

Tom – By Bref O'Rourke.



The weather that fateful evening was atrocious with high winds and rain and clag down. As usual, at 6:00 prompt, the Smelly Helly walkers reluctantly left their warm cars, parked on the old railway track and braved the wild wind and rain hurrying past Bank Foot farm and up the old Turkey Nab track to seek shelter in the woods. As I walked I remember noticing Tom lagging behind a bit so I kept glancing back to see that he was keeping up with us until at the track bend he went out of my sight.

Reaching the top track junction we regrouped and waited for Tom. However we weren't to know there would be no further walk that evening.

Suddenly Bob's phone rang. It was his daughter Amy. Arriving late, she told her dad she had been following Tom up the track when he'd suddenly collapsed in front of her. Hearing this we all rushed down the track to Amy, coincidentally meeting her with the Smelly Helly runners who'd just arrived too.

Tom lay motionless and had stopped breathing. Without hesitation the emergency services were called and CPR was started, everyone glad to take their turn. Someone was sent to meet the emergency services and within 15 minutes the emergency response doctor arrived and she quickly attached Tom to a defibrillator. Under the machine's instructions we all took turns to continue CPR between defibrillation.

About half an hour had passed when the Air Ambulance arrived. How did the pilot manage to land safely in those atrocious conditions? The Air Ambulance doctor now took charge of the situation directing us to continue with CPR and defibrillation. At about 6:45 the moment came we were all dreading. Despite all our efforts he told us to stop CPR. He said after nearly 3/4 of an hour there had been no response from Tom. He said we had done all we could for our friend and that nobody could have done more but that Tom had gone. We all looked at each other finding it hard to take it all in.

A final request from the doctor was for us to stretch our friend Tom into the ambulance that had just made its way up the track. We duly obliged.

The post mortem revealed Tom had suffered fatal damage to his heart and that death was probably instantaneous.

Elayne, Tom's wife, said later how much Tom looked forward to Tuesday night adventures with the Smellys and that she was comforted by the thought that he had died doing something he really enjoyed and more so that he didn't die alone but was in the company of his friends who she deeply appreciated all their efforts to revive him.

RIP Tom.

