

WORLD WAR II

The Archaeology of WWII Project at the Repat is asking a range of questions about the shelters:

What were the local defensive perceptions that led to their construction? How long were people intended to stay inside them? What range of activities could be accommodated within them? How serious was the threat of an enemy air raid on Adelaide considered to be?



ARCHAEOLOGY

The Archaeology of WWII Project was initiated by the Repat, who contacted the Department of Archaeology for assistance in locating the air raid shelters.

Initial work by students in ARCH3302: Archaeological Field Methods in 2004 located part of a concrete pathway leading to the southern entrance between Wards 1 and 3, but was unable to find anything further (the remainder of the entrance is under private property). Three other trenches were dug nearby, but none discovered evidence of the air raid shelters or their entrances.



Recent geophysical surveys have revealed a subsurface anomaly at the southern end of Carpark 5, a location which, according to oral histories, may also have contained an entrance. Excavation work in September 2007 will investigate whether any evidence of the shelters can be located in this vicinity.

THE SHELTERS

Several people remember the Repat's air raid shelters. John and Barry Critchley, who grew up in Daw Park and played in the grounds as children in the early 1940s, remembered them as having plenty of room inside, with benches for seating along the walls. Steve Basso, a unit nurse, ventured inside one as part of his introduction to the hospital in 1970: "There were no lights, when they opened the door there was no electricity, no anything else ... it was just all black. ... I can remember that the torchlight didn't reach the end of it. It seemed to just go on and on."



Public Air Raid Shelter, Prospect

The Army sold the hospital in 1958, but it is not known whether they removed any equipment or fixtures from the shelters at the time, or backfilled the shelters before they left. Given that at least one entrance was still open in the 1970s, it seems more likely that the shelters were left as they were, with the entrances being gradually sealed over as a result of subsequent work at the hospital.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF WORLD WAR II AT



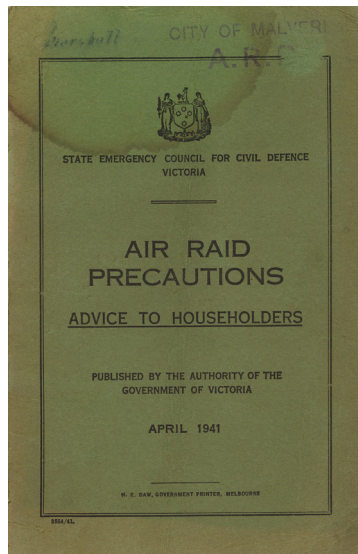
THE REPAT



THE REPAT

The Repatriation General Hospital was opened in 1942 as an Australian Military Hospital and used for Army casualties during World War II. Control of the hospital passed to the Repatriation Commission in 1947, until it was taken over by the State Government in 1995.

The air raid shelters were built as part of general precautions for protecting staff and patients in the event of enemy attack. Not much is known about them, but there are various pieces of hospital folklore that claim they came complete with an underground operating theatre. This was probably not the case, but archaeology will be able to fill in these gaps and tell a unique story about these largely forgotten features.



If you have old photographs, memories or memorabilia relating to the air raid shelters or the Repat in general, or want to share your stories of other air raid shelters and what World War II in Adelaide was like, contact us or visit the site during the dig in September.

THE EXCAVATION IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FROM 10AM-4PM EACH DAY.

The excavation will run from 21st - 28th September, 2007.

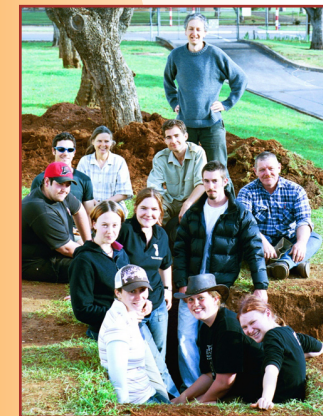


DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

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Archaeology at the Repat



WORLD WAR II IN ADELAIDE & THE REPAT'S AIR RAID SHELTERS