

History of Tring Running Club

What's in a name?

"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" Romeo and Juliet

As we have heard in chapter on the origins of the club, it was born from the running boom of the late 70s with much emphasis on the health benefits of exercise. Although the word wouldn't have been used back then, inclusivity was a strong driver – get as many people as possible as active as possible. The word 'jogging' had a less intimidating feel than 'running' and hence Tring Jogging Club's original name in 1981.

But it wasn't long before the debate started. In 1984, club founder and chairman Ken Laidler, penned an article for the newsletter responding to the few in the club who wanted to change the name to "Tring Road Running Club or Harriers or such". Ken believed that people joined TJC *"because of what we are. A friendly, not too serious, sociable outfit"*. He pointed out that many members turned up on a Tuesday quite happy to run 2 or 3 miles and have a drink and chat. Perhaps a 'fun run' now and then but, in Ken's opinion, these members were not the least bit interested in racing.

Evidently the subject didn't go away. By 1987 a name change was under active discussion within the club albeit with opinions divided. The committee noted that there were no practical reasons not to change the name. The club vest only had "Tring" displayed and, ever conscious of protecting club funds, the supply of printed letter-headed paper had nearly run out!

Chairman Chris Dove took to the newsletter to set out the issue impartially. He summarized the main arguments for changing and retaining the TJC name. The label "jogger" was said to be out of date and might put people off joining the club. Indeed, some did not feel the club catered well for joggers and beginners and it was wrong to give the impression that it did. On the other hand, a more serious sounding name might put off beginners from joining and, also, the existing name had not deterred some serious runners from becoming members of TJC. Chris added that any change would need to be discussed and put to the vote at an AGM. He concluded that the question for members was not one of personal preference but "What is in the best interests of the club both now and in the future?"

Club member Andy Grant duly wrote to the club with a formal proposal for the 1988 AGM. He felt that "Jogging" did not accurately reflect the efforts and achievements of the membership and that an alternative name would

enhance the club's status and give a more realistic understanding of the club's activities. Andy's suggestions for a new name were:

- Tring Road Runners
- Tring Harriers
- Tring Running Club

Debate at the AGM was healthy but opinions were still divided. The formal proposal was made to change the name to Tring Road Runners but, in a classic bit of AGM bureaucracy, two amendments to the proposal were tabled. Firstly that the club be re-named "Tring Runners" and secondly that the name be "Tring Runners and Joggers". The second amendment was defeated but a healthy majority carried the first. The meeting then voted formally on the new amended resolution that, bizarrely, was defeated by a large majority. Tring Jogging Club lived on.

Memories were clearly short. At the 1989 AGM, the name change question was raised again, albeit under Any Other Business. Bob Garland suggested Tring Running Club on the grounds that it would cover all aspects of the sport. As Bob had raised this under AOB no vote was taken and the can was kicked down the road.

Three years later, Keith Moore wrote to club secretary John Shelton proposing a name-change motion for the 1992 AGM. Keith's suggestions were:

- Tring Striders Running Club
- Tring Cavaliers
- Tring Kingfishers

No doubt then chair, Alan Williams, and John were relieved to note that the request was submitted just too late to get on the AGM agenda. The February 1992 newsletter headline was "WOT? NO FLAK?", reporting that the AGM passed uneventfully *"with none of the usual rows about a name change."*

By 1996, the pressure for a name change was rising to boiling point. In a carefully considered letter and AGM debate, Rob Hill argued the case. He pointed out that the club needed to attract younger members and that the Jogging Club name was a deterrent to youth. Secondly, having recently joined Tring and comparing it to several other clubs, Rob observed that TJC's members were involved in a much more diverse range of running activities and that "Jogging Club" was the least appropriate of all the likely names. Finally, Rob pointed out that jogging is not recognized as a specific sporting activity by sports authorities and we might lose the recognition the club deserved.

This last point was supported at the AGM by Bob Garland's speech in which he mischievously cited the dictionary definition of jogging as;
"To move up and down with unsteady motion, to proceed laboriously, to totter slowly, to progress monotonously".

Rob Hill's preferences for a name change were:

- Tring Harriers
- Tring Running Club
- Tring Runners

And at the AGM a few further alternative names were put forward including Rick Ansell's offer of:

- Chiltern Hills Running Club

In the end, it came down to a straight choice between Tring Running Club and Tring Jogging Club. The club's destiny was in the hands of the 37 members present. After a tense count, 20 members voted in favour of the new name, 16 against with one abstention.

So you might have been surprised to read the headline from the next newsletter:

“KEEP ON JOGGING!”

According to the club's constitution, a vote on a name change needed a two-thirds majority. Tring Jogging Club lived to run another lap.

Wednesday 15 January 1997. For a second year running, chair Bob Ford had the delicate task of conducting an AGM debate on the club's name. Tony Hill had put down a motion for a change to “Tring Running Club”. He argued that the club had changed since the early days. It was more diverse in its activities - road, trail, fell, orienteering - and the common link was (of course) running.

Bob added a further option – “Tring Hill Running Club”. Bob's idea was either:

- a clever reference to the club's increasing interest in fell running
- a nod towards a favourite club route – the Bell Loop – that took in Tring Hill on the old A41 to Aston Clinton or
- a mischievous swipe at club stalwarts, Rob Hill, Janet Hill and, name change agitator, Tony Hill.

Tony stated the case for the change. As ever the discussion was heated with fiery passion on all sides. Evidently this was a time before political correctness. In his view, the name Tring Jogging Club conjured up images of runners in pink trainers wearing socks with fluffy pompoms on the heel. The women in the club, led by Frances Mills, took exception to Tony's crude stereotyping until he added that he was referring to the fashion-conscious men.

Eventually it came to the vote. Bob's option was declined and by 27 votes to 9, with the chair abstaining in the interests of fairness, the club became:

TRING RUNNING CLUB

