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## James Tilley, naval officer turned accountant and doughty campaigner for fair pensions for Commonwealth ex-pats – obituary

Tilley founded British Pensioners in Australia (BPiA) to change UK policy on cost-of-living pension increases for expats

*By* Telegraph Obituaries

2 September 2021 • 7:56pm



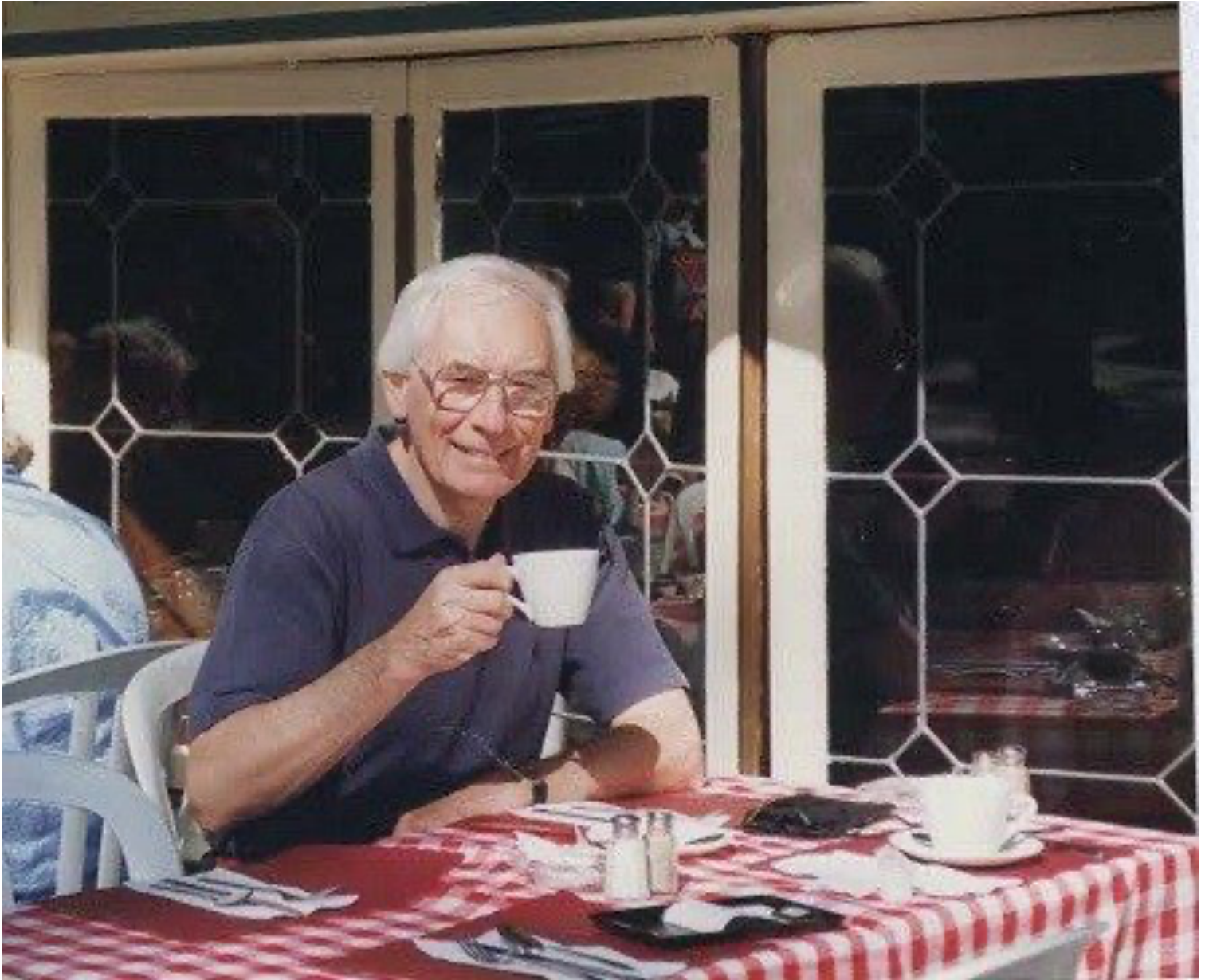
James Tilley, who has died aged 83, was a naval officer who championed British expatriates in their battle for improved pension rights.

When Tilley, who settled in Australia in 1971, realised that his UK state pension would be frozen, he opened a campaign for what he called “British justice” against longstanding British government policy which he characterised as “entrenched unfairness”, denying, he argued, “cost-of-living increases to UK old age pensioners in the old Commonwealth countries”.

Tilley discovered that the settled policy of British governments of all clothes for more than 70 years was, except where reciprocal agreements were in place, not to make annual increases in the payment of British old-age pensions to overseas recipients, thus freezing the pension at the rate when the pensioner emigrated. Reasons given included cost, the desire to focus constrained resources on pensioners in the UK, and the individual’s choice to emigrate.

Tilley realised that for successive British governments, any damage to the country’s reputation for fair dealing and decency around the world was outweighed by the cost of unfreezing these pension arrangements, reckoned at more £600 million by the Treasury, though the International Consortium of British Pensioners reckons a truer figure to be no more than £30 million pa. More than 400,000 people are affected, most of whom live in Australia, Canada or New Zealand.

In 2003 Tilley founded the British Pensioners in Australia (BPiA) and campaigned hard to overturn British pensions policy. Nevertheless the policy remained unchanged even when the All Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen British Pensions – after hearing evidence of destitution facing some British pensioners overseas, and of the impact on Armed Forces veterans who have returned to their country of birth – called for an urgent review of this aspect of pension policy.



Tilley: 'a champion of the rights of Australians for many years'

Tilley became a committee member of the International Consortium of British Pensioners, which raised funds to sue the British Government for discrimination through the High Court then the European Court of Human Rights. But all efforts were unsuccessful.

He died knowing that, while the Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020 affirmed arrangements for the continued payment of pension increases to ex-British residents in Europe, Australia missed the opportunity to bring the matter up as a part of the 2021 UK-Australia

## Free Trade Agreement.

Earlier this year Tilley was made a member of the Order of Australia for his work on behalf of senior citizens; the British government, however, says it has no plans to change long-standing policy.

Patrick Edwards, President of BPiA, said Jim Tilley was “a champion of the rights of Australians for many years. His enthusiasm for our cause has been an inspiration to all of us and we will continue the campaign that he initiated because we know, thanks to Jim, this is a fight for justice.”

James Edward Tilley was born on June 5 1938 in Southall, west London, where his father was a chimney sweep, and educated at Latymer Upper School and Aberystwyth University, where he graduated in Geography and played both cricket and football. He served for three years as an instructor officer, or “schoolie”, at HMS Condor in Arbroath, and represented both the Navy and Combined Services at cricket.

In 1961 he left the Navy to train as an accountant, working first with GKN and then with Cooper Brothers in Birmingham and Glasgow. In Australia for many years he was finance manager for BHP Building Products.

Tilley married Margaret Lamb Dalglish in 1965: she and one son predeceased him earlier this year, and he is survived by another son.

**James Tilley, born June 5 1938, died July 29 2021**

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**Nigel Nelson** 2 Sep 2021 3:26PM

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Thanks Jim for the considerable contribution you made to unfreezing our state pension. I have always admired your commitment and faith that one day, there will be no such thing as a "frozen" pension, and that your massive contribution will have helped to have achieved that. May you Rest In Peace, my friend. [Edit](#)

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