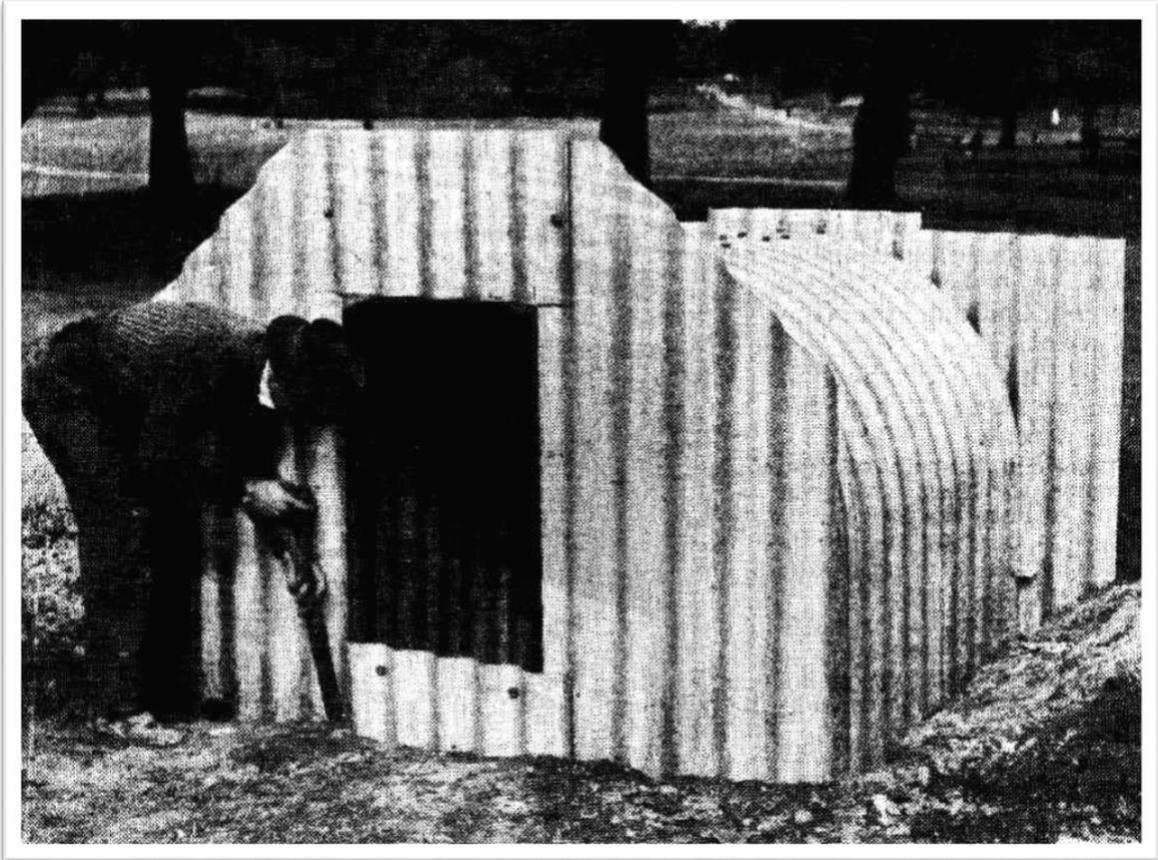




## Impact of World War II on the home front Air raid shelters around Taree

### Air raid shelters around Taree



*Anderson Air Raid Shelter being built in the Domain, Sydney. It is built from the official British pattern, and has been tested to resist the explosion of a 500lb (225kgs) bomb 30 feet (10 metres) away. The smallest model accommodates six people and costs £12.<sup>1</sup>*

By the beginning of 1942, Australians began to fear an imminent attack by Japanese forces. In Taree, and many other towns in the NSW MidCoast, councils started taking precautions against air raids. Some of the local precautionary measures included public demonstrations about how to keep safe during an air raid, trenches built in schools and parks, school windows taped up, and every day citizens encouraged to build their own air raid shelters (with council approval of course!). The official plan for building an air raid shelter was the 'Anderson' shelter.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 'Practical lesson in air-raid safety', 25 July 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer*, 27 February 1942; *Northern Champion*, 21 February 1942, 21 March 1942.

Sir John Anderson was the British Home Secretary during WWII and had engineers design what would be called 'The Anderson Shelter'.<sup>3</sup> The shelter was made of corrugated metal sheets and could fit a family of six. It was dug into the ground and then covered with a layer of dirt. Many families constructed them in their backyards and grew vegetables on top.

Although the Anderson Shelters were the official design, many people built their own shelters using the materials they could access. By March 1942 several Taree residents had prepared air raid shelters for their families. An outstanding one was built by Jim Gore in Albert Street, Taree.<sup>4</sup> It would have stood near where the public toilets are today in the Butterworth Carpark.<sup>5</sup> Cundletown Primary School had two air raid shelters which were built by a parents' working bee.<sup>6</sup> Sadly within a year all of their labour had been for nothing when heavy rains caused erosion of the sides of the shelters and they had to be removed due to safety concerns.<sup>7</sup>

Hotels (if they accommodated over 30 people per day) and Railway Stations were also required to build air raid shelters.<sup>8</sup> In Taree air raid shelters and tunnels were apparently built under the Railway Barracks which housed railway employees. The barracks is now the Taree Railway Lodge Motel. It is unclear if the tunnels and shelters still exist or if they have been filled in.<sup>9</sup>

### **Question:**

1. Do you know where any local air raid shelters are or were?

### **Further links:**

Australian War Memorial: 'The Anderson air raid shelter'

<https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/underattack/mobilise/shelter>

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<sup>3</sup> RGS History, *The Home Secretaries: Sir John Anderson*

<https://rgshistory.wordpress.com/2018/05/11/the-home-secretaries-14-sir-john-anderson/>

<sup>4</sup> *Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer*, 17 March 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Taree Municipal Council Rate Book 1942.

<sup>6</sup> *Northern Champion*, 4 March 1942.

<sup>7</sup> *Manning River Times and Advocate for the Northern Coast Districts of NSW*, 10 March 1943.

<sup>8</sup> *Northern Champion*, 14 January 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Wendy McKeough, *Taree in my lifetime*, (Taree: Taree Family History Inc, 2013), 87.