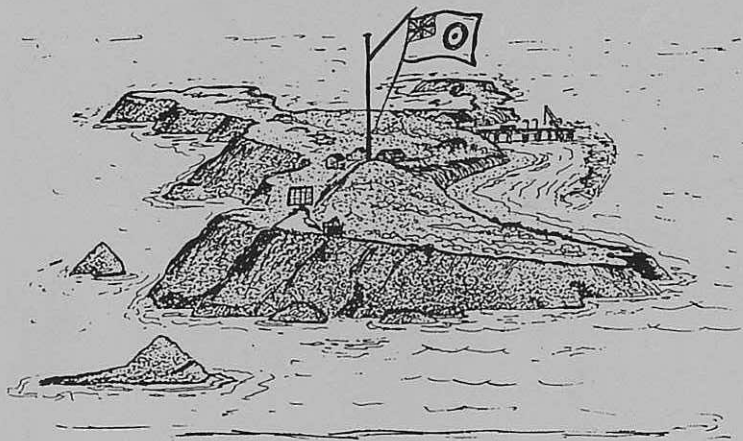


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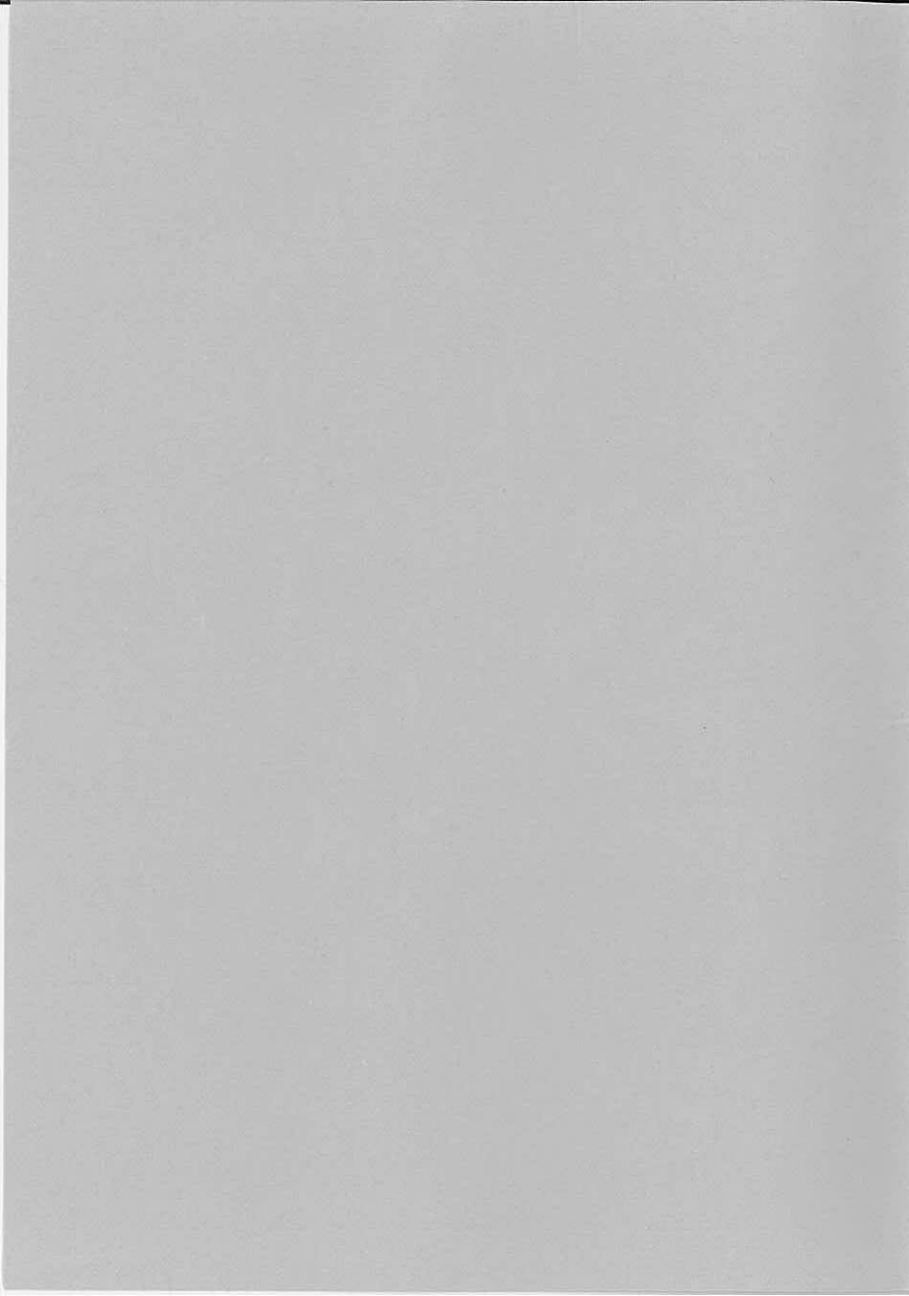


Wedge Island
Sketchbook.



MORRIE FENTON.



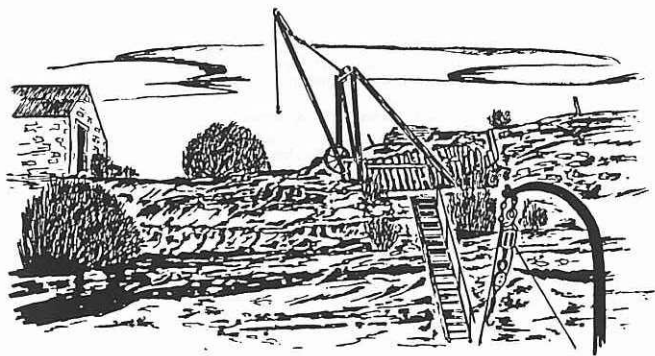




Wedge Island
Sketchbook.

DEDICATION.

*Dedicated to All Who
Remember the Island Life.*



MORRIE FENTON.

WEDGE ISLAND

SKETCHBOOK.

ISBN 0 9596866 9 4

MORRIE FENTON.

(M.E.FENTON.)

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Produced and Published

by

M.E.Fenton,

27 Lasscock Avenue,

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January 1995

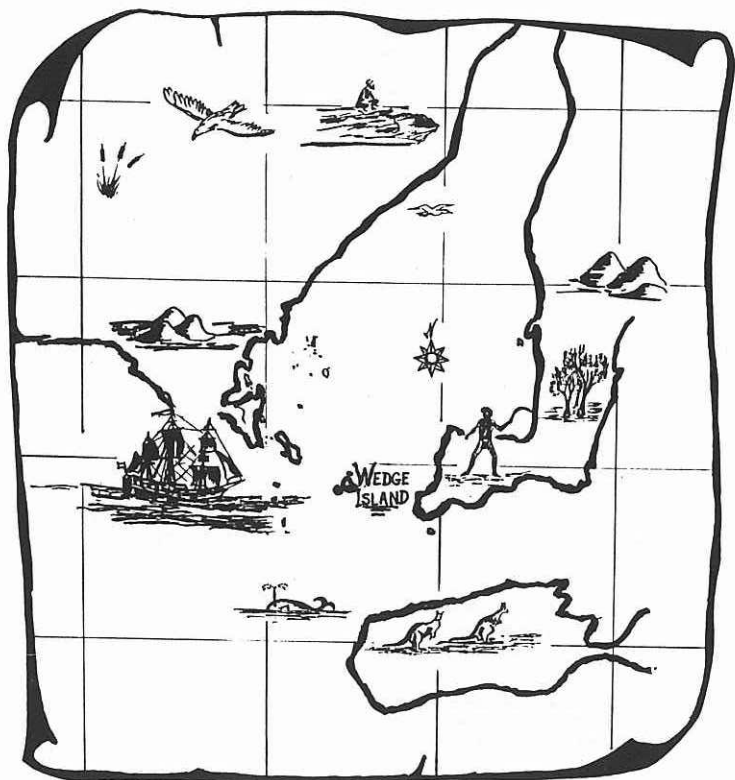
Greetings from the City of Adelaide.

In this special year when "Australia Remembers" we all try to recall the events of fifty years ago, leading to the victory in the Pacific and Universal Peace.

The contribution of 7 Radar Unit to the war-time security of Adelaide and South Australia is possibly not very well known, however, this booklet outlines the importance of the work and service carried out in the Gulf.

I congratulate you all on the occasion of your reunion. I wish you well with the celebrations and hope that the friendships which have endured for so long will continue on into the future.

Henry Nino
HENRY J. NINO
Lord Mayor



Wedge Island.

Wedge Island was discovered and named by Matthew Flinders, that outstanding young explorer of the Australian coastline, in 1802, its name being suggested because of its distinctive and striking silhouette against the skyline. Many of the islands in the vicinity of Wedge were named by Flinders at the same time, the neighbouring larger Thistle Island being named after his navigator who lost his life close by while seeking water.

Wedge may have had earlier settlers, but its first recorded history began about the mid 1800's, and from then the island has supported a succession of farming attempts, some being more successful than others. In all these attempts, the fierce weather patterns, the isolation, and the salty atmosphere have all greatly influenced the outcome. Today the island is mainly given over to fishermen and perhaps a few holidaymakers seeking solitude in a near perfect and natural environment. But in its farming days, barley, horse breeding and raising, and sheep farming have all found favour for a period - even guano gathering was tried at one time by an enterprising early island owner and speculator.

Since it was first surveyed and divided into sections in 1883, there have been a succession of owners and managers living on the island in the cottage built by the Daw brothers about 1860. The names Cowan, Haigh, Golley, Cooper, Winckel, Rau and Reed have all featured prominently in the progressive story of Wedge, while in 1943 and 1944 the island had its largest ever population when up to fifty Air Force men manned the radar unit established on its highest point near the lighthouse. In the 1950's several names of the Growden family were registered as the principal titleholders, and Mr. Norm Growden practised his farming methods mainly from Port Lincoln, flying to the island to check the stock, the water and fences.

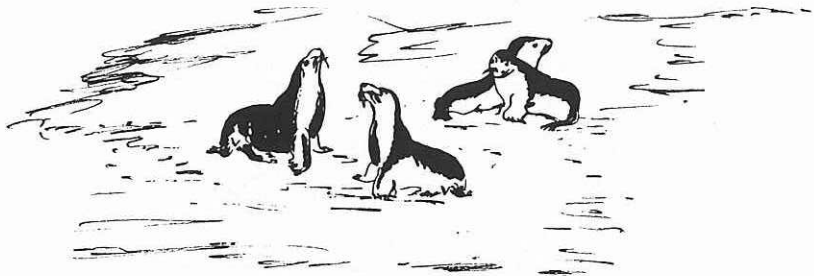
In 1988, Wedge Island was bought by Venture Corporation, and three separate parcels of land were subdivided and offered for private purchase and for the construction of holiday homes, the scheme being subject to strict controls and regulations, for at the same time up to one third of the island became marked for eventual inclusion in the Gambier Islands Conservation Park. Joswell Pty. Ltd. are the present owners of the freehold portion of the island not privately owned, and the conditions ensure that ultimately more than half of Wedge Island will become reserve.

Meanwhile, many species of endangered wildlife have become established on Wedge, for the island is still free of feral animals. Rock wallabies, bettongs and wombats appear to be thriving, while penguins and seals have long treated the island coastline as their special domain.

Perhaps it is inevitable that at some future time Wedge will gradually become more known and more popular as an off-shore island, but it is to be hoped that the strict regulations now in place will ensure forever that the natural beauty, the wild coastal scenery and the endangered animal species now successfully established will somehow continue forever.

1995.

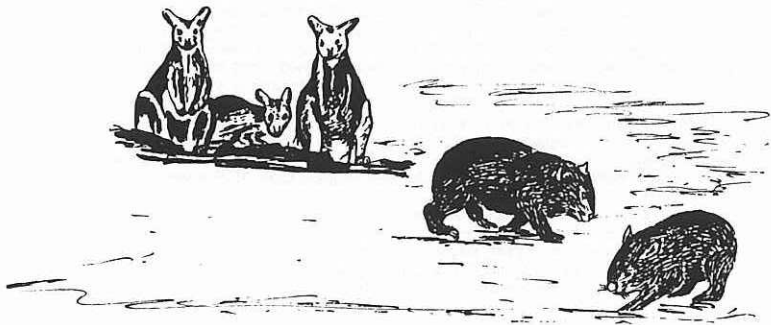
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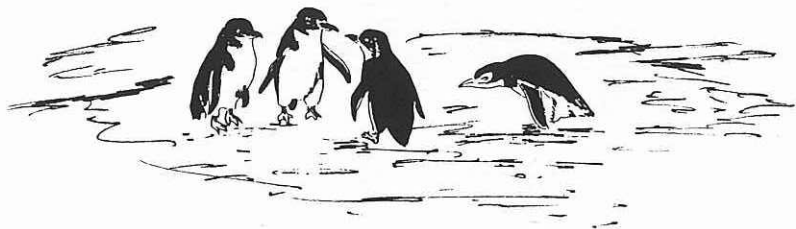


The Wildlife of Wedge.

The fairy penguins and the seals have long been known as the natural wildlife occupants of the Wedge Island shoreline, with the little penguins coming ashore at night to shelter among the rocks mainly on the sheltered side of the island, while the seals have long been the masters of the heavy surf, resting and often making themselves heard from the ledges and the pimple islets around the more dangerous and less accessible parts of the island coastline.

In more recent times, a highly commendable conservation programme has been adopted, and several off-shore islands including Wedge, all being free of predators such as foxes, cats, snakes and the like, have been reserved as wild life areas.



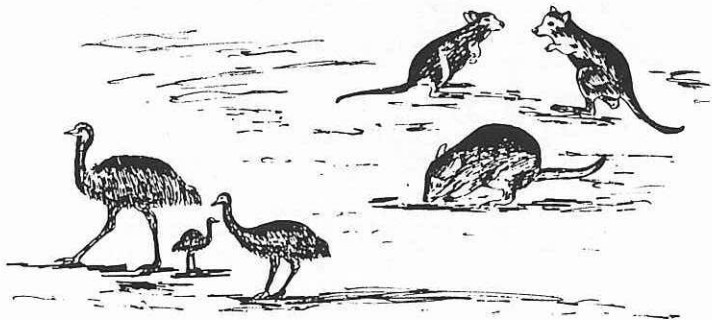


THE WILDLIFE of WEDGE.

This programme has allowed several endangered species to be released into the rarely disturbed undergrowth and vegetation, hopefully to be released eventually back into their own natural habitats when their numbers have sufficiently increased.

So the wombat, and the shy brush-tailed bettong now occupy the island in increasing numbers, along with the handsome little Pearson Island wallaby. And there are emus, though these have increased so rapidly in numbers that somehow they must be culled

Eventually, more than half of Wedge Island will form part of the Gambier Islands Conservation Park, which would ensure the protection and survival of the flora, fauna, and the natural beauty of the place.





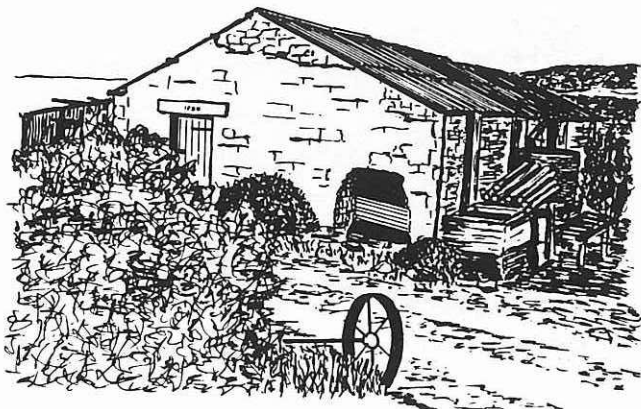
"Paradise Beach" - the pristine length of beach along the northern coast of the island.

"Going Ashore."

Going ashore on Wedge Island was at one time achieved only by way of the beach on the northern side, but after the sturdy small jetty near the old shed had been built, together with the two lifting cranes, this part of the island became a key entry point and place of embarkation. From the jetty, the island folk and their visitors, workmen, stock and materials left or entered Wedge - very much so until the small airstrip was completed. The old stone shed, patched and altered, has survived since 1894. It has been enlarged, equipped in a variety of ways from time to time for its many roles, and has become almost a symbol of the island. Perhaps its most important years were those when it became headquarters for the shearers when up to 2000 sheep were kept on Wedge.

Over the years, the little jetty, built for the Air Force personnel stationed on Wedge in 1943, has deteriorated somewhat, but the crane still works well, and small boats can be lifted to be left safely on the jetty above the seas which at times even there can become unpredictably rough and dangerous.

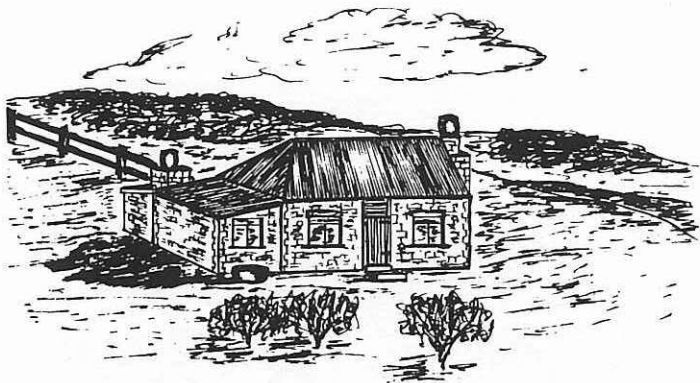
History tells that stock leaving the island - the horses and sheep, did so from the beautiful Wedge beach running east of the jetty, the horses swimming out to the small steamer waiting off-shore, while the sheep enjoyed the short trip packed in the drier, crowded confines of the ship's boat.



The old stone shed - 1894 - almost the symbol of the island.

For many years, sheep farming was practised on Wedge, and the old shed at the landing was equipped for shearing.





An impression of the first cottage, built in 1860 by the Daw Brothers.

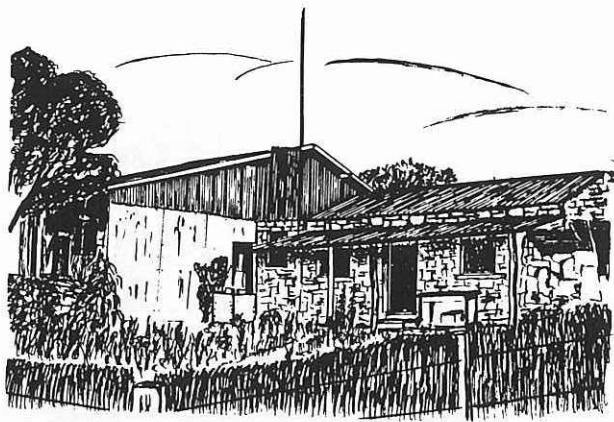
The Farm Cottage.

The farm cottage on Wedge was built about the year 1860 when the Daw brothers occupied the island for grazing or farming interests. They chose a spot on the north side of the island above the beach, looking out over the gulf, and commanding a good view of the seaward approaches from Port Lincoln.

The brothers are thought to have established a garden, though this must have been seasonal, or perhaps hardy native shrubs might have been planted, for there would have been little water to spare in the summer months.

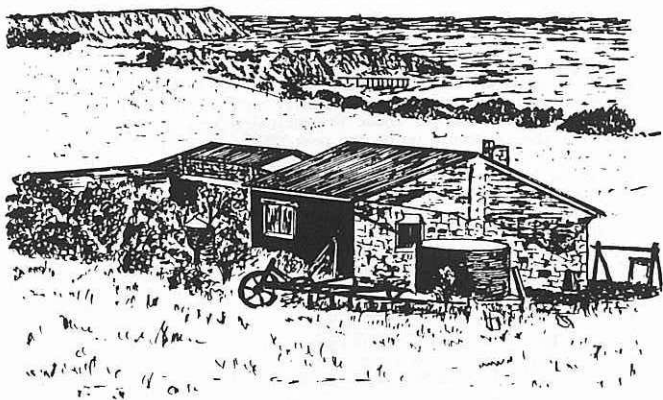
The cottage would have continued quietly until well into this century - a typical sturdy low farm homestead, with a lean-to across the back and some type of annex built along the eastern wall. An open fireplace was built along the eastern wall. But over the years many alterations and additions have been made. The fireplace was removed, perhaps when the cottage was reroofed. Rooms were added on the eastern side, and a verandah was added. More accommodation was added as rooms or flats when the island became a holiday getaway place for families and fishermen, and by now the original cottage appeared to be an afterthought added to the larger, higher rooms rather than the reverse. About this time the owner left the island to live in Port Lincoln. The garden and the outbuildings disappeared - large water tanks were added, and the cottage complex became a holiday lodge rather than a homestead.

At least nine island families lived in the cottage where they enjoyed an unsurpassed view over the sparkling waters of Spencers Gulf and the reefs and islands north of Wedge.

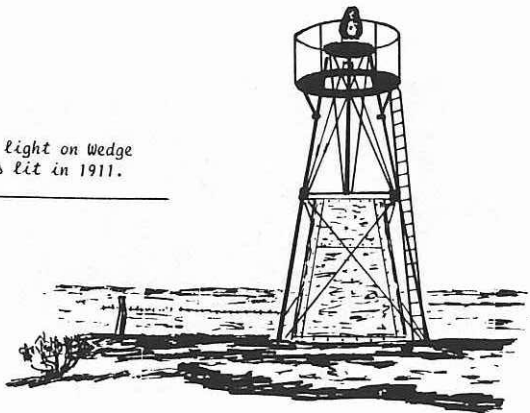


The first of the additional rooms were added after the war ended.

The old homestead is now almost lost among the rooms of the complex.



*The first light on Wedge
Island was lit in 1911.*



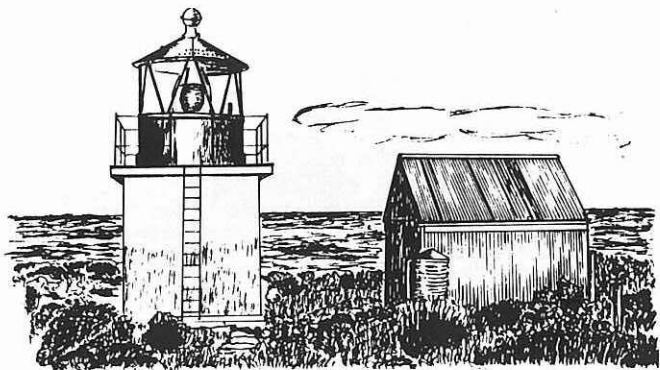
The Wedge Light.

The perils of the open seas south of the Gulfs have been well known ever since the southern shipping lanes were established early last century, and a network of lights was set in place on islands and headlands to safely guide ships through the Gulf waters and on past Kangaroo Island and Yorke Peninsula. Of these, the unmanned Wedge light would be one of the more recent, even though it was lit for the first time in March, 1911 - over 80 years ago.

That first light was on a very basic skeleton frame structure, topped with a small lantern of 135 c.p., the acetylene gas fuel being secured in a steel locker structure at the base. The light was attended by an island resident paid for the task, and from the outset, it was considered too small, and was only visible under fair conditions for about 10 nautical miles, despite the height of the structure up on the peak of the island.

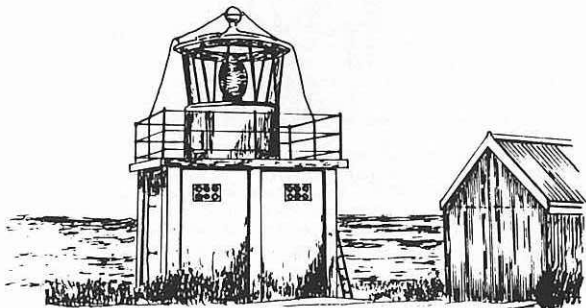
Four years later, the light was first altered, and then about 1918 took its well known square tower shape when a new light and lens were set in operation. The automatic light was fuelled by gas stored in a battery of cylinders linked together in a small shed in the base, with spares in a storage shed nearby. This efficient arrangement continued to give good service over many years until it was replaced by yet a third light which in 1980 was converted to solar operation.

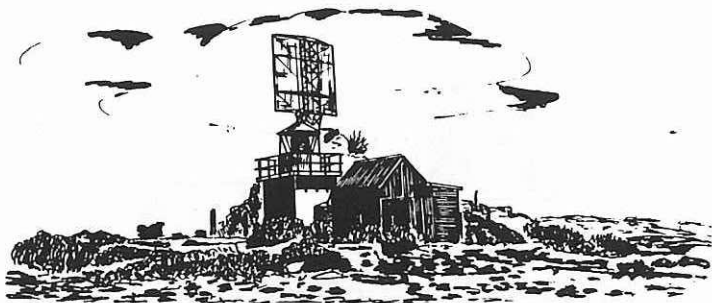
Despite all these marine precautions, there have been many ships wrecked or grounded - and lives lost - in the waters around Wedge Island, the largest ship being the GLENPARK, a large sailing vessel of 2000 tons, wrecked just north of Wedge in 1902.



The second Wedge light, far more powerful than the first, was erected on a square tower and gave good service for more than half a century.

The present light is now solar powered. All three Wedge lights have been on the same site.





The well camouflaged tower of 7 Radar was set up on the highest point of the island where it adjoined the unmanned lighthouse.

7 Radar.

Wedge Island proved the perfect site to set up a sentinel Radar station during the second World War, and in 1943, No. 7 Radar RAAF was formed at Parafield, and in March moved through Port Lincoln and out to the island where the station buildings were ready and waiting. A twenty four hour watch was immediately established, not so much to detect aircraft, but rather to watch the shipping lanes from the west which passed close to the island as they approached Port Adelaide and the Gulf ports.

The Radar tower was located high up on the island, its height giving good coverage for many miles across the Southern Ocean; and the large aerial turned continuously as it searched the skies and the seas. It was known that there had been some enemy activity down in the southern oceans, so the establishment of a Radar watch over Adelaide was very necessary and prudent.

As the tide of war began to favour the Allies, however, a continuing watch so far from the combat zones north of Australia was no longer considered necessary. The station was closed, and the men were posted away in September 1944. But that period when 50 Air Force men were stationed on the island at any one time remains the high point in the long history of Wedge Island.

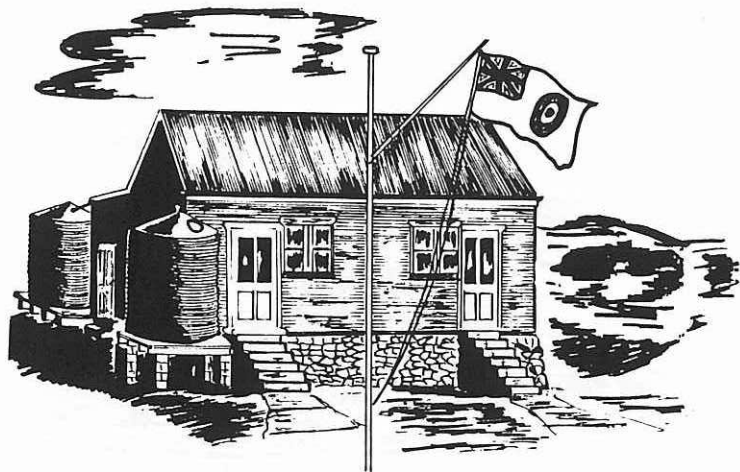
The station buildings were removed soon after the war ended.



The cement shell of the radar camouflaging gave a rock like appearance.

Soon after the war's end, the equipment was removed, then the tower.





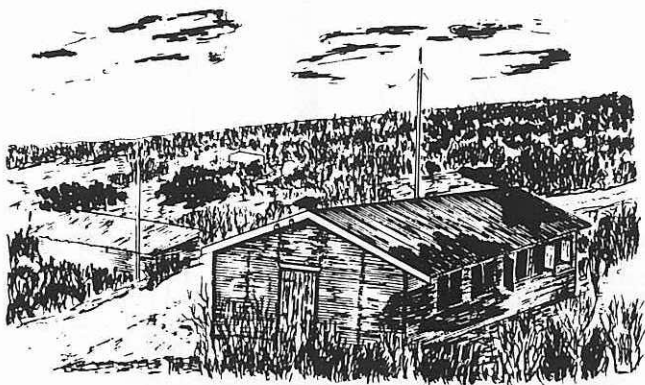
The 7 Radar Orderly Room, Sick Quarters and the station store.

The R.A.F. Camp.

The RAAF camp on Wedge was quite a comfortable place really, despite the lack of a natural fresh water supply. The barracks and various buildings were well constructed of corrugated iron, and the entire camp was carefully camouflaged to resemble a farm house and its outbuildings. One of the buildings had stock-yards and troughs attached for added realism, and the Administration block was brightly painted to resemble a red-roofed farmhouse.

The well organised Mess and busy kitchen were the hub of the camp, and here the men gathered at regular mealtimes, also on the Saturday nights when concerts were arranged.

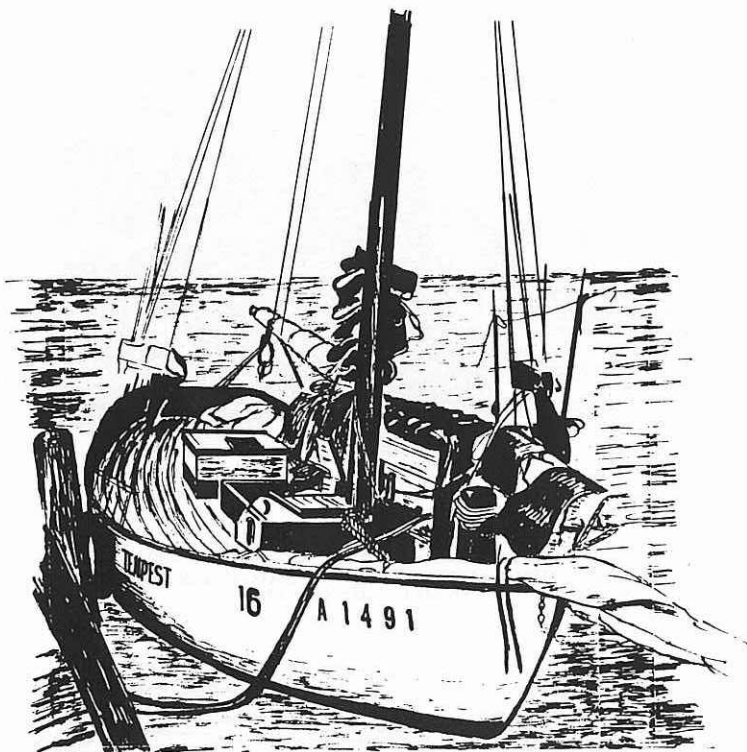
There were several sleeping huts, a rec. hut, and sick quarters. There was a store-room, wireless hut, ablutions and the like, and a daily roster of camp duties ensured the place was kept clean and tidy. Nevertheless, there was plenty of time to relax, and the men were able to read or write letters, listen to Adelaide radio, arrange fishing excursions or long exploratory walks to all parts of the island. Most enjoyed though, were the football and cricket matches, arranged down on the level ground first cleared and levelled by the men themselves. Here small aircraft now skid in to a careful landing.



The Operators' sleeping hut was the first down the track from the Radar tower.

A general view of the camp from the northern side. The Orderly Room can be seen on the far side.



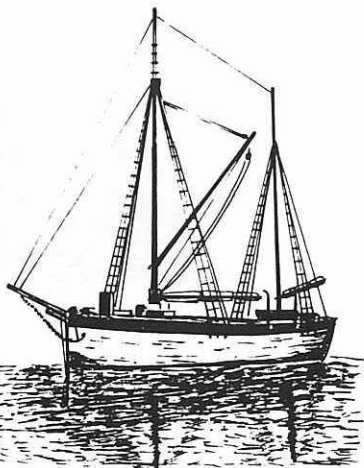


The Link by Sea.

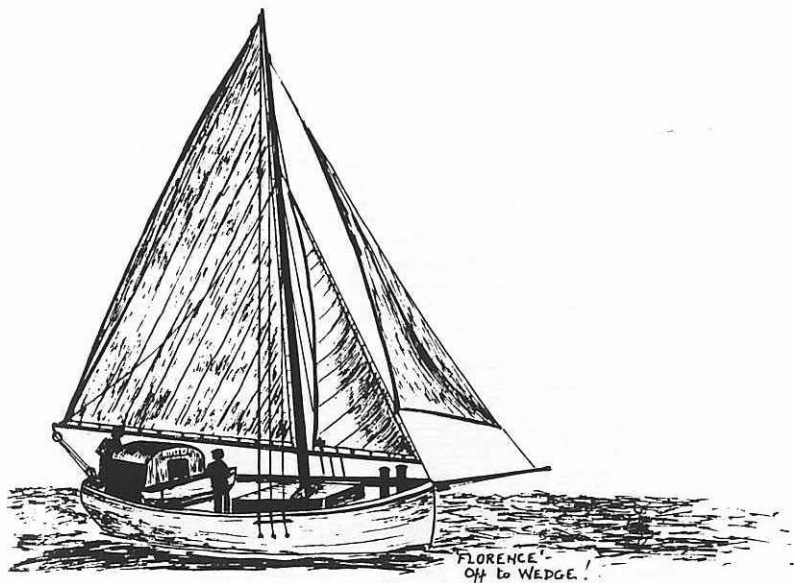
The wartime link from Wedge to the mainland was rather a chancy affair, important though it was to the forty or fifty men out on the island. Two small fishing cutters from Port Lincoln attempted to maintain a weekly service - weather permitting - with mail and fresh food, but conditions had to be favourable before the skippers would leave harbour, particularly if two or three men were to be deck passengers. The TEMPEST and the FLORENCE provided the link, while the venerable old ketch JOHN ROBB brought the heavy supplies of fuel, firewood and any heavy equipment from Port Adelaide.

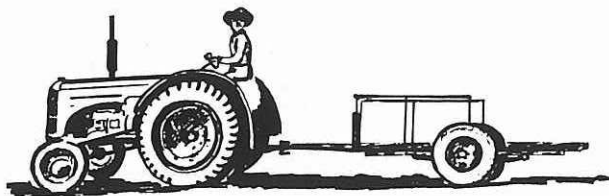
A rough passage out was always to be expected, and lucky indeed was the airman who could claim no feelings of queasiness. Indeed, it has been said that one man refused leave rather than make the return trip after a particularly rough time on the way out. Whenever a boat was expected a careful watch was kept by radar and a lookout, and when the cry came - "Here comes the boat!" - all available men were off to meet it.

The Ketch JOHN ROBB, a regular
visitor during the war years.



Ray Welfare's FLORENCE
most of the island airmen travelled on her to Wedge.





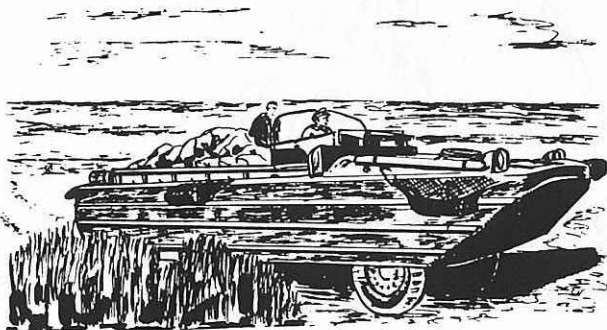
Island Transport.

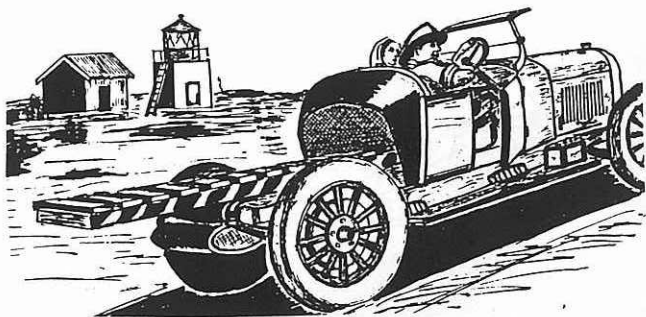
Transport on the island has changed and progressed tremendously over the years, with a wide variety of marine, land and air types serving Wedge with varying efficiency in the different periods.

From the early small schooners and cutters to coastal steamers - and now the odd luxury yacht. From horse and cart to horse teams pulling an English farm waggon. Tractors and motors and small aircraft, Wedge has comfortably accepted them all, even the rather queer amphibious trucks which sometimes came ashore with the lighthouse equipment.

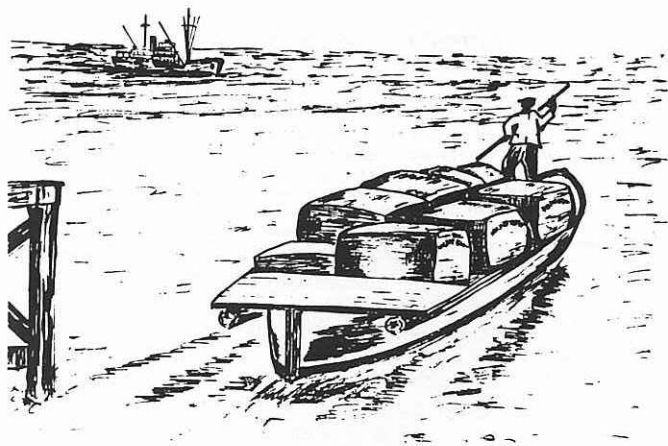
Probably the modern and very sturdy Landrover type of vehicle has best suited the indifferent tracks and rough terrain of the island, even more so than the almost standard tractor and trailer combination of the Air Force Radar days with its almost limitless carrying capacity.

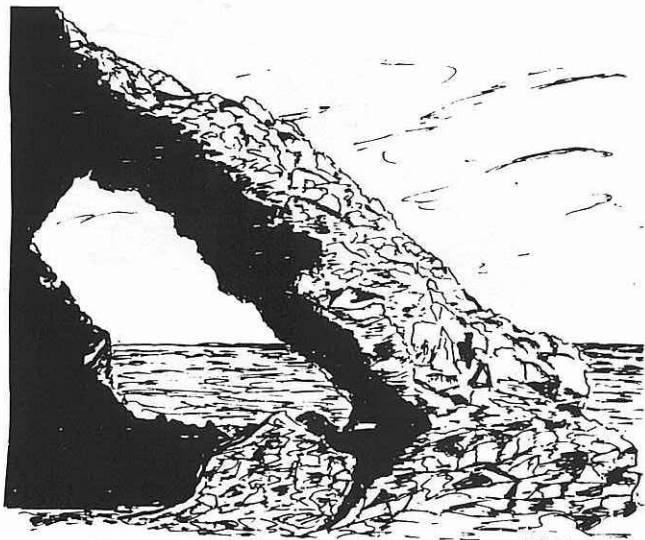
Now that Wedge has entered the air age with its own small airstrip, travelling time to the island has been reduced to less than an air from Adelaide. But the romance of the old steamers, the ketches and even of the old Dodge ute stripped for action will long live on in the folklore and history of the island.





Horses and wagon - fishing cutter to coastal steamer - old Dodge 4
to light aircraft - Wedge Island has seen all types of transport.
Probably the Landrover type of vehicle has best suited the island terrain.





Ramparts of the Island.

*Cliff and Ledge - the Walls of Wedge,
Eternal Seas Surround Them.*

The walls of Wedge extend around the high part of the island as a continuation of the gigantic cliffs which seem to stretch from the Bight to Cape Jervis and beyond. The same cliffs protect the southern coastline of Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, showing how all these features were at one time joined in one length of coastline. Centuries of gale-force winds - centuries of sea erosion have carved and chiselled them into bays and damp, concave caverns with ledges and shelves offering refuge to seals and penguins.

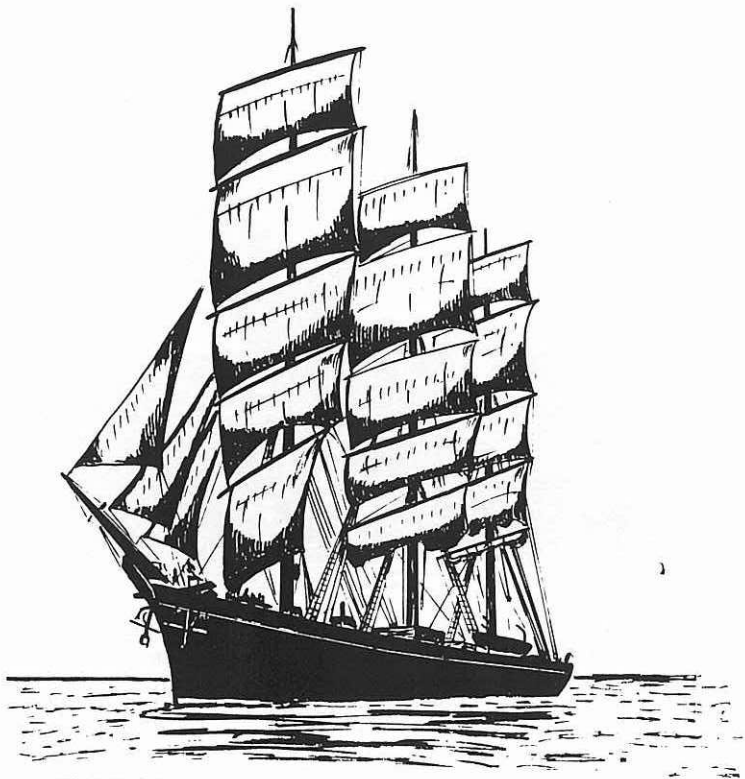
The mighty cliffs of Wedge and Thistle Islands stand guard across the mouth of Spencer Gulf - towering up to 800 feet above the sea - and when storms and gales strike from the south, the island ramparts tremble and shake to the thunder of the surf, and a cloudy mist of spray and foam climbs to envelope and saturate the walls.

Sea birds patrol the length of the cliffs, occasionally wheeling down to sea level, then wheeling up to safety, their urgent cries lost in the thunder of the swelling surf crashing against the island bastions. Now and then a seal appears in the foam, its head appearing immovable against the power of the waves for a few short seconds before disappearing again in the deep waters seeking the rich bounty of the seas.



The protective ramparts and off-shore islets of Wedge have been shaking off the onslaught of the Southern Ocean since time began.

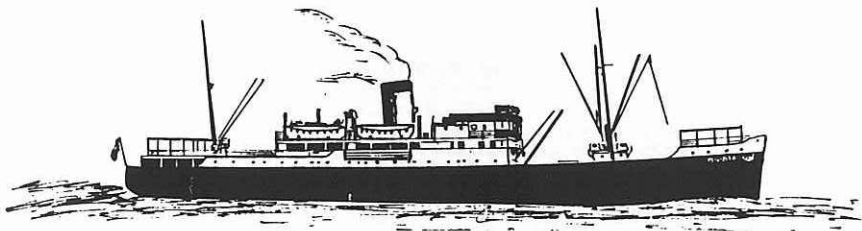




The tall ships carrying grain moved slowly down the gulf to pass the island as they began their long voyages across the world.

'Ships That Pass....'

The maritime history of the world has been well represented by the ships which have sailed past Wedge. The early sealers and whalers - then the English and French explorers - all carefully felt their way around the coastline of Spencer Gulf until the 1830's when the colony of South Australia was founded. Then came the emigrant ships - to be followed by the early steamers and the tall sailing ships until the zenith of the shipping age was reached with the giant liners of the '30's, '40's and '50's when the post war travel liners and migrant shipping again called at Adelaide.



M.V. MOONTA passed by Wedge on the first and last night of each trip.

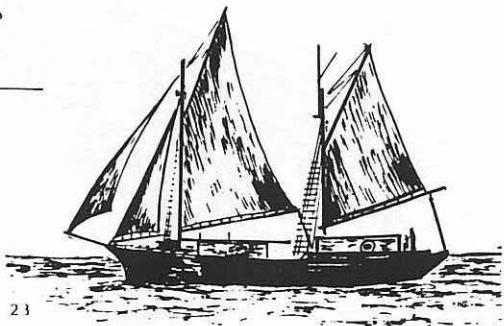
"Ships That Pass"

During all this time, coastal shipping was plying between Adelaide and the small ports of the West Coast. These had been joined by the larger passenger and freight steamers - MOONTA, MINNIPA, YANDRA and others ; while the corvettes and bulk carriers, products of the Whyalla shipyards, moved down the gulf to pass the island as they left their home waters.

The large grain carriers, sailing ships still until well after the war, continued to pass Wedge, much to the astonishment of the Air Force men on watch who were unable to explain the peak echoes on the radar until they sighted a splendid sailing vessel close by the island next morning.

But gradually the shipping has decreased. Now far fewer ships call at Port Adelaide. But nevertheless modern yachts and large fishing vessels from Port Lincoln still watch their course carefully, for many small craft have ended their days in these dangerous waters.

The ketches from Port Adelaide would pass by the island on their long and slow journeys to the West Coast ports.



Relics of Island History.

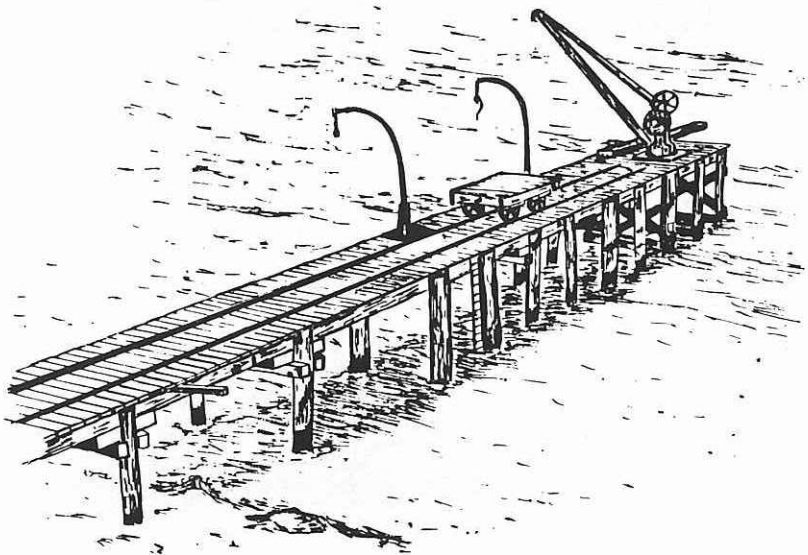
To the casual visitor, the many relics scattered over the island may appear no more than rusting metal or decaying timber; but although Wedge now appears naturally clean and tidy, here and there still appears some strange item recalling the island's history, which with some little imagination, can conjure up thoughts of times long past.

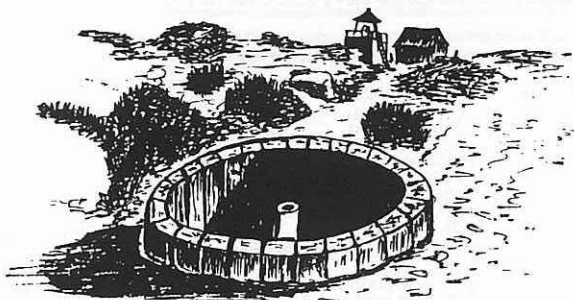
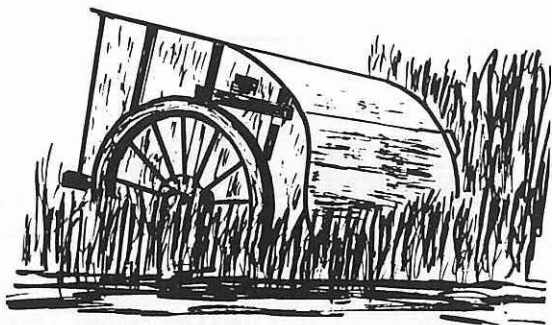
That old boiling down kettle - could it possibly hark back to the sealing days of the early eighteen hundreds? And those strange old bits of machinery - they can only have served some useful purpose when horses were working on the island - or sheep were being farmed - or wheat and hay were harvested.

The useful and practical jetty is a relic of the Air Force days - so too is the not so useful gun pit up near the lighthouse - and those almost eerie concrete steps among the bushy undergrowth which now lead up to nothing.

There are strange structures, their purpose long forgotten - old tank walls of stone - timber uprights. a romantic soul could weave stories round them all, and no one could dispute them, either, for one can now only guess at their use in the decades past.

But the old barn and shearing shed is clearly inscribed with the year '1894,' - and the cottage is known to have been built in the 1860's - so perhaps they are the best and most positive of the island's recognizable relics.





*The relics scattered around Wedge are already reminders
of the almost forgotten history of the place.*





1943

1945

HONOUR ROLL

GEORGE GLOVER
 TED HENTY
 JACK MERSDAY
 IAN YOUNG
 KEN ARNOLD
 REG AVERY
 KEVIN BAURER
 JOHN BUTLER
 MAURICE BOTRILL
 KEITH BACKSHALL
 PHIL BENNETT
 VIC BROWN
 ALAN BUTCHER
 LEN BATH
 DOUG COCKS
 ALAN CROSS
 JACK CARNEY
 RAY CLIFF
 MORT COLLINS
 BASIL CLEWER
 PHIL CUNNINGHAM
 LEO GARR
 BOB CLIFFORD
 JOHN COOPER
 LAURIE CLAUSH
 ALEC CHISHOLM
 DON DIMSEY
 MAX DILLON
 MERV ELBOURNE
 DAVE ELDRIDGE
 GORDON ELLIS
 JOHN ELLIS
 JIM FITZPATRICK

CO
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NEVILLE FRANKS
 BILL FREEMAN
 EDDIE FRENCH
 JOHN FRASER
 ROBERT FENTON
 MORRIE FENTON
 DES GILLARD
 JACK GILCREST
 GEORGE GOWER
 REG HALL
 COLIN HAMILTON
 THEO HARVEY
 JOE HALL
 ROD HARRIS
 ROY HEGARTY
 WIN INGRAM
 LEN JACOBS
 PAUL KLOEDEN
 HOWARD KAESHAGEN
 BILL LANGCAKE
 DERRY MANN
 DICK MORTE
 JOHN METCALFE
 REG MERCHANT
 NEIL MAJOR
 RON MIDDLETON
 JOHN MEADE
 RON MITCHELL
 SCOTTY M'BRAIN
 PAUL MORISSETT
 DOUG MILLER
 JOHN MANSFIELD
 GEORGE MILLER

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 WALLY PACKER
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 EDVA RAU
 POP REECE
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 KELVIN SCUDDS
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 MERV WHITE
 JIM WALTERS



The 7 Radar Honour Roll, showing the names of most of the men who passed through the unit. Doug Cocks made the Honour Roll by hand, and it was dedicated in 1994.

The 7 Radar Story.

In the early years of the war, there were some very positive encounters with the enemy, even in South Australia where the freighter HERTFORD was badly damaged by a German mine down around the Neptune Islands area. But the entry of Japan into the conflict in the Pacific caused grave concerns about the increasing activities of the enemy off the Australian coast. The installation of Radar stations to watch over key areas and shipping lanes was hastily sanctioned by War Cabinet; and on 6th. May 1942, the installation of a Radio Location Station on Wedge Island was approved. The estimated cost of the station was £15100 which included the sleeping, messing and ablutions facilities for 43 men.

Provision was also made for the control buildings, administration, engineering services, road improvements and a jetty. The actual control building, or 'Doover,' was a steel frame building, 20 feet square, supplied by the N.S.W. Railways - the two power houses comprised buildings 18' x 10'6" supplied by Garner Constructions, of Melbourne. Other installations included two underground 1000 gallon fuel tanks and two gunpits for machine-gun emplacements.

In October 1942, the land for the RDF Station was secured under the National Security Regulations, and construction began - the camp itself being camouflaged to represent a farmhouse and its outbuildings - whilst the 'Doover' was placed under a concrete shell, and looking convincingly like the natural rock - with the very obvious exception of the aerial which protruded skywards. The 'Doover' was sited close by the automatic gas lighthouse high up on the summit of the island - the top of the 'Wedge.'
The finished cost of the installation was £16500.

No. 7 RDF Station began to assemble at Parafield Aerodrome, near Adelaide, on 1st. March 1943, and P/O A.J.Glover was appointed Commanding Officer. Two days later he inspected the site of his new command from the air, in a plane supplied from the RAAF base at Mallala. The administrative details for the new station were quickly dealt with by Southern Command, and the new C.O. and a guard party left Parafield on 13th. March - the second group left for the island on 29th. March - and the last group with Radar Officer P/O R.W.Gibbons in charge left Parafield on 10th. April after they had first seen the new RDF equipment safely loaded on to the JOHN ROBB ready to leave Port Adelaide. The equipment was the Australian made A.W. The final act of making the unit operational was attended to when the Commanding Officer returned to Parafield to collect his station's security documentation, after which he returned to Wedge Island under escort, arriving at his unit on 23rd. April 1943.

Meanwhile, W/T communications had been established with Adelaide, and on 1st. May 1943, a continuous 24 hour RDF watch commenced from Wedge Island.

A supply system was next established so that stores and equipment for both the RDF station and the Wedge lighthouse arrived monthly by ketch - most frequently the JOHN ROBB - sometimes the lighthouse supply vessel CAPE YORK. The transport of smaller items, of the all important mail and personnel was attended to by small fishing cutters from Port Lincoln, usually Ray

Welfare's FLORENCE and Charlie Petersen's TEMPEST, which called at the island while going about their everyday activities - when the weather permitted. Indeed, the trip from Adelaide to the island could sometimes take days if bad weather prevented the fishermen from leaving Port Lincoln.

On 26th. July 1943 P/O E.B.Henty was appointed Commanding Officer - and he assumed command early in August. Towards the end of the month, the station water pump was repaired, so restoring the water supply for showers after a long break of two months. At this time there were still forty men on the station.

The South Australian Harbours Board had meanwhile provided a gang to improve the island jetty facilities by installing davits, and by blasting out some of the reef just off-shore from the jetty, so making the seaward approach safer for small craft. This work was completed by September, and in the same month exercises with the Navy were carried out to check the security and defence of the station. The unit was now known as 7 Radar station, in accordance with the description adopted for all Australian RDF units. The W/T communications with Adelaide had sometimes proved quite a problem - at times it was intermittent - and sometimes messages were even relayed via 10 Radar at Yankalilla. A new AR7 receiver arrived on the CAPE YORK in September, and Signals Officer S/L Murden also arrived to give the problem his more expert attention.

January 1944 saw a reduction in the number of personnel - there were now 31 men on the island - and the JOHN ROBB arrived on the 26th., bringing a water condenser, for the supply of good water was a continuous problem. And in February, Meteorological Officer F/Lt. Hutchinson arrived by cutter to instruct the men in the method of compiling weather reports; from then three-hourly weather reports were issued to the Air Force stations at Parafield, Mallala, Port Pirie and Mount Gambier.

There was an unfortunate accident in February, too, when AC1 Gowers, a Radar Operator, was badly burned on his arms and face by flame from the water condenser. He was taken from the island as quickly as possible under the care of F/Lt. Bishop and a Medical Orderly. On the same day, 21st. February, P/O J.W.Measday arrived on posting from Richmond, and he took temporary command of the station while the C.O. went on leave..

In March, both power units became unserviceable. An emergency message in code was despatched via the farmer's radio and the VAOC Port Lincoln. Two days later, spare parts for the engines arrived, and the station resumed normal operations and communications.

In April and May, modifications and alterations to the W/T gear were effected, with emergency batteries being installed and a new Bendix transmitter replacing the old, with the object of keeping the station 'on air' in emergencies such as those recently experienced - and on 8th. May, P/O Measday became the Commanding Officer of 7 Radar.

June 1944 saw the arrival of two new engines for the generators, and the JOHN ROBB took away the old unreliable plants. In August, a new power dinghy arrived to be kept safely on the jetty davits - and on 13th. of the month, F/O I.W.Young took over as temporary C.O. of the station. And so finally, with the unit at long last adequately equipped for efficient operation out in its isolated location, a signal was received from Southern Area on August 18th advising that the station should prepare to close down. From 13th. August to 14th. September, F/O Young acted as temporary C.O.

of 7 Radar station which finally disbanded on 15th. September 1944 when the station reverted to a 'Care and Maintenance' basis.

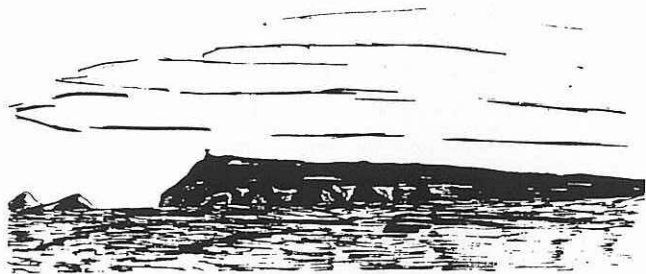
The Radar station property on Wedge Island continued to be held by the RAAF for the remainder of the war, but with the termination of hostilities in August 1945, the property was no longer required. Accordingly, on 24th. November 1945, approval was given for the disposal of the Wedge Island property and buildings, and 7 Radar ceased to be.

The Reunions.

In 1989 - 46 years after the formation of the station, Doug Cocks (ex-corporal Wedge) called a Reunion of 7 Radar, and 14 men of Wedge assembled to enjoy once again the company of their old island friends. And of course the reunion offered an opportunity to compare notes on later war-time experiences - stations and adventures - not to mention families, jobs and the like.

The reunions have since become an annual event, with wives and friends also attending. Numbers have grown, and Friends of Wedge from all States have answered the summons - and thoroughly enjoyed the friendly get-togethers.

In 1993, the little unit celebrated its 50th. Anniversary, and close to fifty folk attended - a sure indication that the 7 Radar Reunion will continue for years to come.





This year marks the 50th. Anniversary of VP Day - August 15th. 1945 - and we can be proud that our Annual 7 Radar Wedge Reunion has been acknowledged as a recognized event on the Calendar of the "Australia Remembers" Year. True it is that our Wedge Reunion, and our modest little 'Memories of Wedge' Chronicle have effectively been an 'Australia Remembers' in miniature, for we have attempted to revive and preserve memories of our days together 50 years ago out on our Spencer Gulf island.

Naturally, we all have memories of the war and places and events far from Wedge, with its comparatively pleasant if lonely life. Firstly, we should think of those who lost someone dear to them - or someone who suffered lasting disability because of war service. Perhaps we know someone who was a POW - someone who gave really outstanding war service - or served in the jungles and islands north of Australia. Then there were the men and women who worked around the clock on the home front, maintaining services, building the ships and vehicles of war, working in the munitions factories, or producing more and more food for the hugely increasing Allied Forces. Some of us were still at school. There was the Schools Patriotic Fund - and the collections of metal, rubber, paper - the knitting groups, the Cadets, Sea Scouts, and the ATC. Everywhere were men and women joining up, or already in uniform. Searchlights over Adelaide - the Blackout - barbed wire on our beaches - slit trenches in the Square - Army tents in the parklands - guns and vehicles in procession to sell War Bonds. War planes at Gawler and Parafield. The Cheer-Up Hut, ARP Precautions and First Aid lectures. Coupons for food, clothing and petrol.

Australia Remembers! But while the generation that does remember grows older and fewer, those who now control the destinies of our nation appear ever younger - far too young to remember. Their actions, their plans and practices today implement policies and strategies which at times can appear even downright dangerous. Where are the qualities of life, the discipline, patriotism, the loyalty which sustained us in our day?

We all know by heart the motto of the RSL - 'The price of peace is eternal vigilance.' Let us hope and pray that 50 years on from VP Day, Australia will meet its threats and problems, internal and external, as they were confronted so directly back in 1945.

MEMORIES OF WEDGE is a small pamphlet - almost like an Australia Remembers in miniature - containing nostalgic stories and memories of the Wedge Island folk who have gathered together annually since 1989 to enjoy each other's company, and to reminisce. The pamphlet has been produced over several years, and copies have been deposited in the Mortlock Library as future history material to tell something of the story of the island, and something of the people who lived there.

