



MALLACOOTA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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"Secrets from the Mallacoota Bunker"

Summary

The Mallacoota & District Historical Society obtained a grant of \$16,600 from the Victorian Government Veteran's Fund to produce a documentary film to record the wartime activities associated with the WWII Bunker. A professional project team included the film production company, *Tiny Empire Collective*, and consultant historian, Dr Sarah Mirams, Adjunct Research Fellow, Monash University.

The film, titled '*Secrets from the Mallacoota Bunker*' was launched at a preview function held on 24 February. It will be screened routinely at the **Mallacoota WWII Bunker Museum** as an introductory audio visual and interpretive presentation for visitors, and will also be permanently accessible on the society's website.

Background

This historic bunker building has undergone restoration and become the society's museum. Both the museum and the film pay tribute to the high security wartime activities of 10BU RAAF – which was based at the bunker and aerodrome at Mallacoota, during WWII. The important work of this RAAF unit is currently largely undocumented and unrecognised. Surveillance and communications operations ensured that vital coastal shipping lanes remained open despite the activities of Japanese submarines off the east coast of Australia. This is often referred to by historians as '*Australia's Secret War*'.

Visitors to the Mallacoota WWII Bunker Museum are mostly unaware of the wartime vulnerability of our region and are surprised to learn of the extent of shipping losses along our eastern coastline. During 1942 and 1943, thirteen Japanese I-class submarines claimed 22 allied ships of which twelve were Australian owned.

Just 25 years earlier, another historically significant maritime event had occurred locally during WWI. In 1917 the British ship '*Cumberland*' was sunk just off Gabo Island. It collided with a sea mine which had been laid undetected in the shipping lanes, by the German raider ship, the '*Wolf*'. This disturbing incident may have been a factor which contributed to the decision to locate a coastal surveillance unit at Mallacoota during WWII.

It is the role of our museum to tell these stories and preserve the history of our region.

The Society is most grateful to the Victorian Government. The Veterans Fund was established under the *Veterans Act 2005* to provide financial assistance to support educational and commemorative activities.



Further information and enquiries to:

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