

Rye Park

(From our Correspondent.)

The weather on Friday, 2nd inst., left nothing to be desired, and the sports, held in aid of the Soldiers' Memorial Hall, were in consequence, markedly successful. As predicted by the writer, a large crowd of people was present, all in holiday mood.

A good programme of horse and other events was carried out under the capable direction of an enthusiastic committee, too strong numerically to allow of names being published. A small army of ladies was in evidence at the luncheon booth, so that the many visitors from outside centres, as well as those living in the immediate vicinity, were catered for right royally.

The sports concluded at 5 p.m., and the crowd then made its way into the township, in anticipation of what was to be the principal function: the opening of the new Hall.

Practically at 7.30 p.m., the President of the Hall Committee, Mr Alex Horton, took the chair on a platform in front of the Hall. In a few words he acknowledged the honor it was to him to be privileged to preside over such a gathering, and on behalf of the committee and subscribers to the Soldiers' Memorial Hall, he extended a very cordial welcome to Mr Frater. He (the chairman) realised with what difficulty Mr Frater had been able to attend, and realised also that Mr Frater's deep interest in matters concerning soldiers had prompted him to be present in spite of many business engagements.

In inviting Mr Frater to open the Hall, the Chairman felt that the soldiers of the district would realise that the ceremony was being performed by someone who was deeply in sympathy with them, and who would feel pleased because the soldiers had been given a hall which was second to none in the district.

The Chairman then introduced to the large audience present, Mr D. B. Frater, upon whom devolved the pleasant task of declaring the Hall open for the entertainment of the people of the district.

Mr Frater, who was obviously overcome by the importance of his task, and whose mind was no doubt flooded with thoughts of those gallant souls for whom the Hall is to be a lasting memorial, addressed the gathering briefly, and then gave way to Mrs Bevan, of Everton.

Mrs Bevan, whose style is of the conversational rather than the oratorical, was on intimate terms with her audience at once, and declared that though she had derived pleasure from being present at other functions in the district, none had yielded the same degree of gratification as being present at this function had. She stressed the need in Rye Park of a Public Hall, where the people of the district might meet for recreation of various kinds, concerts, dances, etc. For years, she said, she had wished she had been a Rockefeller or a Carnegie, that she might, through her ample means, have provided facilities for the entertainment and development of the young people of the district. "How grand it would have been," said she, "to have

young people of the district. "How grand it would have been," said she, "to have provided a fine Hall, with an atmosphere of music surrounding it, dancing for young people—and old people too—billiards for the men, a reading room replete with a choice selection of the journals of the day, and a modern circulating library!" This, she continued, was her dream, and now her dream was to an extent coming true. For some time the movement had languished, but, to quote her own words: "The Diggers had done the trick."

Continuing, Mrs Bevan drew her hearers' attention to the trend of country people to the cities, and pointed out that this exodus from the country was due to the lack of proper amusement for the rural population. "The people of the country want fun," she said, "and nowhere has that been more lost sight of than in Rye Park."

Mrs Bevan paid a special tribute to the members of the committee, who had worked so indefatigably to bring about such an excellent result, and she expressed the hope that the general public would show its appreciation of what had been done by subscribing as liberally as it could, and remove the debt on the hall in a minimum time.

The Rev. E. W. Rettie, who followed, dwelt on the excellent example Rye Park people had shown the countryside by providing so substantial and useful a memorial to the soldiers who had fought for the defence of their country, and had suffered and died that we might be a free people. He asked each and every member of the community to use every endeavor to preserve the Hall, and protect it always from any form of vandalism.

The Rev. W. J. S. Rankin, who spoke with that earnestness which is typical of men who hail from the land to the north of the Cheviots, described the Hall as a work of art, and decidedly preferable to an obelisk or memorial of that type. The dominant feature in it was its usefulness. Apart from its utilitarian value, it was a concrete sign of our admiration of the bravery and faithfulness of those who had fought for us overseas, and the spirits of those who had fallen would mark its advent as a proof of our sincerity and faithfulness. The speaker referred to the urgent need of our giving heed to the great realities of life, and your correspondent earnestly hopes that one of these realities will be that the people will never forget what the Hall is meant for, and further, that the leading spirits in our midst will see that each year, on that day of glorious memory, Anzac Day, the people of all classes and creeds may be brought together to pay tribute to the memories of those men and women who immortalised themselves on the 25th April, 1915.

Mr Frater then came forward again and declared the Hall open for the use of the public.

The opportunity was seized to make presentation of bouquets to Messrs Frater and Bevan. This graceful act was performed by seven-year old Frank Scott, whose mother, Mrs Phyllis Scott, lost her husband in the war.

The Chairman then appealed to the audience to act on Mrs Bevan's suggestion and open their hearts—and purses—wide for the benefit of the Hall Fund.

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After half-an-hour's coaxing—and to the
credit of those present not much coaxing
was necessary—an amount approximating
£50 was promised.

A move was then made for the Hall to
secure seats for the concert.