

## MICHAEL PEARSON GARNETT AOM ASM (R53-55)

He was born on 24 November 1938 in Essex.

He spent his National Service with the RAF in Singapore and Malaya during the Emergency of the 1950's.

Afterwards he commenced a career as a tea planter and was a Tea Plantation Manager in North East India (1960-67). Political events on the sub-continent meant a departure from the country where his father was born and where his grandfather served for nearly 40 years with the British Army.



He spent a year in Papua New Guinea running a coconut plantation before heading for Australia to comment a career in the oil industry with BP Australia Ltd. (1967-94). His responsibilities for government & public affairs within Australasia took him back to Papua New Guinea as well as to New Zealand and the South West Pacific. He also during this period obtained a Diploma in Business Management/Company Law from the British Institute of Careers in New South Wales.

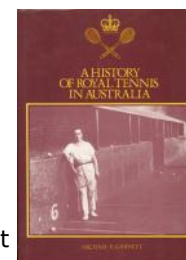
On his retirement from BP in 1994, he accepted the newly created position of Executive Officer of the Australian Royal Tennis Association (ARTA). A post he held until early 1999.

He was also a Flight Lieutenant in the reserve service for 10 years with the No 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron, based at RAAF Laverton near Melbourne – see photo.



His great passion for Royal (or Real) Tennis has driven him over the last 20 years to write a number of books on the subject :-

- A History of Royal Tennis in Australia (1983). The foreword to this was provided by the President of the Tennis & Rackets Association, Lord Aberdare (see copy below). He was an encouraging inspiration to Mike and, during a couple of visits he made to England for BP conferences, he kindly hosted him for lunch in the Lords Dining Room, and escorted him into the chamber to experience the proceedings of the day.
- Tennis, Rackets & Other Ball Games (1986)
- Royal Tennis for the Record (1991). This contains a series of lists including courts past and present, world champions, books on the game, and club emblems. With heavy emphasis on the Australian game, there are lists of newspaper reports on matches etc. It can be found for sale on the internet for around £100.
- A Chase Down-Under (1999)
- A Tennis Miscellany (2006). This describes some disused tennis courts and examines the close association between Real Tennis, Field Tennis, Longue Paume, Lawn Tennis, and Sticke. It can be found for sale on the internet for around £45.



He has also set up his own publishing company (Historical Publications) through which he markets his books. However, he also became aware of three early books on Royal Tennis that had long since gone out of print. Two of these were in French and had never previously been translated into English. He managed to obtain (on loan) a copy of each of these three books and with the two French ones he and a colleague (Richard Travers) translated them into English and published them through his company. They were apparently sold out very quickly, mainly in the UK. The three books are :-

- A Treatise on Tennis (1875) – this was a facsimile reprint (1985).
- Translation of de Manevieux's 'Traite Sur La Connoissance Jeu de Paume' dated 1783 (2004)
- Translation of Edouard Fournier's book 'Le Jeu de Paume' dated 1862 (2006).

The book he published by de Manevieux is his personal recollections of tennis players and professionals many of whom he described as cheats and sharpers. Michael says that he wanted to know more about him, so after much delving into historic records in Lyon, France (where he lived), he found that the poor chap had been

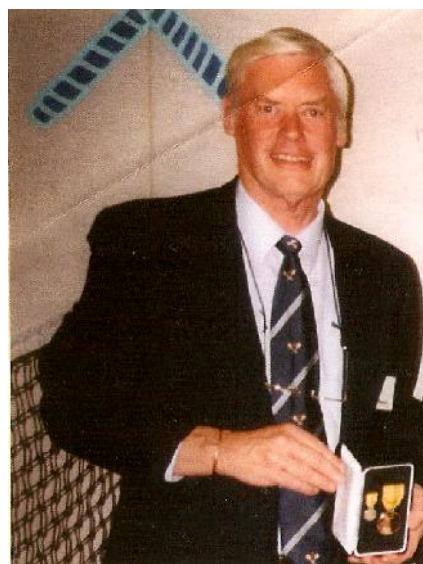
guillotined just a few years after he wrote the book - being an aristocrat during the Revolution was a very dicey occupation!

This interest has resulted in him playing on most Royal Tennis courts in USA, UK and France as well as in Australia. Also through this involvement with the sport he has met Prince Edward on a number of occasions, most recently when his aide phoned him in Melbourne during the Commonwealth Games, requesting he meet HRH for a social drink at the real tennis club.

He has also given his time to the Dept. of Public Advocate (Community Visitor for the intellectually disabled) from 1997 to 2002 and as reported elsewhere on this site was a Commonwealth Games Volunteer in Melbourne 2006, where he was awarded a bronze medallion along with fellow OF **Bob Munro (R56-60)**.

He has also been a member of the Australian Davis Cup Tennis Foundation since 1994 and assists in raising funds for their junior players.

In recognition of his contribution to tennis, he was awarded the Australian Sports Medal (ASM) in 2001. There is a handsome citation that goes with the ASM, incorporating the Australian Coat of Arms and signed by the Governor-General Sir William Deane and the Prime Minister of Australia John Howard.



As you can see from the above, Mike has been away from the UK since he left the College. He formed the Melbourne branch of OF's many years ago and, together with six others, raised enough funds to donate a handsome sundial to the college which he hopes is still standing in the gardens near the headmaster's house. The Society made him a Vice President a number of years ago.

As for other OFs who play Real Tennis, Mike has met on a number of occasions **Stephen Sayer (S58-63)** who is a keen real tennis player. He entered a doubles tournament with him at Seacourt Club on Hayling Island some years ago but tells me they didn't do too well! He has also played against him in a tournament in South Carolina just to show that the game makes them travel far and wide! Stephen is the brother of **Richard Sayer (S56-61)**. The only other player Mike knows is his brother **Gerald Garnett (R50-54)**, who is a member of the Holyport Club near Maidenhead.

On 3 June 2016, Mike was delighted and honoured to be additionally awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division for "service to veterans, to tennis, and to the community". This was approved in Australia by the Governor-General. See below the official letter Mike received, plus one of several articles in newspapers.



HONOURS-IN-CONFIDENCE



20 May 2016

Mr Michael Pearson Garnett  
PO Box 187  
ROMSEY VIC 3434

Dear Mr Garnett

I wrote to you recently advising that you were being considered for an award within the Order of Australia. It is now my pleasure to inform you that your award of the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division has been approved by the Governor-General in his capacity as Chancellor of the Order of Australia, with effect on 13 June 2016.

The Governor-General has asked me to extend his congratulations to you.

As indicated in my previous letter, your award will be announced in the media and published on our website, [www.gg.gov.au](http://www.gg.gov.au), on Monday, 13 June 2016. I ask that you treat this matter as strictly confidential until the date of publication. From that date you will be entitled to use the initials "OAM" after your name.

Embargoed copies of the Gazette and biographical notes on recipients of awards will be issued to media outlets a few days prior to announcement, and you may be approached by members of the media for an interview at this time. If you agree to be interviewed, it is quite in order for you to discuss your award with media representatives. Media are aware that they must not under any circumstances publish or announce details until the appointed time.

In due course you will be invited to attend an Investiture ceremony at which you will be presented with the insignia of your award. Once a date has been finalised you will be contacted by the Government House in your State or Territory. It is expected this will be in September or October of this year.

May I add my own congratulations to those of the Governor-General on your award.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Fraser LVO OAM**  
Official Secretary to the Governor-General  
and Secretary of the Order of Australia

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HONOURS-IN-CONFIDENCE



**Reflecting:** Michael Garnett at the Romsey fountain. The Garnett family were one of the main supporters of the campaign to have the fountain created.

## Local hero honoured

ROMSEY'S Michael Garnett has received an Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours.

Mr Garnett's award is for service to veterans, to tennis, and to the community and reflects years of commitment to achieving results for his community.

"I am honored to receive this award which really belongs to all those who assisted with these community projects," Mr Garnett said when told of his award.

Mr Garnett led a group of local citizens to establish the Romsey fountain to commemorate the Centenary of Federation - a project that was entirely funded by five local families.

Since its installation the fountain has become a focal point for citizens and visitors ever since.

He joined the committee of the Kyneton RSL in 2012 and took an interest in the early history of the Kyneton Volunteers which date back to the 1860s.

As a means of raising funds in support of an appropriate statue, he wrote the book *Kyneton Mounted Rifle Corps*, donating the profits to the establishment of the statue. That project was successful and the statue was unveiled in October 2014 in front of senior officers of the 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse and members of the public at an impressive ceremony.

In 2003, Mr Garnett was diagnosed with lymphoma. He credits Romsey Medical Centre for determining the nature and cause of the disease.

To repay the diligence and care of the local medical staff following chemotherapy in Melbourne, Mike set out with his sons, Nick and Andrew, in 2008 to walk the Sandakan Death March in North Borneo.

The trek raised in excess of \$15,000 for the Romsey Medical Centre which enabled them to purchase two automated external defibrillators for the benefit of the Romsey and Lancefield communities.

He wrote the book *Misery on an Island Paradise - Sandakan*, highlighting the horrific experiences suffered by the allied prisoners of war during the 1945 'death march', a tragedy that was shielded from the Australian public for so many years.

He also established the Romsey Commemorative Rose Garden in front of the War Memorial with the support of many local families who contributed towards the plantings.

"The Macedon Ranges is a great place to contribute to community affairs, because each town has its own distinctive and historic identity. It makes community involvement a pleasure to do," Mr Garnett said.

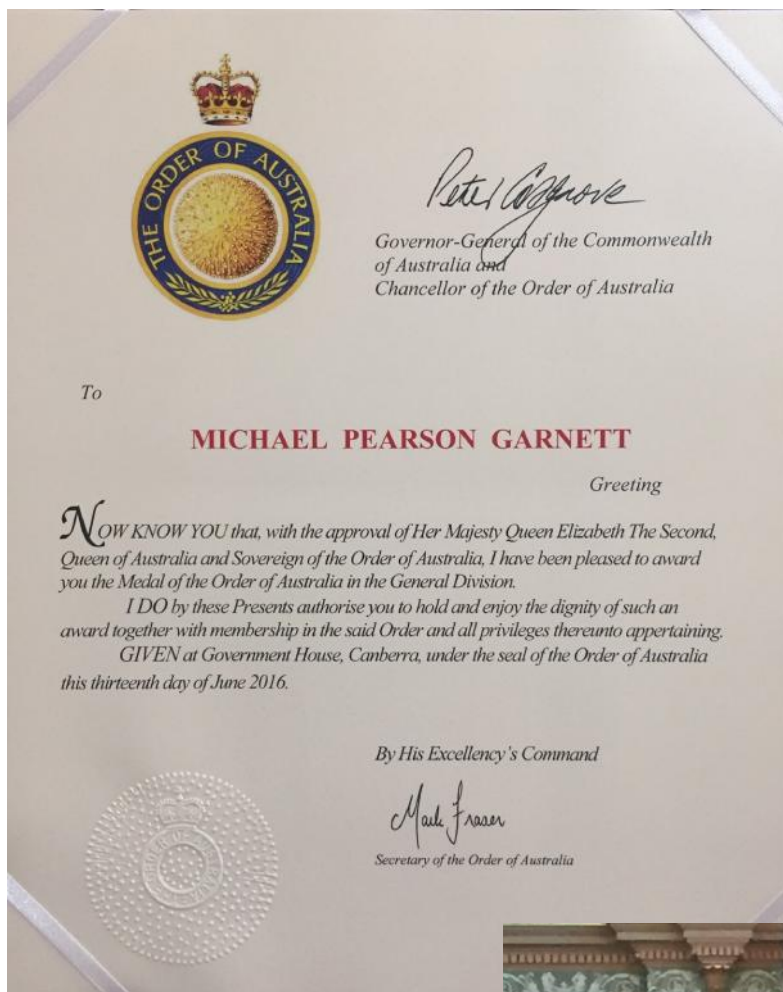
He has also been active in tennis and has been a member of the Australian Davis Cup Tennis Foundation since 1994 and was chief executive officer of the Royal Tennis Association. Closer to home he was a founding committee member of the Romsey Tennis Club.

When asked about his seemingly never ending range of projects, Mr Garnett commented - "You win some and you lose some."

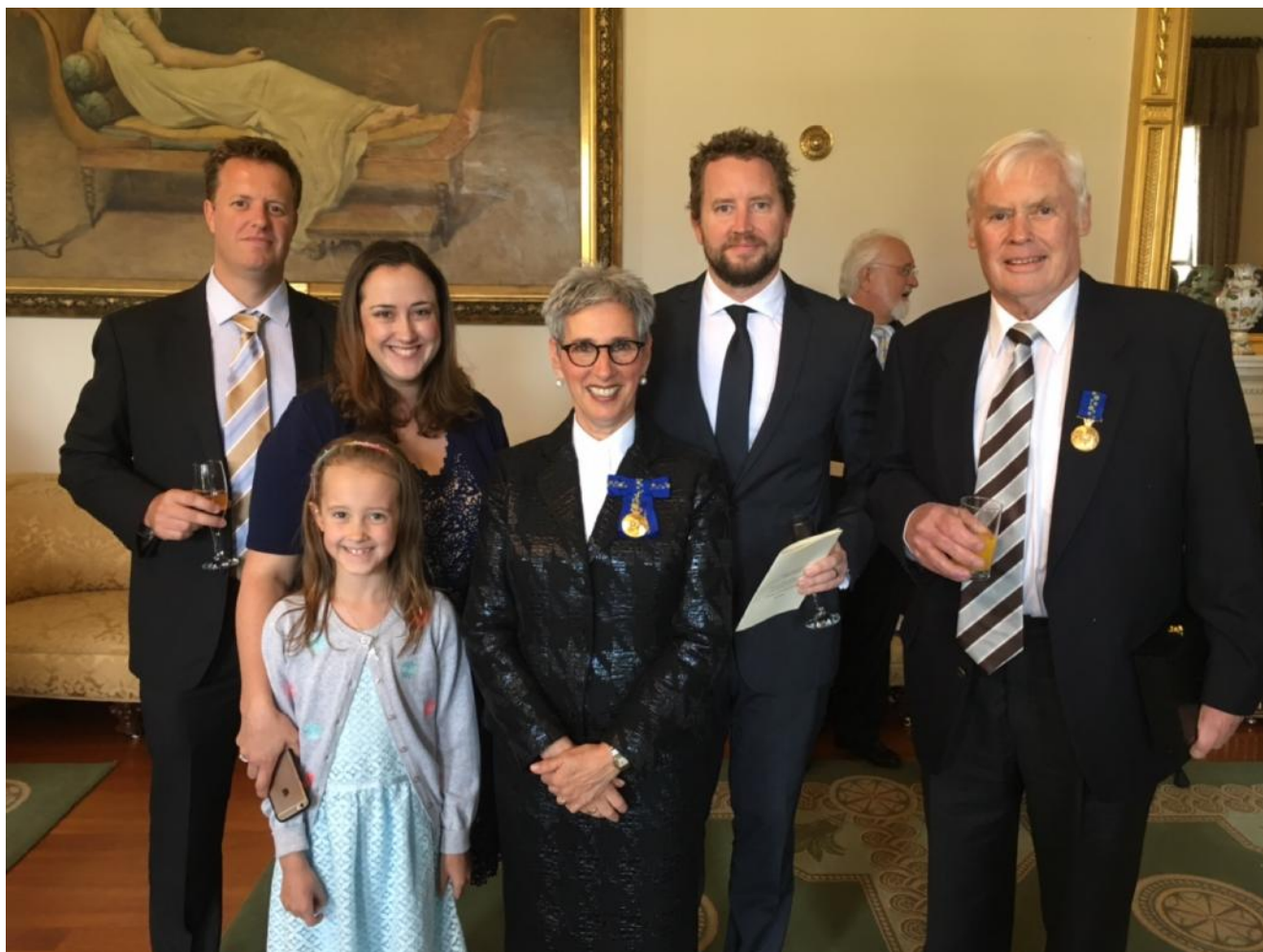
"My efforts to establish a memorial in Romsey for those who served in the Great War, was not supported by the local councillors. This was not only a loss to those who served, but to those still living. They have every reason to feel let down by those representing them," he said.

Michael Garnett was also awarded the Australian Sports Medal by the Federal Government in 2001 for "outstanding services to the sport of royal tennis".

On Wednesday 19 October 2016 he was presented with the Medal of the Order of Australia at Government House in Melbourne, Australia. You can see below the official certificate and a photo taken of the moment he received the medal from the Governor of Victoria.



Below is the official picture afterwards of Michael proudly wearing his Order of Australia, together with his 2 sons Nick and Andrew, his daughter-in-law Carolyn and his granddaughter Lucy, plus the Governor of Victoria. You will notice that Michael is of course wearing his OF tie.



### **Footnote on Royal Tennis**

Royal Tennis, or "Real Tennis" as it is sometimes called, descends directly from the medieval tennis game, *Jeu de paume*. It is played on specially constructed indoor courts, using a pear-shaped racquet and a hard cloth ball. The net is five feet high at the sides and three feet high in the middle. There are 44 courts in the world, but they include Henry VIII's court at Hampton Court Palace, which is still used. In Melbourne, there are 2 courts in the suburb of Richmond.

### **A History of Royal Tennis in Australia (1983) - the foreword by Lord Aberdare.**

#### FOREWORD

I greatly appreciate the honour of writing a Foreword to this splendid history of Royal Tennis in Australia. I have so much enjoyed playing the game at both Melbourne and Hobart and have so many friends in both cities. In particular, I remember my first visit in 1956 during the Olympic Games, when I won the Melbourne Gold Racket and played an exhibition match against Bob Baker in Hobart.

I was greatly honoured in 1975 as President of the Tennis and Rackets Association to open the new Melbourne club.

I am therefore delighted that someone as talented as Michael Garnett has now recorded the authentic history of the game in Australia. Time passes so quickly and it is easy to forget the real story of early achievement. In the United Kingdom we were fortunate in having E. B. Noel and J. O. M. Clark (*A History of Tennis*); in France it was Albert de Luze (*La Magnifique Histoire du Jeu de Paume*); and in the United States Allison Danzig (*The Racquet Game*). Now Michael Garnett has done the same for Tennis in Australia and all lovers of the game are indebted to him.

I heartily commend this book.

The Right Honourable the Lord Aberdare  
President, Tennis and Rackets Association