

MEMORIAL AVENUE.

TREE PLANTING IN LEONGATHA.

LARGE GATHERING OF WORKERS.

Never in the history of the Shire of Woorayl has so much enthusiasm been shown in any public movement as on Saturday last on the occasion of the planting of trees in memory of soldiers who have left the district. At a meeting of the Progress Association it was decided to plant an avenue of trees along the road from the Leongatha butter factory to the Labor Colony, and on the road that leads from the town to Mount Eccles and Fairbank. The shire council was approached, and consented to defray the cost of the tree guards, and the engineer (Mr Bate) "pegged out the land." Mr R. deC. Shaw was appointed president and Mr Wm. Watson secretary to the tree-planting committee. Everything was ready to start at 9 o'clock on the morning of June 22nd. An appeal was made to relatives and friends of soldiers throughout the west riding of the shire to assist in the work, and the response was most gratifying to all concerned. To have placed the trees on the Leongatha Recreation Reserve would have been a parochial movement, so it was decided to plant the avenue outside the township boundary, when more interest would be taken in the demonstration by people in the surrounding districts. The crowd that assembled on Saturday proved that the site chosen was a wise one, for there was hardly a family for miles around that was not represented. When the country people are interested in any undertaking, a guarantee can at once be given that they will be there when wanted, especially when the work is in connection with the soldiers. There were fully 200 present with spade, shovel, axe, saw and hammer to lend a helping hand, and every calling was represented—farmers, dairymen, contractors, carpenters,

dairymen, contractors, carpenters, business and professional men. Work progressed rapidly, and shortly after 2 p.m. the avenue of trees from the butter factory eastward was completed, with guards in position. By 4 o'clock the work was finished, and will be a memorial for generations to come to the brave lads who enlisted from the district to fight for their country in a time of peril. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon. J. E. Mackey, was amongst those present at the tree planting, and showed a keen interest in the work. Before leaving he was called upon to plant a tree in memory of General Birdwood, who was so much admired and respected by the Australian soldiers. 250 elms and evergreen oaks were planted alternately in the avenues. A visitor from Western Australia, Mr. John Livingston, took great interest in the work, and devoted several days to the preparing of the holes for the trees, which was a great help on Saturday, and his services were much appreciated. The ladies did their part in a most untiring manner by providing refreshments and earned the thanks of the workers and committee alike for their kindness. Tables were laid under the butter factory verandah, and notwithstanding the "attack in dense formation" made upon the good things thereon, ample remained for sale at termination of the day in aid of the fund. Nameplates for the trees are being donated by Mr. F. W. Morris, and a collection taken up to defray the cost of inscribing the names of soldiers realised nearly £33.

A blow from the butter factory whistle was the call for a "spell oh," and a cup of afternoon tea and light refreshments prepared by the ladies. Mr R. deC. Shaw, chairman of the tree-planting committee, in introducing the Hon. J. E. Mackey, said that the Member for Gippsland West was always willing to respond to the call to visit any part of his constituency. It was gratifying to see such a large band of workers to do honor to the lads who were fighting on the battlefields of Europe. Only recently a welcome social was given in the Leongatha Mechanics Hall to

come social was given in the Leongatha Mechanics Hall to soldiers who had returned from the front and the presenting to them of certificates, and there had never been such a large and representative gathering at any previous function. He felt sure that no labor, trouble, expense or self-sacrifice was too great in doing honor to the soldiers that afternoon in the planting of trees in memory of "our boys." It was felt that it was the duty of the residents to do something to commemorate the sacrifice made by the boys at the front, who had given their lives for King and Country. The residents of Leongatha, after mature consideration, decided to plant an avenue of trees to their memory, and the shire council consented to defray the cost of the guards. It was only the intention of the committee to commence the work that day, but ultimately a tree would be planted in memory of every boy who had left the district. Relatives and parents of soldiers were asked to care for the tree that bore the name-plate of those dear to them. He appealed to the youths to treat the trees as something sacred, and always remember that they were planted in memory of their brothers or mates. He (Mr Shaw), on behalf of the committee, desired to specially thank Mr Livingston, a relative of Mr Wm. Watson, for the valuable assistance he had given, for he had spent several days in marking out the positions for 170 trees. He had also been requested to



thank Messrs Jack Aberdeen and W. Collins for taking up the trees from the nursery, Mr Thos. Weir for presenting them, and Mr Gould for his help; the latter having travelled from Warrenheip to be present. A good deal of expense would be incurred in placing the names of soldiers on the tree guards, so an appeal would be made for £50. Those desiring to help could give their names to the secretary for any

desiring to help could give their names to the secretary for any amount they felt disposed to donate.

Mr Mackey was received with applause upon being called on to deliver an address. He said that when arriving at the station and being driven down to the butter factory, it gave him the greatest pleasure associated with wonder, to see a band of 200 men working so energetically and willingly in such a memorable undertaking as the planting of trees in memory of district soldiers. There was no shirking or slacking, for to them it was a labor of love and not a task. One could imagine a visitor from another part of the world, upon seeing such enthusiasm, asking what it all meant. And admiration would be expressed when informed that it was to erect a permanent memorial to those who had fought to safeguard the future of their country. The lads had not gone from Australia's shores in a spirit of mad adventure, for sons of Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotchmen had felt the call to duty. The British race, which was a power on earth, was threatened with extinction, for a conspiracy had been hatching for 50 years to destroy the British Empire. All that liberty stood for was at stake, and New Zealand, Canada and Australia went to the assistance of the Mother Land. Britain was the home of democracy, and the British Parliament was the mother of parliaments. It was felt that unless they took time by the forelock the world would be menaced and the British Empire would be lost. They were proud to be Australians, and they also felt that they were Britishers as much as those who stayed at home in the Old Country. They were inheritors of the glories she had won as well as those in England. When the Empire was threatened the call to the race was well responded to, and the men from the dominions went to fight to safeguard the British Empire as well as Australia. In the present war the future of Australia was to be determined. They were a free and independent people, and had a Governor General to watch over them, but he

people, and had a Governor General to watch over them, but he would be recalled at any time if it were desired. German writers and statesmen were openly avowing that if Germany won the war she would wrest Australia from the Empire. Australia had all that Germany wanted in the future—wool, meat, hides, leather, butter, wheat, and metals. It was the best country on the globe for colonisation, and if the war were lost Australia would be Germanised. Although they had a little over five million people in such a vast stretch of territory, the liberty loving people of Australia would never submit to the indomitable power of Germany. Our boys had gone to the war to preserve all that the people cherished, and risked their lives, were returned broken in health and permanently disabled, in order that the people may live in comfort at home. Never since Napoleon had Britain been threatened as to-day, and Australia was little known then. To-day the people of the district had met that some permanent memorial should be made to last for all time in memory of local soldiers. As long as people used the roads leading to Leongatha, the avenue of trees would remind them of the boys who had done so much for those at home. When they returned they would be restored to their old positions, and everything made as favorable for them as when they went to the front. It was the local men they wanted here, whom they know and were interested in, and land should be found for those who desired it. He congratulated the people of Leongatha who initiated such a movement as that to-day. When each man returned he could seek his tree, and say, this is "my" tree, and would feel proud that the people had remembered them when they were away. He (Mr. Mackey) hoped that the movement would spread throughout the State. They trusted that when peace was proclaimed it would be a victorious peace, for never in the history of the world were the Allies so united as to-day. He hoped that this time next year they would be able to meet and

they would be able to meet and celebrate peace. (Applause.)

Mr Shaw then asked Mr Mackey to plant the first tree in the avenue in memory of General Birdwood, who was held in such high esteem by the Australian soldiers. After planting the tree, Mr Mackey referred to the good work done by General Birdwood, and spoke in the most complimentary terms of his successor, General Monash, who was so well known in Melbourne.