

CHIPPER'S LEAP.**AN IGNOBLE EPISODE.**

On Wednesday evening, February 3, a few score persons gathered on the new deviation road being constructed at Greenmount, for the purpose of celebrating the centenary of the incident known as Chipper's Leap. They assembled at the base of a large rock on which a tablet had been affixed by the W.A. Historical Society, and bearing the following inscription:

On the 3rd of February, 1832, John Chipper and Reuben Beacham, a boy of fourteen, while driving a cart from Guildford to York, were attacked by natives near this spot. Beacham was killed, but Chipper, although speared, escaped and leaped from this rock, now known as Chipper's Leap, and eventually reached Governor Stirling's house at Woodbridge.

This tablet was placed here by the Western Australian Historical Society, 1930.

This rock is situated on land purchased 35 years ago by Mr. J. G. Drake, which was transferred under Crown grant, the title in the possession of the family bearing the King's seal. A large number of the Drake family, comprising three generations, were present at the ceremony.

The existing rock, though towering above the road, gives no idea of its original state, for right through it the road has been blasted and levelled, providing a highway where formerly there was a steep descent. In 1832 the rock was a continuation of the steep side of the valley, and the leap for safety was made practically from the southern edge of the present road.

The story itself has no claim on public recognition, and is not of a nature to be handed down through the ages. The sooner it is forgotten the better. A strong, big boned, active man, Chipper was practically in the position of a father to the boy in the circumstances; yet he made not the least effort to save the child, but left him to his fate. In his official report, Chipper states that he heard the screams of the boy behind him, while he ran for his life. The boy was 14 years of age—a little chap he could have tucked under his arm! The record is of interest only as a picture of early life in the State, and the boy

of early life in the State, and the boy Beacham is more worthy of recognition on the tablet. The work of the W.A. Historical Society is highly appreciated, and the State is grateful to this body for its labors; but while so many deeds of self-sacrifice and bravery are left unrecorded, the story of Chipper is not one that should be told to our children.

Mr. Birtwistle (president of the society) explained the object of the gathering. He trusted that it would not be long before an Act was passed by Parliament to protect sites of histori-

cal interest from vandalism.

Mr. P. M. Hasluck (secretary) presented a graphic picture of the conditions prevailing in 1832, and described in detail the settlement from Fremantle to the Swan districts, and the settlement at York. Fremantle was the busiest and most thriving place in the whole of the State, Perth taking second place to the port, having a population of about 200. At Claremont, where the people now went to swim, the Governor had a garden. There were few improvements in Guildford. Most of the activity was above Guildford in the Swan valley, in the neighborhood of Middle and Upper Swan, where the "big" farms were established. Mr. Brockman, with 15 acres, had the biggest area under crop in the State. Wheat was 35/- a bushel. These were not days of prosperity in the State, and the price was caused by scarcity. The position was so bad that in 1832 a passing vessel was stopped, and the captain was persuaded to let the State have 20 tons of potatoes, so sorely did the people lack the necessities of life. Next year affairs were better, and one farmer had a crop of 100 bushels of wheat. The price of wheat dropped to 20/-, then to 15/-, and by 1835 it had fallen to 11/- per bushel, and everybody cried out that the country was ruined. It was stated that the average yield was 10 bushels per acre, and in consideration of the cost of farming 14/- was the lowest price at which wheat should be sold. Eventually the Government was persuaded to guarantee a price of 11/-.

Mr. Hasluck described the procession which wended its way to York in 1831, at the rate of seven miles a day, cutting down trees and removing stones, and thus defining the route of the present road. The batsman at the rear pushed along an

instrument fashioned like a perambulator, which ticked off the miles. Over that track, six months later, John Chipper and Reuben Beacham made their way.

Mr. Steve Chipper, on behalf of the Chipper family, thanked the society for the memorial to the incident in the life of his grandfather. After dedicating the tablet, he read John Chipper's official report of the matter.

Mr. W. Green, grand nephew of Reuben Beacham, stated that the lad was

Born on August 24, 1820, in Sussex, England, and was therefore 11 years old at the time of his murder. Thus closed the life of a young but brave pioneer.

At the instance of Mr. De Mouncey, a comprehensive vote of thanks was passed.

Mrs. Cowan (vice-president of the society) in an able speech, urged all present to combat vandalism.