



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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MOST WORSHIPFUL BROTHER HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI

Forty years¹ ago on a cold January day King George VI stood at London Airport to farewell his daughter Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth and her husband Brother His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as they commenced a tour of Commonwealth countries on his behalf. Everyone has seen famous newsreels showing the King bidding his daughter farewell. As we all know a week later he was dead and his daughter ascended to the Throne. It is incredible to reflect upon the social changes which have occurred since that day. Nothing brings this home more than the realization that the vast majority of people alive today were not even born during his reign.

This raises the question as to why forty years after the death of the King we should remember him. To my mind there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly his life covered a period of enormous social change. He was born during the reign of his great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, lived through two World Wars and reigned at a time when the British Empire became the British Commonwealth. More importantly in an age where the concept of public service and public duty is all too often lost or forgotten he provides an inspiring example of someone who put his duty above his own personal self interest. This he did notwithstanding that this was at great personal cost to himself in terms of his health. As the present Queen said on 21 October 1955 when she unveiled a statue of her father:

"Much was asked of my father in personal sacrifice and endeavour, often in the face of illness; his courage in overcoming it endeared him to everybody. He shirked no task, however difficult, and to the end he never faltered in his duty to his peoples. Throughout all the strains of his public life he remained a man of warm and friendly sympathies - a man who by the simple qualities of loyalty, resolution and service won for himself such a place in the affection of all of us that when he died millions mourned for him as for a true and trusted friend."

It is therefore appropriate to re-evaluate the King's life and to examine the

