

Cooma Presbyterian Church

MEMORIAL GATE DEDICATED

A handsome iron memorial gate has been added to the entrance to the Presbyterian Church at Cooma, which harmonised with the general scheme of the architecture of the edifice. The gate, which is of the double pattern, is supported by two pillars, on which are tablets containing the names of those connected with the church who fell in the war; as follows:—J. D. Adams, C. Bailey, C. Blyton, C. Campbell, J. Clarke, G. Clarke, G. M. Fisk, E. Flanagan, W. Kelly, R. J. Kelly, R. H. Lewis, V. M. Maclure, J. W. McGregor, O. S. McGregor, S. M. Lennan, G. Nugent, I. C. Oliver, A. Palin, A. Roddan, R. Sloan, E. Sloan and T. Whittaker.

The gate forms part of the renovations of the property, which comprise a new fence corresponding with that which surrounds the Manse. By the effort made at the recent Fair, which realised nearly £150, this sum was placed towards a fund for the construction of the fence. The gate is portion of that scheme, and it was considered appropriate that it should form a memorial of the men who had fallen in the war. Their names were gathered from the district honour rolls.

It was decided that the gate should be opened and dedicated by a prominent member of the faith, and accordingly the very Rev. John Walker, General Commissioner of the Federal Assembly, ex-padre, and formerly Moderator of the State Assembly, was requested to perform the office. The Rev. Walker is a guest of Mr J. C. Byrne of Maffra Station, with whom he has spent his annual holiday for the past 40 years.

The Rev. J. N. McGee, Presbyterian Minister of Cooma, addressed a gathering with reference to the gate and tablets, and as to the requirements in the shape of renovations. He extended a welcome to the returned soldiers who were present, including their president, Mr. R. A. McKillop. The Rev. McGee introduced the Rev. Walker, and asked that he unveil the memorial, which was covered by the Union Jack, and dedicate the memorial gate. He related some of the earlier steps taken with regard to the services rendered by those whose names appear on the tablets.

The Rev. Walker then offered the prayer of Dedication. This was followed by the Last Post, which was sounded on the bugle by Mr. R. Bowman.

The gathering then entered the church where a memorial service was held, the returned soldiers occupying the seats of honour. The Rev. Cannon Hirst occupied a seat on the platform.

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The Rev. Walker in an address related his experiences as padre at the war. His discourse was largely of a reminiscent character dealing with scenes he had witnessed.

It may be mentioned that the Rev. gentleman had five sons at the war, three of whom did not return. Mrs. and Miss Walker were in France during the war and took an active part in war work.

The Rev. Walker gave a stirring address embracing his experiences at Gallipoli, and various parts of France and Brussels, as a non-combatant. He said that war was such a dreadful thing that everybody was called upon to do his utmost in the direction of averting it, and throwing in their sympathy to help along the lines the League of Nations was following, viz., the outlawry of war. He gave personal incidents of the wonderful heroism and valour on the part of individual soldiers. Although he met all sorts and conditions of men, yet, when it came to doing their duty every man was equal to the occasion. Not only the men, said he, but the women rendered wonderful service as war workers all over the Empire.

The address was of the most stirring and inspiring nature, the Rev. gentleman emphasising the fact that there existed to-day the need for the same spirit of unity, and unanimity, which prevailed during the conflict, in order to combat class division. He advocated strongly the spirit of unity and brotherhood.

Refreshments were provided for those who had come long distances, these being church representatives from Maffra, Jindabyne, Adaminaby, and other surrounding centres. Owing to indisposition Mr. John Jardine, of Curry Flat, who is secretary and treasurer of the church, was unable to be present.

A collection in aid of the gate and renovation fund realised about £50.