

Remembering Geoff Ashelford 30th Sept 1929 – 2nd Nov 2011

John Gorton writes:

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Geoff Ashelford, a long-time member of the club. Appointed President, he previously had served as Match Captain and Secretary. We shall miss his cheery manner, witticisms and his huge ability as an active member.

Geoff was born in Jersey, lived there under German occupation and after World War Two joined the army where he saw active service in Korea and Singapore. He came to England and joined the LCC which he said was a bit like the Army with its various ranks and disciplines. In addition to his official duties he did much voluntary work for the RASC and the British Legion. He also helped many workers who were at odds with the management. Acting as a sort of quasi-barrister he successfully won many cases.

He was one of that rare breed of gentlemen who, sadly, are in short supply today.

Phil Zammit writes:

I believe Geoff was born in 1929 (his nieces said at the recent celebration he was 82), adopted at a very young age; and when his adoptive parents died (he was still very young) he was adopted by Jennifer/Sally's parents. After enduring the German occupation of Jersey in WW2 he returned to the mainland and joined the Army serving in Korea for seven years. Around 1960 he joined the LCC (GLC from 1965) and the chess club shortly after I presume.

He was Secretary when I joined in 1972 and he then defeated two challengers to become President in 1976. He was very proud to be club president and even though he often rubbed the CSCL up the wrong way (once telling the committee at an AGM that the League needed the GLC club more than the club needed the league!) I feel that Ian Pheby and co. had more or less come round to forgiving him.

I remember that whenever he was playing pool and his opponent had just potted a few balls and was looking like winning he often bemoaned "It's all over". I'm sure his nieces have a more appropriate epitaph for him but "IT'S ALL OVER DAMMIT" wouldn't have been too bad.

Jim Robinson writes:

It was my pleasure to have known Geoff Ashelford for the last ten years. We, as a club, have lost a great man and he will always be in my thoughts for all the help and support he has given to me. He was a very kind man and was always there

for a chat and advice if anyone ever needed it. I will never forget what he has done for me.

Derek Hadley writes:

I came to London in 1967 and looked for a chess club to join. I tried a couple of local clubs but didn't find them particularly friendly. As I taught for the ILEA I was told that I was qualified to join the GLC club at County Hall. I went along feeling a little nervous but immediately Geoff came over and made me feel very welcome! *He was the reason why I joined the club.*

Geoff was a very generous person who was always the first to offer to buy a round of drinks! Each year on his birthday he would hire a room at the "Horse & Groom" pub and treated a vast army of people to food and drinks. He was a very popular person and always laughing and joking with everyone.

When Dorothy and I married in 1995 Geoff was one of our wedding guests and sent us an anniversary card every year except this year when he was obviously too ill to do so. He also never forgot birthday cards and Christmas cards. He obviously really cared about other people.

In recent years it has been very sad to see Geoff's health decline but I like to remember him as he was in his prime.

Paul Efstathiou writes:

I got to know Geoff quite well after I moved to Sydenham in 2004, just a few miles from Geoff's house in Streatham. By now he was suffering the effects of several operations and it was so sad to see him struggle with the constraints of his illness. He was determined to attend our general and committee meetings and as I was so close to him I would pick him up and drive him to the meetings and bring him home at the end of the evening. Geoff would still enjoy a pint or three at these occasions and often be the last to leave the pub at closing time.

During the six years I 'delivered' him to these meetings we would talk at length about all sorts of things, we had both been union reps at work and he would regale me with stories about various 'battles' he had undertaken. My father, who was in his late 90s was also deteriorating in his faculties and talking about them with Geoff he would compare their varying degrees of decrepitness. When my father died in 2009 I think it didn't help Geoff's demeanour.

Geoff was such a proud man I think his last few years were such a struggle, having previously been a 'doer' it was difficult for him to have to accept things being done for him. I saw him on his birthday in September and, sadly, knew he was near the end. We shall miss him greatly.