

TOM SMITH

In 1947 Tom Smith, owing to ill health, asked to be relieved of the office of Hon. Secretary, a post he had held for the past 50 years. He was the only remaining founder member and during that year a testimonial fund was set up and a presentation made to him at a social evening and dance held at the Ambulance Hall on Thursday 25th September 1947. Tom died, aged 73, on 24th February 1948 and at a Special General Meeting, held to elect a new Treasurer, tributes were paid to him and members stood in silence as a mark of respect. Tom had been employed for 45 years at Bingley Post Office and for 23 years was the secretary of the Bingley Branch of the Postman's Federation. For 35 years he had been caretaker at the Baptist Church. He had been the secretary of the Bradford & District Cross Country Association since 1912 and its President since 1939. He had also been the President of the Yorkshire Cross Country Association from 1942 to 1944. An obituary printed in The Bingley Guardian read:

"(He was an) old fashioned conscientious type of secretary who had only one object in his association with the sport, to give it all the service he could. And right well he did it. His services were recognised in September last year, when his friend, Mr HM Dawson, handed him the club's gold medal and a cheque to mark his long service to the sport. He never sought fame for himself, but he knew that he had earned the commendation of his peers in the field of athletics and the medal, which he held for the last few months of his life, was his proudest possession. It was the only recognition he asked".

BOB SMITH



Bob Smith

Robert W Smith was amongst several new members who were recruited in 1919 and, became an important figure in the history of Bingley Harriers. He was born on 5th December 1902, worked at Parkinsons in Shipley and lived in Charles Street, Bingley. He was appointed Assistant Club Secretary in 1946 and was made Secretary a year later. He remained Club Secretary for 26 years before being forced to retire in 1972 because of poor health. He was Club Captain for a number of years and was elected a Life Vice-President in 1948. He was President of the Bradford & District Cross Country Association for 16 years and a past President of both the Yorkshire and Northern Cross Country Associations. He was elected a Life Member of the English Cross Country Union in September 1973.

Bob was a good runner who enjoyed a certain amount of success at local level. He won the sealed handicap in the Club Championship in his first season and was the Club Champion in 1921, 1923, 1933, 1934 and 1935, the 1933 race being run in a snowstorm. Despite being 'scratch' man for many years Bob still managed to win the Christmas Handicap in 1920, 1931 and 1932. His first local success came in the popular Wibsey Park Whickham Shield Open Handicap Road Race over a distance of 7 miles 560 yards in 1921 which he won in 46min 38sec from a start of 4 minutes. In local cross country championships Bob was 9th in the Bradford & District in 1926 and 20th in 1930. His best position in the Yorkshire Championship was 29th in 1923.

It was Bob's organisational ability that was largely responsible for making the Bingley Club what it is today. Together with Bill White and Edgar Jowett he organised track meetings which had previously never been held by the Club. He

started Open Handicap events in 1947 which were traditionally held at Beckfoot on the 2nd Saturday in January for many years. This race later moved venue to Myrtle Park and finally to Roberts Park in Shipley. This ability to organise events successfully was recognised in 1954 when the Club promoted the Yorkshire Championships at Milnerfield Farm. No other local club had previously hosted such events and it was due mainly to Bob Smith's guidance that Bingley Harriers were looked upon as competent organisers. Bob went on to help the Club promote the Northern Championships in 1958 and 1962, the Inter-Counties in 1961 and the Yorkshire Championships again in 1960, 1968 and 1971. It was said at the time that he had probably organised more northern athletic and cross country events than any other secretary.

Bob died in 1974 and the 'Bob Smith Memorial Races' were started in December that year. Fittingly these were the open handicap type of events he had started 25 years earlier. Later the handicap races were replaced in favour of a New Year's Day Road Race. The first, over 6 miles, was held in 1985 from Baildon Recreation Centre and, in 1988, the venue was changed to the Bradford & Bingley Sports Club in Wagon Lane, Bingley and the distance altered, first to 10K and then to 5 miles. Nowadays the 'Bob Smith Race' is a club handicap event held in St Ives Estate at Harden.

Bob Smith was dedicated to the sport and his attitude towards it was demonstrated when he said

"You cannot all be champions but you can enjoy athletics and derive great pleasure in competing and meeting people - and remember to do your best for the Club".