

## **Pam Woolmer**



### **A tribute from Medway Netball League, January 2021**

Following on from the sad news that our Founder Pam Woolmer has died we reprint the article that Pam gave us in 2008. As a League we will look forward to celebrating Pam's significant contribution to Medway Netball as soon as we are able to return.

From Pam Woolmer Founder of Medway Netball League

I started playing for the Territorial's in Maidstone when I left school in 1946 then in 1953 I started a team in Cuxton (ladies) as they were called. The next year I wrote to all the large shops and factories in Maidstone and the Medway towns asking if they were interested in playing netball. asking them to attend a meeting in Cuxton-I cried when I got there it was packed- a committee was formed and everybody went home with their job to do and so Maidstone and Medway Netball League was formed!

Cuxton Ladies won the league that year. I left to have a baby and moved to Borstal where I formed another team. I think we won the League the first two years; my memory is not as good as it once was! At that time I loaned the League some photos for a reunion at the Stirling centre, if anyone has any knowledge of their whereabouts please let me know.

My second child was born soon after and I was playing for Standard Telephones, finally my 3rd monster arrived, you know her as Janet so you can imagine my troubles had just quadrupled!!

During the following years I played for the Post Office, joined Bramar badminton club and provided the getaway car for my husband who was a football referee. By the time my 4th child came along I decided to give up playing netball.

In 1979 I was asked to the "cutting of the cake celebrations of the ¼ century and have since presented cups at the Presentation dances or matches. A few years ago I was asked to be President and was honoured to accept, I never missed a committee meeting the whole time I was in office.

The love of netball never passes. When I come and watch I am on the court playing in mind if not in body and I know I have passed this love onto Janet and Amy my granddaughter.

Good Luck in the future and may you keep expanding.

Janet and her family wanted to add these words:

Our mum had a passion for life, her family was her greatest passion but one of her proudest achievements was the forming of the Medway league...she would want everyone of you to continue to enjoy the sport she loved and continue to support the League to grow in her memory, she was our rock and we will miss her desperately.

# Medway Netball League founder Pamela Woolmer dies aged 90

By Nikki White

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**Published:** 17:00, 11 January 2021, | **Updated:** 18:08, 11 January 2021

The founder of the Medway Netball League has passed away at the age of 90.

Pam Woolmer, from **Borstal**, launched the league back in 1954. From just a handful of players, it grew to support a huge number of clubs with many of those original players seeing their daughters and granddaughters take up the sport. Pamela Woolmer, the founder of Medway Netball League



Pam is survived by three of her children - Peter, Philip and Janet. Daughter Anne, 45, passed away in 2014 and Pam's husband Bob died in 2016.

She also had three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Daughter Janet Waddington said on behalf of the family: "Our mum was extremely proud to be the founder of the league and during her time as life president she attended most meetings and supported as much as she could, always asking me if she could do more.

"She loved the Pam Woolmer Rally, even more so when she could bring my dad along and really enjoyed chatting to the lovely netballers who made time to come and say hello, often debating the new rules of which there were many.

"She was disappointed last year when the rally had to be cancelled. Those of you that knew her would know she loved a cake so she was looking forward to a nice slice.

Pamela Woolmer, the founder of Medway Netball League

"Our mum would have wanted each and everyone to continue to enjoy the sport she loved so much and continue to support the league.

"She was our rock and we will miss her desperately. She will always be in our hearts and I'm sure she will be with the love of her life, our dad, and supporting the netball from above with a nice slice of cake and a glass of wine."



Funeral details have yet to be arranged but the family is asking for donations to be made to Cancer Research via the Rochester branch of

When Pam asked a few women living in her street if they wanted to play netball, little did she know it would lead to the launch of a league that would encourage thousands of women and girls to pick up a ball.

Speaking in 2015, she recalled those early days. "I just wanted a game," she said. "I didn't care about anybody else, I didn't think of it in terms of leagues and numbers, I just wanted to play."

Pam Woolmer seen in this photograph front centre. This is Pam in the TA at Maidstone Barracks about 1950

Pam first picked up a netball at school and carried on playing when she joined the Territorial Army in 1950, while working in the stores at Maidstone Barracks, playing in the London area.

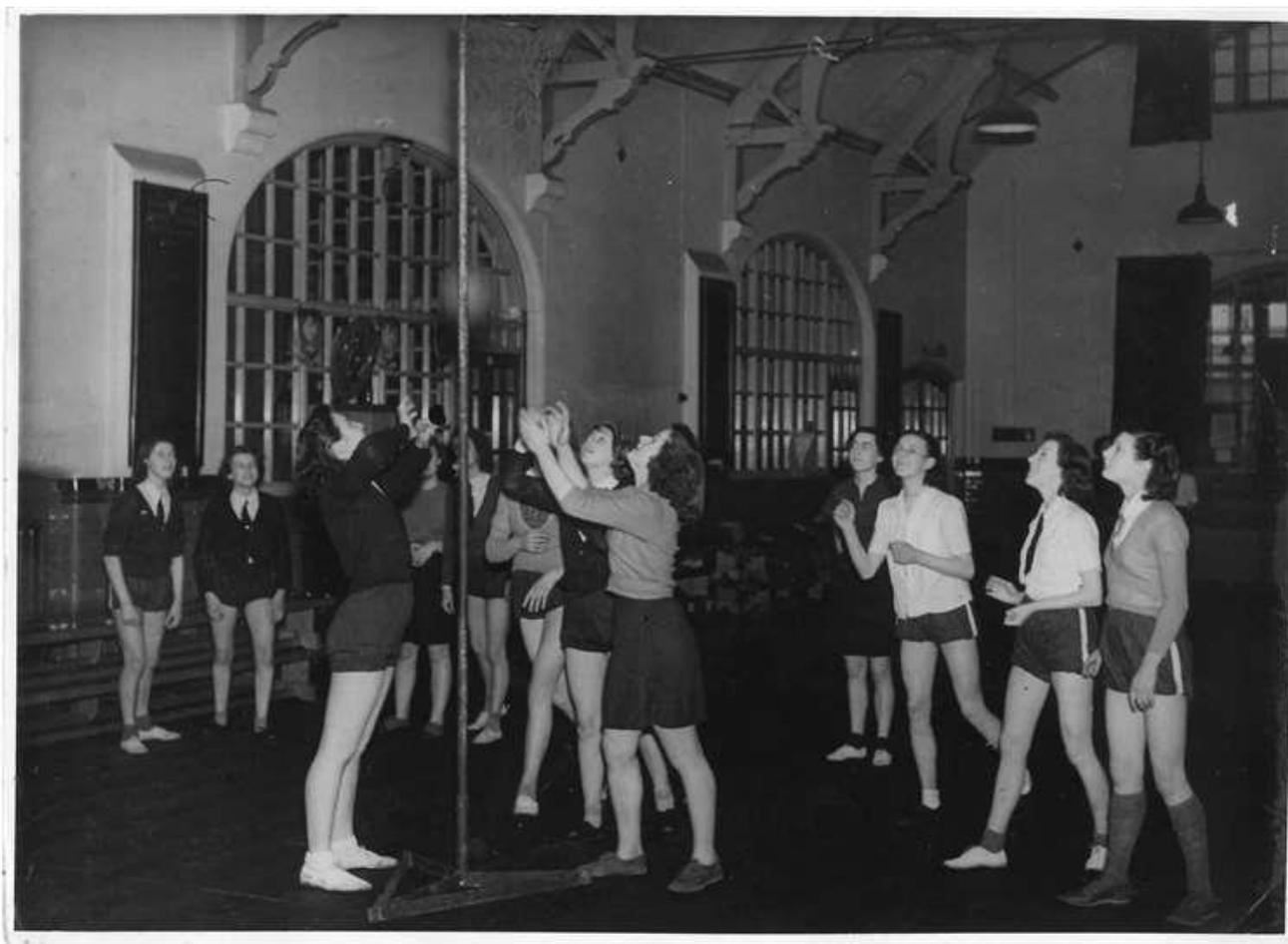
She then met her husband Bob, married in 1951 and moved from Maidstone to Brambletree Crescent, Borstal.



"When I played for the TA, I think there were about three teams round here," she recalled. "One was Norman's Cycles in Ashford. Nobody had a car so we had to go on the train."

Wanting some games closer to home - and convinced there were more women like her who wanted to play - Pam did something about it.

"I sat down one day and wrote letters to all the shops and businesses in the Medway Towns and Maidstone, asking if people wanted to get involved."



Pam Woolmer shooting in a game of netball at East Borough school, Maidstone. She is to the right of the post, in lighter top at the front. Photo supplied by Pam Woolmer

“Then I spoke to all my neighbours and asked if they wanted to have a go, and they said yes.”

She invited them along to Cuxton Village Hall and, to her surprise, the place was packed.

That night, in 1954, the Maidstone and Medway Netball League was formed.

“It was so exciting,” Pam said. “I thought we would get about two or three teams, but there must have been about half a dozen.”

A committee was formed, with Pam as chairman. Maidstone broke away to form its own league within a few years, and Medway continued to flourish. From one division, it grew to many more.



Pam Woolmer seen in this photograph front centre (holding the ball with the Borstal Ladies team, taken about 1956. From left: Margery Turner, Dorothy Dinnie, Sheila (surname unknown), Pam Woolmer, next two names unknown, Daphne Rowley. This was one of many photos in Pam's collection

The first team Pam set up was Borstal Ladies - Pam and the ladies living in her street - followed by Cuxton. Both had runs of success.

Her last game was in 1960. "One day, I just felt 'you're too old for this lark' and didn't play again," she said.

Surprisingly, she never picked up a ball again, but it wasn't the end of her association with netball.

She continued to support the league for years, was a life president and for many years, the league ran a rally named in her honour.

But putting her feet up was never an option. She was already pretty handy with a badminton racquet, so played more of that instead and was treasurer of that league for many years too.



Nikki White, Senior News Editor interviews, Pam Woolmer back in 2015. Picture: John Westrop

And she raised money for the local Scout hut, was chairman of 24th Medway Scouts and organised Borstal's fete for a couple of years back in the 1970s.

All while bringing up four children.

Her daughter Janet started playing when she was 16 and still does - at centre, the same position as her mum. She too served on the MNL committee, and Janet's daughter, Amy, also played, often in the same team as her mum.

In 2014, the league, based at Rainham School for Girls, marked its 60th anniversary.

Did Pam ever think it was the start of something when she sat down and wrote all those letters?

**'It was so exciting to see everybody interested...'**

"I never dreamed it would get this big," she said. "It was worth it. It was so exciting to see everybody interested."

Pam's love of sport never stopped. Up until 2014, she was a member of the BP Club in Hoo, enjoying bowls, dancing and snooker, and for nine years had a season ticket to watch Arsenal.

Her late husband Bob was a former referee.

When the weather was warm enough, she swam whenever she could in the pool in her back garden that she'd had for about 25 years.

Some netballers go on for years - a shooter in Medway was once still going into her 70s. But great-grandmother Pam never regretted giving up.

She said: "Not one bit. I had some lovely times playing. I couldn't wait to get on court.

"I used to think I would dread it when I packed up, but there was always something waiting around the corner that was better, which is a good thing, otherwise you would live your life with regrets."

TRIBUTES PAID

# Netball league founder Pam dies

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The much-loved Pam Woolmer seen in this photograph front centre (holding the ball) with fellow members of the Borstal Ladies' team, taken about 1955

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continue to support the league. "She was our rock and we will miss her desperately. She will always be in our hearts and I'm sure she will be with the love of her life, our dad, and supporting the netball from above with

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She then met her husband Bob, married in 1951 and moved from Maidstone to Brambletree Crescent, Borstal.

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She continued to support the league for years afterwards.

She was a life president and for many years, the league ran a fundraising rally named in her honour.