



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Rt. Wor. Bro. JAMES BRUNTON GIBB. Teacher of Speech

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During World War 1 a concert party called "The Anzac Coves" entertained Australian troops. It was not composed of professional entertainers but of troops as they came out of the trenches in makeshift costumes and staging. One of the "Coves" was James Thomas Gibb, known to us later as James Brunton Gibb. He was less than twenty years of age at that time, a stretcher bearer in France and a would-be electionist. The Australian baritone, Harold Williams, was another young member of the troupe. At the end of the war the Anzac Coves had a Royal Command performance at Buckingham Palace and toured England with their show. Soon after that, on his return to Australia he met Ethel Lang, the subject of the previous paper, and they were married in 1923.

James Brunton Gibb was born in Balmain in 1897, the son of James Gibb, a barber of Scottish descent and Mary Brunton, of Irish descent. He attended Drummoyne Model School, and Sydney High School for 2 years, leaving at the age of 14 which was not unusual at the time. He was then apprenticed to the accountancy department of a shipping office, possibly in Bridge Street, Sydney. His daughter, Barbara Revill, recalls him saying how he absolutely hated that sort of work. He was a great lover of books and from the money his mother gave him from his salary he bought a complete set of Dickens by walking to work rather than pay for a tram ride.

James Brunton Gibb enlisted in the 1st AIF at the age of 18 and served with the Seventh Field Ambulance in Egypt and France where the "Anzac Coves" mentioned above were formed. After returning to Australia he studied the art of speech with Lawrence Campbell where he met his future wife. He became a teacher of good, but not pedantic speech, teaching students to use a wide vocabulary with good speech melody but without affectation. James Brunton Gibb continued this vocation for over 40 years more in a studio in the old Paling's Building.

James Gibb coached Qantas air hostesses in microphone technique and was also adviser in speech to the J. N. Kirby organisations and General Electric for more than twenty years. It has also been reported that he coached Australian cricket captains in the art of public speaking. Ken Rosewall, the Australian tennis player, came to him for help before taking part in the 1953 Davis Cup in New York. He was a member of Sydney Legacy and was for many years a judge at the annual Legacy talent quest and an adjudicator in speech in contests in Australia.

When World War 2 broke out he filled the position of Amenities Officer at the 113th A.G.H. and presented entertainment to wounded patients including complete Tivoli shows. He was able to recruit such artists as Gracie Fields and Peter Dawson. to entertain the troops. James Brunton Gibb had very wide and varied interests, he was President of the Sydney Savage Club and was for many years Chief Savage in which capacity he presented many programmes with well known Australian performers including Stanley Clarkson, Harold Williams, Lindley Evans and Frank Hutchens. The Savage Club took its name from a club of the same name formed in London in 1857. It was described as being composed of men practicing or interested in the creative arts, literature, music, architecture, drama, the sciences, original research and discovery. A pretty wide ambit!

Savages met to enjoy, encourage and practice these arts and sciences in a Bohemian atmosphere of goodfellowship and comradeship. James Brunton Gibb wrote odes for welcoming guests at Savage meetings. I quote:

Savage Welcome:

1. Welcome, welcome, come sit down,
Have a drink and rest a while,
Speak with us, have song and music
In our home with us exult.
2. Come and take food with us,
The Southern Cross shines till day dawn
The eyes of many tribesmen behold you
In our home by the sea, the place of our heart,
3. The soul of the man we love very much
In our camping place at Sydney.
So speak with us, have song and music,
This day we welcome you in the Good Spirit.

This ode was written and spoken in an Aboriginal dialect.

He was President of the Civic Club for 11 years presenting many excellent musical programmes especially for Tattersall's Club and the Bank of New South Wales. He was known as a remarkable raconteur with well chosen stories for every occasion.

James Brunton Gibb's recording of the ode "Lest We Forget" was used in all R.S.L. Clubs on memorial occasions. A luncheon to the Duke of Gloucester was held in the Sydney Town Hall by the Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia (N.S.W. Branch) on 24th November 1934 and James Gibb was the Toastmaster on that occasion. He arranged and compered the annual Anzac Day Concert in the Sydney Town Hall for many years.

As a young man he wrote many poems concerned with war, this one published in "The Gallipoli Gazette" in July/August 1985 was entitled "They Are Not Dead".

1. They are not dead, the men who fell,
Though sounds for them the vesper bell,
And loved ones gather at the shrine-
They live in hearts of yours and mine,
They live in mountain and in glade,
In shearing shed or place of trade,
In school or on the field of play
They live-those men who marched away.
2. They are not dead, the men who fought,
The sons of valour who feared nought
Of man's devising but who trod
The deathless path that leads to God
Their call down bush track is still heard
Their whistle in the song of bird,
Their laughter like a wood-note wild,
Is heard in some Australian child.
3. They are not dead, but gone before-
Though crosses mark on Anzac shore,
At Shrapnel Gully and Lone Pine.
Where rest those mates of yours and mine.
The fields of Flanders, hills of Crete,
Sound no more to their tramping feet,
But they are still here at our side,
The men who fell, but never died.
4. They are not dead, they cannot be,
They're part of you and part of me;
The smile, the nod, the steadfast look,
Could never perish at Tobruk,
Nor could there fade on Bardia's sand
The cheery voice, the friendly hand,
Though seas and lands and years divide.
Our comrades rule-they have not died.

James Brunton Gibb died on 28th June 1968, his wife's 66th birthday
James Thomas Gibb, James Brunton Gibb later being a professional name, joined
Freemasonry in Lodge Birkenhead No. 332 on 25th August 1921 was passed and raised on
14th October 1921 and 9th December 1921 respectively. He affiliated with Lodge Harold
Herman, No. 428 in 1929 and was a foundation member of Lodge Sydney High School, No.
631, also in 1929, serving as Worshipful Master of that Lodge in 1932-1933.
He was elected a Grand Steward in 1933 and served in the various offices of Grand Lodge,
becoming Senior Grand Warden in 1942. He was a member of the Board of General Purposes
from 1942 to 1947 and was appointed Official Lecturer in 1934. At the time of his death he
was the representative of the Grand Lodge of Utah.

Ref: Various family references and personal memoirs kindly loaned by his daughter,
Barbara Revill.
Records of the U. G. L. of N. S. W & A. C. T.