

John (Jack) Naish: A Brief Biography

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John (Jack) Naish was the youngest son of Sarah Ann Naish (née Griffiths) and William John Naish. He was born on 24 April 1923 at Port Talbot, Neath, Glamorganshire, Wales. He had two older siblings William and Edward (Ted) and a younger sister Lilian (Lily). His mother was a primary school teacher, and his father a carpenter.

Naish attended Port Talbot Secondary School alongside Richard Walter Jenkins (who would become known as Richard Burton, Hollywood actor) with whom Naish would swap lead roles in school plays.

At 16 years of age Naish engaged as an articled clerk with a chartered accountant. He then joined the army in 1942 serving with H.M. Welsh Guards until discharge in 1947. Demobbed in London, Naish worked as an assistant to the secretary of a motor car and agricultural machinery distributor in Swansea from 1947 to 1948 and then as a clerk for the management of a picture theatre from 1948 to 1950.

In late 1949 Naish applied for an assisted passage to Australia. Travelling on the *Ontranto* he disembarked in Sydney, and then travelled by train to Brisbane where he arrived on 10 June 1950. He initially secured clerical work, then worked in the forestry at Kalpowar near Monto.

He then travelled north to work as a cane cutter in the harvest season in sugar farming areas between Mackay, in central Queensland and Gordonvale in far north Queensland. He listed his occupations in the slack (the five-month period between harvest seasons) as variously: navvy, gravedigger, fettler, miner, axeman, bookmaker, barman, clerk and fruit-picker.

Having fulfilled the residential obligations of his assisted passage Naish left Australia on 25 February 1956 with the intent to work his way home. His first stop was Fiji having already engaged in Brisbane to work as a shipping clerk in Ba with Burns and Philp Company.

There he met Rosemary Ruth West Medical Superintendent at the Methodist Hospital in Ba. After a year's courtship they both resigned from their jobs and returned to Australia in early March. They were married in Adelaide on 20 March 1958, returning north for Naish to resume cane cutting. Their first son, Guy, was born on 7 September 1958 in Babinda, north Queensland.

The family then travelled to Wales in August 1959 where their second son Lee was born on 22 January 1960. By April they were back in Australia. Naish resumed cane cutting until 1961 when West secured the position of Medical Superintendent of the Cooktown Hospital. Naish died in Cooktown on 19 July 1963 of a self-administered barbiturate overdose. He is buried in Cairns in the Martyn Street Cemetery.