

## **THE OWEN GUN'S FIRST CASUALTY**

In a sensational little article published in the Illawarra Mercury on Saturday June 17, 1995 (p. 30), veteran Mercury Journalist Ron Tindall, in his regular 'Industry Footnotes' column, revealed that 53 years ago on June 17, 1942, seventeen year old Timothy Ryan "was killed by a stray bullet from an Owen Gun

at Lysaght's own firing range near the Springhill Road Plant, where the gun was developed and eventually manufactured."

"Timothy's job at Lysaghts was spotting targets while Owen Gun testing was taking place at a firing range within the works site.

"The spotter sheltered in a pit near the targets and emerged after every burst of fire to indicate where the bullets had hit.

"Tim went to mark the target during a reloading pause after one burst of fire. However, one round of ammunition remaining in the test gun's magazine was discharged with Tim in the direct line of fire alongside the target."

Timothy Ryan was buried in Shellharbour cemetery with no special community or military honours.

Research on Tim Ryan's death was apparently "triggered", according to Ron Tindall, after Figtree resident Milton East "related how the Owen Gun death was still clear in his memory."

Ron Tindall is to be congratulated for this ground-breaking piece of research. Why the Mercury is consigning such historical gems to page thirty is beyond me. Ron Tindall's been doing good work for a long time. I first encountered his writing in the November 1967 edition of the quality publication Walkabout.