

Matters Arising

The committee in the early days was as ambitious and highly motivated as it is today, but with the added huge advantage of having many more members to work with. As previously mentioned jogging was the In Thing, and once the Club was established people started turning up in droves. The 1985/86 Winter Handicap League attracted over 60 entries, and total membership topped 100. There were Senior and Junior sections, and training nights were held on a Monday at the Victoria Pleasure Grounds and a Wednesday at the Leisure Centre.

The minutes of the March 1986 committee meeting describe the following forthcoming events. Coach trip to Brantingham for run and buffet at Ferry Inn / Video afternoon at Goole Rugby Club / Coach to Roundhay Fun Run / Club Meal at Ponderosa / Coach to Harewood House Chase / Alton Towers Trip / Day out at Scarborough / Club Road Relay / Long Weekend at Nun Monkton. All this between April and August! Proposed activities for the rest of the year included a Disco / Cabaret Evening / Club Time Trials / Visit to Costello track / Bingo Fund Raising Night / Junior Sports Quiz, plus more activities for the thriving junior section.

No wonder they needed a big committee. Chief officers at this time were Bob Todd, Anne Sweeney, Paul Peacock, Nick Parker, Mike White and Simon Ganley, **plus** a social events sub committee of Jill Mountford, Pat Giles, Linda Todd and Ros Miller, **plus** a coaching sub committee of Anne, Paul, Nick, John Mountford, Roger Foster, Len Bunclark, Keith Tattersall and John Littlewood, who would set up training schedules and different routes.

Training was a serious matter in those days. On a Wednesday night everybody would have to decide which of three groups to run with. In Bob's words, Group A was for "elite maniacs", Group B was for "experienced fanatics", and Group C was for "sensibles, newcomers, young people and a quickly maturing Bob Todd". There is no doubt that Bob, Paul and Anne were determined to raise the athletic prowess of the Striders whether the Striders wanted to or not. If you were in the top group you didn't just do a long run slightly faster than everybody else, you would do fartlek, repetitions, hill work and anything else that the leaders decreed. Nowadays, our motto is "No pain -- good!"

The committee also took itself very seriously. One meeting around this time involved a discussion of each person's tasks and the distribution of written job descriptions!

We even had a physiotherapist! Angie Wardle, later to become Tattersall, even later to become McGivern, was appointed Club Physio at the princely sum of £5 per week. It isn't clear from the records as to how many customers fell victim to Angie's healing hands or indeed how many of them were able to walk afterwards! Angie was priceless, with a strong, vibrant personality (some might say overbearing) who was to take one of the lead roles in the running of the club in future years. On a personal

note, when Angie got wind of my divorce in 2000, she immediately set me up with dates with two of her single friends! And she had long since left the club at that stage. What a woman.

Throughout these early days Bob organised events, wrote newsletters, cracked the whip in training (no comments about S & M please!) and generally worked tirelessly to promote the club and to make it grow. He had a large committee to help him but there is no doubt as to where the drive and inspiration were coming from.

Then, out of the blue, he resigned. His reasons for doing so were perfectly valid (pressure of work, family commitments, and a long standing back injury which made it impossible to run to his own high standard) but it left the fledgling Striders with a big gap to fill.

And fill it they did. Roger Foster took over the immediate reins before he and Peter Gray were formally installed as Secretary and Chairman, and they began to oversee a long period of stability within the club which would go a long way towards making it the club it is today. Peter, a dentist, 3.06 marathon runner and winner of the very first Three Rivers race, had strong views about any topic you cared to mention, and being a native of the North East, was not frightened to air them. No training run was complete without a vitriolic tirade against Margaret Thatcher, his least favourite politician! Roger we know well, and more of him later.

The ensuing transitional period saw something of a dip in membership, down to 30 paid up members in early 1987, so much so that the comment was made during one committee meeting that it was no longer viable to hold purely social events, but that we should be aiming for social activities which have a running content. Now, of course, as Ray Smith so succinctly puts it, “we are a drinking club with a running problem”.

But vitally the club survived. Anne Sweeney had long since disappeared to Lancashire with her job, and in November 1987 Paul Peacock and Nick Parker, who had done so much to see the club through its formative stages, both left. Keith and Angie Tattersall were taking on more responsibility, and they were joined on the committee by myself, Ray and Graham Skinner. Graham was (and still is) a big man with a big personality, a permanent smile on his face and a nice line of abuse for anyone he spots out running. He used to look at me with ill disguised contempt and say “I’ve seen more fat on a greasy chip!”

Ray of course was a fantastic club man then and still is now, an excellent runner on his day who could have been even better if he wasn’t so keen on helping others to achieve their ambitions. Who else would take on the single handed organisation of the off road marathon planned for this year? As I write, in fact, the Striders’ Off Road Marathon has been thwarted by the authorities, but I suspect the St.O.R.M hasn’t blown over.

Because I dealt with money in my day job, Peter and Roger thought that I might like to deal with it in my spare time as well, so they asked me to be Treasurer. They were wrong, but I took the job anyway and it paid for my holidays for the next eleven years. Only joking.

Over the next few years the membership stabilised then increased as the Nineties progressed. By 1992 we were up to 64 members, largely as a result of Ray Smith's successful Beginners campaigns, and the 1994 AGM revealed 72 members on the books. The committee meanwhile saw Steve Durose begin a long stint in 1989. Steve, a motor bike fanatic then and now, had come to running from top class water skiing, and although he may have lost a bit of speed over the years as we all have, still trains with the same gritty determination that he always has. Steve made a massive contribution to the Striders right through the Nineties and up to January 2001 when he finally came off the committee.

One thing that Steve and I brought in, around 1991, was the Standards Awards Scheme (see Appendix). This was basically a set of race times at the various distances, varied by age categories, for runners to aspire to. Once their time had been achieved they would be formally presented with either a Diamond, Gold, Silver or Bronze certificate. The scheme went down well while it was running, but it takes a lot of work to keep it up to date and it eventually died the death.

The next appointment to the committee of major significance was that of Dot Pullman as Social Secretary in 1992. Dot and Dave had always been supremely popular club members, but now Dot began to play an important part in organisational matters. Apart from a short break 1998 – 2000, Dot's responsibilities have steadily increased to the extent where I feared that she would take on too much, like Bob Todd did. But Dot takes it all in her stride and remains a totally delightful person without a malicious bone in her body. Dave of course has always been there in support and did a committee stint himself in the mid nineties. More of him and his running exploits later.

1995 saw the departure of Peter Gray and Keith Tattersall. Both had been with the club since it started and both were sorely missed. Keith is a big ex-miner who will keep cropping up in later sections and whose philosophy of life can be summed up by one of his favourite sayings "S**t or bust!" An example of his way of dealing with things: during the early years of the club we were graced by the presence of a local eccentric named Chris Dutheridge, who was a keen runner but had to be hauled before the committee at least once on a charge of making a nuisance of himself. In those days we used to meet up in the Old George after running on a Wednesday, and one night CD was there just being irritating as always. Most of us simply ignored him, but as usual Keith put into words what the rest of us were thinking. "Chris, why don't you f**k off and leave us alone?" At any rate, we never saw CD again.

Alan Bexon came on to the committee at this time to begin a five year reign as Handicap League organiser, probably the most thankless task in the club but one which he did superbly. To do this job you need to be a regular racer with your finger on the pulse of who's doing what and how fast they're doing it, and he was.

The late Nineties also saw the arrival of Mark Smith, for the first of his committee stints, and Phil Ounsley. Mark may have a gruff exterior occasionally (actually all the time) but he has a heart of gold and has been an excellent servant for the club over the years. Poor old Phil (of course he is neither poor nor old) was lumbered with the task of arranging marshals for the River Bank race, a job which drove him to distraction.

That wasn't the only job he did but it will be the one he will remember most fondly. And Phil was to play a lead role in The Great Vote Rigging Scandal, up next.

At the AGM in January 1998, Dot, Ray and Mark decided to come off the committee. A few people were interested in coming on so we gave out voting slips and had an election. Sorry, held an election. Steve and I, as long standing officials of the highest integrity, were entrusted with counting the votes, which we did. To our horror Roger Foster had been voted off the committee by one vote! This was the man who, with others, had rescued the club when it was in danger of folding and as Secretary had led the club through the last twelve years! The Striders had been a big part of his life during that time and we thought that to be voted off would destroy him. We could not let that happen.

And we didn't. We rigged the votes so that the new committee included Rob Colbeck, Lynn Robinson, Caroline Houseman -- and Roger. Unfortunately what we didn't realise was that Phil "Eagle Eye" Ounsley was also keeping a check on the vote count, and our little scam was discovered. What happened next involved the words "s*t" and "fan". An emergency meeting was held the following week at the Bexons' house, at which Steve and I explained our motives. We offered our resignations but surprisingly, considering the magnitude of our transgression, they weren't accepted.

The compromise solution was that in recognition of his loyal service Roger was offered the position of Club President, which he holds to this day. Of course he wasn't destroyed by what had happened, he is made of sterner stuff than that, and he accepted the position with good grace. But I shall never forget the embarrassment of having to come clean and tell him what had happened. I know, serves me right.

Rob Colbeck took over as Secretary, and his first job was to write to Roger thanking him for his "vision, enthusiasm and guidance" over the years. Rob is an absolute gentleman and as Secretary was a past master at choosing the right phrase for the right occasion. He wrote perfect letters to me when I came off the committee and again when I stopped writing race reports, and I shall always appreciate his thoughtfulness in doing that. Fortunately Rob hadn't attended the Keith Tattersall School of Tact and Diplomacy!

Lynn Robinson took over as Treasurer and held that position until 2002 when she started her travels as a diving instructor. A real live wire, Lynn was supremely efficient at her job but most of the men in the club will remember her for her French Maids outfit at Sancton one year. At the cross country stiles we were all transformed into perfect gentlemen. "No, after you, Lynn!"

Caroline Houseman did a great job as Social Secretary and then River Bank Challenge Race Director, but always had difficulty in combining these jobs with a busy lifestyle that involves being out of the country for a large part of the year. Looking after Chris must be a full time job in itself!

In 2000, Dot came back on to the committee in place of Alan, then the following year when Steve and I finally came off, Mark Smith came back on and also Dave Hanney lent his articulate and authoritative presence to the proceedings as Riverbank Race Director. It was also in 2001 that something else happened which was to have far-

reaching implications for the club -- our bus driver Gerald retired! We always looked on him as being our driver anyway, because it was usually Gerald who drew the short straw when Mr Drury was allocating drivers for the Striders' trips. We had a lot more buses in those days, and we got to know Gerald very well -- an ex-miner from Thorne, he was always pleasant and friendly, and never complained once when we were late back to the bus after a boozy session, which I'm afraid was a frequent occurrence. When he retired, we invited him and his wife Sandra to the club on a Wednesday night on some pretext, then presented him with a surprise gift, which I think made up for some of those nights spent tapping his fingers on the steering wheel waiting for us to stagger out of the pub.

In 2002 Liz Binnington came on to the committee as Treasurer to replace Lynn, and then Sandy Clark and Karen Mitchell arrived the following year as a Social Secretary double act. I have the highest regard for these three ladies, not just because I like them enormously as people (which I do -- who doesn't?) but because they have the sort of outgoing sociable personalities which are exactly right for a club like ours which is as much about socialising as running. Each one of them can light up a room just by, well, flicking the light switch.

Rob, Phil and Caroline had come off in 2003, to be replaced by Sandy, Karen and Jed Stone. Jed is great company, a forthright and argumentative character who could pick a fight in an empty room! He speaks his mind and gets things done -- again, ideal committee material. He does have a softer side, of course, clearly shown by his affection for the family dog which is no bigger than a medium size hamster.

The most recent additions to the committee have been Graham Walker, an astute and dynamic local businessman who has already brought a shed load of new ideas to the club, and Julie Masterman, carrying on the family tradition (Julie is Marjorie Firth's daughter) and having the courage to take on organisation of the dreaded Handicap League, which I have already described as the most thankless task of all.

So, after all these comings and goings, the only person to retain any form of responsibility since the early days is our President, Roger Foster, who has seen the club through its first twenty years and no doubt intends to see us through the next twenty. The current committee is as follows:

- **Dot Pullman** Secretary
- **Liz Binnington** Treasurer
- **Jed Stone** Membership
- **Sandy Clark & Karen Mitchell** Social Events
- **Dave Hanney** Race Director
- **Graham Walker** Sponsors and Web Site
- **Julie Masterman** Handicap League