

The Institution of Agricultural Engineers

Founded 1938 – Incorporated 1960

Award for Contribution to the Landbased Sector 2016

Ronald Knight

A farmer and contractor, like his father and grandfather before him, Ron spent his working life developing solutions to meet his needs and for Ron in particular, it was the crop sprayer. Without doubt he was a pioneer in the early days of crop sprayer development. He adapted existing equipment for “high clearance, self-propelled” crop spraying to replace the airplane. This was the first machine built in this country that would successfully treat the then new crop, oil seed rape.

These engineering skills were passed on to Ron’s son Brian. Brian recognised his father’s pioneering work and with his interest and involvement, formed Knight Farm Machinery Ltd, which today is one of today’s leading crop sprayer and agricultural equipment manufacturer, exporting to countries all over the world.

Ron is now more widely known for restoring and rebuilding vintage machinery, in particular vintage/classic combine harvesters. He is known nationally as the “combine king” because of his amazing skill, dedication and time restoring these machines to as-new working condition.

His collection is the largest of its kind in the UK (possibly the world). It is unique and of national importance. What a collection – what a legacy! Ron’s machines are regularly worked/ demonstrated at events and draw large crowds from all over the UK to see them in action.

The machines are a major draw at the annual Little Casterton Working Weekend, which is regarded as one of the best events of its kind in the UK. As a committee member, Ron has been a prime mover and shaker of this event for many, many years. It is an event which not only, as Ron says, “See boys and their toys at play”, but has raised many thousands of pounds for various charities.

Ron is always more than generous with his time and unrivalled knowledge. Keen to encourage young people, he has inspired many young apprentices with his enthusiasm and dedication.

In conclusion, what Ron has achieved in his lifetime is unique and if it wasn’t for him the history of the combine harvester in Britain would be lost forever. It has been a labour of love and even now in his eighties, he still continues with this work. Thank you Ron, many congratulations and we wish you well.

