

Balaklava Soldiers' Memorial District Hospital.

The Foundation Stone Laid

Ceremony Performed by the President of the R.S.A.

In our last issue appeared the official report of the movement promoted to provide for Balaklava and District a fitting memorial to those who went away from this neighbourhood to serve their King and country—many of whom, alas, never returned—and assisted in winning for Australia a glorious page in the annals of the Empire's history. That those called upon to remain behind and carry on the country's business were not unmindful of their obligations was displayed in an uncertain manner when the project of providing a hospital for the district was put forward, no less than £5,253 having to date been raised for this worthy cause—a magnificent response of which the residents of the locality and the enthusiastic band of workers on the committee may justly be proud.

The Government having agreed to subsidise the amount raised at the rate of thirty shillings to the pound, it was decided that a start should be made with the building, and plans for a 20 bed hospital were prepared by Mr. E. H. McMichael, and tenders to the extent of about £10,000 were let to Messrs. W. Henry & Sons. Although the work was only commenced on May 4th, rapid progress has been made, and already a good general idea of the fine memorial to the gallant men of this district who feared not to do or die for their fellows may be obtained.

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All roads led to the Hospital site on Monday, June 27th (Prince of Wales' Birthday Holiday), the date fixed for the laying of the foundation stone by Mr. H. M. Bowden, President of the Balaklava Branch of the R.S.A., the gathering being large, representative and enthusiastic.

Amongst those present on the platform were the following members of the Executive Committee:—Messrs H. E. Bowden, H. Virgo, H. Curtis, D. W. Leitch, W. H. Manley (Chairman of the District Council), H. H. Gell (Treasurer), E. J. Finlayson (Hon. Sec.) and J. H. Dewhurst (Assistant Secretary). The President (Dr McEwen), who had been detained by professional duties, arrived soon after the proceedings started and took his place amongst the members of the Committee, while on the platform by invitation was also Mr C Belling, who generously donated the sum of £250 to defray the total cost of the freehold and transfer.

The marble foundation stone bore the following inscription:—

BALAKLAVA
SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL
DISTRICT HOSPITAL;
INCPTD.,
1921.

Underneath the stone was buried a bottle containing coins of the realm and copies of the "Wooroora Producer" giving the history of the movement which led to the foundation of the Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

The proceedings were opened by Mr E. J. Finlayson, who explained that the

J. Finlayson, who explained that the President of the Committee (Dr McEwin) who was to have presided, had been called away to the country on urgent professional business. While apologising for the Doctors' absence at the start of the proceedings he hoped to see him present before they had concluded, and in the meantime he (the speaker) had to fill the breach—as Secretaries were often called upon to do. The Committee had decided that in connection with the laying of the foundation stone of that important building the proceedings should be of a somewhat informal nature, having come to the conclusion that it would be better to leave the matter of a special offering till the opening day. He was glad to see such a large attendance on that occasion and to note the presence of so many farmers, who as a body had rendered the cause splendid assistance. For carrying out the ceremony of laying the foundation stone the members of the Executive Committee had agreed that no better or more worthy choice could be made than by the selection of Mr Horace Bowden, President of the Balaklava Branch of the

R.S.A., to undertake this office (applause). He also wished to acknowledge the assistance rendered the movement through the columns of the "Woorora Producer," and paid a kindly tribute to the help rendered in this respect by the proprietors of that paper (applause).

Mr. Finlayson then read the official report which appeared in the "Producer" of June 23rd giving a condensed record of the events leading up to the foundation of the Memorial.

Dr. McEwin arrived at this stage and addressed the gathering. He remarked that he felt sure they would all agree that the movement which had resulted in the establishment of such a memorial as was being erected there was a wonderful and remarkable achievement, and one which they would ever remember with great pleasure and pride. There were various people whose assistance he, on the Committee's behalf, desired to thank. In the performance of his duties as Hon. Sec. Mr. E. J. Finlayson had done a tremendous lot of work. He had placed at the disposal of the Committee his office and clerical staff, the members of which had rendered excellent service. If the hours they had spent in typing and other work for the Executive Committee were added up the aggregate would appear an incredible one. As Assistant Secretary Mr. J. H. Dewhirst—

Assistant Secretary Mr. J. H. Dewhirst—a Digger himself, and one who was always to the fore when the Diggers' cause was to be advanced—had also given yeoman assistance to the movement, while as Treasurer Mr. H. H. Gell had kept his records in fine style. Valuable and much-appreciated services had also been rendered by Messrs. H. E. Bowden, D. W. Leitch, H. Virgo, and H. Curtis, members of the Executive Committee. He also wished to refer to the help accorded by the local paper in the way of publishing records and appeals in connection with the movement. These had cost the Committee nothing and they regarded this help as a valuable gift. They were indebted to the contractors, Messrs Essery & Sons, for the fine progress made with the building, which had only been laid out on May 4th. Their heartiest thanks were extended to the donors, and particularly to those who gave at the early stages of the movement, this timely help being of the utmost value and inducing a form of encouragement which meant much for the success of the cause. They had now secured in donations over £5000, and though they had decided not to make any appeal for funds on that occasion they felt sure that the public would put up the balance that would be required. Between 200 and 300 trees had been planted in the grounds that day, and it was intended later to plant special ones in tribute to those who had fallen. That Hospital would form a fitting memorial to those who had made the supreme sacrifice—a form of memorial, it should be remembered, which had been chosen by the men who came back. It would also serve as a memorial of the service rendered their country by those who had returned: They were to place under the foundation stone a bottle containing coin and a copy of the "Producer," and when in perhaps in a thousand years that building was demolished to make room for a larger structure the finders would have the record of the foundation of the Hospital and be able to see the specimens of printing and currency of these days. He (the speaker) had been asked to lay that foundation stone, but he had considered that Mr Bowden was the one specially fitted to perform that important duty for he had known many of the men who had laid down their lives for the Empire: he had favoured the idea of that form of memorial, which had also been chosen by the returned comrades who had elected him as their president (ap

chosen by the returned comrades who had elected him as their president (ap-
plause).

Dr McEwen then asked Mr Bowden to accept from the Committee a silver

hearty cheers for the King being given by the assemblage at the call of Dr McEwin.

trowel and with it to lay the foundation stone of the building. The trowel was inscribed—"Presented to H. E. Bowden, Esq., on the occasion of his laying the foundation stone of the Balaklava Soldiers' Memorial District Hospital, Incorporated, June 27th, 1921."

Mr H. E. Bowden, then, on behalf of the Balaklava R.S.A., thanked the Committee for the honour they had done him as President of the Branch in asking him to lay that foundation stone. It was a gracious act on their part, and one, he could assure them, that was much appreciated by both his comrades and himself. Referring to the movement which had resulted in the foundation of that memorial they had felt that nothing but the best would do to set up in memory of those who had fallen. They were proud of what had been done by those men who had shown the highest spirit of self-sacrifice. Further, that hospital would not only be a memorial to their illustrious dead, but it would prove a means by which the people of the district would, by their personal support [and sacrifice, provide facilities for the alleviation of suffering. With regard to the men who had fallen—the price paid by them had been the greatest of all. The sacrifice they had made in laying down their lives for others was of the highest type, and of the dauntless spirit thus displayed and the achievements they had won future generations would be proud. To their gallant comrades who had gone they would for all time owe a deep debt of gratitude for the part they had so valourously played in preserving the freedom and integrity of that Empire to which they all belonged (applause).

Mr Bowden then proceeded to the work of setting in place the foundation stone, which he declared well and truly laid. He remarked that the building which was being erected there would not only provide a fitting memorial for the fallen but would prove a blessing for future generations (hear, hear).

The proceedings concluded with the singing of the National Anthem, three hearty cheers for the King being given by the assemblage at the call of Dr