

John was born in Pretoria, South Africa on 17th October 1897. Before coming to Australia, he served in the Bushveld Carabineers in the Boer War, service number 166. Breaker Morant was also a member of this unit. He also served as a steward in the Royal Navy for 9 years. On coming to Australia he continued his seamanship and is shown on 1907 Register of Seamen as being on the STRATHDON.

On 11th August 1914 he joined E Company, AN&MEF as a bugler stating that he was a ships steward and married, giving his wife Annie at 121 White St Leichardt, as his next of kin. He was involved in the capture of the SIAR, the yacht of the German Governor of New Guinea. He returned from Rabaul and was discharged, term expired, on 4th March 1915 having completed 206 days service.

On 26th October 1916 he joined the Royal Australian Navy Bridging Train, regimental number 57605. He was promoted to corporal and was in training with the unit at Swan Island when the Train was disbanded. He was discharged on 8th May 1917 having completed 195 days service.

He then joined the Royal Australian Navy on 15th May 1917, service number 6136, and served as a steward at Cerberus until 12th April 1920.

On 29th April 1920 he rejoined the AN&MEF, regimental number 1981, this time stating that he was single. He served as Mate on the SS SIAR, the yacht in whose capture he was involved. He was made Hon Sergeant and returned to Australia on the MELUSIA on 5th November and was discharged at own request on 17th December 1920.