

Fifty golden years of teamwork

WELL-KNOWN local writer and broadcaster Ralph Whitlock and his wife Hilda celebrated 50 years of marriage on Sunday with a special service at Pitton Methodist Chapel and a party at the Red Lion Hotel, Salisbury.

"For the first time in my life I was lost for words," said Ralph after the service, where the golden couple were presented with a crystal bowl and an ornamental plate.

And more was to follow as about a hundred family and friends, including children and grandchildren from as far away as Canada, gathered in the city hotel to toast the success of the remarkable Winterslow couple who have achieved so much together.

Ralph ran a farm until 1968 and has written 114 books on agriculture, nature and rural traditions. A regular radio personality, he wrote, produced and acted in the children's radio programme Cowleaze Farm between 1946 and 1962.

"In fact there have been

He was also agricultural consultant to the Methodist Missionary Society and travelled all over the world, sometimes accompanied by Hilda.

They grew up together in Pitton and were married in the Methodist Chapel.

"We were both christ-

When the couple returned to Wiltshire in 1983 after living in Somerset, Hilda began playing the organ at Pitton Chapel — something she first did as a child.

But tragedy struck just months later when she had a massive brain haemorrhage leaving her paralysed and nearly blind.

Doctors feared she would not recover, but Hilda triumphed and four years later made headlines when she raised £1,250 for Salisbury Scanner Appeal with a sponsored organ recital.

Working together and always trying to help each other out has been the core of their relationship, said Hilda. They have complemented each other perfectly through the years and are still a very strong team.

Story: CHRIS TATE
Picture: HENRY WILLS

three other Mrs Whitlocks," he joked, referring to actresses who starred in the show.

Many of those involved in today's green movement had their first impressions of environmental issues from this pioneer conservationist's programmes and books.

ened there as were our children and grandchildren," said Ralph, whose family name is noted on the first parish register.

His latest book — *The Lost Village* — notes the changes in the village over the last 60 years and is now out in paperback.

Labour crushed in by-election poll

MERE, a Salisbury District Council seat which went uncontested for more than 20 years, has been won in a by-election by Independent Andrew Young who steam-rolled the opposition.

The former chairman of Mere Parish Council won 20 times the support of his only challenger, Labour's Michael Ayres, polling 605 votes to the Socialist's 31. Only one

in three voters turned out on a rainy Thursday.

The election followed the resignation of SDP councillor Cyril Scott who was unopposed in 1987. Before that Jack Paul represented Mere as an Independent for 24 years without having to fight an election.

Mr Young attributed his win to a strong tradition of go-it-alone councillors in the ward.

Even Cyril Scott won as an Inde-

pendent before joining forces with the Owenites.

Labour blamed their defeat on the ward not having a history of supporting their party.

The balance of power on Salisbury District Council is unchanged with the ruling Conservative group holding 31 seats, Liberal Democrats ten, Independents nine, Ratepayers' four, SDP two, and Labour and Greens one each.



Ralph and Hilda Whitlock proudly cut the golden wedding cake made by their grand-daughter at the party for family and friends at the Red Lion Hotel, Salisbury, on Sunday evening.