

## '17 Mile Rock' Searchlights, World War 2



An Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Battery operated in Seventeen Mile Rocks for approximately two years during World War 2, between 1942 and 1944. In Army records, it was always described as '17 Mile Rock' (without an 's'). At that time, there was an outer ring and an inner ring of Anti-Aircraft searchlights, stationed at strategic places around Brisbane. The '17 Mile Rock' searchlights were part of the

**Women in foreground are in the underground Operations Room, 1943.**

outer ring of searchlights. The searchlights were used to look out for enemy aircraft and also to guide American and Australian planes to Archerfield airport.

Firm evidence, particularly World War 2 documentary evidence about the exact location of the searchlight battery is still being researched. However, most sources indicate that the operation was

in the paddock next to the school then on Goggs Road, and probably on the northern/north-western edge of the Home Base retail precinct.



The '17 Mile Rock' Searchlight unit was set up by men of the 68<sup>th</sup> Battery, then later was operated by women. The '17 Mile Rock' Searchlight set-up included two searchlights and an underground operations room. Women who served there during World War 2 say that the officers stayed in a farmhouse nearby and that the lower ranks lived in tents.

**One of the '17 Mile Rock' searchlights and women operating them, in 1943.**

With Japan's considerably reduced capacity for an air-strike by 1944, and also with the advent of radar, a number of searchlights around Brisbane, including the '17 Mile Rock' ones, were closed down.

*Photographs courtesy of Mrs Bonnie Millard, Townsville, who worked in the Searchlight unit at Seventeen Mile Rocks during 1943.*

**We would welcome hearing from anyone with information about the '17 Mile Rock' searchlights. If you have information, or would like further information, please contact us either by ringing the contact number for the Society during normal business hours or by sending an email to [centenaryhistory2@hotmail.com](mailto:centenaryhistory2@hotmail.com)**

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