

Ex-England star dies

BOWLERS from Wiltshire turned up at Semington Crematorium between Melksham and Trowbridge to pay their respects to one of the most respected 'Moonrakers' of all time.

London-born Cliff Stroud, who represented Trowbridge Westbourne, Wiltshire and England with distinction, would have celebrated his 100th birthday later this year, but died at the end of March.

A stylish and consistent player, he made key contributions in the 'engine room' when England struck fours gold at the 1972 World Championships in Worthing. Playing second, he built on the good work of the late Norman King at lead, and set up favourable positions for the back-end duo of Ted Hayward and Peter Line.

The England quartet hit the headlines in their last match against the highly-rated South Africans, skipped by Doug Watson, which they needed to win to be sure of finishing in top spot in what, in those days, was a gruelling 'round robin' event – no finals or medal play-offs in those days!

Cliff took up bowls in 1954 after leaving the Army, where he was a PTI. He was a member of the Trowbridge Westbourne club for most of his bowls

career, and played for England outdoors from 1966 to 1975, but it was as a member of the Christie Miller club, where he was a life member, he obtained international honours indoors between 1971 and 1973.

He won the Wiltshire county singles twice – 1964 and 1966 – and completed a notable double in both those years by also winning the fours for good measure.

The furthest he went in the national championships was when he reached the semi-finals of the triples in 1966, but his value as a reliable drawing player was recognised by the national selectors, who named for the 1970 Commonwealth Games and the 1972 World outdoor championships.

Bowls England's director of finance, Howard Pryse, who

also lives in Wiltshire and who regarded Cliff as a guide and mentor, said: "Cliff recently asked if Bowls England would like to display his World Bowls gold medal and other items in their collection of memorabilia, and I intend to present them to Tony Allcock at the next BE board meeting."

David Bryant said: "I first met Cliff in the 1950's, and we got on like a house on fire. He was a first-class player and a fine ambassador for bowls. He was a close friend of mine and I will miss him."

Below: Cliff competes against Ireland in 1972

England- Ted Hayward, Cliff Stroud, Norman King, Peter Line.
Ireland- Gerry Sloan, Jimmy Dennison, Billie Tate, Tom Kennedy



The Viking' bids farewell

BRIAN Thomas (58) suffered a cardiac arrest while representing Aberdare against Blaenrhondda at the end of April.

He died despite the attentions of a paramedic, an ambulance crew and the efforts of the Wales Air Ambulance Service.

Known affectionately as 'The Viking,' Brian was also a member of the Harlequins club and was a bowls fanatic. Having recently been elected as club vice-captain, he had captained Aberdare against Abercynon just five days earlier.

An Aberdare clubmate said: "Brian played for Aberdare and his heart was in the town.

"He loved the game of bowls, played darts and skittles and was very generous to charities."

He leaves a wife, Barbara, two sons, Luke and Saul, and two grandchildren, Jake and Tyler.



Brian with his wife Barbara

Top Kiwi bowler remembered

PHIL Skoglund, one of New Zealand's greatest bowlers, who died in April, will be remembered fondly by bowlers all over the world after collecting an impressive haul of medals from world outdoor and Commonwealth Games championships between 1974 and 1990.

Blessed with an exaggerated back-swing that experts decreed was hardly suited to the fast greens of the southern hemisphere, Skoglund's right arm would descend at speed from a lofty, overhead position, then de-celerate before dispatch, which was as smooth as silk.

His father, also named Philip, was a Minister of the Crown, and his uncle, Thomas T 'Pete' Skoglund, skipped a Kiwi quartet to a bronze medal in the 1950 Commonwealth Games in Auckland and was known

as New Zealand's 'Mr Bowls.'

Arguably, Phil outdid their achievements. He was, at twenty, New Zealand's youngest-ever singles champion, he won eight medals at World and Commonwealth level, and, in 1988, he was granted the Order of the British Empire for services to bowls.

The pinnacle of his achievements came in 1988, when he skipped Ian Dickison and Morgan Moffat to the triples gold, and Rowan Brassey, Dickison and Moffat to the fours silver in the World Championships at the Henderson club in Auckland.

He also competed in the World Indoor Singles championship when the event was still being staged in Coatbridge and he was runner-up to Tony Allcock in 1986.

Skoglund, who died at the age of 77, had an almost intimidating presence, but his granite exterior

hid a warm and generous personality, and, according to his peers, he was one of the best skips to play for.

A reminder that bowls is a family sport, Phil's son, Phil Skoglund Jnr, is also a fine bowler, who has represented New Zealand on a number of occasions.

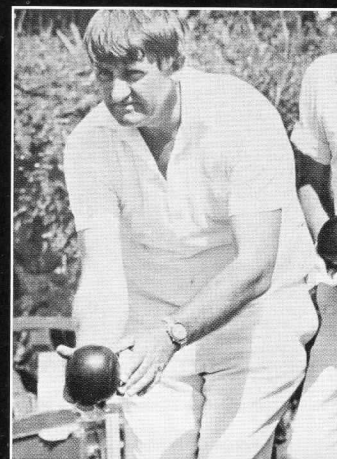
New Zealand stalwart Ian Birch said: "Phil was one of the finest bowlers ever produced in New Zealand. Apart from the OBE he received in 1988, he was inducted into the NZ 'Sports Hall of Fame,' and was installed as a 'Legend' in the NZ 'Bowls Hall of Fame.'

SKOGLUND'S MEDAL HAUL COMMONWEALTH GAMES

1974 (Christchurch) – pairs bronze
1978 (Edmonton) – fours silver
1990 (Auckland) – fours bronze

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

1980 (Frankston) – pairs and fours bronze
1984 (Aberdeen) – fours silver
1988 (Auckland) – Triples gold and fours silver



Skoglund in action