

Memorial to First Act of Public Worship at Clunes

An unique open air service took place at Clunes to commemorate the first act of public worship in that district, held on January 4, 1885. A memorial stone was dedicated by the roadside, a locality almost in the township.

Two hundred and sixty people took part in an impressive ceremony. Among those present were the Moderator of the Richmond Presbytery (Rev. M. O. Fox, B.A.), the Mayor and Mayoress of Lismore (Ald. and Mrs. G. Walker) accompanied by the Town Clerk (Mr. L. Allan) and Mrs. L. Allan; Rev. C. Haxton, of Coraki; Crs. C. Armstrong (Terania), R. E. Walker (Byron), G. Oliver and Hull (Gundurimba); Mr. J. Hull, of Clunes, and Mr. C. Jarvis, of Disputed Plains, who are two members of the original service of 1885. Visitors from distant parts whose memories are linked to the early years were Mrs. Crofton, of Woodburn, Miss Hetherington of Coraki; Mr. C. Moses, of Mooball; Mrs. E. Elliott, of Casino, and others.

Rev. G. Ingate (Methodist) led in prayer and read the Scriptures. Hymn singing was to the accompaniment of cornet playing by Mr. S. Virtue, of Bexhill. Rev. N. Monsen (Presbyterian) expressed a welcome to all present. In a brief historical resume leading to the present service, he stated that people had need to remind themselves of the past. For instance, many people present could visualise the conditions preva-

could visualise the conditions prevalent in 1885. The bitumen road was but a track through to Bangalow, winding its way through densely wooded hills and valleys. Out along this track, on the first Sunday in January, 1885, came the Minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, of Lismore, Rev. William Fraser, M.A. It was around this spot that Mr. Fraser gathered the pioneering families for the first act of public worship in the then recently selected areas.

Since that day, homes and churches had been built; ministers and farmers had served God together.

"The memorial stone," he said, "stands witness to our appreciation of the work and faith of the pioneering families of Clunes. It has been made possible by the initiative of the Kirk Session and Committee of Management of St. John's Presbyterian Church."

The Mayor of Lismore (Ald. Walker) gave the ground upon which the memorial stands. All churches of Clunes had collaborated to make the ceremony a success. Mr. Monsen said that to his knowledge the memorial stone was the first of its kind erected anywhere in the Richmond and it would be honoured in the future.

anywhere in the Richmond and it would be honoured in the years to come as a historic mark.

The Mayor recounted some of his personal experiences of pioneering times and indicated that this part

of the village, where the Jarvis family lived, was a coaching stop. Mail in those days was much appreciated once a week. The commemoration was truly an expression of appreciation for a wonderful heritage handed down the years by God-fearing and hard-working pioneers, he stated. Ald. Walker congratulated the sponsors on their foresight in having erected a memorial to mark a historic occasion in the life of the district.

At the conclusion of his address Mr. Walker handed to Mr. Monson a document transferring the piece of ground to the Kirk Session of St. John's Presbyterian Church.

Mr. James Hull was invited to unveil the Memorial. In performing this act he stated how much he appreciated the honour and recounted an amusing experience with the late Rev. William Fraser.

The Moderator (Rev. Fox) gave the Act of Dedication. He emphasised that God is Spirit, and worship must be in spirit and truth; that true worship was not necessarily confined to cathedral nor church nor hall.

Here in the eternal hills we are reminded of the essentials in the worship of God. To worship is man's highest glory, for in it culminates meditation, prayer, love, faith and fellowship. Wherever a heart yearns for God there is the House of God. This stone is dedicated to the glory of God with grateful thanks for the witness of our fathers who worshipped in this place," said Mr. Fox.

The memorial stone is of concrete, the work of Mr. E. Smith, of Clunes. Mr. J. Hull donated the marble inscription which reads: "To commemorate the first act of public worship in Clunes...4th January, 1885...Rev. William Fraser, M.A....

1885...Rev. William Fraser, M.A.... Presbyterian Minister....This place is hallowed. Erected 25th June, 1947."

A basket picnic lunch was served in the church grounds, where many memories were recalled of the "good old days".