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## Paul Finch – Honorary Life Vice-President

**P**aul Finch is one of Surrey-London’s mild, unpretentious old-timers whose staunch support for swimming touches in at more than half a century. “The amazing thing is that I am only 21,” he jokes.

The laser-etched glass block, presented to him in recognition of the honorary life VP, now takes pride of place on a sideboard at his home in Morden, south London, next to a brass clock awarded by Merton Swordfish Swimming Club for being its longest serving member.

Paul joined Gorringe Swordfish SC [later renamed Merton Swordfish SC] as a non-swimmer at Wimbledon swimming pool in 1963, aged nine. “It was on doctor’s orders, to improve my asthma,” he said.

After learning to swim and working his way through the ranks, Paul earned his stripes and joined the club’s competition group. He travelled all over the south of England to compete in galas, including county championships and the Speedo League [now the Arena League].

In 1970, however, he was involved in a serious motorcycle accident which ended his competitive swimming career.

But as one chapter ended, another one began. A lady club coach, Margaret Baker, invited him to poolside to become a trainee swimming teacher. Little did Paul know back then that he would go on to become the club’s president – a post he has retained since 2012.

By the late Seventies, Paul had ASA preliminary and teacher certificates firmly under his belt. During the next decade he achieved other teaching and coaching qualifications including diving, disability swimming, preliminary tutor and moderator. In 1994 he became an ASA tutor and verifier.

In 2010 he joined the Swimming Teachers’ Association, an international award-winning charity working towards the objective of preserving human life by the teaching of swimming, lifesaving and survival techniques. Paul upskilled and became one of its swimming tutors. He later updated and taught lifesaving too.

“Clearly he is not in it for the sprint, he is in it for the mile,” said county treasurer Jim Boucher. “He has energy abounds. I think the world of swimming in the London Region and down this way too is all the better for what, I reckon, is about 60+ years’ contribution.”

Since 2010, Paul is one of only several people to have been county president over consecutive years: in 2014 and 2015. He has been an active swimming official for around 25 years, regularly supporting county, regional and other galas around the country.

Paul said: “I have given over 50 years to volunteering, starting at my local swimming club and working up to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games where I was a Games Maker and medal chaperone.

“I have always loved helping people as a volunteer. And due to the support I have received at all levels of the sport throughout my 50+ years, I feel that while I am fit and well, I can and will help”.

