

# Mustard gas tainted our reputation

BACK in the darkest days of World War II the Australian and British Governments colluded in a covert operation that drew Lithgow and the neighbouring Blue Mountains in a conspiracy that defied the rules of warfare.

Following World War I the Geneva Convention specifically banned mustard gas from future conflicts.

But desperate times spawn desperate measures and the niceties of Geneva were ignored as Australia built up a stock of the

horror gas for use should the Japanese land on our sparsely defended shores.

And around this part of the world we were in the thick of the top secret operation with mustard gas canisters stored at the Marrangaroo military depot and its nearby abandoned railway tunnel below Tunnel Hill, in another old tunnel at Clarence now used by the Zig Zag Railway, and in a third tunnel at Glenbrook.

Over the years there have been stories recounted by ex servicemen

who worked on these sites and even tests at Marrangaroo to determine if any residue remained.

They were given the all clear.

Now the Illawarra Mercury has revived the issue after tracking down another survivor of the chemical corps in an Illawarra nursing home.

Courtesy of the Illawarra Mercury the report begins on page four today.

FOOTNOTE: In March this year the Daily Telegraph in its history feature reported

on the sinister wartime mustard gas secrets.

It claimed that in 1946 3000 tonnes of chemicals were burned in the Newnes State Forest but the incineration was incomplete and had to be repeated in subsequent years.

In 1980 a large amount of residue had to be removed to the Marrangaroo depot to be burned and bleached.

Mustard gas experiments were also conducted during World War II in the Forbes district.