

# CEREMONY AT WAHGUNYAH

## UNVEILING OF HISTORICAL MASS TREE

Despite the bitterly cold wind which blew on Sunday last, there was a large crowd of Wahgunyah and Corowa residents gathered under the spreading branches of Wahgunyah's historical Mass Tree in the afternoon for the occasion of the unveiling of a bronze tablet commemorating the sowing of the first Mass in Wahgunyah over 80 years ago.

The unveiling ceremony was performed by Miss Pauline Nagle, daughter of Mrs. and the late Mr. P. J. Nagle, of Corowa, and a great granddaughter of the first lady who served for Mass—Mrs. M. M. Burrows. The tablet bears an inscription, under a cross, as follows:—

"Mrs. M. M. Burrows prepared the altar in a tent for the first Mass at Wahgunyah about 1868, celebrated by Rev. Dean Tierney of Beechworth. That Cross is such a simple thing.

But of it men will talk and sing; It is a signboard on the road.

To cheer man with his weary load,  
..... such a simple thing,  
And yet, it touches everything."

Prior to the unveiling, Rev. Father Lawless, of Rutherglen, who addressed the gathering over Glasgow's microphone, said that over 80 years ago Wahgunyah was an important Border town with steamers taking goods along the Murray, and Very Rev. Dean Tierney, of Beechworth, had charge of his scattered flock which included Wahgunyah. In those days Rutherglen hardly existed, and Corowa was insignificant. At Wahgunyah there was no church or hall, and Dean Tierney used to take advantage of Mrs. Burrows' tent in which to celebrate Mass. The tent was, as far as could be ascertained, pitched near the tree under which they sat that day.

The president of the Wahgunyah branch of the Catholic Women's Social Guild felt that something should be done to hand on the tradition of the 'Mass Tree' to future generations, and had been mainly responsible for the ceremony that day, and the preparation of the brass commemorative tablet.

Mrs. E. Brown then informed the gathering of the steps she had taken in preparing for the day's celebration. She said that amongst those who attended the first Mass, including aboriginals and whites, was the late Tommy Anthony. She had received a letter from the Historical Society congratulating the Wahgunyah people on the steps they had taken to preserve the tradition linked with the tree. Mrs. Brown also thanked all those who had been connected with the preparations for the day, including Miss Marge Regan, of Corowa, who had prepared the altar for the Mass celebrated at Wahgunyah that morning by Rev. Father Auburn, of Wodonga. She also expressed the thanks of the Guild to the Border United Football Club; those who assisted with the concert which raised £32; Mr. W. Wilson who erected the seat around the tree, and all those who attended that day.

Mrs. Moore, who apologised for the

absence of Mrs. Cave, of Numarkah, the Diocesan president of the Social Guild, also offered her congratulations to the Wahgunyah branch, and wished the members every success.

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Mr. J. McCarthy then read a poem, which had been composed by Mrs. C. Riches, of Mulwala, formerly of Wahgunyah.

Rev. Father Auburn, of Wodonga, addressed the gathering also, and congratulated the Wahgunyah ladies on their achievement in marking the tree, and hoped that God's blessing would rest on them.

The unveiling ceremony was then performed by Miss P. Nagle, after which Mr. Jack Burrows briefly addressed those present.

At the conclusion of the ceremony those present partook of a very enjoyable picnic afternoon tea, provided by the ladies of the Guild.



Mrs. Len Fallow, Senior Hospital Visitor at 112th A.G.H., supervises moving in of the new Red Cross Hostel at Cannondale.