



## The Honourable Sir Alan MANSFIELD KCMG, KCVO

[1902-1980]



**Sir Alan was Patron of the Club from 1966 to 1971**

**Sir Alan was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1976.**

Sir Alan James Mansfield, Chief Justice and Governor, was born on 30 September 1902 at Indooroopilly, Brisbane, third son of Edward Mansfield (d.1905), a District Court Judge from England, and his wife Margaret Elizabeth (née Bird), who was born in Queensland.<sup>1</sup>

Awarded scholarships to Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) and St Paul's College, University of Sydney (LLB, 1924), Alan represented his college in rowing and Rugby Union football.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir James Mansfield (1733-1821), Chief Justice of Common Pleas in England, was his great-great-grandfather.

*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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On 22 July 1924 Mansfield was admitted to the Queensland Bar. He and another junior Tom Lehane rented chambers - which Mansfield described as a 'broom cupboard' - at 27 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, Queensland's first 'Inns of Court'. Finding his early months in practice 'unbelievably tough', he regularly pawned his watch on Mondays and redeemed it on Fridays if someone paid him a fee. His pawnbroker, Mark Isaacs of George Street, gradually became his friend.

Mansfield supplemented his income by private tutoring and by lecturing part-time at the Central Technical College. Undefended divorce provided the staple of the junior Bar. Briefs, tied in red tape and marked in guineas, appeared more frequently.

Mansfield attributed his success in the matrimonial jurisdiction to the moustache he had grown to make himself look older. Years later he shaved it off in order to appear younger. Unfortunately, his long-unshaven upper lip developed a painful rash, so the moustache returned and remained for the rest of his life.

When the Depression reduced the number of his clients, Mansfield thought of giving up the law and began to study accountancy. He 'worked like a demon' on the few briefs that came to him. In July-August 1931 he appeared for two of the four defendants in the Mungana case. By securing a verdict in their favour, he rose to prominence and his practice burgeoned.

At the Presbyterian Church, Stanthorpe, on 16 December 1933 he married Beryl Susan Pain (née Barnes) a 29-year-old divorcee.

Mansfield was appointed as a Puisne Judge on the Supreme Court of Queensland on 17 May 1940, at the age of 37.



*Justice Alan Mansfield in Brisbane, 1945*

In 1945 the Federal government chose Mansfield as a member of the Australian commission of investigation into war crimes and nominated him for the United Nations War Crimes Commission, London. He was chief Australian prosecutor (1946-47) at the trials of war criminals in Tokyo before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

Back in Brisbane, he was appointed Senior Puisne Judge on 20 March 1947. Described as vigilant, shrewd, conciliatory and 'a good analyst of evidence', he also chaired (1942-44) the Land Appeal Court. As the Senior Puisne Judge, he served until 8 February 1956 when he was appointed to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Queensland. He served as Chief Justice from 9 February 1956 until his retirement on 21 February 1966.

As Chief Justice, he presided over a court whose resources were stretched by a substantial increase in litigation, and he sought advice from (Sir) Leslie Herron on how to make his fellow judges work harder. In his spare time, he held office in numerous cultural, charitable, community and sporting organisations.

On 25 January 1957 the illness of Governor Sir John Lavarack required Mansfield to act as Administrator, an office he was to hold until March 1958.

A large number of people urged him to refuse royal assent to the Gair government's University of Queensland Acts Amendment Bill (introduced in March 1957). This legislation established appeal boards (with government-nominated chairmen) to review complaints by staff against appointments, promotions or dismissals, and was widely seen as threatening academic freedom. At this time Mansfield was also Warden (1956-66) of Convocation at the university. He gave assent to the bill, but the Nicklin ministry repealed (1957) the sections of the Act relating to the boards.

In 1958 Mansfield was appointed KCMG.

On 21 March 1966 Mansfield was sworn in as Governor of Queensland<sup>2</sup>. His ready courtesy made him a popular public figure. Throughout his career he maintained his friendships - the group with which he had first played poker in 1940 continued to meet for regular games until his death.

The University of Queensland, of which he was Chancellor (1966-76), awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws in 1970.

Appointed KCVO in 1970, he served as Governor until 21 March 1972.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Alan was Patron of the Club from 1966 to 1972 and was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1976.

Sir Alan died on 17 July 1980 at Benowa, Surfers Paradise, and was cremated with Anglican rites; his wife, daughter and one of his two sons survived him.

The suburb of Mansfield in the city of Brisbane is named after him.

Sources included:

- John Greenwood, 'Mansfield, Sir Alan James (1902–1980)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mansfield-sir-alan-james-11053/text19669>, published first in hardcopy 2000, accessed online 2 April 2019.
- Various web pages
  - <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mansfield-sir-alan-james-11053>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan\\_Mansfield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Mansfield)
- *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

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<sup>2</sup> He succeeded His Excellency Colonel Sir Henry Abel Smith KCMG, KCVO, DSO

<sup>3</sup> He was succeeded by His Excellency Air Marshal Sir Colin Thomas Hannah, KCMG, KCVO, KBE, CB