



Obituary: Pat Archdale, pioneering umpire

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Pat Archdale, a pioneering International Umpire and a Table Tennis England Vice-President, has died at the age of 90.

Born in Exeter, she was active across the South West during the whole of her table tennis career, including two stints as National Councillor for Cornwall (1978-88 and 1999-2003).

She was Umpires Secretary in both Avon and (from 1964-71) in Gloucestershire and was a Vice-President of both Weston-super-Mare and Bath & District TTAs, and a life member of the latter.

Pat qualified as a County Umpire in 1957, but it was as an International Umpire that Pat made her mark, in an era when there were few female officials on the world stage.

She was the leader of the first team of English umpires to be invited abroad – to the World Championships in Stockholm in 1967, a group which also included Les Smith, Charles Wyles, John Wright, Len Pilditch and Tony Little.

There, she also became the first 'visiting' umpire to umpire a final at a World Championships, taking charge of the Men's Doubles between Sweden and USSR.

She qualified as an IU in 1973 and officiated all over the world, including France, Germany, USA, USSR, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Spain.

Among her prestigious appointments were at the 1977 World Championships and 1994 Europeans, both in Birmingham, the European Top 12 and the Commonwealth Championships.

She was also the first female umpire to take charge of a men's international in England.

Pat was also a Tournament Referee and National Referee who refereed the England international against Czechoslovakia in Exeter in October 1967.



Pat Archdale, Tony Little (left) and Les Smith (centre) prepare for their trip to Sweden in 1967

Off the court, Pat was made a Vice-President of the English Table Tennis Association, the forerunner of Table Tennis England, in 2002 and served on the Appeals Board, National Team Competitions Committee and National Umpires & Referees Committee.

2016 Rio Olympics referee Stuart Sherlock, who spent his early career in Bristol, said: "All the umpiring meetings were at her house, with large piles of sandwiches for everyone. She was a very good umpire and umpired all over the world."

Les Smith, Gloucestershire National Councillor, was among the delegation of English umpires which travelled to Stockholm in 1957.

He said: "There were four or five of us and Pat was the ringleader. She was always pushing to get more umpires qualified and was quite successful. She pushed me to qualify as a National Umpire, as she did with quite a few others.

"That was the highest qualification in those days and a group of us started going around the country and overseas together and we used to enjoy that."

Pat is survived by her husband Robert, who is due to celebrate his 100th birthday in April. A memorial service will be held at Haycombe Crematorium, 209 Whiteway Road, Bath BA2 2RQ at 11.30am on Wednesday 27th February and afterwards at Keynsham Masonic Hall, 99 Bath Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1SR. the family has requested contributions to Alzheimers Research UK in lieu of flowers.



At the 1997 Commonwealth Championships in Glasgow (front row, second right)

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