



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No. 116 A

PREPARED BY: D.G. Davis

DATE: 21 March 2005

Bro. CAPTAIN JOHN FITZMAURICE and ABBOTSHOLME COLLEGE at KILLARA

Bro. John Fitzmaurice, an Englishman related to the Marquis of Landsdowne, was educated for a life in the British Army. He entered the army as a subaltern and saw action in the South African War.

He came to Australia with the rank of Captain in 1901 and a few years later founded the Abbotsholme College for boys at Killara.

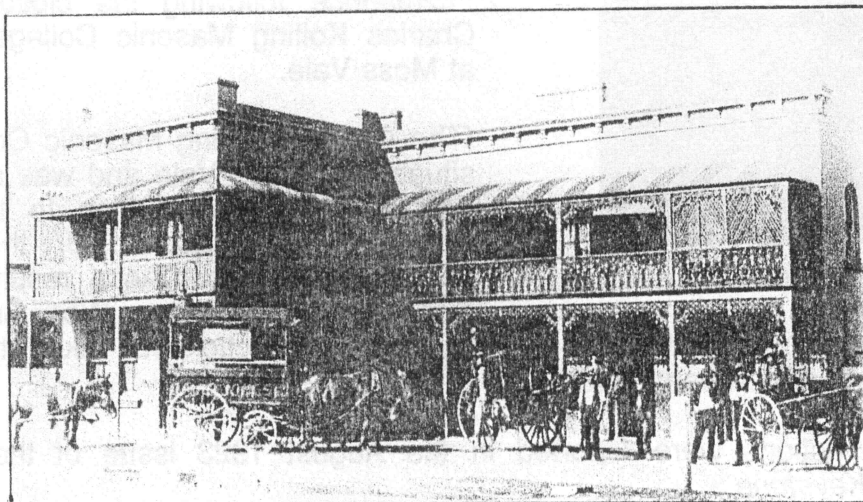
Bro. John Fitzmaurice was initiated into Freemasonry in The Unity Lodge of Sydney No. 32, on 16 July 1906.

He became a foundation member of The Millions Lodge No. 476 at its consecration in Sydney on 13 April 1923.

Abbotsholme College was situated on Lane Cove Road (now the Pacific Highway) on both sides of Greengate Road with the original school building on the southern corner of Greengate Road, being firstly leased and then purchased.

The original owner of this property was a widow, Mrs Matilda Fish, who had 80 acres from which she sold 10 acres to Mrs Ann Hordern, wife of the storekeeper, Anthony Hordern. She built a 'holiday cottage' on the site.

In 1853, this property was sold to Thomas Waterhouse, licensee of the Greengate Hotel who built a substantial home on the property.



The Greengate Hotel in 1880 when owned by Thomas Waterhouse.

After his death in 1884, the property passed to his son, John Waterhouse who promoted boxing, horse racing and cock fighting. He took over the running of the hotel and the home.

Bro. Peter Jackson, a member of the Balmain Lodge and a ship-deserter, who later became the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, worked for Waterhouse at the hotel at this time.

In 1901, John Waterhouse sold the property to John Fitzmaurice who enlarged the premises where, from 1903 until his death in 1924, he conducted the Abbotsholme College for boys.

The sports pavilion and sporting fields were on the northern side of Greengate Road behind the Greengate Hotel and continued down to the railway line. This part of the property covered several acres and catered for all forms of sport.

The discipline at the school was very strict and it had the name of being one of the superior boys' boarding schools in Sydney. Amongst its pupils were Prime Ministers Harold Holt, Bro. Sir William McMahon, a member of Lodge University of Sydney No. 544, and Bro. Sir John Gorton of Kerang Lodge No. 100, Victorian Constitution.



Bro. John Fitzmaurice

The School had a close affiliation with St John's Church at Gordon where the Rector, Wor. Bro. Rev'd Arnold Conolly, was the Chaplain of The Millions Lodge No. 476 and of Lodge Gordon No. 557.

Bro. John Fitzmaurice marched the boys along the Highway to St John's each Sunday for morning service.

Bro. Fitzmaurice certainly knew the meaning of charity.

The subsequent offer was made by Bro Fitzmaurice following the closure of the Charles Kolling Masonic College for boys at Moss Vale.

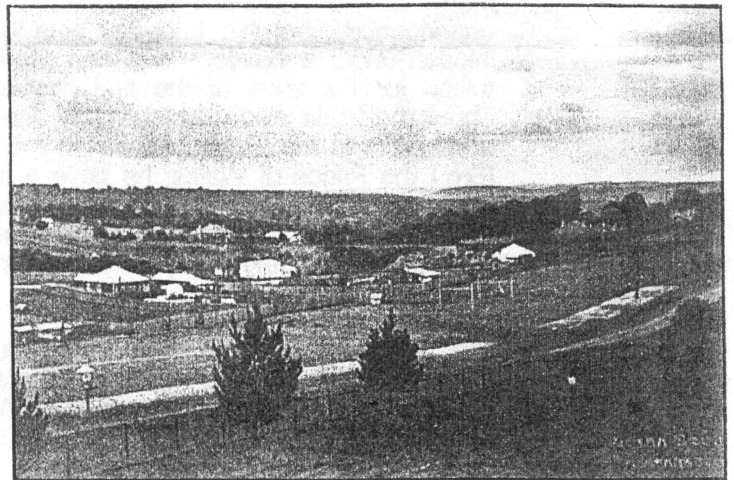
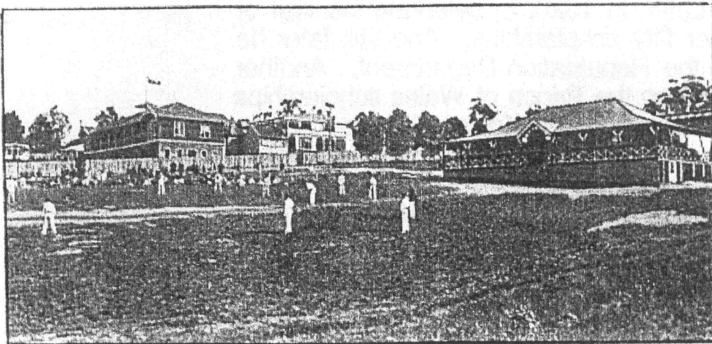
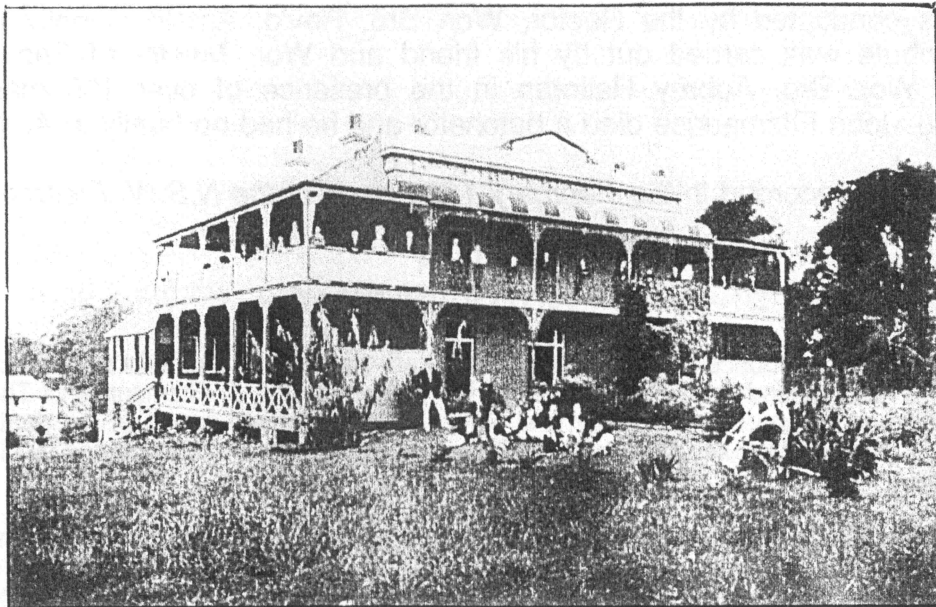
(The Charles Kolling Masonic College was situated at Moss Vale and was a gift from Wor. Bro. Charles Kolling to the Grand Lodge for the education of the sons of deceased masons. As a result of some disagreements between Wor. Bro. Kolling

and the trustees appointed by the Grand Lodge, legal action was taken, the college was closed and the property sold).

Fitzmaurice's actions were reported in the August 1923 issue of the Masonic journal, *The Keystone* :-

PUBLIC SPIRITED CITIZEN
BRO. J. FITZMAURICE HAS 15 MASONIC ORPHANS AT HIS
'ABBOTSHOLME COLLEGE' - WILL TAKE 50.

'The Millions Lodge is justly proud of their Brother Fitzmaurice, and drank his health at supper last month. It was explained that Bro. Fitzmaurice was already educating sons of deceased soldiers to the [total] value of £25,000 in scholarships, and that he had now taken over 15 boys from the Masonic College at Moss Vale, providing them with free board and education, and he was willing to take over another 35 boys if desired by the Grand Master. Bro. Fitzmaurice, who is evidently a man among boys as well as a man amongst men, asked the Brethren of the Millions Lodge not to make too much of his doings, as he was receiving full recompense in the fact that it gave him extreme pleasure to provide for the children of those who had done so much for the nation, and to provide for the sons of Brethren who had passed away. He spoke in such moderate terms of his great gifts that the Brethren present felt that they were in the presence of a big-hearted and great-minded man.'



Top: The first Abbotsholme School building in 1903 and, bottom left, the sports pavilion and school hall, and right, the playing fields looking across Greengate Road.

The February 1924 issue of the *N.S.W. Freemason* carried a report of Bro. Fitzmaurice joining Royal Arch Freemasonry :-

'Bro. Captain John Fitzmaurice decided to become a Royal Arch Freemason and he joined Chapter Army and Navy No. 459, Scottish Constitution, on Monday, 3 December 1923.

. In proposing a toast to him at supper following the ceremony, it was said that the Chapter was fortunate in having the honour of having Bro. Fitzmaurice as a member. This well-known and worthy Brother's work on behalf of the Masonic Schools is known throughout New South Wales. Bro. Fitzmaurice had a distinguished military career with the British Army in South Africa, where he was Aide-de-Camp to Bro. Lord Roberts.'

The sudden death of Bro. John Fitzmaurice from heart failure on 28 January 1924 at the age of 41, received wide publicity in the press.

He was buried with full Masonic Honours in St John's Churchyard, Gordon, The service was conducted by the Rector, Wor. Bro. Rev'd. Arnold Conolly and the Masonic Tribute was carried out by his friend and Wor. Master of The Millions Lodge, Rt. Wor. Bro. Aubrey Halloran in the presence of over 100 masons in regalia. Bro. John Fitzmaurice died a bachelor and he had no family in Australia.

His obituary was recorded in the *February 1924 issue of the N.S.W. Freemason* :-

OBITUARY

Bro. John Fitzmaurice

We regret to announce to members of the Craft that one of Australia's greatest-hearted men passed away last Monday in the person of Bro. J. Fitzmaurice of The Millions Lodge, and Chapter Army and Navy. The immediate cause of his death was sudden heart failure, and it was, until the last hour of his life, unexpected by his friends.

Bro. John Fitzmaurice was only 41 years of age, and the principal of Abbotsholme College at Killara, which under his able principalship, attained a high reputation as a scholastic institution, and which was his instrument for many acts of assistance to growing boys and more particularly boy-orphans. Our late Bro. Fitzmaurice did many acts of kindness for sons of parents of moderate income quietly and unannounced, but his later-day acts of assistance were too big-hearted to be 'hidden under a bushel.' His first prominent act was to provide free board and tuition for the sons of the first twelve soldiers to volunteer with "Carmichael's Thousand." He also offered twenty scholarships to the sons of deceased soldiers and sailors in the [Royal] Australian Navy. Later, in 1920, to celebrate the visit of [Bro.] the Prince of Wales, he gave a further fifty scholarships. And still later he made a similar offer of fifty scholarships to the Repatriation Department. Another fifty scholarships to war orphans was made when the Prince of Wales scholarships were completed, and finally he took over 15 boys from the Kolling College at Moss Vale last year.

Bro. Fitzmaurice was an Englishman, educated for the Army, which he entered as a subaltern and saw action in the South African War. He came to Australia in 1901, and a few years afterwards founded the Abbotsholme College.

Only last week he was a guest at the home of Brother S.A. Bailey, S.W. Lodge Millions, and Secretary of the Millions Club, arranging to pass through the Royal Arch Degree next Monday in the Army and Navy Chapter No. 459, Scottish Constitution, of which Chapter he was a Mark Mason.

On 1 June 1925¹, several of the school buildings were destroyed by fire, probably the work of arsonists.

Bro. Fitzmaurice had no relatives in Australia so all of his assets were sent back to England and despite all the efforts of Wor. Bro. Rev. Arnold Conolly no headstone was ever erected on Bro. Fitzmaurice's grave.

This problem has at last been rectified - a suitable headstone with Masonic symbols, will be erected on 17 July 2005, 81 years after his untimely death. This has been done through the efforts of the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society.

By Order of the PUBLIC TRUSTEE
Estate of the late
JOHN FITZMAURICE

KILLARA-CORDON ABBOTTSHOLME ESTATE

Auction Sale, on the Ground at 3 o'clock

SATURDAY, 23RD MAY, 1925.

Auctioneers
In conjunction

Raine & Horne William Robjohns & Co.

70 Pitt St
Sydney

121 Pitt St Sydney.

TERMS

For Buildings—
15% Deposit, balance in 3 years,
with interest at 7%.
For Vacant Land—
10% Deposit, balance by 12 equal
quarterly instalments, with
interest at 6%.

Title

Torrens except
Lots 24 and 25 Lane Cove
Road which are under
Old System Title

Estimates by the Estate
Messrs W.A. CILDER Western C
23 Pitt St
Sydney

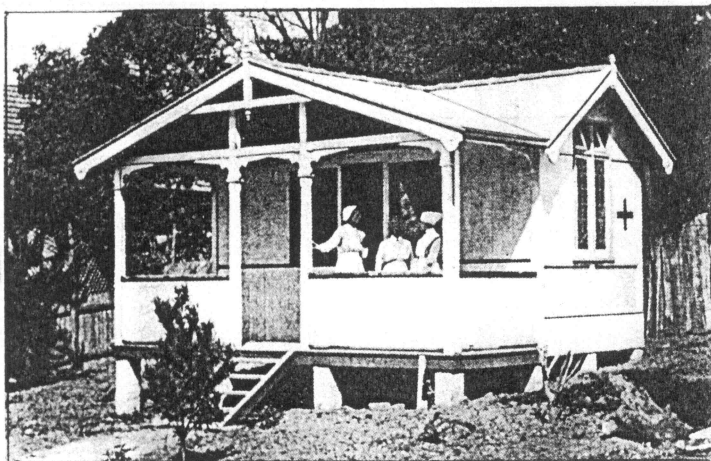
CALVERT

4/28	1
4/29	2
4/30	3

SPENCER

Engineered by
Clements & Dunlop
North Sydney
Sydney

All dimensions etc. are subject to Deposited Plan



Top: The School hospital, or as it was known, the Sanatorium. The health of the boys was paramount and despite the flu epidemic in 1919, the school remained open although many others were closed.

Left: The sub-division plan of the property when advertised for sale in May 1925.

REFERENCES:-

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Focus on Ku-ring-gai</i> | Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, 1996. |
| <i>The Railway came to Ku-ring-gai</i> | Kerrin Cook, 1991. |
| <i>Pioneers at Peace</i> | Jill Lyons, 1994. |
| <i>125 Year History of the Church of
St John the Evangelist, Gordon</i> | Edited by John C. Moon. |
| <i>The Keystone</i> | August, 1923. |
| <i>The N.S.W. Freemason</i> | February, 1924. |
-