



Arthur Lewis (left), Doug Bain and Geoff Burn unveil the new plaque, pictured inset.

Pictures: MATT SULLIVAN

Finally, recognition

OMAR HAMWI

THREE of the remaining RAAF chemical warfare armourers savoured relief at the Remembrance Day service at Panthers Glenbrook on Wednesday.

These "mustard gas men" - Geoff Burn, 85, Doug Bain, 85, and Arthur Lewis, 84 - stood together as they unveiled a plaque dedicated to their unit.

They have waited since the end of World War II for this recognition after handling mustard gas and phosgene for the secret RAAF unit.

"This plaque recognises the contribution of members of the unit - a recognition long overdue," Lindsay Federal Labor MP David Bradbury said at the service.



Blaxland High School's Matthew Cowcher, 17, sounds the Last Post.

rashes, and we acknowledge their health issues and challenges."

The detailed plaque, resting in the cenotaph, depicts armourers sitting on canisters, the Glen-

brook tunnel entrance and a written passage acknowledging their service from 1942 to 1946.

"This should have happened years ago," Mr Burn said.

"But we couldn't get any recognition out of the government."

The Penrith resident said author Geoff Plunkett's work helped "blow the bubble" on the RAAF unit, eventually drawing Mr Bradbury's attention.

On June 24 last year Mr Bradbury etched the mustard gas men's toil in history with a speech he gave in Federal Parliament.

"This plaque will be great for successive generations to know about," Mr Burn said.

The recognition has given relief to members of the unit - some suffering lifelong physical injuries from mustard gas.

"I had lots of burns from the mustard gas and I've had treatment all my life," Mr Bain said.

"You could taste it in the air."

With visible scarring on his hands, Mr Bain said the plaque had made his experiences of the war "a part of history".

Blaxland-Glenbrook RSL Sub-Branch commissioned the plaque after receiving a \$4000 grant from the Veterans Affairs Department.

Several wreaths were laid at the cenotaph by representatives, including Macquarie Federal Labor MP Bob Debus and NSW Labor Senator Steve Hutchins.

Picture galleries of both the Glenbrook and Penrith Remembrance Day services are at penrithpress.com.au