**John Cullingworth (1948-2013)**

John was born 7 May 1948 in Ashford area of Kent but spent much of his early life at a family farm in Yorkshire. He was educated at Maidstone Grammar School and after leaving school John secured a place at Exmouth Teacher's Training College. On graduating from the college he started his career as a teacher & worked his way up becoming a deputy head. In 1992 he was appointed headteacher at Wouldham All Saints CEP school where he stayed until his retirement in 2005. He joined the school when the roll was 49 but it had increased to around 120 when he retired. While at the school he started the chess club & a giant chess set in the playground is planned in his memory.

During his time at MGS, after school, his friends would congregate round at his parent’s house, which backed on to the school, where they would listen to music (one of John’s many passions in life) and play whist. As John grew older his fascination with the game took him during the holidays to the local Whist drives around the town but he gradually realised that there had to be more to it. One day at school during a free period he proudly announced to all and sundry that Bridge was the answer!

After some months, when every spare minute was spent playing the game, John discovered Maidstone Bridge Club. He started playing bridge there with a number of school friends in 1964 & continued to do so for nearly 50 years. He played for the club for many years & captained them when they won the Corbett Cup in 2006. As he neared retirement he set up his own Bridge Club called Count213 (Count to Thirteen!) at Kingshill and did much to encourage newcomers as well arrange competitions for better players from throughout Kent. Today the Club is based in Offham and his wife Marina presented a trophy to be awarded annually in his name.

Over the years he had many partners, one of his first regular ones was David Kendrick & others included Dick Payne, John Elliott, Denis O'Donovan & Jon Cooke. Initially he played Acol but he then in turn played Vienna & then Blue Club before in the 1980s he started playing his own system called CHAOS (Classified Hand pattern Accent on Strength). This system was licensed with the EBU & he mainly played it with John & Dennis although he did play simplified versions of it with other people.

John won the Arnold Cup (the main KCBA knock out teams) eight times between 1972 & 2009, partnering Dick Payne in earlier years, then Terry Goldsmith & finally in the last few with Denis O'Donovan. He also won various other KCBA competitions including the Lukey Cup in 1991 & Fletcher Cup (mid Kent league) on numerous occasions.

Outside of bridge John had many interests, he played tennis & golf and was keen on a variety of board games. As an active cricketer he was deeply involved in his village Cricket Club at Wateringbury for many years. Latterly he became a keen bird watcher, something he took it up with enthusiasm in the same way as his bridge, so if he heard of a rare bird being spotted there was no alternative than to go out to try to find it.

John married Marina in 1992. After he retired John bought a property in Tobago, acquired Tobagan residence & built a concrete edifice of which he was proud. John suffered a heart attack while in Tobago & died there on 4 September 2013. Apart from his wife, John is succeeded by his younger brother Richard who had moved to New Zealand.