

AUSTRALIAN EXPLORER.

MITCHELL MEMORIAL.

Some few weeks ago a communication was received by the Boree Shire Council from the secretary of the Royal Historical Society, suggesting that a memorial should be erected to Sir Thomas Mitchell as near as possible to the point from which he had set out on three of his exploring expeditions, and offering to defray the cost of an inscribed marble tablet commemorating the event, if council would erect a suitable cairn on which to place it.

The idea was enthusiastically taken up by the councillors, and the engineer instructed to carry out council's part of the undertaking, and as a result of their public-spirited action, an imposing memorial now stands, not on the exact spot where the camp was pitched, but on the nearest point to it that is visible to travellers along the highway at the junction of the Orange-Parke and Forbes road, near the Boree homestead (which by the way, is spelt Buree in all the old documents).

The land on which the cairn stands was given by Mr. L. Mac Smith, and the stone of which it is constructed was obtained close to the site on Mr. O'Keefe's property, and is of the type that would have been used by Sir Thomas himself to mark a surveyor's point or boundary.

In apologising for the absence of Mr. W. Folster, and in welcoming all present, Mr. R. H. Herbert, President of Boree Shire Council, paid tribute to the pioneers who had blazed the trails

the pioneers who had blazed the trails for succeeding generations to follow, and mentioned amongst others the names of Evans, Burke, Wills and Eyrie.

Mr. H. O. Elliott, M.L.A., who was present by invitation, said that he was doubtful at first if the point selected was within his electoral area, but on consulting the map had discovered that the road on which his hearers was standing marked the boundary, so that he was only just within his own area. He admitted with sorrow that his knowledge of Australian history was rather rusty and feared that he, like many others, was rather inclined to take everything for granted, without doing justice to the courage, resource and dogged perseverance which had distinguished the early Australian explorers. Captain Cook, he continued, had discovered Botany Bay and Port Jackson, but Sir Thomas Mitchell had really discovered Australia, and it was hard to realise that the fertile and highly improved country which stretched on every side, had in those days been covered by a dense green scrub.

Referring to the type of monument, he said that he had seen several in Canada almost identical in construction to the one that they would see unveiled that day.

Cr. Chapman, of Boree Shire, expressed the pleasure he felt in seeing so many present at a ceremony which must prove interesting to both young and old. As a youth he had been particularly interested in the "explorers' tree" at Katoomba, but he had not been able to see it till he visited it with his children 22 years later. He thanked Mr. Mac Smith for his cooperation and assistance in connection with the erection of the memorial.

Mr. L. W. Morris, Shire Engineer

Mr. L. W. Morris, Shire Engineer, said that a few words of explanation of the type of monument selected might not be without interest. It was in keeping with the character of the strong and virile men whose exploits it commemorated, and was constructed of the same material and in the same manner as hundreds of others which they themselves had built, and to carry out the illusion he had instructed the builders not to allow any of the cement which joined the stones to show on the exterior, and though this had meant a great deal of extra trouble, they could see that it had been successfully carried out, with the result that the monument looked to be merely a

carefully piled heap of rough stones.

Mr. E. A. Griffith, inspector of schools for the Forbes district, who had been invited to unveil the memorial, and had been acclaimed as an authority on Sir Thomas Mitchell by Mr. Elliott, traced his career from childhood, through early manhood, and a distinguished army career in which he had won fame and distinction in the Peninsular Wars, and later on a distinguished surveyor and draughtsman. The end of the wars found him unemployed until he accepted an appointment as deputy to Sir John Oxley, Surveyor General, which paved the way to his life work in Australian exploration. The speaker outlined for his hearers all Mitchell's many expeditions, giving a description in detail of those whose starting point was close to the spot on which they were standing. With a feeling reference to the jealousy of his contemporaries, and his differences with unsympathetic officialdom, and his final decease, the speaker

dom, and his final decease, the speaker unveiled the memorial, "In loving memory for all time to Colonel Sir Thomas Mitchell."

As representative of Amaroo Shire, Cr. Jas. O'Donnell thanked the Boree Shire Council for an opportunity to be present at such an interesting ceremony. Referring to the persecution which had shadowed the latter years of Mitchell's life the speaker said that many great and good characters had been persecuted and misrepresented in life, and lionised after their death, instancing Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc, and others to support his contention. He was glad, he said, to see so many young people present that day, and the ceremony they had assisted would probably intensify their interest in their own local history, a branch of study which he feared was rather neglected. He told a story of a visitor to a local school who wished to test the knowledge of the children with regard to their own district and country, and asked them in which parish they resided, but none of them knew. A question as to the county brought the same result, but an enquiry as to who was the Premier brought a shout of "Jas. O'Donnell" from several young hopefuls. With some interesting reminiscences of his travels in Central Australia in the early days, the genial councillor concluded a breezy address.

Cr. Claude Miller, whose name as president of the shire when the erection of the monument was decided on, is inscribed on a particularly neat bronze tablet in the base of the cairn, said that the Historical Society had invited their co-operation in the erection of the memorial, and they had been pleased to assist, and felt certain

that the ratepayers would endorse their action. Their lady friends were getting ready a cup of tea, and that would, he felt sure, have a greater appeal than a speech from him, and he would be very brief in the part that had been allotted to him, and unveil an English oak tree (which had been planted some time previously when the weather conditions were better than at present), and hoped that it would grow into a fair and sturdy tree, in memory of a great, good, and a "big" man.

A large number of interested spectators had gathered from Canowindra, Eugowra, Cudal, Manildra, Cheese-mans Creek, Molong and other centres, and included squads of scholars and Boy Scouts from the different centres, to the number of about 200.

The column carries a marble slab engraved with the following: "From this vicinity Sir Thomas Mitchell's second exploration proceeded on April 7, 1835, to the Darling River; his third expedition, on March 19, 1836, to Australia Felix, Western Victoria; and his fourth expedition on December 15, 1845, to tropical Australia, Central Queensland."

There were a number of amateur photographers present who, busy taking "snaps" of the memorial and the proceedings, had not noticed that a large tree in the background, bore on its trunk an intimation with regard to a recent sale of household furniture,

but this modern intruder at the historic function was soon removed by a couple of energetic boy scouts.

The wives of the Boree Shire councillors, assisted by many district ladies, served a dainty afternoon tea which

ies, served a dainty afternoon tea which was much appreciated by those who had waited, many of them standing in the sun, throughout the long ceremony.

It is a matter for deep regret that owing to some misunderstanding as to the date or insufficient notice, no representative of the Royal Historical Society was present at the unveiling, as it was owing to their interest and initiative that the erection of the memorial was first mooted.

When the officials arrived at the scene early in the afternoon, it was found that some vandal had scrawled across the base his opinion that it was a "waste of public money," and there was some little trouble experienced before the senseless criticism was obliterated.