



## 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!

