

SHIRE AVENUE OF HONOR. GREAT OPENING CELEBRATION.

Mr Watt Under "Pressure of Business."

Wednesday last witnessed the successful consummation of the movement, initiated only about a couple of months ago, for the purpose of recognising, in a lasting form, the valued services rendered to the Empire by the representatives of the Shire of Newham and Woodend at the Great War. On the afternoon of that day an avenue of 150 Portugal oaks planted along the Mt. Alexander road, in honour of the brave boys claimed as belonging to the district, either because of its being their birthplace or on account of their association with it as residents at some time or other, was officially opened by the carrying out of a programme which must serve to make the occasion a very memorable one indeed.

The avenue extends for over a mile from just beyond Gaggero's hill, along a nicely curved section of the road towards Woodend North. No better site for anything of the kind could be wished for, and, not only is the position a desirable one in every respect, but, by far the greater part of the length covered, the soil is of a red richness that should insure the prosperity of the trees. Where this essential condition was lacking, towards the town end of the avenue, soil was carted to make up for the deficiency. Though natural advantages of great value were present to begin with, the movement necessarily involved a vast amount of work, but this was voluntarily entered upon and carried out by a series of working "bees," and smaller parties, in a manner reflecting very great credit indeed on all concerned. The project called for a united effort, and that was put forth. At the same time, there were those who showed a particular enthusiasm in regard to the undertaking that exceeded the pleasing general interest manifested in it, and while, in this connection it would perhaps be invidious to make any individual distinction, it may not be amiss to say that the locality of Woodend North identified itself conspicuously with the movement throughout, and did much indeed to make possible all that was accomplished within the limited time of two months or so. The avenue, however, has not yet been completed. The number of trees planted does not quite "run out" the district's honour roll, but represent a very substantial instalment of it. In fact, had it been

but represent a very substantial instalment of it. In fact, had it been possible to plant about a dozen more the list would have been brought right up to date. That, however, could not be attempted, without leaving work connected with the main portion of the avenue unfinished, but the additional trees required will be planted next season. All names were, however, given an equal chance by the committee in the allotment of the trees planted, and for the twelve positions yet to be filled, that is, after selections had been made by relatives of deceased soldiers. With the exception of these selections, the positions were balloted for, provision being made in the procedure followed to allow, as far as possible, of those of the one family obtaining trees near each other.

The whole of the 150 trees put in were planted before the opening day, that course being followed as the season had become well advanced, and nothing remained to be carried out on Wednesday last but the official dedicatory proceedings. These were on a very complete and successful scale, well worthy of the event, and affording the committee of management to much credit for it was due to their efforts, and with the invaluable assistance of the ladies (who had, with characteristic energy, thoroughness and generosity, previously fulfilled a very important part in connection with the whole movement, by entering for the several working "bees" held), and the co-operation of the community generally, that the opening celebration is entitled to be classed as the greatest and most impressive public event ever witnessed in the district. The widespread interest felt in the function was strikingly evidenced by the large attendance, which must have numbered fully twelve hundred persons, including some visitors, and was strongly representative of all sections of the community and all parts of the shire, and the gratifying manner in which the afternoon's programme was fulfilled must have afforded all the utmost satisfaction, and none more so than the members of the committee, who had not only been required to devote a lot of time and work to the preliminaries, but had also to put up with a considerable amount of annoying disappointment in the making of their preparatory arrangements, due to apparent disconcert on the part of

their preparatory arrangements, and to apparent disconcert on the part of those from whom they had not unreasonably expected to get the readiest of help, especially in view of the nature of the assistance needed.

In the first place, our Federal member (Mr. E. Jowett, M.H.R.), had given a definite promise that he would be present to assist at the opening of the avenue, and that he would endeavour to secure the attendance of the Acting Prime Minister (the Hon. W. A. Watt), or the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce). After vexatious delay, Mr. Jowett sent along a letter he had received from Mr. Watt, regretting his inability to visit Woodend on the date selected for the opening of the avenue, owing to "pressure of business." Then, at the last moment, Mr. Jowett wrote, stating that he himself could not attend, as he had to address a recruiting meeting at Korong Vale (which must have been fixed after his agreeing to come to Woodend), on Wednesday evening. After a good deal of "search" on the telephone wires, Mr. Jowett was discovered somewhere in the neighbourhood of Daylesford, and was advised of the predicament in which the committee had been left, and was somewhat pointedly informed that he was expected, in the circumstances, to find a substitute, which he succeeded in doing, for Mr. J. M. Chanter, M.H.R., for the Riverina, and Chairman of Committees in the Federal Parliament, came along in his stead by the afternoon train from Melbourne, accompanied by our State members for the district, the Hon. D. McLeod and Mr. A. Cameron, M's.L.A. Then within a minute or two of the arrival of these gentlemen at the avenue, accompanied by a sub-committee appointed to meet them at the railway station, and consisting of the president of the shire (Cr. E. Don), the ex-president (Cr. W. H. McElhinney), Cr. J. H. Thorburn, and Mr. R. Cornish, the Acting Prime Minister, and a motor-car load of others appeared upon the scene, not to remain for a few minutes to assist in the early afternoon ceremony, but on the way to Bendigo, under "pressure of business," to be attended to there by Mr. Watt some hours afterwards. The Acting Prime Minister's appearance at that particular moment caused much surprise to those who recognised him, and some wonderment as to whether the incident was due to design or a strange coincidence. If, at all events, there were any design about it, it failed to work out in accordance with those wishes of the committee which had previously been denied, owing to "pressure of business," for Mr. Watt, after considerably "slowing down," and gazing about him, sped on his way, unable to spare even a few minutes to a function such as ours—though of undoubted moment. But, withal, it was, as already stated, most successfully performed, and will probably live longer in the memories of this community than even Mr. Watt.

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procession from the town, marshalled by Sergeant Skehan, the district recruiting officer, assisted by Mr. S. Harris, and led by Senior-Cadet Hallett, of Newham, bearing a Union Jack. Following came the Anzac Band of 15 performers, then several returned soldiers, a good muster of Senior Cadets, children of the State, Convent and other schools, in large numbers, shire councillors and members of the avenue committee, members of the Loyal Woodend Lodge, M.U., I.O.O.F., A.N.A. and H.A.C.B.S., and civilians, the whole stretching out to a considerable length, and making a very pleasing turn-out, and giving added significance to a fine display of bunting made in the town arranged, mainly, by Messrs. H. J. Brown and G. Harris, who also carried out similar work most effectively at the avenue, at the entrance to which a beautiful arch, covered with ferns, and embellished with wattle blossom and flags, had been erected by Mr. C. H. Overton, assisted by Messrs. J. Fisher and L. Overton. The arch was the suggestion of Mr. Overton himself, and, though its erection was not commenced until only a few hours before the time appointed for the opening of the avenue, all was in readiness in good time, and so a completeness that deserved and received general admiration was given to the whole of the day's decorative scheme. Here, too, it may be noted that a large marquee was erected, at a point about midway along the avenue by Messrs. Overton, Lee, Harris and Cr. J. H. Thorburn for the entertainment of the visitors and the convenience of the many ladies who undertook to provide and dispense refreshments at close of the ceremonial proceedings—an undertaking of considerable magnitude, but one, all the same, that was most excellently managed, and without regard to trouble, expense, or any consideration whatever other than the one united determination to do everything connected with it thoroughly and worthily—and that being achieved, in a way exceeding all expectations, the ladies were doubtless satisfied, while those catered for in such large numbers, and with so much attention and liberality, could not have been otherwise than appreciative.

At the avenue, the proceedings were in the hands of the newly-elected president of the shire (Cr. Don), who performed the many duties devolving upon him in a capable and efficient manner, and at the outset, after the band, to which much of the success of the function was undoubtedly due, had played the National Anthem, appropriately explained the object of the gathering and very suitably introduced the visiting politicians—the Hons. Chanter, McLeod and Mr. Cameron, afterwards calling upon the first named to open the avenue, across which a band of red, white and blue ribbon 27

to open the avenue, across which a band of red, white and blue ribbon 27 yards in length had been stretched. The avenue had been similarly "closed," pending the completion of the ceremony, at the other end, this idea being the outcome of a suggestion made by the secretary to the committee (Mr. A. F. Daniel), upon whom a great deal of work necessarily devolved, and by whom, it is but just to say, it was performed with painstaking efficiency, arising from a keen and most commendable interest in the movement from its inception. Souvenir pieces of the ribbon were afterwards sold at sixpence each and from this source the substantial sum of £12 2s. 6d. was realised.

Mr. Chanter spoke at some length in his opening address. He began by claiming an acquaintance with the district, having in his boyhood days lived at Tylden, where the remains of his departed and revered mother are still resting. He then went on to explain that he had much pleasure in coming to Woodend that day, as a substitute for Mr. Jowett, and to assist in doing honour to the brave young men who had gone forth from this district to fight for those principles for which Great Britain had entered into the war. The Australians had proved themselves equal to any other men on God's earth for love of country, and had shown themselves capable of glorious deeds in defence of the Empire to which they belonged, and of the liberties they had enjoyed. True, many had fallen—some from this district, but their memories would not only be perpetuated by the trees planted here in their honour, but would also be enshrined in the hearts of the people for all time. It had been said that there was no need for Australia to have gone into the war, but there was every need for her doing so, not only as part of the grand old motherland, but for other reasons, amongst which was the fact that this fair land was looked upon as a first prize in the great war gamble initiated by the greatest monsters the world had ever seen. People did not realise what they had been spared from, for, if they did, the actions of at least some of them would certainly be very different from what they were at the present time. Under German rule Australia would have been no longer free, and it was only the protecting arm of the motherland that had held them safe. It was the duty of Australians to be true to their trust, and though present signs at the battle front were hopeful, there was yet much need for continued activity on the part of the people of this Commonwealth. The war would not be over for some years, even after the last gun had been fired, for new economic conditions would arise in which Australia must be prepared to play its part, and a noble part, if they would make it worthy of the great name which had been written in the blood of its heroes. Wherever freedom was spoken of Australia was almost a name to con-

ure with, and there must remain, after the fight, a great part for its people to perform. Mr. Chanter went on to say that the promise made to the "boys" who first left Australia's shores had not been fulfilled, and to urge that the pledge then given should be observed. Next he condemned in strong terms the proposals for peace by what was called negotiation, and without indemnities or annexations, and showed how foolish it would be to entertain such ideas, and, nearing the conclusion of his address, Mr. Chanter congratulated the residents upon what they had done, in the planting of the avenue to the honour of men for whom it would be impossible to do enough. He hoped the trees in the avenue would live for many years, and that, as necessity arose, they would be renewed by future generations to the memory of those who had done so much to deserve it. He then cut the ribbon and declared the avenue open for all time.

The assemblage then moved on to tree No. 28, planted to the honour of Sergeant George Green, where the Band played the Dead March, and the

"Last Post" was sounded with impressive solemnity, after which Mr. S. Harris read the following list:—

THE DISTRICT'S FALLEN.

Bennett, Royden	Hutton, W. R.
Bowen, H. W.	Johns, William
Foyre, Herbert	Judkins, James
Bruun, E. d'A.	Lock, Leonard
Bretuerton, R.	Moore, John
Christie, Elias	McGuane, Thomas
Christie, Maurice	O'Connor, W.
Christie, S. R.	O'Connor, John
Davies, S. L.	O'Leary, Joseph
Donald, Henry	O'Meara, John
Evans, A.	Pridham, Arthur
Evans, John	Richardson, W. H.
Fisher, Fred.	Rooney, Norman
Gibbs, Edward	Scott, J. J.
Green, George	Tyrrell, Nicholas
Hayes, P.	

The Hon D. McLeod followed with an address, commencing by saying that the day was one of proud remembrances of the splendid work "our boys" had done, and were doing. The deeds of the Australians had earned the highest praise from men renowned in war. Our men had accomplished what had hitherto been deemed impossible and now, instead of Australia being spoken of as a burden on the mother country it was regarded as one of the brightest jewels in the British Crown. They had, however, to remember that the price of liberty was eternal vigilance and be prepared always to fulfil their part. The war was being waged for truth, honour, liberty and the right of the smaller nations against a brutal military tyranny worse than that of the old Huns, for even Atilla

military tyranny worse than that of the old Huns, for even Atilla did not perpetrate atrocities as bad as these committed by the enemy in the present war. There would be a better appreciation of what Australia had done when a complete history of the war was written, read and studied. The deeds of our men would be handed down for all time in history and song, for they had laid for Australia the cornerstone of a great nation, cemented in the blood of some of its bravest and best. Here the real horrors, sufferings and privations of the war could not be realized, but they had been felt in all their severity in little Belgium, Servia and elsewhere. The Australian army had given this country a right to a voice in the terms of settlement, and the work our soldiers had done had more than earned for them the gratitude of the people, who could not do enough to their honour. The war was yet a long way from being over and though the deepest sorrow had been brought to many homes there should be consolation in the knowledge that what had to be borne was not in vain. He congratulated the residents of the shire upon what they had done to the honour of their representatives at the war, and was pleased to see the cadets present in uniform, for it was upon the rising generation that the future protection of Australia must depend. The young men of this district who had fallen had left a noble memory behind. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for a brother." Were others proving themselves worthy of the sacrifices made for them? Were they doing all that could be done to help those who were fighting their cause? So far they had not done so. He hoped the lessons of the war would sink deeply into the hearts of all and that no lodgment would be given in the minds of the people to any cry for a premature peace where the fruits of victory would be lost and no guarantee obtained for the future safety of those principles forming the foundation of public virtue. He hoped the trees forming that avenue would be attended to with special care, and that the meaning underlying the action of those by

underlying the action of those by whom they had been planted would always be understood.

Sergeant Skehan vigorously supported Mr McLeod's remarks, more especially in regard to those men who had fallen in their country's service, and of whom this district showed a long list, as had been read. All honour was intended for every one of them. George Green was the first of them to fall on the battle field. He enlisted in the Second Contingent, in 1914, but surrendered a commission in order to sail with the First Division. He quickly regained his rank as a sergeant, and took part in the landing at Gallipoli. With him there was another Woodender, Lindsay Davies, and 25 of them went out to one of the foremost positions, were cut off, and only seven returned. George Green was one of those who never returned. Lindsay Davies afterwards came home, recuperated his health, returned to his duty, and he, too, was then required to make the supreme sacrifice as in the case of the other noble men whose names had been announced. The sergeant went on to point out that it was because of men such as these, and their comrades that the people here remained in comfort and security. He exhorted all to be dutifully mindful of their obligations to their soldiers, who were the men really entitled to be heard as to the terms on which the war should be settled.

The gathering, headed by the band, then marched to the end of the avenue, where Mr Harris read the honour list, after which "God Bless our Men" was sung, and

Mr Cameron spoke. He was pleased to see so large a gathering as affording proof of the people's appreciation of their soldiers. He hoped the example set here would be followed elsewhere, and went on to eulogise the work done by Australians abroad. Though people differed about conscription and voluntarism, all seemed to recognize that every effort should be made to carry out the promises in regard to repatriation, and to see that the boys received the treatment they so well deserved. The millions of pounds to be spent in this connection should be used in

millions of pounds to be spent in this connection should be used in the establishment of industries throughout the country, and in the settlement of the men on suitable land obtained under reasonable conditions.

At the conclusion of Mr Cameron's address, Mr Chanter cut the ribbon placed across the road at this point, and dedicated the avenue to the eternal honour and memory of men who had placed the liberty and freedom of the civilized world before anything else.

An adjournment was then made to the marquee, at the invitation of President Don, and there refreshments were dispensed by the ladies on a most elaborate scale, surpassing anything of the kind ever before attempted here, which is saying very much indeed, having in mind how thoroughly things in this way have always been done in the district. The spread provided was an excellent one in every respect, and after it had been partaken of a vote of thanks was accorded the visiting politicians, on the motion of Cr McElhinney, following a short recruiting appeal by Sergeant Skehan.

The National Anthem, by the band, concluded a memorable day's proceedings.