

Ian and Yvonne Bennington

Ian and Yvonne joined the club at the end of 1995 and attended their first rally at Manchester Airport in April 1996 with daughter Gemma, but it was not until their third rally at Bishop Auckland in September of that year that Linda and I first met them. Like many of us in those far off days they had to juggle work commitments, but they obviously still caught the rallying bug, running up 50 rallies by the Factory Rally in 2001 and by the time rallies were curtailed in early 2020 they were rapidly heading towards 300.

At the 1998 AGM held at Reaseheath Agricultural College, Nantwich, Gemma was appointed Junior & Teenage Representative and Yvonne joined the Northern Committee for the 1999 season, positions they held in 2000 as well. Yvonne also became Northern Secretary for 2020 and 2021.

Ian's first three year term on the Northern Committee was 2002/03/04 and he went on to represent the North for a further seven years. 2004 was my first experience of working with Ian at committee level, including the AGM at Easingwold School that year, something that I had the great pleasure of doing for many of the ensuing years up to and including 2020, a period that also covered two further AGMs.

Yvonne had already dipped her toe into the rally marshal's pool, when she ran, with Ian, their first rally at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, North Yorkshire in June 2000 and Ian followed suit at Durham Rugby Club, Spring Bank Holiday, May 2003. Together they were to run a further 18 rallies for the club and would have added a further 2 to that total if covid had not forced the cancellation of last year's rally programme. They made a great team with Ian doing all the marking out, siting of vans etc, whilst Yvonne looked after the finances, paperwork and catering. In addition they assisted at a further 3 AGM rallies and were assistant rally marshals countless times.

There are many happy memories of Ian and Yvonne on rallies, from Ian kissing the wrong woman when presenting a plaque at flag, to the kidnapping of the club flag at Durham and the perpetrator eventually being tried by 'Hanging Judge' Bennington, to Yvonne and sometimes Ian, walking round a rally field exercising her beloved Morton and last but not least Ian's devotion to Sunderland AFC.

No one who was at the Flamborough rally in 2014 can forget the 'discussion' surrounding the operation of an Alde heating system, with the conclusion that the hot water was a by-product of the heating system – something Ian's background as a heating engineer found difficult to accept and therefore "I will have this monkey on my back for a long time" was his plaintive cry!

Both Ian and Yvonne were only too ready to help others in all sorts of ways – stepping in to help run rallies, helping to serve food, tea and coffee, fetching water, emptying grey water, fixing caravan problems, particularly those associated with gas, even staying on with another rallier, who was unable to travel when the rally ended, so that they would not be alone on the site. It was therefore very fitting that Ian should have been awarded the 2017 Dave Bain Memorial Trophy.

Ian also had a fund of humorous stories, many from his days at British Gas, frequently regaled with a glass of wine in hand, often including the phrase “bish, bash, bosh”, and which could easily reduce us all, including Ian, to helpless laughter.

There is no doubt that the Bennington family and this club have been dealt a cruel blow and that there is a void in all our lives that will take some time to heal, but one thing is certain – Ian and Yvonne will never be forgotten.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Nicola, Martin, Jessica, Daniel, Gemma, Lewis and the rest of the family.

RIP Ian and Yvonne.

Peter Turner
February 2021