

In The Beginning

In the beginning there was Todd.

Bob Todd, that is, ex-pro footballer once on the books of Liverpool FC and now living in Howden and nurturing a secret ambition. Taking a leaf out of Martin Luther King's book, Bob had a dream, which was to pass on his obsession with running to the unsuspecting public of Goole.

In his own words: "I float above the mortal plain and see the future - it is wonderful and astounding, I am the Pied Piper and I lead my following of faithful joggites away from that scourge of obesity and lack of faith to the promised land."

I don't think Bob really thought he was the Messiah, just that he got a bit carried away when he put his thoughts down on paper - and anyway he was already one up on Martin Luther King, who to my knowledge never even tried to establish a running club in the Deep South.

To add to his own drive and determination, Bob had two distinct advantages. Firstly the mid-Eighties were the height of the jogging boom, and secondly he was acquainted with Anne Sweeney, who was another fanatical runner. Like Bob, Anne had an ex-City of Hull AC pedigree and remains, at the majority of distances, the quickest Lady runner ever to appear in Striders' colours. She was so thin that Bob used to compare her to the Popeye cartoon character Olive Oyl - a cheap shot maybe, but entirely based on fact. At the time Anne was working at Goole Leisure Centre, which appeared to be an ideal venue for the proposed venture (but more of that later).

So in January 1985 the Sweeney – Todd partnership was formed, and Goole Joggers and Runners Club was born. The first night, involving a Cheese and Wine party as an incentive, attracted about 30 people which was an excellent turn out for a new club. However this is where Bob made a slight error of judgement. On the assumption that they could all run, he proceeded to take them all out on a 4 ½ mile circuit, which we know from subsequent Beginners' Evenings is ambitious in the extreme. Hindsight is a marvellous thing. Anyway, in Bob's words, "some finished, some didn't and some shouldn't have tried."

The inevitable happened and the following week the turnout was down to about a dozen people who would form the nucleus of the Club as it grew. Bob worked tirelessly to advertise the Club to as many people as he could, even propositioning joggers in the street to try and boost the membership. My favourite story concerns the window cleaner who Bob knew was a jogger. "He was rather startled to say the least when I tapped him on the shoulder at fifty feet above ground level!"

Paul Peacock, a quietly spoken but resolute electrician from Rawcliffe Bridge, was our best runner at the time and indeed one of our best ever runners - with a 2.44

marathon to his credit I can't think of many who could catch him - and it was he who came up with the name Goole Viking Striders. John O'Neil, the Club chairman at the time, chose the club colours of blue and yellow.

Records of those early days, mostly written with a quill pen on parchment, indicate the names of such luminaries as Angie Dryden, Dave Campbell, Roger Foster, Ray Smith, Tony Butcher and Steve Mallinder - all still with the Club and going strong, although admittedly some are going stronger than others.