



John Graham Hopetoun Verey was born 19<sup>th</sup> September 1921, a young brother to his sister Joan, to Douglas and Adelaide at Heatherdene, Canon's Park North London. After living with his American grandmother in Hall Place, Weybridge, John moved to the Sussex coast aged around 4 years. Adelaide moved with her sister Irene Dresser, into two new houses with lovely gardens in Middleton-on-Sea, starting the development of Harefield Estate. They established houses, shops a garage and a country club.



John boarded at a very young age, weekly boarding at Holyrood preparatory school in Bognor, Sussex. Gaining entry with five credits to Blundell's School, Devon, he excelled academically, winning many prizes and enjoyed cross-country running, furniture making, and learned to box. John went up to Exeter College, University of Oxford where he rowed for his college, reading Botany and later completing his Masters degree in Forestry.

John volunteered for military service, gaining a commission into the army but switched to Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, typically defiant, as a rating. But Able Seaman Verey quickly became a specially selected rating and the 19 year-old trained intensively, HMS Collingwood, HMS King Alfred, appointed sub-Lieutenant Verey, stationed in Portsmouth, Poole, Troon and Glasgow, learning Navigation at Greenwich Naval College. He served on USS Georgetown in the North Atlantic, escorting merchant ship convoys and mine destroying duties. He was to become Commanding Officer of his Tank Landing craft, and later, two LCQ Headquarters ships in Combined Operations.

John was always reluctant to talk about war, but we heard a little later in life and out of a sense of duty to ensure later generations should forgive but never forget. Perhaps



John's finest hour was during the initial assault of the D-Day landings of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, when as a 23 year old Commanding Officer of LCT 857 he was amongst the first to arrive on Gold Beach, G-force, Division 1 of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Flotilla. The crew had trained intensively for the running-in manoeuvre with their cargo of self-propelled 25 pounder guns firing shells as the LCT sailed under enemy fire onto the beach. John became stranded for several hours on Gold Beach, then faced a 36 hour channel storm. He was eternally grateful to the RAF for weakening defence positions.

Sub-Lt Verey recorded the sailings across the channel that summer 10 trips successfully completed during campaign. At sea 42 days, in harbour 55 days, no personnel lost. He was always cross with himself –“so stupid” not to realise the purpose of the top-secret “special stores” he was later carrying to Port-en-Bassin, when he eventually discovered the purpose for the pipes as part of the PLUTO line.



By 1945 John had been promoted to Commanding Officer of a Headquarters Ship, LCQ 494 with orders to sail for the Far East. It was probably fortunate that the war ended just before this call of duty. Awarded War Medal (1939-1945), Atlantic Star and clasp (France & Germany), the King George VI 1939-45 War Medal (Star) and at the end of his life, on the day before his death, John was awarded Chevalier in the Ordre Nationale de la Legion D'honneur from the President of France through the French Embassy.



John returned to Oxford, but on coming down he packed his belongings on a motorbike, with the degree safely warm and dry beside the exhaust. He never did obtain an authentic parchment copy in Latin to replace the charred remains found on arrival at home.

In 1947 John emigrated to New Zealand working in the New Zealand Forest Service, initially Wellington, DO Wairarapa, Chief Technical Officer responsible for Golden Downs Forests, a 3 million acre project in Nelson, South island. It was here that he met Noeline Flute, a young art teacher who was to be his wife up to her death aged 72.



A holiday “batch” in Monaco, Nelson and living in the Golden Downs settlement this was one of the happiest periods. Kathleen Barnett piano teacher and bridesmaid is still writing from Nelson. John's parents and his aunt Violet Pallister-Young soon joined John, and John also purchased a small farm with his father growing tobacco and raspberries in

Orinoco, Nelson. It was stark contrast to the rationing and poverty of wartime Britain, with abundant food his aunt Violet and mother Adelaide reportedly grew very large on NZ ice-creams.

Returning to England, John faced a difficult choice of jobs, Canada or UK. He opted for Sussex and a career as a civil servant in HM Forestry Commission. Typically, he had no idea at all that his grandfather and great grandfather owned a large forest and sawmill in Canada, and that might possibly have been related to his mother's idea of a career in forestry. John came home to Middleton-on-Sea, where he was fortunate to have a house available on the Harefield Estate from his mother. There should have been a warning at this stage of the number of moves required, as his lovely new home Colworth Grange, Chichester was ready to move into even with the kitchen garden planted up when his appointment of District Officer was relocated from Chichester to Uckfield in Sussex. He never moved into Colworth, instead renting a farmhouse during the building works and renovations for Glebe House in Framfield East Sussex.

The family moved to Lincolnshire, then Norfolk, but John declined his final appointment as a Grade One Civil Servant in North Wales, foregoing his safe Forestry Commission salary and pension, deliberately choosing a challenging life on the Isle of Wight. John set out to avoid an unearned income, sold all his investments and diverted all resources to producing tomatoes on the Island.

The Big Idea had probably started in the large lean-to glasshouse at Framfield 1963. There were simply too many tomatoes, and a wooden trug was set up in the local grocers to sell the excess. So it was that John and Noeline purchased Budbridge Manor in 1968 with enough land to start building glasshouses, half an acre each year. The house was derelict, with straw stored in the dining room so huge efforts were required to make the old place habitable.

They said it was a tiger by the tail. Three Oil crises, 24 hour days, seven days per week, switching to coal, overcoming miners strikes and tobacco mosaic virus in a severely

cold winter. John's growing expertise provided top yields through meticulous attention to detail in the glasshouses. He chaired the Hampshire and IOW study group and made innovations that have become standard practice. He was amongst the first in 1973, to use biological control in place of insecticides, rearing his own predators in special cages on the nursery. John was also amongst the first in the early 70's to risk sowing his crops in October, proving

tomatoes could be picked in February. The nursery John created in a field at Budbridge, where he found a Palaeolithic axe, was to become one of the foundation stones for the business that was in turn to become one of the owners of Wight Salads.



John provided immense support and advice for the family growing business, working tirelessly until Noeline fell ill in 1998. After losing Noeline, John lived quietly in Spring

Cottage, loving Shanklin beach and enjoying the beautiful garden, often entertaining four grandchildren, before returning to Budbridge Manor where he remained active, until the age of 93 enjoying seeing his grandchildren growing up and being at the centre of family functions.



It was only when John started to fall victim to the later stages of dementia that he left Buddbridge for his last two and half years in Cornelia Care home, Watergate Road where the outstanding and dedicated staff succeeded in making the very best of John's final years.

