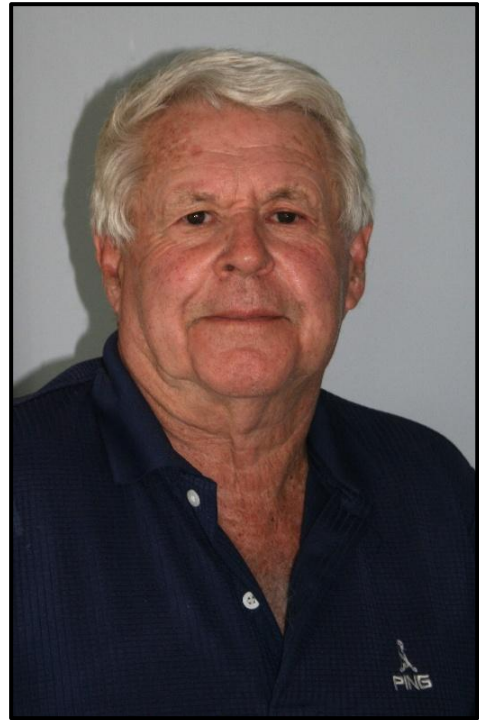


Barry Hughes

I was born in Lithgow on the 19th of April 1942, to Edna and Ernest Hughes. I have one brother, Graeme, and one sister, Lillian.

My parents had a farm called 'The Meadows' between Sodwalls and Tarana. We got a new house built in Carrington Avenue and we moved to Oberon when I was probably about five years old.

We sold 'The Meadows' and bought a place called 'Mayfield', which is next door to where the gardens are now. The property was 480 acres and I'd done a lot of work on it as I was growing up. We had a Farmall M tractor and an old antiquated mouldboard plough, but that's what we had and we got the job done. Dad used to also grow peas and potatoes.



I started school at St Joseph's Convent School when we moved to Oberon and I walked out of school when I was 14 years old. I just couldn't stand the.... I was disillusioned with the whole education set up. Getting caned every day for not knowing the answers. I went home and I said to my mother "That's it, not going back." I got the usual comment, "You wait till your father gets home," and I did, but he knew I didn't like it, so I got away with it. No one come looking for me or

anything like that and looking back on the whole thing now, it was a real bad mistake leaving at 14. I should have left when I was about 10.

One time when I was about 9 or 10, my father was planting peas around Dulce Domum golf course, where the by-pass goes now. I was riding the seeder, checking the seed was flowing and such, and Roger Arrow joined me and we spent the afternoon together on the seeder. Neither of us knew that Roger's mother had reported Roger missing and there was an APB, an All Persons Bulletin, out on him, with a search being undertaken, and yeah he was on the drill with me, so that was something that happened.

When we were at 'The Meadows', we used to go to Lithgow to do our shopping every Friday maybe, or once a fortnight. And I remember standing up in the main street and watching all the old coal tippers going up and down the main street and I knew from then that I was hooked. I was going to be a truckie.

When I left school, I got a job at the Shell Garage and my job was the bowser boy, clean the oil bottles, put them out near the bowser. And back then they had a Chrysler and Simca motor agency. I had to clean them all up on a Friday afternoon, chamois the dust off, and put them back in the showroom.

I stayed there for probably about 10 months. And Mum and Dad had some good friends called Alan and Bessie Adams. And they'd just bought a farm called 'Pine Lodge' at Duckmaloi. They were looking for someone to do the farm work with the tractors. So that suited me down to the ground.

Alan was a bulldozing contractor and over the time, I learnt to drive dozers. I used to go out and fill in for drivers who were sick or something. I stayed with Alan for about four years. Three pound a day (\$6), no holidays, no RDAs, no roster days off, no turn up, no money.



Barry on Allan Adams and Claude Brien's International Crawler WD30

I saved enough to buy a brand new Holden FC Holden in 1959. It was back in the days when the Holden agency used to come to the Oberon Show and have a tent there.



I'd just got the car paid off and I had to get a truck.

So I traded the new car in on a new Bedford J6 truck. I had no work and no money, so I'd do anything - go to Lithgow, bring back coal and sell it. Go down to the granite country and shovel sand out of the water table and come back to Oberon and shovel it all off again. At that time, it was back in the 60s, they were building Pyneboard, so it was pretty easy to get a job carting the sand if you could do the work.

I was a good friend with Tommy Rogers who was with Oberon Freighters and they had just bought a new Commer truck with a two deck single axle trailer to cart livestock. I went with him to Coonamble to bring a load of first cross ewes back to Oberon. We had just left Coonamble and it was dark and Tommy was feeling tired so I suggested maybe I could drive a bit while he had a quick nap. He said to wake him if I met another car coming. So I woke him alright ...when we were back in Oberon. It took me 50 years to tell John Brien that I drove his new truck back from Coonamble when I was a 13 or 14 year old kid.

When I was 15, I'd got a special licence to drive Alan Adam's Land Rover from the farm back to Mum's place where I was living at the time, just straight to the farm and back and no mucking around with it around the streets at night.

I had the truck but never had a proper licence to drive it because you had to wait until you were 21 to get a C Class licence. I used that special licence and done three seasons at Grenfell, wheat carting and also carted peas to Melbourne markets from Oberon.

Things started to get moving a bit and I had a few bucks coming in and I bought a second-hand Bedford, so I had two J6 Bedfords. Then I traded them in on what they called a K-model Bedford with the famous Leyland Motors. I was one of the first in Oberon to build and operate 20-foot dog trailers to cart livestock to Sydney markets, which meant that we no longer had to do 'doublers', that is, coming home and loading up again at about three o'clock in the morning and going back to Sydney. With the dog trailer you'd have already done your two loads, so it worked out fairly good. Then I bought a new MAN 650 with McGrath single-axle trailer and crate. The following year I bought a new 14-18 Mercedes Benz with a three-decker trailer and another second-hand Mercedes.



I was a business partner with Ray Sargent for a short period. He was a fantastic worker and we were 'Hughes and Sargent' carting livestock to Homebush stock markets. When I got married, I took my wife in as a business partner, we were 'BJ & SM Hughes.'



There was a lady named Mrs. Williams and she had the Commonwealth Oil Refinery (COR), depot, which was later called BP. She was getting on a bit in years and she recommended to BP that I take over the agency, which I did. That relationship with BP lasted for 35 years. I went from selling probably about 20 drums a week to, I wouldn't know, to how many million litres of diesel and petrol every year.

While I was with BP, I bought what they call a W Model Kenworth, which had all the bells and whistles on it. And it was a beautiful truck, 400 horsepower, and the new 36,000 litre Highgate aluminium tanker.



Mostly I'd do a load every night from Auburn in Sydney, to my depot here in Oberon. And if the work was there, I'd hook onto a low loader and shift heavy machinery through the day, and then back to Sydney that night. So you never got much rest really. A lot of the times you didn't sleep, but we were that keen that it didn't really worry you.

I sold the BP depot to Shell in 1980. I kept the low loader working for quite a while, and built some warehouses which I leased out.

Back when I was driving the Mack and the Kenworth there was two lots of tax. There was a road coordination tax, and a road maintenance tax. The maintenance tax, you had to fill a form out every month, every trip you'd done, whether it was loaded or empty. If you didn't fill it out on a particular day, and they spotted you, they took your number and next thing you get a summons. So that was one of them, and the other one was a road coordination tax. You paid this tax whether you were fully loaded or just had a third of the load. At this time no one could cart wool by road, only to the nearest railhead, which for me would be Mount Victoria or Tarana.

So then there was a guy by the name of Ted 'Greendog' Stevens. He'd had enough of it (the taxes), and he blocked the road off at Razorback Ridge on the Hume Highway at Picton. He actually put his truck across the road because he just completely cracked and had enough of it.

That blockade and others at other places lasted for 12 days. My brother and I heard about it, and we took our trucks to Mount Victoria and put them in the line-up. And we were there for the 12 days.

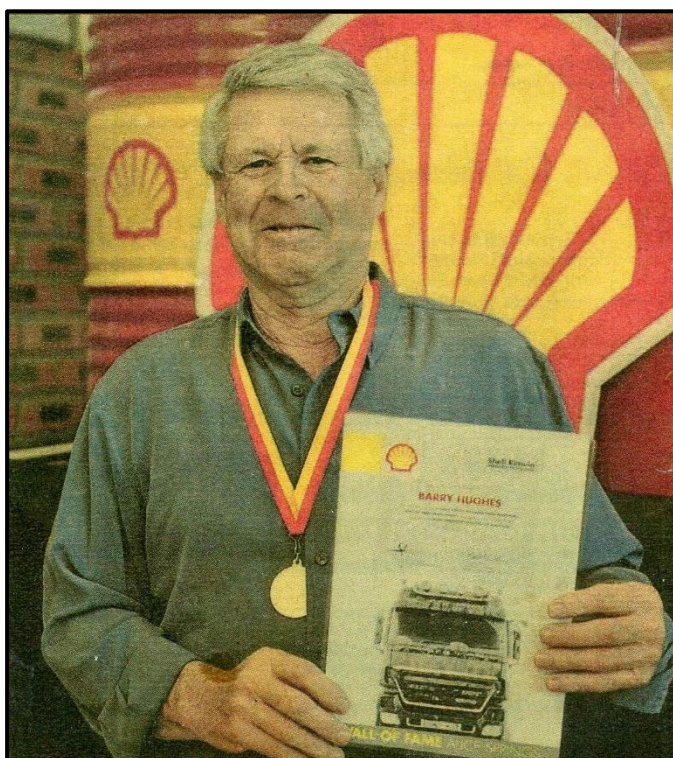
John Laws played a very big part in resolving the blockade. He seemed to like Neville Wran for some reason, and he'd come in the helicopter and go over to Razorback where it all originated, helping us. It paid off because they got not only the road tax lifted, but they got an extra two or three ton to cart as well.

I was out at Warwick Armstrong's place 'Nestle Brea' one day, filling the tank with diesel, and he came out and said, "When you're finished doing the tank, come on in and have a cup of tea." I walked in the kitchen and here's John Laws sitting at the table. Anyway, we had a cup of tea and a bit of yarn and I left. And when I was gone, Warwick explained to him about the strife I was in with the Transport Department. And as a result John went on to write a song "Sam the Tricky Truckie" (fourth song on "Motivation Man" album) about my escapades. So that was the end of that.

I got caught, together with about 70 or 80 other long distance transport operators from right out west. They were carting wool when you weren't supposed to. So we got charged with conspiracy to cheat and to fraud the Commissioner for Motor Transport, which was a fairly serious thing when you're about 18 years old. We went to court. The judges were fairly sympathetic towards the whole thing, and we got off with a good behaviour bond and a couple of thousand dollars fine.

In about 1970 I carted all the bricks from Lithgow for the new post office in Oberon Street. I loaded every single one by hand from the kiln and then unloaded every single one when I got to Oberon. So I have handled every brick in that post office! Bernie Jamieson was the builder. Some fork lifts existed in those days but I didn't have one.

I also put the very first load of timber into the new Amcor mill to test it out. I had timber trailers so could go out to Hampton to get the pulp logs to fire it up. I think this was about the mid 1980s. CSR later bought Amcor out, then Borg, who was CSR's biggest customer, bought CSR out. So that's a little bit of history for you.



In 2010 I was nominated for the Transport Wall of Fame at the National Transport Museum in Alice Springs, which is the biggest one in Australia. I got the surprise of my life when I got the letter to say that I was accepted and was inducted for 'contributions to road transport'. I was real proud of that milestone.

I was restoring a tractor once, a Fordson Major, underneath my house in Bligh Street and Warwick Armstrong said, "You ought to start a museum." And I thought to myself, "yeah, yeah, that'd be right." Anyway, it turned out that I did, and I've now got 28 tractors in it, all fully restored, with an implement on every one, and a lot of other stuff as well. I have done most of the restoration work myself but a good friend Peter Back has helped me with the hard stuff. In my opinion Peter's

a real genius. Thanks Peter! It was Peter who said, "Anyone would think we were running an orphanage for worn out tractors." I'm pretty proud of the museum which we now call 'The Tractor Orphanage'. I haven't got it open all the time, if someone gives me a call, I'm only too willing to open it up for them.



Two restored pieces in the Tractor Orphanage

I remember when International Harvester had a showroom with new tractors and trucks in it permanently, and Len Williams had the Ferguson and Vanguard car agency. He was selling Fergusons like hot cakes. I think Oberon was better back then. I'm 83 now, and we could not have been brought up in a better time, a better era. Everything's over governed now and you can't move because you're bogged down with bureaucracy.

I have travelled quite a lot, probably to about 40 countries. But I haven't found anywhere I like better than Oberon. Oberon's been good to me and it's been a very good place to bring up kids.

(March 2025)



Barry with his son Jason