

**Author  
Geoff  
Plunkett  
with his  
book  
*Chemical  
Warfare in  
Australia.***

Picture: PETER  
KELLY -PP250035



# War yarns lead to chemical dig

**STEVEN DEARE**

BEROWRA research scientist Geoff Plunkett sparked the discovery of a chemical weapons stash beneath a defence base after his book pinpointed its location.

The Defence Force is excavating the site, at Marrangaroo Army Depot near Lithgow, and evacuated residents to prevent exposure to any chemicals.

While the casings found so far have been harmless, defence said it could find more munitions.

The findings come after Plunkett, a defence force research scientist, published his book *Chemical Warfare in Australia* (*Advocate*, April 10, 2008).

The book contained interviews with veterans who

were part of secret tests of chemical weapons at the base during World War II.

The weapons included phosgene bombs, which Plunkett said was "perhaps the most lethal chemical weapon there is".

"It's like someone's hands around your neck," he said.

Using his research, Plunkett prompted the veterans to recall the location of buried munitions.

"I told the right people, and they've acted on it," he said. "It vindicates the importance of these guys' stories."

Plunkett's findings are the subject of a History Channel documentary.

A TV crew from Los Angeles flew to Sydney to film the story, screening on Foxtel on Monday.