



Trophy tribute mystery is solved

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The amazing story behind a friendship immortalised in the form of a table tennis trophy has been revealed.

The winner of the Bury & District TTL Men's Singles Championship has received the Barlow Cup since 1948.

According to the trophy's engraving, it was presented to the league by A V Peatfield in memory of his close friend Bill Barlow, who was killed in 1944 while serving with the RAF.

However, not a lot of other details were known about its origin.

That has now changed, thanks to the league's match secretary Simon King, who has traced a remarkable story which takes in Australia and Egypt as well as Lancashire.

Bill Barlow was born in 1921 and won the league's men's championship in 1938, and the doubles alongside J Taylor in 1939.

He married Vera Gibson in 1943 but was tragically killed when his plane crash-landed in Egypt on August 12, 1944. He is buried in the Alexandria (Chatby) War and Military Cemetery.

Now Simon has tracked down the widow of AV Peatfield, who was known as Vernon, in Australia and she has given him the full story of the origin of the trophy.

Simon said: "Marjorie Peatfield is alive and well, 90 years old, sharp as a tack with a great memory and only gave up playing table tennis herself just four years ago.

"It was Vernon who taught her to play and together they won the mixed doubles in Bury in 1947.

"In respect of Bill she never met him but said he was Vernon's closest friend. They were a great doubles team together but on the occasions when they did play against each other they would both give everything they had to beat each other."

Marjorie Peatfield also told Simon that Vernon wanted to sign up to fight in the war but as he had lung problems he was not able to do so. When Bill was killed in 1944 Vernon was devastated and he again tried to sign up to fight but again he was rejected on health grounds. Vernon helped with the war effort in an administrative role and was at one time commissioned to Eritrea and also to Cairo.

Whilst in Cairo, Vernon represented the Cairo Area Forces team, which was made up of the finest players from all aspects of the Allies.

Vernon himself had a remarkable record in the Bury Championship, including becoming the first player to win the Junior and Senior titles in the same year in 1937. He beat his great friend Bill in the 1939 final and again won the men's title in 1947.

He and Marjorie moved to Northampton in the 1950s and then to Derby, before emigrating to Australia in 1987. Vernon died in 2005.

Bill's sister Dorothy also had a link to the league – she was married to Gordon Lomax, who was chairman of the league from 1966 to 1980.

The cup is currently held by England's No 1 Cadet player, Amirul Hussain, who is the youngest holder of the trophy.

It will next be contested in April 2017, when it will be presented by Bill's brother-in-law Gordon Lomax. He has also paid for the restoration of the cup, which has become a little battered over the years.

Simon added: "It was thoroughly worth the effort of tracking down these guys!"

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