



Captain C. E. deF. PENNEFATHER

[1848 – 1922]



Captain Pennefather was a Founding Member of the Club in 1892.

Captain Pennefather was elected to Life Membership of the Club – possibly after 1910 and before 1922

Charles Edward de Fonblanque Pennefather was born in the quarters of the British Embassy at Geneva on 23 June 1848 (during a time when Geneva was besieged by revolutionaries¹). His father and his mother were travelling at the time.

His father was Major Kingsmill Pennefather [1790-1858]. He was born in Ireland and died in Perth, Western Australia. He was an officer in the British Army (Limerick Militia) and from a prominent Irish family.

¹ In the aftermath of the Sonderbund War, resulting in the political re-unification of modern Switzerland

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His mother was Jane Catherine Patricia [sometimes Patricia Kathrine] (née de Grenier de Fonblanque) [1819-1886] - the daughter of a wealthy British family of diplomats. She was born in France and died in Lancashire. She had married Kingsmill in 1842 after his first wife Frances (née Hall) had died in 1840 - having borne him nine children.

Charles was the eldest of their three children. His siblings were:

- Ruth Timperly [1851-1906] Born in Perth, WA and died in Scotland. Married William Nimmo [1844-1920] and had 3 sons and a daughter.
- (Sir) John Tymperly de Fonblanque [1856-1933] Born in Perth, WA and died in Hampstead, UK. A British cotton merchant and conservative politician. Member for the Liverpool constituency of Kirkdale (1915-29) and created a baronet in 1924. Married Madeline (née Stewart) in 1886 and had no children.

Little is known of the circumstances of the family moving to Western Australia c.1850; nor of Charles' move to Queensland c.1870 (aged 22). His mother and siblings appeared to have returned to the United Kingdom at some time after Kingsmill's death in 1858.

In February 1881 in Melbourne Charles married Mary Rose "Marsie" (née Seward) [1856-1946]. She was born in Victoria and died in Brisbane. They had three sons:

- John William Seward [1883-1972]² Born in Ingham and died in Sydney. Overseer at *Alice Downs*, Maranoa in the early 1900s.
- Charles Edward deFonblanque [1885-1950]³ Born in Brisbane and died in Auckland, NZ. He married Jessie Mary Roy (née Stewart) in 1908 in Fiji. Charles served as Chief Police Magistrate in Fiji. They had one son (b.1910) and one daughter - Joan de Fonblanque Pennefather (b. 1913), both born in Suva..
- Edward Kingsmill Seward [1898 – 1976]⁴ Born and died in Brisbane. He married Phyllis Mary Eyre (née Hempsted) [1902-1977] in Brisbane in 1931. A salesman who lived in Redcliffe.

The family lived at Albion.

In 1872 Pennefather and a party of seven others purchased the schooner *Crinoline* and engaged in pearl fishing at Torres Straits. He was afterwards appointed master of the vessel. In 1879 he took command of the Imperial naval surveying schooner *Pearl*. Obtaining his commission as Captain, he was engaged in patrolling the south east coast around the Gulf of Carpentaria. In 1880 near the Coen River he discovered a large river which was later named the Pennefather River after him. He also explored the Batavia River, which had previously been marked on the charts as a small opening in the land.

Captain Pennefather was engaged surveying the Mourilyan Harbour in 1882, and he was appointed Police Magistrate at Ingham (where his eldest son was born); in 1888 he accepted

² Private J.W.S. Pennefather served in World War I in King Edward's Horse. He was invalided, returned to Queensland and re-enlisted in the AIF 1918-19 as an infantry re-inforcement. (King Edward's Horse (The King's Overseas Dominions Regiment) was a cavalry regiment of the British Army (formed in 1901) which saw service on the Western Front and Italy in the First World War.

³ Charles was schooled at Bowen House School and then attended Brisbane Grammar School 1900 to 1903. He was described as being "manly and conscientious" and was a talented sportsman – he played in the Rugby 1st XV, kept wicket in the Cricket 1st XI, and was the 100 yards champion (in a very respectable time of 10.8 secs).

⁴ Private E.K.S. Pennefather served in World War I in the 42nd and 25/15th Battalions in 1916-19 and was wounded several times.

the position of superintendent at St. Helena (the Brisbane prison settlement), and in 1893 was appointed Comptroller-General of Prisons.

He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1879; and retired from the Public Service in 1919 at age of 71 – when he was described as “... not only a patriotic and energetic citizen, but a valued public officer, who has had an adventurous and picturesque career.”

Charles Pennefather obtained his commission as a Captain in the Queensland Maritime Defence Force, but when the new Naval Defence Act of the Commonwealth came into force in 1910, he surrendered that rank, and joined again, becoming lieutenant, senior lieutenant, and commander. When the First World War broke out, he was on the retired list but volunteered for active service – an offer which could not be accepted on account of his age.

Captain Pennefather was a Foundation Member of the Club in 1892. He is not recorded as holding any office in the Club. In common with other Foundation Members, he was elected to Life Membership – at some time after 1910 and presumably before his death in 1922.

Captain Charles Edward de Fonblanque Pennefather died at Levuka, Fiji on 2 October 1922 – possibly while visiting his son Charles.

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
- Trove
- Brisbane Grammar School Archives
- State Library of Queensland
- NAA and AWM archives