

Dated 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020

The North Fylde AC squad of runners and support team at Lands End before starting on their epic Relay

Twenty five years ago North Fylde AC (NFAC) runners were on the starting line at Lands End ready to run a continuous Relay to John O' Groats. A year before in 1994, NFAC had competed in, the then annual, Manchester to Blackpool Road Relay. During the afternoon after the Relay had finished, Kevin Ryan, a Founder member of North Fylde AC, was checking through the results, when he collapsed and died from an unknown heart problem, leaving a young widow, Jenny and daughter. He was a much loved friend and teammate and to recognise his passing it was decided to raise money for the British Heart Foundation by running a Relay from Lands End to John O' Groats.

The runners to carry the baton from Lands End to John O'Groats, were Tony Airnes, Tony Croft, Bill Davies, Paul Hodges, Martyn Jackson, Bill Johnson, Bob Fairclough, Mick Edge, Carl King, Gary Johnson and Nick Hume, who worked as two teams of five in two Van's. The backing crew, driving the buses, providing the food, etc were David Ford, John Horan, Nigel Pawson, Ray Preston, Rod Hardacre, Maureen Shenton, Dave Noble, Mike Wright, Liz Airnes, Nick Hume, Bill Davies, Avril Minton, Karen Webster and Pat Wright, while Jane Shelton with Mr & Mrs Jackson provided home base.

Overall this venture went well but there were inevitably a few problems, with one before they even started running. Four Vans travelled down to Cornwall but unfortunately the skylight blew off the camper van onto the M6 carriageway, and was promptly flattened by a lorry. For the rest the trip to Scotland, and back to Blackpool, a plastic bag, secured by sellotape covered the hole.

On the night before the start the team stayed at Golant Youth Hostel. Next day they travelled to Lands End for the start having discovered they had left one of the runners, Gary Johnson, behind at Golant. Of course it was before the days of mobile phones, but they phoned the Youth Hostel and arranged to pick him up as they ran by later in the day.

It was also before the days of GPS in vehicles, and obviously they had to avoid motorways, so sometimes the Van's did go astray, but only temporarily. One time near Edinburgh, one van with the runner running along side was stopped by the police, and although it was an A road, the police treated it as motorway. By the end of his third leg Bill Davies was forced to withdraw with fatigue, but Nick Hume, who was part of the team officially as a driver, and had already run three legs unofficially stepped in to replace Bill.

Other than these minor problems, everything generally went well, and the whole team crossed the finish line together at John O'Groats at 10pm on 27th May 1995, having run 893.7 miles after 4 days and 7 hours. The team raised a magnificent £10,000 plus for the British Heart Foundation

