



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY: Jim Ruxton

GARING William Henry CBE, DFC

Bill Garing was born on July 6 1910 at Corryong in Victoria, the son of George Garing a retired grazier and Amy Evelyn Garing. He was educated at Thougla State School, Corryong Higher Elementary School and Melbourne Technical College.

Garing began his career as an Electrical and Mechanical Engineer in 1928 with the citizen air force before entering the Royal Military College at Duntroon in 1929. In 1930 he transferred from the army to the air force as a specially selected RAAF Cadet and commenced flying training at Point Cook in December 1930, graduating in 1931. He also graduated from the School of Air Pilotage and Specialist Navigational School in the UK in 1934-35 and was a Seaplane Flying Instructor and Chief Navigation Instructor at Point Cook in 1936. In 1938 he became the first person in Australia to qualify for a first class Air Navigator's Licence (Australian).

Bill Garing was posted to England in 1939 and served with the No.10 Australian Squadron RAAF as Flight Commander in Coastal Command RAF in 1939, taking delivery of new Short Sunderland marine patrol aircraft for the RAAF. On the outbreak of war in 1939 instead of returning to Australia as planned, Bill Garing stayed on to participate in the war and flew the unit's first operational mission on 10 October 1939. In June 1940 whilst flying a Sunderland flying boat he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for engaging five German bombers that were attacking an armed merchant cruiser. At this time he was flying operations in the North Atlantic, France and the Mediterranean, and also helped rescue 45 survivors from the refugee liner City of Benares six days after the ship had been torpedoed in the North Atlantic.

Garing flew Lord Lloyd to France for meetings with the Petain Government before the collapse of the French Government. He was also pilot to the Duke of Kent and Mr Anthony Eden, being Mentioned in Despatches during that time.

He returned Australia in 1941 and was appointed Senior Air Staff Officer Headquarters, Northern Area which ranged through Netherland Indies, New Guinea, British Solomon Islands and New Caledonia. It was at this time that he was able to use his operational experience and planning ability to set up reconnaissance and attack plans for air force units stationed in New Guinea. These plans had previously not existed in the RAAF and were in preparation for the possible entry of Japan into the war.

Garing then commanded the No. 9 (Operational) group RAAF, New Guinea 1942, Milne Bay Campaign 1942, Buna Campaign 1942-43 (awarded American DSC), 1943 awarded CBE, Commanded No 1 Operational Training unit Victoria 1943-44 (awarded 1939-43 Star),

Garing showed brilliant and aggressive leadership at Milne Bay and the Bismarck Sea battles and this was a great contribution to the eventual victory, the first time that Japanese land forces had been defeated. In 1942 seven months after Milne Bay the Japanese made one last effort to keep their hold on New Guinea by despatching 6400 troops from Rabaul to Lae using eight transport, eight destroyers and about 100 aircraft. Garing then organised a massive co-ordinated attack against the convoy using large numbers of aircraft and precise timing. On the morning of March 3 more than 90 RAAF and US strike aircraft with fighter escort intercepted the convoy in the Bismarck Sea about 140 Kilometres and between 10.00am and 10.30am the enemy fleet had been completely routed. Only a handful of allied aircraft were lost with the Japanese losing eight transports and four destroyers and three thousand Japanese soldiers killed and the rest in disarray.

This was described by General MacArthur as the “decisive aerial engagement” of the war in the south-west Pacific, being one of the most devastatingly one-sided air-sea battles of World War 2 and was also the end of any Japanese threat to Australia



Garing continued on to be Director Operational Requirements in 1944, RAAF Representative to Washington 1945-46, Joint Services Staff College 1948, ADC to King George 6th 1951 and Imperial defence College 1952. Despite some problems with bureaucracy Garing filled many senior post war offices with great distinction including Air Officer Commanding Overseas Headquarters, London and commanding bases at Pearce in WA, Point Cook, Richmond and Edinburgh Field in South Australia.

After leaving the RAAF he continued to fly aircraft until retiring in 1964 after exactly 60 years to the day of flying during which time he logged more than 3900 hours and flew over 90 aircraft types as captain in command. He continued his interest in military affairs and spoke at many RAAF conferences with his recollections of the war. He was a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management. He was also an Air Master Navigator (RAF).

His recreations included alpine skiing, water skiing, yachting, golf, shooting, racing, carpentry, landscape painting and gardening. Garing was a member of the Imperial Services Club (Sydney), Royal Commonwealth Club and was a Freeman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators.

William Henry Garing died on 1st January 2004.

William Henry Garing was initiated into Freemasonry on 16th August 1932 in Lodge Adastral No. 397, Victorian Constitution, passed on 21st March 1933 and raised on 16th May 1933 and called off that lodge on 6th October 1947.

He affiliated with Lodge Gippsland No 51 Vict Const on 2nd February 1946, called off on 7th March 1962 Foundation Wor. Master of Lodge Fraternity No 214 South Australian Constitution on 26th October 1963, called off 30th September 1965. Affiliated with Lodge Royal Empire No 613, NSW Constitution on 25th July 1968 and was installed as Wor Master in 1976 and called off on 31st October 1984 after affiliating with Lodge Army and Navy No. 517 on 13th April 1983.

The rank of Past District Grand Inspector of Workings was conferred on 12th March 1980 and that of Past Junior Grand Warden on 9th June 1982

Ref: SMH Obituary, 19.01.2004.
NSW Freemason, Who's Who in Australia, 1983
UGL of NSW & ACT Records