



The John Villiers Trust was established on the death of John (Jack) Villiers in Yeppoon, Queensland on 11 July 2002. He left the whole of his Estate to form a philanthropic Trust in perpetuity, to benefit public charitable institutions solely in the State of Queensland.

John Villiers was born an Englishman but became a proud Australian, and more importantly, in his later years became a proud Central Queenslander.

He was born John Villiers-Tuthill on 17 August 1912 at 24 Arlington Road, Eastbourne, Sussex, England. Both his father and mother came from proud family backgrounds, but John, in his usual modest way, rarely made reference to this.

His father, Thomas Vernon Villiers-Tuthill (1883-1951) was an Englishman and an officer in the P&O Steamship Company.

His mother, Mary Ida Porter (1888-1963) was born in Melbourne, child of wealthy property owner George Edward Porter (1856-1906).

They had four children, Mimi, John, George, and Richard. John was affectionately known in Queensland as Jack Villiers. George was a Battle of Britain pilot in the Royal Air Force, and on his last mission before being promoted to Lt Commander, his plane was hit over Rotterdam, Holland on 31 August 1940, killing all three of the crew. Richard volunteered for army service as soon as he turned 17, rather than be conscripted. He became a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Sussex Regiment and was sent to Germany in the army of occupation. Richard was killed on 19 September 1947, the day before his 20th birthday, whilst rounding up Germans who had "gone underground".

John's father enlisted in the Royal Air Force during World War 1. John recalled the door to their St John's Wood flat being opened one day to see his father swathed in bandages after being shot down on a mission over the English Channel.

John's father remained in the Royal Air Force for the duration of World War 1. After being shot down, he became involved with the synchronising of aircraft guns, and later, as an RAF recruiting officer based at Bristol.

As John's father had been an officer in the P&O Line, it was not surprising in that exciting maritime era, that John should contemplate a similar career. At age 15, he won a P&O scholarship and spent two years at the Incorporated Thames Nautical Training College on the naval training ship "Worcester", moored in the Thames River opposite Gravesend. A three-year apprenticeship followed on P&O passenger and cargo ships. During that time, John spent two years on the far-east run to Singapore, China, and Japan, and also twelve months on the England to Australia run.

Then the depression struck and two-thirds of the merchant navy found itself with no business. Some 60,000 seamen were unemployed. John undertook a further twelve month course at the King Edward VII Nautical School in London's East End. Unable to find work Jack worked his passage in March 1934 aboard the British naval vessel "Jervis Bay" to Colombo, Ceylon, where he visited his sister Mimi and her husband Cliff and then travelled on the "Esperance Bay" to Australia.

In Australia John found a job with the Australian United Steam Navigation Company. Then a seaman's strike followed which lasted upwards of twelve months, which was the last straw for John and he decided to give up the sea and try his luck on the land.

His first job was as a Jackaroo on his uncle Norman Parbury's farm at "Caprioli", near Stanthorpe, Queensland. His other jackarooing roles were at "Lansdowne Pastoral Company" in Tambo, Queensland, "Warrama" in Moree, "Ayrshire Downs", and "Oondooroo Station" between Winton and Hughenden. In 1939 he and several others were driving a large flock of sheep from Oondooroo, heading for Jundah south-west of Longreach, and had reached stockyards in Winton at sundown on 19 September. Just as they had the sheep ready to pen, six Wirraway aircraft flew low overhead scattering the sheep. After they had finally secured them, the men walked into town, where John noticed a newspaper poster which said "British Aircraft Carrier Sunk". They were stunned to find out that World War 2 had broken out over a fortnight beforehand! They all immediately went and enlisted that night at North Gregory Hotel. Before they could get the sheep to their destination, John was called up to the 26th Battalion and sent by troop-train to Townsville, Queensland.

He remembers his two-year army career as being fairly monotonous, as he was placed on garrison duty for most of that time.

Wanting a change but being over the acceptance age for the Navy, John joined the Air Force as a guard, being told he could change later, which proved to be false information. He spent ten months at Parkes guarding the air navigation and wireless school, then in charge of the bomb dump at Townsville. His rank was elevated to Sergeant and he was sent on an RAAF operation to occupy and hold a radar unit in the Torres Strait. Here he developed severe dermatitis and malaria and was evacuated to Cairns and later sent to Brisbane to guard a large storage depot on the Brisbane River until the war ended.

He spent six years four months' service, but found it hard to be discharged. A points system allowed family men out before single men.

After his discharge in January 1946 John returned to the land, working at Darr River Downs at Morella, between Winton and Longreach. He then purchased a 300 acre farm on the north coast of Queensland, between Mackay and Sarina and ran Illawarra Shorthorn cattle for beef and milk. Part of the farm was later excised for a Post Office, before the government resumed the whole property as the site for the Hay Point Coal Terminal.

In 1966, John decided to retire to Yeppoon, a quiet place on the coast east of Rockhampton, Queensland. He lived there for many years, then moved into Rockhampton in 1982, before moving back to Yeppoon in January 2000 to live at the Capricorn Adventist Retirement Village until his death.

John never married, but he made many friends in many places. He lived a simple life, but behind his quiet modesty lay great qualities – a sincere caring gentleman, and a generous man to those in need. During his lifetime he made many gifts to his favourite charitable organisations, some of which made him an Honorary Life Member. He was a willing giver of his time, as he was aware from his years living in various rural locations of the isolation and hardships faced by many young people.

In later life he suffered from osteoporosis of the spine, and prostate cancer. He died peacefully on 11 July 2002, 37 days short of his 90th birthday

The story of John (Jack) Villiers could have ended there but for the fact that under his Will he bequeathed his total estate of approximately \$6.7 million for the benefit of Queensland charities.

Today the capital value of The John Villiers Trust is \$13 million, and grants have been made to many charities.

The generous benefaction by John (Jack) Villiers, being perpetual will continue indefinitely for the benefit of future generations of Queenslanders.

(The accompanying hearty photograph of John with sleeves rolled up and raising his Akubra hat is seen as his final farewell and telling us "good luck with my Trust".