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Man behind resort zoo pools dies at 88

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Neville Haigh, a civil engineer behind some of Blackpool's biggest projects, died from the coronavirus Covid-19, his daughter said.

The 88-year-old, who in retirement gave up his spare time to teach children to read, and to volunteer at the RNLI shop, was living at the Anncliffe Residential Home in Newton Drive after being diagnosed with dementia.

His daughter Ann Mckell said he would be remembered as a "true gentleman in every sense of the word", and said her dad was a "great family man who adored his children and grandchildren, and a man so proud of his home town".

Born on Christmas Eve in 1931 at his parents' boarding house in Crystal Road, Neville had his lifelong love of football sparked by one of its famous residents: the wizard of the dribble Sir Stanley Matthews, who would take the youngster to matches at Bloomfield Road.

As a boy during the Second World War, Neville would watch the troops exercising on the Prom in South Shore, and

bath when the venue was full during the summer.

He attended Thames Road Primary School and Palatine Senior School, where he excelled at athletics and played for Blackpool Boys Club, Ann said.

At 16, he started work at the council's surveyors department, with one of his first jobs helping to install drainage for the playing field at what is now Aspire Academy in Blackpool Old Road. Ann said: "Dad began his civil engineer training at this time, and he went on to be head of drainage at the town hall."

At 21, Neville was called up for his national service with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Scotland. "One of his stories was being late back to barracks, and his punishment was to cut the grass with a pair of scissors," Ann said.

Neville met his wife Anita on a blind date at the Winter Gardens in 1957, with the pair marrying two years later at St Paul's Church in Honister Avenue. After buying their first home, they had two children - Michael and Ann - before the family moved to Devonshire Road in 1964.

In the '70s, Neville designed the tunnels and outfalls for pumping stations at



Neville Haigh, who died from the coronavirus at the age of 88

chorsholme, as well as the sealion and penguin pools at Blackpool Zoo.

"Dad enjoyed every day of his working life, and was well respected in his field," Ann said. "He was very proud to be making a better Blackpool."

A keen sportsman, Nev-

He also played snooker for St Cuthbert's in Lytham road, and was on the committee for the civil service fishing club in Norcross, and would join working parties to dredge local ponds.

Ann said: "After his retirement, Dad went on to be a consultant and expert witness for the north west water board. He also volunteered at Bispham Endowed Junior School, helping the children learn to read. In later years, he volunteer with Mum at the RNLI shop in Blackpool.

"A great animal lover, he had many dogs throughout his life, walking them on Blackpool beach and the sand hills, with one flat-coated retriever - Ella - even making it to Crufts."

Neville's wife Anita died following a short illness in 2016, with Neville, affected by dementia, spending his final years at the Anncliffe Residential Home, which Ann described as "wonderful".

He died on Sunday, April 12, 2020, after being diagnosed with Covid-19.

He was survived by his children, who both work for the council; daughter-in-law Fiona, grandchildren Joe, Rachael, Caroline, Katherine, and Stephanie; and two great-grandchildren Francesca,

and Blackpool for 20 years and showed a talent for fast bowling. After joining a climbing club in his 20s, he fell in love with fell walking in the Lake District, and went on to design and help build two chapels: one in the Langdale Valley and the other in the vil-