

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

