

Engineering Heritage Australia
National Engineering Oral History Program

Brief Biography

Sir John Holland (1914 -), Civil Engineer, Company Director

Birth & Family: Born 21 June 1914, Clifton Hill, Victoria; Clifton Vaughan Holland. Eighth child of Tom Holland, farmer and property owner, and Mabel Ruth Elizabeth (nee Falkingham) property owner (m 1892). Siblings (ages at birth of John): Harry (21), Tas (19), Rena (14), Florence (Bill) (12), Travers (5), Albert (4), and Clarice (3) then followed Ian (Jim) (1915), Alma (1917).

Schooling:

Attended Primary school at Flinders State School, No. 841, Secondary school at Frankston High School, Victorian Matriculation Certificate 1932. Tertiary education at University of Melbourne, Queens College.

Marriage and family:

In 1942 married Emily Joan Atkinson, they had three sons and one daughter.

Qualifications:

BCE (1936); Hon. Deng (31.3.1978); FTSE; Hon. FIE Aust; FAIM, FAIB.

Awards:

AC (1988); KT (1973); Peter Nicol Russell Memorial Award 1974; Kernot Medal 1976; Foundation Fellow, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering 1976; Fellow of Queen's College 1978, Total Community Development Award 1982; Consulting Engineers Advancement Society Medal 1984; Vocational Service Award Rotary Club of Melbourne 1987, Honorary Fellow, Institution of Engineers Australia 1991, Distinguished Achiever Award 2000, Distinguished Constructor's Award 2000.

Summary Work History:

Junior Engineer, BP Australia 1936-1939, Construction Engineer, BP Australia 1946-1949; Founder John Holland Construction Group 1949; Managing Director 1949-1972, Chairman 1949-1981, President, 1986-1994; Chairman, John Holland (Holdings) Ltd 1963-86 (ret'd), Chairman Process Plant Construction Pty Ltd 1949-1982.

War Service:

World War II RAE and Z Special Force Lt-Col 1939-1945

Detailed Work History:

Clifton Vaughan Holland, always known as John, had a life long passion to be an engineer. He was inspired by pictures of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and by the local Flinders Shire Engineer who allowed him to accompany him on various civil engineering projects. The Great Depression prevented Holland's attendance at a private school, but he excelled at Frankston High School prior to being accepted into Melbourne University in 1933 to pursue his engineering studies. He later boarded at Queen's College.

Following graduation Holland quickly received work with BP Australia. War service interrupted his burgeoning career as a civil engineer and he again excelled in this field of endeavour. He was active in the military engineering school and went on to play a vital role in the Z special force. While on active service he contemplated his future direction and decided that he wished to establish his own engineering business. He did this on demobilisation, joining Stafford Fox in a partnership to form the John Holland Construction Group.

The business prospered and won contracts to work on hundreds of projects Australia wide. Key projects included: Jindabyne Pumping Station, Captain Cook Bridge, Loy Yang Power Station, Calcap Thermal Power Station Queensland, Westgate Bridge, Tasman Bridge Restoration, National Animal Health Laboratory Geelong, Sydney Entertainment Centre, Australian Sports Institute, MCG Great Southern Stand, South Eastern Freeway, Coal Outloading Facilities Mackay, and Joint Construction Manager New Parliament House Canberra.

Sir John has served on numerous boards and is and has been active in a broad range of organisations including: Director ANZ Banking Group 1976-1981; T&G Life Society 1972-1982; Chairman Process Plant Construction Pty Ltd 1949-1982; Patron Bone Marrow Foundation 1992-; Patron Stroke Research Foundation 1990-; Member Baker Memorial Research Institute, 1982-; Member Construction Industry Research Board 1982- 1984; National Chairman Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust for Young Australians 1981-1987, Distinguished Life Member 1991, Chairman Vic 1977-1980; Chairman Citizens Council Victoria's 150th Anniversary Celebrations 1979-1982; Director Child Accident Prevention Foundation Australia, 1979-1981; Director Winston Churchill Memorial Trust 1976-1982, Life Member 1982, Chairman Victorian Region 1977-1982; Member Loch Ard Centenary Commemoration Committee 1976-1978; Member Melbourne Centenary Test Co-ordination Committee 1976-1977, Chairman History Advisory Council Victoria 1975-1983; Member La Trobe Centenary Commemoration Council 1975-1976; Member Economic Consultative Advisory Group to Treasury 1975-1981; National Chairman Outward Bound 1973-1974, Chairman Victorian Division 1964-1977; Chairman Matthew Flinders Bi-Centenary Council 1973-1975; Foundation President Australian Federation Civil Contractors, Life Member 1971; Councillor Institute Public Affairs 1970; Member Rhodes Scholarships Selection Committee 1970-1973; President Stroke Research Foundation 1983-1989; Director Royal Melbourne Hospital 1963-1979; President Royal Melbourne Golf Club 1990-1993; Patron Children First Foundation 2000; Patron Voluntary Euthanasia Society of Victoria 1996. (See bibliography for references to full list of board appointments and memberships.)

Recreations:

Golf, music, gardening, cricket

Clubs:

Australian, Navy and Military (Melb), Royal Melbourne Golf, Frankston Golf, Flinders Golf.

Bibliography:

Holland, Sir John, AC, *A Constant Challenge, A history of the John Holland Group 1949-1986*, Craftsman Press, Melbourne, 1994

Holland, John, *In Passing*, privately published, Melbourne, 2001

Madigan, R.T., et al, *Technology in Australia, 1788-1988, the Sir Lindsay Clark Memorial Volume*, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, Melbourne 1988

Report of Royal Commission into the failure of the Westgate Bridge, 1971 Victoria, reproduced July 2000

Who's Who in Australia, 2000

Stella M. Barber, July 2002