

KEYS, Lewis – Professor, Old Boy, Benefactor

17 March 1922 – 20 January 2022

Lewis (born 1922) and his brother Colin (born 1925) attended Newcastle Boys' High School during the turbulent times of depression and world war. They were the children of a publican from the old dockside suburb of Carrington, and on his occasional recent visits to Newcastle, Lewis stayed in the same room at that hotel in which he slept as a schoolboy.

Lewis excelled academically and went on to a brilliant career in metallurgy and research. He worked in the UK on a research project seeking durable materials for the fuselages of emerging jet fighter aircraft.

He went on to develop an academic career at the University of New South Wales, where he was Professor of Metallurgy. Lewis had married Margaret Howard, known to him as "Peg", and the two lived happily, until his retirement took them to Bicheno on Tasmania's east coast.

Great stories about Lewis abound! When he stayed for a night in his old room at the Carrington Hotel, he remarked that the ghost, who had bothered him 90 years earlier, was still there. He complained that the piano had been moved to a new position, from its spot in the 1920's, because he wasn't ready for change!

More recently, following some major heart surgery, when his cardiologist insisted that he refrain from any activity involving pushing, Lewis devised a method to mow his Bicheno lawn by inventing a wooden yoke, worn across his shoulders, to pull the mower.

Lewis played tennis well into his 90's, and kept a faithful dog with him, even after losing his beloved Peg. His nature was generous, and he never forgot his school ties. Through his generosity, a number of academic prizes have been established at Newcastle high schools.

Our Dux of School prizes are named in honour of Lewis and Margaret, and monies donated by Lewis continue to promote the study of the sciences and mathematics in each current generation of high school students.

Lewis last attended our annual dinner in 2017, making the long journey from Bicheno to Newcastle for that reunion, and speaking to senior science students about his own research, and their career directions in science.

Lewis was a special man, kind with his time and financial support, and his impact will be felt for many years. Every year, recipients of the Keys prizes will revive memories of Lewis.

This obituary kindly prepared by John Beach
Vice-president
Newcastle Boys' High School
Old Boys' Association.