

## Obituary: Derrick Prance, frozen pensions campaigner

A doughty advocate for justice on behalf of British pensioners overseas has died aged 88



Derrick Prance engaged in a lengthy battle against bureaucracy

By Ava Hubble

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One of the most indomitable campaigners against the UK's frozen pensions policy, Aubrey Derrick Prance, has died in Perth, Western Australia.

He was born in London on June 12, 1926, and always known by his second name, Derrick.

As a teenager during the Second World War, Derrick joined the Home Guard and helped to man anti-aircraft guns in London. He joined the Army at 18 and saw service in Europe. He ended the war helping to relieve the Belsen concentration camp. He later worked as a sales representative, mainly for the McVitie's biscuit company.

In 1997 he and his wife, Ivy, left the UK to join one of their daughters and her family in Perth. At the time he was aware of the UK's long-standing policy of not granting its annual pension increase to Britons who retire to Australia and over 100 other, mostly Commonwealth, nations.

However, he and Ivy emigrated in the belief that the Labour Party would honour its pre-1997 election

promise to revoke that policy. That didn't happen.

Soon after Derrick settled in Western Australia, he discovered that not only his basic British state pension would be frozen at the 1997 rate, but also his State Earnings Related Pension (Serp).

He joined the Australia-based British Age Pensioner Alliance and began lobbying to get the frozen pension policy scrapped. He was soon appointed to the organisation's committee.

In 2000 Derrick returned to the UK to attend a tribunal hearing he had sought in respect of the freezing of his Serp. But his case was adjourned pending the outcome of a case mounted by the **International Consortium of British Pensioners** against the Secretary for Work and Pensions.

The consortium, representing British pensioners in Australia, Canada and South Africa, alleged that the frozen pensions policy was in breach of the Human Rights Act since it discriminated against contributors to the National Insurance scheme on the basis of where they chose to live in retirement.

The case dragged on for nearly 10 years. Following a loss in the High Court in London, the pensioners, with the help of legal funds from the Canadian Government, mounted unsuccessful appeals in the Appeals Court, the House of Lords and both chambers of the European Court of Human Rights.

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Yet Derrick continued to seek the reopening of his long-adjourned tribunal hearing. During a working life that spanned more than 50 years he had contributed to the National Insurance fund and both he and his employers contributed to his extra pensions. He claimed that neither he nor his employers were ever informed in advance that he would be financially penalised if he retired to Australia.

Hence his epic battle, dating from 2010, to get his adjourned tribunal hearing reopened. But eventually, after appeals to the Department of Work and Pensions, the Royal Courts of Justice, several British politicians and countless ombudsmen, he was advised that his adjourned case had been heard in his absence and a ruling made against him.

Derrick insisted that he had not received any notice of the rescheduled and long-adjourned hearing. To his astonishment he received a reply stating that as the matter was decided against him at the rescheduled hearing, all files pertaining to his case had been destroyed.

Down the years he sent copies of his correspondence with various UK authorities to fellow members of

the British Age Pensioner Alliance around Australia. They, in turn, replied with messages of admiration for his persistence and encouraged him to continue his fight.

Right up until the time of his death from cancer Derrick was still writing to various organs of the British bureaucracy about this matter. It is hoped that his stand will not be forgotten and that it will lead to the British government finally scrapping its frozen pensions policy which has been in force for over 70 years and currently affects about 250,000 Britons in Australia.

Derrick, who died on April 12, is survived by his wife, Ivy, daughter Janice, son-in-law Mike and grandchildren Olivia and Andrew. His other daughter, Suzanne, predeceased him. His funeral will be held at Pinnaroo Crematorium, north of Perth in Western Australia tomorrow, Thursday, April 23.

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