

Bunker battleground WWII apprentice doubts hill tunnels' existence

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Mr Nott, was a 16-year-old apprentice electrician with Townsville City Council's electrical authority when US troops arrived in 1942.

US engineers dazzled Alan Nott with their earthmoving and haulage equipment in wartime Townsville.

But Mr Nott, 84, a retired Queensland Electricity Commission electrician, doubts if the Americans built bunkers in Castle Hill or Mount Louisa.

"I don't believe there was anything like bunkers for Flying Fortresses built in Mount Louisa," he said this week.

"Maybe (they dug) bunkers for ammunition and things they thought might blow up in an air raids."

Mr Nott, was a 16-year-old apprentice electrician with Townsville City Council's electrical authority when US troops arrived in 1942.

He lived with his parents in Stagpole St, West End, not far from Green St, where the RAAF built its heavily fortified operations centre between March and June 1942.

This site, on the lower slopes of Castle Hill, was out of bounds.

However, Mr Nott doubts rumours that it was the entrance to a network of tunnels.

"It's possible, but I think the site is too rocky," he said.

As an apprentice, he worked with a city council team assigned to build a power line to the US 4th Air Depot.

He recalls it as a painfully slow job until American engineers intervened with a four-wheel-drive post-digger, a 25-tonne mobile crane and prime mover and trailer capable of carrying 15 poles at a time.

One of the council's Thornycroft trucks was so old that it had originally been equipped with solid rubber tyres.

"The lines went up like mad," he said.

"They wanted power in a hurry, they would have been 10 times as quick as us."

Mr Nott and his dad used shovels to dig a slit trench in their backyard, about six months earlier.

"It was good red gravel and fairly easy digging," he said.

They made use of it on July 25, during the first of three bombing raids by Japanese flying boats.

"The sirens went off, we saw the plane come over, silhouetted by two spotlights," he said.

"We heard the whistle of the bombs coming down -- it sounded like they were coming down near us so we dived into the trench."

The raiders' bombs actually hit tidal flats near the mouth of Ross River, 1km from their target -- oil tanks at the port. Bombing raids on July 28 and 29 were also off target.