



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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R. W. BRO. BISHOP HILLIARD P. D. G. M. 1887-1960

The suburb of Redfern, which often seems to be a trouble spot, was where to-night's masonic personality was born. William George Hilliard first saw the light of day in a modest cottage beside the Railway workshops on the 29th of May, 1887, so he would have been 105 this Friday. Who would have thought from such a humble beginning he would grow up to be a very famous Mason, Bishop, headmaster and cricketer? I am sure you will agree this start in life was in stark contrast to the birth of our last masonic personality, King George VI whose life was presented to us so beautifully by John Armfield.

Perhaps some of you here to-night may remember William George Hilliard (hereinafter called "Bishop"). You may have seen him in masonic regalia, you may have been baptised, confirmed or married by him. I remember seeing the Bishop take a confirmation service at St. Peter's Burwood East when I was a child, and recall thinking "isn't he good looking". Clergy in those days seemed to look rather forbidding but he was different. It was very disappointing, when a few years later I had to settle for being confirmed by Bishop Pilcher the other coadjutor bishop of the Sydney Church of England Diocese.

Like many Australians, the Bishop's great grandparents were convicts whose misdemeanours included burglary and petty larceny. Grandfather, Henry Hilliard excelled at cricket. He became a sporting celebrity and passed this gift on to his grandson. One of the Bishop's most highly prized possessions was a cricket bat his grandfather gave to him for his thirteenth birthday.

The Bishop was the eldest of the family and had two sisters. His father died when the family was young and the mother took in washing to help support the family.

In 1887 the Church of England in the Sydney Diocese was beset with problems - so what's new?. The diocese was divided into two parties, one which was conservative evangelical and turned away from the secular world and its problems

