

Barbara Robson

When and how did you start running?

At the age of 11 in 1944 at Whitley Bay Grammar

Do you remember your first race?

First school sports day in 1946

Did you have any success once you started running and beyond?

Yes, I was a winner on several occasions for my school, county and running club – North Shields

I heard you were quite a decent sprinter back in the day, what are your personal bests and when did you do this?

I don't recall my personal bests or when I would have done them for the 100 metres. Back in pre-decimal time, the equivalent of 100 metres was the 100 yards.

Used to run 5kms in around 17 mins

Canterbury Half Marathon – 1992 – 1:47:35

New York Marathon – 1992 – 3:56 my 3rd marathon of the 6 completed

London Marathon – 1997 – 4:02

Was running up to 67 miles a week when training for Marathons



Barbara Robson - New York 1992 - London 1997

Injuries and set backs?

I used to be an actress, so training had to fit in with rehearsals and the shows, so I suppose this limited the amount of training that I could do.

My biggest set-back was in probably in my school days. As part of the Northumberland Girls' team, I was entered in a hurdles race in Southampton, which was the race to qualify for the Olympic team. My coach hadn't realised that my 80 yards hurdles event had changed to 80 metres. The difference in technique and timing can't just be changed overnight. Sadly, I came 3rd and didn't get into the Olympic team, as only the first 2 would qualify. One went on to win the Olympic race and claim Gold.

Embarrassing moments? Was on Holiday at Rothesay – went for a 5-mile run along the promenade, bought a Sunday paper on the way back, then went to the hotel's breakfast bar to then hear a shout from Frank my Husband. He said "she's not wearing any shorts". I was wearing my Metros' shirt proudly whilst showing off mini scale panties.



You have been a member of Metros for 30 years, what are your fondest and as well funniest moments / memories?

The warmth, love and strength / support given through difficult times from many of my now closest friends from this running club. Funniest has to be dressing up for Midsummer Madness, especially when I wore my Tina Turner wig.

Achievements? And biggest achievement?

Running Marathons and in particular running the New York marathon where I finally ran in under 4 hours, at the age of 58

Have you run in other countries?

I've run all over the world, mainly when I was travelling. But one stand-out moment has to be when I was offered the opportunity of running at the Stadia in Olympia, Greece, A 192.5 metre straight which was used in the Olympic games back in 724bc. After running it, I was presented with an Olive Branch, a moment I have cherished since.

Sprinting to Marathons – what changed?

I stopped running / sprinting at the age of 23. We decided to have children, had twins - baby daughters - and then another daughter, so running took a back seat whilst we brought them up. 31 years later I decided to join Metros to combat my asthma; initially I started walking then running before building up the distance.

Have you raced / beaten a famous runner before?

Joyce Smith – in the old days, equalled her times and ran with her often. Back in 1971 Joyce broke the Women's 3000m world record, and was the first women to win the Women's elite London Marathon in 1981 and then 1982

Joining Metros

Back in October 1988 - When I joined Metros, I remember having my spikes in the boot of my car, so when turning up to Roxbourne Park on my first outing, these were obviously not suitable. You have to remember I hadn't run in anything different before.

When was your last race?

At the age of 64, I was running a 10k race at Stockley Bridge when I ran into huge difficulties with my breathing, her lungs just stopped working the way they should do. I was later diagnosed as having Chronic Obsessive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). So that was it for my running days.

Medals and T-shirts – you must have a fair few – do you still have them? What's your favourite one?

Had well over 200 medals and have given a few away – some I look often as they hold great memories. Favourites though are the ones where I have some sweatshirts from some road running events in Kent and of course the medal from my New York Marathon

What do you love about being a member of Metros now?

Being a member now for 31 years, I love the friendships and people that are old and new and the support that everyone gives. It's amazing that a running club that I joined so many moons ago has given me so much joy, through doing the things I used to love doing and also to have made so many great and lasting friendships.

Favourite race and why?

Of course, the New York Marathon, it truly was an astonishing moment.

More than the Refreshment Queen – how come you took on this role?

I had been coming along to the Saturday sessions and I hadn't quite worked up to running yet as I was just coming along to walk. On the 2nd Saturday, Kosta said that if someone doesn't take over from his wife Molly (who was then handling all the refreshments) that they wouldn't get refreshments anymore, so I volunteered to look after them, not realising that I would be known to everyone now as the Refreshment Queen.



Barbara and team preparing for the TVXC onslaught of wet, muddy, hungry runners

In your prime I'm sure you would have given our current members or some of them a good run for their money, which member would you love to go up against and why?

Nigel Rackham – due to him being a brilliant runner and has a winning attitude. In my prime I was as competitive as Nigel is now and although I might have been slightly slower, Nigel is certainly someone I hugely admire and would have loved a good race against.

What advice would you give to the aspiring runners who are young enough to know their best years are ahead of them?

You must train to improve. You need to enjoy your running, have a plan, don't just go out and run, be disciplined and use the people around you.

If you were stuck on an island and could invite someone famous from the running world past or present who would it be and why?

Roger Bannister – I was a school-girl at home with my Mum and Dad, listening on the radio to Roger Bannister breaking the 4 min Mile, so it would have to be him that I would have on the island.