

IMPRESSIVE MILITARY FUNERAL

Thousands Line Route as Bodies of Young Soldiers Pass

Sympathy Shown to Bereaved Families

Yesterday thousands of people witnessed the sad spectacle of a mass funeral of the 26 young men who so tragically lost their lives at Kapooka R.A.E. School on Monday last. The military funeral left Kapooka shortly after 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and entered Wagga by the Sturt Highway with a large tender leading decked out with beautiful blooms.

The flowers were a symbol of affectionate sympathy towards a young band of Australian soldiers who gave their lives for their country, and their stricken relatives. The approach of the funeral was signalled by motor cyclists, and as it came into view at the western end of Edward street the waiting crowds formed in lines on each side of the highway and came to respectful attention.

In the crowd at this point were staffs from big industrial firms such as Hardys Ltd., Minty's Garage, Barton's and other artisans. There was also a large number of officers and men of the R.A.A.F. and of the A.I.F., while a splash of color was created by the double lines formed by the matron, sisters and nurses from the Wagga Base Hospital.

The crowd was hushed as the first tender bearing six coffins came through the lines, followed by three others carrying the other 20 bodies of the dead soldiers. Following was a long line of cars, the leading ones of which contained bereaved relatives, and many of those in the streets found their eyes dimmed with tears as their sympathy went out to the distressed relatives who had so sadly and abruptly been deprived of loved ones.

Colonel W. D. McDonald, his staff officers, and the officers and men of the establishment at Kapooka shared in the sympathy, for there was a true understanding that these officers and the colleagues of the victims of the tragedy were passing through a distressingly anxious period.

In a leading official car was Major-General Lloyd, who came from Melbourne on being advised of the catastrophe.

CROWD OF 7000

Long before 2 p.m. people began to assemble along the footpaths in Edward street. A thin spread of people grew to crowds at intersections until these joined up and the entire thoroughfare from Docker street to past Bolton Park was lined with people standing many deep.

At the intersection of Baylis and Edward streets some 300 returned soldiers formed a guard of honor under the leadership of the president of the Wagga sub-branch (Mr. John Graham). One block earlier along the route several hundreds of school children also formed a guard of honor in front of the South Wagga School.

It was hard to estimate the extent of the crowd which was spread along about a mile of Edward street, but a suggestion that the crowd totalled 7000 does not seem to be beyond the mark. The cortege was so long that when the first vehicle had arrived at the cemetery there were still many more lined along Tarcutta road and beyond the railway gates into Edward street.

"Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends," and no greater tribute could have been paid by any community than that paid at Wagga yesterday, a tribute to these men who had laid down their lives in the service of their country. It was a scene of humble tribute that will remain in the minds of Wagga and district residents for many years to come.

THE FALLEN SOLDIERS

- Spr. Francis Boyd (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Joseph James Collins (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Joseph William Paul (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Alan Flood (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Denby Eric Graebby (S.A.)
- Spr. Kevin Alexander Hurst (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Colin Leslie Hurley (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Ronald Irwin Liathorpe (W.A.)
- Spr. Terence Aonald Moore (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Stanley Robert Morphy (Q.)
- Spr. Leslie John Mather (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Jack Clinton Nixon (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Geoffrey Wilton Partridge (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Ernest Frederick Poschalk (Q.)
- Spr. Frank Wilfred Platt (Q.)
- Spr. Kevin Francis Pierce (V.)
- Spr. Stanley Ernest Ross (N.S.W.)
- Spr. William Reid (S.A.)
- Spr. Edward Charles Robson (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Thomas Woods (N.S.W.)
- Spr. Alfred Edward Widd (W.A.)
- Sgt. Herbert John Pomeroy (V.)
- Cpl. William Barclay Cousins (N.S.W.)

OFFICERS PRESENT

Senior military officers who were present at the funeral were: Major-General A. W. Lloyd, C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O. (GOC Second Australian Army); Brigadier C. E. Prior, CBE (DA and QMG Second Australian Army); Colonel M'Gowan (representing the Engineer in Chief); Colonel W. D. McDonald (Commander, 1 R.A.E. Trg Centre); Majors M'Donnell, Berg, Tunley, Keys; Captains, Ellis, Harper and Fraser.

Senior Air Force officers present were: Air Commodore F. W. F. Lukis, C.B.E. (of 2 Training Group, Wagga); Squadron Leader J. Jensen-Muri, M.B.E.; Flight Captain Alexander, O.B.E.; and Flight Lieut. R. White, of Forest Hill; and Wing Commander H. L. H. Chambers, Squadron Leader J. Horner, and Padre A. E. C. Collins, of Urquandilly.

The 17th Battalion Voluntary Defence Corps was represented by: Major D. Hamilton, Captains E. Brunskill and Crabtree, W/O Walker and Cpl. Jones.

The Deputy Mayor (Ald. J. A. Harrison) represented the Wagga Municipal Council with the town clerk (Mr. F. H. Burns) and the municipal engineer (Mr. H. J. Chaston). The Mitchell Shire Council was represented by the president (Cr. Dave Hamilton). In the absence of the president (Cr. C. C. Donohoe) the Kyeamba Shire Council was represented by

the shire clerk (Mr. E. S. Hedditch), the engineer (Mr. E. F. Cameron) and the health inspector (Mr. H. C. Hunt).

Almost every public body and organisation in Wagga was represented in the large gathering. No. 45 Squadron R.A.A.F. Air Training Corps was represented.

Captain Chaplain T. R. M'Brien, S.M., officiated at the Catholic burial services and Major M. C. Archbold, M.C., assisted by Padre Roberts officiated at the other service.

AT THE CEMETERY

TOUCHINGLY IMPRESSIVE SCENE

For most of those who yesterday afternoon attended the funeral obsequies within the military section of the Wagga cemetery it was a new and sad experience. The portion first set apart for military graves was filled and a new section opened on the southern side of the Wagga cemetery. The first impression of many yesterday was that this section is rapidly being filled—row upon row of simple white crosses telling the sad story.

In war every man or girl who enters the services accepts the hazards and risks of war, and of these death is one of the greatest hazards, and this may come early or late. Once in uniform a person is a soldier of the King and should death come swiftly in peaceful surroundings far removed from the battlefield a life has been given for the King as surely as if the soldier had died in combat. Here—in this quiet place—were the little white crosses to remind us that to many death had come early by the hazards of war. Since yesterday it becomes necessary to erect 26 more crosses on the lonely hillside, and no doubt this thought was uppermost in many minds when the first big tender drew up to the gates and six Union Jack draped coffins were lifted off and carried with steps "mournful and slow" to the waiting graves. Meanwhile several hundreds of soldiers stood as a guard of honor, and senior officers and subalterns formed up to join in paying this last tribute of respect.

A mass funeral has about it a depressing influence; but so splendidly were all the arrangements carried out yesterday that the proceedings lost this aspect and the ceremony came down to individual funerals of each of the 26 soldiers. As each coffin was lifted from the tender on to the shoulders of six bearers the sergeant in charge took his place at the head of the coffin which was followed by a wreath bearer. Then came the bereaved ones. These came in some instances long distances from other States to attend the funeral of loved ones. Sad to relate, some of the boys had no relatives present to shed a tear. The whole proceedings were carried out with military precision, but with dignity and grace. Ministers and priests met the incoming funeral procession and took up positions at the allotted sections.

Overhead the blue sky was cloud flaked. There was a softness in the air, and one might appropriately quote David Garrick's "Prologue on Quitting the Stage": "A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind!" It is certain all present experienced the influence of the sad occasion and sympathy flooded from their hearts to the bereaved ones as they thought of young lives ended so abruptly.

When the funeral service and the last prayers were recited the coffins were lowered—26 coffins containing the mortal remains gently laid into the 26 waiting graves.

The ceremony concluded, Warrant Officer Swift and his squad of trumpeters who were assembled on the flagpole base sounded the "Last Post." As the notes floated away to the hillside an echo was caught up along the rocks and thrown back into the sad silence. Heads were bowed and many were in tears. The trumpeters after a pause sounded the Reveille, loud and clear with its note of hope and courage to face the future.

Major-General A. W. Lloyd, C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O., who with the senior officers had formed up in front of the flagpole then motioned his officers to form up facing south. They came to the salute—a mark of respect to the soldiers just laid to rest in

the southern section. Making a right-about turn they came to the salute again—facing north.

Gradually, orderly, the large crowd dispersed—the closing scene leaving an impression of quiet dignity not usually associated with military activities.

CAR OWNERS ASSIST

An appeal had been made to the taxi drivers and civilian car owners of Wagga to provide their vehicles to convey relatives and friends to Kapooka and to the funeral. There was an avalanche of offers and it says much for the generosity of these owners that the number of cars offered greatly exceeded the actual requirements. It may have been disappointing for some owners to have made their vehicles available only to find that they were not wanted but the will could be taken for the deed and their effort was none the less appreciated.

When the cars were assembled at the Town Hall to convey the relatives to Kapooka yesterday the Mayoress (Mrs. J. V. Doyle) accompanied by Mrs. J. A. Harrison, was there to extend sympathy and make inquiries as to what assistance might be rendered to the relatives during their stay in Wagga.

Inspector H. C. Randall and Sergeant M. R. Sherwood were in charge of the civilian police who took care of the traffic arrangements. There, perhaps, was little compulsion necessary to control such a large crowd who were only present to pay their last respects, but the careful planning of the whole arrangements reflected considerable credit on these officers and their men. Detective-Sergeant H. J. Cloke was in charge of the police, inquiries and his sympathetic handling of the whole arrangements were commended in all quarters.

At the conclusion of the funeral, relatives were escorted to the Soldiers' Hall where members of the Women's Auxiliary of the Returned Soldiers' League, under the direction of the president (Mrs. John Graham) dispensed afternoon tea.

Sapper Jack C. Nixon who was killed in the explosion is a brother-in-law of Detective Sergeant George Munro of Albany. Mrs. Nixon is a corporal in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and arrived in Wagga on Tuesday night.

DANGEROUSLY ILL LIST

Of the two men who were also in the accident at Kapooka on Monday, one, Bartlett, of South Australia, is on the dangerously ill list.

MINISTER'S SYMPATHY

The following message of sympathy has been forwarded by the Minister for Agriculture (the Hon. E. H. Graham, M.L.A.): "I desire to extend my sincere sympathy to the parents and relatives of the young men who, in the course of training to equip themselves for the carrying out of a dangerous and most important service to their country in its hour of need, have fallen victims of a grievous misfortune. They have given their lives in the cause of freedom just as assuredly as had they fallen on the battlefield. We will remember them with gratitude and by honoring them, honor ourselves."

COURT ECHO

OF NEWSPAPER DISPUTE

SYDNEY, Wed.: When Consolidated Press Ltd., Associated Newspapers Ltd., and John Fairfax and Sons Ltd. were sued by the Australian Journalists' Association in the Chief Industrial Magistrate's Court to-day for alleged breach of the award in failing to pay full award rates during the newspaper dispute in October last, counsel for the association said that the cases affected 80 per cent of the journalists in the metropolitan area.

On the application of the defendants the case was adjourned until June 4.

Munitions Control

MR. BROADRIBB TO BE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

MELBOURNE, Wed.: The appointment of the deputy Director-General (Mr. N. K. S. Broadribb) as Director-General of Munitions is expected to be announced shortly. Mr. Essington Lewis retires on June 1. Mr. J. H. Jensen is expected to continue as secretary.

All work on which the Ministry is engaged is of highest priority in war production, and there is no immediate likelihood of a heavy cut in the munitions staff before the end of the Japanese war. A spokesman said to-day that the total of munitions workers had already been reduced to 54,000 and there had been a reduction in the administrative staff.