

Hugh Sykes

1944 to 2021

Hugh was the fourth in a family of five children. Born in 1944, he first lived in Derbyshire, not far from Chatsworth House, before moving to the south side of Manchester where he lived for the next twenty years. The first fourteen were spent in a large house with a very large garden, which provided lots of scope for exploration, games and gardening. His first known expedition was to ride from home to the outskirts of Manchester on his tricycle when he was three years old! Subsequently there were many expeditions by bike, on foot or by canoe.

It was when he was living here that he started to show his talent for woodwork and engineering. This in turn led him to a lifelong interest in clocks. One day my mother looked in his room and found to her horror that one of the grandfather clocks had been completely dismantled and was distributed all over his desk. In replying to her question as to how the clock was going to be put back together, he said “Well, it’s obvious!”.

After school, Hugh worked in Manchester for a firm of chartered accountants, and after much hard work he eventually qualified and became a Fellow of the Institute of a Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. This qualification helped in later life, but also took him away from his first love of clocks. He did also become a graduate of the British Horological Institute and came first in the country in one of the exams.

When Hugh first left home, he went to live in London, where he learnt to ride a motor bike. His first trip after passing the test was to ride to brother Martin’s farm in west Wales, about 250 miles away. His wander lust grew and in 1971 he took the opportunity to become a “ten pound Pom” to take a job in Sydney, taking his trusty Triumph Saint motorbike with him. He intended to ride round Australia with a friend. When he came to cross the Nullabor his travelling companion did not fancy such an arduous journey so he rode this section by himself! His journey ended at Perth where he had an accident when a dog ran out in front of him.

After a two year spell in New Zealand he returned to the UK for eight years. During this time he met his wife, Sue – a professional pianist, before they both returned to Perth and he subsequently became an Australian citizen. He graduated with a BA in Public Administration at Murdoch University. The Government of Western Australia provided him with employment in various financial capacities until his retirement.

Where he saw injustice around him, Hugh had a strong desire to help others. Those who were less fortunate than him, those in prison and those held for immigration purposes amongst others. He spent time visiting them and demonstrating on their behalf when he felt was appropriate.

So many people who met him commented on Hugh’s gentleness and care for others both in Australia and the UK. He inherited this altruism from his parents and grandparents. He was very good at keeping in touch with the people he met. He made friends with a very wide selection of people. All those who knew him will have their own stories to tell and memories to hold dear.