



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No. 132

PREPARED & PRESENTED BY: B. Hickman

DATE: 24 July 2006

**Right Wor. Bro. JAMES DOUGLAS NORTHEY
(1890 - 1975)**

James Douglas Northey was born on 26th March 1890 at Hindmarsh, Adelaide, eldest of four sons of James Northey, stoker, and his second wife, Mary Elizabeth nee Davis.

When his father died, 12 year-old Douglas left Kyre College and worked as a printer's devil to help support his mother, brothers and half sister. In 1906 he was apprenticed to a bookbinder.

Raised in domestic piety by his mother who "lived her faith", Northey began preaching at the age of 16 and was challenged by an old minister to "take up the Lord's work."

At that time his ambition was to be a professional athlete. Stockily built and possessing extraordinary physical energy, he excelled at every sport he tried; he was regarded as a prospective international cricketer, though he was blind in one eye from a football injury.

When he completed his trade course, Northey entered Parkin Theological College, Kent Town, and studied at the University of Adelaide where he obtained his B.A. degree in 1919. He was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church on 1st December 1916.

At Riverton Methodist Church on 20th December that year he married Eva Janet Hannaford.

Parish appointments followed, at Kennington Gardens from 1916 to 1921 and at Victor Harbour from 1921 to 1929.

In 1929, Rev'd. Northey transferred to Canterbury, Melbourne, where he quickly distinguished himself. An indefatigable proponent of the ecumenical movement, by the early 1930's he was advocating organic union between the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches which was eventually achieved with his active assistance in 1977. He was chairman in 1934-35 of the Congregational Union of Victoria and president in 1936-37 of the Council of Churches of Victoria. In 1938 he helped to found the Christian Commonwealth Movement which sought to interpret "the Kingdom of God" in socio-political terms. A member for twenty-one years of the Melbourne College of Divinity, he served as its president from 1944 to 1946 and again from 1957 to 1959.

