



Obituary: John Norsworthy, Plymouth's leading light

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: March 08, 2019

John Norsworthy passed away peacefully at his home in Plymouth on Monday February 25, aged 81.

John was born on April 15, 1937 and had always lived in Plymouth and it was in the city that John became a leading light in the local table tennis scene. John first started playing seriously in 1952 when he joined the Plymouth and District Table Tennis League for the 1952-53 season and continued playing in the league until ill health forced him to stop at the end of the 2017-18 season, a continuous run of 66 years.

But playing was not John's only contribution to the League. In 1959 he became a member of the League's Executive Committee and was the Vice-Chairman between 1965 and 1973 and then in 1974 John volunteered to become the Match Secretary and he continued carrying out this complicated and time-consuming task for 42 years, only retiring in 2016, again on health grounds.

For the many years that John carried out the role of Match Secretary he controlled the League of up to 15 divisions with 14 teams in each division by hand, this would be a thankless task in this day and age using a computer but John used only a card index system and pen and ink, spending 2-3 hours every day, 7 days a week answering queries, re-arranging matches and generally controlling all the problems that a league of over 200 teams generated. John's only assistance for the majority of the time that he carried out this mammoth task was from his loving wife, Pat.

John's enthusiasm did not stop there, he also became the club secretary for three clubs playing in the League: Rosemont TTC in 1957, Plymouth Electricity TTC in 1965 and Astor TTC more recently.

John's other contribution to table tennis in the city was to organise a twinning system with the French town of Huelgoat, a town in northern Brittany and this he did from 1980 until 1992.

On May 24, 1994 John was awarded the Merit Award for Devoted Service to Table Tennis by the English Table

Tennis Association, the first recipient of this nationwide award, and in 2004 John was awarded the Lifelong Contribution to Local Sport at the Evening Herald Plymouth Sports Personality of the Year ceremony.

John was a Life Vice-President of the Plymouth Table Tennis League and in 2016 when the President retired John was offered this role but due to his difficulty in hearing he reluctantly had to decline this prestigious appointment.

The Plymouth Table Tennis League, which is generally recognised as the oldest table tennis league in the world having been in existence since 1903, depends solely on volunteers to run it and John's dedication and conscientious hard work for so many years has been a major factor in the Plymouth League being held in such high regard nationally.

John's long association with the Plymouth League was not his only contribution to the city, after his retirement from the South West Electricity Board where he had been a Senior Clerk, John, who had a hearing disorder, was a volunteer for the Hearing and Sight Centre spending 4 – 5 mornings each week visiting people to help them with their hearing aids and other problems associated with deafness, a task which he carried out for 15 years. John also volunteered at the Audiology Department at Derriford Hospital.

His other passion was Modern Sequence Dancing which he attended twice weekly, originally with Pat but once she had to retire for health reason John carried on until fairly recently.

John is survived by his beloved wife Pat, his son Ian, his daughter Joanne, his grandchildren Sarah, James, Rachel and Grace and his great-grandson Thomas.

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/obituary-john-norsworthy-plymouths-leading-light/>