

Western Times - Tuesday 10 June 1919

HALBERTON'S PAGEANT

Fitting Welcome Home to War Heroes

THRILLING SCENES

A simple wooden cross, a fallen log and a pillory; these were all the props for this historical pageant, "The Home-Comers" performed, in the charming grounds of Bridwell Park, near Halberton yesterday. The sloping ground made an excellent amphitheatre and the leafy oaks a perfect background, while the sun shone brightly all the day, and a favourable breeze was helpful to performers and comforting to spectators.

It was a happy subject, for the pageant was quite in keeping with the occasion. The idea was to raise funds for the conversion of a "demobilised" hotel into a village club to form a war memorial for the village of Halberton. Of the pageant itself more hereafter.

The feature about it all, which was the most thrilling, came at the end. The principals having marched before the audience formed a semi-circle with the other performers, and then, each to the appropriate national air there marched representatives of the Allies, all forming an effective tableaux. An amusing relief was provided by the appearance of a red tailed and horned intruder representative of Bolshevism. One after the other he approached the Powers, only to be repulsed, and then Russia weakly yielded, fell and was led into darkness.

What followed can only be described as thrilling. To the air of a stirring tune about fifty local men in navy blue and khaki and civilian clothes marched smartly into the arena, halted, turned to their front, and stood at attention. These were the men who had fought and

suffered for their country. These were the real actors in the great drama and this was their final curtain. They were the real “home-comers”.

With their first appearance without any pre-arrangement, the huge crowd of spectators rose their feet and uncovered. It was a thrilling, touching tribute not to these men only, but also to the large number local men who, fighting for their country, have gone to their last Home.

Mr. H. G. New, dressed as a Crusader, whose part he had been taking, explained that the idea of the pageant was give a welcome home to the men who had fought for England in the greatest crisis in her history. However great her trials in the past this country had never had to face anything to compare with what she had gone through during the past four years. That afternoon they had presented phases of England's history when her warriors had been welcomed home, and it was only fitting that now the great war was over, and they hoped they were entering happier times, that they should welcome home, too, their sons who had risked all for the defence of the Empire. It was hard to express in words just what they felt, but they were very grateful to them all. He called for three cheers to the men who had fought and who had come home. The huge crowd heartily responded, and Mr New then expressed the thanks of all to Mr. W. T. Lovett, who had organised the event, to Mr. J. W. Clark, who had kindly given permission for the use of the park, and to Captain E. C. Ball, the producer. At his request "Britannia" presented Mr. Lovett and Captain Ball with silver cigarette boxes and framed photographs.

The Pageant

It was a very ambitious undertaking to attempt to produce a pageant of the kind submitted, when it is considered that the majority of the performers have never previously spoken a line in public. It has to be remembered, too, that, the helpers were scattered over area of ten square miles. For the past ten weeks, under the supervision of Capt. E. C. Ball of the London Regiment, they have worked very hard, and have attended no less than 45 rehearsals. The reward for their efforts came yesterday in the success of the production.

Despite the huge size of the amphitheatre and the presence of a crowd approaching five thousand, not one performer suffered from stage fright. Their lines were well spoken with appropriate gesture and feeling, and in a voice loud enough to heard by all who occupied seats, though those who stood behind the ropes had of necessity to satisfied with dumb pantomime. It was, everything considered, a triumph. The pageant ranked amongst the very best produced in the West England. The producers almost apologetically announced that it was merely a simple village play. They have no occasion excuse anything. It was a brilliantly successful pageant. To attempt any lengthy description is quite impossible. It showed in five episodes the return of warriors from the time when the Romans fought in Britain down the return of the warriors who fought with Wellington at Waterloo, and the entrance of the soldiers of the present age as already described made a fitting conclusion an entertaining and instructive show.

Finally the choir, under the conductorship of Mr. K. Bareham, F.R.C.O, sang, "Land of Hope and Glory," followed by the hymn "God our help," the first and third verses being accompanied by the Royal Marine Band, and the second verse being effectively rendered

unaccompanied. The singing of the National Anthem ended the performance. The performances the Royal Marine Band were a feature of the day, and there were numerous other attractions. Mr. Harry Rice, the well-known entertainer, entertained large audiences, who were highly delighted with the conjuring and ventriloquial entertainment. Miss Freda "Merry- Makers" party gave concerts in a big enclosure, there was a tent for Punch and Judy shows, sports and teas, to say nothing of dancing till a late hour. The whole event showed what was possible of accomplishment even in a remote country district, and the officials are to be congratulated the success the event.