

No chemical weapons at WWII burial site

THE secret stash of drums Penrith's Geoff Burn and his peers buried during World War II has been dug up by the army, but they don't contain deadly chemicals, the military has said.

Based at Glenbrook RAAF base during World War II, Mr Burn was one of a group of soldiers charged with monitoring the gas store kept in a nearby disused railway tunnel that runs under the Great Western Highway.

In 1942 he also helped bury

about 30 drums of mustard and phosgene gas at Marrangaroo, a bomb storage depot near Lithgow.

The lethal chemical supplies were stored for use as a potential chemical weapon against Japanese forces, but never used.

However, the existence of the unit was never acknowledged and its work was not documented on military records.

Mr Burn and the chemical warfare unit were finally vindicated when they were acknowledged in

Federal Parliament by Lindsay Federal Labor MP David Bradbury last year.

Then, while working on his recent book *Chemical Warfare in Australia*, author Geoff Plunkett found out the Defence Department wanted to use the Marrangaroo land and had asked Mr Burn to help them find the bombs.

A statement by Defence on Friday states that earlier this month the department began work on "a contaminated site" at

Marrangaroo Army Depot near Lithgow as part of its national contamination remediation program.

"Marrangaroo Army Depot is known to have been used as a reserve for chemical munitions in World War II," the release reads.

An old munitions casing was found but confirmed to be "empty of any chemical agent".

Excavation work for the remediation program at Marrangaroo is scheduled to be completed by the end of May.