



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER NO. 148

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### **Wor.Bro. JOHN BROWNE DRISCOLL 1919-1996 AIRMAN & HISTORIAN**

Just occasionally a man stands out from the crowd because of his ability to get things done. Such a man could be a dreamer with a conviction of time and History, \*\*\*\*\*with a desire perhaps to record the lessons of yesterday, that the world of tomorrow may learn and not forget. Add to this a personality and determination to enthuse others, to accomplish these dreams, and you have a very special person.

Such a person was John Browne Driscoll.

#### **W. Bro John Browne Driscoll**

J.B. or Jack as he was known was born at Bathurst on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1919 the eldest son of station manager Richard Denis Driscoll and his wife Norma Olive nee Browne. His early years were spent on the properties his father managed so his primary education was by correspondence. When he reached High School age he was sent to Coonamble to attend the local High School. It was here that he met a 12year old Iris Astley, who was living next door to the house where he was boarding and she later became his wife for 53years.

In 1936 he completed his leaving certificate and joined the Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney Ltd. at Brewarrina He worked at many country branches including Moree, Windsor, and Coraki as a relief staff member over the next few years.

#### **RAAF SERVICE 1941—1945**

The outbreak of war saw him join the R.A.A.F in April 1941 volunteering for Air- Crew in Sydney, his Service No was 422265 and he did his initial training at Bradfield Park Sydney. In November 1942 he graduated from Service Flying Training School, Parkes, as a wireless air-gunner. In December 1942 he became engaged to Iris Astley, and when a posting appeared to be imminent they decided to be married.

After initial training on Lockheed Hudsons he Joined 13 squadron which was in the process of moving to Darwin. As it turned out 13 Squadron had a false start and it was some time before it finally saw action. (Darwin posting was cancelled)

February 1943 saw Jack at No1 OTU Bairnsdale Vic.. April 1943 saw him in Parkes on a Navigation Course, and in June 1943 he and Iris were married at Lakemba Methodist Church. In the meantime Jack spent the time in a test and ferry Unit flying out of Bankstown and Wagga-Wagga.

He was Commissioned Pilot Officer in 1943.

In May 1944 his group were transferring one of the new Lockheed Venturas into Fairbairn Air Force Base in Canberra when they found out that it was being delivered to 13 Squadron which was reforming. They stayed on the plane that they were delivering and rejoined the squadron.

October 1944 Jack was promoted to Flying Officer Fairbairn Airbase Canberra flying Lockheed Venturas.

When the Squadron was posted to Gove Arnhemland, Jack went to Gove. For the next twelve months Jack and his crew flew anti submarine reconnaissance, convoy escort bombing Japanese bases on Islands around the Timor Sea.

In February 1945 he was invalided back to R.G.H. Concord Sydney.

Jack left 13 Squadron in February 1945 having risen from his initial rank of L.A.C. to the rank of Flying Officer. Just after demobilisation in September he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant, the RAAF equivalent of a Captain.

## Honours

Include 1939-1945 Star, Pacific Star, War Medal, Australian Service Medal, qualified for Returned Service Badge.

Jack rejoined the Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney Ltd. at Orange and his determination to study and better himself saw him studying for his accountancy qualifications by correspondence.

With a wife and two small children to support, full time study was out of the question so his study had to be at nights and weekends, and any spare time he could scrounge. When he graduated from Sydney Technical College in 1950 he topped several of the subjects that he had undertaken. In June 1950 he was accepted into the Association of Accountants of Australia. The Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney then transferred him to Narrandera, and so began his long association with the town and district. He and Iris set up house in Narrandera with their three children Elizabeth Don and Geoffrey. Thus began a 46 year association with town and district as an accountant.

In 1951 he began as part time Secretary Manager of the Narrandera Ex-servicemen's Club, a position he held for 21 years. He contributed a great deal to the club and in 1973 he was elected President, a position he held for five years. He was also a life member of the club. The J.B. Driscoll room at this club was named in his honour in recognition of his services to the club. He resigned from the bank in 1954. He became the Secretary of the Narrandera Pastures Protection Board on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1955. He wrote a booklet commemorating the centenary of the P. P. Board and retired from this position in 1984.

Jacks passion for facts and the written word prompted him in 1960 to form a company to purchase the local weekly newspaper **THE ARGUS** with another Narrandera accountant the late Graham Tyson, and retain it under local ownership.

For 28 Years he served as Secretary and General Manager and wrote a regular Column **Of many things** as well as numerous Special Articles. He was on the Board of Management of **SOUTHERN WEEKLY** magazine, which circulated throughout South-Western New South Wales and the Riverina.

His knowledge of the newspaper industry and his good relations with other country newspapers, made him widely respected in the Industry. This role in keeping "**THE ARGUS**" as a voice of the local community was honoured at a Testimonial in June 1995 following his retirement from the Board of Directors

Always greatly interested in Local history, Jack's knowledge became widely sought after by local residents and others who sought information about Narrandera and the district. Whenever there was an historical event in the town Jack's expertise was sought and he helped many local associations compile their histories. His knowledge was mostly gained by countless hours spent scanning the Archives of "**The Narrandera Argus**" from 1900 onwards

It was this thirst for knowledge that led him to write his column "**Of many things**"

On the day of his admission to Hospital for the last time he met his weekly deadline for this column. Despite his diagnosis of cancer and his constant battle with ill health for many months he wrote his weekly column (sometimes from his Hospital bed) and if he was unable to deliver it personally his wife Iris did so for him.

In 1983 in conjunction with Local Artist Denise Robertson he had published a booklet called **Historic Narrandera**. This gives a description, location and history of all the main buildings in the town and district.

Jack was involved as a Councillor with the Narrandera Shire Council from 1980 to 1987. He was Deputy Shire President for two terms in 1983 and 1984, and in October 1984 he was elected to serve as President for 1985. He was re-elected for two further terms as President in 1986 and 1987.

### **E.F.T.S. Memorial at Narrandera**

Jack was better known for attaining many goals in his years in the town; one of many is the Memorial to the Elementary Flying Training School.

Without his integral hard work and influence this Memorial would not have got off the ground.

No.8 Elementary Flying Training School had opened in September 1940, and closed in June 1945; 3,818 trainees had graduated from 8 E.F.T.S in that period including five W.R.A.A.F.S. and moved to service training and combat.

In 1981 Narrandera Shire Council President Warwick Hecendorf mooted the idea of a memorial to Shire Council.

Jacks interest and efforts at fundraising played an integral role in the establishment of this memorial. Without his influence and hard work, it would not today stand as a memorial to the Airmen who trained at the No 8 Flying training School at Narrandera. His efforts to build the Memorial had begun in 1982. Plans were drawn, money raising started and a Tiger Moth purchased for restoration, these plans culminated in its official opening on October 2<sup>ND</sup> 1988. Not only did he play a leading role in its formation and the years of fund raising to bring it to fruition, but after its opening, he regularly opened it to visitors and was frequently seen working around the building and its grounds. 1988 saw the Memorial opened by Air Chief Marshall Sir Neville McNamara, (RTD). The golden anniversary of the No. 8 EFTS was held in Narrandera in 1995.

**In 1988 Bro. J.B. Driscoll was awarded Narrandera Shire Citizen of the year.**

### Ode to the Tiger Moth

The throb of the Gypsy has ended.  
The twang of the wires has ceased.  
This Tiger enshrined here forever.  
Played its part in the winning of peace.  
By J.E. Gallagher.

The concept and maintenance of this shrine has become a Memorial to the untiring efforts of this visionary, dedicated man Jack Browne Driscoll

Jack was a member of Legacy for 40 years, serving as Treasurer of the Narrandera Legacy group, and two terms as Vice President of Wagga Legacy. As an accountant he served as Honorary Auditor for many community organisations, including the RSL Sub-branch, St. Thomas' Anglican Church,

Meals on wheels, Riverina District Bowling Association and Lodge Leopold to name a few.

Jacks family saw him as a quite and modest man they were privileged and proud to have as a father. In their own words he was a rock in the family and shaped their lives, not so much by what he said but by the way he lived his life. They described him as a person who did not make a fuss, he loved their mother deeply and was proud and appreciative of all that she did to the end.

His recreational interests included a friendly social game of golf on a Sunday morning and an ale and a chat with old friends. Behind every good man there stands a good woman, and this was certainly true in Jacks case as his wife Iris was the one who gave him support and encouragement over their 53 years of Marriage. Her devotion continued during his illness, and she was a source of great comfort during this time. Jack was reluctant to speak of his own achievements, but spoke with great pride of his daughter Elizabeth and his sons Donald and Geoffrey. And their families.

His high ethical Standards and honesty were part of his legacy to his family. He performed a huge amount of public service without wish for reward and was a disciplined person who did everything he undertook to the highest standard. One of his favourite traditions was the holiday with his mates when they went off together exploring Australia and brought back some amazing tales. Jack had a gentle side to his Nature and one of the families favourite recollection was his love for the little thrush that visited him most days at his home and ate out of his hand.

### Masonic History

Jack had a 50 year history with his Masonic Lodge. He joined Masonry in Lodge Ophir No 17 at Orange

Initiated 28<sup>th</sup> February 1946,

Passed 25<sup>th</sup> May 1946

Master Mason 15<sup>th</sup> August 1946

Called off Lodge Ophir 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1959

Affiliated Lodge Leopold No128 at Narrandera 16<sup>th</sup> October 1958

Junior Warden 1974 / 1975

Senior Warden 1975 / 1976

Worshipful Master 1976 / 1977

Past Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies 14<sup>th</sup> September 1988.

Jack was a member of Ophir R.A. Chapter S C No 332 Advanced 3-9-1947.

One of the big influences on Jack was his father-in-law Percy Astley who was a member of the same Lodge in Orange, and then Lodge Belmore in Punchbowl; his Brother-in-law Norman Astley was also very active in this Lodge until his death in 2001.

Jack passed away peacefully in Narrandera Hospital on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1996 aged 76. The funeral service was held at St Thomas Anglican Church. Members of the family took part in the funeral service It is fitting that his funeral cortege diverted from the normal route and travelled past the Ex-Servicemen's Club and the Tiger Moth Memorial. Masonic Brethren and R.S.L. Members formed a guard of Honour at the church and also at the gravesite service.

#### References

The Narrandera Argus Tuesday July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1996

Information from The E.F.T.S. Tiger Moth Memorial Narrandera.

Don and Geoff Driscoll

Wor. Bro. Bruce Guymer Sec. Lodge Leopold No 128

U.G.L. of N S W and A C T. records.

#### THE MASONIC HALL, NARRENDERA

