

# **A TRIBUTE TO BILL BUCKLEY**

## **1919 - 2002**

- Ernst Holland

Bill Buckley, one of Australia's most respected cave guides, passed away on 10 January 2002. While Bill will be remembered by his many friends and acquaintances as a gentleman of great worth, it should never be forgotten of those many thousands of cave visitors who may never know the name but will always remember the great experience they had at Jenolan Caves because of him.

He was born William John Buckley on 15 September 1919, to William and Katie Buckley, in Sydney. His father introduced Bill to Jenolan Caves – his first visit to Jenolan Caves was in 1921 when he was three years old (yes, Wirburd was still working as a guide and he clearly remembered being taken on a cave tour by him in the 1930's, but unfortunately he didn't remember which cave).

Bill's sister Lucy tells that the family would make regular trips to Jenolan in a 1932 Buick Super Six Tourer. The family would set out at 4.00 am to be at the top of the Five Mile Hill for the 9.00 am down hill run (the five mile hill was only one way traffic in those days with gates to control the traffic flow at the top and bottom). The run home would start after the last cave tour at 4.30pm and if they were lucky they would be home by midnight.

And so started a great love of Jenolan that lasted within him and at times was the only thing that kept him going. Bill made many visits to Jenolan as a boy growing up, as a working and family man. During this period, except for his war service from 1939 to 1945, Bill worked and lived in Sydney.

With the formation of the Jenolan Caves Historical and Preservation society in 1972 Bill started to take an even more intense interest in Jenolan. Already having a keen interest in nature, history and people, it was a logical step for Bill to take up causal guiding.

It was during this period that Bill formed a great camaraderie with the staff of Jenolan and often with the visitors to Jenolan. In 1985, having no strong ties to Sydney, Bill started to become more involved with the guiding and eventually lived at Jenolan and worked full time as a guide.

Bill guided until he was 82 years of age.

It was while he was working full time at Jenolan that he made some enduring relationships, especially with the younger members of staff, acting as mentor and father. He also worked tirelessly to improve and modify the working conditions for the casual guiding staff. For the whole of his life Bill was able to talk to people in such a way that they felt relaxed, comfortable and special to him, attributes that made him an exceptional mentor, friend and cave guide.

Bill Buckley was an old styled Australian man. His love of family & work and the natural environment – his personal values of loyalty to his colleagues, his country, and service where needed are too rarely reflected today – an exceptional combination that made him the man, sadly for us, that we must farewell. I would like to thank Ken Buckley for the use of some of the words from the eulogy he gave at Bills Funeral.

