

State School Honor Roll

The Unveiling Ceremony.

On Friday afternoon last the unveiling ceremony took place of the Honor Roll erected in the Mirboo North State School. The Board is a most beautiful piece of workmanship. For some weeks it was on exhibition in Melbourne, and many former Mirboo North residents got a pleasant surprise on seeing it there. We can honestly say there is no finer Board in any school in the State outside of Melbourne. The Board is of blackwood, with the names in gold lettering. There are 80 odd names on the Roll, which clearly shows the past scholars of the local school have nobly answered the call to fight for their country's honor. Mr Mackey, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and member for this district; Mr C. Hack, the Chief President of the Australian Natives' Association; and Cr Inglis, President of the Mirboo Shire, delivered most interesting addresses. Apologies were received from Mr Wise, M.H.R., and Mr Dooley, district inspector, whose duties prevented them from attending.

The honor of unveiling the Board was given to Mrs B. Verdon, on account of her having four sons whose names are on the Roll, two with stars opposite them, denoting that they had given their lives.

The attendance to witness the unveiling ceremony was very large, many people being unable to gain admittance, but these had a good view through the windows.

Mr Green occupied the chair, and introduced the various speakers.

Proceedings opened with the singing of the National Anthem.

Cr. Inglis, the President of the Mirboo Shire, gave an account of what had been done in the shire in reference to the war. He remarked that the present occasion was the most momentous for which the children had gathered together in that building. The school had been opened for 33 or 34 years, but in his opinion there had never been such an important gathering in it than the present one. The speaker then

the present one. The speaker then spoke of Germany's attempt to dominate the world. When the war broke out over four years ago, Australia, like the rest of the British Empire, could not stand back. Australia had a population of about five millions, and had sent no less than 33,000 young men to take part in the great struggle. He was proud to think that these men had rubbed shoulders and proved their worth to take their place with the best of other nations. The British nation had come out of the present war stronger than ever she was. There was no decadence. When children attending the school looked at the board they would see the names of the boys who had attended the school and who had risked their lives, because they thought it was their duty to fight for the Empire. The fight was the fairest in the history of wars. From the Mirboo Shire about 200 men had enlisted, and he was proud to say they had done their duty well. It was with feelings of sorrow to think that some of the brave boys would never return. The scholars should remember always to honor the boys who had fought for them. They were now only young girls and boys, but they would soon be asked to take their place in the world, and they should remember that no matter what they were asked to do they should do it willingly. The soldiers had offered their lives, which was the greatest sacrifice possible, to fight for liberty. The Honor Roll would no doubt indelibly impress on the minds of the children a record to be proud of. The names of those men could not be thought too highly of in the future.

The unveiling of the Honor Roll took place at this stage.

Two verses of the Reversional Hymn "Lest We Forget," was then rendered.

Mr Mitchell read the names on the board, a recitation, entitled "For the Fallen," following, it being very nicely rendered by May Maslin.

Mr Mackey opened his speech by stating that they were there that day to do honor to the brave boys who had gone to the war from this district.

gone to the war from this district. Brave boys had gone not only from Mirboo North, but from every other district in Australia. They had seen boys go into training, and then leave in ships to go to war. Not only had the cream of Australia gone, but they had seen the same thing happen in every country. Boys had gone to the leading towns to train, for the purpose of offering their lives and bodies. The men of South Africa—which country had recently been at war with England—had offered their lives. It was the same in Canada, also in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. What had done this? They all knew the origin of most wars. Wars started owing to the ambition of kings, and the desire to acquire territory. Of course, there had been a few slave wars. What induced their young men to rush to the present war? Was it any ambition or any desire for new territory, or was it to capture trade? No, the British Empire joined the war for the honor of the Empire, truth and righteousness. The Empire had pledged its word to guarantee the protection of the little country Belgium, if she should be attacked. Belgium was attacked by a country which had also guaranteed to protect her. When word came that the Empire's word was at stake, men from all parts offered their services. From this district 200 men had gone to the front. Did any person present think those men had gone for the purpose of helping the Empire make gain or make gain themselves? Every person had in them a sense of honor. It was chivalrous honor that made those men go to the assistance of little Belgium and to offer their lives, and in many cases those lives have been given. Soon after England had gone to war, the Australians captured New Guinea, and the adjacent islands were also captured by Australians, and he hoped those islands would never go back to Germany. The Australians had fought in Egypt and in Gallipoli. They had

an awful time at Gallipoli. On April 25, 1915, men landed there from boats amidst shot and shell. Many of the shells landed in boats. When the lads hopped out of the boats they found barb-wire entanglements. Neverthe-

less, they formed and landed, and then swept the enemy before them over hill after hill. That was the first most of the Australians had ever seen of war. They put in many weary months there until the evacuation, which was carried out in one night without the loss of a life. At first they all thought the losses at Gallipoli had been in vain, but General Allenby had recently stated that the Australians and the Allies in that campaign had broken the power of the Turks. The Palestine successes were the outcome of the Gallipoli campaign. Therefore, those lives had not been lost in vain. Mr Mackey then narrated the splendid work performed by the Australians in France. On July 18—only four months ago—the Germans were within a few miles of Paris. They could see the spires of Paris, which was the promised land to them. Everything was then at the darkest hour for the Allies. The Germans with four offensives had driven in miles and miles, and it looked as if the next offensive would get Paris. However, the Allies at that stage started their offensive, which resulted in driving the enemy practically out of France. The part played by the Australians in that offensive could not be too highly praised. The Australians had never retreated one yard. Haig says Monash is a man that Australia should be proud of. Word had come to Australia that the German offensive on March 21 was a complete surprise, it starting much earlier than anticipated. Birdwood, who happened to be in England at the time, travelled by motor car and aeroplane to France, and Monash had to rush up from Italy. They found the Fifth British Army in full retreat, with Germans amongst them. The Germans had liberated 700 tons of mustard gas, and some of the British had thrown away their arms. The Australians then came up and dug themselves in, and at the end of two hours all the ground in front of them was strewn with dead Germans. The Australians met the enemy face to face, and almost destroyed them. The Australians did not give way a yard. The Australians had stood up to the crack regiments of the world and covered themselves with glory. Every time the Australians had met the renowned Prussian Guard, the latter went under. Our boys were not

they the renowned Russian Guard, the latter went under. Our boys were not like the trained Prussians, they were only amateur soldiers. They came from farms, shops, factories and mines and not one of them ever dreamt of taking part in a war. Notwithstanding their short training they more than held their own. That was why the boys whose names were on the board had been so honored, as also had others in other parts of Australia. They all knew that if the Allies had gone under, Australia would have ceased to be an English-speaking country. Australia would have become Germanised. Mr Mackey referred at length to what the Australians had also performed on sea. Their deeds on the water had been wonderful. He also stated that the people must look after the returned men. Unfortunately, there were stars against too many of the names on the Honor Roll. It must tear the heart-strings of mothers to know they would never see their dear boys again. There was the consolation, however, that they died the death they would have chosen. Long may the Honor Roll—which was the finest board he had seen—remain in the School, and long may the Honor Roll be an inspiration to the boys and girls of what was done by the young men of the present time. Mr Mackey concluded by congratulating the local people and the School committee on erecting such a handsome board. Visitors to the town should be taken to the school and shown the board.

Mr Clem. Hack, the Chief President of the Australian Natives' Association, opened his remarks by saying that he as head of the A.N.A. felt very gratified at being able to visit Mirboo North. He felt even more gratified at being here while such a ceremony was taking place, as that Board meant a great deal to his association. The Board was put there as a reminder for time immemorial as for what those boys had fought. During the four years of the war the aims and objects for which the war had been waged had perhaps been forgotten. They should carry their minds back to 1914, when Austria declared war on Serbia; Russia said she would assist Serbia, and Germany said if Russia started to mobilise she would declare war on her. France was bound to assist Russia. When England was asked what she intended doing, Sir

Edward Grey answered that he did not know, but England would stand up for her honor. When Germany invaded Belgium, Britain's honor was at stake, and she was cast into the war. This war was different to other wars, and there was a moral issue to it. Their honor must be observed. The whole of the people's business was carried out on their honor. They must honor their bond. That principle was a glorious one, and that principle had been vindicated. Therefore, those sacrifices had not been in vain. When they looked back they took off their hats to the past, but they would have to take off their coats to the future. Mr Hack then reminded those present what the war meant to Australia. When the boys landed at Gallipoli on that memorable 25th April, their boats being swept with shot and shell, Australia in name was an insignificant place, and was not known beyond the atlas books of the British Empire, and perhaps not in some of them. But, now, the name of Australia was known from Greenland in the north to any part in the south, and also anywhere from east to west. Australia was known on account of the deeds performed by her boys. She was now known through the length and breadth of the world. When they remembered what the lads had done they took off their hats. Repatriation was now the main question. Men who came back must not be any worse off than when they left. There was something more. There was the moral repatriation. The boys must find Australia just as clean and as pure as when they left. They should not witness strifes tearing the people asunder. The soldiers had been drawn from all parts of Australia. Wharf laborer and capi-

talist were side by side in the trenches. They charged across together, not caring what a man's religion was, or whether he owned land or not. He was a "digger" and his cobber, and when those boys came back class distinctions would be put aside. He felt certain that the men who had lain side by side and shared each other's water bottles would not allow class distinctions to interfere with them. Surely the people could forget some of the

the people could forget some of the class distinctions. One of the things they had to do was to take off their coats. Mr Hack concluded by feelingly referring to the lads who would never return. Many had given their lives. When they remembered the rejoicings at the termination of hostilities and for the dear ones coming back, there were many hearts sore at the thoughts of the little spots and the little crosses in France and Gallipoli. Some great monument should rise to make Australia always remember those noble lads who had given their lives. They had unrolled a veil of eternal honor to those names, but a greater honor would be to make this Australia the greatest, the cleanest, and the purest land on the face of the earth.

A recitation, entitled "Our Wounded," was at this stage well given by Edie Maslin.

Mrs Verdon was then presented by the School Committee with a photo. of the Honor Roll.

Mr Green, on behalf of the school children, presented Mr Mackey with a handsome fiddleback walking-stick, as some recognition of the much valuable assistance he had given the local school.

Mr Mackey heartily returned thanks for the gift, and remarked that in all probability he would have never stood for Gippsland West had it not been for the telegrams he received from Mirboo North. He also stated he was at Waragul the night of the election. The contest was a close one, but he always appeared to be a few behind. At 7.30 he went to have some lunch, being then 51 votes behind. Soon afterwards one of his supporters rushed in with the Mirboo returns, which gave 26 votes to his opponent and 130 to himself, and instead of being 51 behind he was 53 in front. He had received nothing but kindness at the hands of the Mirboo people.

Mr Mitchell (the head teacher) tendered his best thanks to the parents, public, and School Committee, for erecting such a handsome Board in the school. It had been his desire to have a Board, but he did not press for it on account of there being so many patriotic appeals.

Mr Hack was afterwards presented with several pieces of work carried out by lads in the sloyd room.

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