
Honorary Life Vice-President Michael Holden, Woking SC

Michael Holden is one of Surrey's golden swimming officials whose involvement in the sport falls just shy of 25 years. "He is really up for a long service award," insists his wife, Irene.

"He is a real, genuine volunteer," she says. "He is truly very worthy of this accolade. What better way to honour him than with an honorary life vice-president award?"

Michael has been a familiar face on poolside at Woking SC more or less since his middle daughter, Natasha, started swimming at the age of five. Now she is 29.

It was in 2000, not long after she had been accepted into the club that Michael decided it was too hot to be sitting up in the gallery with other parents, watching their children train and compete up and down the lanes.

He took a big leap and volunteered to help on poolside, though more on the technical side rather than managing the swimmers. He started in the normal way, by holding a stopwatch and learning timekeeping duties.

Then, due to the general lack of volunteers coming through the system, he worked his way through more knowledge and eventually became a referee. "He has great experience in managing all types of swimming galas," says Irene.

Whenever his girls were at swimming competitions he would volunteer as an official, often being the referee – or certainly in his whites somewhere on poolside.

Michael has not only been there for his own children but also for other clubs. He is contacted frequently and asked to help run open meets. On many occasions had he not offered his expertise and volunteered his time, a lot of clubs would have struggled to hold their competitions.

He has always been a huge supporter of swimming, whether it be for primary, secondary, county or divisional schools' competitions – or even a national school event.

He volunteers at the annual county championship fixtures, though skiing does sometimes get in the way. He also officiates at masters, army and other county galas (Berkshire) and, of course, the time when swimming was included in the Surrey Youth Games.

Even though his daughters are no longer involved with Woking SC nor swimming in the area, Michael is still there doing the best he possibly can for the sport. He was president of Surrey County ASA in 2019 and kept the role in the ensuing pandemic years.

