

2nd June 2020

Man who built Statham Lodge dies in tragic accident in New Zealand

By [Isobel Cotogni](#) Reporter



THE man who built Statham Lodge with his dad has sadly died aged 87 after living a ‘very full and varied life’ around the world.

Brian James Cunnington was born in Orford in 1932 and died in Auckland the day lockdown was lifted in a tragic accident.

He had been observing the lockdown in New Zealand for 11 weeks and when this was lifted, he went out to the supermarket for groceries.

While walking back to his car, he was hit by a reversing car and died on Sunday, May 24 from his injuries.

The driver was a 90-year-old lady who had also been in lockdown and had become unfamiliar with her car.

Brian was educated at Beamont School and Boteler Grammar School and on leaving school, went into the family furniture business.

His dad James owned a furniture shop in Longford Street and later they opened a shop in Stockton Heath.

Brian then became involved in renovating and opening Statham Lodge in 1963 as a restaurant and casino, together with his dad James Cunnington, friend Ted Walker and his son Arthur.

This was a great success and Brian and his family lived there until 1973 when they left to open an engineering business in Harare, Zimbabwe where he had served during his National Service.

He fell in love with the country and vowed to return one day.

Brian flew his 11-year-old son Andrew out to Rhodesia in his own Cessna plane flying in legs across Europe and down through Africa.

When Mugabe came to power, life became increasingly difficult and the family returned to Warrington.

Brian worked as a prison warden at Strangeways Prison and opened a hairdressers in Dudley Street and Orford Lane where his wife Pat worked.

He then moved to Perth, Western Australia where he had a beachside restaurant on Cottesloe Beach

He ran it together with Pat, daughter Anne and son-in-law, Jim.

Their son Andrew was living in New Zealand at the time and in 1996 the family moved to Auckland where Brian opened several businesses including furniture, jewellery, and pawn shops.

They still own eight shops around Auckland and one on the Gold Coast of Australia.

His sister Irene, who lives in Preston-on-the-Hill, said: "Brian returned regularly to Warrington for holidays and to visit old friends and family.

"His first stop would be Synge Street where he headed for Tomlins pie shop.

"He said he dreamt of Tomlin's pies while in New Zealand. He did enjoy his food.

"Last year he came over for three months for his cousin's, Gladys Terry's 100th birthday celebration which took place at Statham Lodge in May.

"He stayed with me and enjoyed helping and being involved with local activities."

Brian is described by family as a 'very active 87-year-old' and on his trip last year visited many places in Europe from Llandudno, Canterbury, Cambridge to Sorrento, Rome and Germany.

Brian's last request was for family and friends to have a party after his death in his memory and so on Sunday, a Zoom 'Life of Brian' party has been arranged for his friends around the world.

Friends from New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland, America, Sweden, USA and the UK will be joining in celebrating his 'very full and varied life'.