

# JOHN GRAHAM RETIRES AFTER 38 YEARS

## The man everyone relied on

**One of Akubra's longest serving staff members and a man that every employee and every retailer has relied on, retires next month after 38 years with the company.**

Sixty four year old John Graham, the despatch manager as well as the man in charge of Akubra's payroll, is planning to dig out his golf clubs as well as explore much of Australia with his partner Shelley.

"Neither of us has any desire to travel overseas but we both love Australia, especially the Northern Territory and we can't wait to get back up there," John said.

"No matter where we go we won't be towing a caravan.

"We did that for many years when we took the kids to the beach during school holidays.

"The novelty of caravanning has well and truly worn off.

"I haven't hit a golf ball for the last two or three years and I want to get back to playing the game."

John left school at 14 to work in a Kempsey sawmill, stacking timber and stayed there for three years before moving to a second mill.



*ABOUT TO RETIRE: John Graham, soon to depart Akubra to explore Australia.*

"The boss at the second mill recognized that I was good with figures and put me in the office as manager and doing the payroll," John said.

"Eventually the payroll job came up at Akubra and I moved here 38 years ago.

"Then in 1987 Graham Keir, who was the national sales manager, died suddenly.

"He was also the sales representative for the North and North West of NSW and I was asked to take on that job as well, spending three days a month on the road."

Then in the early 1990's John was also put in charge of despatch.

"Fortunately computers have made the job so much easier," John said.

"I used to calculate then write out more than 100 payroll sheets by hand and that took two days every week.

"Now the girls input it all into the computer while despatch and invoicing has also become so much easier and quicker."

There have been other changes as well including the succession of three

Steve Keirs as managing directors during his time at the company.

"The late Steve number two was in charge when I first got the job here," John said.

"Then we had the late Steve number three as chairman for many years and now we have Steve number four and I feel fortunate to have worked with them all.

"Akubra is a family business and working here is like belonging to a family."

John has seen big changes in the overseas markets Akubra serves and in the vast range of hats the company has developed.

"China is by far our biggest export market now, which is one significant change and they want the top of the range hats," John said.

"When I first came here I think we produced a range of six styles but through innovation and hard work we now produce 100 styles.

"It is going to be sad leaving Akubra but there are other things to do and places to explore and we want to do it while we are still healthy and fit enough".

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# THE TOP 10 AKUBRAS

## How times have changed

**AKUBRA**



CATTLEMAN



CATTLEMAN-SAND



SNOWY RIVER

**When we look at the top ten selling Akubra hats today and compare the list to 1994 there are very few common names:**

| RANKING | 1994        | 2013        |
|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 1.      | SNOWY RIVER | CATTLEMAN   |
| 2.      | CATTLEMAN   | COOLABAH    |
| 3.      | STOCKMAN    | ROUGH RIDER |
| 4.      | PASTORALIST | SNOWY RIVER |
| 5.      | DOWN UNDER  | TERRITORY   |
| 6.      | COLLY       | COOBER PEDY |
| 7.      | OXLEY       | RIVERINA    |
| 8.      | GYMKHANA    | ARENA       |
| 9.      | KIANDRA     | TABLELANDS  |
| 10.     | BOBBY       | STONY CREEK |

Snowy River and Cattleman remain common throughout the last 19 years and even today comprise approximately 35% of all company sales. It is pleasing to see that these styles have survived the test of time.

The growth of the Coolabah can be directly attributed to this company's growth into export markets, particularly Asia. The authentic crocodile band is widely

sought after by customers overseas along with an increasing desire for quality goods manufactured outside their home country.

It is worthwhile noting that the Coober Pedy also enjoys a similar popularity overseas, perhaps because of the Australian opal that is attached to the authentic kangaroo tail band.

Rough Rider has emerged domestically as one of the most popular additions to the Akubra range. First introduced in 2004 it has enjoyed a steady rise to now be number three in the top 10 styles.

Along with the Territory and more recently Riverina (the latter introduced in 2011) the trend towards wide brimmed hats is noticeable. Apart

from the stylish design both hats afford, it is clear that the UPF rating of 50 + is becoming a significant consideration for customers when making a decision about headwear protection.

The other interesting trend in more recent times is the move towards lighter coloured hats. Up to 10 years ago perhaps 20% of all sales were from light colours whereas today it is more like 50%.

## The top 10 by style and colour at present is as follows:

|     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
| 1.  | CATTLEMAN FAWN         |
| 2.  | COOLABAH REGENCY FAWN  |
| 3.  | ROUGH RIDER LIGHT SAND |
| 4.  | SNOWY RIVER SANTONE    |
| 5.  | CATTLEMAN SAND         |
| 6.  | TERRITORY SANTONE      |
| 7.  | COOBER PEDY SANTONE    |
| 8.  | ROUGH RIDER BLACK      |
| 9.  | RIVERINA SAND          |
| 10. | ARENA SAND             |

These ten individual hats comprise 44% of all hats sold by Akubra and four of them are a light colour. On its own Cattleman in fawn and sand comprise 16% of all sales and has consistently been the number one performing style over the past 20 years.

It is a style that suits most people, both men and women. Of course each state and territory sees a

different mix on best performing styles although many of the ten above will appear as strong performers in your territory.

If you would like information on likely best performing styles please contact your Akubra agent or head office. We would be more than pleased to assist you in growing your Akubra sales.



# THE FAMILY SAYS THANKS, JOHN



**Akubra's Chairman and Managing Director, Steve Keir, said John had worked for three generations of the Keir family.**

"He was always there for us and has made a significant contribution to the history of Akubra Hats," Steve said.

"John was one of the first to be employed by Akubra when we moved to Kempsey in 1974 and he has served the company well in all those years.

"He was always the first to put his hand up if any help was needed.

"On his travels around the state as a sales rep for the company John made many friends and never a bad word was spoken about him.

"He made an impression on all who dealt with him.

"I would personally like to thank John for his time at Akubra, his helpful nature and his wicked wit which always brought that wry grin to his face that cheered people up.

"I hope retirement is everything he hopes for because he thoroughly deserves it.

"Good luck John and thank you."

**As if he wasn't busy enough.....**

As if John was not busy

enough with all his roles at Akubra, he also served for 32 years as the treasurer of Kempsey Race Club and 28 years as secretary before standing down several years ago.

"Steve Keir number two was chairman of the club at the time and came to me one day and asked if I would help count money at race meetings," John said.

"I agreed and then a few months later he came to me and said there had been a board meeting and I had been elected treasurer.

"Four years later I was appointed secretary as well and because of the involvement that Steve number two and Steve number three had with the club I was able to combine all my roles, both here at work and with the club.

"I would not have been able to do it otherwise."

# MEET OUR FRONT OFFICE LADIES

**Akubra's office is the first point of contact for all our retailers and customers and these are the four friendly ladies you deal with first.**

They are only too happy to help and with the experience they have can probably answer any question.

If not, they know where to get the answer because between them they have 100 years of service with Akubra. It's a great place to work.

From the left we have Jenny Newham (20 years service) who, in most cases, is the first to answer



the phone while she also handles customer orders.

Shelley Crotty (26 years) also takes customer orders as well as processes invoices and handles customer account enquiries while Cheryl Mitchell handles cash receipts and takes orders. She has asked that we whisper, very quietly, that she has been with the company for 32 years.

Finally Julie Wilson (22 years) handles creditor and supplier payments.

Now, when you ring, you can put a name to a face or, to put it another way, a face to a name.

**AKUBRA – ON TOP DOWN UNDER**