

LIFE AFTER TANFIELD



NAME MARK HODGSON

PUPIL AT TANFIELD FROM 1975 TO 1981

MY LIFE AFTER LEAVING TANFIELD

I left school after a brief spell in lower sixth in February 1981 and joined the Royal Air Force as an apprentice engineering technician; this didn't work out as the practicalities of metal work and applied maths was not my skill. I returned home and continued playing football for South Moor Juniors then Stanley R.A.F.A. and cricket for Beamish and East Tanfield Cricket Club. Sport kept me sane as job opportunities were scarce. It's true what they say, it's easier getting a job when you have one. I was unemployed for 18 months. I joined the Durham Special Constabulary with the aim of following my father but interviews were never my forte so after a couple of failed attempts I needed to look elsewhere. I was fortunate to get a part time job at Stanley Baths and trained as a lifeguard. I was in the job for two years; it was then I saw an advert looking for a part time ambulance driver. I was successful at interview and started at Blaydon Ambulance station. I was 21.

Six months part-time resulted in a full-time job and in being sent on a driving course followed by the basic six-week qualifying Ambulance Technician course at Keighley, West Yorkshire.

From being just a driver at Ambulance Stations Blaydon and Washington, I moved to Gateshead and started working on the Accident and Emergency vehicles 24/7, 365 days a year! Rotas and shift work curtailed all team sport. Two years later I was deemed qualified. There was no 'Paramedic' back in the early 80s. In 1990 I passed my entrance and passed my exams to become a IHCD Paramedic. Mid-90s saw me promoted to Station Officer and moved to Sunderland. The year now would be 1996 and I was 33. Northumbria Ambulance service collaborated with Charles Sturt University in Australia and started the first University program for Paramedics. I volunteered and started a 3 year self-learning distance degree (no internet, just books and floppy discs - Windows 3.1 was the operating system). Leaving school with 6 GCSE 'O' levels, I now could put BSc after my name.

I moved North, so transferred to work at Wallsend followed by Cramlington. A restructure took place which resulted in me not applying for a manager's position; I was content to be just a paramedic. By now I'd been a paramedic for 25 years, hence my low HCPC (Health & Care Professionals Council) registration no. PA 00039. At 50 I'd had enough of nightshift. The job was changing. I retired but returned and started working out of Blyth on a rapid-response car. This lasted 5 years before a reshuffle resulted in the car being disbanded north, so I made a final move to Ashington where I find myself based now, working 27.5 hours per week. I have been in the Ambulance service now for 37 years and working practices have changed a lot and training improved. All paramedics are now university trained.

I have plenty of days off and enjoy my time playing as much golf as I can. I have recently taken a position on the directors' board at Newbiggin Golf Club.

I've been married 3 times, have 2 great kids (22 and 20) from my second marriage, and am currently married to Jill for the past 11 years, living in Bedlington.