

LARGS SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL.

OFFICIAL OPENING.

The commemoration of Anzac Day in Largs, 1921, will long be remembered by the residents, for in addition to the observance of the day as the occasion demanded, it was also an historic day for the district, on account of the dedicating and the official opening of the local soldiers' memorial.

For some days previous the memorial committee were busy making arrangements in order that the occasion might be as worthily and fittingly celebrated as it should be, and it must be said that their efforts were not without avail, the ceremony being a most impressive one, and the proceedings were carried through without the slightest hitch, and the committee responsible for the arrangements as well as the accomplishment of the project to establish a memorial as a tribute to the memory of those gallant young lads, who volunteered from their district, never to return, an everlasting monument to their heroism, are certainly to be congratulated upon the successful termination of their efforts.

Long before the hour specified for the opening, a large number assembled in the vicinity of the memorial, and upon the arrival of Mrs. MacKenzie, who travelled from Sydney to perform the ceremony, many were unable to gain admission to the building.

Mrs. MacKenzie who was accompanied by Mr. Percy Stacy (Singleton) was met upon arrival by the president of the committee Mr. D. Ferry and other officials, and as the party entered the hall the children from the public and convent schools under the direction of the local school master, Mr. M. Hannan, rendered very nicely a welcome chorus. Two little girls, Marion Stevens and Eileen McDonnelle representing each school, then stepped forward and presented Mrs. MacKenzie with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The children later sang several appropriate songs, their effort being very much appreciated.

The president (Mr. Ferry) who had charge of the function extended a hearty welcome to the visitors. He read apologies for absence from Revs. A. Smith and F. J. Curwood, Mrs. Percy Stacy (Singleton), whose illness prevented her from being present, from Mr. M. Charlton, M.H.R., Walter Bennett, M.L.A. (who had previously accepted an invitation to perform a similar ceremony at Gresford, and from the president of the Port Stephens Shire Council (Mr. Ralston). They were pleased to have with them Rev. Canon and Mrs. Portus, the Mayor

were pleased to have with them Rev. Canon and Mrs. Portus, the Mayor and Mayoress of East Maitland, and many other visitors. They felt honoured on account of having with them that day a member of the Lang family, who had manifested such a keen interest in their memorial. Mrs. MacKenzie had travelled from Sydney at great inconvenience in order that she might be with them and open their memorial. Before asking her to perform that important ceremony, he would like briefly to trace the history of the memorial movement. Shortly after the outbreak of the war a patriotic committee was formed, and though that committee was not a large one so far as its numbers were concerned, they had accomplished a lot of good work. Throughout the duration of the war every patriotic appeal had had the support of the committee and a large amount of money was raised for the various patriotic funds. Each brave lad as he left the district was given a hearty send-off, and each heartily welcomed home upon his return. A Comforts Fund had also been formed and the ladies connected with this fund saw to the wants of their boys while they were in the trenches. But at the conclusion of the war their work was not finished. Unfortunately seven of these heroic lads had paid the supreme sacrifice, and were never to return. The memory of these brave young fellows had to be perpetuated. A public meeting was convened with this object in view, and after very careful consideration a proposal, which was conceived by Councillor McRae, to extend the School of Arts and erect a large room which would serve as a public library, and would be dedicated to the memory of our fallen ones, was almost unanimously carried, and the committee set about to give effect to the decision of the meeting. An appeal was at once made to the residents for funds, and the response was a generous one, but it was found that they were still very much short of the required amount. It was then that the great generosity of the Lang family asserted itself. The matter was placed before them through Mr. Stacy, with the result that the movement had the most hearty approval and sympathy of the family, and the magnificent sum of £200 was contributed to the funds. This was only one of the many generous acts which the district received from these philanthropists. Thus encouraged the committee at once called tenders and the work was put in hand and to-day they had assembled to open their memorial, practically free from debt. In referring to those brave boys who had not returned, he said that they were sorely missed by every one, and to-day they sympathised to the fullest with their relatives. They died for a noble and glorious cause and their self-

and glorious cause and their self-sacrifice would never be forgotten. Their names and memory would be honoured and handed down from generation to generation. These heroic lads, together with over 60,000 of the pick of their manhood, of all denominations, fought and died side by side. They freely gave their lives for those who remained behind, in order that they might enjoy the principles of peace and freedom. But in face of these facts, he regretted to say that there were to be found to-day men who were endeavouring to destroy those principles. Adventurers he would call them who were out to divide the people, in order that their lust for power and position might be gratified. It was up to all citizen-minded citizens to unite in frustrating the aims of these people, and to see that the liberty and freedom which had been defended at such a cost were kept untarnished and maintained to the fullest. They could honour their illustrious dead in no more fitting manner.

Rev. Canon Portus throughout the course of an eloquent address said he was please to be with them on such an important and historic occasion. He congratulated the people of Largs for having a memorial erected to the memory of their soldiers of the character of the one they had assembled to open that day. He dwelt at length upon the wonderful achievements of the Australians. It was but fitting that the self-sacrificing action of those noble souled men should be remembered. He referred to the mighty efforts of the Anzacs, who against tremendous odds, endeavoured to force the passage at the Dardanelles. He was

gaging in war. Surely the brains of their statesmen can devise some means to bring about this reform.

Mr. W. F. O'Hearn, M.L.A., expressed his pleasure at being with them that afternoon. He had to forego other engagements to be present, but he considered the importance of their function demanded his attendance. The people of Largs had at all times shown a true spirit of patriotism, and he was not surprised to find that they had assembled there in such large numbers to show their respect for the memory of their fallen heroes, whose valour and heroism he was sure would never be forgotten. He congratulated them upon the sensible and useful as well as the imposing memorial which they had erected to perpetuate the memory of their soldiers. He would yield to no man in his respect and admiration of the gallant men they had sent from the Maitland district. He paid a very high tribute to the battalion known as Maitland's own, whose deeds he said would for ever live in the memory of Australians. He made feeling reference to those brave lads who had paid the supreme sacrifice, and said their relatives had consolation in the fact that their dear ones had given their lives for a glorious cause. He referred at some length to the commemoration of Anzac Day and to the glorious achievements of the men who had so courageously attempted the task set them at the Dardanelles. It was their duty to spread the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion so gloriously exemplified by the Anzac.

Others to congratulate the committee upon the establishment of the memorial and make fitting reference to the occasion were the Mayor of East Maitland, Alderman W. M. Porter, the president of Bolwarra Shire Council, Mr. Reid, the president of Woodville Patriotic League, Mr. P. McDonnell, the president Bolwarra Patriotic League, Mr. J. T. Kirkwood, and Mr. John Graham.

The chairman then presented Mrs. Mackenzie with a gold key, suitably inscribed, and requested her to officially open the memorial. Mrs. Mackenzie proceeded to the memorial and as she placed the key in the lock leading into the room, she said she desired to thank the committee for the honour they had done her in giving her the privilege of opening their memorial. She could assure them she deeply appreciated the honour. She offered to the people of Largs her hearty congratulation upon having erected such a fitting memorial to commemorate the memory of their soldiers. The grand sense of the com-

pleased to see the growing observance of Anzac Day, and said it was most fitting that they should select such a day for the opening of their memorial. They wanted more of the high spirit of the Australian soldier engendered into the public life of their community—that spirit which animated their soldiers to put self-sacrifice before self-interest, the spirit by which they had shed their blood to make the world free for Christian democracy. They had entered into a new era, and he trusted the world would be the better for it. There should be no need for further war. Nations should be able to settle their differences without engaging in war. Surely the brains of

commemorate the memory of their soldiers. The good sense of the committee was exemplified in the manner in which they set about their work. The building in addition to serving the purpose for which it was erected, would for many generations also prove useful, and she hoped would be utilised by the residents, and the "Last Post" was sounded by Trooper Allen Eckford.

The ceremony was most impressive and touching.

The people again entered the hall where, on the motion of Mr. Robert F. Graham and Councillor McRae, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded Mrs. MacKenzie, special reference being made to the long and close association of the Lang family with the district, and to their interest and generosity at all times in all matters of a worthy object.

Mrs. MacKenzie suitably acknowledged the vote.

The memorial room is 17 feet 6 in by 19 feet, and its general construction is of brick with concrete foundations and cement walls, which are 14 feet from floor to ceiling. The ceilings are of fibrolite nicely panelled. A fire-place has been provided with a tiled grate and oak mantle. A large vestibule or entrance hall opens off the room. This has also been made the entrance to the School of Arts, and a very nice ticket office and cloak room has been attached thereto. The appearance of the outside of the building is very pleasing. A high parapet, which has been cemented and painted white, stands over the entrance and in raised gold letters are the words, Large Soldiers' Memorial, 1914-1919. The contractors, who faithfully carried out their work, were Messrs. Compton Bros., East Maitland, while the architect who designed and supervised the work was Mr. J. Warren Scobie. Prior to handing over the building to the School of Arts committee, who will accept the responsibility of its maintenance it is the intention of the memorial committee to have the room thoroughly furnished and supplied with up-to-date literature.