

## **John Cayley's contribution to the Hamilton Field Naturalists Club (HFNC) – 1972-2017**

John William Douglas Cayley (b. 19 January 1938) died on 26 June 2017 in Hamilton, following several years of Parkinson's disease and then a massive stroke on the night he and Glenys arrived home from a holiday exploring the fossil areas of outback Queensland. Members of HFNC, other members of the public and former work colleagues were dismayed at the passing of a great friend and a man who refrained from uttering disparaging words about anyone. John was HFNC's longest-serving and most dedicated member.

John was a graduate in Agricultural Science from the University of Melbourne and his major training was in agronomy. He and Glenys Cayley came to Hamilton in 1961, when John was appointed as a Livestock Research Officer in the Department of Agriculture at the Pastoral Research Station. The officer-in-charge was Harry Bishop, then also President of the HFNC, and in 1962 he prevailed upon John to give a talk on rock climbing and trekking in Tasmania. That meeting was John's introduction to the club. He became a regular club member in the early 1970s and continued for the next 45 years uninterrupted. John was President of HFNC from 1977-79, 1986-87, 1993-97, 2002-03, 2005-07 and 2011-16, a total of 21 years. He also served as Vice-President from 1975-76, 1981, 1988-90, 1992, 1998-99 and 2004 (10 years). He was keenly involved in club matters up until his death and one of his 'extra' contributions was to assist Glenys Cayley with the production of the bi-monthly Treasurer's report, using an Excel spreadsheet (John was very computer literate and loved to tackle digital/technical complexities).

John was awarded a Life Membership in December 2014, in recognition of his long and distinguished service to the club. As noted in the nomination, John participated in almost all working bees over the years, including tree-planting on the Grange Burn, the summit of Mt Napier, Lake Linlithgow, Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve, Glenelg Highway east of Dunkeld and the Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve. Some of us recall John's efforts with his 'Mountain Mule' backpack in carrying 2,000 seedlings of Manna Gums and Blackwoods up to the high slopes and summit of Mt Napier in 1984-89. John and son Ross also used a cross-cut saw to drop a huge pine that was growing on the eastern rim. They failed initially but a storm completed the job!

John also helped plan and he attended most of the club's excursions over the years, often as leader. Other time-consuming and sometimes disagreeable duties included attending meetings of Grange Burn/Lake Hamilton Advisory Committee, DEPI/PV Roundtable Meetings at Halls Gap and Forest Operations Plans with DEPI for prescribed burning in SW & Wimmera areas.

One of John's strengths was his ability to communicate in a friendly, non-adversarial manner, not allowing environmental ignorance or uncaring attitudes of some in government departments, shires or general community to visibly frustrate or upset him. That quality certainly helped to keep channels of communication open where there were differences in attitudes/beliefs.

John's constant, quiet but steadfast effort to keep the club active, relevant and achieving its aim of being an advocate for the environment is applauded and we acknowledge with gratitude the many years of companionship that he has shown to us all. We will miss his keen wit and quirky sense of humour too.

John was one of the most likeable and helpful people that one will ever find and his sudden death is a great loss to us all.