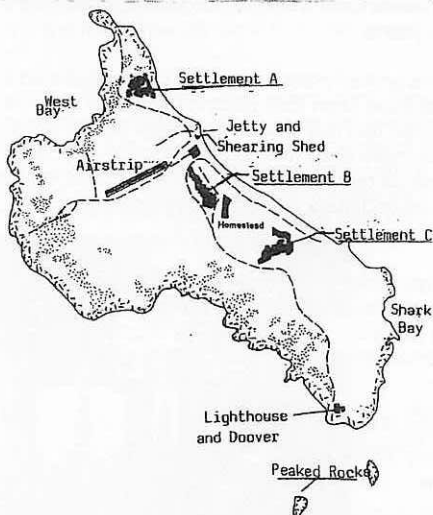
OUR 'TOUCH OF .PARADISE' IN 2009

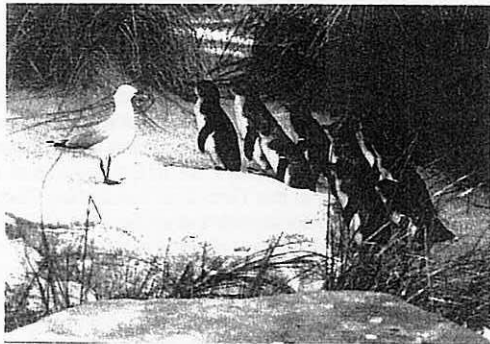
Wedge Island is one of about 150 Off-shore islands in South Australian waters, all varying greatly in size, shape, weather, and height above sea level. And so they also vary in plant, animal and bird life, and also in sea life, seals and penguins particularly.

These varying conditions apply very much to Wedge, which is part of the Gambier Islands Reserve, with the exception of the three sections, A, B, and C set aside for private development and shown on the attached map.

Also shown is the landing strip, not even remotely contemplated 40 or 50 years ago. But the familiar old landmarks – the lighthouse, the RAAF jetty and the old 1894 shearing shed are still much in evidence, thanks be, and there are also a few reminders of our old radar camp.

Remember the seals? Their barking could clearly be heard from the Peaked Rocks when we were up at the Doover. And who could forget that over-excited penguin someone had put in a locker. Very over excited it was indeed.





"Now Listen youse fellersWe're gonna try it again
and we're gonna keep on trying till you get it right....."

"So stand to attention..... toes together up straight
everyone and on my command, move smartly".

"Tenshun!..... Right Turn..... now on my
command move off with the left foot".

"By the left quick waddle and swing those bloomin'
flippers chest high like they showed you at rookies".

"Lep Right, Lep Right. ...Waddle Waddle You've got It!"

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6 INSTALLING THE GEAR AT 7 RADAR ON WEDGE

(Cec. Blumenthal)

With the pressure really on in '42 and 43 to provide radar coverage across Australia's north, I had several months at Darwin and Bathurst Island. I then returned to 1 RIMU in Sydney where I was appointed to head No. 2 Technical Installation Party. After installing two LWAW's along the NSW coast to serve until the permanent equipment became operational, I was instructed to proceed to install the gear at 7 RS in South Australia. Sgt. Emerson who had been with me in the Technical Installation Party and another Sgt. Mechanic were to accompany the equipment on the train to ensure safe transshipment at the change of gauge and to guard it generally. I was to go ahead to make sure all was ready to get it on air.

Arriving in Adelaide, I first proceeded to Parafield where the new station was forming up, and after a few days, the CU, P/O Clover, asked me to take an advance party to Wedge. It was arranged that I go on MV MINNIPA to Port Lincoln, thence by Ray Welfare's launch to the Island.

On arriving in Lincoln, it was discovered that Welfare was away with a party of doctors on a fishing trip in the Bight, but was expected back in about a week. So we booked in at a local hotel where we enjoyed a very informal and relaxing few days before Welfare returned. I confess that having recently returned from Darwin, I in no way objected to the convivial break with such pleasant company.

But all things, good and otherwise, have to come to an end, and so we found ourselves off to Wedge.

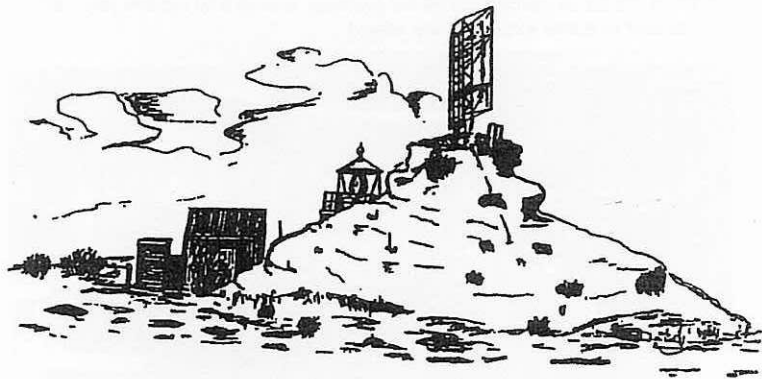
After the rough and ready conditions of Darwin, I was impressed with the contrasting and luxurious accommodation on the island -the excellent engine housing - the piped water (no longer from a soak at the edge of a billabong).

And the Doover erected and ready up on the hill, all set for us to get on with the job. We still had to wait for the ketch JOHN ROBB to arrive with the rest of the personnel, the Radar gear, my two sergeants, the aerial matching and phasing team and of course the rest of the station bods.

Eventually all arrived including the matching and phasing team with F/O Ben Asman in charge. The radar installation was relatively quick and easy except that the Receiver was 'on the blink,' - and no spares had been sent from RIMU. Fortunately a signal tracer had been sent, usually a fairly useless bit of gear for AV sets, but I remembered that it shared a similar circuit to that in the Receiver with the 955 valve. It was only a few minutes work to replace the faulty resistance etc. On my return to RIMU I arranged for a set of spares to be sent.

7 Radar was then in service, only waiting for the radio link to be established. The date on air was 22nd April 1943. I remember that as the next day I caught up with my washing, 23rd April 1943 which was my 21st birthday.

Soon afterwards Ray Welfare arrived so we were off to 1RIMU Sydney with a kit bag of wet washing.



WEDGE ISLAND



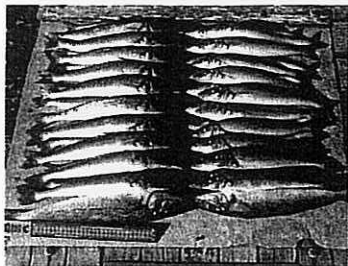
Wedge Island forms part of a small group of islands in Spencer Gulf which has been named the Gambier Group of Islands. Matthew Flinders named the island in 1802 "from its shape." Wedge has been used for pastoral activities since the settlement began. The island still has part of the original dwelling built by the Daw Bros – though the conservation of water has restricted the stock numbers. Cereal growing, sheep and horses have all been tested to some extent on the island.



Over the years a Marine Park network has been developed and a study of the various parks has been undertaken with varying results – once again with consideration being given to the natural assets of the Marine Park. The sea floor and all the sea grasses off shore have been studied as well as the make up of the island itself and noted for future use; for South Oz has in all some hundred and fifty small to medium size islands many of which may offer potential now or in the future for usable results.

Recreational and fishing rights immediately come to mind – fishing for commercial purposes as well as hobby fishing are carefully studied and

noted – shell fish to a lesser extent but nevertheless the possibility of future harvesting is carefully studied to determine whether commercial fishing would be feasible. And there is wildlife too – seals abound but these of course are protected.



Aboriginal heritage is also studied – in which case access to islands has to be considered. Wedge Island is part of this great plan of Marine Parks and protected areas for conservation of wild life of all sorts.



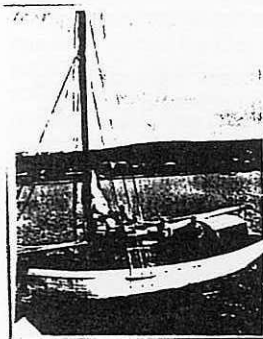
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AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

I was sound asleep in that big dormitory room at the Great Northern Hotel in Port Lincoln when George Gynell, the amiable publican hammered on the door and everyone was awake. "It's 5:30 chaps" was the call and we were dressed ready for breakfast in no time.



At 6:30 we set off for the Lincoln jetty – quite a walk really – but when we reached the jetty Ray Welfare, the owner of the cutter FLORENCE, was already on the job warming the engine. "Hurry up you chaps – it's already 7 o'clock. We're waiting to leave". And so we were off – out towards Boston Island and the harbor entrance.

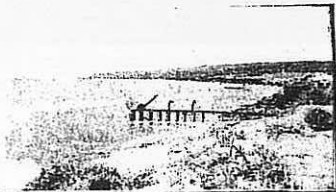


An indication of what to expect as we set course for Thistle Island – and about 12 or 1 suddenly we were into it – a choppy sea as we left Thistle, then headed towards Wedge.

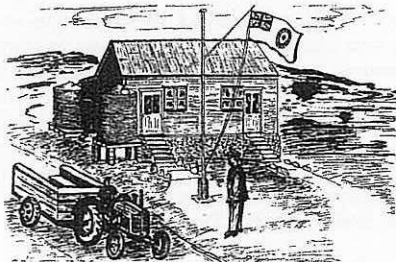
Gradually things got worse – a boisterous wind and now an angry sea. Before long there was only one thing to do – hang onto something strong and hang one's head over the side.

It seemed forever – but I guess it was about 2 hours. Wedge now protected us – the sea calmed and next we crossed the reef and headed into the jetty where some ten or a dozen of a welcoming committee greeted us.

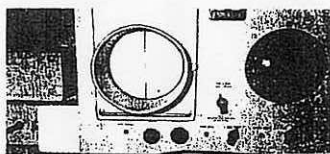
Despite my heaving stomach, I managed to climb up to the jetty – then up the steps to the top of the cliffs and rest while the locals grabbed the stores and the mail.



Then by tractor and trailer up to the camp – I was now one of the boys!



Hard indeed it is to imagine a Defense Post on Wedge – and to have it manned by eighteen year old young chaps. Yet that was the situation back in 1943 and 1944 when 7 Radar began operating and filling a vital need – watching over S.A.'s sea routes. Those sea routes were actually used by enemy craft too, laying mines and attempting to strike a blow for their own forces.



LW/AW
Receiver
panel

There must have been a sense of isolation and loneliness felt at all times just as keenly felt as the sense of serving one's country. The feelings of the boys must have been daunting - suddenly becoming men and doing their best to smother their fears and show that they were now true blue Aussies.



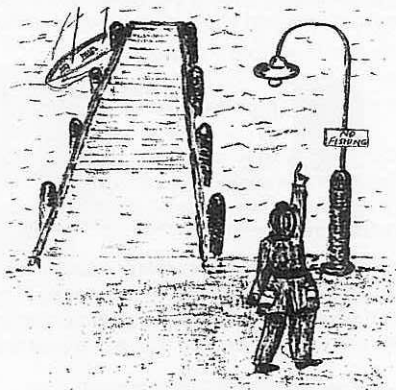
RAAF Flag

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THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF PORT LINCOLN

I guess we young "Wedgies" of 43/44 all felt a mite envious as our C.O. packed his blues and headed off for a few days in Port Lincoln. The story was he'd be staying at a nice pub, with a few good meals and drinks, and even seeking out the bright lights of Lincoln. Well - that's what he told Smithy, the O/R clerk, who somehow managed to pass it on to us - but Smithy as always a bit susceptible to a gentle leg-pull. It made a good story though and a good one to savor at the evening meal. Those bright lights of Lincoln seemed mighty attractive to the socially starved lads back on Wedge 60 miles out to sea and with only a Doover for company.

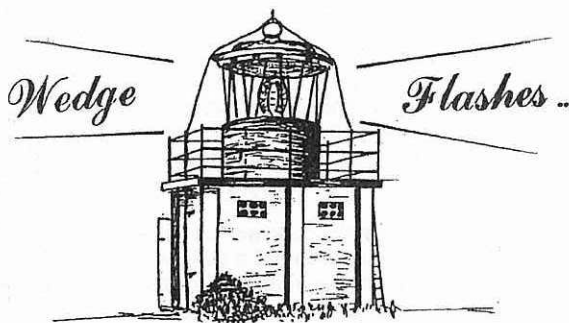
In actual fact, the C.O.s trip was away on one boat and back on the next with cash to pay those who needed it for leave, canteen, bookmaker and other such essentials but it made a good story nevertheless.



*There You Are! See! I told you
there's bright lights in Lincoln!*

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Sadly our numbers have dropped away badly – the 2009 reunion will probably be our last "get-together" – but our achievements year by year have been outstanding. We began with more than 20 members – but we are half a dozen.

But not to worry – we have photos to prove our words.

This year Eddie and Thai French from Tasmania will be our special folk – Welcome to you two – it's great to see you.

The best attendance was about 1991 – and now we're heading for the worst. Nevertheless, we thank Claire and Jan for their efforts this year – we're proud of you.

The Italian Club, the old Traveler's North Terrace and the Marion Hotel have all done us proud – we're grateful. And to Doug and Rhonda Cocks, who had the hopeful idea in 1988.

We are sorry that Winston Ingram has passed on in 2008 – he was a good member and also gave us a laugh now and then.

The Newsletter "Memories of Wedge" was first produced in 1988 – then annually. It is now possibly about to expire – and daughters Claire and Jan will work on the final editions – we thank them.

So we conclude our Reunion work – it's been over 21 years since we started. Thanks a lot to everyone and we hope you have all enjoyed the Wedge Reunions as much as we have.

