

TRIBUTE TO DEREK ‘NOBBY’ CLARK by PAUL ALLEN.

THERE was standing room only in the chapel at Poole Crematorium as family and friends said their final farewells to Derek “Nobby” Clark.

As the mourners filed out at the end of the service, it was to the cheerful melody of the Monty Python song “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life”, chosen by Nobby’s family because it reflected his own outlook. “He was a whistling, smiling, happy man,” said his son Derek in a tribute during the service, “with a legendary drive to live and laugh every single day.”

Nobby was a widely-known and popular figure in the Bournemouth and District Table Tennis Association and was tireless in encouraging other people to take up the game he loved. He served on the Executive Committee from 2005 to 2008 and played an active role in the decision-making processes of the Association. A born organiser, he founded the Shamrock Table Tennis Club in 2005, which was based first in a hall at the Anglican Church at Canford Bottom and more recently in the Methodist church hall in Colehill. The Shamrock club is thriving, with four teams playing league table tennis in the Bournemouth League. He was also a founder member of the Nimrod Table Tennis Club which fields three teams in the Bournemouth League.

Last year, he also began a table tennis club in Wimborne for players over the age of 50 and it was an immediate success. In both cases, it was Nobby’s selfless efforts that won grants towards buying equipment for the teams and he was a tireless leader of the two clubs. It was his special joy to welcome new players of all ages and abilities and to help coach them in the game.

His own health problems did nothing to hold him back. Despite an ulcer, diverticulitis, irritable bowel, two hip operations, two knee replacements, two elbow operations and a pacemaker – and also reaching the age of 80 last year – he was as tenacious a player and organiser as many half his age.

Nobby was a self-taught builder, widely respected in the trade as a hard worker and a good boss and it was evidence of his skill that he was approached to become Dorset’s senior building inspector for the National House Builders’ Council. He married his wife Jean in 1949 and they had four children – Ann, Paul, Colin and Derek. Ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren were to become part of the family. Jean died three years ago, after a marriage of 57 years filled with music, dancing and house renovating.

He will be sorely missed both by his family and his many friends.