

RONALD LEONARD BOWDEN

1 August 1929 – 12 May 2018



Ron was a long-time coach (over 70 years), most of them at Woodford Green across many events, but arguably his greatest and most outstanding contribution was to hammer throwing development.

He was Hammer Circle President 1986-1991, as well as a former Chairman and long-time committee member of our Association.

Ron gave his most recent of many presentations on coaching and technique to the Hammer Circle in October 2015.



We shall miss him terribly.

RON BOWDEN RIP (TRIBUTE FROM WOODFORD GREEN'S WEBSITE)

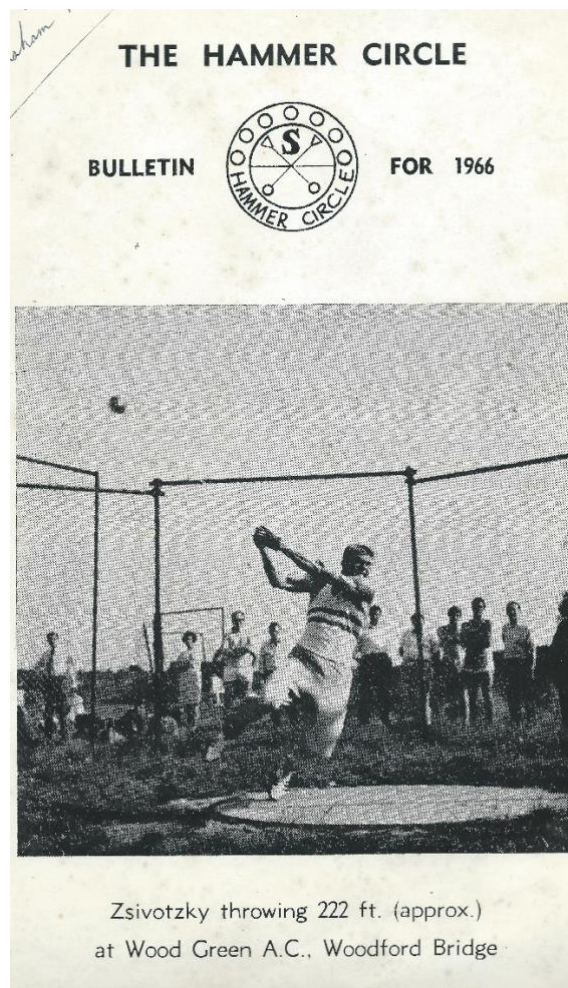
Woodford's legendary coach, 88-year old **Ron Bowden**, sadly passed away at home in South Woodford on the evening of Saturday May 12th, survived by his wife Jose', and their three children, Philip, Stephen and Yvette.

Ron had been coaching for over 70 years, 65 of those with Woodford. His initial interest in coaching began whilst undertaking National Service in the Royal Navy, and then with Loughton AC, where his interest was primarily in the running events.

He joined Woodford Green AC in 1953, and brought with him two of his young charges at Loughton, **David Stearns** and **John Baker**, both of whom went on to become fine Woodford middle distance clubmen under Ron's guidance, with David going on to gain international honours at 3000m steeplechase.

Ron eventually coached across all distances and disciplines, and guided athletes to international level in most, if not all events. His range of expertise was prodigious and the many hundreds, if not thousands of athletes he guided over the years included, on the track, one of Britain's leading sprinters of the early and mid-1960's **David Jones**, through to Woodford Club marathon record holder **Colin Moxsom**, to multi-events in which he guided **Kim Hagger** to Olympic heptathlon representation and **Gladys Taylor (Bird)** to European Cup pentathlon representation, prior to two Olympics (400m, 400mH and 4x400m). He guided a Woodford men's 4x100m team to a national Club title.

However, it was in the throwing events, notably the hammer, that Ron will best be remembered. A modest hammer throwing proponent himself, although he won an Essex County title, his expertise in the event increased, and he organised a clinic at Ashton in 1965 with the then world record holder **Gyula Zsivotzky** of Hungary.



He was heavily involved in the development of the Hammer Circle, including later serving as its Chairman and President and, under the BAAB, Ron became a Senior Coach and later the national event coach for the hammer. He produced and guided numerous good hammer throwers, many over 60m, and some very good ones over 70m, such that by 1990 three of the top six on the UK all-time lists (**Martin Girvan**, **Matt Mileham** and **Paul Head**) had been guided by Ron. Decades before the phrase “strength and conditioning” became fashionable parlance amongst the more recent and current Track & Field coaching fraternity, Ron had already embraced such techniques, and his technical knowledge was sought after by ITV as an expert commentator on both athletics and weight lifting in the 1970's. Recognising his contribution to the Club, Ron was awarded Life Membership of Woodford Green AC in 1968.

But Ron's interests were far from restricted to helping those who had the potential to reach international level. He was equally keen on helping the average athlete get the most out of themselves. As long as they were prepared to agree and then commit to the time they had available to better themselves, Ron would do likewise and more. His 65 years coaching with Woodford saw him at Ashton Playing Fields certainly more than any other individual. He would be there not less than four days each week and sometimes more, and often more than once a day. He would only be absent for a very occasional holiday (usually to France), or to attend athletics meetings.

There can be few individuals within our sport who have given such dedication and commitment over such a long period. Ron's legacy is huge both to Woodford Green Athletic Club with Essex Ladies and the sport more generally. He will be sorely missed. It can only be hoped that part of that legacy can live on through some of the athletes and ex-athletes that he guided, and through some of the other coaches that sought his expertise.