

World War 2 in Port Melbourne: 1939 – 1945

**Ever wondered what life was like in your suburb during WWII?
From 3rd September 1939 to 14th August 1945 life in Port Melbourne was on a war footing, an awareness of the war events dominated every aspect of daily life.**

Manufacturing

Manufacturing businesses in Port Melbourne were transformed to support the war effort. Fisherman's Bend became a centre of aircraft production led by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation. By September 1941 the Beaufort bomber, produced at the neighbouring Government Aircraft Factory, test flew over Port Melbourne.

The Port

As a major port, wartime experiences of ships and the navy were highly significant. HMAS Lonsdale on Beaconsfield Parade was the naval base used for the initial training for Victorian naval recruits. From 1942 American soldiers were camped on the football oval and became a common site on Port Melbourne streets.

Civilian Life

Home life had to adapt to the reality that most men aged between 18 and 50 were away 'at the war'. Women learned new skills and entered occupations previously only open to men, including in the aircraft industry. Although construction of new houses halted, work on the Housing Commission development on the Bend was completed and the first residents moved in.

Fear of Invasion

In 1941-2, as the Japanese made rapid progress south through Singapore, Java and into New Guinea, the fear of an invasion of the Australian mainland became very real. An air raid siren was mounted on the roof of the police station, air raid shelters both public and private were dug and a blackout was enforced after sunset. These fears increased with the bombing of Darwin and Townsville. In February 1942 observant residents watched as a small Japanese reconnaissance plane flew directly over Montague and Port Melbourne.

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Where

Emerald Hill Library
195 Bank Street, South Melbourne

When

June 12th to October 12th

No ticket required



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This fascinating exhibition showcases unique items from the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society's collection, including but not limited to pieces from a disassembled air raid siren, Christmas cards sent from German Prisoner of War camps, ration cards and more.

Come and see the exhibition to find out more about wartime rationing, manufacturing, activities on the port and the real fear of invasion felt amongst everyday people.

port phillip
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