



John Appleby

It was with great sadness that the ESFA learned of the passing of our former Council colleague, ex-Chairman and Life Member, John Appleby, on the evening of Friday 7th August.

John's cancer had returned a few weeks previously and was diagnosed as being terminal. He received excellent palliative care at home and was kept comfortable and pain-free. When I was last able to speak with him some three weeks ago, he was doing the draws for Staffordshire cup competitions this coming season. Almost to the end, he was working for the county he loved and served for almost 50 years.

John's formative years were spent in the north-east. He attended George Stephenson Grammar School, and his love of football was engendered by his father, an avid Newcastle United supporter who followed his team home and away. After graduating from Loughborough, John spent his entire teaching career at Paulet High School in Burton on Trent, becoming Secretary of Burton & District SFA and Staffordshire CSFA. On retiring from teaching, John joined ESFA Council in 2008, and was Chairman in 2011-12. He stepped down from Council in 2016, but continued to support local, county and national activities, liaising between ESFA and Repton School for the courses and matches staged there, and also hosting the international games between ESFA and Australian Schools at Stafford Town FC. The successes of the Staffordshire teams in regional and national competitions were a source of huge pride to John, as too were the achievements of many county players.

Mere facts do John little justice. The lives he touched, the young people he inspired and the colleagues he supported and encouraged are best placed to do that, as shown by the reaction to his passing:

“So gutted. Thank you for everything you’ve done for Staffordshire football and for me especially. I’m grateful to have been able to win national titles twice with you there. Rest in Peace, Mr Staffordshire “

“A great man with a lifetime commitment to children and sport. A teacher others admired and tried to live up to. Sadly missed.”

“Some teachers just stay in your memories - Mr. Appleby was one of those teachers!”

“RIP Mr Appleby. A huge contribution to schools, district and county football, local communities and many, many individuals. A true gentleman who will be missed by many.”

“I was lucky enough to spend three years playing county football for Staffordshire. He played a massive role in inspiring the team, making us better players and better people. I was proud to win the National Cup, but winning for John was special.”

“Really, really sad to read this. Mr Appleby was a fantastic teacher and taught me in the 90s at Paulet High School. He was a grumpy, but super kind teacher and my classmates and I loved our lessons with him. Rest easy Mr Appleby, you were one of the best.”

Outside of football, John was a devoted family man. A conversation with him invariably included them: his wife, Janine, to whom he was always grateful for supporting him in his footballing endeavours; his children Chris and Ellie; and his granddaughter, whose visits brightened his days. To them, the ESFA Family extend our love, prayers and sympathy. They will be comforted by the knowledge that "Mr Staffordshire" was held in such high esteem by so many.

Written by Phil Harding, ESFA Chairman

