

## Honouring Soldiers

AT UPPER LANSDOWNE

(Contributed)

A record public gathering at Upper Lansdowne took place on Thursday, 26th December (Boxing night) when approximately six hundred people attended in honor of a group of eight young men of the district who had enlisted in the fighting forces. The men were approaching the final stage of their training. The function was organised by the local branch of the Patriotic and War Fund under the presidency of Mr. C. C. Drury, who acted as chairman.

The proceedings opened with community singing and a concert programme arranged by Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Drury. The items, which were well received, included:—Piano solo, Miss Beth Minnett; violins and piano selection, three Drury boys; duet, Mrs. Dave Minnett and Miss Jean Bartlett; piano solo, Miss Melvie Bennett; piano and violin selection, Miss Melvie Bennett and Miss Jean Bartlett; solo, Mrs. C. C. Drury.

Accompanied by applause, the following soldiers marched to the stage: Cpl. Ray Drury, R.A.A.F.; Aircraftsman (A.C.I.) Bob McLaughlin, Pte. Jim Unger, Private Gilbert Atkins, Private Bruce McLaughlin, Private Les Minnett, Private Harold Christensen, Private Will Riley.

A number of the parents and close relatives of the young men, as well as several prominent citizens, also occupied the stage.

After extending a few appropriate words of welcome to the guests and of appreciation of the large gathering, the chairman invited the Rev. W. S. Benzley to speak. After expressing considerable surprise at the size of the audience and paying a tribute to the spirit of the young men who had so elected to face the hazards of war, that gentleman recalled his association with members of the old A.I.F., who were ever welcome guests at his old English home. He assured the present generation that a similar reception awaited the Australian uniform again, as always. The speaker concluded his address on the higher theme of a confident faith in Divine guidance and protection for all who fought and struggled in a righteous cause. He trusted that such a faith

was fought and struggled in a righteous cause. He trusted that such a faith would serve to allay the anxieties of those who watch and wait at home.

Messrs. Geo. Minnett and Hilton Bartlett also spoke words of appreciation of the young men who, they knew, would do their job in a worthy manner wherever they should go. A fitting welcome home awaited them in due course.

On behalf of the returned soldiers, Mr. Leo. Clune wished the boys good luck and expressed confidence in their ability to repeat the performances of the old Diggers.

The presentation to each man of a parcel from the Comforts Fund was then made by Mrs. Col. Bennett, who neatly expressed the sentiments of the donors and wished each one a safe return.

Each soldier made a brief acknowledgment of his thanks.

Mr. Geo. Minnett was next entrusted with the pleasant duty of presenting a valuable wristlet watch to each one and his genial mood imparted just the right tone to the happy ceremony.

Mr. Ken. McFadyen, on behalf of the G.U. Oddfellows, next presented appropriate gifts to soldiers Christensen and Riley, accompanied by suitable expressions of goodwill and hope for a happy ending to it all.

Each soldier, in turn, made a brief

response and thanked the people for their kindness and good wishes.

At the invitation of the chairman, several of the parents also spoke briefly in response. Mr. Jas. McLaughlin said that this gathering of unprecedented numbers of their friends and well-wishers was a compliment to the guests more impressive even than all the kind words spoken. Each soldier was a volunteer in every sense of the word and eager for an opportunity to demonstrate his worth to follow in the footsteps of the old A.I.F. Mr. Sam Unger also acknowledged the tributes paid to his son and mates, remarking that his own inclinations to take a hand in the good work surrendered only to the pressure of youth.

Mrs. Edgar Minnett expressed gratitude on behalf of her own son and wished all a safe return in due time.

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The strains of Auld Lang Syne brought the ceremonial part of the function to a close.

The company next gave their attention to the tables where skill and liberality, characteristic of the district, again combined with most agreeable effect. Those responsible for the achievement received much appreciative comment.

The rest of the evening—and some of the ensuing morning—was devoted to dancing. Excellent music was supplied by Miss Jean Payne, Mrs. Wes. Minnett, Mr. Joe Cicolilli and others.

This was the second function of the kind at Upper Lansdowne, the first being held some months ago, when Pte. Arnold McLaughlin, now somewhere in the war zone, was similarly honored.