

1 EARLY DAYS

When I left school, aged 14 in those days, the sports master came up to me and said “Well, Stanley” as he called me then, “ You’re leaving us, I would advise you when you leave to go and join a running club” As he called it then. And that was difficult locally because we had one but that was I wouldn’t say I was too good for them but I couldn’t get the right opposition. So I then switched to another club 2 or 3 miles from where I lived called Southgate Harriers and how I got involved with them, I got in a cross country race as a Boy Scout or Rover Scout and won this cross country race which was ... I wouldn’t say sponsored but was put on by this Southgate Harriers. From then on they got me to join their club and I suppose I can say I never looked back, just improved and improved and got better.

I used to run against Sydney Wooderson, people like him, in fact in 1939 Wooderson was injured and I took his place at my first International in 39 and although I finished fourth I was inside the then British what they called the English Native Record and that was where I was spotted and from then on I got invited to International events.

And then I went on to 3 miles racing – 5000 metres. The press at the time, or media, thought ... well one actually printed that I wouldn’t last, I’d fade away because they considered I was too young to run 3 mile races but of course they do it nowadays all the time.

In 39, before the war, I was called up into the RAF, supposedly for 6 months then you were supposed to go back to your original job. Well during that 6 months I had to get released from the RAF in civilian clothes to go to Germany to run against Germany I daren’t go in RAF uniform. This was an international match – England against Germany in Cologne in late August 39 about 10 days before war broke out, about September the 3rd I think. I was in Germany winning this, 10 days before we went to war with them.

2 TRAINING & EQUIPMENT

We used to work in those days from 8.00 in the morning to 6.00 at night and Saturday morning we had to work in those days, so I had to do all my training in the evenings. We had a track which I used to use in the summer – that was in Southgate – I had track training you only trained, in those days, two evenings a week and race on Saturday, that’s all the training we used to do but once I took up road-running I didn’t do much more track racing it was all pounding the roads.

Running longer distances, I trained 3 times a day. I used to work at that time about 2 or 3 miles from home and what I used to do in the mornings I would put my running gear on, instead of running the 3 miles to work, I used to make it longer to get to work. And I had arrangements there that when I got to work, had my shower, I had to leave a suit of clothes at work obviously to change back in then I used to go down the canteen to have breakfast and then off to the office.

I had a friend, his name was Norris MacWhirter one of the MacWhirter twins they used to write the Guinness Book of Records, and he measured my stride and – being a clever man – he worked out how many times I lifted my feet off the ground in 26 miles. And he advised me to, in training, wear heavier shoes than what I race in. And you can imagine the difference wearing heavy shoes and then getting to a race with a pair of Dunlops that were

9s 11d in old money ... it was like running on air but mind you they only used to last me the one race, I used to wear them out, my heels and toes Happy days, cos now they've got proper road shoes haven't they.

Later on Dunlop Footwear Division contacted me and they used to supply me with, I think they were different colours, green flash, white flash, red flash – I think that was what they called them to run in and then I used to send them back to Dunlops who used to put them through their laboratories with a view to seeing how they wore and improving them. So I was in on the ground floor with that. That's how you got better shoes later on cos' I wore the other ones out too soon.

3 LONDON OLYMPICS 1948

Everything was rationed in this country, at one stage they sent us all to Dublin to boost our weight up with steaks. See Southern Ireland weren't involved in the war so they had plenty of food so at one stage they sent us across to Dublin to eat well.

I got selected in the 48 games because I'd already been an International before the war and I was 6 mile British Champion in 48 was how I got selected. The actual Games at Wembley I ... people won't believe this.. I had to take a day off work, unpaid ... it was either unpaid or take it off your holiday... I think at the time I took it off my holiday in order to run for Britain. Just unheard of!

We were accommodated in RAF Uxbridge but see I only stayed there a couple of days and nights, I had to go back to work, I couldn't see the rest of the Games. And then I took my time off to run in the Games and then couldn't afford to lose wages. I think I ran the Games on the Friday I think it was and the next day I was back to work. In 48 we had to wear a beret with an Olympic badge on and I'll read from this book- "the beret must be worn with the band level around the head one inch above the eyebrows, the crown to be pulled to the right with the badge over the left eye. See photo page 4". Wembley only had a greyhound track at the time and the track was put down brand new for the Games ... only a cinder track ... nothing like ... I mean the sprinters had to dig holes with a trowel to put their feet in, no starting blocks... and the ... when the Games were over they lifted, took the track up and there's a club in London called Eaton Manor Sports Club, quite famous in those days, and they laid that track down at Eaton Manor Sports Club so Wembley never had a track at all apart from a dog track.

Oh yeah, "Ovaltine will be available free to all members a special sweet and chocolate ration of 8 ounces per person per week can be purchased by all members of the team.." (laughs) you had to buy your own chocolate. Now there was a BBC commentator named Harold Abrahams, at the time he used to commentate on athletics and that and to his dying day he claimed I ran a lap too many ... which has been in the media. And the reason was there was a runner called Zatopek who was famous. And he claimed the judges, judging what used to be 24 laps of the track and as he went past, it would come down 23 to go and so on. And Harold Abrahams claimed because of the miles of Zatopek, the lap judges took their mind off the job at the time and he claimed that I didn't get the bell when I should have done. I got the bell a lap too late... which meant the last lap. Which meant my time would obviously have been a lot faster. Never mind.

4 HELSINKI OLYMPICS 1952

I went into long distance running in 1950, 1950. I stepped up into 10 mile races, 15 mile races, 20 mile races and then eventually the full marathon. The race from Windsor Castle to Chiswick in London in 1952 I think it was ... the time that Jim Peters and myself did was for, as I said world best, wasn't believed by the rest of the world – as far as marathon running- so they had to re-measure the course . Well when they re-measured the course, It was half a mile – 800 yards – too long so which would have made our times that little bit better.

They used to have a clock to time it and they used to set it off once the race had started and then they'd dash up to the 5 km mark with that clock. That's how they timed everybody going through the ... 5km, 10 km, up to 42 kms. That's the only way they used to time it. One clock. That's how they could give us a print out of these races of all the kilometre stages.

Because Jim Peters and myself were the top, in those days, the top two marathon runners in the world, in order to avoid the media in Helsinki we got permission not to fly out with the team but to stay at home and do our training as close as possible as we could to the Games. The Games lasted a fortnight. We flew out about 3 days before the Games and the plane we flew in, believe it or not, were boneshakers. Old York aircraft that were used for carrying freight and they just put seats in it. When we got airborne, I had my hand luggage down on the floor with a label on. We got airborne I looked to the left and the label on my luggage was flapping about and I could daylight through the door. Weren't pressurised – that's what we had to travel in. So being as it's on my left side, when it comes to the race, I collapse. My feet upwards on this left side I just couldn't feel ... it just went dead. And I just collapsed ... I'd done 22 miles I think of the 26. And when we got back to England, I had to go to Harley Street to see the sports doctor – in fact the doctor we saw in those days was the Queen's doctor ... what was his name? ... anyway he was the Queen's doctor at the time. And they put this down to the fact that we were in this plane and we could see daylight, it affected this left side. So that was that.

5 STAN'S MESSAGE FOR 2012

I shall be 94 in 2012 and if I feel like I am now I actually want to take part in some way. I'd like to carry the torch, even if it's only for a 100 yards or something and hand over to the one that's going to go in and light the flame. That's my ambition. And it would be quite a story wouldn't it?