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Bro. Captain William Morrison
1st Viscount Dunrossil of Vallaquie in the County of Inverness
GCMG, MC, K St J, MA.

AUSTRALIA'S FORGOTTEN GOVERNOR-GENERAL (1893-1961)

Australia's 14th governor-general was born on 10th August 1893 at Torinturk, near Oban, Argyllshire, Scotland, sixth of eight sons of John Morrison, farmer, and his wife, Marion, nee Mc Vicar.

John had worked in the South African diamond fields before selling out to De Beers and settling as a farmer at Torinturk. Educated at George Watson's College, Edinburgh, in 1912, William entered the University of Edinburgh to study arts and the law. He graduated M.A. in 1920. His initials, W.S. and his love of Shakespeare, earned him the nickname of "*Shakes*" which stuck to him. In August 1914 he was commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery (Special Reserve). He served in France throughout the war and at Neuve-Chapelle in March 1915, he maintained communications with his battery, despite being wounded, and was awarded the Military Cross. He rose to captain, was thrice mentioned in dispatches and resigned his commission in August 1919.

Called to the English Bar at the Inner Temple on 19th November 1923, Morrison was private secretary (1922-1929) to Sir Thomas Inskip (Viscount Caldecote) who was successively solicitor-general and attorney-general. Morrison became something of a specialist in railway cases.

At South Leith parish church, Scotland, on 22 April 1924 Morrison married Katharine Allison Swan; she, too, was an Edinburgh graduate and was reading for the Bar.

Following two unsuccessful attempts in 1923 and 1924 to enter the House of Commons as Unionist candidate for the Western Isles, he was elected in 1929 as Conservative member for the Cirencester and Tewkesbury division, Gloucestershire. He was to retain the seat for thirty years.

Morrison took silk in 1934. Appointed recorder of Walsall, Staffordshire, in 1935, he became financial secretary to the Treasury later that year. In 1936 he was appointed minister of agriculture and fisheries, and was sworn of the Privy Council. He was chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and minister of food in 1939-1940, when he was responsible for introducing food rationing and fixed foodstuff prices, postmaster-general in 1940-1942, and minister of town and country planning from 1943 until 1945 when his party went into Opposition.

On the Conservatives' return to power in 1951, Morrison was elected Speaker. He presided over

debates on the Suez crisis in 1956 'when feelings rose so high as seriously to threaten the preservation of parliamentary order and the cohesion of the Conservative Party'. That the standing of the institution of parliament remained undamaged was largely due to the personal characteristics and talents which he displayed as Speaker. These skills stemmed from his years at university where he chaired debates and was senior president of the Students' Representative Council.

In 1959 he announced his retirement for reasons of health. There was, therefore, some surprise when it was announced soon afterwards that he had been chosen to succeed Field Marshall Sir William (Viscount) Slim as governor-general of Australia. Morrison was created Viscount Dunrossil of Vallaquie which is on the island of North Uist, in the Outer Hebrides and appointed G.C.M.G. that year. He was sworn in as governor-general on 2 February 1960 in Canberra.

The way he approached Australia and Australians in his year of office was shaped by his relatively humble Scottish origins, his non-Establishment education, the egalitarian nature of Hebridean society, and his long-standing friendship with Prime Minister Bro (Sir) Robert Menzies who had recommended his appointment. Lacking an appreciation of the large amount of work involved in vice-regal office, he plunged into his duties with energy and enthusiasm, but at great cost to his health. He and his wife travelled widely throughout Australia and its territories. Lady Dunrossil accepted he worn heavy responsibilities, as well as quietly and efficiently assuming additional public duties whenever her husband's illness prevented him from discharging them.

Dunrossil's appearance and rich Scottish voice was impressive, even forbidding, and he was quite unlike any of his predecessors, but his personal staff found him warm and friendly. Journalists described him as a very human person with a rich sense of humour. All who met him were struck by his simple sincerity. Survived by his wife and four sons, he died of pulmonary embolism on 3 February 1961 at Government House, Canberra. He had served as governor-general in and over the Commonwealth of Australia for 1 year and 1 day. After a state funeral, he was buried on February 7 at his family's request in the graveyard of the Church of St John the Baptist, in the Canberra suburb of Reid. His eldest son John succeeded to the viscountcy. Lady Dunrossil died in England in 1983; her ashes were interred in a niche in the cover of her husband's grave. Rex Bramleigh's portrait of Dunrossil is held by Parliament House, Canberra.

Bro (Sir) Robert Menzies, Prime Minister, said:

The Queen has lost a fine representative.
Australia has lost a new friend.
My wife and I have lost an old friend.

Bro Viscount Dunrossil arrived in Australia as an honorary member of Lodge St Peter No 120, Scottish Constitution meeting at Forfarshire and an honorary of the University of Edinburgh Lodge No 2974, Constitution, meeting in London. On 3 September, he affiliated with Lodge Ubique No 900, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, meeting in the Sydney suburb of Chatswood. It was known as the 'gunners lodge' so it was appropriate that a former Captain in the Royal Field Artillery should become a member.

Bro Rudyard Kipling wrote in a piece titled *Ubique*:

There is a word you often see, pronounce it as you may, 'you bike', you 'bykwee' úbbckwe' alluding to RA (Royal Artillery). It serves órse, field and garrison as motto for a crest an' when you've found out all it means, I'll tell you álf the rest.

The word denotes Everywhere.

Unfortunately, Bro. Viscount Dunrossil died before he could attend a meeting of the Lodge.

He also affiliated with Lodge Gowrie of Canberra No. 715, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, meeting in Canberra.

The Lodge was named after Most Wor. Bro. Lord Gowrie, VC, PC, GCMG, CB, DSO, Past Grand Master of South Australia and New South Wales, who had served as governor-general of Australia from 1936 to 1945.

Bro. Viscount Dunrossil was nominated by Right Wor. Bro. Thomas M. Owen, PJGW and Wor. Bro. Robert P. Stone, the Worshipful Master.

The March 1961 issue of *The Freemason of New South Wales* reported the occasion:

On the 6th October 1960 in the presence of 17 Grand Officers, 72 Members and 93 Visitors, His Excellency, Brother Viscount Dunrossil was welcomed as a member of Lodge Gowrie of Canberra.

Owing to the limited capacity of the Temple, admission of visitors had to be strictly controlled by invitation and the Temple was packed to capacity.

The meeting was the occasion of the Election of Officers and with such a large attendance, the Worshipful Master, Wor. Bro. Bob Stone and his Officers had some anxious moments in getting the business completed before His Excellency's arrival.

However, their fears were unwarranted and His Excellency was announced at the scheduled time. The Wor. Master requested the Brethren to stand whilst the newly-affiliated Wor. Brother was admitted.

The Brethren were then seated and the Wor. Master, in a short but sincere address, welcomed His Excellency on behalf of Freemasonry in Canberra, adding that he hoped His Excellency would be able to visit the Canberra Lodges occasionally and enjoy the companionship of the Brethren. His Excellency was conducted to his seat in the South-east corner next to the Chaplain, Bro. David MacKay. The Lecture on the First Tracing Board was then delivered by Brother John Yarra, a Steward of Lodge Gowrie.

His Excellency retired with the Wor. Master and was escorted to the ante-room, where the Grand Officers, where the Grand Officers, visiting Masters and a number of brethren, including the Wor Master Elect, Bro. John Flowers, were presented to him.

When the brethren were assembled in the South, His Excellency, led by Bro James Ogilvie with the pipes, was conducted by the Wor Master to his seat between the representative of the Grand Master, Right Wor Bro. Thomas Owen, of Lodge Gowrie of Canberra.

In proposing the toast to our newly-affiliated Brother, Right Wor. Bro. Owen referred to the honour and privilege afforded to the Wor Master and himself in sponsoring such an eminent Brother into the New South Wales Constitution. He referred to the connection of the late Most Wor Bro Earl Gowrie with the Lodge and also the kind reception of the debutantes by Her Excellency Viscountess Dunrossil at the Masonic Ball earlier in the year.

Bro Viscount Dunrossil's response was well received and included a touch of humour and a well known verse from Kipling. He left no doubt as to his sincerity as a Mason and his pleasure at being able to enjoy the companionship of the Brethren.

One of Canberra's leading tenors, Bro George Waterson, then rendered several Scottish songs which His Excellency obviously enjoyed immensely.

It was by this time twenty minutes past His Excellency's time of departure and he was conducted to his car by the Wor Master, preceded by the piper. His Excellency paused at the door and was given a rousing farewell by all present.

All who were privileged to attend felt that they had participated in something quite unique and realised that in His Excellency they had found a warm and human person with a deep appreciation of the real meaning of Freemasonry.



His Excellency Brother the Right Hon. The Viscount Dunrossil

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