

## Ronald Jack Byatt, 14 June 1918–20 August 2009



Ron Byatt was known by me for near forty years, and was highly regarded by his many friends and associates. Ron loved company and a glass of red, and was ever willing to share his wide knowledge of the many interests he held. With his wife Phillipa, there were shared excursions and travel to find the raw materials for their hobbies of gemology, silver-smithing and numismatics.

Growing up in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, Ron completed his schooling at Scots College in the mid 1930s and then immediately went into his family business, which was making lodge and regalia items, trading under the name of Harvey C. Smith. Around this time the firm acquired W J Amor (William Joseph Amor [1860–1953]), a medalist and die sinking

business established in 1888, and shortly after the acquisition the then 70 year old Amor retired. Ron's father, Arthur H Byatt (1891–1974), recognized the goodwill in Amor's business, and from then on traded as Amor Ltd.

To fully understand the business, Ron trained as a die engraver and tool maker. He made only one medal, commemorating the opening of the Sydney Prudential building (Carlisle 1939/4), but his father was satisfied that Ron knew the shop floor aspect of the industry and brought him into the management side. In 1970 the firm acquired a competitor, *W.J. Sanders*, and four years later A.H. Byatt died and Ron became the managing director of the firm. In 1985 he acquired another competitor, *Denham Neal & Treloar* (badge makers),

and from this time the company traded as *Amor Sanders Denham Neal & Treloar*. When Ron retired in 1997 he sold the business to Christies and he donated some obsolete equipment to the Powerhouse Museum. The company became *Amor Badges* and operates out of St Peters, a suburb near the Sydney Central Business District, and in addition it has a retail shop in Pitt St in the City centre. Ron's Mint Master's collection of specimen medals was sold in Noble Numismatics Sale 56, November 1997. During my research he made one of his offices available on given days for me to inspect and copy the working Day Books. Sadly these records only went back to 1949, but still it was of immeasurable help in my research; earlier records were discarded when the business moved to another site.

Not only did Ron spend all his working hours surrounded by medals, it was also his recreation—he was fully immersed in numismatics. The Australian Numismatic Society had been established in 1913 and, as a mere lad, Ron joined in the 1930s at a time when its members focused on ancients. His membership number was 93. In those days the society met at Dr Abbott's room in Macquarie

Street, Sydney. These were the depression years and the ageing membership was dwindling, but that did not stop Ron's enthusiasm and he became very good friends with his contemporary, the late Owen Fleming. These two numismatists were behind the establishing of the Numismatic Society of New South Wales; Ron was its first secretary and had membership number 3. The merger between these two numismatic bodies eventually happened, some four years after the end of World War II when times were more prosperous and the future looked positive.

Privately, Ron collected in many fields, and in later years he specialized in Naval General Service Medals. This large and important collection was disposed of by Spink & Sons in London.

Ron gave me lots of happy memories of long lunches and dinners with like friends and laughter, and he would produce a breathalyser to check if we were all safe to drive home! He will be greatly missed by Phillipa and his daughters Jill, Lynn and Vicki, their families and all who knew him.

Les Carlisle