

Ackworth Road Runners

35th Anniversary 2020: A Year to Remember



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Edited by:

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Photographs:

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Front Cover:

Alison John-Baptiste at the Tadworth 10 Mile, October 2020

Back Cover:

The Carsington Trail Half Marathon, February 2020

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to all members, past and present, who have contributed in any way to our 2020 activities and to the contents of this book.

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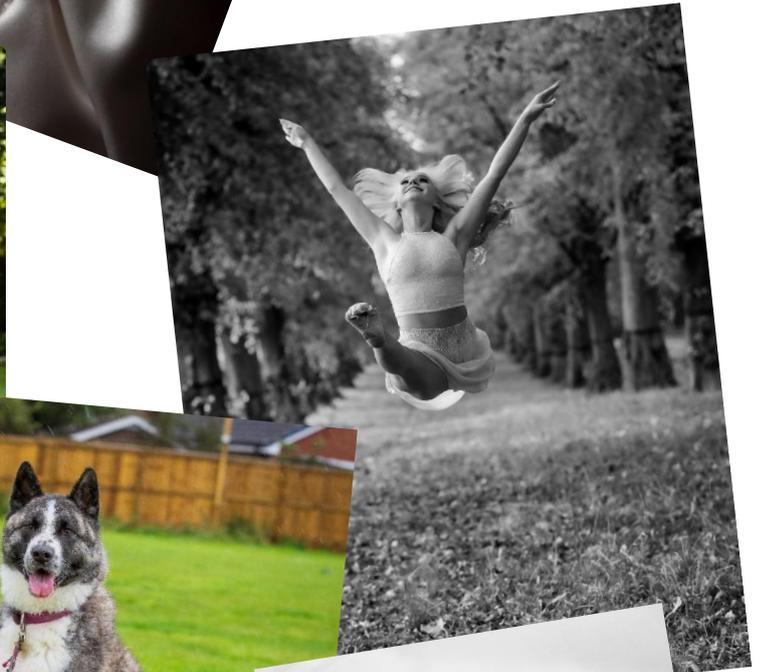


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Introduction

On March 23rd 2020, a nationwide lockdown commenced in the UK as the government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. All running club training, parkruns and organised competition stopped.

With the forethought and imagination of many committee and club members, Ackworth Road Runners embarked on a programme of virtual activities in order to keep the club functioning. This programme included: Zoom quizzes; social events; information sharing; online fitness sessions and virtual running leagues. They were all aimed at encouraging members to participate in club activities when normal training nights weren't possible.

Members were encouraged to stay physically active within the government restrictions initially by stimulating competitive interest with weekly virtual running leagues held on Saturdays as a substitute for parkrun in what were (and still are) strange times. Incredibly, we still attracted new members to the club during lockdown.

In April, Gill and Simon Bennett suggested inviting members to submit a 500 word piece on a running related theme for publication on the club web site and eventually in the form of this book. Little did we know that there would be such a good response and that we had such talented writers.

2020 is the 35th anniversary of Ackworth Road Runners and the Committee decided to combine the commemoration of that milestone with documenting how the club responded so effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we wanted to recognise the exceptional efforts made on behalf of the club to ensure that as many members as possible remained active, entertained and involved while reacting to the needs of those members of the club who were more vulnerable and isolated due to shielding.

From June to October, the Senior Section of the club and also the Junior Section under the guidance of Pat Wood, Jeff Denton and Ruth Walker, were able to effectively operate training sessions and club events in line with England Athletics restrictions.

In November, however, we once again entered lockdown restrictions meaning that our training and events had to be suspended once more. No doubt, the club and its members will respond to the challenge as positively as before.

Hopefully, we'll be able to report on a more conventional year in 2021.

Steve Berry
Club Secretary

Foreword

I am impressed by the number and quality of the contributions to this book. In days gone by it was like pulling teeth to get anyone, apart from the Editor and myself, to provide anything for the Newsletter/Footnotes.

At this time, I am reminded that without the initiative of the late Doctor Jean Wharton, a Consultant at Pontefract General Infirmary, in instigating the Ackworth Half Marathon, we might not be where we are today. It is hard to believe that 35 years have passed since I then took the steps, two years later, which led to the creation of Ackworth Road Runners.

The growth of the club has been astonishing. In the Winter of 1985, I predicted that if we could survive until the Spring, we could claim to be established and now here we are 300+ strong. This is testament to the hard work and commitment of the numerous members who have served the club in various capacities over the years.

I ran my last race in the New Year Handicap in 1992 which saw me posting a time, over 10 miles, 32 minutes slower than my PB! I retired shortly afterwards, due mainly to deteriorating health and work commitments, after a running career coincidentally also spanning 35 years.

Value your ability to run. It may not last for ever, although one or two founder members disprove this. Also, the friendship and camaraderie that you will miss when you are no longer able to share the experience of training & racing together.

Colin Tanswell

Club President and Founder Member



Alan and Hazel Tattersall at the Lisbon Half Marathon 1994

Ackworth Road Runners - 'The Birth of our Running Club'

This year we celebrate our 35th Anniversary – not bad for what started as a village club! But how did it come about?

In the summer of 1982, a committee was formed to organise the first Ackworth Half Marathon, to be held in March 1983. This was the time of the running/jogging boom when fund raisers jumped at the opportunity to use the new 'craze' to raise money for good causes by promoting road races. The Ackworth initiative was no exception, with the sole purpose to raise funds for the Parish Churches. Numbered amongst this committee was Colin Tanswell, a competitive road runner for almost 30 years, who had lived in the village since 1978.

The first half marathon proved highly successful, raising a considerable sum for the cause and drawing a surprising entry of 598 runners, 70 of whom lived in the village itself. Colin perceived that there must be sufficient interest to consider the feasibility of forming a local running club, as the nearest established ones were situated in Wakefield and Barnsley, some 10 miles away, but he took no action until the time of the second half marathon, held two years later when he placed an advertisement in the programme promoting ideas for a club.

*DOES YOUR INTEREST IN THIS EVENT
STEM FROM BEING A SERIOUS, FUN OR
POTENTIAL RUNNER?*

*IF SO, WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE FORMATION OF A
LOCAL RUNNING CLUB?*

GIVING OPPORTUNITY FOR:-

*Meeting fellow runners who live locally.
Training with others of similar ability.
Receiving advice and support.
Maybe running in races as a team member.*

If you are interested, contact Colin Tanswell

*If there is sufficient interest a meeting will
be held to arrange the formation of such a club.*

The event, now with more emphasis on providing a higher quality race for competitors, drew an entry of 525 with 68 villagers. (The downward trend in the running boom, a flu epidemic and the miners' strike all contributing to the lower entry level).

The advertisement drew a disappointing response with only 8 contacts in the four weeks succeeding the race (one of these indicated a number of interested runners in the Wilkinson's sweet factory in Pontefract). Undaunted, Colin set about organising an exploratory meeting by circulating details to all known local half marathon entrants and placing adverts around the village. The local press were not interested in giving free publicity.

RUNNERS PLEASE NOTE

*A MEETING HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR
8:00 pm ON WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE IN THE
"MASON'S ARMS" TO DISCUSS THE
FORMATION OF A LOCAL RUNNING CLUB*

*SUCH A CLUB WOULD GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR
MEETING FELLOW RUNNERS WHO LIVE LOCALLY
TRAINING WITH OTHERS OF SIMILAR ABILITY
RECEIVING ADVICE AND SUPPORT
MAYBE RUNNING IN RACES AS A TEAM MEMBER*

*RUNNERS OF ANY STANDARD OF ABILITY
OR ANYONE THINKING OF TAKING UP THIS
SPORT ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THIS
MEETING*

The meeting, on 26 June, was attended by 28 interested persons, six of whom were ladies, representing a whole range of experience and running ability. There was real enthusiasm for gaining the benefits of the membership of a running club close to home, although it was reported that a similar initiative in the early 80's had failed to reach fruition. Many views were expressed over what a club should provide and how it should be organised. Much emphasis was placed on the importance of establishing a base from which to operate, and where it should be in the village.

Those that attended the meeting on 26th June 1985 were:

Wendy Bell, Stephen Brammah*, Ian Buckley, Richard Coles, Brian Dodd*, Yvonne Edwards*, Robert Elden*, Jill Ferguson, Michael Flaherty*, Peter Goodfellow, Peter Grimoldby*, Stewart Haigh*, R Hodson, Denise Laughton*, Derek Laughton*, Mike Morgan, Diane Morris*, Peter Oldham, Mike Powell*, Geoff Rainey, David Rollason, Gail Simms*, Phillip Smith*, Wayne Smith, Ken Tait*, Colin Tanswell*, Brian Turner, Harvey Wiles*.*

Those marked * became members of the club.

It was decided to hold two social runs to get to know one another and to get started. The first, held on Sunday 30th June, was anything but social as individuals set out to show off their ability. The second, two days later, was a more sedate and organised session, supported by 26, which met the needs originally intended. A third was attended by 19 a few days later.

The following joined the club in the period up to 31st August 1986 and were deemed to be founder members.

John Bell, Ken Bingley, Paul Carr, Chris Cope, Roger Cope, Terry Dakin, Andrew Evans, John Goodwin, Peggy Gorman, Peter Gorman, Stan Hollings, Laurence Jones, Harvey Jubb, Peter Kean, Charles Lines, Andrew Lockwood, Elizabeth Marsden, Paul Morris, Colin Poole, Michael Readshaw, Steve Roberts, Phillip Ryder, Peter Simpson, Dennis Slater, Mick Snowden, Viv Snowden, Tony Spears, Paul Tankard, Chris Taylor, Peter Telford, Joe Thorpe, Dave Towler, Gary Townend, Derek Whiteley, Paul Zywicki.

Stewart Haigh
Club Treasurer and Founder Member

Monte Carlo or Bust

This is a newspaper clipping from 2002 when Ken Barton organised Monte Carlo or Bust. It took us 10 days to run back to Ackworth raising £100s of pounds for 3 different charities. This is what Ackworth Road runners is all about. Ken Bingley will remember this well I think he ran more miles than most of us. Sadly, two of this party are no longer with us but we will never forget the great time we had!!!

Christine Hall



The Betty Goodwin Trophy

The Betty Goodwin Trophy was presented to the leading lady in the grand prix series. It was first presented in 1991, the second year of the grand prix competition.

During that first year of the competition, Betty was there at the end of our races, as indeed she always was. I don't think I can remember a race in my early ARR days when she wasn't there with the big handbag full of car keys and track tops. The weather didn't bother Betty, she just hoisted the umbrella, lit a cig and settled down with a smile while we grumbled and moaned and eventually set off in the rain.

"Smile!" she often said "it makes folk think you are enjoying yourself." She cheered and supported all of you who ran for the club in those days (sometimes you probably didn't even know who it was that shouted your name at the finish) and afterwards she could report accurate finishing positions of all ARRs. She was a keen studier of form and knew when someone had run well or who had been victorious over regular rivals.

I remember one particularly cold, windy cross country day at Temple Newsam when the race finished uphill into the wind. I was running as fast as I could up the hill toward the finish line when Betty shouted to me that there was a girl just behind me. With vital points at stake that season, I summoned a last effort, leaned into the wind and sprinted. When, safely across the line, I caught my breath and looked over my shoulder, there wasn't a runner, male or female, in sight. I can still see Betty's big grin as she said, "Well, cock, tha' looked like tha' could go a bit faster!"

She was our regular bartender and sandwich maker on Wednesday nights at Pontefract Cricket Club, checking us all in and out, making sure no-one had been left out on the road. On one memorable occasion, she sent me back out to look for Dennis Slater who had set out with the main group but wasn't with us when we returned from a complicated route across the fields. Dennis was actually scrubbing himself in the shower at the time, having taken a short cut home, unaware of the panic he was causing!

My last memories of Betty are of a vibrant character; still dancing at Terry Sinar's 30th birthday party while us runners flopped exhausted; cheering, encouraging, consoling, organising food, selling raffle tickets at the Phil Ryder Summer Handicap on a lovely summer's evening. Just a few weeks later she had gone. Later that year, while running in the Benidorm Half Marathon, I thought I saw her cheering along the seafront. I had waved back before I realised that the dark hair, big handbag and cig could not be Betty's.

Although Betty wasn't a runner, she was very much part of the club and I personally was delighted to be the first winner of the trophy name in her memory. Ackworth

Road Runners can't exist with runners alone. We all need the support and encouragement of our partners and families, many of whom have themselves become members, marshals, timekeepers and taken on countless unheralded tasks. The Betty Goodwin Trophy should always remind us not only of Betty, but also of all the other non-running folk who are an important part of our club.

Ann Rhodes

Ken Bingley – an ARR Legend

In "The Northern Runner" 1993

The Runner August Page 39

Kenny Bingley

A profile by Ackworth Road Runners' Ann Rhodes

Every club has amongst their ranks a member who is an inspiration to those around them.

Through the pages of **The Runner** (a magazine we all read at Ackworth), I would like to nominate my club mate, Kenny Bingley for this accolade.

Kenny, who will be 62 this year, has been running all his life. He became ill two yrs ago, lost all his strength and running became a hard task.

However, Kenny refused to pack it in. During that long year, he was always there at club training sessions, running a lot slower than normal but continuing to run in races, without a word of complaint or excuse for slower times.

When a blood disorder was finally diagnosed and cured, Kenny sprang back to his usual pace with no loss of confidence.

The little smile reappeared when he was asked how he had run in the previous weekend's race.

On his come-back trail Kenny set 2 over-60s course records:

Crosby Crawl (8.5 miles), 2nd June 1993, 1.01.26 (course record by 2 minutes), (10th appearance).

Grimsby Tough 10, 7th June 1993, 1.09.26 (course record by 30 secs).

These are some of his race results from last year:

So far this year he has successfully defended his over-60 title at the Brass Monkey Half Marathon in York and his current form suggests he will defend several other titles over the coming months, especially around the Grimsby area where he spends his Summers.

Kenny is always first to arrive for training and has usually run a few "warm up miles" before the rest of us get there!

He has an incredible memory for detail and can describe every course he has ever run over the years, who he raced against and the eventual race winner, both male and female.

A training run with Kenny, if you have the breath to talk, is an education! He has a wonderful collection of photographs which evoke the era of the "Ghost Runner" John Tarrant, and other stalwarts of our sport, as well as several recent photos showing much younger members trailing in his wake!

Kenny is a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to club members at all levels.

He is a gentle, unassuming man, always ready to quietly pass on the benefit of his vast experience to those who ask him.

Always aware of other club members' targets and progress, a chat with Kenny has encouraged many a flagging sprint.

An old training partner of his told me recently that Kenny's false teeth were an indicator to his running form: "If Bingley takes his teeth out, you know you are in for a hard session!"

These days, he takes his teeth out for every run!



■ Kenny Bingley at Ackworth R.R.'s presentation night, with Ann Rhodes on his right.

RACE ORGANISERS!

Get your mile markers from the Runner Magazine

Telephone: Chris
write on 091 477 5599.

Or write to:
The Runner Magazine, 191 High Street, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 1AS.

Kenny's 1993 winning streak

1st O-60 Rotherham Half Marathon, 21st July 1.30.59.
1st O60 Grimsby 10k, 29th August 41.06.
1st O60 Grimsby 10 Miles, 12th September 1.01.17.
1st O50 Selby Half Marathon, 3rd October, 1.26.56.
2nd O60, Goolse Riverbank 3rd June 57.05.
2nd O60 Healing 7, Grimsby 27th June 47.01.
3rd O60 Great Ouseburn 10m, 25th July 1.09.00
3rd Over 60, Barnsley 6, 1st August 44.54.
3rd O60 Robin Hood Marathon, 26th September 3.12.27.

TARTAN GAMES

OPEN ATHLETICS MEETING

To celebrate 20 years of Gateshead's Tartan Track at Gateshead International Stadium
Saturday 3rd September (1st event 11am)

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS
PRIZES IN EXCESS OF £2,000

VETS: 200m, 2 miles, s.p.

SENIOR MEN: 110MH, 100m, 300m, 600m, 2 miles, 2000sc (SM & JM), SP, T.J, PV,
 U20 MEN: 100m, 400m, 1 mile, DT, LJ,
 U17 MEN: 100MH, 200m, 1000m, T.J, LJ,
 U15 BOYS: 80MH, 100m, 300m, L.J, H.J,
 U13 BOYS: 200m, 1000m, L.J,
 U11 BOYS: 60M, 300M,
 INVITATION MILE: CONTACT JOHN STEPHENSON
 TEL: 0207 543148

SENIOR LADIES: 100MH, 100m, 300m, 800m, 5000m, HT, T.J, H.J,
 U19 LADIES: 100M, 300M, 800M, HJ, LJ,
 U17 LADIES: 80MH, 150m, 300m, 1000m, SP, HJ,
 U15 GIRLS: 75MH, 100m, 1000m, L.J, SP,
 U13 GIRLS: 80m, 600m, L.J,
 U11 GIRLS: 60m, 300m.

*Seeded races may be essential
Entry fees £2.50 Senior, £2.00 U15

AAA Forms acceptable - pay Gateshead Harriers & A.C.
 9 x 6 SAE detailing name, address, club, date of birth, events, age group, PB to
 Mr J Burn (TARTAN GAMES), 265 Rectory Road,
 Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 4RS by
 20th August.

"There's good, there's great and then there's Ken Bingley. An absolute memory man for races and courses - I've often asked him what it's like between 8-9 miles on a particular half marathon course and he responds immediately and can even tell you who he passed. And he's a real gent. I shared a room with him at the London marathon when he was 70 - even my snoring didn't spoil his run."

Stewart Haigh

Graham Beardsley – ARR Official Photographer

At Ackworth Road Runners we are fortunate enough to count Graham Beardsley amongst our membership. Graham is a professional photographer and many of the photographs in this book are his work.

Graham has devoted countless hours to photographing ARR events and one of his specialities is capturing members in mid leap. Occasionally, he gets to run too.



Lockdown Virtual Activities

It all started with a great idea and a cute baby animals quiz from Debbie Worthington. This quickly blossomed into a regular Tuesday social event, with contributions and collaborations from many club members.

The Coaches sprang into action setting up a regular Thursday session to keep us all moving and motivated. It also provided some much-needed training support and for many of us another real connection to our running community.

Our most challenging event was ARR does Treasure Hunt with Will Walker taking to the streets of Ackworth with a phone and headset. Our route setters, Gill and Simon Bennett, challenged us with clues while Debbie Worthington and Helen Wainwright hosted us on Zoom.

We made it through the technical challenges and got up and running on Zoom, coping with restrictions until they were temporarily eased and we were able to return to a more 'physical' approach to club training.

Zoom activity contributors:

Tuesday Quizzes: Debbie Worthington & Helen Wainwright - Zoom co-ordinators

- Debbie & Joe Worthington – Cute Baby Animals, Logos, ARR members baby photos quiz and others
- Gill & Simon Bennett – Nature Notes quiz and Art quiz
- Kevin Guttridge – Kev does Pop
- Andrew Mascarenhas – Brain Teasers
- Roy Simpson – Club Spots Mystery Tour
- Helen Wainwright – Film quiz and TV Quizzes quiz
- The Bennetts and The Walkers – ARR does Treasure Hunt
- Ruth & Will Walker - Goodwill Hunting Scavenger Hunt

Thursday Fitness Sessions: Debbie Worthington & Helen Wainwright - Zoom co-ordinators.

- Joe Worthington
- Sarah Powala
- Pat Wood
- Donna Bailey
- Denise Clark



©2020 Joe Worthington

Info Sessions:

- Graham Beardsley (2 photo sessions)
- Alister Nicholl (GPS)

There were a host of other activities and initiatives too all provided by club members.

- Chris Field - ARR TV youtube channel
- Dave Allison – shopping for vulnerable members
- 10K a day – ARR one week or one session challenge
- parkrun Zoom coffee morning
- Graham Beardsley's weekend photo competition
- Carnivorous League, Rainbow League, Top Cat. League and Zodiac League
- Martyn Stearn – 5 a Day quizzes

Graham's weekend photo competitions generated some high quality entries:



©2020 Cary Bernard



©2020 Terry Mottram



©2020 Steve Berry



©2020 Dave Hughes

ARR Lockdown Leagues

In the middle of March 2020 Stewart Haigh began a series of Facebook posts to the Members letting them know how the pandemic was going to affect their running lives and the club. These posts enabled the club to reach out to support runners and maintain motivation within the Government enforced rules.

A selection of Stewart's posts are reproduced to show how a positive and responsive strategy was developed to address difficult and shifting times.

'Just received the following from England Athletics. We will post more later today. These are trying times when everything needs to be put in perspective. Club life and running plays a huge part in my life and many of you. I'm sure we will find some very creative ways of keeping the club spirit going and maybe competition in some form or another!'

Stewart Haigh 17 March 2020



Coronavirus Statement

17 March 2020

The UK government has advised that everyone in the UK should now avoid "non-essential" travel and contact with others to fight coronavirus. Whilst it has not issued any ban on public gatherings of any size either indoors or outdoors at this stage, the advice is to avoid non-essential contact with others, [including going to sporting events, pubs, clubs, theatres and social venues](#).

As a result, England Athletics advises that all face-to-face activity such as club training sessions, events, competitions, club committee and face-to-face meetings, athlete camps, running groups and social events should be suspended until at least the end of April.

First were the initial **Corona 5K runs**:

'Debbie Worthington is sorting out some midweek activities for you - we can now announce your Saturday fix! We are looking to start an "events" list for the Corona 5k Runs! I have worked out an event - The Fitzzy Country Park run (will post a link to the route later). This Saturday you could define your own local 5k - could be a bit of a trial and error - but record your time for 5k even if the run turns out to be longer - you can possibly adjust later. Once you've got your event route sorted - let us know and we will add it to the events list. Hopefully we will be able to build up a series of events right across our membership area. Those who can - put your result on Strava - join the Ackworth RR group - or simply post your result here. I will publish times on the club web site as usual - they won't count as official pbs.

Runs must be on Saturdays only but at anytime of day. If you are running with one or two others please adhere to Government guidelines. Going forward you could run other events but again no large groups please.

PLEASE DONT ALL TURN UP AT PARKRUN COURSES ON SATURDAY MORNING AT 9:00

Comments welcome -whether positive or negative.'

Stewart Haigh 20 March 2020

'Don't forget it's pop up parkrun day tomorrow (it's getting quite hard to know what day of the week it is!)

If you didn't run from home last week please try and do so this week. Should your 5k route start a little way from your house, simply start your Garmin etc at the start point. Only run with a family member - ie someone in the same household unless you've got sick of them by now! By all means acknowledge other runners but best to keep running and not stop for a chat. I will add a post tomorrow for you to send in your results. Will have a think about how we can use the results in a competitive way! Any suggestions welcome. Keep sane, keep exercising.'

Stewart Haigh 27 March 2020

CARNIVOROUS LEAGUE

This was the second iteration of an ARR response to the pandemic and saw the club divided into geographical areas to add an element of team competition to individual efforts. It was great to be able to wave to fellow runners and realise you are not alone!! Some even resorted to chalking start and finish points on the pavements - mentioning no names...(Andrea!)

'Saturdays just got more interesting with our unique (sort of) CARNIVOROUS LEAGUE. You should be able to work out how I came up with the name! Every member can take part - over 100 have already registered a Saturday 5k run over the last 2 weeks. Each week is a virtual race - just do a 5k run on a Saturday and you're in. Members have been divided into 9 Area teams - based on geography. Every runner counts for their team in some way - will you help your Area become League champions? You will be able to register your time from 6:00 am tomorrow. Registration will close at 16:00 on Sunday to give me time to sort out the scoring. No late pleas for clemency - I don't want to keep revising results! Please be honest with your data - our audit team is standing by! If you want to post your screenshot - no problem - BUT RESULTS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN FROM WEBSCORER.

Find out which team you are in (available via web site) - encourage others living in your locality to participate. You can give your team a name and even elect a team captain(s). You never know - there could be trophies or prizes available at our 'Back to Running' party at some time in the future. Keep Running!'

Stewart Haigh 31 March 2020

Out of 288 paid up members an amazing total of 169 submitted results via Webscorer on Saturday 3 April!

‘A few stats on membership.

As of today we have 288 paid up members - welcome today to our newest member Andrew Aubrey (brought in to strengthen Team 9 even more?).

There are 275 first claim members, 3 second claim and 10 social members. Just 64 (22.2%) live in Ackworth.

Gender split - 147 females and 141 males.

Average age on joining - Females - 40.52, Males 41.1

Average age now - Females 45.45, Males 49.92, All - 47.64 .

Females under 35 - 21, over 60 - 12

Males under 40 - 37, over 65 - 19 (oldest 82).

What a diverse club!

Stewart Haigh 9 April 2020

RAINBOW LEAGUE



After 8 weeks of the Carnivorous League, Stewart came up with a new idea for the Saturday 5K runs, which for many members had become a regular substitute for their much missed weekend parkrun fix. It was a good way to mix up runners from across the patch and build up some competitive team spirit. Some WhatsApp groups became extremely motivational!

‘Next Saturday we are launching our RAINBOW LEAGUE – same 5k distance but with a different team format. There will be 7 teams each representing a colour of the rainbow. Members have been allocated randomly to teams based on pace to try and ensure that each team has a similar balance. The first tranche allocated was composed of those who have participated in the Carnivorous League; the second tranche was all other members. It is proposed that the first 15 in each team will count; the first 7 for the Ladies league; the Vets leagues will remain as before.

Do you have a running top in your team colour? If you have a t shirt or vest to match your rainbow colour why not run in it tomorrow - take a selfie - let's see which colour posts the most.

It will be hot - so what - you should all have a great suntan by now - and it will rain eventually so enjoy it whilst you can.

To try and even up courses – please ensure that your route is a loop or out and back – no one way downhill please! Please record your elapsed time.

Stewart Haigh 24 May 2020

After 8 weeks of the Rainbow league, with a total of 240 members having taken part, the results were published on 20 July.

‘What do you find at the end of a rainbow? Find out about 6 pm tonight - but in the meantime here are the final results.

Congratulations go to Team Violet as Open League Winners, Team Orange as Ladies Team Winners and Team Red as Mixed Vets Winners.

Top of the Individual Leagues were:

Premier League:	1. Gavin Walker, 2 Joe Worthington 3. Simon Barber.
League 1:	1. Steve Wigglesworth, 2. Adrian Leach, 3. Jurie Swanepoel.
League 2:	1. Steve Wong, 2. Chris Hartley, 3. Guy Malam.
League 3:	1. Sarah Cooper, 2. Emma Smith, 3. Rob Milner.
League 4:	1. Jill Daly, 2. Julie Roberts, 3. Emily Chatwin.
League 5:	1. Gill Bennett, 2. Julie Swanepoel, 3. Steve Berry’

TOP CAT. LEAGUE

The Rainbow League was swiftly followed by the Top Cat. League with teams allocated the name of a well-known cartoon feline and based on age categories.

- 15 Teams based on age categories: FS/F35/F40/F45/F50/F55/F60+, MS/M35/M40/M45/M50/M55/M60/M65+
- Age category based on your age on 1 August 2020
- 5k run approx. on a course of your choice. Longer runs to a max of 10k allowed with times pro-rata. Minimum distance 3 miles.
- 5k times of over 1 hour excluded.
- Please adhere to running courses which are circular or out and back
- Times recalculated to Age Adjusted as per WAVA Calcs to determine points.
- Points allocation: fastest 100, each subsequent place loses 90/number of runners that week with a minimum score of 10.

- ALL runners count for the Team total irrespective of numbers.
- To help those who can't run on Saturdays, you can run Sunday morning but times must be logged by 12:00 noon on Webscorer
- Officer Dibble will have the final decision on any disputes.

Stewart Haigh 22 July 2020

'The final weekend of the Top Cat League saw our leaders, 'Cat in the Hat' (AKA F50-54.'s) win the last event and become overall champions by a good margin. They supported the series very well throughout with 17 ladies participating - 11 turning out in all 8 weeks.

In 2nd place was team 'Sylvester' (AKA M55-59) who did manage to finish in top spot for 2 weeks. They had 11 different runners with 5 participating all 8 weeks. A total of 184 members participated in the series.

Remember - Series 4 starts next weekend - our "Zodiac" League.'

Stewart Haigh 14 September 2020

ZODIAC LEAGUE

The Zodiac League got under way in September with teams named after signs of the zodiac and members allocated according to their sign.

'We're on our penultimate weekend for the Top Cat League - our 3rd 5k league of this wonderful year. Is there demand for one more? I looked at my horoscope this morning and it read " as the days get shorter and the weather colder, look to the sky for the signs of inspiration to see you through to better days" Luckily our Chairman, Chris showed me his Sky Map app last Tuesday at training when we were arguing whether the bright star was Venus or Saturn or the last flight to Faro. So, having downloaded it I wondered if it would work when its daytime. Yes. I could even see where the constellations were. Bingo! Let's have a Zodiac League with teams based on their birth sign! Back to my horoscope to see if I could get even more inspiration... I read on. "Your financial situation will improve by giving and receiving". Bingo again! I could give a superb t shirt designed to commemorate the 5k series by receiving the sum of £5 for each one I gave away!



How can I do this? Simple - just get those interested in participating in the Zodiac league to register for the series - whether they want to run them all or just one! If they could add their t shirt size we would know what we need to order and all I need do is check my (sorry mean the club's) bank account to ensure they've paid before the closing date of 18th September. Will they remember to add their name when transferring money?

Best get them to start registered get this evening because it does take some quite a time to make their mind up. Luckily there's no limit. Perhaps people will be out this evening looking to find their stars?

Stewart Haigh 5 September 2020

In total 162 members registered for places in the Zodiac league which ran for 8 weeks.

GRAND PRIX LEAGUE

In addition to the regular Saturday 5K runs, the club also organised longer distance events, within a COVID secure environment which required runners to start in waves of 6. These races all contributed towards the ongoing but modified GP league tables and also enabled members to achieve their annual age graded results for 10k + 10 mile + half marathon times for their Club Award. 7 events had been completed by November.

- Delayed Spring Handicap (5 miles) spread over 3 nights on 23, 24 and 25 June with 121 runners
- Diverted Darrington 5 miles on 14 and 15 July with 110 runners
- Askworth 10k on 25 August with 80 runners
- Slightly Soggy Summer Handicap (5 miles) on 15 September with 99 runners
- Autumn handicap (5 miles) on 27 September including 84 runners
- Tadworth 10 miles on 18 October with 93 runners
- Sprockevil 10k on 1 November with 98 runners (including 9 who had to run an alternative route in South Yorkshire due to Tier 3 restrictions).



Delayed Spring Handicap – June 2020

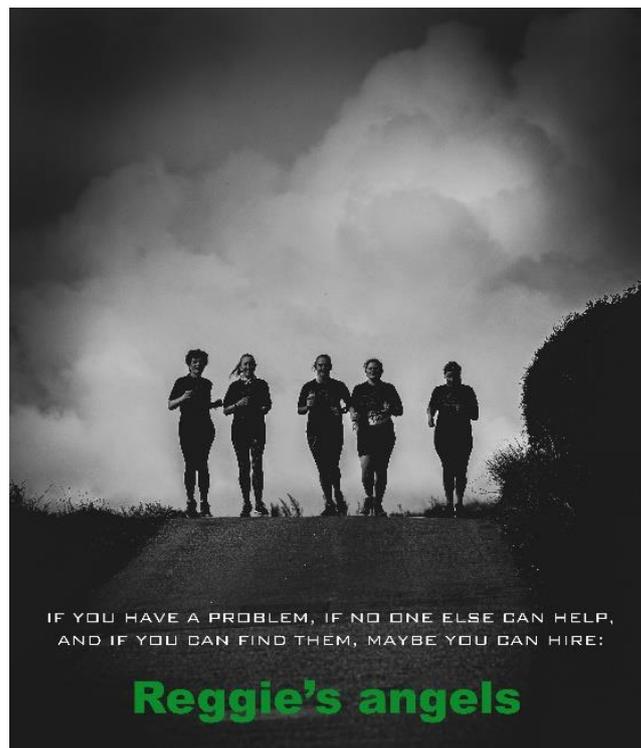


TEAM REGGIE

In early October, members of the club (and many others) supported a magnificent fundraiser organised in aid of the Down's Syndrome Association by Chris and Georgie Sharp, whose son Reggie has Down's Syndrome.



A number of members ran a full marathon distance in relays on what would have been London Marathon Day, accompanied by numerous members of the club on one or more of the 4 legs while others organised raffles and refreshments.



Returning to Training

As many ARR members will be aware, our Ladies Vice-Captain Ruth Walker has been heavily involved in re-organising Tuesday and Thursday evening training sessions. The Editorial Team decided to interview her:

1. Why did the pre COVID training sessions have to be altered?

Pre-COVID, training sessions were on a “turn up and run” basis. All comers were welcomed with Tuesdays seeing large numbers turning out for a social run and up to 20 members attending on Thursdays for a more formal training session based on hills, speed, endurance or a combination of the three. These sessions had to be suspended when the country went into lockdown at the end of March.

On 6th June I was added to a messenger group with a handful of other committee members to discuss the latest England Athletics announcement about the possibility of returning to training. A meeting was held where it was agreed that we would try and put something together but needed to look into the possibility of managing the numbers able to attend.

I had previously set up a RunTogether account for bookings for a one-off event so I offered to see if it was possible to utilise the system to manage our new bookings. The following week we held a test event, inviting a number of committee members who hadn't previously been involved in order for them to trial the bookings process and for us to figure out how we could make more than one group of 6 work. The trial was success and the first of our new club sessions was held on Thursday 18th June.

2. Did you worry that members wouldn't want to engage with a more formal process? How have members responded to the more structured program?

It's always a worry when you try to change things that have been in place for some time, but I think the majority of members were happy about the possibility of being able to attend training again and were prepared to go with it to be able to do so.

3. What have been the challenges working within the government guidelines? What is England Athletics role in this re-organisation?

As we see regularly in everyday life, the government guidelines can be open to interpretation and there are many grey areas with regards to sporting activity. With each amendment to the government guidelines, England Athletics update their policies and feed them down to the club via our Secretary and COVID Co-

ordinator, Steve Berry. Steve then reviews these documents and we discuss any matters that may affect how we run things.

4. What feedback have you had from runners?

The feedback we've had from runners has been really positive, the most common two being that it's good to be out running with friends again and that because the booking system doesn't tell you who's on your group it gives you the opportunity to meet new people.

5. It sounds like the new system requires a lot of juggling/last minute changes but what are the rewarding aspects of the current process?

The beauty of using the RunTogether app to manage the bookings is that to a certain degree, the last minute changes manage themselves, although there are always one or two changes that can throw a spanner in the works but between us we sort those out.

The most rewarding aspect for me is the sheer volume of numbers of people attending. From our first session to the time of writing (29th Oct) we've had 1619 training bookings over 287 sessions, once you take out the days we've had events on club nights you're nearing an average of 100 runners a week! I'm proud to be an integral part of the team that's making that happen.

6. Can you give an overview of the behind the scenes organisation that has to go on?

The organisation for training sessions week begins on the Wednesday/Thursday of the previous week. A draft rota is pulled together of run leaders/coaches and their preferred pace groups, these are then publicised on our Committee and Coaches Facebook pages. Leaders who aren't part of these teams are contacted privately to check availability.

Assuming all are available and willing, the rota is finalised and the sessions are then set up on RunTogether and the individual leaders added to their own group. Steve then takes over the reins to lift the booking links from RunTogether to put them onto our webpage. The webpage is then put onto our members facebook page, generally at 6pm on a Friday, then its "fastest finger first" for who gets on.

7. What are your views about training going forwards into a hopefully less COVID restricted future?

I think there has been a real benefit to running lots of smaller groups so would like to see this continue in the future, but with unlimited numbers meaning lots of

small groups (rather than one big rabble like Tuesdays sometimes used to become). As a Run Leader it is far easier (and safer) to keep the group together, and whilst on a more “social” run you can also incorporate some elements of formal training, allowing you and the group to work together to help develop technique for things such as pacing or form on hills.

8. How have you tried to balance/engineer the sessions to appeal to different abilities?

Our aim is to try and engage as many members as possible, so offer a wide range of pace groups from 7-8 min/mile to 12-13 min/mile pace, with multiple groups for the most popular paces. We did initially offer a 13-14 min/mile group but this has folded as the majority of members in that group have either moved up the next pace group or have switched to the increasingly popular “Jeffing” group.

9. How does the club select Run Leaders and do you need coaching qualifications?

Initially we only used leaders from our qualified coaching team and committee members, but as demand started to exceed supply, we had to look to some of our regular runners to lead groups. All technical sessions are run by a qualified coach holding the “Leadership in Running Fitness” as a minimum, but to lead a run group you do not need a formal qualification. The main requirements for that role are common sense, regular attendance, and a sense of direction.

10. Have there been any unexpected collateral benefits? (thinking about mental health - ad hoc support for people struggling with issues/loneliness)

I think one of the main benefits of starting training has been to bring a little bit of “normality” back to life and structure to the week. Whilst so many other social opportunities have been restricted, even going for a coffee with friends, the fact that we can offer a safe, friendly environment for people to meet and interact with others whilst remaining within the guidelines can only have a positive impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing.

11. Do you need to wind down after a training session and if so, what is the routine?

Running is one of the things I do to help me wind down so I’m already pretty relaxed (and possibly tired) after a training session. My post-training routine is a natter at club (often for longer than I ought to) then home for tea, a shower and then a bedtime story for Oliver if it’s my night to put him to bed.

12. What's your favourite high vis colour?

I love pink, but for hi-viz it's got to be yellow with reflective bits on.

13. What is the most popular pace?

The 9-10 and 10-11 min/mile groups are probably the most popular. Getting a place on these when the links go live, especially the 10-11 min/mile group, has been likened to "getting tickets for Glastonbury".

14. What is the best/most frequent/most unbelievable last-minute excuse for missing a (rainy, cold, windy) session?

The most common reasons are being stuck at work or injury. There have been a fair few unbelievable ones but I think the best was the one where someone tripped over their own hairbrush and hurt their foot/leg so had to pull out!



Katie Evans and Janice Hookham at the Delayed Spring Handicap – June 2020

The 500 Word Challenge

During lockdown, when we all seemed to have a scarily large amount of time at home and many of our main occupations had been curtailed, like shopping, visiting relatives, going out with friends and attending ARR training sessions, Simon came up with an idea to harness Ackworth Road Runners untapped literary ambitions and to fill in an idle hour or two.

It was a simple format: a maximum of 500 words on a single side of A4; any running related topic; no restrictions on style - personal or general, humorous or serious, fact or fiction!

The Editorial Committee, that's a posh term for Gill, Simon and Steve Berry, were astonished at the volume of submissions: 39 in total, over 10% of the membership; a good response from both male and female members; a mixture of styles from the confessional to the literary to the mock medieval to the spoof.

As a result, it was decided to mark ARR's 35th anniversary and its' positive response to the COVID pandemic, by incorporating these wonderfully personal pieces into a book together with all our other lockdown activities, the club's history and some photographs. We hope you enjoy reading this collection as much as we have.



Gail Tombs, Terry Sinar and Jonathan Routledge at the ARR Awards Night 1994

The Terry Fox 10k by Jeff Denton

My first race was in Ankara Turkey at the USAF base in 1989. I was one of a group of expats from around the world who were working on infrastructures projects all across Turkey.

We all had flats locally in Ankara and used to have a sort of run every Sunday followed by beers and a barbeque. We had some Canadian expats in our group mostly from Calgary who would arrange the annual "Terry Fox" run every year, September time.

Terry Fox was a young man who unfortunately was stricken down by cancer and he had to have one of his legs amputated. He declined further treatment which could have prolonged his life as he wanted to run across Canada the second largest country on earth.

Sadly, Terry died near the end of his huge challenge, however in Canada or where Canadian expats are working, they help by running an annual race and raise money for cancer Charities.

The run itself was a 10k following an oval track around the base. In the group I was running with we set a target of completing the race in under an hour and raising money for the nominated charity. The temperature was in the high 20's however we achieved both our aims.

Even though I have worked in other countries I have never come across a group of Canadian expats again. Maybe we can do a similar run for the NHS when we return to normality.

I have to thank this experience of my first run, and once work declined made an aim of joining a running club.

Bless you Terry Fox, a true Canadian hero.

Jeff Denton, April 2020

Observations of a Reluctant Runner by Jane Illingworth

Race definitions

It's a flat race	–	there will be hills.
Softly undulating	–	there will be many hills.
Undulating	–	there will be many hills, some of them very, very steep.
Hilly	–	read as 'mountainous'. Basically, it will be hands and knees.
Challengingly hilly	–	let's face it, you are gonna need crampons.
No toilet facilities	–	men – there is always the roadside – women - good luck getting a private pre-race wee in a bush.
Limited parking	–	get there 2 hours early or risk parking so far away that you will have to do the race distance twice.

Pre-race chat

Not feeling it today: This can mean 2 things:

- I am so gonna knock it out of the park and annihilate your fastest time that you should feel embarrassed to be stood near me.....but I am hedging my bets.
- I feel shocking and don't want to admit I sank 2 bottles of wine last night and a large dominos as pre-race prep.

Hopefully this race will go ok: I have been training like a demon, my kids don't recognise me anymore and my partner is threatening divorce. If this doesn't go well, and I don't get a PB, I will burn my trainers.

I hate running, me – as per Darren Horobin: This means, yes, I hate running me.

I like to race a bit: Ask me about my running, please! Ask me my best times for 10k, half marathon, etc! Please, please, please – let me bore you so much that you will want to cut your own ears off!

When is your next race after this one?: We have nothing in common but running and I need to make conversation to take my mind of the horrific agony I am about to put my body through for the next hour/2hours/4hours (delete according to distance).

Post-race chat

I enjoyed that: No I didn't, that's a total lie. I enjoyed that now it's OVER! Where is the bar?

I did ok: I did absolutely chuffing amazing! I am officially awesome! Ha! Beat you too, looser!!!

That was harder than I expected: My eyeballs are bleeding, I am in agony, I nearly shat myself and I am never ever running again... apart from the next 7 races I have booked.

That was a tough race – (usually said whilst lying prone on the floor trying not to vomit): I am traumatised. I have no more words. My body hates me right now. I need re hydration.... Where is the bar?

How did you do?: I am not the slightest bit interested, I am only asking so you can ask me and I can bask in your praise and SHOUT from the rooftops how amazing I am!

Medals!: Means I really do love medals, what am I? 6 years old? Don't care!! I am off to the bar – I have now fully justified drinking 7 pints and replacing every single calorie I have just burned and some. I will do this whilst high on endorphins and talking about nothing but the race I have just done. I will then arrange for my long-suffering wife/husband to collect the drunk me and fall asleep on the sofa for the rest of the day. I will also bore said long suffering spouse by talking about nothing but my race for the next 7 days.

Jane Illingworth, April 2020

Diary of a 10k Race by Graham Beardsley

Initially I was so nervous about this distance, because of my knee that was practically the longest I could run without the knee really starting to give me issues, it would be sore the next couple of days, then return to normal.

There was always something of a no turning back now feeling when I received my number, a finality, you're in now Graham, especially if it was a known tough course.

So, ablutions done (critical in my head these are completed on the morning. I have been known to shout 'get in' when all was successfully done), minimal food done, running gear donned and number affixed. The next important thing for me was to get there early, there is something I really hate about running late for something, especially races. I knew it wouldn't be a good run if wasn't mentally ready through rushing to get there for the start.

But there came that time from anticipating it, either with dread, or with dreams of a PB, to enough now I just need to get going, I hated waiting in the big start crowd, wondering if I was too far forward, or too far back, always the same.... and I am off!!!

Ok, maintain the breathing, don't go off fast! breathing, breathing...

Jesus EVERYBODY is coming past me !! this is going to be a slow race...for god's sake don't look at your watch...I feel like stopping this is terrible...

Approaching halfway, you're nearly there mate, breathing ok, feel ok, status check, yep I feel knackered but generally I feel ok...

There is something psychological about the half way point for me, knowing that each step now takes me closer, everybody is roughly around my pace now, it's the battle of the strongest, I pick out someone in front of me, my target, my victim I judge my pace against theirs, can I overhaul them? are they quicker on the flat or uphill? The next mile is kind of subconsciously seeing who the hill climbers are, who struggles, all noted in the brain as we come towards the last mile.

The finish looms, I am tired, my knee is sore but I know I can finish this now, judging by how many came past me in the first 5k its not going to make for good reading, still mate you tried your best, lets see what you have left in the tank...

Across the line, no clock at the finish, stop my watch, I think I am going to die, my breathing is uncontrollable, panting and just wanting to lie on the floor...

I check my watch...I look again...it's a 5 sec PB!! But it felt so slow!!

I have a spring in my step and forget my tiredness as I collect the medal and find my running friends to compare notes...

Coffee and food await, for now it's time to wander back to the car, legs stiffening up by the second, smiling at the medal I just earned the hard way.

Graham Beardsley, April 2020

5 Reasons to Love Running by Elly Roberts

Sugar and spice and all things nice. That's what little girls are made of... unless they aren't. Unless for some seemingly unknown reason they are made to feel different. Outcast. Opportunities missed with a dwindling lack of confidence and a growing retreat to food and drink. But this is not a story of woe; this is a story of awakening. In true runner's style it will be told quickly, darting from moment to moment as the in between parts blur away.

2013 and sat watching London Marathon with a man who is now my husband, I remarked that one day in my life I would like to be able to do something like that. With a wave of his magic iPhone, he'd signed us both up for Birmingham Half Marathon later that year. Super! Except we didn't own trainers and we weren't runners (or so we thought). Runners to us were those people with short shorts, long legs and swishy ponytails that glide elegantly and never seem to perspire. I was more of a vertically challenged, over dressed, sweaty tomato that had careered into a bush.

Number 1 reason to love running: running doesn't care what you look like.

After following a run/walk guide, we made it to the distance. Each time I ran a further distance I believed more in myself. That year I completed Birmingham Half in 2:00:19. I wasn't even bothered about the 19 seconds so quell your gasps. It was then that I joined Lawley Running Club. Me? Allowed in a running club? But they're for proper short shorts, long legs runners surely? From that first moment of joining a bunch of shady folks in a dimly lit car park, this assumption has been flattened year on year. If you run, you're a runner.

Number 2 reason to love running: running has the power to bring us together, allowing us to be part of something bigger whilst still allowing us an individually unique experience. Your run is not the same as the person's next to you even though parts of your experience are shared.

Over the years I learned a lot. I got a better pair of shoes instead of that first pair that you could literally fold in half; I stopped running with my headphones in whilst carrying a gallon of water; I learned that I had a very wonky leg; I started to run round in circles outside my house to get to a round distance. As all runners who have been running a few years, you start to make yourself goals. You have good years and bad years and periods of injury when you might as well have had both your legs chopped off as time seems to move backwards and everyone else is running around, even your Great Aunty Dorris whilst you just sit.

Number 3 reason to love running: it allows you to be dramatic.

2017 came and I was finally on fire (not literally). I got my half time down to 1:33:22, 10k to 42:12, 5k to 19:57 and marathon to 3:34:17. I started to actually win things. I ran my first ultrarace and won it! I am unashamedly proud of it because I worked hard and when I think back to being a child bullied for having the wrong kind of brand in her PE kit, I never would have thought that I could do that.

Number 4 reason to love running: you are capable of so much more than you know.

At this point I moved back to Yorkshire and everything changed. Not for the quicker, but for the better. I joined Ackworth Road Runners and felt a true sense of community with some of the kindest people I know. I also became pregnant with my first child. People told me I wouldn't have time for running once she was born. The thing is, people don't know everything. Running is an integral part of me and our family. Obviously we have had to make many adjustments: running silly miles with a buggy; finding extra places en route to have a wee; breastfeeding in the middle of a field at Harewood House before running the National Cross Country Championships...but it has made me appreciate it all so much more.

It is an escape and a reminder that I am so totally insignificant in this vast planet. When all that's left is the pounding of your heart and the sound of your body connecting with the Earth, the fact that your child has managed to wee down your sleeve whilst the dog is being sick on your foot seems to glide away on the wind.

We connect routes across our Strava maps like blood pumping through arteries, conquering the space around us; Kings and Queens of our running territory. Our personal stories woven into the landscape, "Remember the time I tripped and cut up my arm on the pavement outside the Toby Carvery but managed to pause my Garmin before I hit the ground."

Number 5 reason to love running: it connects us to this planet.

Elly Roberts, April 2020

Why I Started Running – Ron Dyson

I'm in the Spread Eagle beer garden early one summer's evening, enjoying my pint and the company when a small group of runners pass by heading towards Ackworth. They are chatting and laughing. I'm walking round Winterset one Sunday morning, when the same group of runners are encountered. They are chatting and look happy.

Its 10pm one school night, I have just shut down my computer and watching a bit of telly before bed. Looking back on the day, I have survived on strong coffee, 40 John Player Specials and 4 cans of Stella. This is my daily diet. My sister in law dies of lung cancer.

I am in my office one lunchtime with a pile of admin, when a colleague suggests a short run one day. After the inevitable 'You are having a laugh' response, a week later I find myself gasping for half a mile and aching for days after. The half a mile becomes, a whole mile, then 2, then 3. I discover Nicotinell gum and buy a pair of running shoes. I am in my late 50s.

'Hey Ron, you fancy doing a race?' I discover it's the Sandal Castle 10k and never having been good at saying 'no', I reluctantly agree. Fast forward a few months and I am on the starting line at Pugneys Lake. To say I am bricking it was an understatement. There are loads of proper runners in club vests doing warm ups and looking menacingly good at this.

I climb up and up to Sandal Castle without stopping or oxygen breaks and even overtake a few on the way back down.

I am not last! My time was 1 hour and 15 minutes. My kids call me a 'machine' which is far better than some of the names I have been called. I am beginning to feel sort of healthyish.

Fast forward a few more weeks and I am in Askern social club after the Askern 10k running as unattached. I am at the bar and get talking to Ken and Christine who I recognise from the running group outside the Spread and at Winterset. We get to mention joining Ackworth and a few weeks later, I turned up at the Angel as possibly the oldest newbie at ARR.

I have never been fast but could always last the course and as I now go back down on the bell shaped curve of running times to 1 hour 15 for a 10k, I can reflect on many great years as a proper runner myself. Stella and cigs did not detract from doing 5 marathons and countless other races. ARR gave me great memories and even greater friends.

If only I had started this running lark as a youngster, but then life is all about if only.....

Ron Dyson – April 2020

What is Running? by Richie Berry

It wasn't until just over a year ago that I actually enjoyed running. Exercise in some form or another has always been a part of my life - I've always enjoyed resistance training, HIIT, team sports like rugby, and even disciplines such as T'ai Chi and yoga - but running for its own sake never really did it for me. I just didn't get it. I detested it in fact. Until I was dragged that is, to Nostell parkrun by Steve and Wendy - or to me, mum and dad. I was back in the UK for a holiday (I had been working in Thailand as an ESL teacher) and this is what they did every Saturday morning; they awoke from their slumber early on a Saturday morning to run in subzero temperatures at 9am. What?

Now, I'm a morning person, so rising and being ready to run at 9am is no issue. The freezing temperatures on the other hand? Almost a deal breaker. Getting through the pre-race instructions was the biggest challenge on that first morning at Nostell - the contrasting weather conditions I had become accustomed to had never been more apparent. Fast forward to 9am, gloves are preventing my hands from freezing and warming me from the inside is Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe" (don't judge) through my headphones. I was eager for the race to start. And soon enough, there was the cry of 3-2-1-GO!

I don't remember my time, that was of secondary importance that day. From start to finish, I loved it. The atmosphere and camaraderie among all the participants, many of whom were friends and family, was intoxicating. Not only did the whole experience introduce me to lots of new faces of different generations, it also reintroduced me to old faces. Old childhood friends, former colleagues and the like. Running together, struggling together, and enjoying a hot caffeinated beverage and an ever so cheeky slice of cake after the race together. Brilliant.

When I returned to Thailand, I incorporated running into my exercise regime - which had consisted primarily of CrossFit type workouts using kettlebells, plyometrics, callisthenics, battle ropes etc. - and I've never looked back. It also led me to participate in a number of grass-roots triathlon events in Bangkok (it's the Tri-Dash Series for anyone who might be interested) as well as The North Face trail run in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. These types of events just weren't on my radar before. I'd obviously caught the bug, not just the physical act of running bug, but the sense of community bug that these events/clubs facilitate. Although we are all striving to improve on past efforts, to get that new PR, we are also there to motivate and to encourage our fellow competitors to help *them* get *theirs*. And that's what I love about running. People encouraging each other to push that little bit harder, to be a little bit better than they were the day before. It's inspiring. It's friendship. That's what running is to me.

Richie Berry, May 2020

Bella's parkrun by Bella Bennett (possibly with a little assistance!)

Saturday is my favourite day - WOOF- it's parkrun day. I have a busy job trying to round up my owners, Simon and Gill, so that we get there on time and they #DNFYBC. When we get to Nostell there is lots of faffing about with car keys, tickets and so on: DON'T FORGET MY POO BAGS!! - where would they be without me?

At the race briefing I keep WOOFING because I am very excited but EVERYONE IS CHATTING!!! At the start I prefer being in front with Simon just to make sure all the other dogs realise it is MY PARKRUN. Sometimes I have to WOOF to keep them in order and it did once cause a bit of a trip incident - NOT MY FAULT OF COURSE. That nice lady Pat Wood sorted it out. I like to race ahead until that nice man Terry Forrest runs past - we haven't seen him for a while - perhaps he has moved house. It's a bit awkward being at the back when I am with Gill because SHE CHATS A LOT and OFTEN MISSES THE START!!! I have to WOOF loudly and give her a good tug!!

Luckily there are lots of LOVELY VOLUNTEERS to cheer me on and the Run Directors are very good at PICKING UP POOS especially that nice lady Emma Bird. I enjoy having a DIP IN THE LAKE halfway round except Gill isn't so keen - but it's always worth a try. At the obelisk there is usually a very nice man Andy Barr, but really I don't see why we have to go all the way up round the bollard - I try to TAKE THE SHORTCUT but neither Gill nor Simon seem to understand it would take SECONDS OFF THEIR TIME - only trying to help!!

At the finish I do my best to do a bit of a sprint although GILL SEEMS TO BE BREATHING VERY LOUDLY. There are lots of nice people cheering me on at the funnel where I can meet up with some of my friends. MAX is often there with that nice man Ian Hookham and recently they have walked around the course too: I KEEP EXPECTING THEM TO BREAK INTO A RUN. I think Max comes along MAINLY FOR THE CRISPS and to support that nice lady Janice Hookham. I do like to meet up with Martha, and her owner Sarah Turner, except SHE INSISTS ON LICKING MY FACE, but I do understand she is quite a young dog. After the run it's my favourite time in the courtyard trying to EAT AS MUCH CAKE AS POSSIBLE without Simon or Gill noticing, luckily Gill is USUALLY TOO BUSY CHATTING. Simon and I have a terrible job trying to get her home.

When we do get home, eventually, it's a lovely RELAXING SNOOZE for me on a comfy sofa whilst Gill and Simon read the newspapers and DRINK MORE COFFEE!

HAPPY PARKRUN – CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT STARTS AGAIN

Bella, May 2020

Why I'm Running? by Joe Worthington

Back in 2014 I was still attempting to play football (badly), but my ankles were both shot, I could barely get through a game and was in pain for most of the week after. I couldn't really train either, so I was getting ready to retire from football and take up golf in my old age.

However, I started doing a little bit of running and entered a couple of local races and realised all these old people were running past me and beating me. So rather than having another 6 months or so playing football, I might be able to run for a few years before breaking down completely.... Now 6 years on, I've been running everyday for over 1000 days and counting and the body is still holding together. Just!

The first couple of races I did were the Sheffield half marathon and then the Leeds 10k (I signed up to the Wakefield 10k, but slept in and missed it). From the start of my running journey, pacing has been an issue; I set off in the Sheffield half on target for a sub 1 hour 20 time Safe to say it didn't go well and my calf exploded and I limped in just under 2 hours - and I hated it. Then it was the Leeds 10K where I finished in just over 50 minutes and noticed most the people around me were 10-25 years older than me, whereas at football most were 10 years younger. I actually enjoyed this race, and it was where I started to think I might give this running thing a go.

Around this time, I remember my old boss telling me about this strange thing on a Saturday morning in a park in Barnsley, so I headed off to see what was going on and loved it. There was such a wide mix of people - all ages and abilities and everyone just had a chat and ran up and down the many hills then grabbed a coffee. I could get used to this! So the parkrun addiction started, although I moved to Nostell soon after, taking Debbie with me, it's still a great way to start the weekend.

After running for about a year I was happily doing my own thing, a few more races and parkruns and these white vests with a blue stripe were appearing everywhere.... But surely I wasn't good enough to join a running club?

After keeping pace with Richard Smart at the Kinsley 10k for most of the race and at parkrun the previous weekend, I decided to see who they were. Debbie was working away, so I had nothing better to do and ventured down to the Pavilion in Ackworth. Here I was greeted by one of the older members (who shall remain nameless) who introduced himself and said it was "the best knocking shop in the area". A strange introduction and I don't think they're still on the welcoming committee anymore!

I definitely remember one of my first club runs and running with the quick group, thinking I was doing OK, and then me and one of the other runners started to pull away from the rest. He continued to talk to me whilst upping the pace; I was really struggling as we went up the hill towards Badsworth (I think). Safe to say by the time we regrouped everyone else was laughing at me, and I'd learnt not to try and keep

up with Simon Newton! I'm sure it was some sort of initiation... But I still kept coming back.

I can't believe how quickly the last 4 years have flown by, being a member of this great club with brilliant support and friendship from everyone since joining Ackworth Road Runners. I've done my first marathon and another 14 as well, and I still can't get one right. I've also done a couple of Ultra Marathons and I can't wait to see what silly ideas / challenges I get supported with moving forward.

Joe Worthington, May 2020



How many current members can you recognise from the 1993 Northern XC Championships at Pontefract?

No. 3 Paul Zywicki, No. 4 Jonathan Routledge, No. 1 Terry Sinar, No. 2 Chris Taylor, No. 7 Pete Grimoldby.

Confessions of an Ultra Virgin by Debbie Barton

Let's do an Ultra, my brother suggested one night over a curry and a few too many glasses of wine. It didn't take me long to agree... he was riding high on his London Marathon performance and I was feeling a bit smug that I'd managed to survive my first marathon with no preparation whatsoever, having only ever run a half before... don't ask!

Anyway, here we were. The decision was easy - we chose the Isle of Wight Ultra Challenge - advertised as 106km of varying terrain (actually almost 110km and described as "tough" we found out later!). It was our childhood holiday location of choice for almost ten years and the event was in memory of our mum and dad, so it was a no-brainer really...

We signed up in the January and so it began... the months slipped by and very little training took place. Challenges from the new job took their toll and, other than a 20 miler with my lovely coach, Mrs O, I didn't do nearly enough, but I wasn't phased.

Travelling over to the Island the day before the event I think the reality (or should I say, the enormity) of it all set in. I looked like an extra for a low budget Titanic film as I hung over the edge of the ferry wondering what the hell I was doing, what mum and dad would have thought, and if I was even going to live to tell the tale! I didn't sleep at all that night...

Saturday morning arrived much faster than planned and, as I sat eating my porridge, I contemplated the day ahead and tried to prepare a plan of attack in my mind that never came.

Arriving at the Start line, my brother was there, thankfully looking as apprehensive as I felt (I think I might have punched him if he'd been upbeat and raring to go). Setting off was quite an understated event, it was a staggered start due to the different distances/durations for other participants, but there it was ... we were off!

The event was split into eighths (four full serviced stops and four small ones with just drinks and snacks) so we soon got into a pattern and were quite jovial as we trotted off into the "unknown".

Each stop brought its own challenges, but we managed to overcome them all. Waiting for a foot-ferry to cross from Cowes to East Cowes was very surreal as we stood there with a handful of other participants, panicking because we thought we would need some cash to pay the ferryman and none of us had any!!

The event was broken up with so many highs and lows I lost count, but these were the memorable ones:

Highlights:

Mr B being at every single stop to cheer us on and change our kit as we needed it (lifesaver and official hero).

Mr & Mrs O walking down the promenade in Cowes having travelled all the way down to support (I think i cried at that point!)

Lowlights:

More styles and steps than you could shake a stick at... getting my leg over (a style!) was almost impossible by the end...

My brother collapsing from low sugar at 83km, my survival instinct kicked in (yes, who knew I had one of those?!). We sat high on a hillside in the pitch black (I never realised the night could be so dark...). In the distance we could see Portsmouth and the Emirates Spinnaker Tower lit up in all its glory. I force fed him shot blocks, got him back on his feet and on to the next checkpoint. It was decision time - do we quit? do we have a break (we were well within our cut off time) or do we put our big boy/girl pants on and crack on.. needless to say, we went for option C.

The last 26km were so tough I never thought it would end, but it did. It was at that point I realised that it wasn't my body I should be worried about, but my mind.

The last mile was torture, we could see the finish line but had to weave away to get back to it.

As we crossed the line and got our fizz and our medal, I had a strange sense of fulfilment. It wasn't the fastest time by any stretch of the imagination - it took us just over 24 hours and I'd planned for under 20. However, we came mid-way in a pack of around 480 competitors (over 70 didn't even finish!), so I was happy, and I'm sure mum and dad were watching as their youngest daughter and youngest son crossed the line together doing something that they never dreamed they would achieve.

Would I do it again? Never!! (but don't we all say that?.....)

Debbie Barton, May 2020

You are an Inspiration by Martyn Stearn.

Having been a teacher almost fifty years it was with a certain amount of pride that I listened to two people, within the space of half an hour, telling me that I am (not was) an inspiration. I have to admit however, that this was nothing to do with my teaching, but occurred at the ARR awards evening and that both of those who flattered me had probably had a glass of wine or seven. Hopefully, this just gave them the courage to put in words what they felt rather than cloud their judgement. Whatever the scenario, there comes a time of life when you are willing to accept praise from whatever quarter – and I have undoubtedly reached that age.

On reflection I think that both who spoke to me (I will protect their identity to spare their blushes) were probably focussing less on my sporting prowess and more on the fact that just a year earlier they, and several others, didn't think I'd get to the end of the month let alone the end of another race. Kindness in whatever form is always welcome and I listened as they talked about how they used to try to keep up with me, while I couldn't help wondering if those days would ever return. It made me think about the word 'inspiration' and my mind drifted back to when I started running.

I was approaching fifty and had for some years competed on the windsurfing circuit, racing regularly throughout the year. For those who need some clarification, the correct term for windsurfing on a racing circuit on flat inland water is boardsailing, but windsurfing sounds a lot more glamorous. The other competitors on the circuit were getting younger and my physique was crying out for a wetsuit in a maternity style! I decided as a new year's resolution to start running with the aim of completing the Wakefield 10k in the April of that year. That was going to be it and after running for ten minutes around Ackworth, which involved passing four pubs, two clubs and various take-away establishments, I really began to question my sanity (not for the first or last time).

Needless to say, I stuck with it and reached the start line at Wakefield, my first proper running race since picking up the bronze medal in the cubs' sports some forty-two years earlier. I finished in 49'52" which I was pleased with but couldn't help noticing that an old grey haired chap finished in front of me. I stuck with the running inspired by this seemingly frail figure who left me in his wake, little realising at the time that it was the running legend Mr Ken Bingley. He wouldn't have realised that he inspired me, just as I hadn't realised how I have in turn inspired others.

Just remember, you don't know who is watching you and who you are inspiring. Whether you run like a gazelle and finish first or inspire by knowing that you will never win but demonstrate true grit and determination. Never forget, each and every one who runs can change a life without ever realising it. Keep on running.

Martyn Stearn, May 2020

A Woman's Journey by Yvonne Stearn

Many moons ago in ye old English village named Ackworth a middle aged woman waved her husband off on his steed of Adidas Supernovas. He gave his usual battle cry. "Why don't you join me at ye olde running club?" To which the woman replied, "Martyn you know I don't run."

Months came to pass and the woman was getting fatter by the minute, infected by the dreaded plague ...Menopause. Eventually she decided to battle the plague that was befalling her by trying a well-known treatment. It was pricey, it was embarrassing but if done correctly would aid her in her quest. On entering the establishment of ye olde fat club the woman met a fair maiden called Linda. She made the vicious plague seem normal, beatable and helped the woman settle in. Hereby a strong friendship was forged.

The woman and the maiden were starting to win the war on the plague but needed to go into the second phase of attack...exercise. Although the woman went to the gym it was a half-hearted attempt at getting fit.

The maiden Linda suggested they amble over the nearby hills known locally as the Turkey Tracks. After a month or two the maiden introduced new vocabulary into their conversation. "I have an app." she said and then spoke the words the woman dreaded. "Shall we walk for 1 minute then run for 1 minute. This app will help us in our quest."

The woman died a little. What would she tell her man, on his supernova steed? He would be exuberant and expect great things of her. But, determined to beat the plague she cheerfully agreed and so her running journey began.

She had to buy her own steed choosing Adidas Glide. They served her well. Who knew steeds came in so many designs and colours?

The maiden Linda had not finished yet. "Shall we join ye olde Sweatshop Running Community?" The woman had heard of this establishment from her man and was filled with dread but said weakly "Yes." After a few meetings at this establishment the maiden Linda spoke again "Shall we enter a 10K?" The woman thought she needed a new friend at this point, but worse was yet to come as the maiden continued to speak "I think we should join Ackworth Road Runners. It will help us in our quest for fitness and speed".

How could the woman and the maiden know how much this would change their lives, and how far their steeds of rubber would take them?

The Woman (Yvonne Stearn) May 2020

In a Galaxy Far Far Away by Tom Macklam

My running journey started “a long time ago in a Galaxy far, far away”. Bonus point if you can name the film?

Coming from a large family of cyclists, my uncle representing Team GB in the Milk Race in the 1960's and cousins setting national standard records, I struggled to get into the top 5 finishers on “family” ride outs, which is somewhat demoralising to a young boy in the early 1980's. Maybe my Dad was in the same place, as he and my Mum became founding members of St Theresa's Athletic Club (STAC) in Leeds.

About this time, I broke my collarbone playing rugby, could not grip the bike handlebars for some time and was banned from playing contact sports at school for 6 months. The cry of “Macklam you will have to go and run around the pitch for an hour” was a regular call in PE lessons.

So I trained more with STAC and at the age of 12 pestered my Dad to run with him in an early incarnation on the Temple Newsam Ten (TNT), only to be pulled off the course by a marshal in the last mile for being under age! However, I had found something I was good at.

I ran all distances from 100m right through to 5 miles - 10k was not a regular distance back in those days so soon after decimalisation! I represented the City of Leeds at the Yorkshire Championships at 200m and 1500m on the same day, beating at least two athletes who eventually went on to run in the Olympics, and did the 4x100m relay at the end of the day too.

As the torch relay to the 1986 Commonwealth Games made its way to Edinburgh, I was selected to run the leg through Leeds City Centre and ended up on the front page of the Yorkshire Evening Post in very short shorts.

Things ramped up quickly and got serious based on the level I was running at. This caused me some anxiety issues for various reason, to the point where I no longer enjoyed being in the environment anymore and maybe my moment passed.

After a period away and an ill-advised foray back to Rugby with Moortown RUFC, I returned to running in my mid-twenties but never regained the ability to “compete” once more. Since remarrying, moving to Pontefract and joining ARR I have a newfound love of running but from a different perspective. Although my legs will not do what they once did, my heart is still there and I enjoy the social and competitive set up we have at Ackworth.

In the current COVID crisis, my mind and waistline has benefited greatly from running in the wonderful countryside where we live, with my beautiful wife before a full day working/zooming from home. I believe in fate and synchronicity. Everything happens for a reason to make you the person you are, but still think I should do sub 7min in the mile challenge, even at nearly 50!

Now you will want to know what my time actually was in the recent ARR mile challenge: 7:09.

And 'lifetime best'? In May 1986 at the West Yorkshire Track League I did a mile in 4:19, very much a galaxy far, far away, if not another dimension!!!

Tom Macklam, May 2020.

The Reluctant Runner by Sarah Rose

As a kid and a teen I had taken part in school running activities but never was one of the fastest and was always quite reluctant to start a run.

Fast forward 25 years and I got talked into my first 10k (Leeds 10k 2012) it took me 01:13:07. I didn't have the right running gear I turned up in a pair of casual leggings and a vest! No watch, no special trainers!

That was it, I was done, until I got signed up for Sheffield Half Marathon (2014) by a 'friend': she thought I might enjoy it (ha).

I could say this was the start of it all, I knew I couldn't train for this by myself so I finally plucked up the courage to contact ARR and turned up for my first training session. I remember this as I met Stewart [Haigh] and he asked what my pace was... I didn't have a clue what he was on about so I told him I put the treadmill on at 7mph and just ran! He looked shocked and now I know why! I was a 12min mile at this point!

My first race in an ARR Vest was the Thirsk 10mile (someone asked me if I knew it was 10mile and not 10k?). I was out there forever and a few ARR members waited the 2 hours for me to get over the finish line. It took me a few years to go back to Thirsk!

10 marathons later, numerous 10ks and half marathons, loads of pb's and loads of very good friends made I'm still the very reluctant runner and you will hear me moan about every run, moan about every race and every distance ... but I still keep plodding along ... forever the reluctant runner.

PS for those wondering about Sheffield Half, it got cancelled on the day but we ran it anyway.... I even made an appearance on the news in my Ackworth Vest!

Sarah Rose, May 2020

The Tortoise and the Hare by Jurie Swanepoel

My first recollection of running was when we went to the annual Christmas tree function at my dad's work. I was about 5-years old and remember various fun competitions going for the kids, including a few events like egg and spoon and sack races. But they also had sprints and laps around the field, which interested me more.

At primary school we had sprints and relay events on the menu and I was fortunate enough to always make the relay team for my age group, although never number one. Looking back now I realise that every year I got a little slower compared with my peers and by the time I went to secondary school I was way too slow to make the relay team. Luckily, I could move to other events and I started doing reasonably well at 400 and 800 metres. Turns out I was never a sprinter.

After school I started working as an apprentice at a big iron and steel works which had a running club and so my running journey continued, culminating in me receiving the Victor Ludorum trophy for winning the 400 metre, 800 metre and 400 metre hurdles. That sounds much grander than it was as there was a serious lack of competition. This "achievement" prompted one of my running buddies to suggest we go run the Comrades Marathon, which I had seen on TV but did not know much else about it. Turns out this is an 89km (55 Miles) ultra-marathon for which you need to qualify by completing a standard marathon in under 4 hours 30 minutes.

So off we went on our 800 metre training to run the Jeppe Quondam marathon in Johannesburg, as our first marathon. It did not go well! I went out at 800 metre pace and by 16Km I was done and started walking.

After a while I heard huffing and puffing behind me and realised that the oldest man I have ever seen was about to pass me. That just did not seem right, so I sprinted off, as one does. The attempt did not last long and about 1 Km further I was walking again. And a few minutes later I was hearing huffing and putting again. I could not believe what was happening, it was "The Tortoise and the Hare" reality TV. After all, I was the reigning Victor Ludorum! So, another sprint, another walk and another huff and puff further, my marathon was pretty much over. I hobbled home to finish my first marathon in about 4 hours 36 minutes, but my body, mind and ego was duly shattered, and I did not qualify for Comrades Marathon!

Licking my wounds while recovering I realised that road running is not track running and started training with some more experienced road runners, starting with shorter distances and slowly increasing to a point where I could qualify to get to the mighty Comrades Marathon. That did not go well either, but I am out of words. I run because I can.

Jurie Swanepoel, May 2020

From Dads' Race to the London Marathon by Tom Camponi

In 2008 I moved to Fitzwilliam while expecting our first child, leaving my old rugby team, team-mates, friends and social life behind in Mirfield. Missing my old rugby team but new to the area, I decided to wait until we had settled into a new family-focused routine and then find a local team to join. However there always seemed to be another reason to wait a bit longer as 'now's not a good time.'

Fast forward eight years of comfortable living and very little physical activity, I'm the most overweight and least physically fit I've ever been, sat at my eldest's sports day when the call goes out for the Dads' race. I look across the field to see my daughter gesturing for me to join in. Reluctantly I walk to the start line to get this 100meter torture over with. As expected, it was not pretty and, other than a Grandad who tripped at the start and didn't finish, I came last.

Embarrassed and disappointed with myself for getting that out of shape, I was determined to do something about it. I started going for a few short runs, but frustratingly just couldn't get into it. Even when I was younger and fitter I'd never been a fan of running. School cross country sessions were boring monotonous runs around the school fields, warm up laps at rugby training were a chore, and worst of all were the extra laps doled out by the rugby coach as punishment.

Then one day my Dad called to say his local running club were having an outing to Nostell parkrun in a few weeks and did we fancy meeting him there for a picnic, which led to me registering with parkrun to give it a try. I turned up on the appointed Saturday with a paper printout barcode, a rugby shirt and a pair of cheap Lonsdale pumps that I'd been doing my short runs in. It was more painful than I'd expected, and only sheer pig-headed stubbornness made me continue onto the second lap to torture myself all over again.

Yet somehow the next Saturday I was there again now with a pair of proper trainers, then the next, and over the following weeks I got talking to a few other parkrunners, which led to me joining Ackworth Road Runners.

Fast forward another four years and, while I'm still as overweight as I was at the start of my running journey, with the support and encouragement of the amazing coaches and members of ARR I now love running, especially the PECO cross country events. Over this time, I've taken part in a host of races, from 5km up to marathon, with a highlight being getting to do the London marathon through the club's ballot. I now look forward to the Dads' races and, while I'll never win them, I no longer come last!

Tom Camponi, May 2020

My Ackworth Road Runner Journey: a poem by Denise Clark

A Road Runner you'll be,
That's what they told me,
Club ARR is the place,
You'll see.

Weekly we train, three sessions it is,
A steady run,
A speedy sesh,
Oh... and, hills which you shouldn't miss.

Onwards we run through our picturesque village,
Pounding the paths leading onto the trails,
Watch for the roots, and the nooks and the crannies,
You can do this, are the words that I hear.

Reaching our goals, is important to us,
A mile,
Just faster,
A hill in one go,
A steady 5k,
A blistering 6 mile,
The ultimate aim being our own personal game,
Supported of course all the way by the Ackies.

How high can you jump?
Is the latest crazy,
How big can you smile?
It's imperative you see,
for the GB photo file.

Your race approaches,
Your nerves are high,
You've planned your day,
The stakes are up in the sky.

You dig out your kit,
It's all gone to plan,
No injuries sustained, and you know you can.

Just one minor problem
A 'Trail' and a 'Runner'
You've packed odd trainers, you're such a bummer!

Only one thing left to do,
That is tell all the crew,
They have their laughs and a few loud giggles too,

And then

My panic is over,
Gail to the rescue,
My bestie she is,
She has in her kit,
A spare pair of kickers.

The race I can run,
A PB obtained,
A smile and a medal,
My reward for the day.

The Priory Race, a 5k or 10,
The clubs organised, summer event,
I volunteer to help plan the fun,
It all goes so well all plans said and done,
Marshals in place,

The runners set off, and
In an instance,
Before I'm aware,
They are at the forked junction,
Which way do I send them?
I'm not too sure,
Straight on? Yeah that's the right one,

A short time does pass,
Before Haighy appears,
One fuming look, and a very loud gasp!
My, Oh My, That's the wrong way My Dear!
He's off on his way, and then disappears.

The magic is done,
The course is retrieved,
Haighy has spun his web of achieve, and so to this day I am still here,
with fellow Ackies, sat having a beer.

Summer has ended,
Winters arrived,
It's time for Cross Country,
The mud and the hype,
It's cold and its wet, and sometime its ice,

The rain and the snow, sometimes show,
But that doesn't deter me I'm having a go.
Gloves at the ready, war paint adorned,
This is a favourite,
I'm crazy I know.

The course is a tough one, and I'm in hell,
I feel battered and bruised and can't wait for the bell.
The finish line in sight, fellow Ackies aligned,
I can hear them shouting,

COME ON DEE,

SHE'S AT YOUR REAR GET THAT FINISH SPRINT IN GEAR.

I cross the line,
and stop my watch,
I catch my breath,
and then,
my afterglow appears.

Denise Clark, May 2020.

A New Normal by Mark Leadbeater

A new normal is a statement very current in the news headlines as we go through the Covid-19 pandemic, but a new normal started for me over 6 years ago.

In December 2013 after taking up running some 4 months earlier I was diagnosed with a benign brain tumour. Some 6 weeks later I was in surgery for 18 hours, followed 10 days later by a subsequent 5-hour operation to partially remove the unwanted lodger I had named BOB (2 points if you know what BOB means!). I was in hospital for 32 days, 28 of them bed ridden, so due to muscle memory loss I lost the ability to walk and left hospital in a wheelchair. I also had to learn to write again (some would say I am still learning).

My rehabilitation started then as I had signed up for the Jane Tomlinson 10K series and the Yorkshire marathon later that year and whilst in hospital I found out I had gained a place in the Great North Run. These were to be my first ever half and full marathons. I told my consultants what I had entered, and they said maybe try next year we cannot see you doing it this year!! Well I am a stubborn Yorkshireman and like a challenge.

Daily trips to the gym in the early days and walking with the aid of a walking pole around a reservoir in Halifax I had a silly idea. I had really bad balance' hence the stick, but remembered that riding a bike you need momentum to keep upright. Much against my wife's wishes I threw the stick to the ground and started to jog. I managed this better than walking, it was the first time I saw light at end of the tunnel and just maybe I could try some of the events I had entered.

I started back at SRC in the April and was so well looked after by many people, a lot of whom are now Ackworth members. I saw running as my lifeline to a new normal. I used to play badminton in the Bradford and Yorkshire leagues for over 30 years, but balance issues put an end to that sport.

I managed to run all the 10K events and met some inspirational people along the way, all from varied backgrounds and all with a similar love/hate of running! I was paced for 7 miles at the Great North Run by a fellow Ackworth member before she needed a loo break (another 2 points for guessing who that was?). Finally, my biggest challenge was the Yorkshire marathon and even having a slight meltdown at mile 18 and a brief walk my brain uttered these words, " You were in a hospital bed 8 months earlier, get over yourself, its only 8 miles to go". I had done it **YES**, crossing the line under the 4 hour mark, running was my salvation, totally helping my mental health issues. My journey to a **New Normal** was complete.

I owe a massive thanks to the **NHS** who saved my life and the total dedication, professionalism of these superheroes so it is easy for me to "**Stay at Home**" "**Save Lives**" "**Protect the NHS**"

Mark Leadbeater, May 2020

The Musings of a Rookie Runner by Lorraine Hawley.

Rookie mistake number 1 – running is easy. It all started on Saturday 4th February 2017. My long-time friend Catherine had finally dragged me to a parkrun. I was a typical gym goer then. I thought 5k, that is nothing. Only 3 laps of the park. Unfortunately, my park was at Barnsley and I keeled on the first lap! I had DNF'ed. I swear blind those hills were not as big when I was 8 years old! Needless to say, I ran straight into the café and stayed there until everyone had gone. When I left the café, I was approached by a run leader from a Barnsley running club and the rest was history. On the 24th of June 2017 I did my first official parkrun at Nostell with my sister. We finished in 56 minutes after forgetting we were on a timed run. Sorry, Pat!

Rookie mistake number 2 – they cannot let the lions and tigers and bears oh my - out of their pens. I did my first race on Sunday 15th October 2017 at the inaugural Run for Wildlife in Doncaster. I was stood there nervously looking at all the giraffes, lemurs, and assorted fancy dress animals. As we ran into the first part of the course, I overheard one of the marshals say that they were letting the lions out! Freaked out, I finished with a PB of 53 minutes something as a result.

Rookie mistake number 3 – you improve with every run. I happily carried on walk/running for a few weeks and hit a plateau. It took a lovely tail walker called Wendy Berry to coax me out of this self-pity. Saturday 21st October 2017, I told her I wanted to give up. I had had enough. Wendy told me to wait until I had got back to the house and if I still felt the same, stop. I got to the top and carried on with Wendy's support. I finished with a PB.

Rookie mistake number 4 – not all people who wear Hi-Viz are marshals. My second 5k race was at the Elsecar Trail Running festival in December 2017. I was running and noticed someone stood on the bridge, so I ran up the hill towards them. It was only when I got closer, I realised he was walking his dog. Back down the hill it was and 52 minutes later I was met with – "Where have you been?".

Rookie mistake number 5 – running clubs are full of super fit, tee-total Olympic athletes. On January 9th, 2018 myself, Sam and John joined Ackworth Road Runners. We turned up to the old pavilion where we met the run leaders. Denise you have the patience of a saint! Ackworth Road Runners taught me about true friendships, genuine support and how to drink and not let it affect your race the day after. I am even mastering the art of selfies.

May 10th, 2020 – my running has improved dramatically and today was no exception. I'm starting to pace myself to get quicker. I knew something wasn't quite right when I hit a speed of 9 minute miles. Then it went to 8. My watch was in kilometres not miles. Still a rookie.

Lorraine Hawley, May 2020

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 ARR's), 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.

Me.....Run? by Emma Woodall

In 2018, I was well into my weight loss journey when a GP colleague suggested I try parkrun. "Me, run? Are you having a laugh?" After a little persuasion, I found myself nervously sending him a screenshot of my shiny new barcode. Little did I know this was only the start.

Saturday morning arrived and I set off to Pontefract Park with my then 9 year old, Leon. He was to be my sidekick, my safety net, so I wasn't in this alone. Although Nostell was my closest parkrun, I couldn't go there. It was far too hilly, and God forbid I might see somebody I knew! I arrived at the racecourse with a million doubts in my head. Where did I go? What did I do? What if I couldn't finish? And the dreaded...what if I came last? I soon discovered that coming last is the tail walker's job. Crossing through that finish funnel that first time and picking up our shiny little finish token, little did I know what I had started!

Over the next few months, we showed up only in fine weather, back then if it rained it was a good excuse not to run! My friend joined us, much faster than me, but always there at the finish, encouraging me on.

A good eight months or so later, I felt brave enough to tackle another parkrun course. I met a whole new bunch of lovely people at Nostell. Leon continued to run with me week in, week out. Running became "our" thing. Then at the end of June last year, we got chatting to a lovely lady – Pat - about the junior running club. Leon took an instant shine to Pat and attended their next training session.

In July, Leon was running the Laila Milly 2k fun run. I knew there was an adult run too, but although I fancied having a go, I couldn't run...I didn't dare. Although I had lost around 3 stone by then, I still had no self-belief. I wasn't a real runner, I hadn't ever run more than a 5k parkrun. I couldn't say I ran, could I? I'd never keep up, and what if I couldn't finish, how embarrassing would that be?! With all this running through my mind, I took Leon along dressed in gear I could also run in should I change my mind.

As much as deep down I wanted to run, I couldn't bring myself to register. Luckily, an ARR member that I knew managed to convince me, walking me to the registration tent. I was so nervous, shaking, all the negative thoughts running through my mind. I set off telling myself it was not much more than a parkrun! As I ran further, I started to wonder could I finish this? Even though nobody knew me, the support along the course was fantastic and I reached the end in tears. I did it! Lo and behold, this was the start of my ARR journey. I started training with the club in July 2019.

So far, I've only run two 10k races and burst into tears crossing the finish line at both, I find finishing so emotional. 2020 is my first full year with the club, but Covid has put an end to the racing this year! I still doubt myself, I have slightly more self-belief now, but I'm learning to be proud of myself. Two years ago, I never thought I'd be where I am now.

Emma Woodall, May 2020

From Nothing to Lots to Very Little by Pat Wood

The year, 1982. I am the mother of a HUGE 8 year old who thinks he can rule the roost. The solution, according to Dad, was to take said obnoxious child to a local boxing club. Teach him discipline, get rid of aggression, tire him out. Little did I know it would do the same to me!!

So, as an active mum – only 28 years old – I took great delight in training with all the horrible Henry's aged 8 to 14. The training involved some warm-up drills in the gym then a run round the hills of Dewsbury. Strangely, that was the part I really enjoyed. So much so that I would go out for runs around Denby Dale where we lived. There was not one route from my house that did not start with a flipping hill. I was not a member of a club, who knew then that they existed? I used to run with my dog. [I also did my son's morning paper round (don't ask!) and ran that too].

Fast forward nearly 20 years. My enjoyment in a gentle trot had diminished over those years, but every now and then I thought I could still do some running. In 2001, there was a new event starting and I challenged myself to enter and run it. It was Race for Life. Mine took part in Greenhead Park, Huddersfield.

My son, now grown up, and a Champion Boxer, (see, dedication and hard work paid off for him), decided that he would train me, Rocky style. There is a bandstand in that park with steps leading up to it. Mark had me running up and down those steps singing the theme tune. Laugh? The youths in the park did! The day of the Race for Life came. I lined up with a couple of hundred other bewildered females and off we went. I ran my little legs off that day but seeing my son and family cheering me on made the sick making sprint finish worth it.

Mark asked me "So what's next Mum? A marathon?" And without further thought, I managed to secure a place in London 2002. Where eldest son met me at mile 13, then 18, then 21 – with a pint of lager – and then at the end. 5 hours 20 minutes of sheer hell. But, like many thousands of others, I went on to run more marathons, hundreds of halves, loads of 10k's and an immense number of 5K's.

Now, after 3 heart attacks in 2014, sepsis and knee replacement in 2017, I am content to be ED at Nostell parkrun, a coach, be there to support, encourage (oh OK, shout at you all xx), and involve myself with the junior running club – today's children, tomorrow's Usain Bolts. #loveARR xx.

Pat Wood, May 2020

These Are a Few of my Favourite Things by Simon Bennett

This is down to you Craig Thorpe. About three years ago you asked me what my favourite race was.

Trail, road, fell, parkrun or cross-country? 5k up to 100 miles (and beyond)?

parkrun. Bella's favourite. Nostell, Pontefract, Frickley or Tourism? Trail running at Sierre-Zinal or Lakeland Trails? Yorkshire Coast 10k for the post-race Fish'n'chips. Malta, Tissington or Carsington half (you're having a laugh!)?

Marathons in Manchester or Hull. Or Paris or Athens. So that's an easy choice then!

50 miles Round Rotherham or from Milngavie (pronounced 'Mul-gay') to Tyndrum on the West Highland Way. 100 miles along the North Downs, the South Downs, the Thames Path, the Cleveland Way or the UTMB (Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc)? Or the Grand Union Canal Race (GUCR) from Birmingham to London?

Bleasdale Circle, Buttermere Horseshoe, Haworth Hobble, Mearley Clough, Midgley Moor, Stirton, Steel Fell, Tigger Tor, Trigger, Trunce or Isle of Jura Fell Race. Almost all are universally appealing. And you get your feet wet.

None compare to the camaraderie and friendship on the Bob Graham Round where it was so good to have so many ARR's helping on the fells and at the checkpoints. You know who you are.

And who would have thought that any of this would have happened when I ran competitively ('ha!') at the Clitheroe Triathlon in 2009? A 400m swim (breaststroke), 30k bike ride (on a 'sit up and beg' bike) and a 10k run. Obviously, none of us runners ever remember our times. Ever. Mine was 1:02:44. And 12:11 for the swim 1:30:16 on the bike, since you ask.

Times are not important to me!! At my age it's all about 'age graded performance'. Unless I get close to a PB at parkrun, 10k, 10 miles or the half marathon. Obviously a PB at marathon is meaningless. The only thing that matters there is a good-for-age qualifying time.

Apart from PB's at any distance on the road, it's fell, trail and ultras for me. The great beauty of these events is that time and pace become irrelevant. Except at the 100 mile distance if you're chasing:

- A PB over the distance
- A sub-24 hour time
- To beat the time you set last time you did the same event; or
- To beat the dreaded cut-off times.

Averaging 4 kilometres per hour (kph) is good enough at UTMB. No need to be fast, just persistent. 6kph downhill and 2kph uphill. Around 40 hours into the race, still more than 4 hours from the end, I was moving uphill at about 1kph. Families out for a walk with young children and dogs overtook me.

At Cumbrian fell races it's nice if you can avoid coming last. They seem to breed them tough up there. My mind is still scarred by coming second last at the short, sharp Steel Fell Race in 2013, overtaken again by children, women, the elderly and infirm.

Simon Bennett, May 2020



©Gill Bennett

Those Odd Looking Feet by Donna Bailey

My mum says that I never bothered to crawl as a baby. The story goes...I just stood up and got moving at the age of 9 months and to be honest I've never stopped moving since. She was quite relieved to be honest that I walked. I was born a healthy baby, but with two deformed toes on my left foot, stacked in a strange manor. For the first few weeks of my life, these two toes were strapped together in hope that then would correct. This didn't work. As soon as the strapping was removed, they'd just ping right back into their original obscure place. My mother was told that I may have trouble walk until I was old enough to have these toes operated on. So you can imagine her relief when I got going.

My early years of school, I recall gathering my class mates to race me in the playground. I'd always win, I'd even beat the boys. To be honest I was never top of the class in any of my other subjects, but I was always the most sporty and definitely the fastest runner. It wasn't long before I was running for my school. I can feel the tension now, dressed in burgundy PE knickers and a navy blue top, a scrawny kid aged 11 on the starting blocks. My legs trembling with nerves waiting for the gun to sound. With winning or placing high regularly came pressure and anxiety. I found as I approached my mid-teens, I'd struggled with the pressure that I'd created in my mind and the expectations of my coaches. Running competitively very soon took a back seat as I'd tired of this feeling. Life carried on, bringing up a family, keeping active in many ways but rarely running.

Fast forward nearly 20 years. A friend suggested we pop down to Sweatshop at Xscape, "I hear they hold a running club down there" she said. So nervously and not particularly enthusiastically I attended. I was surprised by the warm welcome from strangers and some familiar faces that I had met over the years working in the fitness industry.

My first race was encouraged by Wendy and Steve Berry. I can remember it like yesterday. Wearing Steve's Sweatshop T-shirt (I hadn't earned mine yet). Hadn't raced for years, with a few friends cheering me on, I did really well and realised what I'd missed. That was it, I was hooked. The fun was back in the run! Clocked up over the years many runs now. A few stick in my mind in particular.

Ferriby 10 mile with Wendy Berry. Running wearing our plastic bags. There was wind rain and snow that day! My jaw locked as my mouth froze. A complete stranger had to undo my soggy wet sports bra in the changing rooms after the race, my arms and hands so cold they wouldn't work. Me and Wendy still talk about that race today with great amusement.

London marathon 2016 and 2017, which I believe I still hold the club record for in my age category, for now anyhow (but that's ok 🤔).

Windermere marathon 2018, 2019 with my amazing running pal Stephen Wong, who knows me so well, knows just what to say when I have doubt 😊. And so many more 😊.

Steve and Wendy suggested we try it out at ARR. Again, I was a bit reluctant. "Aren't they a proper running club" I'd ask, presuming it would come with the pressure I recalled as a child. On arrival we were greeted by a friendly lady named Pat 🤗 who believed Steve and Wendy were my parents.... I'll take that 🤗🤗.

Over the years that I've been a member, I've made many super friends, the list would go on for ever, and it keeps on growing all the time.....You're my kind of people 😊.

I believe that the lovely ARR team allows you to be whatever kind of runner you want to be. It's no secret that I do still struggle with those anxious feelings at the start of a races, that's why I'm a bit unpredictable with my times. But once in a while, a race falls into place, the anxiety attached from so many years ago subsides and I feel like that super fast kid again, I'm flying and I bloody love it!

But most of the time I'm happy plodding along, running with friends and cheering you guys over the finish line, celebrating all your achievements. So that's my running journey in a nutshell and don't judge me on my feet. 🤗 Take care.

Donna Bailey, May 2020



With a Little Help From My Friends...by Janet Barr

I'm sorry Mrs Barr it's cancer. It was May 2017 and the bottom had just fallen out of my world. Up to that point I had thought of myself as a fairly typical mum. I had 2 children James and Jess who were 17 and 14 and a supportive hubby Andy who many of you know as Obelisk man.

I was reasonably healthy, didn't smoke and was a regular runner at ARR and parkrun. I wasn't breaking any running records but I enjoyed it and had a good set of friends.

As my world imploded and I ended up in a whirlwind of scans and surgery my running family were there picking me up and supporting me at every turn.

Recovery was slow and I wasn't going to win any prizes but when my consultant said I could start gentle exercise it seemed fit to have a 'race' in mind to kickstart it. 20th August 2017 and I found myself on the start line of the Stockholm Midnattsloppet surrounded by family and ARR friends. A sea of orange and glow sticks, this was a 10k night run like no other with music and candles.

So many memories but running up a hill to a church lined with candles and running over the finish line in a row holding hands with tears pouring down all our faces. It might have been my slowest ever race but I was still alive and just felt so blessed.

Fast forward to Edwinstowe December 2018 and I'm in tears again at the end of a race!! As fellow ARR came racing down the hill to give their support I had to reassure them that they were happy tears and I was crying because I had just completed 10 GP races. They hadn't been very fast and not very pretty but to me they were a huge achievement and yet another testimony to the continued support of the club.

An idea at this point sprouted – maybe I should run a marathon!! Now anyone who knows me knows I always said I'd never run a Marathon – I was too old, too unfit, too busy

However as I now spent time at Weston Park Cancer hospital every couple of months it had made me realise just how much I had to be thankful for and how much running and my running family had helped with my recovery both physical and mental.

I entered the Great Welsh Marathon 14th April 2019 exactly two years to the date that I found the lump that changed my life and on Christmas Day 2018 I started training. Over the next 4 months I ran over 800 training miles but ARR never missed a beat – no matter what the weather – snow, rain, wind, gales – every time I asked, someone was there to run with me. Faces became names and names became friends as the ARR community supported me at every stop.

14th April 2019 I finally crossed the line on 4:09:29!! I was a marathon runner and had raised over £2500 for Weston Park Cancer Hospital.

The whole journey has just taught me what you can do with a little help from your friends and I'm just so glad ARR are mine!!

Janet Barr, May 2020

My Running Journey by Annabelle James

I was never a fan of running as a kid - I preferred field events and threw things at county level until I went up an age category, my fellow competitors and the things I was throwing got bigger and I didn't. Running was something we were made to do as a punishment for talking in netball and of course there was the dreaded cross country... I thought I was being clever hiding in a bush and returning, mud and sweat free, when an appropriate amount of time had passed. My plan was foiled when they put me on the cross-country team - I didn't last long.

Any sporting skill I had faded into the dim and distant past when work life took over. Living on mainly caffeine and nicotine, the most exercise I ever got was walking up the odd flight of stairs at work when the lift got stuck in the basement. But then I started martial arts training and eventually started to work towards my black belt in kickboxing. The need to be able to run 2 miles in under 20 minutes seemed like an insurmountable task. But I practised and by the time I took my grading in September 2013 I did the timed run in 18:13. And somewhere along the way I realised I didn't hate running quite as much anymore.

The next year I was dared by a colleague to enter the Great North Run - I'm never one to back away from a dare and thought I had better do some training. At this stage a friend at kickboxing mentioned this thing called parkrun to me where you could turn up, run 5k round a park and get a time and free t-shirts. I duly signed up and rocked up at Dewsbury parkrun (my nearest one in the pre-Nostell and Thornes days). I'd never run 3 miles before so thought I'd better be prepared - not sure what the other runners thought when they saw me turn up clutching a bottle of water and a gel... The Run Director said go and I pegged it up the hill. Which was longer than it looked. Much longer. Eventually I got to the top, there were only about 4 people in front of me - yay, I thought, must be nearly 3 miles and I'm looking at a top 5 finish, I love running. That's when I looked at my watch and saw I had run just over 0.1 miles (my perceptions of distance and pacing have not improved). I eventually finished in 32 minutes or so and vowed never to return.

Roll forward to 2020 and I'm now on 198 parkruns, have done 2 marathons and a bunch of halves, 10ks and other races. I smashed my leg up quite badly in 2016 but eventually got back to form last year getting PBs at most distances. I'm still not sure if I like running but must do just a little bit as I keep on doing it!

Annabelle James, May 2020

You've Come a Long Way, Baby by Debbie Worthington

After a summer of running, jumping and throwing, a 10 year old girl leaves the stadium on a cold Autumn evening. With the floodlights behind her, she makes her way to the dark, misty expanse of the playing fields, ready for her first road race with the Rotherham Harriers. Starting to stretch as instructed, she reaches down to the ground and promptly puts her hand in some doggy deposits... a potent portent of her future distance running prowess. In floods of tears, she begs to return to the safety (and toilets) of the stadium, but the race is about to begin; cleaned up with spit and a tissue, she starts her running journey.

At the back of the pack, she feels lonely and scared –

"you're not supposed to be out on your own in the dark" she thinks.

As she gets to the main road it seems brighter and safer, but her new foe is the hill. At the top, parents are waiting and more tears spill - why can't she take the short cut back down to the stadium and end this torture? A few weeks later she's forced to attend the awards evening, where she gets her Four Star Athletic Award certificate, never to return to the Harriers again.

Fast forward almost 30 years and it's the start of another race, only a kilometre from the first... the return of the Rotherham 10k in 2018. The sun is shining, friends and family are waiting and it's a glorious day in Clifton Park. After a not so glorious return to running in 2014, a rollercoaster of injuries have got in the way of progress... so recovering from a torn hamstring, she sets off once again around her old stomping ground.

Down past the old Arts Centre where she took part in teenage plays (now a Tesco), quickly through Canklow (don't loiter, it hasn't changed!), through All Saints square in front of the impressive Rotherham Minster for a quick drink. Then the hills begin... up past the front of the Museum (or Zoomeum as it was known back in the day), past the doctors (where she went with childhood tonsillitis and adolescent acne) and then up that same hill she ran up all those years ago.

Since then she's traipsed up that hill barefoot, after nights of underage drinking and spending taxi money on chips 'n' cheese, and its time to walk once again, chatting to some other ladies who think it's far too hot for excessive exertion!

Soon she's passing that little gap in the wall which leads down to the stadium, but once again, she's taking the long way around. Across the playing fields, through the houses where the locals cheer on the runners, and back into the leafy park.

The finish straight is now familiar from Rotherham parkrun, but then and there the finish seems daunting and distant. At the end her husband and family are waiting and cheering her in, smiles all round. They chat and rehydrate... we've all come a long way, and no distance at all.

Debbie Worthington, May 2020



The Grumpy Runner by Ian Stancliffe aka Plug

Am I the only one at club who:

- Doesn't enjoy running
- Has no energy on Tuesday and Thursdays
- Hates Sheard Hill
- Does not own a Garmin
- Never possessed an ARR vest
- Still not tackled a park run
- Never entered a GP

Does anyone else run to:

- Keep their beer belly down
- To get a free shower twice a week
- To get thirsty so two pints of beer are warranted

I joined ARR in 1991 and have had the odd break for football and golf; average at both so returned to running. I find it is easier to hide average when running.

ARR actually introduced me to Ackworth the town, being a Normy boy it seemed a long way away, but more importantly it introduced me to the:

- Angel
- Ackworth Club briefly
- Rustics
- Masons
- Cricket Club

At AA meetings, and no not AAA meetings, I start by saying "I'm an alcoholic, I joined ARR"

My running memories are not times, course details, price of entry but the characters I've got to know over the years. Running attracts a diverse bunch of people all with different goals, depth of pockets, tales to tell and in particular running styles.

All inspire me because they are individually driven, enthusiastic and embrace ARR.

For the record my pb at ARR was getting a pint out of Ady!

Not 500 words I know but a tip to finish; always hold a bit back so you can pb over and over again.

Ian Stancliffe, May 2020

Why do I Run? By Chris Crowther

I often ask myself this question but to try and find out the reason, I have to go back to the beginning. Back in February 2013 I was convinced to come and try parkrun. Back then my local parkrun was Huddersfield so I rocked up to see what it was all about. I completed my 1st parkrun in 36.46 mainly running and walking. As I was going round and having to stop and walk quite a few times I kept asking myself why am I doing this?

Well something happened that day with my competitive streak and also my desire to actually be good at something and claim it as my own. I came back to parkrun a couple of weeks later to try again but it didn't go very well and I was slow! My determination to go faster was still there, though my times were constantly around 39 and 38 minutes then suddenly there was a freak time on the 6th April 2013. I did parkrun in a time of 34.38 I still believe that was wrong even now! I'm like, how the hell did I do that?

But the downside is, if running demons exist, I'm damn sure they live with me at times as the next week I ran parkrun in just over 39 minutes and I was so annoyed. Back then I had no sports watch so didn't know my time til I finished. That was my last parkrun until February of the next year.

In the process of all this I moved to Wakefield, Walton for a year then Havercroft to be with my now wife Gemma. I was trying to keep fit and get back to running though not very successfully until I came to Nostell parkrun; a parkrun now local to me and with just the right atmosphere. I had found that desire again. My 1st run there was terrible, a time of 43.32. You can imagine how I felt about that, but I had help now. First of all Gary ran with me and then Tracy which was appreciated massively.

Despite all the help, I still wasn't happy with my times. Then came Slimming World. As I started to lose weight the times started to come down too as my Nostell pb is 31.10 and Huddersfield pb is 30.55.

I still have goals and those running demons are always there especially at the moment. 5 weeks of no running at the start of lockdown has set me back quite a lot but I'm getting there slowly, I think, so hopefully I can still pass a few of you on my traditional parkrun sprint finish.

Chris Crowther, May 2020

My Most Important Medal by Cary Bernard

I don't have many medals. I don't enter many races!! My most important medal, though, wasn't for a race, except against myself. I'd never quite understood the attraction of virtual medals until 2018.

I always forget when I jokingly say that a run was drug fuelled that people won't quite understand what I mean unless they know that I have dodgy lungs!! And the best (and worst) drugs my NHS dealer gives me are the steroids tablets that kick those dodgy lungs back into action. It always feels like cheating but it always feels like freedom.

And so, it was yet again at the start of 2018. Turbo boosted!! My lungs were working and giving my legs the oxygen they needed to run. And they were running, they were running fast, they were going to break that 60min 10k at the Wakefield Hospice 10k.

Just one more week to go, one more week before my legs and lungs took me flying to the finish line ... only they never got that far. An inevitable side effect of years of the magic bullet is osteoporosis and my ankle didn't quite stand up to the new found speed. So that was that, not running fast but limping slowly with a stress fracture. And that took months to heal, probably not helped by more drug fuelled limping speed! But finally, after about 6 months it was declared healed ... be on your way and don't do it again!!

I started slowly building up again, fast walk, run walk, running bugger, legs working now lungs gone again! I had to have a target to make me get out and try to run so I looked to a virtual medal. One company released just one a month and they were always lovely. I decided running a total of 25 miles during December would be my aim, though I wasn't sure if I could do it. I waited to see what the medal would be, not realising just how much it mattered to me.

When December's medal was announced it was beautiful, just what I'd imagined, just what I wanted, just what I needed. I immediately burst into tears at the thought of working for that beautiful medal and really earning it. I planned my routes, I planned my days, I planned to get that medal. Slowly I ticked the miles off, slowly I reached my target and slowly I waited for my medal to arrive. When it did arrive, I was so excited opening the packet. My hands were actually shaking as I ripped it open. And there it was. My medal!! It was beautiful. I'd earned it, I deserved it and I'd also learned something even more important. I wasn't ready to give up trying ever.

Cary Bernard, May 2020

Runs in the Family by Ian Vogan

My 50th birthday fell on a Sunday so I decided to celebrate with a weekend away and a marathon in La Rochelle (France). Most people who read this will consider that normal. Hotel research is not my strong point but I bumbled through and found a hotel on Isle de Re about a half hour drive from the airport. Somebody was smiling on me. The hotel was just what we wanted.

(Very) fast forward ten years. My 60th is on a Saturday so I decide to return to do the marathon again. Sue and I had already been back to La Rochelle a number of times for long weekend breaks. This time we would celebrate with the family. We decided to make it a running weekend.

Along came my son Gareth, a snowboarder who runs when he remembers, my daughter Nik and her husband Rich. Gareth was aiming to complete his first marathon, Rich wanted a sub four hour marathon, Nik was training seriously for an off road duathlon championship so she chose the 10k. Sue did what she does magnificently and agreed to cheer us on and look after “coats”.

My training went as usual, I annoyed my hamstrings early on and my longest training run was 15 miles. I got off the plane in La Rochelle on the Friday and said to Sue that I would have a test run on Saturday but might not run on Sunday. The test went well.

Come Sunday we were all nervous, but the marathon course is two laps and fits around the 10k, there were going to be plenty of opportunities for Sue to support everyone. We went our separate ways to the different starts. Gareth had decided that he would run with me, we went to the veterans’ start. I told him that my plan was to run the first lap and see how I felt.

Gareth’s training had been as minimalistic as mine. We had a pace plan but that got forgotten, we got to half way bang on two hours! We knew the wheels would come off, the question was when. We finished in under 4.5 hours so were happy with the result. Rich came in comfortably under his four hour target. The “goody bag” for the race includes a tray of oysters. We had no idea what to do with three trays of oysters, but the waitress at the cafe where we had lunch seemed very pleased with her tip.

Nik missed her target time by seconds but was second lady back. The presentation was in a grand auditorium and the announcer sounded grudging when he had to say “Grande Bretagne” as he handed over the trophy. We had a great weekend, all runners pleased with their achievement and Sue totally knackered from trying to be in the right place to shout at us.

The race does disrupt the town but it brings in a lot of business for the weekend and at least one couple have been back regularly to boost the local economy.

Ian Vogan, May 2020

Blame it on the Dog by Chris Hartley

'Twas on the 9th of June 2009 - Blaydon Race day on Tyneside. A runner friend rang after the race - taking that call in local woods, Murphy my Irish Water Spaniel ran away. Now Durham is hilly. I ran this way and that. Darkness fell. An hour passed - I found him. Back home Age 47 and 15 stone I looked in the mirror. If I could run round Durham that night I could run some more. 3 months later I'd lost 3 stones.

I told my friend when I could run 5 miles in 40 mins, I'd get a personal trainer. She introduced me to Dan. PT and his running club sessions followed. I got fitter. Entered races. 5k 5 & 10 mile, The Blaydon Race then my first Great North Run. With just 4 hrs sleep, on a hot day I blew it. Off too fast - for the first and only time I hit the wall after mile 8. Walked drunk for 3 miles - Jogged the rest missing 2 hours by seconds. Gutted. More races and even a couple of marathons in Geneva. 5 a side soccer and swimming too.

Born in Hemsworth and raised in Fev and Ponte, I joined my sister Wendy Berry for runs with ARR when back home. It was all going SOOO well until: Back in the North East, Dan sold his gym, his running club folded. I was solo again.

Work got busy - two years passed. Just as my fitness was waning, Dan got in touch. A new gym and now coach of Blaydon Harriers. I joined them - I was back but life has its twists - just as I was ramping it up, within months, 4 years ago disaster struck. My knee gave way. Bone on bone Arthritis. On crutches I did 2 half marathons - including Liverpool Rock'n'Roll with members of ARR. Six months of no running or gym followed. Advised to move to Cycling, I crept up to 5k - beating my orthopaedic surgeon at the Newcastle park run. The long road back to fitness followed. More runs in Yorkshire with ARR - In my Blaydon vest I became known as the man dressed as a bee!

2019 brought The Grasmere Gallop and Leeds 24 Endure. I Joined the Social Running Group in Gosforth and Great Run Runners Newcastle Quayside plus more half marathons than ever in a year -4. I dipped below 2 hours once again. Met Brendan Foster at the Gibside great run local - the start of the Great North Run Weekend. Got a start line pass for the GNR itself. That year I'd joined ARR as a second claim. It's a fabulous club. I've made great friends. Even won the winter handicap in 2020!

2020 should have been busier still. More halves, the Edinburgh Marathon, Leeds 24 Endure plus the rest. The Covid inspired Carnivorous League has been a life saver - a great incentive. Though the knee complains every day, I'm now fitter than any time since I turned 50.

You'll no longer see the bee vest when I'm back in Yorkshire - but you'll spot the ever present knee tape. I'll finish by raising a glass to the committee and my fellow Area 9s

Sadly, my dog isn't alive to see this. RIP Murphy. It's all down to you.

Chris Hartley, May 2020

...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 6th 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

She Made Me Do It by John Hawley

I noticed she had been running for a while. I was surprised it had lasted that long but never said anything. But this time it seemed serious. I just wondered who she was seeing. Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays she was always busy. So, I asked. What I did not expect was - come join me on Saturday, we could have a threesome! Yep, you guessed it! Me, her and parkrun.

Nostell Parkrun - my first ever parkrun! It was the biggest shock I have ever experienced! WTF! But to be fair she had warned me. I felt pain, sick and ouchy. Never again! But she insisted on every Saturday.

Barnsley 10k – I must have upset her because the next thing I know she's entered me into the Barnsley 10k. I thought she was trying to kill me. But apparently it was a birthday present.

Ackworth Road Runners - still not convinced about this running stuff we did a trial with ARR. We went from the Pavilion and I ended up with the 4 mile group with Chris Taylor. It was great. We joined.

Hull Veterans Cross Country - to be social I took one for the team. We went to Hull to run the cross country. 10k against pensioners, how hard could it be? I found out the hard way. Respect. Still came away with an unexpected silver and felt smug. The day after I did Thirsk 10 miles. Not a pub in sight.

Manvers Dusk til Dawn – arguably the best experience ever. Do not remember much because it was straight off the back of Munich. But the potatoes were nice and I did 16.9 miles. Longest run to date.

Leeds Country Way - ran this with Tim Owen and the back support was great. Cheers, Me! Fantastic event and one I would do again.

Humber Coast Half – was not my favourite but I did a personal best thanks to Sarah Cooper.

Tadcaster 10 miles – I had joined up with Dawn Sketchley and came in at a respectable 90 minutes ish. Huge thanks for pacing me, Dawn.

Silverstone half marathon – at this point Loz had a wobble and wasn't confident in attending races. She'd dropped out of lots of races and wasn't the same. But I coaxed her into doing the Silverstone 10k (ie got her drunk and convinced her it was a good idea, like she used to do with me). She PB'd. I did it in 1hr 59m 33s. I was happy I had done it in under 2 hours.

Munich Silvester 10k - One of the most nerve racking experiences of my life. Another one she had booked and disappeared from. But I do not blame her! Munich Olympic Park was very imposing and vast. The buildings were so grand and tall. I can imagine what real athletes must have felt like! Looking around I found my place and BANG! The Bavarian Guards had set us off. We were running around the iconic tower, the Olympic lake and out of the park down the autobahn and back into the park for a stadium finish. It was my best ever time – 52:12! I did get funny looks though for running in shorts in minus 6 degrees. I did have my Ackworth Road Runners jumper on though! After the confidence boost and achievements of 2019, 2020 was going to be my year! Ah.... So, she made me do it! I am glad. Not bad for two years of running.

John Hawley, May 2020

You Don't Know You Can, Until You Try - My story of becoming a runner by Sue Francis.

I had tried hard at winning that race, but teacher sniggered at the unexpected first position. I gave up after that, it wasn't worth the humiliation.

Fast forward 40 years later.

'Mum, will you do parkrun with me?

'Mark, I can't run'.

Off we set. Mark, yelling, *'you are going too fast, you will run out of steam.'* I finished my very first parkrun in 30 minutes. *'Well done, fab time you got, will you come next week?'* Said the marshal who knew it was my first time.

'Mum, will you come running on Tuesday?' Despite my doubts of my ability I did. This decision to go became life changing. *'Mum you are going too fast'*, I left Mark behind and followed some runners to the Nostell gates. I felt exhilarated running all the way back to the club and surprised myself with my efforts. *'You coming next week?'* somebody asked. *'Yes, I really loved it, thank you.'*

Before long I joined Ackworth Road Runners getting to know some lovely people. Somebody asked, *'have you signed up for any races?'*

No, I'm not good enough' I replied.

With encouragement I signed up for the Tadcaster 10, to my surprise I finished. After that I signed up for longer races. At Awards night I got a few trophies, the girl who thought she couldn't run because a teacher had sneered.

So, I have learned, you can do things if you try and ignore negativity. It doesn't matter if you are first or last. I never imaged winning a good for age place at the Yorkshire and London Marathons. I never imagined I would win medals and trophies and develop the runners bug. It all started with a park to keep my son company and continued with longer races.

I really miss my running family who have encouraged me all the way. I couldn't have done it without my own family, my loving supportive husband who patiently awaits me on the finish even when he has to help me climb all those steps from Brighton Beach because my legs stopped working.

I couldn't have done it without our club leaders and trainers and all the efforts they go to on training sessions. Thank you all, including Chris, Stewart and of course our Pat who shouts to me 'go chase them' so I did.

Sue Francis, May 2020

What does a Farmer Run Like? by Mick Chapman

I was never any good at running at school, in fact I was pretty crap at most sports. My mum is baffled that I took up running, she recently reminded me how rubbish I was at sports days. A spectator at the side of her once commented "look at him, he runs like a farmer!" I'm still not very fast and never win any races but running has become an enduring passion and I have relished the small victories and achievements along the way.

I think I was first inspired by Ackworth legend Ken Bingley as a child. I was always impressed when he passed the bottom of my street as he ran out of the village on an unfathomably long run. I first took up running in my early twenties, running after work with a friend. I can remember running the first mile and being so exhausted that we both walked back. We upped our distance but didn't get much further than five miles before we both got fed up and packed in.

I have my son to thank for finally getting me hooked on running. I was watching him and some friends play football when they were about eight years old and decided to join in. I was shocked by how out of shape I had become and as an overweight out of shape 40 year old smoker I decided that he and my daughter needed a fitter dad. I returned to where I used to run which was near Frickley Park and slowly started to build up the miles. My strategy then was to increase my runs distance by 10% a week. It worked well and before too long I had started to think the unthinkable. Could I run a marathon?

After 12 months, I had done the half marathon and dared to dream about running the London Marathon. I was never interested in the short races, you had to run too fast. After a couple of rejection magazines from the London Marathon I decided to join a club to improve my chances. As luck would have it, I didn't need the club ballot and managed to get a place the same year.

Joining Ackworth really made the training a lot easier and I have found inspiration from some of the great achievements of members young and old and discovered some nice routes around Ackworth that I didn't know about. I'm enjoying the virtual races but look forward to the day when we can run together and have a pint afterwards

Running has taken me all over the country and improved my health no end. I've run round Welsh mountains and Scottish Lochs, under the Mersey Tunnel and past the Cutty Sark. I even combined a run with a long lost Aunt who is also a runner. She told me about my Great Grandfather who used to race distances for prize money. Usually arranged from a pub. I wonder if he was a farmer?

Mick Chapman, June 2020

You Can Get There in the End – Then You Can Start! **by Brian Dodd and Stewart Haigh**

The year was 1997.

Brian *“fancy doing this race in France. You start in Paris by the Eiffel Tower and run to Versailles? We could go without our wives to keep the cost down”. There’s a sports tour company who organise coach travel, hotel and race entry. We can’t go wrong”*.

Stewart *“Sounds good – let’s book”*.

All we had to do was turn up outside Leeds Railway Station at 4:00am for the coach pick up. Brian’s son was volunteered to get up early and drop us off at 3:30am – just to be on the safe side! The hour came but the coach didn’t. Frantic looks through our paperwork to allay our fears that we shouldn’t have been at the bus station – we were in the right place and at the right time. Must be running late! 5am arrived and our spirits were diminishing – had we been conned? Our confirmation letter gave a telephone number for the company – but they didn’t open until 9:00am! 5:30 and all hope had gone. Phoned to wake up Brian’s son again to come and collect us. We weren’t happy and Gavin didn’t look overjoyed. All we could do now was hope to get our money back!

We arranged to meet at 9:00 to ring the company. Phone answered! Told them the issue and we weren’t happy. The reply was – *“but the coach pick up had been changed to 3:00am – it was on the letter they had recently sent”*! Neither of us had received one! We wanted our money back – NOW! The guy said did we still want to go? He would ring us back – and did about 10 minutes later.

“Good news, I can get you on Eurostar if you can get down to London”. No was our reply – we would have to drive and then there’s the problem of parking for a few days. He said he would have a look at other options and called back a few minutes later. *“Good news – he could get us on the 13:30 from Ashford in Kent, bad news is there’s only 1st class available on the outward journey”*! We decided it was bad news for them, not us!

As the clock was now approaching 10am – could we make it to Ashford in time? *“If we can’t make, it you’ll have to pay for the petrol”*. Agreed! Car packed and off we set non-stop to Ashford. We parked up and ran to the station with just a few minutes to spare to collect our tickets. Phew! Ticket man *“the train’s running about 40 minutes late!!!”*

We enjoyed our First Class seats as we sped to the Gare du Nord. The hotel was just a short walk away and we checked in before the coach party arrived! Beaming smiles! Our return train on the Monday was 12 noon, the coach party departed at 6am! A win win situation!

We had got there in the end – all we had to do now was enjoy Paris for a couple of days – and get to the start line on time! We arrived early ... to stand in the hot sun for about 2 hours. It's a staggered start and a large field!

Brilliant course takes in the banks of the Seine followed by a long ascent up to an observatory then down through fabulous woods to beautiful Versailles. Give it a try!

Brian Dodd and Stewart Haigh, June 2020



Stewart Haigh at the Midsummer 10k 1994

In the Day by Colin Tanswell

Sometime ago, Ken Bingley & I were manning a drinks station at a club handicap. The opportunity arose to share memories of running fifty years ago!

Specialist running shoes were unheard of. I remember running in 'Dunlop Green Flash' plimsolls. The soles were almost indestructible but the tops soon rotted from sweat or water. Designer road/cross-country shoes did not become readily available until the early 60's. Initially I ran cross-country in flat plimsolls, then ones with ribbed soles. I ran my first road race (10 miles) in RAF plimsolls.

Warming up/down were unheard of, although we did rub our muscles with embrocation. The smell was awful, especially in confined spaces. Races were seasonal. Cross-country in winter, road relays in spring and track in summer, until we became interested in road races which were then few in number. Races were mainly inter-club matches or area/national championships. Changing rooms were non-existent for cross-country. We returned home sweat stained and mud spattered. Cross-country was over demanding courses involving often hills, ploughed fields, stiles & water crossings. In major championships, tin baths might be provided in the open air. The water was cold and dirty by the time the backmarkers arrived!

Coaching was by self-help. Advice from the one specialist magazine available, or books. Running standards were surprisingly high in comparison with today. A ten mile time of 60 minutes was considered the norm and anything much slower was likely to incur the displeasure of the officials/fellow competitors awaiting the results. No medical support was available apart from the local GP who was only interested in getting you back to work. Well-meaning advice from friends or colleagues was seldom helpful and could be counterproductive.

I timed my training runs using an ordinary watch, with no second hand. I had an ex WD stopwatch, which had to be carried in the hand and was therefore not convenient for long runs or interval work.

Race fields were generally small. The National CC Championships over nine miles, I ran in six, was the largest with barely 1000 runners. The Eastern Counties would have had less than 100 in the Senior race with a few more in the Juniors & Youths. No women in those days!

Kit was basic, no lightweight materials; tracksuits were heavy woollen material vests and shorts were cotton. Transport to races was a problem with public transport a rare possibility. We travelled to the National CC in Blackpool by chartered train or hired coaches sometimes, but it was mainly down to fellow club mates, who had their own transport to share. In my early days I travelled by motor scooter to Bedford (10 miles each way) once a week for club training.

Colin Tanswell, August 2020

Founder's International Baptism by Colin Tanswell

First published in the Ackworth Road Runners Newsletter in May 1987

In the Autumn of 1958, (before some of you, your parents or grand-parents were born, a sobering thought), I was a member of the RAF Wildenrath cross-country team, during my National Service. At this time, we were champions of RAF Germany and unbeaten in inter-service competitions. In order for stiffer opposition, and to win a few pots maybe, we decided to enter local events, the first at Wegberg CC Festival, was run over a muddy course and I finished last. As other team members did better, we were encouraged to enter the Dahlhausen Sports Club event.

We arrived on the day of the race at a town not far from Essen, having experienced anti-British feelings on the way as the area had been heavily bombed during the war. Outside the stadium we noted large posters advertising the event. Our German had not progressed much beyond 'Ein Bier Bitte' but we were still able to ascertain that a Great Britain team was taking part. A case of mistaken identity, we thought, as children sought our autographs.

At registration, we noted that the entry also included top German clubs & some international runners. On buying a programme we were horrified to discover that the GB team was not Gordon Pirie, Frank Sando, Gerry North etc. (top runners of the day) but OURSELVES. Our protests to the organisers brought no result; they either did not understand our concern over our inflated status or did not wish to compromise their advertising claims.

We suspected that we had been set up following our showing at Wegberg and were fearful of letting down the name of our country in this hostile environment.

I remember little of the race, except that it was hilly; I suspect that I was running in a panic. I finished 33rd, none of our team let the side down, most had run above expectations and we were not disgraced. The winner was Ludwig Muller, who had represented his country in the European Championships. Our leading finisher, in 6th place, had been in the London Schools steeplechase championship, a far cry from the European Championships.

This was my first representative appearance for my country. My second 'vest' has been a long time coming!

Colin Tanswell, August 2020

Hurdles, Passing the Baton & the Closing Ceremony by Chris Sharp

Hurdles

Instead of talking about a particular race I'd like to share my love of the club and how my personal life has benefitted from being a member. Starting with the hurdles which is really just a metaphor for life and mental health. During the last two years I have had the highest of highs and the lowest of lows but regardless of which, the club and its members (my running family), have always been there for me.

After starting my apprenticeship, I headed off to college to spend twenty one weeks away from home. Little did I know that this was the start of what would be the most challenging twelve months of my life. Being away from home, ridiculously painful sciatic issues, the terrible food that was 99% carbs, receiving the worst news I have ever had and then finding out my Dad was terminally ill and would only have about 8 more weeks to live.

The moral of all this is that the running club and its members were there to nurture my mental health back to healthy levels. From asking or forcing me to run, to cooking and delivering warm meals or even just sending the odd message to engage in conversation and get things off my chest or escape from the demons for a while. Ackworth Road Runners was my saviour and I was again back running, not very fast, but now in it for very different reasons than before.

Passing the Baton

Fast forward a few months to the Christmas period and only a few months after losing my Dad, the fatherhood baton was passed on to me in the form of a beautiful baby boy, Reggie. Now I see how Reggie being born with Down's syndrome could have been seen as a further blow but it really wasn't. Tired I was, upset I wasn't. Once again, members continued to be so supportive.

I love running with Reggie in the buggy and my favourite run of all time was when we were finally allowed some freedom from the COVID19 lockdown to venture up to the lakes where we ran as a family to Grasmere on the not so buggy friendly coffin route and returning by the water side of Grasmere and Rydal water. A quick dip then a pint in The Badger Bar. The area was first introduced to us through the club's annual trip and has been a favourite place to visit since. I can't wait until we can all go up again and leave Reggie at the Will Walker Creche for Adventurous Children.

The Closing Ceremony

Now, the closing ceremony isn't so much a closing ceremony as the start of something wonderful, in the form of Team Reggie. Club members have been great at helping us raise money for the Down's Syndrome Association (DSA). Who knew that signing up to virtual VLM would quickly turn into an event which would then see over a hundred people purchase and wear Team Reggie T-shirts in support of our

fundraising? As the event was kind of marking the end of our fundraising efforts it's kind of the opposite.

When we currently live through such difficult and uncertain times and people haven't had much contact with others, it has been great to see everyone come together for this cause. It's so good to see how much love and support there is amongst club members and the amount of love there is for Reggie. He was born to bring people together and Ackworth Road Runners is the foundation of this. We hope to continue Team Reggie fundraising, although maybe for a more local cause and put on another event in 2021 and so on. It warms my heart so much that others have gone out of their way to help us fund the building of a sensory garden and each one of these people are all ARR members.

Ackworth Road Runners is the best club I have ever been a part of and full of the most amazing people I have ever met and I prefer to refer to it as a family rather than a club. My mental and physical health has been massively improved and maintained since becoming a member and I hope others get as much out of being a member as I have.

Chris Sharp, October 2020



