

## Derbyshire Squash Rackets Association

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<http://www.derbyshiresquash.co.uk>

### John White MBE - 'Services to Squash'

John White had been recognised, in 2000, for his 'Services to Squash' by England Squash (the National body) when he was the recipient of the 'Dick Hawkey Award'. Now, much to his great delight and surprise, he has been honoured with a MBE. This is a rich reward, for which he feels indebted to his family, particularly his wife Pauline, for their support which has enabled him to devote over 40 years of his life to the game.



John and Pauline White with MBE at Buckingham Palace

He first played at Birmingham when compelled, as part of the University curriculum, to participate in some form of physical activity. With a background of County tennis he enjoyed immediate success on court winning the Birmingham and UAU [English Universities]

Championships and UAU representation. Significantly he also became involved in the game's administration. He progressively became Treasurer, Secretary and Captain of the University team.

National Service followed with a short service commission in the Royal Navy and with it the Secretary-ship and Captaincy of the RN Squash Team. The Navy Championship came his way 3 times and also representation and Captaincy of the Combined Services Team.

On leaving the Navy in 1964 he returned to Derbyshire and almost immediately became Secretary of the Duffield Squash Club, having originally joined the Club in 1957 along with his wife and another Club stalwart - Clive Wildsmith.

He held this position for 33 years guiding the Club from a single court with a basic wooden clubhouse to a well appointed 5 Court integrated complex. The Club has the distinction of being one of the Country's leading promoters of junior squash; designated one of the SRA's High Performance Centres and has enjoyed repeated success in the National League Championship (now PSL).

During this time he qualified as a Marker and Referee, was appointed a Panel Tutor running numerous courses in the Midlands. He also qualified as a Coach but opted to leave this side of the game to his wife. With the Club being a founder member of the Midland League he served on their Committee for several years before eventually becoming Chairman. At the same time as holding the post of Secretary of Duffield he also became Secretary of the Derbyshire SRA, a

responsibility he maintained for 17 years. During this period, he was a pivotal figure in the launch of the Derbyshire County Leagues, the development of Marking and Refereeing, the introduction of the County handbook, the rolling out of coaching and putting the DSRA on a sound financial footing.

From his earliest playing days he had always supported the County with representation at Senior, Over 35, Over 45 and Over 55 levels, acting as Captain on many occasions. In all he won 26 County Titles [and Runner-up on 5 other occasions] to go with his 9 County tennis titles.

In 1982 he won the Diners' Club National Over 45 Championship, reached the semi-final of the British Open Championship losing to Ken Hiscoe [of Australia] his younger day's hero. He also twice reached the semi-finals of the British Closed [Over 45] and was losing finalist [twice] in the British Closed at Over 60. He represented England over a period of 17 years in various age groups only ever losing one match.

In his spare time he qualified as a Dental Surgeon and after a commission in the Navy joined a practice in Matlock in 1964 eventually becoming the Principal before retiring in 1994.

It was on the squash courts at Birmingham University that he met his future wife Pauline (nee Drew) in 1951, got married in 1960 and has two sons - Simon and Kevin.

Pauline has also been totally devoted to the game, starting at the same place and time. She too had a background of Tennis representing the County, ultimately well over 350 times, winning too many County titles to count and playing at Wimbledon in the singles, ladies doubles and mixed and being a member of the Wightman Cup squad.

At squash she first represented Warwickshire, then the joint Nottingham and Derbyshire team and later, after creating the Ladies County Association, Derbyshire. She also played regularly for Great Britain culminating in being a

member and Captain of the GB Touring Teams to America and Australia.

As a graduate and qualified teacher she became increasingly interested in and involved in coaching gaining qualification on the first course run by the Squash Rackets Association, the governing body of English Squash. Then, working with the Ladies National Association, she set up the National Women's Coaching Committee which she chaired for the next 15 years.

Ultimately she became a professional coach and her services were eagerly taken up by the Duffield Squash Club and Derbyshire.

In 1993 her contribution to Squash was recognised by the SRA when she too received the 'Dick Hawkey Award' for 'Services to Squash' and her ability was recognised when she became 'SRA Coach of the Year' in 1998.

Like her husband she too joined the Duffield Squash Club in 1957, joined the Committee in 1964 and remained on the Committee until 1990.

Their eldest son, Simon, also played to a very high standard, winning all the county junior age group championships, playing for the Duffield Team in the Derbyshire and Midland League, represented the County and served for a short time as Derbyshire Captain before injury forced his retirement from the game.

Meanwhile his younger brother Kevin has been an outstanding player, also winning the Senior, O35 Championships and County junior age group championships. Kevin is the leading men's player of the Club and County Teams, is Chairman of the County Association and plays for and Captains the England O35 Team.

Duffield Squash Club is member owned and any person may freely join. It has been a sports and social facility at the heart of Duffield village and the surrounding community since 1937. Since its existence there have been

thousands of members, both senior and junior, who have and will continue to enjoy its many attractions.

In 1964 the club had a single court - built in 1937 to an En Tout Cas specification, including low girders across the ceiling. There were less than 100 members [with only 1 junior], a wooden 'pavilion' with limited facilities, nothing in the bank, no land and an access from a small car-park onto the A6.

8 years later a 2<sup>nd</sup> court and brick pavilion were built but only after waiting, literally, for the owner of house next door to die and a developer to buy and agree joint access to the car-park. This satisfied the planning authority who had refused numerous previous applications.

7 years further on, and after a marginal decision at an EGM, 2 more courts were built following the purchase of land from the garage on other side and satisfying planner's requirements for more parking spaces. A couple of years later a beer store and office were added [surprisingly without any objections!].

9 years on - and after numerous attempts, in various guises, at further development [all thwarted by the planners] - the original neighbour's house was bought [by John], the garden converted to a larger car-park and the building sold on as offices. Planning permission was then obtained to demolish the central [clubhouse] part of the original development and to build a glass-backed court and a much improved new clubhouse.

2 years on and, after another battle with the planners, a well equipped fitness suite was added, bringing a new dimension to the club and a new facility that the members of the community could use.

Finally the roofs of the two original courts were raised to bring them up to International standard and a sports shop built into the reception area.

By now [1997] the membership had grown to 820 with 250 juniors [and with a further 150 on the waiting list!] who were mostly supportive and who had helped finance all the changes [no outside assistance had ever become available]. They were able to enjoy four additional courts [all up to international standard], one with a glass back and gallery for 160 spectators [2 with height adjustable tins], spacious changing rooms with ample showers and saunas, kitchen and dining room, bar and lounge [with viewing over the courts], fitness suite, pool room and a shop. The Club was clear of all debts and was generating £30 - £40K surplus a year.

On the playing front the club had produced teams that had won endless local, regional and national competitions and, individually, had provided the backbone of all the County teams and enjoyed numerous representations at International level.

It should be noted that there were three people common to all these changes - they had proposed them and were all actively involved in seeing them through - Clive Wildsmith [Chairman and President], Pauline White [Coach] and John White [Secretary].

Duffield Club President and Honours Nominator Mr Russell Moore said "being a member's club, this was no mean feat, necessitating gaining the support of the majority of members to allow the developments to proceed, raising necessary funding and overcoming the reservations of the doubters. Change is never easy to introduce, but this trio showed us all the way with their dedication and enthusiasm".

**Kevin White**  
DSRA Chairman