

LOYAL LEURA.

LORD FORSTER'S VISIT.

LONE PINE AVENUE.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL REPORTER.)

LEURA, Wednesday.

In bitterly cold weather and in a driving, madcap wind that gnawed into the very bones his Excellency the Governor-General (Lord Forster) to-day unveiled the memorial tablets on the gate piers erected at the entrance to Lone Pine-avenue by the citizens of Leura in honour of the local men who served in the war. His Excellency, who was accompanied by Lady Forster and attended by Lord Ditchby—they were the guests at their mountain home of the Chief Justice (Sir William Cullen) and Lady Cullen—will probably remember the trip, his first visit to the Blue Mountains, not only for the simple splendour of the little ceremony in which he was the central figure, but for the beauty of the natural scenery through which he passed, and for an extraordinary sharp nip in the air not usually associated with this warm southern land.

On Armistice Day the people of Leura planted a pine—a lone pine—to commemorate that epochal event. Out of it, so to speak, has grown Lone Pine-avenue, along which, right through to Gordon Falls, and through one of the most beautiful of the mountain reserves, there has been planted on both sides of the road a tree in memory of each man who enlisted from the district. At the entrance to this avenue is an imposing archway, which was the scene of to-day's ceremony.

At the Leura Mail, which, in common with the railway station, was a blaze of patriotic colour, a large gathering had assembled from the mountains for miles around to welcome their Excellencies. An imposing guard of honour of local returned men included in its number one who is regarded, locally at all events, as the oldest soldier who served with the A.I.F. abroad—Pte. Duncan Allan, of Lawson—who was 61 years of age when he went into khaki, and who joined up with his grandson, and saw service in Egypt and in France. Pte. Allen, who proudly shows a photograph of himself and the Prince of Wales, taken in company on the occasion of the latter's visit to Australia, was introduced to his Excellency the Governor and Lady Forster, both of whom were keenly interested in him. Another guard of honour worthily supporting the diggers was composed of the school kiddies, who brightened the atmosphere with a lavish display of Union Jacks, Commonwealth flags, and Allied flags. Supporting the guards of honour was the band of H.M.A.S. Melbourne, which had come to Leura specially for the occasion.

The National Anthem, in which everyone enthusiastically joined, was played on their Excellencies' arrival. Among the big and representative gathering who were introduced to them were Alderman Chas. L. Dash, Mayor

representative gathering who were introduced to them were Alderman Chas. L. Dash, Mayor of Katoomba, within which municipality Leura is situated, Councillor Dash, a brother of Alderman Dash, representing the chairman of the Blue Mountain shire, the chairman of the local war memorial committee (Rev. A. J. A. Fraser), Mr. H. Relton (hon. secretary of the committee), Rev. H. D. Mackie (hon. treasurer), one of the members for the district (Mr. J. C. L. Fitzpatrick), members of the council and of the shire, and of the Katoomba Chamber of Commerce, and other representative local figures. Mr. Carl Johnston, another of the members for the district, was present later at the unveiling ceremony.

In a handsome address of welcome, presented by the Mayor (Alderman C. L. Dash), the citizens of Leura expressed to his Excellency the Governor-General their loyalty to the King. The address proceeded:—"The memorial avenue was formed and the gateway was erected in recognition and grateful remembrance of the ready and magnificent response of the Leura men to the call of duty in the great war. The number of enlistments from this centre was 100, being almost the entire eligible population; and of those no fewer than 14 yielded their lives in support of the cause for which they fought. No memorial in stone or bronze has been erected to commemorate the devotion, sacrifice, and untiring labours of the women of Leura, although in their kind they were as great as those of the men, and are held in equal remembrance."

"I welcome," said his Excellency, in an informal reply, "your expression of loyalty. I know, from what I have heard, that Leura's loyalty is beyond doubt. My wife and I are glad, indeed, to have the opportunity to visit this most loyal centre, and to pay some tribute, by our presence, to the splendid service which Leura rendered to the Commonwealth, to the motherland, and to the Empire during the war."

The Governor-General afterwards inspected the guard of honour, and walked along the long lines of school children in company with Lady Forster.

Their Excellencies, accompanied by Lord Ditchby, the Chief Justice and Lady Cullen, and representative citizens, were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Bloom at luncheon at The Kitz. Mrs. Marshall entertained the guard of honour, and the bandmen from H.M.A.S. Melbourne were the guests of Mrs. Sherwood at Bou Saada.

Their Excellencies were afterwards given an excellent opportunity to see something of the beauty of the Blue Mountains. They motored first of all to Narrow Neck, overlooking, on one side, Mount Solitary and the ruined castle, and on the other Kanimbula Valley, and then passed on to Katoomba falls, where the Three Sisters and the Orphan Rock, standing in waterless solitude were pointed out to them. They then visited Echo Point, and proceeded via Gordon falls to the entrance to Lone Pine Avenue, where, despite the bitterly cold wind, a very large number of people had assembled.

On either a number of the tree guards along the avenue leading to the entrance were laurel wreaths—slight tokens to the heroic dead. It was with bowed head that his Excellency paid his homage to these men as he passed by.

At the entrance to the avenue, which was richly beflagged, his Excellency inspected a guard of honour. Here proceedings took the form of well-known hymns, to the impressive accompaniment of the band of H.M.A.S. Melbourne, prayers, the sounding of "The Last Post," and the National Anthem.

Following upon a brief address by the chairman of the war memorial committee (Rev. A. J. A. Fraser), and the cutting of a ribbon by Lady Forster, his Excellency unveiled the memorial tablets "to the glory of God and in grateful remembrance of the men who served, and particularly those who fell, in the great

grateful remembrance of the men who served, and particularly those who fell, in the great war."

His Excellency, in an address, expressed the homeland's feelings of admiration and ever-falling gratitude to its brothers and sisters across the sea in this distant but happy land for their splendid services and their great sacrifices during the war. He had lived in part of England where they could hear the ceaseless thunder of the guns in Flanders. Time and time again, had he thought of the gallant fellows out there fighting at the call of King and country—men from this fair land, from South Africa, from Canada, from every part of the King's dominions, men who had rallied to the call, not because they must, but because they could. (Applause) Standing there that day as the representative of the King, he was proud to bear tribute to the great valour of Australia's sons and to the patience, courage, and self-sacrifice of Australia's women-folk. "And I say, in the King's name," proceeded his Excellency, "that these services of yours shall never be forgotten as long as life lasts. To those who, like ourselves, have had the proud, but sad, honour of giving our sons to the service of our King and country, we offer the hand of true sympathy. But I hope you will feel, as we feel, that if anyone has to suffer—and some must—we regard it as a privilege and an honour to have served our King and country in that way if we could serve in no other. After all, life is not everything. What matters is what we do with life, and our boys, in making the great sacrifice, have made the best use of life, and we are convinced that all is well with them." (Applause.)

At the instance of Sir William Cullen, seconded by the Mayor of Katoomba (Ald. Dash), and supported by Mr. J. C. L. Fitzpatrick, M.L.A., a cordial vote of thanks was accorded to their Excellencies, who later met the near relatives of the local fallen soldiers.

An apology for absence was announced from the Acting Premier (Mr. Dooley).