

## **Who'd Have Thought** by Steve Berry

Flashback to early 2011. I'd been retired from the Fire Service about 6 months and my weight was heading slowly but positively towards the 16 stone mark which I'd never topped before. I liked eating out and I liked red wine (still do). They weren't going to be sacrificed so something else had to give. I'd always regarded voluntary exercise as something you did the least of that you could get away with!

What could I do? What about running. How hard can it be?! I downloaded a series of podcasts called NHS Couch to 5k which assured me that if I did everything the lovely Laura told me to 3 times a week for 9 weeks, then I'd be able to run for 30 minutes non-stop. Sounds good. After a couple of weeks following Laura's directions to the letter, the idea that I could do this non-stop for 30 minutes seemed a long way off. I persevered though and completed the 9 weeks and was very proud when I indeed ran that last run without stopping. What next?

At the 2011 Darrington Feast and Fayre, Scott Daly had told me about this parkrun thingy that had started at the racecourse every Saturday (he did it every week in speeds that I would require a motorcycle to emulate). Many weeks later I had a go. I wheezed round in 35 minutes flat. It was to be another 3 months or so before I went again in early 2012. There were lots of people in yellow shirts. One of the other runners took pity on my obvious bewilderment and ran with me over the course of the next few weeks. That was Georgi Newton. My times started getting better. I remarked during one parkrun to Georgi that that bloke who won every week was incredibly fast, practically showing off even. "Yes, that's my husband Simon". Oops.

Georgi mentioned SRC at Sweatshop which I'd never heard of so I gave it a try. A good move! I met some great people (including many current ARRs), ran my first proper races at Darrington, Leeds and Scarborough and during 2012 achieved my best 5k and 10k times (which I've never quite matched since). I also ran 16 consecutive sub 30 minute parkruns including the PB of 28:49 that year until my first proper injury (achilles) put things on hold for a while. By this time, Wendy had joined SRC too as she wanted to see who all these new friends were!

Building on many 10ks and half marathons, I finally did a marathon in October 2014 in York. I just wanted to say I'd done one. Well, I did it, it took over 6 hours and I've never done one since.

Following on from those great SRC years, me and Wendy joined ARR in September 2015. We already knew a lot of people there from SRC and parkrun so it was all good. 5 years on and we've had some amazing ARR trips out both in this country and beyond at various parkruns and races and met even more fantastic people. The friendliness of this club is second to none which is probably why it keeps getting bigger and bigger.

Steve Berry, May 2020.