

# TRIBUTE TO GILL PARRY

27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 1953 – 2<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2020

## British Association of Advisors and Lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE) and the Association for Physical Education (afPE)

Gill arrived on the BAALPE scene in January 1997 when she was appointed Teacher Advisor for PE, seconded from Standish Community High School. She had a long and established relationship with BAALPE across her posts as General Advisor with responsibility for PE and educational visits and Strategic Lead for Physical Education and School Sport at both Manchester City Council and Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC). Her sense of humour was evident when she commented that the full BAALPE name was quite a “gob full”! We did have a titter. She was a vibrant member of the North West region and was passionate about PE as a National Curriculum subject and the wider benefits of school sport and physical activity.

When afPE was born in 2006, Gill continued to be a loyal subject association member and was always keen to contribute in a positive and constructive way. Not least was her phenomenal work on the PE and School Sport for Young People (PESSYP) strategy DVD. It was clear that Our Lady's Catholic Primary School had received excellent advice and support from Gill which resulted in a trailblazing DVD of high-quality PE that went to every primary school in England to support the national strategy. This was a great tribute to her expertise and afPE was grateful for the role she played in its development.

The meaning of Gillian in numerology is ‘youthful; child of the gods’. People with this name tend to initiate events, be leaders rather than followers, and have powerful personalities. They tend to be focused on specific goals, experience a wealth of creative ideas, and have the ability to implement these ideas with efficiency and determination. They tend to be courageous and sometimes stubborn. Gill, you certainly lived up to the numerological definition of your name!



On a personal note, I have such fond memories of our times at the BAALPE and afPE conferences: putting the world to right and sharing so many stories and so much laughter. I knew, when she escorted me down a corridor, that Gill would tell me exactly how it was, but always with a smile and laugh and a celebratory drink afterwards. Her infectious laugh, her lovely Lancashire accent and her ability to connect with everyone was testament to the great person she was. We can't take away the pain of her loss, but we can celebrate everything Gill created; she was a wonderful person who added so much to every life she touched.

**Sue Wilkinson [afPE member] is Chief Executive Officer of afPE.**

## afPE North West Region

Gill was a founder member of afPE North West when the association was formed in 2006. She had previously been a member of the BAALPE North West region since 1997. She was always a regular member

and valued contributor at the regional network meetings. Her knowledge and vast amount of experience as her career developed ensured she had the greatest respect from all members. When Gill made any contributions you listened carefully, as you knew that any comments were carefully thought out and definitely worth listening to! She was on many working parties, including leading the development of the partnership between the North West Counties PE Association and afPE North West. She was the perfect person to lead on this work as she was so highly regarded by both associations.

Gill was a lead tutor on numerous training courses which took place in the area. Being such a talented performer herself, she was an excellent role model for both teachers and pupils. Gill had a great personality and knew exactly when to be serious and when to use her great sense of humour. Her training courses were very informative, fun and highly regarded.

Gill was also a highly valued Quality Mark validator for schools in the north west. Her attention to detail and being firm but understanding helped her schools enormously with their self-evaluation process. Her reports and feedback from the schools were of the highest quality.

Gill would rarely miss the afPE national conference. She was always the life and soul of the afPE North West table on the dinner night. She was such good company and so much fun with so many stories to share.

afPE North West will always be grateful for the excellent contribution Gill made to the development of PE, physical activity and school sport in the area. As well as being a valued colleague she became a great friend – a friendship which continued in the years following both our retirements. She will be sorely missed.

**Bob Saunders [afPE member] was afPE North West Treasurer 2008-16.**

## Manchester Physical Education Teacher Training (MPETT)

We were lucky enough to meet Gill when she joined us in the City of Manchester in January 2005. I had never met anyone from Wigan before, so meeting Gill was certainly a culture shock – as much as arriving in inner-city Manchester was initially to Gill. Immediately, though, she became an invaluable part of our Manchester team and, for many, a much-loved friend.

When I contacted the Manchester teaching community following Gill's death, the word that kept being used to describe her was "inspirational". She had such a wealth of knowledge and expertise in PE that she shared with everyone – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Her incredibly high standards, the breadth of her knowledge and her absolute dedication to ensuring the highest quality of teaching and learning in PE were infectious. She was hugely committed to the development of our gifted and talented students. She wanted them to be the best they could be and could draw on her own success as an athlete. She had boundless passion, energy and enthusiasm, which often meant receiving emails after midnight! She always left Wigan at the crack of dawn which, of course, meant getting dressed in the dark. Suffice to say, only Gill could pull off wearing completely different shoes on each foot (different colours and heel sizes) with style and amusement.

Another word used to describe Gill by our tight network was "leader". She was this in every sense of the word. She was committed to the development of herself and all those around her. She had an enormous thirst for knowledge and was always keen to keep up with any developments in PE. Being the thoroughly dedicated professional that she was, even splitting her trousers wide open when delivering to over 100 PE subject leaders did not stop her. She just cracked on and borrowed some trackie bottoms from a delegate!

Gill thrived on supporting others and was always available to listen, advise and encourage. Nothing was ever too much – she gave so generously of her time. I'm sure many of us feel a debt of gratitude to Gill: her belief in us and our potential, coupled with her unwavering and selfless support, makes us all her prodigies. The legend that is Gill has left an enthusiastic army to continue her tremendous legacy. She quite rightly got enormous satisfaction from this.

Anything to do with Gill, whether that be work or play, was always "great fun". No-one in Manchester will ever forget the

famous corridor training. Unfazed by the size of the room and the large number of delegates, she looked around and said, "Let's use this corridor, Hannah. Sometimes you have to take a risk." How right she was and how much laughter there was in that corridor in Ardwick crammed with people. Her sense of humour was legendary, her laughter infectious – there was always a story! Meetings were never quick, but they were always enjoyable.

Gill has been described by many as a "lovely lady" who was loved by everyone. She was so sociable and had the amazing ability to welcome everybody and put them at ease. She was kind and caring and brought out the best in us all.

We realised that if you take the first letter from each of these descriptions – inspirational, leader, great fun, lovely lady – and rejig them, it spells **Gill**. Our unique, quirky, scatty, one-in-a-million, much-loved friend. Gill – the most inspirational leader and fantastic colleague – we are all honoured to have known you and to call you our friend.

**Hannah Vecchione [afPE member] is Director of PE and Sport at St John's Catholic Primary School and Strategic Lead for Physical Education Professional Learning at MPETT.**

## The North Western Counties PE Association

On behalf of The North Western Counties PE Association (NWCPA) I pay tribute to Gill Parry.

Gill: determined, fun-loving, inspirational, courageous, infectious, outstanding, passionate and supportive. The tributes made to Gill following her death all reflect these attributes and I personally wonder how there were enough hours in each day for Gill to do all she did and to be the friend she was to so many people.

Gill and I would meet for lunch at midday, when she would enthusiastically reveal her latest projects and ideas. How exciting it was to work on these with her. We would still be sitting at the table at 4pm and wonder why, once again, we would be getting stuck in the rush hour traffic. Lunches with Gill were inspirational, great fun and not to be missed.

Gill continued to embrace new personal goals throughout her life. More recent ventures were learning to play the ukulele, taking up golf and, of course, Pickleball, which she had started to play in recent months with her typical zest and enthusiasm.

Gill joined the NWCPA in 2011. At that time, she was a PE advisor for the City of Manchester, having previously held a similar role in Wigan. At the time of her death Gill was Vice Chair of the executive committee and Chair and driving force of the Research & Professional Development sub-committee. She worked tirelessly to ensure the effectiveness of this committee, which grew from six to 13 members under her leadership. She was able to recognise equally passionate people whom she knew could make a difference and invited them to contribute to the work of the association.

Gill's passion and determination to make a difference to the lives of young people through PE, physical activity and sport were always apparent. She was also clearly passionate about the opportunities available to teachers to access professional development. She was the driving force for several very successful conferences for teachers of PE. She played a prominent role in the planning for the European PE Association (EUPEA) forum, held in Manchester in 2017, and the European School Sports Day in September 2019. At the time of her death, Gill was planning the 2021 conference 'Inclusion and Diversity in PE', an area she cared passionately about.

Gill will leave a huge gap in the heart of our association. She will be greatly missed by all members. We will ensure that Gill's legacy is continued in her own inimitable spirit.

**Rita Hesford [afPE member] is Secretary of the North Western Counties PE Association (NWCPEA).**

## Youth Sport Trust

I first met Gill in 1996 when I moved to Wigan MBC as a rookie sports development manager to implement the Youth Sport Trust TOPs programme. Gill was then Head of PE at Standish High School and, from that first meeting, I knew I had met a kindred spirit. Gill's knowledge, expertise, drive and passion for supporting young people to be the best they could be was palpable, and her reputation and credibility across the authority were second to none. From that moment, I knew my job would be much easier, and that the ambitions of the Trust through TOPs were in safe hands! It was at this point Gill embarked on her 24-year-journey as a Youth Sport Trust tutor and trainer.

It wasn't long before the driving force of Gill and the local education authority (LEA) advisor David Tarpey ('Tarps' as Gill and many others fondly referred to him) had





capitalised on the opportunity to create one of the first specialist sports colleges in the country and, in 1998, Gill moved to Abraham Guest School as the Director of Specialism and Assistant Headteacher. This is a status and ethos the school has retained and continues to drive even today. She went on to hold the same position in Lowton High School, the second school in the authority to gain specialist sports college status in 2002, before moving on to do a stint as LEA Advisor in Wigan, and then a further seven years in Manchester LEA as a consultant and strategic lead for PE and school sport.

Always striving to be the best she could be in whatever she did, but, importantly, mentoring and coaching all those she came into contact with to be the best they could be – whether they be pupils, teachers, athletes, friends or family – Gill was a true professional. She took real pride and pleasure in helping others achieve this too. As a result of this experience and her unique capacity-building approach, Gill was always at the front of the queue when there were opportunities to pioneer new approaches to learning. She was a driving force for the development of PE and school sport across the authority, region, country and internationally – she can be described as a real missionary!

As part of the Youth Sport Trust Learning Academy, Gill was instrumental in implementing the government's 2002-2010

PE and school sport strategies. She was one of the original national tutors and her breadth of expertise in both PE and sports coaching ensured she was able work across a number of work strands including the national CPD programme, Coaching for Teachers, the gifted and talented programme, school club links and competitive school sport strands. The list is endless!

Gill's work with Youth Sport Trust International took her to far flung parts of the world, including Mozambique, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates and various countries across Europe. Those of us who knew Gill well will know how much the motto 'work hard, play hard' resonated with her and, at the end of the 15-hour days, she loved nothing more than to sit down with a beer and embark enthusiastically on planning and preparation for the next day!

My abiding memory of Gill was her positivity, and with that came the ability to adapt, change and respond to the ever-changing landscape around her. Gill would brush aside the politics and always focus on making a difference to young people through PE and sport.

We at the Youth Sport Trust were humbled to learn that, even in her passing, Gill wanted to keep giving to the PE and school sport profession, to the subject she felt so passionately about and, most of all,

to young people and their futures. Her generous and thoughtful donation to our charity will be held within a discrete fund, allowing us to invest in something in her memory that will deliver a legacy befitting of someone whose personal legacy is so significant and strong. She will never be forgotten by those who worked with her, or those who benefitted from her teaching, coaching and care, but we hope her impact will continue to be felt for years to come through the support we will give to practitioners and pupils in her name. While we paid tribute to Gill's incredible life at our conference earlier this year, we look forward to working with her family and colleagues to determine the most appropriate beneficiaries of Gill's fund and, through this, celebrate once again one of the very best champions, pioneers and driving forces behind the development of PE and sport in this country.

Gill's contribution to PE, sport and education was immense; her enthusiasm and passion for the subject and for people's development were second to none. She was a genuinely lovely, grounded human being with a heart of gold, a wicked sense of humour and cheeky chuckle to match! A life taken too soon, but a legacy that will live on! ■

**Lisa McHendry is Director of Innovation and Insight at the Youth Sport Trust.**