

JOHN H COLLINS.

John was born in Aylesbury, Bucks in 1937. As a 13 year old he joined the Vale of Aylesbury Athletic Club. His thirst for Athletics led him to compete for his university, the Imperial College, London and his desire to help and inspire other people's lives had begun; he was appointed the club secretary at the age of 18.

With John's arrival to live in Pontypool Gwent, in 1961, came a massive boost for local athletics. John was a founder member of the now famous Gwent Cross Country League; it is still going strong to this day, providing competition for 11 year olds up to over 70 year olds, covering South Wales and the West and is one of the largest leagues in the UK, incidentally John is still involved with the league as Chairman. Not content with this, John won the Welsh Cross Country title in 1963 and went on to win his first vest, competing for Wales in Belgium. It was the beginning of being awarded many more international vests.

Swansea was the next area to benefit from John's volunteering and inspiration. In 1965, John moved there from Gwent and immediately joined Swansea Harriers; he is still an active member there and has been involved in the clubs managerial roles from that date until the present time. One of his earlier projects was to form the Welsh Men's Track and Field leagues, (Women competed separately in those days) once again becoming secretary and inspiring people to compete. Still with Cross Country as his first love, John represented Welsh Athletics on the BAAB (UK) Cross Country Committees for many years and maintained his inspiration at national level.

By the mid 1980's, Veteran or as it is now described, Masters Athletics, came into prominence. This was a new way for John to use his skills in inspiration and volunteering alongside his other involvements with club and country. John became secretary again, whilst still competing for the Welsh Masters Athletic Association, later becoming President. On the competing side, to date, John has won numerous vests and medals as a veteran. (Too many to list)

Welsh Athletics honoured John in 1970 with a meritorious plaque for his services to athletics and in 1996 he was awarded the AAW Award of Honour and more recently the Lifetime Achievement Award. Although winning his battle with an illness that curtailed his running, John still managed to compete within the 2012 Welsh championships winning the Gold medal in the over 70 year old 3k walking race, alongside his work as a Welsh official at the event. This was the same week as John had the ultimate honour of carrying the Olympic torch through Swansea. John up until his sad passing this month, still competed for his beloved Swansea Harriers (plus the WMAA) at race-walking.

What an inspiration to everyone around him.

Mel James (WMAA)