

MERRIWAGGA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

NEW MEMORIAL BUILDING OPENED.

From the last issue of the "N.S.W. Presbyterian" we take the following report of the opening of the Soldiers' Memorial Church, at Merriwagga:—
"It is not many Charges which can boast the opening of two churches on two successive days, but this proud experience has been the lot of Hillston-Gunbar."

The first of these churches is the Soldiers' Memorial Church, Merriwagga. Merriwagga is 25 miles on the Griffith side of Hillston, and is a very young town. It began its existence about six years ago, and to-day it can boast two churches, a Roman Catholic Church, finished over a year ago, and built of wood, and a Presbyterian Church of brick, and just completed.

This is the first brick building in Merriwagga, and it is a thing of beauty. The architect is Mr. G. W. A. Welch, of Leeton, and the contractor, Mr. W. J. Bacon, of Hillston. Both these gentlemen have reason to be proud of the building they have produced.

At the opening ceremony, which took place on Wednesday, June 19th, the Presbytery of the Murrumbidgee was represented by the Moderator, Rev. D. J. Albert, who took charge of the proceedings.

Outside the church a large crowd had gathered, and the Returned Soldiers' League was well represented. The Returned Soldiers lined up either side of the Moderator, when he, at 2.30 p.m., stepped on to the platform and announced Psalm 100. A prayer followed. Then Mr. Alex. Robertson, secretary of the committee, read a statement in which he outlined the progress of the movement from the early desire of Mrs. Moore, of Moore Park, to have a church built at Newlyn, to the memory of her son and other soldiers of the district who had fallen in the war, to the later attempts to build a church at Merriwagga (where the settlement centred when the railway came) which was sponsored and pushed forward by another

the railway came) which was sponsored and pushed forward by another lady, Mrs. B. Varcoe, of Hopefield.

The Moderator of Presbytery spoke of the spirit of Anzac and drew attention to the fact that the church was a memorial to the soldiers who had given their lives for the Empire. Dr. Tarleton responded for the returned men.

Parents of soldiers who had fallen in the Great War were then invited by the Moderator to accompany him to the door of the church. Three responded, and one of them turned the key and declared the church open. This was Mrs. Moore, of Moore Park, and in memory of the occasion she was given a gold key. These three parents, with the Moderator, were the first to enter the church, followed immediately by the returned soldiers and then by the general public. The church was crowded. Public worship was then conducted by the Moderator of Presbytery, who dedicated the church and set it apart for the worship of God. Articles of church furniture given in memory of fallen soldiers and otherwise, were dedicated by the minister of the Charge (Rev. A. J. Elpper). They were as follows:—

In memory of Robert Thompson Moore, a communion table given by his mother, and a fine Estey organ given by his brothers.

In memory of Joseph Varcoe (the reading desk had been given previously), his brother and sister-in-law, Mr and Mrs. B. Varcoe gave a pulpit Bible; Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Varcoe gave a communion service and cloth; a sister, Mrs. Alexander MacArthur, of Lindfield, gave the Moderator's chair; and another sister, Miss Amy Varcoe, gave an elder's chair.

In memory of Melville Allan McKenzie, his aunt, Mrs. W. Cashmere, of Hillston, gave the organist's bench, and another aunt, Mrs. R. McKenzie, gave an elder's chair.

Mrs. Woodman gave the pulpit cushion and the curtained vestry, and the children of the Sunday school gave a silver baptismal bowl.

The treasurer, Mr. S. J. Woodman, of the A.B.C. Bank, then read a statement re the financial position and a collection was taken which amounted to £26/17/10, a very good response in a drought year.

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A sermon appropriate to the occasion was preached by Mr. Albert.

The second of the churches is at Nevin Park, not far from Rankin's Springs. It is also a thing of beauty, but beauty of another kind. It is not the beauty of architectural perfection. The style of architecture is severe to the point of plainness. The windows are of the box frame variety to be found in many a dwelling house, the gables are of the plainest, there is a diminutive porch in front. But the building from first to last is the work of the congregation. It is a labour of love and that is what constitutes its beauty. The work, however, has been well done; not perhaps in quite the best tradesmanlike style, but it is certainly a high-class amateur production.

The Church and Manse Loan Fund Committee came to the assistance of these people with the loan of £200, on the understanding that their part was to be contributed by the way of voluntary labour. I doubt if the funds of that committee have ever been more carefully husbanded than in this instance. The church is well and solidly built. A pulpit has been constructed, which is a credit to those who designed it, and the furniture, so far as it goes, has been well chosen and carefully bought.

The Moderator of Presbytery was again in attendance, and this time performed the opening ceremony himself. This he did in a neat, earnest and impressive speech.

Though Nevin Park is one of the centres of the Hillston-Gunbar Charge and has been for some years, none of the members of the session had ever met the congregation, but this time, at the request of the minister, three elders were present. Mr. Robert McKenzie, our senior elder, had travelled about 40 miles, Mr. Benjamin Varcoe, who brought the Moderator in his car, had come about 50 miles, and the session clerk, Mr. E. A. Eldridge, had travelled 67 miles to be present. Mr. W. J. Grimison, a member of the Hay session, but resident in the district, was also present.

The congregation which had gathered filled the church to overflowing, and listened with rapt attention to an impressive service and to an address which gave food for thought

and was an inspiration to further service.

The service over, the ladies of the congregation busied themselves pre-

paring the tables for the tea meeting. This proved to be a pleasant meal, after which the seats were rearranged and a lecture was delivered by the Moderator of Presbytery on "Charles Dickens and his Work." Mr. Albert is a gifted man and the lecture was greatly enjoyed.

The whole proceedings were carried out with such goodwill and enthusiasm, the preaching and lecturing was of such a high order, the spirit of kindly Christian optimism was so manifest that the occasion will be pleasurable remembered by the participants for a long while and we think it will be fruitful of much good.

Occasion was taken by the minister to recognise the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Nevinson, who had given the use of their home for the worship of the congregation for five years.