

COLIN'S STORY

The Story of Colin McLean before Okehampton

Colin joined the Eldon PHAB (Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied) Club in Croydon in 1964, which was originally formed in 1950 and was then known as the Eldon Social Club and catered for all sports and activities. He and others started playing table tennis on a kitchen table until they had raised enough funds to buy a proper table. He pushed for the club to enter a team and the league committee visited to check the venue, but he really felt they were checking to see if these disabled payers could play well enough as at that time the league didn't have any disabled players. They passed with flying colours and the club never looked back.

Colin started in Division seven and, over the years progressed to division two. They used to play in an old hall, but Colin started a building fund and as a result of many fund raising events, including a 24 hour table tennis marathon and donations, they reached the sum of £80,000 and a new hall was built. Colin did have help from at least 3 famous people, who championed the fund raising events; Henry Cooper, Roy Hudd and Paul Nihill (Olympic silver medallist for walking).

Today the club has 11 teams spanning 3 leagues, with over 90 members, and Colin is still remembered. Colin spent 28 years at the club and built up the membership to over 200 members. Colin held many committee positions; his favourite was probably Club Leader, very fitting for the amount of time and effort he put into the club.

The Story of Colin McLean in Okehampton

During his time in Okehampton, mainly in the 90's, Colin inspired the building of a tailor-made Table Tennis Centre in the middle of the town. It's a fine building with a 6 table competition hall, an additional coaching room and excellent social facilities. It was mostly funded by local donations and put Okehampton on the table tennis map as a place for South West Region and National events and also with a reputation across the area for excellent coaching. It's a high quality modern building and a real asset to the town as it is used for activities other than tennis table in order to help its financial viability. It's certainly an admirable legacy of Colin's time in the town and a very valuable local asset to the whole community.

The Story of Colin McLean in Dorset.

When Colin arrived in Poole, around the turn of the century, little did anyone know what a transformation in table tennis for young people – and for some older ones as well – was going to happen. He began by playing in the Poole League for Lytchett Matravers – and playing remarkably well! A couple of years later he heard about a smallish primary school in Bournemouth which had started an after-school club and was looking for someone to help with coaching. The rest, as they say, is history.

Over a period of around 10 years the Townsend Club reached out to Porchester School (later known as Harewood College) and Colin drove the development of a Club which was community based, though with a very strong emphasis on finding and developing young players, many of whom now play in the Bournemouth League. The Poole League was transformed into a Pairs League with teams of all ages and playing levels taking part. In order to expand the horizons of the young players in particular he encouraged participation in national tournaments as well as the ETTA Cadet and Junior Leagues and much success was achieved in both. He also ran annual competitions for local schools.

Colin was leading most of these developments, but was joined in 2010 by two local Community Coaches funded by a mix of national and local funding. James Lewis and Jo Kuzu added an extra

dimension to what could be provided in other schools and communities and James built on Colin's success in putting the Club on the national table tennis map as a Premier Club. At the same time Colin was busy and active in developing the Branksome Heath Club as the only Community table tennis provision in Poole. Whilst organisation of leagues and tournaments was important, a focus on coaching was retained through regular sessions led by Colin, James and Jo and highlighted at least once a year by coaching camps led by Alex Perry, former England Number 1 and Commonwealth Games medallist, and Nicola Perry, six times English National champion. In addition the Bournemouth League sponsored Saturday morning coaching sessions for young beginners and also for adults.

The other significant event that took place during this period was the building of the Roy Moore Sports Hall at Harewood. It made possible the hosting of large events, using up to 24 tables, and thereby highlighted the progress made over the previous three years in particular. Unfortunately it was not available to table tennis for regular weekday use, and therefore, when the opportunity arose to form a partnership with Grange School which would give our sport the option of exclusive access to a tailor-made high quality venue, the rationale for moving was irresistible.

The Dorset Table Tennis Centre located in the Grange School – with 16 tables available weekends and evenings – was a great legacy to what Colin and others under his leadership and guidance had achieved. It is to be hoped that the table tennis community in this area will support and develop it to its full potential.

Colin is warmly remembered by the many hundreds of players of all ages who have come into contact with him over the years. His determination, kindness and sheer ability to get things done were admired by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Equally remembered is his lovely partner Sheila who sadly passed away in September.