

MEETING REPORTS

NOVEMBER Mr Tony Kent: BREAKWATER BATTERY

Situated near the new launching ramp at Port Kembla Harbour, the Breakwater battery building was commenced in May, 1939, apparently in expectation of the war which com-

menced in September of that year. Its purpose, of course was to protect one of the most important and most vulnerable of Australia's industrial centres. Mr Kent outlined the design of the battery and the part it played in World War II in conjunction with other fortifications such as those at Hill 60, Fort Drummond and the Tom Thumb anti-aircraft battery. An indigenous population, numbering about 100, was moved from Hill 60 in 1941. Japan's entry into the war in December 1941 heightened the importance of these defences, especially with Japanese submarines operating off the coast. On the NSW coast alone, 25 ships were either sunk or damaged.

The war having ended, the building served for many years as the office of the Maritime Services Board until its present building was erected. After being closed for some time, the Battery was eventually leased from the Port Authority by the Military Heritage Society for use as a museum.. It now contains many relics from World War II, such as paintings, weapons, flags, vehicles, guns and personal effects. Two tanks, a searchlight, anti-tank gun, mountain gun, Japanese anti-aircraft gun, Owen gun and other items are on display.

After Mr Kent had outlined many of the incidents associated with the wartime history of the battery, we were left with the impression that this is one place we should all visit in the near future. How about a half-day excursion during 1999?