

The story of The Robert McNamara Plaque.

At the unveiling of the Robert McNamara Memorial Plaque time was of the essence. It was somewhere between the viewing of the items for auction and the auction. Therefore there was insufficient time to explain the ideas and thought that went into the design.

The first idea was to have an owl sitting on two books. On the spine of the books there would have been The Robert McNamara Memorial Library. The carving would have been mounted on the top shelf of the library.

When we showed it to Jean she was not very happy with it. Firstly no-one would see it up there, and secondly it doesn't say anything about Robert.

The next carving session Jean came along with the design.

If you knew Robert and study the design, you will realise every element is about Robert McNamara.

In the centre of the plaque is his portrait.

The portrait is taken from a photo of Robert demonstrating turning at an Australia Day demonstration.

Robert was a teacher.

He taught secondary school students at a number of high schools and he also taught wood turners here at Manningham.

The lettering not only reminds us of his name but also reminds us that he built our library. And as Robert had Celtic heritage we have Celtic strap work.

Jean has incorporated turning, carving and scroll saw work into the design to remind us Robert was the President of our club when he died. And members from each of the disciplines, including box making, helped to make it.

Although all the groups from our club were involved in making the plaque, the overall design is very much a wood turning. ***Eucalyptus coolabah***

The plaque is made from two different timbers; Eucalyptus coolabah and Queensland White Beech.

During his life Robert worked with many types of timber firstly as a carpenter then a school teacher and finally as a wood turner. He not only worked with different timbers he was also interested in different timbers.

A number of years ago he and Melva joined the International Wood Collectors where they became active members.

The Eucalyptus burl reminds us how he loved burls; how he loved turning burls; how he loved the magic of discovering the colours and intricate grain buried below the gnarled external surface.

The eucalyptus burl reminds us that Robert was born at Bairnsdale in the heart of Victoria's eucalypt forests - and the Queensland White Beech - it reminds us that he was at the turning expo in Queensland when he died.

Thank you Jean for all the thought and effort you put into this wonderful design.

Bryan Thompson