

Unveiling of Memorial

TO LATE SERGEANT-OBSERVER
STANLEY A. UNGER

(Contributed)

One of the most impressive ceremonies ever held at Upper Lansdowne took place in the Memorial Hall on a recent Saturday afternoon for the purpose of doing honor to, and unveiling, a large portrait of the late Sergeant-Observer Stanley A. Unger, son of Mr and Mrs Sam Unger. There was a large attendance, which spoke eloquently of the high esteem in which the sympathy and respect for his sorrow-late airman was held; also the intense grief of his parents and relatives.

The late airman, who followed the vocation of a school teacher, very early following Australia's entry into the war, answered the call of King and country by offering his services as an airman. He subsequently served in England and later in the Middle East, where his tragic and untimely death occurred.

The memorial ceremony opened with the singing of the National Anthem, after which the chairman, Mr. C. C. Drury, outlined the objects of the gathering and extended a welcome to all present, especially to the Rev. Father Whibberley. He paid a glowing tribute to the sterling character of the one whom all had come to honor.

Father Whibberley, on being invited to speak, said:

"Greater love no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—John XV. 13.

"What nobler or more fitting epitaph could be written for our soldiers, sailors and airmen who gave their lives in the past war than those words spoken by Christ, our Lord. It is the epitaph which we write in remembrance of him to whose memory and supreme sacrifice we are gathered in honour this day, namely, Sgt.-Observer Stanley Andrew Unger, RAAF, who met his death in a plane crash in the Middle East on June 2nd, 1942, when returning from a reconnaissance flight. Mindful of his sacrifice and of so many like him, how grateful we should be to them for the great joy of peace once more—a peace which marks the end of six long years of daily and unremitting toil, tears, and bloodshed. Moreover, what a debt of gratitude we owe to God, you and I, who have followed with excusable anxiety the grim, terrible history of this war, only too well realise. Since September, 1939, there were times, many times indeed, when the fate of this country, bound up as it was with the fearful, relentless struggle of the war in Europe—hung in the balance. when, too, we faced an overwhelming and crushing

defeat. In all those dark days of the war we recall to-day the many days of national prayer and supplication to Almighty God to spare us and deliver us from the hands of our mighty enemies. Always those prayers were answered; always the tide of war swung miraculously in our favour; always the Hand, the merciful Hand of God intervened to save us in circumstances

when, in the words of so many of our military generals—'all seemed lost.' Can it be said of us that we shall ever forget? God having granted us the victory for which we have so earnestly and devoutly prayed, will men and women again put God out of their lives and live as if they have no need of Him? Yesterday's danger has passed, but there remain the dangers that may arise to-morrow, both nationally and individually, for this world of men and women—for you and for me. This war has brought out some of the finest qualities in human nature—as it has the worst. Among the virtuous qualities are numbered the bravery, heroism and fortitude of so many Australian soldiers, sailors and gallant airmen. During the past six years of war Australian soldiers have served in twenty-nine territories so far as I can briefly recall—The United Kingdom, North Africa, Greece, Crete, Cyprus, Syria, Palestine, Eritria, Transjordan, Malaya, Ceylon, Burma, China, Java, Timor, Amboyna, Papua, New Guinea, Dutch New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Nauru, Oceanic Islands, and Borneo. In addition, the Australian Army has garrisoned the Australian mainland against the might and powerful threat to this country from her overwhelming enemy in invasion. On this occasion well may we justly recall with honour the Australian heroes of so many campaigns, of so many engagements in the air and on the sea, and in those grim struggles in the steaming jungle warfare of the Pacific isles; of that epic stand made by a few score Australian troops who alone withstood the might of the Japanese on that now famous Kokoda Trail and the Owen Stanleys; of those countless heroes who stormed those gun-raked beaches of Buna, Gona, and Sanananda; of our airmen who served in every theatre of war, and of their great contribution to England in the Battle for Britain when in the words of Mr. Churchill, 'Never was the fate of so many dependent upon the efforts of so few'; of the valour and gallantry of the Australian Navy which sailed the seven seas; and, despite its small force, was so eminently distinguished by the bravery and victories of its men and ships in the Pacific, Mediterranean, and the decisive Battle of

terranean, and the decisive Battle of the Coral Sea, Tobruk, Bardia, El Alamein, Greece, Crete, Timor, Malaya, Lae, Finschhafen, Salamaua, Milne Bay. What memories all these names revive of the bravery and heroism of Australian troops and their devotion to duty, their love and devotion to Australia, and to each one of us. These are among the names which have spelt victory at long last for us—of struggles and arms blessed by God. So this long line of deathless heroes of Australia passes before our eyes as we look back upon the anxious years of World War II. They gave their all that you and I might live to see the Victory of this day. They bid us have courage to face the great tasks of the future in the rebuilding of a greater and better Australia where we trust God will be recognised and social justice will reign. They died for freedom—for you and for me."

Father Whibberley concluded with words of condolence with the deceased airman's parents, Mr and Mrs. Sam Unger, his brothers and sisters, and many friends present.

An appropriate message, sent along by Mr. Stan. Cowan, of Hornsby, and late of Upper Lansdowne, was read by Mr. A. Rae. The message was well received and highly appreciated by the Unger family. Other speakers who paid tribute to the late airman and extended sympathy to the bereaved family and relatives were: Messrs. H. A. Atkins, A. E. Minett, H. R. Cicolini, A. G. Drury and C. K. Bennett.

The congregation then sang the Recessional, "Lest we forget," after which the Rev. Father Whibberley proceeded to unveil the portrait of Sgt. Observer S. A. Unger, and in doing so said: "And now it is my honour and privilege to unveil this most appropriate and tender memorial to Sergt.-Observer Stanley Andrew Unger, RAAF. May it ever be a reminder to all who gaze upon it of the great sacrifice he and so many others made in the cause of final victory. May his memory and his sacrifice live forever."

A vote of thanks to Father Whibberley for his fine address, and for his ready response to perform the unveiling, was moved by Mr. C. Bennett. This concluded one of the most sincere and impressive ceremonies ever held in this district.