

War Memorial Baths Opened At Pungarehu

Result of voluntary efforts praised.

In spite of heavy rain during the morning, the weather cleared after mid-day to enable the Pungarehu memorial baths to be opened under perfect conditions. Mr. W. T. Vaughan, New Plymouth, was the principal speaker, Mr. E. B. Corbett, who had hoped to perform the ceremony, being absent. The material for the baths was provided locally and the labour was voluntary. This was stressed by the speakers, who praised the district's community spirit.

Set in a natural amphitheatre, the baths, when fully completed, will commemorate the men of the district who served in two world wars.

Mr. W. A. Corbett, chairman of the baths construction committee, welcomed visitors and local residents and read an apology from Mr. E. B. Corbett, detained by pressure of public business at Wellington. Mr. Corbett said the opening was the outcome of a visit by Pungarehu children to Okato baths a few years ago. So few were able to swim that a citizens' committee decided to build a pool at Pungarehu. They were promised £400 and substantial help from the home and school association and the boxing club. As the baths were to be a war memorial public support was immediate and generous. Mr. Corbett specially praised the untiring efforts of Mr. L. Miller and Mr. G. Noble.

Originally a Dam Site

Mr. P. Brophy, representing the Cape Egmont Dairy Company told his listeners that Mr. W. Corbett had been the prime mover in the scheme. Mr. Corbett had persuaded the factory directors to hand over the site, originally the factory dam, to the domain board.

Mr. S. J. Armstrong, Opunake Returned Services Association, introduced Mr. Vaughan and spoke of the pleasure of ex-servicemen that the district had selected such a memorial.

Mr. H. Gilhooly, chairman of the Pungarehu school committee, said that nothing could have been more useful to the community. There was nothing comparable between New Plymouth and Manaia, said Mr. Gilhooly, one of the collectors, congratulating the district.

Mr. Vaughan said: "There is no better district in New Zealand than the coast when community effort is needed." Pungarehu must be congratulated on the form chosen for the memorial.

"This is a Memorial"

Speaking to the children, Mr. Vaughan said: "Do not forget that this is a memorial pool. Don't talk of going down to the baths—say rather: 'We are going to the memorial baths,' for they represent a silent reminder to the men of your district who were prepared to go away and fight, to suffer hardships, and to die for their ideals."

"I know they will appreciate it," said Mr. Vaughan, "for ex-servicemen do not now want pillars of stone, however noble and dignified, but some tangible amenity that will benefit those who follow on. Here at Pungarehu you have a community effort where all have worked together for the common good. Is not this a practical ideal which, animating wider groups and even the nations of the world in concert, may yet hold out the greatest hope that men may live and work in amity."

"I now declare the baths officially open and I trust that each and everyone of you will enjoy them for years to come."

Mr. Vaughan unveiled a stone plaque set in to the edge of the baths which reads: "1950 memorial baths, erected in honour of those who served during the great wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45."

At the conclusion of the ceremony Mr. Vaughan presented lettered scrolls of appreciation to Messrs. Corbett, Miller and Noble on behalf of the residents.