

### **...And Also Ran** by Stewart Haigh

Up until the age of 14 I was enthusiastic at sport but not very good. Suddenly I had a growth spurt and found I could just about make the Colts Rugby team and I was pretty decent at athletics – representing Hemsworth Grammar school in the half mile and sometimes at 220 yards. Come sports day I tried my best to beat Baxendale but at 9 months older than me and 6 inches taller it was he who collected the Half mile Cup. That was it for sport as I found other interests! In the 6<sup>th</sup> form – my last sports day, I came last in the cross country.

Running took a back seat until my early 30's. I had joined Wakefield Round Table and after a social drink or two agreed to run in the Area Cross Country championships. I ran... just ...and finished well behind most others. My next attempt was the inaugural Wakefield Half Marathon in 1982 – sponsored by the Yorkshire Building Society on whom I relied for business. I wasn't brilliant but was more than elated to finish in 1:59:50.

Now living in Ackworth, I had started to run with Brian Dodd, a near neighbour on Holly Bank. It was Brian who saw Colin Tanswell's notice inviting anyone interested in forming a running club in Ackworth to a meeting at the Masons on 24 June 1985. By September the club was formed with me and Brian amongst the 20 odd members. We weren't the quickest in the club and spent training running together at the rear. Brian was first to do the London Marathon, followed by my first in 1991 when I managed 4:13 (no chip timing in those days). The years went by – we didn't race too much due to family and work commitments. We had back of the field runs together at the Ackworth Half and Norton 9. At that time the club received weekly publicity in the Ponte & Cas Express with race reports listing the achievements of the likes of our chairman Chris and others but frequently ended with the phrase “and also ran, Stewart Haigh and Brian Dodd”. This became such a topic of conversation at home that my family bought me a t-shirt emblazoned on the back with the phrase “and also ran” (think I still have it).

Premature retirement came at the age of 61. Time to lose 30lbs in weight and run 4 times a week for the first time ever! Suddenly 50 years after my first peak I was back. In 2016, 25 years after my first London I finished in 4:03 – a course best after 6 other attempts. The year before I had finished Manchester in a 3:55 pb and first and only sub 4, but sod's law the course was short by a couple of hundred metres! However, victory was mine as 'I also ran' it – the first time I had never walked in a marathon.

Stewart Haigh, May 2020