

Ron Wilkes

By occupation he was a train driver, firstly on the New South Wales north coast, then later, based in Goulburn. His wife Elizabeth predeceased him a number of years ago.

Ron contributed to dahlias in Australia in many ways – as an administrator, breeder, judge, exhibitor and promoter.

Ron served as Distributor of the Australian Dahlia Council, the forerunner to the current Dahlia Society of Australia, for a number of years. As such, he was a staunch supporter of national conferences and was a regular attendee, though maintaining a low profile. The current 1998 dahlia standards were produced under his patient leadership.

He was an avid grower, exhibitor, judge, and breeder of dahlias. He quietly mentored many a grower and judge over the years.

His raisings were released, or shall we say “freely given,” under the prefix of Araluen. Many are still grown including the reliable miniature cactus Araluen Fire.

He was a trail blazer as far as travelling long distances to exhibit was concerned. He frequently exhibited in Melbourne and Adelaide and on one occasion, Queensland at Caboolture. His trusty Falcon would be packed with quality competitive blooms grown under shade cloth in Goulburn. He grew all types but took it upon himself to promote the lesser types.

Ron had a fascination with the USA and made multiple trips over - in dahlia season, of course. He was the conduit through which many Aussie-bred varieties reached the states. Ron was renowned for encouraging growers to explore some of the bigger flowers showing people what was possible with the giants.