

Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle Parish Council Volunteer of the Year 2016

The Parish of Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle has always enjoyed a very close relationship with our neighbouring Parish of Bere Regis. This is exemplified this evening by our joint nomination of Bob Holman as Volunteer of the Year!

Bob and his family were originally resident in Bere Regis before moving to Affpuddle, many decades ago. During their residency in Bere Regis he became a swimming teacher. Considering for a while how he might put this newly acquired expertise to good use, Bob subsequently arranged with the local primary school to run a swimming club during the holidays in their outdoor pool. So, on the 14th June 1976 Bob was totally amazed when one hundred people turned up for the inaugural swim, and so was born Bere Regis and District Swimming Club.

It may not have taken you long to work out, but this year sees the 40th anniversary of the club and during all that time, Bob has been the Chairman. Having moved to various indoor pools to enable the club to operate all year round, Bob has willingly given up his Saturday evenings to teach swimming, personal survival, lifesaving, water polo, elementary diving and synchronized swimming to children from complete novice to competitive standard from an age range between three years old to sixteen.

During those forty years Bob and the club have taught thousands of children to swim from within our communities and beyond. The children thoroughly enjoy the family atmosphere that Bob has ensured remains as the ethos of the club. It provides a social and educational focus for both children and parents. Every year Bob, with his wife Diana, open their garden in Affpuddle for a prize giving BBQ and ceremony where every child will get a certificate for something.

Our small rural community is not particularly awash with swimming teachers and Bob has become particularly adept in the art of persuading parents to become involved and qualify themselves.

This really has been a forty year success story which Bob has guided to a position today of around one hundred members with twelve qualified teachers. I would imagine that many of the children over that time from our communities have been taught by Bob and his team from the Bere Regis and District Swimming Club.

Aside from the swimming club, Bob has been a prolific charity fundraiser. Through his epic cross channel swim in 1992, and previously across Loch Lomond, he has raised around ten thousand pounds for the local branch of what was then the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. It should also be noted that Bob can never be found when Father Christmas arrives at Briantspuddle Village Hall during the Christmas Fair. Perhaps he goes out to check on the Reindeer while Santa is inside!

It is an honour to commend Bob as the Volunteer of the Year for Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle.