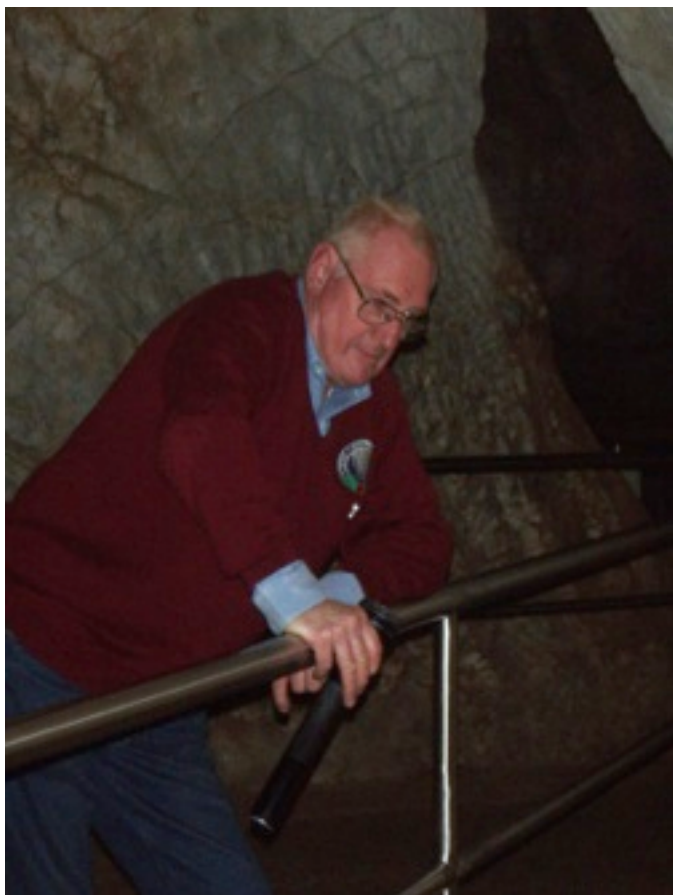


JOHN CALLAGHAN

Sasa Kennedy and Dan Cove



*A contemplative moment
Photo: Sasa Kennedy*

It was with great sorrow that Jenolan Caves staff and the wider caving community learnt of the death of much-loved Jenolan guide, John Callaghan, on Saturday 14 September 2013.

John's career at Jenolan spanned four decades from the 1960s onwards, during which time he held positions as a Guide, as Senior Guide, as Assistant to the Manager, Acting Visitor Services Manager and Groups and Inbound Tour Operator Liaison. John left an enduring mark in all of these roles. As a member of the guiding team in the 1970s, he was an integral part of the refurbishment of the show cave system, particularly the concreting of paths and drystone wall construction in the Imperial Cave.

However, it was typical of John that he was not merely a hard working member of this team but became a leader, and deeply interested in the methods of show cave development and in promoting greater access to caves by all. This philosophy led to John, having left Jenolan for a time, developing Tantanoola Cave near Mt Gambier

as the first genuinely wheelchair accessible cave in Australia – a significant milestone.

John returned to Jenolan and continued to advocate for a policy of sustainable development allowing ever greater inclusivity. This philosophy was a clear statement of John's love of his caves, and his desire to share this love with as great a number of visitors as possible. John's achievements and his vision in show cave development were well recognized across Australia, and he was a well respected member of the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association.

John was one of the greatest of advocates for Jenolan, and was at his finest representing the caves at trade shows and travel events. He was a skilled networker, and was a well known and respected in the broader travel and tourism industry. He recognized early the great importance of tour and coach visitation, and worked hard to establish Jenolan as a 'must see' destination for coach itineraries and the relationships he developed with tour operators and coach drivers were enduring. Whenever possible he would personally greet arriving coaches, with a warm welcome and tickets to hand. He was quick to appreciate the rising importance of Asian, particularly Chinese, inbound markets. The strength of these markets at Jenolan today is a long term testament to the foundations that John established in his time.

John was one of the founding members of JCHAPS, and always had a deep passion for the history and heritage of Jenolan. When the Post Office building was to be demolished to make way for a new shelter shed John was part of the crew which took down the building,



*Barry Richards and John at SUSS 60th Anniversary
Dinner*

Photo: Sasa Kennedy



*After winning the coveted Diamond Donut Award, June 2008. L-R. Phyllis Calvert and John Callaghan, Peter Austen, Jann and Grant Commins
Photo: Jenny Whitby*

numbering each part and carefully storing them, so that when the time was right it could be rebuilt. It now stands as the JCHAPS museum. John was awarded Life Membership of JCHAPS for his services to the society.

One of his greatest strengths was not merely the depth of his knowledge, which was – in some areas – unparalleled, but his generosity in sharing this knowledge with others. John was a mentor to numerous aspiring guides and work experience students; he would spend much of his own time in leading trips through the cave system, discussing his experiences and his knowledge of the long heritage that he was always proud to be a part of. At the time of his retirement, John led a series of special trips for staff to ensure that his knowledge could be captured and passed on to succeeding generations of guides.

He was delighted when guides went on after hours caving trips, providing valuable information about routes and necessary gear whenever asked. Afterwards he was

always keen to hear how the trips went and answer any questions that arose as a result. He was always an attentive listener, in addition to being a memorable raconteur. He welcomed cavers and guides' families to Jenolan, never forgetting a name.

John will also be forever remembered as a larger than life character – a true legend in his own time. He had a unique way of communicating and storytelling that gave rise to the birth of an enduring term, the “Callaghanism” to reference one of John’s celebrated turns of phrase. He was always at the heart of the social scene at Jenolan and was a great believer in (and driver of) a sense of community amongst the staff. He will forever be remembered at Jenolan as JCA, as he appeared on rosters.

In 2008 at the Guides’ Awards, when it was decided to instigate an award to seriously commemorate services to social harmony and community spirit at Jenolan Caves, John was clearly the stand out choice to be the inaugural winner of this award. He was always one of the most popular figures in the Guides’ Office and with the hundreds of thousands of visitors who were fortunate enough to be on one of John’s tours over the years. That Chisholm’s Restaurant was literally filled to capacity on the night of John’s retirement shows the regard in which he was held.

John’s funeral was held at the Castlebrook Crematorium, Rouse Hill, on Thursday 19 September 2013 at 11.00 am. The service and wake were filled to overflowing with John’s family, Jenolan staff, both past and present and members of the wider tourism industry.

John was one of the great personalities of Jenolan Caves. He will be missed by all those who were fortunate enough to have known him, but leaves behind an outstanding legacy that will endure forever in the pages of Jenolan’s history.

John is survived by his partner Phyllis Calvert, also a popular Jenolan guide, and his extensive family.



Left. Jenolan guides past and present who came together for John’s wake.



Right. With Phyllis