

DAVE Spencer was born to run and has been doing it for more than 60 years. Dave will celebrate his 80th Birthday on 26th July and to mark the occasion Barrow Athletic Club sprung a surprise presentation at Holker Old Boys football club which was a club training base for many years. Athletic Club Chairman Les Middleton described Dave as “a true gentleman and role model for anyone taking up the sport “

Dave who has received many accolades during his illustrious career is hoping there are plenty more miles left in his 80-year-old legs as he continues in the sport.

The Barrow and Striders Athletic Club member still manages to run around 20 miles a week, pacing it out at the Park Run or with his friends at the Walney Wind Cheetahs.

He won the gruelling Ben Nevis three times on the trot, the last occasion crossing the line with teammate Mike Vickers. He was crowned over-60s winner representing England in the British and Irish championships raced in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, and led the Three Peaks 23-mile challenge for 18 of them, before tiredness overtook him.

His peak years were in the late 50s to mid-60s when he competed in track, cross country, road and fell running – he has done the lot.

He feels his best distances have been from one to 10 miles, although he did once try a marathon but felt it was too far and decided he did not have the body strength for the rigours of the 26-mile discipline.

The former Vickers drawing office employee cut his athletic teeth in his hometown of Ulverston, running his first race over Hoad at the age of 11 when he was a pupil of Ulverston Victoria school.

“I was a first year runner, I was third,” he recalled. “I was born in Ulverston and I had natural training, Hoad was our play area.

“I wasn’t very good at bat and ball, I found I could run better than I could play football or cricket so I carried on. I just did the school runs for the next five or six years and then, at 17, I joined the Barrow Athletics Club.”

He talks about the sport with an abiding passion and has a record that would be the envy of many other athletes.

“When I was in my teens that was my life,” he said. “I went to Vickers and virtually the rest my life and all my money was spent going to races.”

He added: “I do four runs a week, that’s the parkrun, a run on Saturday morning and also train with the Walney Wind Cheetahs.”

Although Dave is hampered with his vision on his left side, it hasn’t put him off running, and he has some advice for those wishing to take up the sport: “Join a club, do the park runs.”

He said “Join a club it’s better than competing on your own.

“A lot of people think when you join an athletic club it is full of star runners that are going to run off and leave you, but that’s not the case. They are there to cater for all age groups

He remembers competing in a cross country race in Belgium where he finished in the top 10.

In 2013 with his long-time running friend Peter Hall they achieved a remarkable double in the British Masters 5km Road Racing Championships race held in Horwich to win their respective age groups, Peter the vets-70 race and Dave the vets-75.

Dave, a one time treasurer of Barrow Athletic club has lifetime of memories, but he concluded: "I lost my wife two years ago, I had virtually given up, but I went back and started racing again. It's like a running family, I've really got good friends in the athletics world."

Dave Spencer and Peter Hall pictured together in 2013 after their winning the British Masters 5k

