

MERREDIN HOSPITAL.

OPENING OF MATERNITY WARD

The maternity ward of the proposed new district hospital was opened on Anzac Day. It was only possible to have the work carried out through the residents of the district finding half of the money and the Government the other half. Through the co-operation of the local branch of the R.S.L. and the Hospital Comforts Fund Committee the raising of the local quota was achieved. The former had collected £450 towards a children's memorial ward and latter £150 towards an X-Ray plant. Both organisations recognised the urgency of a maternity ward, and they placed their funds at the disposal of the Hospital Committee, trusting to attain the objects for which the funds had been collected at a later date. The estimate of £1500 was exceeded by about £200, and although the Hospital Committee has already raised £815, they require a further £100 to discharge their liabilities. It was decided to make a special appeal at that afternoon's function, and over £30 was donated. This was augmented by £15 raised by the Ladies Auxiliary for the sale of buttons and afternoon teas.

The building is a substantial brick structure with a verandah all round. It contains a main ward, a surgical ward, bathroom and linen press. The main ward contains six beds kindly donated by the Merredin Masonic Lodge, and made in W.A. There was also a comfortable drop-side cot dona-

also a comfortable drop-side cot donated by the Women's Auxiliary.

The first £100 towards the old hospital was raised by the first committee, with Mrs E. M. Duff at its head.

Several apologies for non-attendance were received.

There were between 300 and 400 people present at the opening, some of whom came long distances.

Mr Harling (chairman of the Road Board) said residents of the district had battled hard to get an up-to-date hospital, and it gave him great pleasure to assist in the opening of the maternity ward, which was the first unit of the proposed district hospital. The old buildings were a disgrace to the district. Some years ago the Road Board had tried to raise a loan to build a hospital, but owing to the apathy of the ratepayers there was not the requisite percentage of votes recorded, with the result that a golden opportunity was missed. The local sub-branch of the R.S.L. and the Hospital Comforts Fund Committee were primarily responsible for the present ward being erected. He trusted the £150 advanced by the latter body would be refunded at an early date. The various sporting bodies in the district had been very generous in their response. The Hospital Committee still wanted £100 to clear their indebtedness and he trusted those present would assist by giving to the special appeal which was being launched that afternoon. On behalf of the committee he thanked the local Masonic Lodge for donating the beds and Miss A. M. Cummins for donating a sterilising plant. (Applause).

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Messrs H. A. Griffiths, M.L.A., and J. H. Kendall, president of the local sub-branch of the R.S.L., supported the chairman, the latter remarking that a new hospital was long overdue.

Brigadier-General Bessell-Browne thanked the committee for the honor conferred on him in asking him to open the memorial ward. Since his last visit to Merredin he noticed a wonderful improvement in the town, and it was only right that the hospital should advance with the town. In their effort to establish a memorial ward the R.S.L. had been ably assisted by the Ladies Auxiliary (applause) and the citizens committee. He congratulated the community on having such a splendid man as Dr. Shelmerdine in their midst. He had known him in the war zone and returned with him to Australia in the same transport, and he had always found him keen to help his fellow men. He had seen the plans of the proposed new hospital, of which the maternity ward was only a part, and he was sure the building would be a credit to the district. He trusted it would not be long before the new district hospital was completed.

Miss Pat Andrew then presented Mrs Bessell-Browne with a handsome bouquet of roses and maiden-hair fern.

The president of the R.S.L. then presented Brigadier-General Bessell-Browne with the key of the ward, which was opened amidst applause.

After the ward had been inspected the General then unveiled the memorial tablet, and in doing so said, "I would liken this ward to the rising sun which spreads rays of warmth and health to all creatures on this

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earth, and may those who are ill or afflicted be fortunate enough to be inmates of the ward, and may they benefit from the sunbeam of health which will radiate throughout the ward henceforth." He then unveiled the tablet on which was the following following inscription:—"R.S.L. Memorial Ward for Children. This ward was erected at the instigation of members of the Merredin Sub-branch of the R.S.L. to the memory of comrades who fell in the Great War, 1914-18. Unveiled by Brigadier-General A. L. Bessel-Browne, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Anzac Day, 1932."

Mrs O. Haines, president of the Ladies Auxiliary, said the members of the auxiliary felt it their duty to help in the good work of establishing the memorial ward, and on behalf of her fellow members, she presented the hospital with a cot and linen.

In supporting Mrs Haines, Mrs F. Growden said it gave her great pleasure to be at the opening that day. It was just 17 years since she and her late husband had first moved in the direction of getting a maternity ward erected in Merredin. She trusted that now the work had been begun it would not be long before the hospital itself was an accomplished fact.

Afternoon tea was then served on the spacious verandah by the members of the Ladies Auxiliary.