

## ERIC STUTTARD 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1924 – 3<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2008

I met Eric when I started work at Mons Mill in the 1970's. Eric was the maintenance painter and busy painting the staircase and the windows on one of the landings. I asked him how many bays he finished in a week he said, "about two". I told him that by the time he'd done the whole mill he'd have to start again. He stopped work, came down the ladder and, in a strained voice said, "Don't rock the boat! This is my Forth Bridge...and it's ALL INSIDE!" the last phrase was delivered in a much louder voice and accompanied with a large grin.

This encounter seem to sum up the experience of being in Eric's company. Surreal but always with laughter attached.

Not long after Todmorden Harriers was formed I joined about a year later. We would train twice a week and run or race at the weekends, usually Sunday morning. At this time the jogging boom had only just begun to reach our frontiers.

Anyone in shorts, running along the roadside was shouted and jeered at and came in for criticism. Eric was in his mid fifties when he started running and was the oldest jogger in town. He appeared almost weekly in the local press and rarely turned down an opportunity to do a sponsored run for local charities and societies. He thrived on the taunts and jeers and eventually won some grudging admiration from his critics.

His running style was based on two phases.

PHASE1.Run as fast as possible from the start until worn out, then walk until recovered.

PHASE 2 Repeat phase 1.

We tried to talk him out of it but he felt better doing it this way.

There are many stories of running with Eric covering his instinctive navigational talents which led to discussions about disappearing stiles and the sudden appearance of new walls. After a morning of dehydration and hypothermia on the Gaddings moor trying out Orienteering we decided to use compasses in future event. You could hear the sheep sniggering as we passed. Eric was never upset by any of this and always had a very old joke to cheer us up.

Our most successful collaboration was in the Pram Race. We won the veterans' trophy year after year. In a notable final leg Eric was in the pram after choosing to drink orange juice instead of beer at the last pit stop. As a result his stomach contents went on in advance but we still won the vets prize.

There is much more in the same vein but Eric would be fed up of this by now and I agree.

At the beginning he helped put the Todmorden Harriers on the map with his sponsored runs. He created a good deal of discussion in the town about the role of exercise and running in particular as as a way to being healthy . He encouraged his own children and others to take up the sport and supported the Harriers to the end.

*J Dowling 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008*

Eric was one of the founder members of Todmorden Harriers in February 1978. He was our Honorary Club President.

He loved living and made the most of it at all times.