

Arbor Day at Amphitheatre.

THE ANZAC AVENUE.

(From our Correspondent).

Arbor Day has always been a red-letter day in the year at Amphitheatre, but this year it stands out in greater prominence than before for, on that day, Amphitheatre residents planted an Anzac avenue in honor of the district boys who have left the land of the Sunny South for overseas to fight in the cause of right and freedom. The idea had been mooted early in the year, and was eagerly taken up by all concerned. The Lexton shire council, always to the fore in any movement for the good of the district, gave financial support. Working "bees" were held, when all sorts and conditions of men worked side by side, anxious only about one thing—that the avenue should be such as would do honor to our loved ones far away. Messrs Eunis and Studd enthusiastically shouldered the direction of affairs, and were ably assisted by a host of willing workers. It speaks volumes for the enthusiasm of those concerned that, one week day afternoon, close on 40 men left their own work and spent the time in strenuous toil at the avenue, and repeated the performance on the following Saturday. At various other times individual workers might be seen "doing their bit." The result was that on Arbor Day, Thursday last, some fifty-nine sturdy guards stood erected on the main road, fifty-six being for Anzacs, whilst the three additional ones were for the councillors representing the west riding, without whose help the carrying out of the scheme might have been much more difficult. Fortunately an old Amphiboy, Mr E T Quayle, was temporarily in charge of the Commonwealth Weather Bureau and, though not able to supply us with a perfect day, gave us the best sample he had in stock, and for that we are duly grateful.

Proceedings commenced at 1 p.m., when residents began to wend their way to the scene of operations. Guards had been labelled and the trees placed in readiness for planting so that, when Cr R W Laidlaw explained what had to be done, no time was wasted in getting to work. Soon groups were seen round the guards, while "Mum" or "Dad," or "His girl," with thoughts far away, planted a lasting memorial to the boy who was upholding the nation's honor. At the completion of this, races were held, in which the Anzacs of the future and their sisters competed with much earnestness amid the cheers and advice of the onlookers. Then came afternoon tea, doubly welcome on account of the bitterly cold wind that was making its presence felt. Neighbour sat by neighbour, and discussed matters of mutual interest, while a bevy of ladies attended to their wants. By this time, late arrivals had planted their trees, and the main work of the day was over.

Cr R W Laidlaw, the popular president

of the shire, then officially declared the avenue open. He said they were celebrating Arbor Day and Empire Day and, important as Arbor Day was in itself, it gained an importance that day from the work they had done and the purpose for which it was done. The present stage of the war was extremely critical for, with the practical withdrawal of Russia, greater responsibilities rested on the Allies. He was grieved to see that, while 10,000 men would crowd to a boxing contest at the Stadium, recruiting was falling off. He was proud to be there that day, but his pleasure was mingled with sadness, for they had planted in the avenue trees for three boys who would not return to see them, and he was sure that the hearts of all went out in sympathy to the three widowed mothers who mourned their sons. He hoped that they might be able to extend the avenue by reason of further enlistments.

Cr J Quayle said that, while the avenue marked our appreciation of the services of our soldier lads, it was impossible to reward adequately such work as they had done and were doing. But the trees would serve to keep their memory green. He then explained the principle upon which names had been included, and defined what was meant by the Amphitheatre district.

Cr R Neil spoke on behalf of the school committee, and heartily endorsed all that the previous speakers had said. The avenue would remind future generations of what their forefathers had done. When peace was declared they hoped to plant a "Peace" avenue.

Private S. Firus, a Gallipoli Anzac, spoke on behalf of the A. N. A. and the Anzacs. He said that he felt a special pleasure in speaking on behalf of the A. N. A., for that Association had earnestly advocated forestry, and this planting of highways was a step in the right direction. He felt sure that the lads who enlisted from Amphitheatre went, not for rewards, but to uphold the nation's flag, and to protect their mothers, sisters, and sweethearts. (Applause).

Mr Eunis moved a hearty vote of thanks to the speakers; Mr Studd to the ladies who had provided refreshments at the working "bees"; Mr S. Firus to the teacher, Mr Russell, who had initiated the scheme.

It may be mentioned that the trees and posts for the guards were donated by various residents, while the Shire Council provided the wire netting, barb wire, etc. The trees (pious insignis) came in for a good deal of favorable comment, and reflect great credit on their grower, Mr Nicholls, of Ballarat.