

MAURICE DE ROHAN AO OBE



Engineer, Manager, SA Agent General London, SA Governor elect.

Born: Adelaide SA 13 May 1936

Died: 5 October 2006

Attended ATHS: 1949-51

Career

Maurice John de Rohan graduated from the University of Adelaide in 1960 with a degree in civil engineering. Aged 23 he jointly founded Kinnaird Hill de Rohan and Young (later Kinhill Engineers Pty Ltd) as a partner and then Director. The Company expanded to all other States of Australia and grew to become one of the Australia's biggest engineering and planning consulting groups.

In 1976, after the firm's joint venture with Llewellyn-Davies Weeks International, Maurice became deputy chairman and managing director of the London based firm. He became a founding member of Australian Business in Europe, a director in 1978, and president in 1982-83. He also became a Fellow of the British Institute of Management. The loss of his daughter, Alison, and son-in-law, Francis Gaillard, in the 1987 Zeebrugge ferry disaster was a turning point in his life. With others of the bereaved, he set up the Herald Families' Association, with the aim of achieving justice and creating awareness of the need for higher standards of ferry safety. This led to the founding of the charity Disaster Action in 1991. In 1998 he was appointed Agent-General in London for South Australia. He was widely regarded as the most outstanding agent-general South Australia has ever had.

He was actively involved with Anglo-Australian organizations and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Australia Day Foundation in 2003, and that body's responsibility for organising events around Australia Day, including honours for the achievements of Australians in Britain. He received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Adelaide for his involvement in helping the university build an alumni chapter in London. He became patron of the Combined UK Chapters of South Australian University Alumni Associations.

The esteem in which he was held in his home state was underlined by his being chosen to succeed Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, as Governor of South Australia, a post he was to take up on his return to Adelaide. Unfortunately, soon after learning of the honour, he was found to be suffering from cancer. His condition worsened, and just hours before his death, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia at a special presentation conducted by the Australian High Commissioner witnessed by family and close friends.

Awards:

In 1992 he was appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to maritime safety and in 1998 was made a Freeman of the City of London.

He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2006. Maurice de Rohan died on 5 October 2006 – he was to have become Governor of South Australia in July 2007.

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