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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

University of Tasmania
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(Signature)
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.B. Records of the Agricultural Bank
A.W.U. Australian Workers Union
C.P.P. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
C.S.B. Closer Settlement Board
L.S.D. Records of the Lands and Surveys Department
PD. Records of the Premiers Department
P.H.F.C. Port Huon Fruitgrowers Cooperative
RC/1 Records of the 1926 Royal Commission into Soldier Settlement
R.S.L. Returned Servicemens' League
THRAPP Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings

A Note On Additional Referencing.

In assessing this thesis one of the examiners criticised the lack of referencing at certain points. Such new references will be found on pps. 222 - 225, denoted in the text by use of a previous reference number and an appropriate letter of the alphabet.
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Abstract

On the eve of World War One the Huon felt itself to be on the threshold of a bright and prosperous future. The recent rapid increase in the export of its apples and timber had led the region's "boosters" to believe that the long, dark night of the 1890s depression was at an end. Such new found vitalism was soon translated into plans for the construction of a rail link to Hobart, an overseas wharf at Port Huon, the dredging of the Huon River to Franklin and the development of a diverse range of industries for the area.

Such hopes were soon dashed by the European conflict of 1914-1918. Despite, perhaps because of, the Huon's remoteness, the region soon suffered the full effects of war; its overdependence on the export of apples and timber rendering it peculiarly vulnerable to any change in the international marketplace. As a consequence the Huon soon found itself a community under siege, held bondage in the grip of profound anxiety. Such tension was reflected in the region's bitter debates over conscription and recruitment; in the growing conflict between the worker and his employer; in the Huon's growing sense of isolation from main-stream political decision making and in the death of any pre-war optimism.

The first chapter of this thesis outlines the Huon's pre-war aspirations, describes the area's first reactions to the outbreak of World War One and notes the immediate effects of such conflict upon so fragile an economy.

Chapter two details the Tasmanian Government's first tentative steps towards a soldier settlement scheme and describes the Huon's less than favourable reaction to such plans.

Chapter three outlines the increasingly disastrous effect of the war upon the Huon; points to the growing divide between the area's self-declared loyalists and their predominantly unionist antagonists; notes the effect of such division in the 1916 referendum on conscription and details parliamentary debate over the passage of the Soldier Settlement Act of 1916.

Chapter four gives an account of the growing despondency that overwhelmed the Huon as the war continued, such despondency clearly evidenced by the near total collapse of the fruit industry in 1918 and the
hardening of the area’s attitude to the war as evidenced by the size of the "no' vote in the conscription referendum of 1917. All hope was though not entirely lost and war’s end brought renewed expectations of a prosperous future, though first experiences of resettlement gave pause to such hopes.

Chapter five outlines the Huon's fate in those unsettled years of the early 1920s. It was a period of great tension as orchardists sought to reestablish markets; as unemployment rose dramatically; as Ireland's problems saw reflection in the growth of Catholic antagonism towards the British Empire and as unionists sought better pay and working conditions. Such was the depth of despond that many left the Huon to seek employment elsewhere.

Chapter six details the mechanics of resettlement in the Huon, a process that doubtless typified wider Tasmanian experience, then explores the impact of resettlement upon state politics, suggesting the Labour Party's rise to power in 1923 to be largely the consequence of Nationalist party indecision, perhaps intransigence, towards the continued and ever deepening financial crisis posed by resettlement.

Chapter seven recounts the experiences of those soldiers who resettled in the Huon and evidences the Closer Settlement Board's varied attempts at overcoming those settlers' difficulties.

Chapter eight details both the background and findings of the Tasmanian Government's 1926 Royal Commission into soldier settlement, a minor study of the politics of the pragmatic.

Chapter nine discusses the final stage in the repatriation of the Huon's soldier settlers, Justice Herbert Pike's Federal enquiry into resettlement and considers factors which likely led to successful resettlement.