

12. TRC Personalities

Ken Laidler

Ken was the founder of Tring Jogging Club. He died in 2001 and lifetime member Alan Williams wrote:

It was a shock to learn of the death of Ken Laidler from cancer. Ken was the founder and first chairman of the club, then known as Tring Jogging Club. To those members trying to remember if you ever met Ken I can confidently say you never did. Ken was a larger-than-life character and if you met him you wouldn't forget it! He held pronounced and outspoken views on every subject under the sun.

He was especially passionate about driving TJC from a little bunch of joggers into a successful club. It seems ironic that the two people who did the most to ensure the future of the club have been taken from us. Ken was the dynamic leader driving the members of the club to do more and more while Brenda Barlow worked carefully to ensure the resources were all in place particularly on our big, organised event, The Ridgeway Run.

Just one example of Ken's manic ideas was when he pressed us all to participate in the Amersham 5. It wasn't enough for lots of us to enter the race, we had to show the world what a tough lot Tring were by running from Tring to Amersham before the start: about 11 miles. And as I'm staggering up the Chesham to Amersham hill he drops back alongside me and says, 'We should always attack the hills Alan when we run with the club!'

If I give the impression that Ken was a mixture of Genghis Khan and Hitler then I've neglected to mention his great sense of humour. He would take the mick out of anyone and when he was the butt of the jokes he'd be the first to burst out laughing.

It was a privilege to know Ken Laidler and I think all of us in the club owe him a debt of gratitude for his inspiration and drive in those early years of Tring Jogging Club in the eighties.

Brenda Barlow

Brenda was also one of the founder members of the club. She sadly died in 1992 age 50. Her friends and fellow founder members, Jen and Terry Elliott wrote:

Brenda was probably the most popular member of the club and worked particularly hard as secretary and organiser of the Ridgeway Run.

Brenda joined the club as a complete beginner and progressed from 'up Cow Lane without stopping' to the Sunday Times Fun Run and ultimately the London Marathon twice, once in a time of 4 hours 14 minutes.

She will be long remembered for her organising ability. One of a bunch of novices trying to set up the now popular Ridgeway Run, she was instrumental, with her husband Ken, in arranging the basic organisation which still exists today.

We also remember her tremendous sense of humour. Brenda could always be relied upon to brighten any social gathering or outing. Her repartee with anyone who dared to venture into banter with her was an education to listen to.

After her retirement from running Brenda always turned up to club events to lend a hand – and a voice! In fact, one of her last outings saw her at the finish of this year's Ridgeway Run. She derived much pleasure from the 'joggers' as she affectionately called us and was always interested in the goings-on, especially the gossip.

Her courage in facing her final illness was an example to us all. Sitting in bed, holding court to her many visitors, giving us support and encouragement for the times ahead, making the visits an occasion to remember. Tring and the jogging club will be the poorer for the loss of 'BB' and we, especially, have lost a very dear friend.

John Boielle

When John died in 2012, Tring Running Club lost one of its most colourful and cherished characters. John joined the club in its earliest years in the mid-eighties and contributed hugely to making TRC what it is today. He always made a point of spotting and welcoming new joiners and made sure that they were able to join in, whatever their running abilities.

He was also a regular author of articles and letters for the club newsletter, all of which showed John's great sense of humour. Many of them might not pass the politically correct test nowadays!

During the 1990s and 2000s, John sustained scores of aspiring marathon runners with hospitality at his home in Dundale Road. The Sunday morning runs would start and end at John's house and he would always be there with steaming mugs of tea, cake and biscuits to defrost the gang after 20 miles.

Extracts from the eulogy to John given by Tony Hill:

John was born in Jersey in 1934. During his pre-school years, John moved from Jersey to England. However, in the summer of 1940, along with his sister, he returned to Jersey to spend the summer with his grandparents. This proved to be a defining moment in his life. For, in July of that year, the Germans invaded the Channel Islands, and John was trapped – unable to return home until after the end of the war!

John had an unconventional mind – and that's putting it mildly! He had an extremely high IQ and was intensely curious.

In 1959, he met his future wife Linnet at a party in London and after a whirlwind romance (when did John ever do things slowly?) they married the following year. They moved to Tring in 1967.

John was a man of exuberant passion. He could extemporise on almost any subject – but especially on anything even remotely related to tortoises, motorbikes, real ale, local history, science, or unconventional cooking recipes (apparently, his beef casserole with added strawberry jam was particularly well received!).

John was a very active member of Tring Jogging/Running Club. He served on the committee and, for many years, organised our annual handicap event. Together with Mike Blake, he also provided unstinting support to the Sunday morning marathon training runs. At the end of the run, everyone recovered at John's house with tea and cake – whilst John would give an impromptu lecture on topics including the local watercourses of Tring, or the mating habits of an obscure Madagascan insect!

Most running club members will vividly remember their first encounter with John. On their inaugural outing, John would manage to talk nonstop for the whole run – and then continue his seemingly never-ending story later at the bar. This informal initiation ceremony became known as 'being Boielled'!

His contributions to the club newsletter ranged across the whole sphere of human endeavour! Perhaps his most notorious piece, submitted with scant regard for political correctness, included the line that the 'women could improve their upper body strength by standing further away from the sink when they did the washing-up'. One club member remarked that, when recalling his happy times at the club, all the best of them seemed to have John at their heart.

John was a very special and unique man. He was loyal, steadfast and generous. He was a true nonconformist, an eccentric with a passion for life. He made a positive and unforgettable impact on the lives of all who knew him. I feel privileged to have been his friend.