

Pioneer Woman Honoured

Last Sunday, a woman and her daughter who died in 1872 were remembered and honoured by Wirrim C.W.A. members and people from the Birchip community.

They were Mrs Ferguson and her infant daughter, who died and were buried near the old Karyrie station home- stead, where is now the side of the Sea Lake road.

A representative crowd gathered at the site of the grave and cairn on Sunday afternoon, and all present must have felt the pathos of the occasion, which was commemorating the fate of a woman and her baby 126 years after their death.

It seemed very appropriate that the women of the local C.W.A. had elected to provide a plaque and organise a ceremony as their project to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the C.W.A. in Victoria.

It had always been known that a woman and her baby were buried there, but it was only recently that Mr George Gould discovered, during his research into the history of the former Birchip shire, that it was a Mrs Ferguson.

The cairn which is beside the grave was placed there by Birchip C.W.A. in 1936 and Mrs Dorothy Reid presented a brief history of the cairn and the grave, including the fact that a pepper tree planted at the grave site many years ago had been accidentally removed by a shire worker, and had been replaced by the flowering gum which flourishes there today.

She also detailed the known details of the grave site, which was an interesting segment of local history, and the older people present were able to relate to much that it contained.

Wirrim C.W.A. president, Mrs Heather Gould, wel-

comed those who had gathered for the occasion and apologised for the absence of Group President, Mrs Houlst.

She believed it to be a humbling occasion, as it brought back many memories of past history.

She called on members of C.W.A. to repeat the Collect and then unveiled the plaque which marks the grave site, the wording on which is reproduced on this page.

Mrs Gould then introduced the Mayor of Buloke, Cr. Stuart McLean, and invited him to speak.

Cr. McLean was pleased to be there on what he described as "an historic occasion".

He said, "The re-dedication of this memorial is significant and marks a re-affirmation of the contribution of pioneer women in the settlement days of this district."

He noted that one of the highlights of the Country Women's Association is leadership and said, "Pioneers of this district were real leaders of people in their day, and without their commitment to expand into new lands, history would show a very different picture today."

He believed community spirit is a great asset and that this is what would have activated the pioneer women to hold together and face the challenges of their day.

Cr. McLean concluded by saying, "The marking of seventy years of C.W.A. in Victoria in the way you have done is very commendable," and he wished the organisation all the best in the future.

Mrs Maureen Donnellon read the poem "The Women of the West" by George Essex Evans, which had been mentioned by Cr. W.J. Barber in the 1927 shire minutes, when he first revealed the name of the until then unknown woman.

and Miss Elaine McCallum — for the tremendous amount of effort they had put into it.

"Wirrim C.W.A. would like to thank especially Mr David Kelly, who restored the

cairn so beautifully and erected the plaque. David put a great amount of time and energy into the project and we do extend our grateful thanks for his contribution," she said.

Following the ceremony, most of those present returned to the Uniting Church hall for afternoon tea and a little more reminiscing.



• The Plaque.


