

PART TWENTY-FIVE

At the start of 1992 I never would have thought it would be the year I would lose my mother to cancer. It was a shock to my system but thanks ^{to} the support from the club, I managed to cope with her sad loss.

On a happier note it was the year Paul Evans was selected for the Barcelona Olympics and finished a creditable 11th in the 10,000 metres against world class opposition. The club itself was going through a quiet period, mainly due to lack of facilities and some of our long standing athletes either calling it a day or moving onto college or university. However, it was not all gloom and doom. We still had a nucleus of athletes who turned out on the road, cross-country and Track & Field. In May we held our annual Jubilee Trophy meeting at Walmer Road, kindly sponsored by the Rotary Club of Lowestoft and John Grose Ltd. From memory I think the club profited by five-hundred pounds, much needed now membership had fallen. Also the number of active coaches had gone down to single figures, realizing the future would be a struggle for the club.

In 1993 we lost Pete Whall, our very first team manager for Lowestoft A.C. I was still chairman of the club for my sins, and I would hold this position until the amalgamation in March 1996. It was a testing time for everybody, and in 1994 we suffered another blow when we lost Mary James, a stalwart of the club for many years for her coaching to athletics. She would be sadly missed by all members, young and old. In this year, secretary Barbara High relinquished her post after many years of loyal service. Jaquie Woolley was voted in as her replacement. It was coming clear that both us and Beccles A.C. were struggling to attract new membership, the main cause being the absence of all-weather facilities. The word of a possible amalgamation was now being considered by both parties and in June 1995 a meeting was arranged to take place at Walmer Road. It was a very cordial meeting, both sides feeling that the only way forward for athletics in this area would be a becoming together of both clubs. If we stayed as we were, it could be the 'death knell' for both parties, especially on track & field. It was agreed by both clubs to contact Joe Mower, Suffolk AAA Secretary, of our intentions and would put it to the vote to all members of both clubs. Joe informed both clubs that there would have to be a two-thirds of members in favour before an amal-

-gamation could be considered. Both clubs then sent letters to ~~all~~^{ALL} members stating the facts and that a vote would take place in September. The weeks leading to the vote I found there was an atmosphere in the club mounting to some heated views, both for and against, some quite abusive. I was disappointed from the remark of one of our founder members, John Daniels, I quote: 'I'm not concerned about the juniors, I'm only interested in the seniors', a statement that I and many other members thought was uncalled for. It had been decided in June that Beccles would have their vote two days before us. They had no problems in convincing their members, voting unanimously in favour of the amalgamation. It was now down to us. I expected a close vote. The turnout on the night was very high despite the threats of abstentions. We had two independent scrutineers to count the votes and you could hear a pin drop as we awaited the result. Handing me the slip of paper I breathed a sigh of relief when I read out that 70.1% had voted in favour and confirmed the amalgamation would now go ahead. A week after the vote had been taken, both club committees met at Beccles Town Hall, and amongst many things to discuss, both parties agreed the amalgamation should take place at the end of March next year, subject to Joe Mower, Suffolk AAA Secretary, giving his blessing.

It was unfortunate that several members of the club found it hard to accept the vote. There was a threat to a split in the club, especially when a special meeting to choose the new club's name and colours was held. The choice by the majority of 'Waveney Valley A.C' led to a uproar from those opposed to the amalgamation, mainly because of dropping 'Lowestoft' from the title. It was the same story again when the majority of members voted for red, yellow and black for the new club colours. A month before the amalgamation took place a club you know as 'Lowestoft Road Runners' was opened by the discontented few.

On the 31st March, 1996, 'Waveney Valley Athletic Club' was born. Many thought we would not survive very long but I think after nearly 18 years we have proved them wrong. I hope there is now a strong foundation for the club's future years ahead.

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