

George Livesey

George is fairly enthusiastic about everything, but especially running. He's been a keen running competitor all of his life, a good team player and has formed many lifelong friendships along the way. Even from France, he's very much part of the Wilmslow running Club.

Early Life

George and his younger brother were born in Moss Side in Manchester, and from age four lived in Whalley Range in a nice house that backed onto William Hulme Grammar School's playing field, and next to the headmaster's house. Coincidentally, Ian Ashcroft attended William Hulme during the time George lived there.

He went to a private preparatory school in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, and attended St Werburgh's church nearby, becoming a member of the choir and a server. Happy times were spent there in the cubs, scouts, and the youth club.

His mother died when he was at prep school, and as his father had to continue running his business as a coal merchant, he and his brother regularly had to stay with relatives and friends. A time that his brother recalled in later life as "unsettling." After a time, they returned to the family home and had a series of live-in housekeepers. A few years after his mother died, his father remarried: a lady from Yorkshire, who had a daughter ten years older than George. Having had an unsettling early childhood the brothers were now part of a family unit again and were able to enjoy their teenage years.

After leaving preparatory school he attended Didsbury Technical High School but admits being more interested in sport rather than fully concentrating on school work. His brother was the more academic of the two he says. He enjoyed school and was interested in sport: athletics - track and cross country, football, cricket and table tennis. From an early age he was very strong at athletics. "I always aimed to save on the bus fares, so I would run to the next stage stop on the way to school if I thought I could make it! I recall winning inter scouts x-country race and that motivated me even more."

In 1960, at the age of fourteen, and encouraged by two class mates: Peter Abell and Stewart Grace (both became very good athletes) he joined Sale Harriers and was soon running six days a week, competing on the track in the summer and running cross country races during the winter months. As youths and juniors they became one of the top clubs in the country winning Northern and National team races, gaining many individual titles in the process.

Peak youth running

At 16, George broke 2 mins for the half mile: 880 yards. "I knew I was in good shape and ran 1min 58.8 at a Bolton Track Meeting one Wednesday night which got a mention in the Daily Telegraph...and a congratulatory telephone call from the trainer the next morning."

His PB for half mile was 1min 54.8. At one point during a summer season he was 11th in UK ranking lists as a youth. Having come 4th in the Northern 880 Champs he was invited to take part in the AAA's National Junior British championships at Crystal Palace, competing in the 18 to 20 age group. "I got knocked out in the heats after having had to lead the race and didn't run particularly well. Peter Abell beat Mike Tagg to win the mile title that weekend."

His PB was 53.8 for the quarter mile (440 yards) but this was not his favoured distance, being more suited to the half mile. "I recall one Sunday morning training session when, along with two others, and with a rolling start on each of the three by one lap, I completed them in under 52 secs. After the third and without recovery we immediately did 10 x 100yds. I couldn't feel my legs, they were like jelly."

PB for the mile was 4.18 and 9.28 for 2 miles.

Various memories from teenage years

The track in Sale was made of cinders originally and the inside lane in particular usually had a groove in it. Footwear was normally a pair of pumps and the first pair of 'spikes' George owned were bought by his uncle from a large sport shop in London: "they were made of leather, and after getting wet they were rock hard when they dried and took all the skin off my toes and heels."

"All our shorts were made by the trainer's family who ran a clothes business. We never had to buy any and they came in all colours! Track suits were made of thick heavy cotton with 'Sale Harriers' written on the back and 'weighed a ton' when they got soaked. Badges showing achievements were often sewn on the front by proud parents."



George Livesey

Running to be Proud of:

- Fourth place in the Manchester Schools' cross country. "Sale Harriers dominated the top four places and Didsbury Tech won the team race."
- Ninth place in Lancashire Schools cross country which qualified him for the county team. The Lancs youth team then went on to win the English Schools at Coventry for which they received a certificate and a badge.
- Twenty-first place in the northern youths cross country. "With around 400 in the race, it was a useful performance by the team who easily won. I was the 5th Sale runner to finish!"
"When I ran for Didsbury Tech, it was a very strong team as others were also in Sale H. We won the northern schools cross country at Lyme Park where there must have been 1000 runners in my event."
He represented Lancashire Schools at both track and cross country.

George says "I targeted the right distance and training. I trained 6 days a week with the best coach and some very talented athletes around me. It was a very strong generation and was celebrated as part of the Sale Harriers Centenary event at Manchester Town Hall. I learned about camaraderie, how to win and to lose, how to run in a team, to be competitive, and discover my capabilities."

George describes himself as a "useful club runner. Others were more talented but this only spurred me on to train harder."

After leaving Sale Harriers at age 21, he was thinking about re-joining in 1973 at the age of 27. Alan Robertshaw told him that a Gary Davis, a talented athlete had joined Sale and lived in Wilmslow. "I just knocked on his door one day, and from then on we often trained and raced together and became firm friends. Stella and I are still in constant touch with Gary and his wife Pam and stay with them in Sandwich whenever we drive back to the UK."

He's still in touch with many of his friends from that period and meets with them at least twice a year when he returns to England. Peter Abell (an English Schools champion, and AAA mile champion), who now lives in Melbourne, Australia is also part of the get-together via a video call from the pub.

"Alan Robertshaw, the coach at Sale Harriers. was a big influence on my life. He and his family gave us their time in abundance and was the main reason why Sale Harriers youths and junior runners were so successful. He wasn't PC – we got a bollocking if didn't turn up to training, or unthinkably dropped out of a race. But there were no hard feelings - we knew we deserved it, and he enjoyed our respect. Alan's death had a profound effect on a lot of us and I am still in contact with his brother who lives in Wilmslow."

Career

The second major thing that changed his life, after Sale Harriers, was a chance meeting at the age of eighteen with an old school friend on a bus ride from Manchester. His friend had gone into computing and it gave him the idea to do the same. He promptly applied for a job at the North Western Gas board and his successful application changed his career direction from his first job as a trainee buyer, working in central Manchester for GB Olivant, an exporter of goods to W.Africa.

"At British Gas, as it became, I was working with first generation computers. They were big, and performed one task at a time. I remember my first day there when I was literally bamboozled, with the flashing lights on the console, card readers, paper tape readers. etc."

Computers weren't the only things that dazzled him at British Gas, that's where he met Stella at the age of nineteen. They got married at age twenty-one and rented an apartment in Brooklands Road, Sale, before buying their first house in Cheadle Hulme. Three years later they moved to Wilmslow, where Simon was born in 1974 and Anna in 1977.

In his job, he initially learned how to operate the machines, then was sent to London on courses to learn how to program the next generation of machines that were on order. After many years as a programmer, systems analysis and project management work followed.

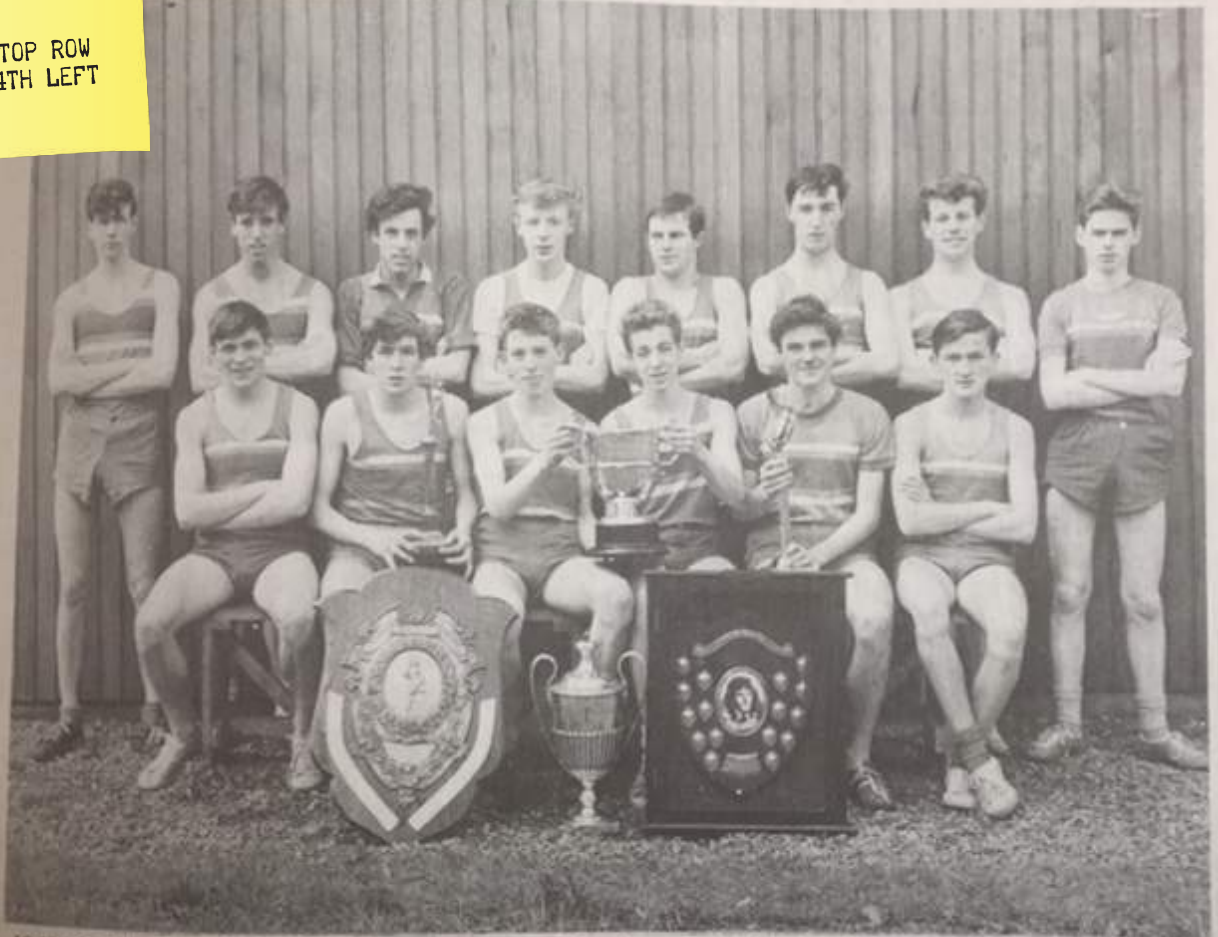
He stayed in IT and British Gas until computing was centralised and the NW HQ in Altrincham was closed. He was made redundant on the back of the re-structure and immediately joined a start-up IT company along with many of the BG staff from around the country with its HQ located in Solihull. He worked for five years at their Manchester office, and was then placed with Fujitsu as a development manager on a customer site in Stoke. Before retiring, he worked a 15 month contract as a freelance Systems Delivery Manager.

Two years after retiring at the age of fifty-five, and having bought a piece of land in southern France he and Stella moved there to manage the building of a house.

MANCHESTER
TO BLACKPOOL
RELAY
EARLY 60'S



TOP ROW
4TH LEFT



1965-66 The Youth and Junior East Lancs, Northern and National Cross Country Champions

The adult running years:

"In 1982 I ran the London marathon, with a target of sub- 3 hours. I trained hard and was knocking out 6min 12sec per mile during long training runs but, on the day I blew it by being too cautious - at 16 miles I was running alongside a horse! Unable to keep to 6 min miles for the last 10 miles I finished in 3hours 7 minutes. Disappointing.

"I had run a 'practice' marathon at Anglesey a month or two before where I was perhaps over confident and set off too fast. and I learned a few lessons. In that race, I was dropped to a target finish of 3 hours 30 which was pointless knowing I was fitter than that, so I didn't bother to finish."

Ten years later he ran London again finishing in 3.08 and a final attempt resulted in a time of 3 hours 14 minutes.

When George joined the WRC the runners included Malcolm, who was the outstanding athlete, Rob Dunkley, Peter Nelson, and of course Tony Hulme who, along with Paul Sanders, Dave Reed and others generously selflessly gave their time in training members. "The club went from strength to strength thanks to their efforts."

He also remembers competing in the Tour of Tameside, completing the Half Marathon event in 1 hour and 28 minutes. Six races in seven days, a good challenge for anyone

"I've always loved the cross country: Boggart Hole Clough, Wythenshawe, Heaton Park....all of them. I still love it 50 years later but not getting lapped as happens now!"

"I've never enjoyed or been good at hills, but realise it is essential training. I always relied on my long legs for speed."

George only ever concentrated on running and didn't do any cross training. He focused on interval training both at Sale and WRC. "At Sale we'd do 4 x 1 mile, at 5 min mile pace. At Wilmslow, Tony's sessions were excellent. I remember doing the bypass sessions. It hurt but was essential training and what I had done in my early years. We also had the hard runs on a Thursday evening, when I'd often try and run with Cecilia and Tony.

I'm lucky not to have had many injuries in my running career, especially when you consider that we ran in plimsoles in my youth. I didn't stretch much, which led to short hamstrings and a slight back problem as I got older."

When George moved to France he joined Sainte Maxine Athletic Club. At that time, he was at the older end of Veteran 2 (50 to 60 years). By the time he moved into V3, he was on the podium almost every week. He trained very hard, mostly on the track, as there's very little local street lighting. He succeeded in beating everyone at one time or another in the Var (the name for a department of Provence), with the exception of one man, who became the 10k French Champion.

Having done the 10k qualifying time the club paid for him and one other athlete to compete in the French championships in Marseille as a V3. He ran in the 10k, completing the first 5k in 21 minutes and the 10k in 43 minutes. At that time, he was running half marathons in 1 hour and 34 minutes.

“I love the races in France. The villages make a big effort to create a great ambiance and locals give the races tremendous support.”

As a club, we've also been over to join George in France to run the St. Tropez 16k three times, the Pertuis festival three times and Nice to Monaco half-marathon. Most recently, George joined Ian Ashcroft, Nicky and Don for a 13k trail (25k for Nicky!) race at Cannes.

Mainly when racing in France, George has represented his club as an individual, however in his early years over there they did an “Ekiden” team event in Toulon, which covers a marathon distance in relay. The club qualified for the French championships with their mixed team. It was held in a Marseilles park on a very hot day, with a ‘stately home’ setting. George completed his 5k stretch in 19 minutes. He remembers the experience fondly, finishing the day on the terrace of the ‘stately home’ along with many other eating and drinking on a warm evening with a lovely French atmosphere.

GEORGE'S ADVICE:

1. **Dedication – unless you put the effort in, you don't get the results.**
Complete the sessions.
2. **Be competitive in training and racing – motivate each other in both. I'd always try and compete against someone of a similar standard in the reps.**
3. **Keeping a diary is a good thing – not just uploading from a watch. The narrative is also important – the feelings and critique. Something I regret not doing!**
4. **Tuesday's sessions are essential – don't miss them and work hard aiming for consistent times.**
5. **Break habits and the mould: trotting out the same times for your training runs when you know you can do better... Force the body and strain lungs.**
6. **I did very little stretching during my youth. Listen to advice from Physios. There's more importance attached to stretching now.**

THE FUTURE:

George has had a lull since Feb 2016 due to an achilles injury but was able to train for the Cannes race in January and has since re-joined his French Club and will be entering V4 races. “I have no targets at the moment. I just want to run for as long as possible and when I can't run, I love walking....so long as I can keep moving!”