



Major General The Honourable J L KELLY CBE, RFD, QC

[1920 – 1999]



General Kelly was President of the Club in 1979 - 80

Jack Lawrence Kelly was born on 25 September 1920 in North Sydney, New South Wales, to Sydney Leslie Kelly, and his wife, Myra Edith (née Lawrence).

His secondary education was at Brisbane Grammar School, finishing in 1936 and winning the Lilley Medal. He won an open scholarship to the University of Queensland from which he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1939.

While attending an army cooperation course run by the RAAF in Canberra, he met Mavis O'Brien, and they were married in Brisbane in January 1944. Their wedding photograph shows Jack with his head slightly cocked to one side and his characteristic mischievous grin.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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They had three daughters and one son. Mavis became Judge Kelly's Associate until they left Rockhampton in 1977 when she retired, probably due to ill-health. After the death of Mavis in 1982, Kelly married Isobel ("Belle") Catherine (née Gallogly) in January 1984.

Kelly enlisted in the militia (#146779), joining the University Detachment in 1938. He transferred to the AIF (QX40823) in July 1942 and was discharged in December 1945. During his war service with 9th Australian Infantry Battalion he served at Milne Bay (where he was the adjutant), and with HQ 7 Brigade on Bougainville.

Re-joining the Citizen Military Forces in 1948 with the rank of captain, he was appointed Officer Commanding of the newly created Queensland University Regiment (which then consisted of one company). He became the Commanding Officer of 9th Battalion (*The Moreton Regiment*) in 1957, an appointment which ended in 1960 after the unit was granted the freedom of the City of Brisbane.

He transferred to the Legal Corps in which he held an appointment at Victoria Barracks with the rank of colonel. In that capacity he spent some time in South Vietnam as judge advocate at a court martial. In the period 1976 to 1982, he was promoted to Major-General as Judge Advocate General of the Army – a role that overlapped his position on the Queensland Supreme Court. In that role he oversaw the drafting of the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 (Cth)*, a piece of legislation described by one observer as "a long overdue and far reaching reform of Australian military law that for the first time brought coherence to what had hitherto been a Byzantine morass of imperial and single service statutes and regulations".

After the war, and in common with many ex-servicemen, he experienced a complete change of occupation and became a salesman for National Cash Registers (1945–47). He returned to his studies at The University of Queensland, graduating with a Bachelor of Laws (1949) and was admitted as a barrister at the end of that year.

He spent the years 1950 to 1953 as private secretary to Sir Arthur Fadden - the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister in the Menzies government, transferring to the Reserve of Officers for the duration. On returning to Brisbane, he commenced practice at the bar in 1953. He took silk in 1964.



Lieutenant Colonel Kelly leading 9th Battalion exercising the Freedom of the City of Brisbane, 1960.

He embarked on a distinguished legal and judicial career in both Australia and the South Pacific. His roles included:

- Judge, Supreme Court of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (1970–72)
- Acting Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland (1972–73) [Rockhampton]
- Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland (1973–77) [Rockhampton]
- Judge Advocate General, Army (1976–1982)
- Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland (1978–1985)
- Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands (1982–84)
- Vice-President, Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands (1983–84)
- Senior Puisne Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland (1985–1990)
- Acting Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Queensland (1986 and 1988)

He also held several important positions, including:

- Chairman, Queensland Licensing Commission (1958–1960)
- Member, Queensland Licensing Commission (1960–1970)
- Member of the Board of the Faculty of Law, University of Queensland (1965–1970)
- Chairman, Queensland Parole Board (1983–85)

He retired from the bench in 1990.

In recognition of his military service he was appointed a Commander in the Order of the British Empire (Military Division) in 1982. He was awarded the Reserve Forces Decoration in 1984.

Jack Kelly joined the Club in 1946. He served on the Committee from 1960 – 68, was then Vice-President in 1969 and 1978 (having stood down during his judicial appointments in Papua New Guinea and Rockhampton), President in 1979-80 and Immediate Past President in 1981-82.

In 1967 he was heavily involved in Committee deliberations on a property re-development proposal, adding his significant legal skills to the deliberations

General Kelly died in Brisbane on 20 April 1999.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents
- Supreme Court Library of Queensland <https://www.sclqld.org.au/judicial-papers/judicial-profiles/profiles/jlkelly>
- "Military Commissions – should Australia Have some?" Major The Hon. H.G. Fryberg QC Edited version of the inaugural Jack Lawrence Kelly memorial Lecture, 30 June 2008
- Douglas Murphy QC, Judge Kelly's one-time Associate.