

OBITUARY – DON WRIGHT. 27/11/1938 – 12/02/2021

Don, as a member of Heyfield and District for near forty years, attended each of the National Rallies, beginning at Lake Goldsmith in 1987, where I think Heyfield put in a submission for a future event. He found the rally at Carrara by chance. We were holidaying in Queensland, and accidentally heard the “hit and miss” noise and saw a plume of smoke. I remember the Goolwa Rally, small and situated on a grassy bank overlooking Lake Alexandrina. Then came Bendigo, followed by Canberra, where his McDonald threw him to the ground when he was cranking it. For Busselton, he flew over both ways on the “red eye”. The Heyfield mob had driven over and had his tent all ready for him with his swag. Henty was a favourite, with a real Aussie country flare; next was a trip to Launceston on the ferry that left from Welshpool, taking only four hours from home. The big one at Heyfield was the next, a huge task well done. Naracoorte on the racecourse; Biloela at the silo; Murray Bridge, where we hired a houseboat for accommodation; Pinjarra was a long way, but at least we crossed the Nullabor both ways by road. Mudgee was where the men from Sydney Science Museum drooled over his Leichardt, and a collector of signs told him the name plate was hand engraved back in the early 1900s. Back to Launceston and then to Hamilton in the mud.

During those forty years he collected and restored, achieving a display second to none – he enjoyed every minute building pieces to complete an engine. He didn’t study the model numbers etc., but ask him how it worked, to build and restore from a picture and he was in his element. Saving an engine from the scrap heap was his passion, as was hosting other clubs, or talking to visitors about his collection.

His last project was our front fence, he dug 30 post holes in dry hard dirt, finishing in April last year. He had a bit of a cough early Covid. By June, after some tests, he was told it was lung cancer, likely through exposure to asbestos. We moved to the Latrobe Valley late in 1970’s and Don worked at two sites, now closed because of asbestosis contamination. I believe it was possible this where the contamination occurred. His oncologist said he had reached 82 because he wasn’t a smoker. The message is do not smoke, and respect asbestos. In the course of the disease, including this recent admission, doctors have told Don they had to check twice his age – another reason not to smoke. For his last months he was happy sitting in a chair looking out our window at his native “tame” birds and the traffic on our road. (amazing for someone who was always very active). No more Nationals for Don, but don’t be surprised to feel him hovering over your Ronnie engines, breathing in the fumes, and enjoying sounds. Rest now Don.

Prepared by his wife Elizabeth.