

GETTING TO KNOW YOU.....A LITTLE BETTER.

As another season draws to a close, I am delighted that our Patron, John Percy, agreed to be our final profile of the year.

John's introduction to Crown Green bowls started with his Father as a purely social activity in their native Liverpool. It was not until John moved the family (Wife May and son Young JP) to Sychdyn that he met the Highams who got him involved competitively and introduced him to other roles in the game – these Highams have a lot to answer for. However, John's love affair with Wales goes back much further. He was sent as an evacuee to Anglesey which must have seemed like the end of the earth to a youngster from Liverpool. He has never forgotten his time there and still visits the chapel graveside of the couple who gave him a home at that time.

In Liverpool John played for Walton Hall Park, but has played his bowls for only two clubs in Wales. Sychdyn from 1978 and Coed Talon from 1983 when he moved again, this time to Pontblyddin. John is still a member at Coed Talon. He used to play four or five times a week, but a spate of knee operations – five in total – put paid to active sport.

Asked if he was, or had ever been involved in administration, his reply was 'How long have you got?'

He flexed his muscles in organisation when working as a full-time Union Officer and as Assistant Secretary to Mel Higham at Sychdyn BC. On moving to Coed Talon, he was instrumental in setting up a youth team and entering them in the Wrexham League – something he is still very proud of.

Other outlets for John's organisation talents has been the WCGBA where he has served on the Management for 22 years, three of those as its Chairman. He was Welsh President 1998 and a founder member of the Welsh Coaching Society ,as Chairman for four years and its President for eleven years. He has given much of his time – I'm surprised he could find any – to the Wrexham Area as a founder member where he served as its Chairman for 22 years and Chairman of the Wrexham League for 25 years.

John has also served as WCGBA Vets Team Manager, a post he held for ten years. During that time, the Welsh Vets won the BCGBA Vet's Championship twice – 2002 and 2008. He has plenty to be proud of. There's much more to the man than you know.

Although unable to play himself, he invariably turns up at most Welsh County matches, Seniors, Juniors and Ladies and the other major competitions in Wales and Britain. He enjoys cheering the players on, giving support and advice when needed.

For best and worst moments in bowls, John singled out his pride at great friend Mike Riley's British Merit win in 2011, which he was there to see. He also felt pride at the success of another great pal, Mel Higham when he was installed as BCGBA President in 2001 and to see Peter Higham follow his brother 15 years later as British President. I remember the nomination speech at the British AGM !

The thing that saddens him most is seeing the difficulties on behalf of the WCGBA with the reluctance by everyone involved in the game to step forward and to develop the organisation for the future. Some of the disquieting incidents that have troubled the game recently are also a source of regret for John.

On a lighter note, John enjoys most sports – as an armchair participant. He loves football (Wrexham and Liverpool of course). In his time though, John has played cricket, baseball, and football. He has also spent some time boxing in his youth – now we know where he gets those rugged good looks from. Son John also plays bowls and they have played doubles together in the past. John is by far the better player – you can work out which one I mean.

In music, John enjoys Country and Western. His favourite actress is Bette Midler and food wise, fish is at the top of his menu choice.

He is widely travelled. In the forces he visited Libya, North Africa and chilly Siberia. Today, he visits friends in Spain – a little warmer I think.

Asked about what stresses him most, he mentioned his son and Grand daughter, Amber and what relaxes him is to ignore them – a nice simple philosophy.

A couple of nuggets to share with you. John was selected to play baseball by the England squad against Wales and he also appeared in a film called ‘No Time To Die’ which was filmed in North Africa.

John at 82 is still truly passionate about the sport of crown green bowls, and would love to see it developed within schools. He was made WCGBA Patron in 2011 and takes this ambassadorial role seriously. Everyone knows John. He believes in plain speaking and has the tenacity of a prize fighter when he feels passionately about something. He is generous to a fault, has the humour of a true ‘Scouser’, and the heart of a lion. Long may he continue to be a part of Welsh bowls.