

John McGregor OBE: Master Spectacle Maker

3 October 2018 – 2 October 2019



John was born in London but moved out to live and work in the leafier climes of Essex.

He spent 25 years in the chemical industry before leaving Smith and Nephew Group in 1986 to found his own company, Contamac Ltd. As a sole trader, his first laboratory was constructed in his garden shed. Some thirty years later the operation has become the largest of its kind in the world, employing more than ninety people and trading internationally from its headquarters in Saffron Walden - an ideal location within the Innovation Corridor linking London with Cambridge and perfectly placed only minutes away from John's home.

The company, of which John is now Chairman, recently became part of the HaoHai group. Its expertise lies in developing and producing materials for Specialist Contact Lenses, Intra Ocular Lenses and other implantable devices. John and his team spearheaded the work creating innovative new optical polymers both for contact lens manufacture and for the creation of new Intra Ocular Lenses, used in cataract surgery. It was this work that resulted in two Queen's Industry Awards for Enterprise for Contamac and John's own award of the OBE in the 2018 New Year's Honours List. John is proud that his efforts have been influential in restoring or improving the sight of millions of people globally.

John has had a lifelong interest in aviation, having been a keen glider pilot in his early years as a result of his involvement with the Air Training Corps. He also indulges himself in the many disciplines encompassed by shooting although live game is now prohibited on the strict orders of the Mistress Spectacle Maker. Liverymen should be much relieved – he is a good shot!

He spent many years playing and coaching Badminton but age has dispensed with that activity as it has done with his attraction to fast cars including driving the Talladega NASCAR circuit in Alabama.

John is married to Gloria who is a lifelong educationalist and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Educators as well as a Liveryman of the Spectacle Makers' Company. He actively supports her charitable work on deafness and deaf awareness and her role in creating and maintaining her website www.lipreadingpractice.co.uk in support of this objective and of the charity www.hearinglink.org.

John's son recently took over the role of Managing Director of Contamac after more than twenty years working in the Company. His daughter is a solicitor who has been heavily involved with the creation of the new Science Park in Harlow. Both are freemen of the Spectacle Makers' Company. With three granddaughters and a great granddaughter too, plus Gloria's three children and three grandchildren, John delights in his extended family.