

The evening before my father died a kiwi called louder than I had ever heard outside my window and I wondered.

I am Julia, Antony's or Tony's, as he was often called, eldest daughter and have just come over from New Zealand.

My father Anthony Oldfield Wood was born on the 2nd November 1935 in Morley, Yorkshire. He grew up in Gildersome where his father was the headmaster of the local primary school. His mother was a teacher at the same school, where she specialised in teaching crafts. His dad was into amateur dramatics and became a local councillor and his mum was active in the teaching union. She campaigned for equal pay for teachers, and was one of the first to receive it, a fact our dad was very proud of.

Dad had a fantastic memory and would tell stories of visiting the wool mill in his town to see the mother of a friend. He spoke of the incredible noise of the looms and how the ladies would lip read because of this. He could remember how grubby everything was during the war and how they put grass and fake cows on top of a factory to try and deceive the enemy. He was an only child and played cricket with his cousin John and excelled at maths and latin at school. When his school friend Mike, heard of his passing he said "the end of an era, a sad day indeed." and 'He was my oldest friend from our school days and we had kept in touch for most of the time since he left Gildersome. I had toyed with the idea for old times sake of sending him a CD of Dick Barton, Special Agent a radio programme we dashed home to listen to at 6.45 every evening, Tony even went to the extent of making notes on the exploits of Dick, Jock, and Snowy after each episode.

I think of Tony whenever an aircraft flies over from the Yeadon airport where we did our plane spotting (Spitfires and Dragonflies in those days), or when I chance upon a new sundial!

After school my dad studied aeronautical engineering at Imperial College and in London he met his wife to be, our mum, Angela Davison. His Father died when he was 15 and his mother a few years later when he was at college. He married in 1958 and he was left some money by his parents so by the time dad was only 22 he had a wife, a house in Harpenden and a job as an aeronautical engineer at Hawker Siddeley.

I came along in 1960, Susanna in 1964 and John in 1967. As a young man he played tennis, went gliding at Dunstable Downs, made aeroplanes from balsa wood and he played the game mahjong throughout his life. Later his exercise became table tennis which he coached for years and played in various leagues. He carried on playing that until his 60s.

My earliest memory of my father is holding his hand and running together down Piggotshill Lane, Harpenden to fly a kite on the common. He liked things that flew, especially aeroplanes and birds. My two siblings Susanna and John were also born in that first house on Piggotshill lane and then it became too small and we moved a 5 minute drive away. Each time we moved house he would rewire it, put in central heating that would bang and click and always redecorate, often in bright colours.

In Harpenden we lived under the flight path of Luton airport and Dad would rush out with a telescope to look at planes (with John, as a very little boy, following and copying his actions) When we were young he would kindly give our mum a lie in on Sundays and take us all off to

expend our energy at the swimming pool, he would top off this treat by buying us a Crunchie bar, something that was not normally on our menu!

In 1972, Hawker Siddeley asked him to design missiles, he did not think that this ethically OK thing to do so he took a job in Canterbury teaching maths at the Public School St Edmunds.

He was not very political but he voted Liberal and was a pacifist.

For many years he taught maths at various schools around Kent and he was a committed and enthusiastic teacher. He taught computing when it was a brand new subject and his pupils were prize winners in a national competition run by the Department of Industry and he received a letter of acknowledgement from John Major, who was then just the under secretary!

He finally went back to engineering in his 50's which saw him move to Churchdown, in Gloucestershire. There he lived quite close to an old engineering associate from Harpenden, Brian and they often went rambling together and went to concerts in Gloucester where Brian's partner Christine sang in a choir. She says "The two of them would sit listening with their eyes closed".

At this time Dad also became interested in sundials and he served for many years as a member of the Society's Council, and he regularly contributed articles on a wide variety of subjects to the quarterly bulletin. He had a very wide knowledge of sundials in general but he became particularly interested in mass dials on country churches. He organised the mass dial register, and managed the collection and recording of reports from members, latterly putting a great deal of time and effort into transferring the accumulation of paper reports on to computer storage. Mass dials are a very early kind of sundial with a hole for a stick to act as the gnomon, found mostly on a church walls.

When the shadow from the stick hit a certain mark it would signal that it was time to ring the church bell for mass. This interest got him driving out into the country visiting many churches in country villages.

He liked cars and driving slowly on country roads. In the early years we had minis, and looking at them today I don't know how we all got in! We also once had a beautiful dark green Bristol 405 with orange leather seats and in Churchdown he had Spitfires and a comfortable Mercedes.

Although he liked aeroplanes, he did not particularly like to travel overseas. I think he went to France and Germany with his college gliding club and met the lady who had flown for Hitler, this is such an extraordinary story I don't know why we didn't hear more about it.

He went to the Paris Air show in 1962 and with of Brian he did once venture all the way to New Zealand to visit me. I found it interesting having engineers at guests. They were more interested in thermal power stations and switch back railway tracks than the normal tourist sites.

He particularly liked steam trains and went train spotting as a boy. He had shares in a steam engine that was being renovated by the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway Society and we took him for a ride on a steam train for his 80u' Birthday.

In his later years his main focus was Nature in Art a gallery for works by wildlife artists. For many years he had been interested in birds, knowing their latin names and collecting bird stamps and prints. At Nature in Art he volunteered as a steward and he donated a sundial

which was made from a large rock and now stands in pride of place in front of the main entrance.

He was always a cat lover and rescued many cats and they were a great source of company in his later years. He was such an intelligent and well read man he could talk with insight and knowledge on almost any subject. He spent his final years listening to classical music (very loudly as he was quite deaf) and reading The Guardian.

He does not have much family left, just us three children and his two grandsons Thomas and Freddie Susanna's sons

I send him much love and gratitude for his role in my life as he journeys to the other realm and I believe that when a bird comes close he is letting me know he is keeping an eye on me.