

The Day that Changed my Life

Thursday 23 December 2004 was the day that changed the life of Orpington's Danny Lavender for ever.

From a very young age he was always interested in sport and it was at secondary school that his love for endurance started. "I remember doing cross country and realising as well as enjoying it I was actually quite good at it", says Danny.

"I continued my love of running in order to keep fit and in 1988 decided to compete in my first half marathon. The following year I competed in 3 other half marathons and extended my interest in long distance running, first to 30K in the North Downs Run and then to a full marathon in Maidstone. Over the next 3 years I continued to compete in half and full marathons and it was always my dream to do a marathon in less than 3 hours."

His first attempt was in Helsinki in 1990 where he clocked 3:16. The following year he returned and was amazingly close to achieving his dream with a time of 3:05. Back on UK soil he ran the London Marathon in 1992 in a time of 3:07 - another good time by anyone's standards, but he struggled to recover from severe exhaustion and could hardly walk, had a pins and needles sensation and was eventually sick.

That was the last of his marathons, although Danny did continue to compete in endurance events. In fact by 2004 he had competed in a total of 4 marathons, 33 half marathons, 2x30K and 10x10K runs.

It was in 2004 that he started to realise that after a few miles of running his right leg and arm became stiff and his running technique became uncoordinated. The stiffness extended to his walking and he began to drag his right leg, it was at this point



that a work colleague suggested that he needed to see a doctor. The appointment was set for 10.30 am 23 on December 2004. "I woke up that day with a degree of eagerness to know what was wrong with me. I asked the Doctor what he thought the problems was - he said I think you have Idiopathic Young Onset Parkinson's Disease. My stomach dropped. In the following few months I lived in complete denial of its existence."

However, after reading a newspaper article he met with Alex Flynn a 37 year old lawyer, adventurer and ultra-endurance athlete who had also just been diagnosed with Parkinson's. He had a vision to cover 10 Million Metres through competitive races and raise a million pounds for his chosen charity - The Cure Parkinson's Trust - to further research and to help find a cure for this horrendous disease by doing some amazing feats of endurance. "Alex instilled in me the ethos of channelling my anger and frustration in having Parkinson's in a positive and rewarding way by undertaking the same

journey."

In September 2013 Danny set up his charity - Beat Parkinsons, www.beatparkinsons.co.uk, with the support of the experienced charities team at Orpington solicitors Clarkson Wright & Jakes, who were instrumental in advising him on selecting the most appropriate structure for the charity as well as assisting with its registration with the Charities Commission.

What does the future hold in store for the inspirational Danny Lavender? "I want to keep my focus; I want to enthuse others to reach and achieve their goals in life which they can do with the right mental attitude and pure hard work."

