



Obituary: Ken Marchant, 72 years of service

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Ken Marchant, Northamptonshire's long serving County Chairman, died on 1 July, just short of his 95th birthday.

Ken was born in Wellingborough in 1923 and was called up (on his honeymoon) for army service with the 5th Northants Regiment in WW2 fighting in North Africa, Sicily and at the battle of Monte Cassino.

He was twice seriously wounded being pulled out of a collapsed building alive and receiving serious leg wounds caused by a German machine gunner. His legs were in a very bad shape for which many operations were required.

After the war Ken worked for the Gas Company for 25 years followed by a similar period at Whitworths (both in administration). Ken's sporting interests then centred on local football and table tennis. He was Honorary Secretary of Wellingborough Victoria Football Club (formed out of a Bible Class at Victoria Congregational Church) from 1949 to 1977 of which the last 18 years was combined with the position of Treasurer.

In table tennis Ken became a member of the Wellingborough & District League Committee in 1946 on which he was still serving 72 years later, since 2004 as Chairman. In 1967 he helped to reform the dormant Northants County Association, on which he has served ever since and from 1988 as County Chairman. In 1967 he also became a National Councillor and received a Silver Salver in 1992 after 25 years' service. He resigned in 2013 after 46 years, making him the longest ever serving Councillor.

In 1969 Ken qualified as a coach and progressed in coaching to become the first Level 4 coach in Northamptonshire. He became a member of the National Coaching Committee and was appointed Regional Coaching Advisor for the East/South East Regions covering 12 counties. He later became Regional Coaching Chairman.

In 1982 Ken's achievements in coaching were recognised nationally when he was made a Vice-President of the ETTA.

In 1999 Ken received the prestigious Torch Trophy Trust Award for his outstanding voluntary service to the

English Table Tennis Association. The wording of the letter informing him of the award was:

“It is undoubtedly due to the selfless dedication of people such as yourself that young people in this country have the opportunity to develop their own talents and, in many instances, produce the champions of tomorrow. All of us in sport have much to thank you for.”

Ken received the award from the Duke of Edinburgh.

Since then Ken has been awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Northamptonshire County Table Tennis Association for his outstanding contribution to the county.

In recent years, in his 90s, Ken has continued to be active and at the centre of all aspects of Northamptonshire table tennis, seeking sponsorship, arranging tournaments and particularly encouraging and creating opportunities for the young.

Table Tennis England Chairman Sandra Deaton said: “We’re very sad to lose a dedicated volunteer who served the sport for so many years and who was held in high esteem not just in Northamptonshire but in the wider table tennis family. Our thoughts are with his family.”

The funeral will take place at the United Reformed Church, High St, Wellingborough, NN8 4HW on Monday 23 July at 11.30am.

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