

MEET THE SENIOR – JOHN McEVoy

John is one of our long-term club members. A regular face at our coffee mornings, with his wife Ann. John has helped us over the past few years, by supporting lots of activities for our School of Life project, where we link seniors with local schools – skill swapping! Through this, we learnt that John has a few strings to his bow...



This month – John McEvoy answers 10 quick-fire questions and tells us a bit more about himself.

Q1. John – where do you come from originally and how long have you been in East Hunsbury?

I'm from Birkenhead in the Wirral originally. I have been in EH for 33 years. Why EH? I came for work. I worked for British Steel in Sheffield and was made redundant, as many others were, in the 80's. I became self employed as a chartered engineer and I moved for work, for different contracts, successfully working freelance. Working in Market Harborough, I looked at a place to live and East Hunsbury appealed. It was very different in those days of course; we were in the countryside! We have been happily living here now since 1988.

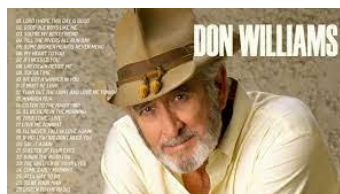
Q2. Tell us a bit about you . . .

2a. Family

Married to Ann. We have 3 children between us - 1 boy, 2 girls and 5 grandchildren.

2b. Favourite Band/Song?

Oh, what a difficult question – all of them. I am a musician – I play the guitar, and I have performed for years, but if you push me, I will say, Don Williams, a great voice.





2c. Best place in the world?

Again – what a question...if I must choose one, I will say The Grand Canyon, what a stunning landscape.



2d. What would you have been – if you could have been anything?

This is an easy one, I would love to have been a pilot. I wanted to join the RAF but an issue with my ears put paid to that. After many years, however, I did learn to pilot hang gliders in Derbyshire and light aircraft over at Sywell, so I have been able to pursue the aim to fly, which was another pastime of mine.

2e. Most hated food stuffs.

Kimchi – dreadful stuff.

3. Fantasy Dinner guests? You can invite four people (alive or departed) to dinner – who gets an invite and why?

Well in truth, family would be my wish, Ann's parents and my own parents, but if a real fantasy dinner party, I would say, Don Williams (he could sing for his supper) and Julie Andrews (what a voice, and how talented). To add to these two people, Mr. Patrick Moore, the astronomer – another hobby of mine, somewhat of a passion. Finally, I would like to invite an old schoolteacher of mine, who quashed my interest in space, many years ago....it took years for me to pursue my interest in the skies, as I asked him as a boy what was in space and he said NOTHING . . . just a vacuum! How wrong he was about that, and how wrong to say that to a child. I now know very different – and would dearly love to educate him!





4. We know that astronomy is one of your hobbies – tell us a bit more – when did you get into it and why?

I will take you back to me at the age of 11 – my interest was sparked by Sputnik in 1957, then the space race and the moon landings. Like so many I was engrossed by it all. When I was working in Kuwait, the images of comets like Hale Bopp crossing the skies in the desert amazed me. We won't see Hale Bopp again for another 2000 years, so privileged to see this. But I really didn't start looking at Space until I was 60 years of age. I joined several local clubs, and my daughter in law bought me membership of the British Association of Astronomers.

From there onwards, my passion and interest grew, I joined Nene Valley and Northampton Natural History Society Astronomers, I took Open University courses in astronomy and planetary science (part of the OU Science Degree course). My interest has seen me give talks to many different groups.

Aside of my passion for astronomy, I am a guitarist and singer – I love music, perhaps a sing song at a senior's session might be in order! As well as music, I like my sport, and have also been a badminton coach.



5. Tell us more about the observatory – in the back garden. What led to this amazing thing in the back garden?

During lockdown, I eventually decided to build my own observatory in my garden. Ann and I are supportive of each other's interests, and it seemed an ideal time. We began building in November, so it is a work in progress but it's nearly finished.



The neighbours cannot wait to come in. For many years I have had a telescope at the front of the house, and neighbours and friends will come along for a look. This now gives me a great place for watching the skies.



6. What sort of equipment do you use?

Well, there are different sorts of telescopes depending on what you want to look at! A long focal length one allows you to see into the craters of the moon, that's the one that I use at the front of the house, but in my new observatory, I use an AG12 Orion Optics. With this static telescope, with a shorter focal length, the viewing angle is wider and I can look at the molecular giant gas clouds, the Solar Nebula, which is the very source of stars and galaxies that make up the universe.

Many thanks to John for allowing us to visit his observatory and telling us about one of his main hobbies. Perhaps we can get a group of Seniors out and about and star gazing? Anyone interested in knowing more, having a talk from John, or signing up for some star gazing, please let Liz know.

AND - If you have an interest in appearing in 'Meet the Senior' and fancy being interviewed with 10 quick-fire questions, please get in touch with Liz by emailing: community@easthunsburyparishcouncil.gov.uk