

Citation for Alan Ransome OBE

Presented by Dr Aulay Mackenzie, Pro Vice-Chancellor, on the occasion of the award of an Honorary Doctorate from Teesside University, on Tuesday 25th November 2014.

Chairman, it is my honour to introduce Alan Ransome OBE.

Alan Ransome is the chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation. He is also the former chairman of the English Table Tennis Association. For the past 50 years, he has been a driving force for the sport of table tennis in this region; and also nationally; and also internationally.

Alan came to acclaim in the 1970s, when he was both a player and a coach for the famous Ormesby table tennis team. They were European club champions in 1972; they dominated English table tennis for more than ten years from the 1960s to the 70s; and they continue to pick up long lists of medals and titles, including the British Women's Championship title – with Alan continuing as coach, manager and chairman of the club. The Ormesby club was founded in the 1950s by Alan, who was then aged thirteen, with the help of his father, Robert Ransome, and started life in a converted chicken shed in his father's

garden. It is regarded as a leading club in the UK; and it is very highly admired for its community programmes. The club moved, a few years ago, to a new centre on Cargo Fleet Lane in Middlesbrough. It is now home to some of the best table tennis facilities anywhere in the UK.

Alan played internationally, for England, at the Commonwealth and World Table Tennis Championships in the early 1970s – at both junior and senior levels. He began to coach at international level, and to build the reputation and popularity of table tennis as an international sport. He has coached a succession of young people from the region, who have gone on to play for England. He has brought many international tournaments to this region, including the World Student Games in 1980. He was team manager for the Great Britain table tennis team at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, in 1996; and a member of the British Olympic Committee throughout the 1990s. It was Alan who fought and successfully lobbied to have the sport of table tennis included in the Commonwealth Games – and it was included for the first time at the Manchester Games in 2002. As Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation, Alan has presided over eleven Commonwealth Championships, held in different countries around the world, over the past twenty years.

I know that Alan is keen to say that his Honorary Doctorate, being awarded today, is an honour for the whole sport of table tennis and for the many people who work so tirelessly for it. Anyone who has watched table tennis being played, at international levels, will have

strong mental images of rapid speed and skill; of intense concentration and phenomenal dexterity. Table tennis has been played around the world for more than one hundred and twenty years. It is now vastly popular in Asia and in many parts of Europe, as well as here in the UK.

Table tennis became an Olympic sport in 1988, when it made its debut at the Games in Seoul, in South Korea. Table tennis is also a hugely popular Paralympic sport.

In 1997 Alan was awarded the OBE, in recognition of his services to table tennis. In 2013, he was presented with a lifetime achievement award by the *Gazette*, here on Teesside – partly in recognition of his thousands of reports on table tennis, written for the *Gazette* over the past few decades. He has been the instigator behind very many aspects of the sport's development in this country. He secured three quarters of a million pounds in funding to pay for the new Ormesby club. He ensured the success of England's bids to host both the World Championships in 1997 and the European Championships in 1994. He managed a special development programme which established fifty full-time table tennis centres across England; and which helped hundreds of clubs to run their own development programmes. He is a coach; a specialist commentator and a correspondent for the media. He is a leader and an organiser of a multitude of events and competitions. He has supported many young players from the very beginning of their interests – building their talents and coaching them

as competitors. His influence is formidable at all levels of the sport – from local club level, through to the very highest levels of international competition.

We are very honoured to welcome Alan today, as a member of our University. I am very pleased to present, for conferment of the Honorary Degree of Doctor in Professional Achievement: Alan Ransome.