

OBERON'S GREAT DAY.

MEMORIAL HALL FOUNDATION STONE LAID.

AND CROWNING OF THE QUEEN.

(By Our Reporter).

Friday was indeed a red letter day for Oberon and district, by reason of the foundation stone of the new Returned Soldiers' Memorial Hall having been well and truly laid in the afternoon. Residents from near and far assembled in large numbers to witness the ceremony which, unfortunately, was spoiled by a shower when about half way through. On the temporary platform were Mrs. S. A. Rogers (whose son fell at the war), to whom was deputed the honor of laying the foundation stone, Senator Cox, Mr. A. G. Manning, M.P., Rev. Father O'Reilly, Rev. W. Opper, Rev. Almond, Cr. H. V. Stevenson (chairman), Shire President, the whole of the Councillors, Dr. Mulvey and others. There was a liberal display of hunting. Prior to the ceremony, quite a number walked over the foundations, which are already floor-high, with a view to gaining a clearer conception as to the dimensions of the building to be. Many returned soldiers were present.

The Shire President, in opening the proceedings, said many residents of the district had for a long time thought of bringing into existence in tangible form, a memorial of some kind to perpetuate the memory of the boys who had enlisted from Oberon district for service in the great war. Various suggestions were made, but the one most favored was the erection of a memorial hall and Shire Council Chambers combined. They saw that afternoon the result of a united effort on the part of the Returned Soldiers' Association and the Shire Council, which, when completed, would be a credit to the town as well as a useful asset. It was to his mind far more preferable than a fountain or monument in the street. He apologised for the absence of several gentlemen—including returned soldiers—who were prevented from being present.

Mr. C. E. Richards, president of the Returned Soldiers' Association, gave an interesting resume of past operations in connection with the movement, which began so far back as 1922. After

in connection with the movement, which began so far back as 1922. After any ideas had been expressed, it was definitely decided that the memorial take the form of a public building, equal to accommodating the Shire Council, and also social functions of medium size. That afternoon found the building sufficiently advanced to permit the laying of the foundation stone. The contract price of the building was £1662, while the money subscribed to date, including £500 from the Shire Council, and about £260 from the queen competition, was £1722, which showed funds to the good. Of course, certain rooms in the building would require furnishing from the general fund. The number of men and women who enlisted from Oberon district was 114; 26 of the former had made the supreme sacrifice, while others had returned incapacitated with life. In a cavity in the foundation stone would be placed a leaden box containing certain documents setting out data concerning those who worked for its erection and an entire list of those who enlisted. The following statement would also be placed therein:—"This building was erected by public subscription, with £500 added by the Oberon Shire Council, as a Soldiers' Memorial and Shire Chambers in remembrance of those who served in the great war, 1914-18. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs. S. A. Rogers (whose son was one of the fallen) on January 3, 1928." As chairman of the R.S. Association, he conveyed thanks to all the ladies who, during a long period, had worked in the interests of the movement.

The chairman, at this juncture, handed Mrs. Rogers a silver inscribed trowel, with which to officially lay the foundation stone. After the ceremony, Mrs. Rogers expressed her deep appreciation of the honor. She trusted the building would, in addition to reminding the citizens of the services rendered the Empire by their boys, also serve a useful purpose, and reflect credit on the town (Applause).

The National Anthem was sung, and the chairman asked the assemblage to stand a moment in silence in honor of those who fell. The stone (a marble one) bore this inscription:—"This stone was laid by Mrs. S. A. Rogers, mother of one of the fallen, February 3, 1928."

Rev. W. Opper said it was befitting for them to have something in the nature of a permanent memorial. The clergy had been invited, presumably because they represented a large section of the people who had sent their sons to take part in the late war, during which they (the clergy) were brought into very close contact with the parents, since it was frequently their sad duty to bear sad messages. A great need of the world was purpose and sacrifice, which was emphasised in General Haig's message to his men. During the war that spirit animated the soldiers

war that spirit animated the soldiers on all fronts, even when their backs were to the wall. From the carrying out of that purpose, friends could not persuade or fools deter. Australia's quota included thousands of her best soldiers, sailors, airmen and nurses. They were together again that day, after ten years, to record their appreciation of the benefits they had reaped as a result of great sacrifices. That message, too, urged them to set up a high standard and have a noble purpose in life, which would reflect radiance in their church, business and home life. It was that message that enabled their kinsmen to bravely make the supreme sacrifice. With that day's ceremony many wounds would be opened afresh, but the memorial would stand as an evidence that to the bereaved ones was extended their sympathy, while serving as pledge never to forget. (Applause.)

Rev. Father O'Reilly said as an Aus-

tralian and a member of the Catholic clergy, he was proud to be identified with the ceremony. It meant an interesting event in the life of the community, while such a building, when completed, would be a perpetual reminder to those who visited Oberon, that its people had not forgotten the brave deeds of sons and daughters in the day of their country's necessity. (Hear, Hear.) It had been said that the memorial was belated; but it was far better late than never, as by its erection the spirit of Anzac would be kept in everlasting remembrance and benediction. When the tocsin of war sounded, the sons of the land of the Southern Cross quitted the fields of sport for the fields of battle. They were not professional soldiers, but rather drawn from the quiet, peaceful walks of life; they were not vassals, but free men, and the name they established and the prowess they exhibited were respected among the nations of the world. He would not discuss the cause of the war, but he would say that not all who had returned had been fairly treated. He represented the Catholic community, from which thousands had enlisted—as the memorials in their great schools throughout the land would attest. They did not ask the reason why; but Catholic and non-Catholic had fought side by side and many died together. (Here the reverend speaker made fitting reference to one of his parishioners who had died only a few days previously as a result of war disabilities). Their creed was Faith and Fatherland, and King and Country. In the light of these lessons of fidelity, why could they not all become cemented by the bond of true citizenship, and live and work together for the common good. (Loud applause).

The Rev. D. F. Almond said whilst he had pleasure in joining with the

people on that memorable occasion, there was an element of sadness, in that there had been the terrible cause, in the shape of the great war, that had called men to lay down their lives, in thousands of instances, in a spirit of true patriotism. He had a great and profound regard for all Diggers, because he had been one of them, and, therefore, brought into very close touch with them. For that reason, among others, he was pleased that the soldiers' memorial in Oberon had advanced to its present dimensions. He feared that, in time to come, it would be found to be not large enough, but they had started well with what was to be a lasting memorial to the memory of their brave young neighbors who had yielded up their lives at the Empire's call, as well as those who were fortunate enough to return again to their homes and loved ones.

At this juncture a heavy shower of rain brought the speaker to a close, while the spectators were forced to seek the nearest available shelter. When the storm had abated, the chairman mentioned that Senator Cox and Mr. Manning would be unable to speak at that late hour as an important engagement called them to Bathurst.

The building, which is situated on the corner of Oberon street and a street leading to the public school, will, when completed, be of brick. Accommodation will be provided for the Council Chambers, clerk's offices, and a large room, 33ft. x 18ft., which will be exclusively controlled by the Returned Soldiers' Association as its rendezvous. There will also be under its roof a leading library and school of arts. The building is expected to be ready for occupation by the latter end of April. Among the donations received during the ceremony were £1 from Mr. Manning, and £12 by an anonymous donor. Apologies were received from Sergt. Jenner, of Burwood, first treasurer of the association, and Mr. J. Burns, Sydney, who had formerly taken a keen interest in the movement. Much regret was expressed at the intimation that the latter gentleman was far from well. Mr. C. S. Chudleigh, as secretary to the movement, deserves the thanks of all concerned; as also does Miss Chudleigh, who assisted her father.

QUEEN OF OBERON.

Miss Brien Crowned at Interesting Ceremony.

That the ceremony of crowning the queen in connection with the Returned Soldiers' Memorial effort, and the ball which was to follow, created considerable interest, was evident by the splendid audience that assembled in the Southern Cross Hall on Friday night. Naturally, the queen competition had

Naturally, the queen competition had been in progress for some time, and the magnificent financial result—namely, £260—indicated that both the idea, as well as the fair competitors, became popular with the residents of both town and district. There were three candidates—Misses Heather Brien (country), Ita English (town) and Rene Clifton (sport), each of whom received the assistance of five sub-committees. Miss Brien was declared queen with 10,494 (3d) votes, realising £131 3s 6d; Miss English was next, with 5,878 votes, £73 9s 6d, and Miss Clifton did well with 3,728 votes, £46 12s 3d. Those who had this section of the memorial movement in hand fixed Friday, February 3, as the date for the coronation ceremony, and all arrangements were complete by the time the coronation party was ready for the stage. This party consisted, in addition to the queen and her maids of honor mentioned, of Archbishop, Mr. R. Northey; herald, Mr. Campbell Roy; page, Lloyd Clifton; trainbearers, Misses Daphne Doust, Doreen Waterhouse and "Poppy" Cannyngame. A very fine set of appropriate costumes was on hand from Sydney, and at 8.15 Mr. Sheppard sounded a fanfare, thus announcing that the ceremony was about to take place. The herald then passed down the aisle, followed by the archbishop, who was announced as "His Grace the Rural and Domestic Archbishop of Oberon." Next in order came the queen, accompanied by her maids of honor. While the procession made its way to the stage the Peter Pan Orchestra played a well-timed march. When the queen and maids were seated, the herald opened the proceedings with his "royal proclamation," which declared that whereas certain public-spirited and well-intentioned citizens of the provinces interested had decided to augment the memorial movement funds by a queen competition, their objective had been attained, etc. Other particulars, set out in interesting manner, dealt with the progress and result of the competition. The proclamation concluded with the introduction of the queen-elect to her "subjects." Mr. Roy, who has a splendid speaking voice, was complimented on a very fine performance.

Next came the archbishop who, with solemn mien, outlined the vast territories over which the queen would reign. After questions as to her preparedness to accept the responsibilities of her high office, the crown "which had graced the heads of her honored ancestry for thousands of years," was placed upon the queen's brow, amid applause. The orb and sceptre were also received from the archbishop, and "God Save

the Queen" signified that the actual ceremony had ended.

The queen and her maids looked very nice indeed, and fully deserved the manifestations of applause frequently in evidence. The queen was presented with a handsome xylonite toilet set in honor of the occasion, while each maid of honor was given a neat little dress ring. Mr. English, jun., lessee of the hall, operated the colored lights, which enhanced the general stage effects. Generally the ceremony was regarded as interesting, and while at times there was an air of assumed dignity necessary, a little vein of humor filled in the lighter side.

To mark her coronation, her majesty conferred honors on certain of her subjects. Mr. George Richards, president of the Returned Soldiers' Club, was raised to the peerage, and will henceforth be known as Sir George. It will be his duty to take charge of the royal escort after passing the "Dog Rocks" when her majesty journeys to Tarana by road, and constitute her personal protector during her stay under the shadows of Crown Ridge. Mr. Horace Stevenson, with the title lord, was appointed poet laureate. None of his poems, however, must be sung or recited within a one-mile radius of the nearest residence of her majesty's subjects.

Capt. Mulvey was appointed physician-in-chief to the royal household. With a view to expeditious transit, the queen has ordered the last word in aeroplanes, the arrival of which in Oberon, it was hoped would not be so long delayed as was the advent of the railway.

On Robert Mackie was conferred the title of Earl of Gingkin, with a commission to guard the royal palace against the approach of the kangaroo army.

Messrs. Eric Hoy, Bob Linnane, and Tom Lee, in recognition of the safety-first principles observed by them on the Oberon-Tarana line, were commissioned to always crew the royal train when her majesty travelled by rail. Being rather nervous, the queen has an objection to the engine running tender first, and will immediately take steps to obviate the necessity for that now familiar spectacle.

Mr. Frank Parker was declared knight of the cleaver and block, with the right to place on his shingle "under royal patronage."

Other honors were promised at the opening of the Memorial Hall.

The ball which followed was also a big success, and as the Peter Pan orchestra supplied spirited music the dancers enjoyed themselves immensely. Mr. Roy Humphries was M.C. Mrs.

Mr. Roy Humphries was M.C. Mrs. Hawkes, assisted by Mesdames Brien and L. Cunynghame, had charge of the supper, which was at once delectable and liberal.

Between dances Mr. C. E. Richards conveyed to the coronation party and the orchestra the thanks of the committee. The little ceremony had been carried through most successfully, and gave pleasure to all who witnessed it. (Applause.)

Mr. Northey, in reply, assured Mr. Richards that it was very gratifying to know that the performance had given satisfaction. That knowledge was always the best thanks to those entrusted with such a job, especially when practically no rehearsal was possible. He also expressed thanks on behalf of the orchestra, which, he understood, was giving its services free on that occasion. (Applause.)