

"THE BOYS IN RED"

ELSWICK HARRIERS 1889 to 1989

NICK MURRAY



"The Boys in Red" **A History of Elswick**

Harriers 1889-1989

This book attempts to tell the story of Elswick Harriers. From the earliest foot-races through the grimy streets of victorian Tyneside right through the years to the present day.

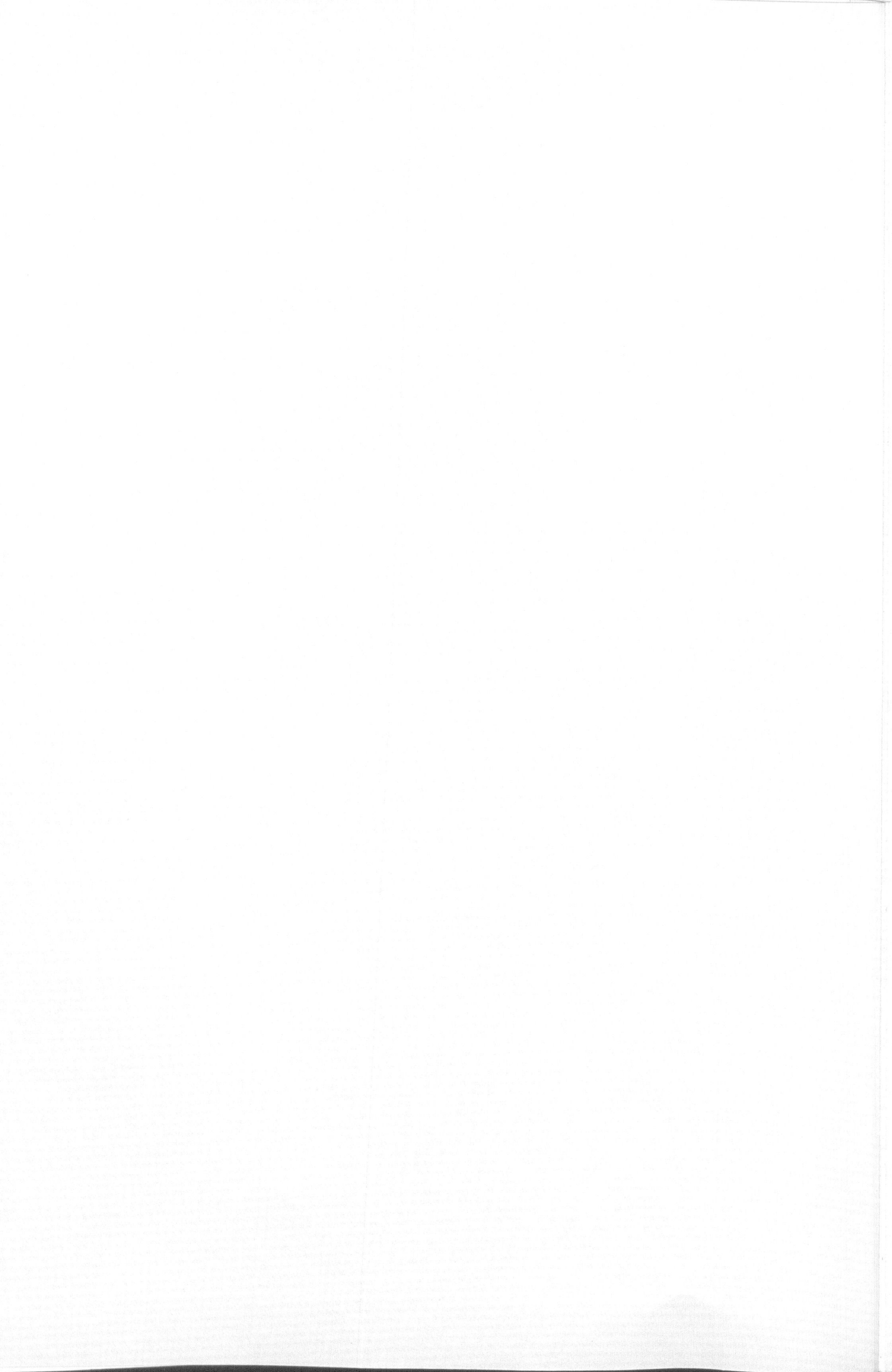
The writer has produced not a definitive work, lack of reliable source material has made such an approach impossible. It is rather a broadly based chronicle featuring the great Elswick athletes of the past and their major achievements.

In any historical context only the names of the famous or the infamous seem to survive on record and this is true of athletics in general and of Elswick in particular. The names of those "ordinary club members" who down the years have worked tirelessly to make possible the feats of the few, have for the most part sadly slipped from the pages of history.

It is to the latter group that this book is dedicated.



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Acknowledgements

The Boys in Red was born out of an idea discussed at a monthly Committee Meeting in 1987. As the centenary was fast approaching members felt that some effort should be put into recording the history of Elswick Harriers and getting it down on paper.

Working as a graphic designer, and possessing an 'O' level in English language was, I thought at the time, qualification enough for the task ahead. Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread; was a proverb that was to haunt me for months.

Writing this book has been the most difficult, tedious, yet rewarding task that I have ever undertaken. Without the help of so many people I am sure the project would have sunk without trace.

To acknowledge everyone who has helped me with research material, photographs, stories and anecdotes would fill a chapter. I am sure I will be forgiven if I mention Mr. Terry Monaghan, for without his help, the task would have been quite impossible. So can I just extend my grateful thanks to The Boys and Girls in Red.

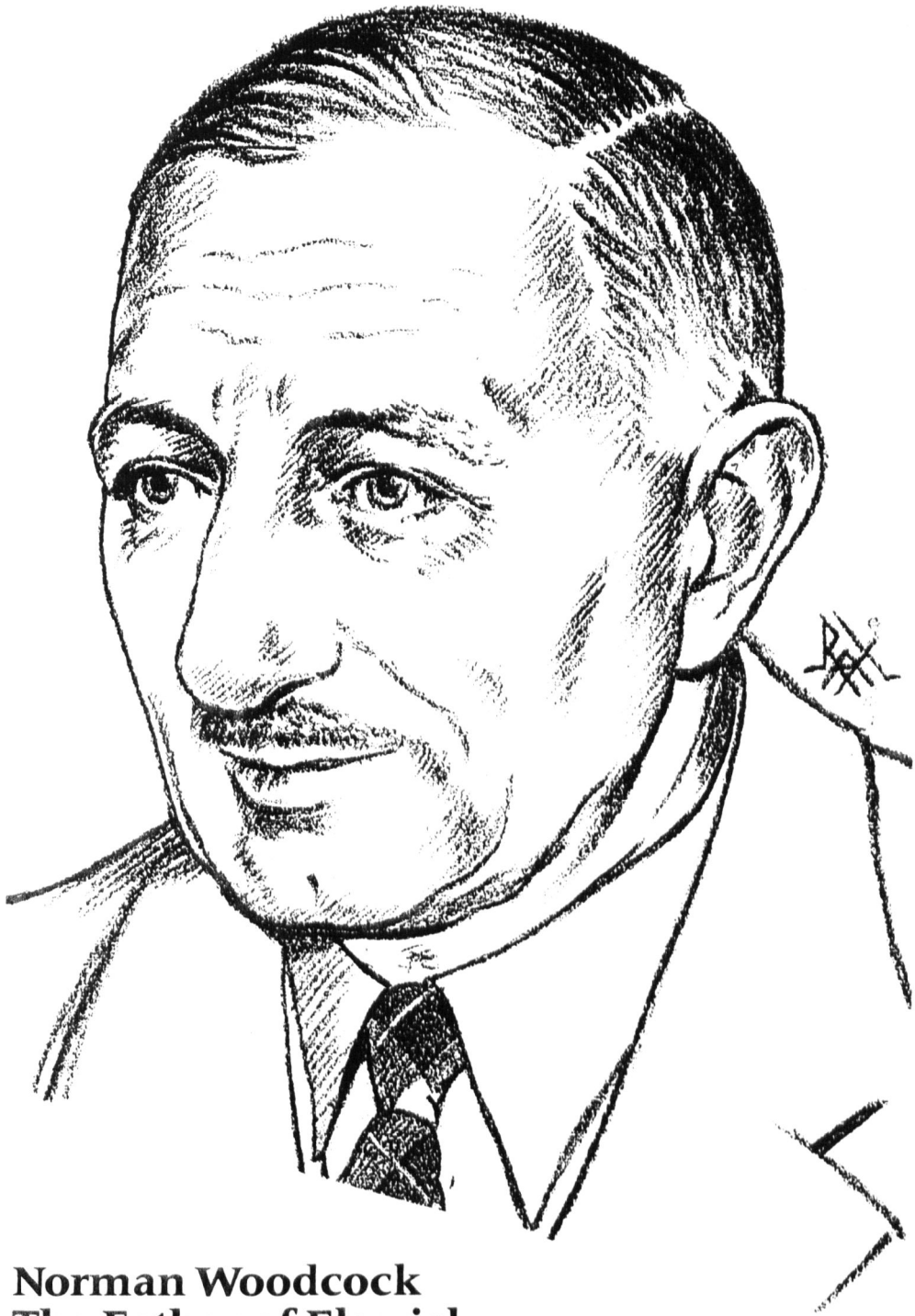
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**Norman Woodcock
The Father of Elswick
Harriers**



1889: A Legend is Born

Founded 1889, states the white diamond on the cardinal red vest as Elswick's Frank Melville storms his way to victory in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race on that wintry day in 1908. This event I will call Elswick's first great moment, granted, the club had seen some success prior to 1908, notably in the North Eastern Cross Country Championships of 1898, 1899 and 1900. In these years the Club won the event on all three occasions.

When trying to delve into the early history of Elswick Harriers it is first necessary to understand the roots from where the Club sprang. To do this we must travel back in time to the early eighteenth century and to the sport of Pedestrianism. Pedestrianism was in fact nothing more or less than professional athletics, and the practice was wide-spread throughout the British Isles. It was a sport that had no governing body or structure.

At first it was the great land owners and the gentry, who would, for wagers enter their servants or footman in point-to-point cross country races, as naturally no proper roads existed. As the sport grew in popularity, the gentry themselves would participate, but naturally only against opponents of their own class.

By the middle of the eighteenth century pedestrianism had reached the height of its popularity, with power and influence moving away from the upper classes down to the working classes living in the new towns and cities that were springing up in the wake of the industrial revolution.

On Tyneside, athletes would be drawn from the mines, steel foundries and heavy engineering works. It is easy to imagine these hard men conducting their business in back street public houses prior to running on a nearby cinder track to gain their prize money, and money was to be the factor that was to destroy the sport at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Money is the root of all evil, the saying goes and this was very true with regard to pedestrianism. Races were fixed, athletes would hold back and run poor times so as to get more generous odds at their next outing.

Top runners would compete under assumed names and professionals would pose as amateurs. In 1887 a meeting at Lillie Bridge, near London ended in a riot after rival supporters could not agree which man in a sprint race would lose, on that occasion the stadium was burnt to the ground.

Pedestrianism did leave one good legacy and this was the provision of accurately marked and measured tracks, good lap and time keeping. It also set down the standard racing distances of 100 yards, 110 yards, 440 yards, 880 yards; 1 mile, 2 miles, 4 miles, etc. These distances would remain standard until the introduction of the metric system in the middle of the twentieth century.

Some of the tracks in the Tyneside area are on record, Benwell Boathouse, Three Mile Bridge and Gateshead Borough Gardens. In 1873 Dick Buttery of Sheffield ran a world best of 48.25 seconds for the 440 yards at the Borough Gardens. It can be seen that these men with their tarnished ideals were however no mean athletes.

During the 1880's the Amateur Athletic Association began its dominance of athletics in this country. It appointed county associations and local officials, the latter, having the power to punish those who would infringe the rules. 1889 saw the AAA recommended rules become compulsory for all athletes and athletic meetings throughout the country.

This involvement by the AAA did much to clean up a rather discredited sport, and open the way to organised athletics on a local, national, and international level. It is perhaps then no coincidence that the demise of the crooked runner and his grasping cronies saw the birth of true amateur athletics in general and the founding of Elswick Harriers in particular.

There is very little documentary material available concerning the early years of Elswick Harriers. What is clear is that by 1891 Elswick had developed into a well organised and popular running club, so much so that the local newspaper of the time The Newcastle Daily Chronicle ran the following report on the 24th September, 1891.

Elswick Harriers Club – the opening Monday run of this club took place over the old Benwell course, and the fact that two packs turned out on such a stormy evening speaks well for the enthusiasm displayed by the members.

The slow pack paced by Cairns were given a 4 minute start and moved steadily along through the mud as far as Benwell Church where they decided to branch off up Charlotte Bank (Condercum Road) and take a near cut home. The time occupied in traversing the distance of two and a half miles was under sixteen minutes, the run ended in Pithkethly being followed home by Cairns and Hodgkin.

The fast pack turned out in the face of a perfect gale and was led by Sproat and kept up a hot pace until Benwell Lane was reached. Entering here the pack was sheltered a great deal by the overhanging trees and the pace was made more easy. The roads from this point around Bishops Castle until the Fox and Hounds was reached were simply splendid – being utterly devoid of loose stones.

Coming along the high turnpike however, the full force of the rain was met and it was a case of alternately running and wading until Bentinck Road was reached.

The run of nearly half a mile resulted in J. Davison arriving first, closely followed by A. Stokoe and Cuddiford. The time being returned as 18 minutes for the full course of three and a half miles. Very good form indeed was shown by four or five of the men in this run: notably A. Stokoe and J. Davison, both

young runners and there is every likelihood of the Club having a good team of long distance runners.

Next Monday night the run will be over the Museum Course and a large muster of members is anticipated.

The report you have just read is significant for two reasons, firstly we have Elswick Runners, their names and times for a specific time down on record, but perhaps more interestingly, the route taken on that far off day can be clearly traced on a modern ordnance survey map. This route will be familiar to any runner living in the west end of Newcastle. One of the runners featured in the report, A. Stokoe would in 1892 win a Club championship.

During this early period the Club's junior members had notable success in the North Eastern Counties Cross Country Championships, in 1898 it was won by G.H. Pearson, 1889 by T.D. Hopper and in 1900 by T.G. Connolly. Race walking also appeared to feature in the Club's activities, in 1906 a certain F.T. Peat walked from Newcastle to Haltwhistle, a distance of just over forty miles, in 7 hours, 22.5 minutes.

It is hard to visualise Elswick fielding a football team, nevertheless their name is mentioned in a local history book entitled "The Story of Rutherford Grammar School." It would appear that they played both at junior and senior level, against teams bearing the unlikely names of West End Swifts, East End Swifts and Gateshead St. James. It may be fortunate that I have been unable to find evidence of how they fared in that particular league, history does sometimes repeat itself for in March 1988, Elswick under the leadership of the redoubtable Robert Walker, were to demolish a Heaton Harriers eleven on the playing fields of Rutherford School.



Looking west along Adelaide Terrace, Benwell at the turn of the century, a familiar sight to early Elswick runners.

1908: Frank Melville



Winner: Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race 1908, 14 miles, 1 hr 17 min 45 sec Third: Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race 1909, 14 miles, 1 hr 19 min 26 sec Winner: J.K. Hall Cup 1908, 5 miles 800 yds, 27 min 15 sec Winner: North Eastern Junior Cross Country Championship 1907 Winner: Northern Junior Cross Country Championship 1908, 42 min 27 sec Winner: Senior Club Championship 1908, 3 miles, 15 min 35 sec Winner: Senior Club Championship 1909, 3 miles, 15 min 3 sec Member of the England team, International Cross Country Championship, France 1908.

As the records show, Frank Melville was no ordinary club runner, his achievements during the period 1907-1909 were quite remarkable and certainly would not be bettered for the next 20 years. Perhaps, his finest achievement was winning the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race in 1908.

The Journal, Thursday 2nd January 1908 reports:-

Starting point, Finger Post, foot of Station Bank, Morpeth and finishing at the crossing of Sandyford Road and Barras Bridge.

After covering a couple of miles the tail began to file out and when Gosforth Park gates had been reached the leaders were Melville, Mirley and Coxon, their next nearest persuers being Parkinson (holder) who ran quite up to his last year's form. But owing to the better pace and the superior field he could not finish successfully.

When Gosforth Cycling Grounds had been reached Melville let himself go at a raking pace and notwithstanding the strenuous efforts of his nearest opponents to keep on terms he had outstripped them by 50 yards by the time the Gosforth Tramway Terminus had been attained.

Mirley began to fall back from his hitherto forward position, meanwhile, Reay of Sunderland had weaved his way up behind Melville, challenging in succession Mirley, Parkinson and the Liverpool man, Wilkinson. Melville improving his lead in the last mile eventually won by over a minute and a quarter from McCoy with Parkinson filling the vacant situation in front of Reay.

It is worthy of mention that McCoy repeated his performance of last year in running second on this occasion and though he beat all previous records for this event yet he does not gain a prize for so meritorious a performance while others on handicap with less claims, are rewarded. As already hinted Parkinson, last year's winner, despite another creditable effort had to succumb to better class while a good man in Ivan Coxon failed to complete the journey.

Finishing Positions:-

1. F. Melville, Elswick – 1.17.45
2. J.O. McCoy, Heaton – 1.19.04
3. J.G. Parkinson, Darlington – 1.20.05
4. F.H. Reay, Sunderland – 1.20.21
5. R.C. Wilkinson, Liverpool – 1.20.47
6. W.H. Mirley, Heaton – 1.20.59
7. W. Woods, Elswick – 1.22.00
8. C. Walker, Darlington – 1.22.49
9. H. Heslop, Darlington – 1.22.54
10. R.B. Tate, S. Shields – 1.23.12

In 1909 Frank again entered the Morpeth but was only to manage third place in a time of 1 hour 19 min 26 sec in a slower race than the previous year. At one time the race was

threatened with abandonment due to the muddy condition of the Great North Road. It did, however, go ahead and produce a most exciting spectacle.

The first ten to finish were as follows:-

1. A. Marshall, Heaton - 1.18.40
2. F Reay, Sunderland - 1.19.24
3. F Melville, Elswick - 1.19.26
4. J. Ormston, Elswick - 1.21.09 3.5
5. R.C. Pennock, Stockton - 1.22.09
6. C. Taylor, Heaton - 1.23.03
7. W.H. Mirley, Heaton - 1.23.47 2.5
8. T. O'Neil, S. Shields - 1.24.15
9. W.G. Metcalf, Alnwick - 1.24.24
10. W.H. Taylor, Congers - 1.25.45 4.5

A smoking concert was held in the evening, at which Mr. C. Crighton, the President of the Newcastle club presided over a large attendance. During an interval in the proceedings the Chairman presented the prizes won in the race and complimented the respective winners.

Another fine victory for Frank Melville came in the Sunderland to South Shields team road race in 1908, together with team members W. Davidson, W. Woods, J. Ormston, J. Long and W. Holmes, came home in second team position from Heaton Harriers, with Frank Melville winning the race.

There follows a report from a local paper of the time:-

Wrested from the Quakers - Melville's Fine Victory in Hall Cup Race

From the first time since the inauguration of the event five years ago the J.K. Hall Challenge Bowl for the Sunderland to South Shields harrier road race changed hands on Saturday.

Hitherto the race had resulted in the Darlington Harriers Club proving their superiority over all the over competing organisations. They won outright the first trophy presented by Councillor J.K. Hall, the President of the South Shields Club, under whose auspices the race is held, and last year when the bowl was generously replaced by Councillor Hall they were again successful.

On this occasion however, the Heaton club who in the past have been Darlington's most formidable rivals wrested the pot from the Quakertown organisation after one of the closest and most exciting tussles in the history of the event.

It must be stated, however that Darlington lacked the services of George Butterfield, the English mile champion, who in the four previous races was the first man home, but on the other hand Heaton were handicapped to some extent by the absence through indisposition of E.C. Coxon.

A feature of Saturday's race was the fine performance of F. Melville of Elswick who on New Year's Day carried off the North Mail Cup for the Morpeth to Newcastle road race.

The course from Monkwearmouth to Westoe was 5 miles 800 yards long, and the conditions were the same as usual, namely, that 9 men should run for each team, the first 6 to count.

Frank Melville leading the pack during the 1909 Morpeth to Newcastle



How the Race was Won

With the exception of Tyne Dock who were non-starters, through several members of the team missing the train, the whole of the clubs turned up and no fewer than 111 runners toed the line.

By the time Fulwell Bank was reached Parkinson of Darlington had made his way to the front and he was closely followed by Mirley of Heaton and Melville of Elswick while further in the rear was McCoy of Heaton.

After going another couple of 100 yards Parkinson increased his lead, and maintained the advantage he had gained for about a mile.

For some time Parkinson, Mirley, and Melville ran a neck and neck race, but eventually when about half a mile from Harton, Melville made a great effort and took up the leading position.

Maintaining his lead, Melville at length won a grand race in 27 min 15.15 sec. Mirley was second about 3 yards behind, and about 20 yards separated Mirley from Ivan Coxon, the third man home.

The following were the first dozen to meet the winning post:-

1. F. Melville, Elswick
2. W.H. Mirley, Heaton
3. I.A. Coxon, Heaton
4. J. Parkinson, Darlington
5. F.H. Reay, Sunderland
6. J. O. McCoy, Heaton
7. C. Walker, Darlington
8. W. Davidson, Elswick
9. J. Hoad, Whitley Bay
10. J.J. Hodgson, Darlington
11. W. Woods, Elswick
12. F. Finch, Gateshead

Northern Counties Cross Country Junior Championship 1908

February 15th 1908 saw a fine Elswick team line up for the start of the Northern Counties Junior Cross Country Championships at Haydock Park, Manchester. The team comprising of F. Melville; J. Bowran; W. Davidson; J. Ormston; W. Woods; M. Ridley and W. Holmes; W. Badger and A. Richardson as travelling reserves made up the team. The photograph above was taken by a local photographer prior to the race.



Sadly, only Frank number 367 can be identified in this group, although, it would be reasonable to assume that the figure in the trench coat and starched collar was one of the reserves, either Badger or Richardson.

The race itself was run in fine weather with a firm footing, 38 of the 39 clubs entered took part; and the result was a fine win for Frank Melville, who covered the course of 7 miles in 42 min 47 secs, beating A. Wyatt of Radcliffe by 15 yards. Available records give no clue as to Elswick's actual team position, but they did figure in the top six.

Melville became Elswick's first international runner, when, on March 26th 1908 he represented England in an international cross country championship race of 10 miles. The race began at the Stade du Martin, Colombes, Paris. The weather was dull and overcast, and the course ran through fields and agricultural ground made heavy by recent storms. Spectators were few, as this was a period of religious festivities, of the 59 starters, 50 finished, 6 out of the first 7 were English, a Frenchman, Ragveneuve finishing fourth, with A.J. Robertson (Birchfield Harriers) winning in a time of 50 mins 26 secs, Melville came home in thirty ninth position.

The team result, England 24 pts, France 81 pts, Ireland 104 pts, Scotland 126 pts and Wales 237 pts.

From the records available, Frank's next and last victory was in winning the Senior Club Championship and Clark Cup in 1909. After this, Frank Melville takes no further part in the story of Elswick Harriers. Returning to his trade of motor mechanic he was to set up a business in Campbell Street, off Westgate Road in the west end of Newcastle. The following advertisement placed in the 1920 Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race programme can only hint at what the future held in store for Frank Melville, The First of the Many.

“READING STANDARD”

THE WORLD'S MASTER MOTOR CYCLE.

Full Electrical Equipment. Three-Speed Twin. 10 H.P.
DEMONSTRATION MODEL READY.

For Details, Specifications, Prices, Etc.,

MELVILLE'S GARAGE,
Proprietor: **FRANK MELVILLE, (Late Elswick Harriers,)**
CAMPBELL ST., WESTGATE RD.



The Chesterfield Arms, Elswick Road, the Club's first headquarters.



The Roaring Twenties

It could be argued that the 1920's was the "Golden Age" of Elswick Harriers, the combination of 'class' runners and fine accommodation provided a base from which the club grew in importance and stature within the context of North East athletics.

The training headquarters were situated in the "Black Bull" hotel, at the corner of Stanhope Street and Barrack Road. It was through the generosity of Mr. George McConachie, the owner who allowed the club to use an upstairs room in his hotel as a base for their activities. Mr. McConachie even went so far as to have the walls adorned with photographs of past Elswick champions. As club patron he was to present Elswick Harriers with their "McConachie Cup" to be contested at the Easter Monday road race, and to this day the race has always been referred to as the "McConachie"

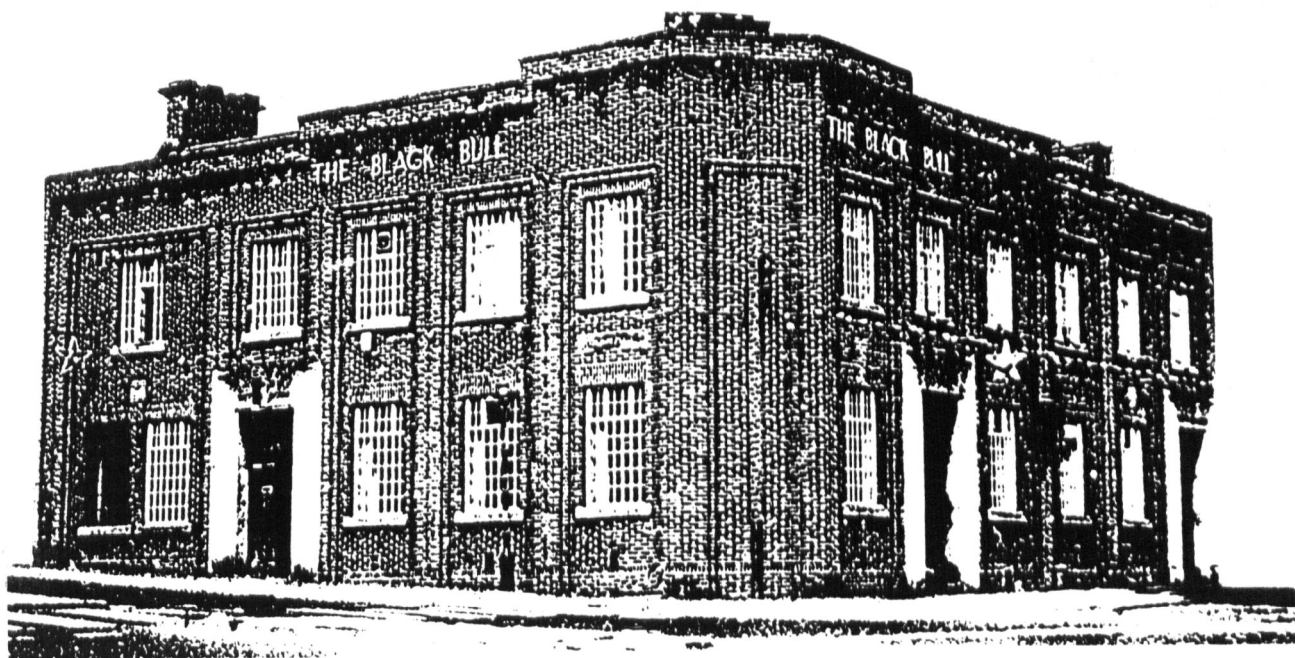
In researching this section of the book, it became obvious that the spirit of the club and the kindness shown by both officials and senior members towards the younger element was to have great bearing on the club in the later years of the decade. Club men well past their prime, would, in the most desperate conditions just turn out to help the youngsters. Jack Varley, club secretary turned out one Boxing Day with a large bottle of Wintergreen* and proceeded to ladle it out onto the unfortunate Elswick Youth's Team. The liniment must have been effective because the lads won the Tradesmens Trophy that day.

*Wintergreen – a rubbing liniment, a popular cure-all at the time.

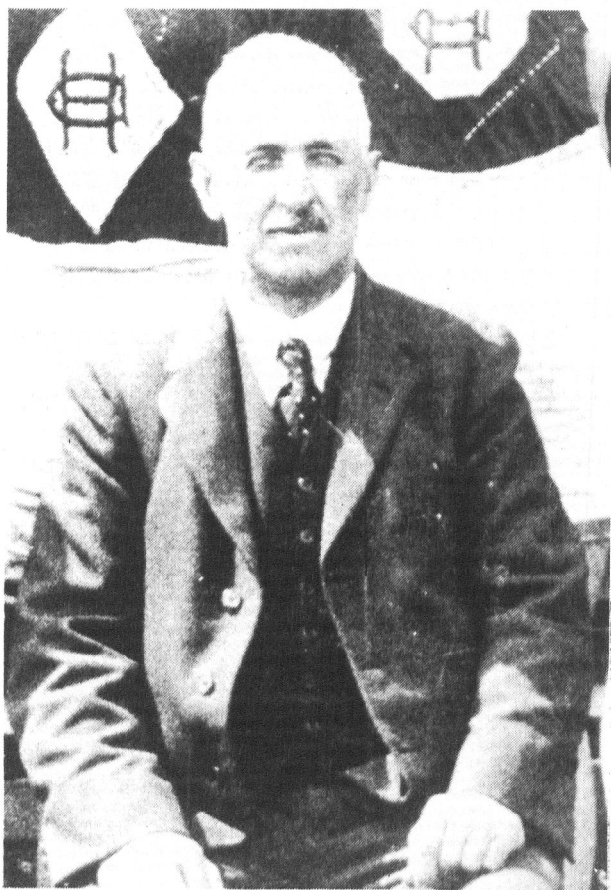
With such interest abounding in the club it was hardly surprising that the youth's section took off in a big way. Inter-club rivalry was intense at this time, Benwell, Heaton, Gateshead St. Mary's, Saltwell, Sunderland, and Wallsend, together with many more local clubs providing fine opposition for the Elswick lads.

The youth's section in the early twenties comprised of Terry Monaghan, Joe Mirley, George Laycock, Les Sewell, Norman Mein, Charlie Byers and Stan Redhead. This team, whilst never achieving greatness was solid and reliable under the ever watchful eye of that lovable old warrior, T.W. "Tommy" Davidson, winner of the "Morpeth" in 1926. Both Tommy and a certain Mr. Simpson, cabinet-maker and donor of the "Simpson Shield" were the team that guided the lads until they became senior runners and then to take their place alongside the giants of their age.

Also alongside the giants were the senior club runners, and I will mention here just a few of those whose names survived the passing years. Ossie Bulmer who loved the club and never missed a committee meeting, his pride and joy was a gold Hunter watch, won in some long forgotten race. Ossie gave years of service as an official until ousted by outsiders, he died a bitterly disillusioned man, also Bobbie Hull who was a fearless competitor and proud of his red vest. Many clubs can boast of having two brothers running for them, Elswick had three. They were the Donaghues', Joe, Johnny and Peter. Joe, the eldest was a heating engineer and



a "hard man" who would never accept defeat, a competitor who would run himself into the ground, a reliable and consistent counter no matter what the distance. Joe had the distinction of being the only Elswick man to run in the Windsor Marathon. Johnny was a stylish runner and seldom out of the counters, who, when finished with competitive running became a successful cyclist. Peter Donaghue was a reliable counter also, particularly, in the junior section.



Mr. George McConachie, Club President.

CALL AND SEE
GEO. McCONACHIE,
 President of Elswick Harriers,
 AT THE 
Black Bull Inn,
 BARRACK ROAD,
 Elswick Harriers Headquarters.



Mr. Simpson, Patron and, donor of the "Simpson Shield".

Elswick in the early twenties was served well by an enthusiastic and dedicated committee, whose officials were: President, George McConachie, Chairman, Walter Holmes, Secretary, Joe Holmes.

Another name from this period was Harry Bell, now Harry was a very special person in that he had a job! and was the envy of the club. Working for the Water Board Harry was in the position of being able to buy new kit whenever necessary. This no doubt contributed in no small way to Harry's success in the British Games of 1923 where he came third in a fourteen mile race. It is sad to think that many of the poorer club runners would struggle to buy even a pair of sandshoes.

If runners at that time wanted proper running shoes, it would have taken them up to three months to get enough money together to make the journey to Askew Road in Gateshead. There, a shoemaker called Douglas provided the best running-pumps that money could buy.

So with an excellent committee, an up-and-coming youth's section and a strong senior membership, together with good club facilities, it is therefore, not surprising that the club drew into its ranks runners who would bring fame and glory to the club in the ensuing years.

Joseph Nixon

Joseph Nixon joined the club in the early 1920's and quickly established himself as a runner with potential. He first made his mark at club level by winning the Youth's Club Championship in 1922. In 1923 he easily won the Junior Club Championship over a five mile course in a time of 28 mins 20 secs



Joseph Nixon, centre, together with his father and a young Norman Woodcock.

Elswick Junior Championship – Tuesday 9th January, 1923

“There was a keen struggle for the Elswick Harriers Junior Championship which took place over a five mile course on Tuesday night, and carried with it the possession of the Nestle’ Cup. Mr. G. Gibson started the field of twenty three runners from headquarters. Mr. J.E. Davidson acted as time-keeper, Mr. A Crampton was clerk of the course and messrs. G. Hudson and B. Hedley acted as judges.

N.B. Hutchinson took the lead after the first mile had been covered, closely followed by J. Nixon, N. Holmes and G. B. Weatherburn and T. Roberts, the remainder of the pack being well

strung out. The positions remained unchanged for the next mile and a half, when the leaders were joined by A. Davidson and, G. Gibson, making a group of seven all running well. When the Westgate tramway terminus was reached, Hutchinson drew a little further away, but did not maintain the 100 yards lead he had established, for J. Nixon came alongside him about a mile and a half from home and finished the race in fine style, winning from Hutchinson by well over a minute. Mr. W. Tate handed over the Nestle’ Cup to J. Nixon.

Further success came to Joseph later that month, when on the 27th of January he won the North Eastern Youth's Cross Country Championship. The twenty-fourth annual championship was being held on the Houghton Race Course, and spectators turned out in large numbers to watch the proceedings. The meeting was, however, not an unqualified success, for the changing accommodation left a lot to be desired and whilst the officials were zealous and keen, there was perfunctory attention paid to the most important duty of lap-scoring.

The race was a dual between G. Gibson of Heaton and Nixon, although, Brown of Saltwell caused some consternation by taking the lead and running strongly, holding the lead for two laps. At the beginning of the third lap Brown was finding the lead too fast and was overtaken by Gibson, with Nixon at his shoulder, both men running with ease. Coming into the last 200 yards Nixon made his move, passing Gibson who could not respond, he finished full of running in a time of 16 mins 45 secs.

Later in the season Joseph came second in the Northern Counties Cross Country Championship and then rounded off a fine season by winning the Northumberland and Durham 880 yards Championship.

1924 was a lean year for Joseph, although, he did manage to come second in the North Eastern Cross Country Championships held at Darlington. Coming into the last lap in fifth position he was improving gradually but finished a very tired second to W. Appleby of Wallsend. Joseph attributed his lack of speed to a break in training through injury earlier that year.

Gosforth Park was a venue for the North Eastern Cross Country Championships in 1925. Joe Nixon lined up at the start together with his Elswick club mates and another 97 runners drawn from most of the local clubs. The race was dominated by Nixon and Glendinning from Heaton. 300 yards from home they were racing neck and neck, but Nixon's finishing speed saw

him come through to win by 15 yards in a time of 38 mins 40 secs for the seven mile course.

Although, Joseph continued to run for Elswick for some years, the records show that the 1925 season was to be his last in the top flight. Running in a half-mile race on the Town Moor during a Race-Week Temperance Sports, sometime towards the end of the decade he suffered a broken ankle. Eye witnesses said at the time that he stumbled into a depression, Joseph was never to pull on an Elswick vest again.

His brother John Nixon carried on the tradition by winning the Club Youth Championship and Simpson Shield in 1927 as Joseph had himself won in 1922.

T.W. Davidson

Tommy Davidson's credentials are impressive:-

1922, winner, Junior Club Championship, winner of Senior Club Championship and Winner of the Morpeth Road Race.

1923, second, Heaton Harriers Road Race.

1924, winner, McConachie Cup and fourth in the Morpeth Road Race.



One of the most interesting things that can happen when writing about an historical event is to actually meet an eye witness, especially, a relation of the person concerned. Arthur Davidson was such a man, Tommy Davidson's brother still living in Newcastle, a sprightly octogenarian who was to provide a very personal picture of a fine runner.

His brother recalled the Morpeth Road Race of 1922. "After the race started, I followed the runners on my bike, just behind them so that I could not be accused of being a pacemaker. When the leaders reached the greyhound track at Gosforth there were four of them, a Bolton United Harrier, Tommy Minnikin, my brother, and I think the other one was Tommy Bell. They were running side-by-side the three local lads talking amongst themselves about how they couldn't hold the Lancashire lad (Bryant). Anyway, when they got to Salters Road there was a tramcar standing and Tom ran around one side and the other lad ran around the other and he thought Tom was going to take advantage of him so he sprinted a bit.

Tom turned round to me and said 'its alright, wait until we get to the Deaf and Dumb Institute'. True enough as soon as he got there he was off like a shot, I couldn't believe what I was seeing! Tom never trained over ten miles, anyway, when he reached the end of Jesmond Road he was over 150 yards in front, of course in those days the race finished at the bottom of Claremont Road. As usual there was a great crowd there to see the runners come in and my father, Joe, was overjoyed at his son's success".

The Journal, Tuesday, 3rd January, 1922

The fourteenth annual Morpeth Road Race provided a fine sporting event which was witnessed by a large crowd. The conditions were more favourable than they had been since 1914. The going being very good and the runners were aided by a following wind. The cup goes to Elswick's Thomas W. Davidson who ran a well judged race throughout. C. Bryant from Lancashire and T. Minnikin and Davidson had the race in their keeping from the time of leaving Stanington the trio ran together over three quarters of the race. Davidson making the first break at Seaton Burn, where he established a 10 yard lead over Minnikin, with Bryant third 3 yards away. Minnikin quickly established

left: Tommy Davidson with the "North Mail" Trophy.

equality and running to Gosforth Park gates Bryant regained his position with Davidson, Minnikin was left 20 yards behind. At the Northumberland Rugby Ground Davidson had a slight lead, in 2mins 49 secs outside Frank Reay's record time of 1911.

Bryant drew level again at Gosforth and coming onto the North Road the Lancastrian had a slight lead. Davidson drew level at the Deaf and Dumb Institute and at the end of Clayton Road he let himself out just the merest trifle, but sufficient to leave Bryant behind, and the Elswick man was never called upon to answer another challenge, winning in 1 hr. 16 mins 58 secs, 3 mins 48 secs outside the record.

Team; T.W. Davidson, 1; J.R. Bell, 11 1 hr. 20mins 29 secs; E.J. Bell, 19 1 hr. 22mins 41 secs Team second.

Arthur himself, ran the Morpeth the following year but was way down the field, but he does remember the time he beat his brother in a race, Arthur continues; 'when I got to the Black Bull, all the lads were wearing sand shoes. I went upstairs and put on a pair of short spikes, all the lads started to laugh at these spikes, but they didn't know why I was wearing them. The reason was that part of the course for the race, around Cowgate was covered in ice, anyway when we got to the top of the bank all the lads were huffing and puffing and sliding all over the place. Me and our Tom were way out in front, but when we got to the Water Works he said to me to go on, he couldn't keep up with me. When I reached the Barracks I was just about done! and Charlie Coutts and Norman Woodcock beat me into third place'.

Warming to his task Arthur then told the story of how he himself won a medal for coming last!

'I remember it was at South Shields for a two mile race I was never very fast, just a good plodder, but I would always count in the team. Anyway it was on the track, I was puffing away not very far behind the leader, at least that's what I thought. After I crossed the line, I looked behind and there was no one there!, they'd all dropped out and were lying on the grass exhausted with the heat. When the officials worked out the team positions they said Elswick had won and I was last counter! I remember that race as if it were yesterday.

Tommy Davidson was an "Elswick Man" through and through, after his running days were over he could be found coaching the youngsters or anyone else for that matter who had the wit to listen to his wise words.

Sadly, only weeks away from retirement, Tommy became ill and died whilst on his journey home from work.

In the next section we will be looking at the career of Alex J. Burns, Elswick's first Olympian. Before we leave the 1920's mention must be made of three runners who together with Alex Burns shared in many successes in the middle and late Twenties.

Charles A. Lamb. An Old-Fashioned Gentleman

Authors note: I had the opportunity to remove the last paragraph on hearing of the death of Charlie. Someone who new the man well said Don't change a word, Charlie would have loved it just the way it is written"

If not the most gifted runner in the Club, Charlie was certainly one of the most colourful. He came into the sport through being in the Territorial Army and started running in season 1926/27. A bricklayer by trade Charlie would venture south to look for work, but when he was needed as a counter in a forthcoming race, Charlie would make the trip home at considerable expense and inconvenience. Billy Killick, Club Secretary at the time just used to drop him a line and Charlie would appear.

His running career came to an abrupt end in 1930 as the Evening Chronicle reported:-

Sympathy unbounded and sincere wishes will be extended to Charlie Lamb and Miss Evelaine Ashton - members of the Elswick Harriers - on the misfortune which overtook them when motor cycling during the weekend.

As the result of a collision with a motor car both are at present patients in the Royal Infirmary with fractured legs, while in addition Miss Ashton suffered a dislocated shoulder.

When I visited them earlier in the week, both were accepting the misfortune in the best spirit, but it was disappointing to learn that Charlie would have to undergo another operation today before the fracture - a compound one - could be properly set.

The Elswick Club have thus received a severe set-back to their hopes of fielding a strong team in the two miles events during the summer, for Lamb was expected to prove a strong counter, and of course, unfortunately, his injuries will cause a long halt in his athletic career.



Charlie Lamb winning a handicap race from Norman Woodcock at the Ingham Infirmary Sports, South Shields 1926.

After considerable legal wrangling Charlie received some compensation and set himself up as a Bookmaker. There is a story that a bookie had a stand at the bottom of Stanhope Street and one day finding that he could not cover his bets he disappeared. Charlie Lamb stepped in and without any records paid all winning bets out of his own pocket. This was to be the start of a very successful career as a bookmaker. For some years he plied his trade around the back streets of Elswick, one eye on the law and the other on his competition.

Employing a lookout, a runner, Charlie would accept the smallest wager and quote the most generous odds to the workers who drove cattle along Scotswood Road to the market near Marlborough Crescent. His business prospered and finally took his place at the end of the line of bookies at Gosforth Park. Fifty years later he is still there occupying a position at the front of the queue.

In the 1970's with the Club's fortunes at a very low ebb, Charlie's position as President came under close scrutiny. It was the issue of the Club's name that brought matters to a head. In an effort to try to give Elswick a new image and to encourage young people to join, a motion was put forward to change the Club's name by dropping Elswick and to call the Club, Newcastle Harriers.

Naturally, and quite rightly, in my view Charlie objected strongly to this cosmetic exercise. Because of this, and other longstanding matters he was voted out of office. It may well be that new ideas and new blood was needed at the time, and it is true that at the time of writing, the club is reasonably successful. It has its Olympic athlete and a crop of good youngsters despite being hampered by its name. The Club also boasts of a dedicated Committee and coaching staff despite being hampered by its name.

What the Club does lack however is the services of an astute and successful businessman, a man who lives and breathes for his Club. This would be an asset beyond price and totally beyond the Club's wildest expectations, he may also be able to get the Club's name changed, if he does, don't tell Charlie Lamb.

Charlie Coutts

After the success of Tommy Davidson in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race of 1922 it would be another seven years before Elswick would again mount a serious challenge in this event.

The challenge came in the shape of Charles F. Coutts, Charlie was a gangling, ungainly figure who nevertheless, was a fine road runner. In the 1929 "Morpeth" Charlie came second, beaten in a sprint finish by the then king of the road runners, Duncan Mcleod Wright of Maryhill Harriers. Terry Monaghan vividly recalls the finish; "The North Road was very crowded with both people and vehicles, as the leading runners, Mcleod Wright and Coutts approached the finish, a car stopped directly in their path, Mcleod Wright went one side of the vehicle and Charlie took the other side. The Scotsman's path was the better one and he went on to win the race".



Charlie Coutts and Duncan McLeod-Wright passing through Blagdon during the 1929 Morpeth Road Race.

In the 1930 running of the "Morpeth", Charlie could only make third place beaten again by Mcleod Wright and J.H. Potts of Saltwell Harriers. As a team however Elswick did very well on that day, coming second behind Maryhill Harriers.

Elswick's result as follows:-

C.F. Coutts; 1 hr 16 mins 35 secs, N.D.
Woodcock; fourth, 1 hr 17 mins 44 secs; T.W. Davidson, twelfth, 1 hr 21 mins 41 secs.
Other notable Elswick performances on that day were by R. Marshall; 1 hr 21 mins 47 secs; C.A. Lamb; 1 hr 22 mins 1 sec; J.P. Donaghue; 1 hr 24 mins 41 secs.

Norman Woodcock

As someone who was not fortunate enough to have met Norman Woodcock, I have had to rely on the testimony of others to try to do justice to this great man within the pages of this book.

Norman started running for Elswick around 1925 and was invariably second counter home, backing up Alex Burns in many epic cross country-races. In his time he also won a half mile handicap on the track proving his ability and versatility. Norman, together with Alex Burns, Charlie Coutts and Charlie Lamb made up a formidable senior squad.

As a runner Norman never made the headlines; at the time it was the exploits of Alex Burns that caught the imagination of the press and public alike and quite rightly so. Only when Norman hung up his running shoes and retired from active competition did he come to prominence within the club.

Norman Woodcock was a Civil Servant by profession but had leanings towards sports journalism. For many years writing under the pen-name of "Whipper-In" in the Evening Chronicle, Norman would expound his opinions throughout the North East through this column. The amusing thing about Norman's column was that while he thought that no one at the club knew that "Whipper-In" and Woodcock were one and the same person, in fact everyone connected with Elswick and even those further afield knew his secret, but to their credit no one ever disclosed this to Norman.

Believing in a strong youth policy, Norman, who in the early years was very active in talent spotting would, tour local schools and boy's clubs looking for a boy who would be a

ATHLETICS

By "WHIPPER-IN"

Dickinson's "220" Title?

NOT LIKELY TO BE EXTENDED

WE are now in the middle of the July rush of athletic fixtures, and, following the Duns meeting on Saturday last, many Tyneside athletes journeyed to Berwick yesterday for the annual Tweed-mouth Feast gathering, while to-morrow there is the South Shields Ingham Infirmary meet, to be followed by Swan Hunters sports next Saturday.

The Swan Hunters meeting is the most important of the week because of the four Northumberland and Durham championships that are to be decided. Chief interest will be centred in the senior 220 yards title event, which will be run over a straight furlong track.

Dickinson Recovered

Recent running has proved that J. Dickinson (Gateshead Congers), the holder, has now recovered from the leg injury he sustained while running for Northumberland and Durham in the inter-counties championships at the White City, London, at the beginning of the season.

Although he has not won a handicap, he has been right up with the leaders in his heats and on more than one occasion it has just been a matter of inches that has kept him out of the finals. With R. Duncan (Heaton) and R. Barnes (Heaton) out of the way, Dickinson should not have much trouble to win. B. Charlton (Gosforth), F. O'Kane, J. O'Kane and T. Monaghan (Elswick) are about the best sprinters we have in the North-East at the moment, but none of them are likely to find half-a-dozen yards on Saturday, which they will have to do to beat the holder.

Ridley Again?

M. Williamson (Durham University) is capable of defeating Dickinson, but unfortunately he is still out of action.

The other three title events are for youths, and while there are many new names among the entrants for the long and high jumps, the one-mile race should result in another triumph for A. D. Ridley (Sunderland). Ridley has already won the half-mile honour in excellent style, and a repetition of that form will practically ensure him winning the mile championship.

All the district stars are expected to be in opposition at the Ingham Infirmary meeting on the Westoe cricket ground, South Shields, to-morrow (6.0 p.m.).

J. A. Burns (Elswick), J. H. Potts (Saltwell) and W. C. Wylie (Darlington) may clash again in the two miles team race and the 100 yards scratch race for the Infirmary Cup is likely to be a rehearsal of the district championship. Dickinson is the holder of the trophy, and he will be fully tested by A. W. Elstrop (Middlesbrough), the A.A.A. junior and Yorkshire senior sprint champion.

While many records were broken at the White City, London, in the annual A.A.A.

championships, the result that would give most satisfaction to followers of the sport in the North-East would be that in the two miles steeplechase which resulted in a win for W. C. Wylie (Darlington).

First A.A.A. Title

Wylie had previously won the Scottish cross-country and steeplechase titles, the Northern junior cross-country, the North-Eastern senior cross-country, and finished second in the international championship. Many successes have also come his way in district title races, but this is his first win in a British title event.

Wylie has been concentrating on steeplechase running for over a year now and he has received his reward for his hard work by being included in the team to represent Great Britain against France in Paris next Sunday. He will run in the 3,000 metres steeplechase.

Another fine performance at the London track was that of the Saltwell harrier, J. McShane, who did much better than was expected of him in finishing sixth in the marathon race. His time of 2 hours 49 minutes 46 seconds is, I believe, the best he has done in these long-distance runs. It is certainly a great deal faster than the times he has accomplished in the North-East marathon championship.

A. Fielder (Sunderland Police) was no match for the foreign visitors in the discus throw, but he managed to fill sixth position with an effort of 124 feet 10½ inches.

Wrong Tactics

According to more than one report, J. A. Burns (Elswick) has only himself to blame for not winning the six miles title on Friday. He was 15 yards behind the winner, who won in 30 minutes 20 seconds, and he was 20 yards behind the runner-up, who won in 31 minutes 15 seconds. Kelen, of the r. winnin recover the El J. H. Potts six mi amped



above: The "Whipper-In" column in the Evening Chronicle, inset Norman Woodcock in later life.

champion. One boy he found, John Hewitt, who ran for Rutherford Grammar School did become a champion, winning the Northumberland and Durham 880 yards Championship in 1929 in a time of 2 mins 11 secs. Hewitt also ran well in the North Eastern Junior Cross Country Championship of 1930 in a time of 16 mins 24 secs, only 5 secs behind J. Laidler of Heaton who won the race.



Part of a group photograph showing from left to right; Charlie Coutts, Norman Woodcock and Alex Burns.

Throughout the 1930's Norman was an ever-present at the club, turning his hand to anything that needed to be done. Again, after the Second World War it was Norman who called the first committee meeting early in 1946. It is not hard to imagine the scene at the Black Bull on that fateful day. The committee, comprised of Charlie Lamb, President, Norman Woodcock, Secretary, Ossie Bulmer, Andy Laidler and Tommy Davidson, at this time Tommy was the only active runner within the club. The committee's brief to cobble together the tattered remnants of their club and to chart a course for the future.

During the next thirty years, Norman Woodcock was the leading light at Elswick. He never missed a committee meeting, training session or race; throwing himself wholeheartedly into organising social events and outings.

In 1953, due to pressure from Elswick Harriers, Newcastle City Council built a cinder running track on the site of the Byker Tip in the east end of the city. It was a miserable four-lane facility situated between bombed-out buildings, it nevertheless attracted many good athletes from the surrounding clubs. Colin Bolton, our present Club Treasurer remembers training there, together with the likes of Ronnie Henderson and other top runners of the time. Naturally, Norman would be there in attendance dispensing advice and encouragement from beneath a dense cloud of cigarette smoke! Dressed in a formal suit teamed incongruously with a flat check cap Norman would chain-smoke his way through the entire proceedings. The session over, Norman, together with his associates would take "refreshment" in the Cafe' Royal before returning home for Sunday lunch.

Through the sixties and the decline of the club Norman kept the spirit of Elswick Harriers alive, and it is down to Norman's dedication that the club exists today. With due respect to the men who preceded him and those who were to come after him, Norman Woodcock stands head and shoulders above them all.

Norman died in tragic circumstances, travelling to the United States to be with his seriously ill son, who himself was to recover. Norman Woodcock's name is now enshrined in a trophy awarded each year to the winner of the "Norman Woodcock Memorial Road Race".

Peter Hammill our present club coach summed the man up when he said simply, "Norman Woodcock WAS Elswick Harriers".



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Andy Laidler

In 1927 Andy Laidler was running for Gateshead Congregational but subsequently through the years gave support to Elswick Harriers in many different roles. Not a big man, but very strong and ran like a bouncing rubber ball. In 1928 he was an Olympic trialist for the Amsterdam Games, losing out to Walter Rangely of Salford who won the silver medal in the 200 metres; sandwiched between Percy Williams of Canada and Kornig of Germany. Rangely's time was 21.9 secs. Andy Laidler had no training facilities whatsoever and used to train on the Town Moor, setting the youths up to 15 yards in a sprint. This resulted in him pulling a hamstring and that was the end of his running career.

After the Amsterdam Games Elswick had the pleasure of having England's first choice of sprinters and the AAA's sprint champion, Jack London, to appear at a number of athletic meetings in the North East.

Jack London was from Trinidad, and the most perfect specimen of a man you could ever wish to see, standing about 6'3" and weighing 13 and a half stone. His dark skin contrasted with his white English vest and he made a most impressive sight, especially in the 220 yards. When in full flight his stride was 9'4". In sprint finals, handicaps were the general rule and he was often not in the reckoning 10 yards from the finish but more often than not still managed to get his torso over the finishing line first.

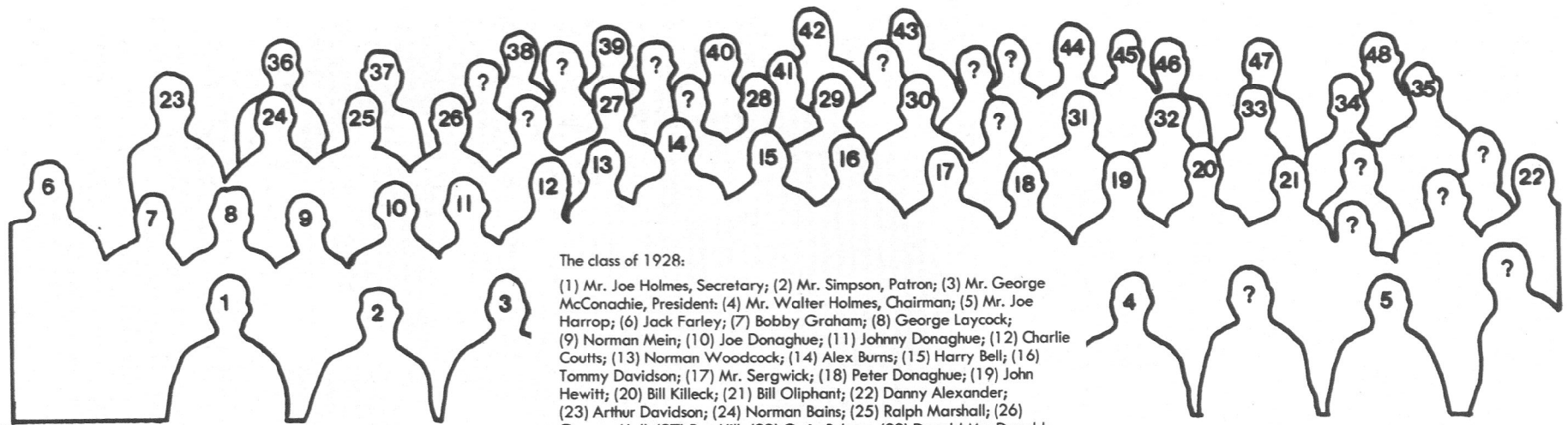
In the Gateshead Congregational Sports, in a short limit handicap, Andy Laidlaw beat London off 2 and a half yards and that was excellent running. Jack London was also a good long jumper, at the Amsterdam Games he had to be recalled from the long jump to run a 100 metre heat and since 1928 no sprinter has been allowed to combine the two disciplines.

Jack London came to England to study medicine, and having failed more than once to pass his exams he finished up playing boogie woogie music in a London night club.

Andy Laidler leads Jack London

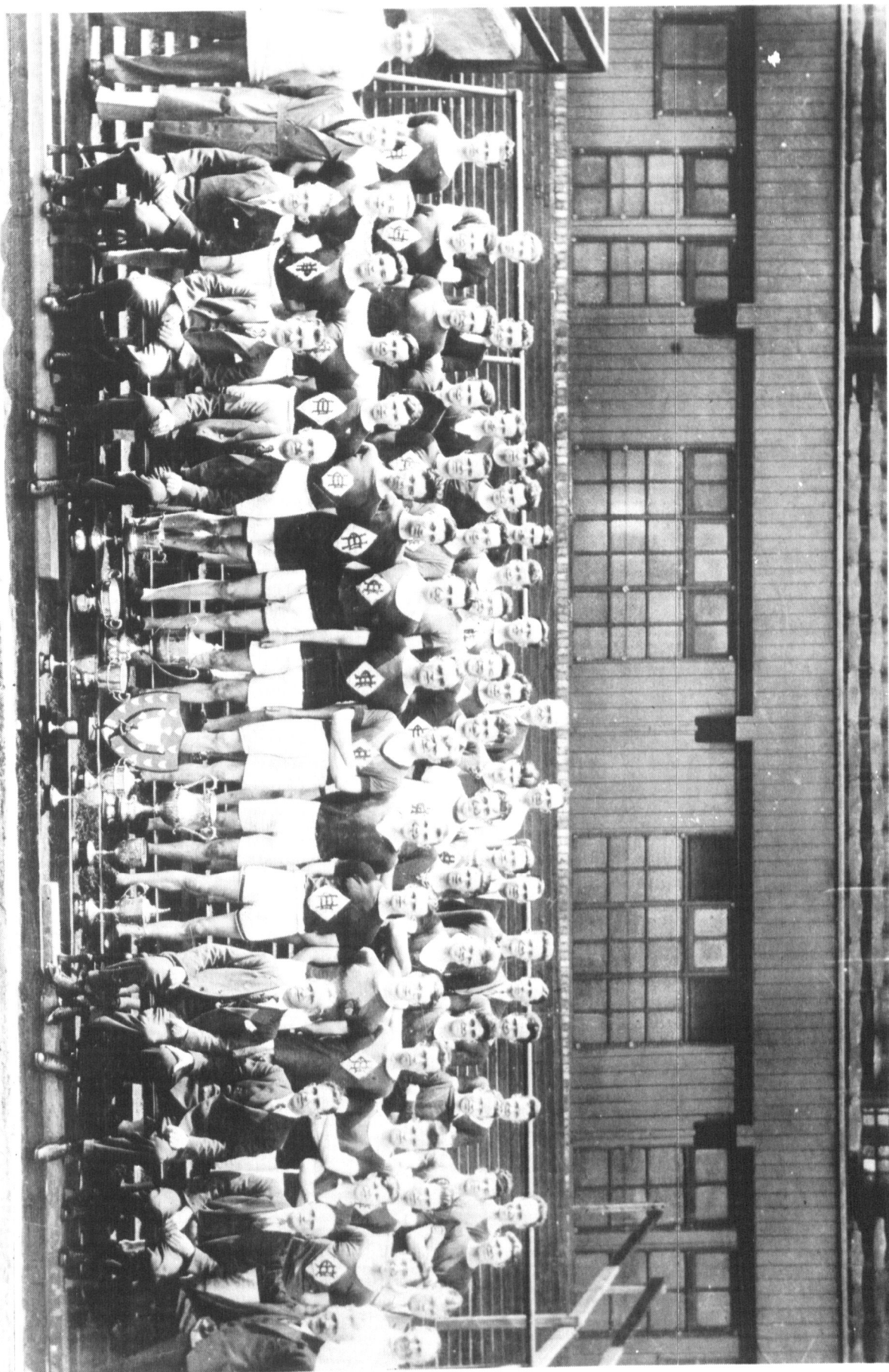


JOHN HEWITT, Elswick Harriers, who won the 880 yards Youths' Flat Race Championship of Northumberland and Durham at Smith's Dock Sports. He has also won at North Durham Sports this season, and there are keen judges who predict a successful athletic career for this youth.



The class of 1928:

(1) Mr. Joe Holmes, Secretary; (2) Mr. Simpson, Patron; (3) Mr. George McConachie, President; (4) Mr. Walter Holmes, Chairman; (5) Mr. Joe Harrop; (6) Jack Farley; (7) Bobby Graham; (8) George Laycock; (9) Norman Mein; (10) Joe Donaghue; (11) Johnny Donaghue; (12) Charlie Coutts; (13) Norman Woodcock; (14) Alex Burns; (15) Harry Bell; (16) Tommy Davidson; (17) Mr. Sergwick; (18) Peter Donaghue; (19) John Hewitt; (20) Bill Killeck; (21) Bill Oliphant; (22) Danny Alexander; (23) Arthur Davidson; (24) Norman Bains; (25) Ralph Marshall; (26) George Hall; (27) Ron Hill; (28) Ossie Bulmer; (29) Donald MacDonald; (30) Bob Baty; (31) Lloyd Willits; (32) Terry Monaghan; (33) Joe Mirley; (34) Les Sewell; (35) Charlie Byers; (36) A. Coopman; (37) Alan Duns; (38) Mr. Clarke; (39) Arthur Foster; (40) Tommy Downie; (41) Joe Nixon; (42) Mr. Holland; (43) Guy Phillips; (44) Mr. Farley; (45) Mr. Simpson; (46) Tommy Roberts; (47) Mr. Collins; (48) Tommy Smith.



Into The Thirties

Prior to this chapter, the source material for this book has been mainly dredged from old pressing cuttings, faded photographs and half forgotten stories, and perhaps a little artistic licence on the part of the writer. With the coming of the 1930's however there is now a continuous supply of first-hand information from the Elswick's lads themselves, and who best to start the ball rolling but that fearless man of the cinder and grass track, sprinter, Terry Monaghan.

When Terry heard that Elswick were about to embark upon writing a book about their history, he came to see me and thrust into my hands reams of handwritten memories of the club in the twenties, thirties and forties.

As mentioned earlier, Terry jointed Elswick in the twenties and was soon made youth captain. Because of his position he was allowed to attend committee meetings and to observe the inner workings of the club. Terry won the youth's championship in 1929 and during his career he was able to witness at first hand the awesome running power of that great legend, Alex Burns.

Alex Burns, Elswick's First Olympian

For some forty years or so Alex Burns by virtue of his athletic achievements was regarded as the finest runner ever to wear the Elswick vest. He would still be the dominant name in the annals of the club but for the emergence of Mike McLeod in the mid-seventies. To some, however, Alex H. Burns was, and still is, the first name to come to mind whenever Elswick Harriers is mentioned in conversation.

His career spanned some 13 years, years packed with success upon success, from winning the North Eastern Counties Cross Country Junior Championship in 1925 to winning the AAA 4 mile championship in 1931, which brought him international recognition, to the culmination of his career at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The following list of his individual successes merely scratches the surface of the great man's achievements.

1925 Club Youth Champion
Northumberland and Durham 880 yards
Championship, runner-up
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Youth
Champion

1926 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Junior
Champion

1927 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Junior
Champion
Winner, of the McConachie Cup

1928 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Junior
Champion
Northern Counties Cross Country
Championship, runner-up
Winner, Sunderland to South Shields Road Race
Winner, McConachie Cup
Northumberland and Durham 2 Mile Champion

1929 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
Winner, McConachie Cup
Winner, South Shields Road Race
Winner, Heaton Memorial Road Race
Northumberland and Durham 2 Mile Champion
Winner, North Shields Polytechnic Road Race
Winner, Gateshead Congregational Road Race

1930 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Cross Country Senior Champion
Northern Counties Cross Country Champion
Winner, South Shields Road Race
Winner, Heaton Memorial Road Race
Winner, Gateshead Congregational Road Race

1931 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
AAA representative v France, runner-up
AAA representative v Italy, winner
AAA representative v Germany - Cologne
(third)
AAA representative v Germany Dusseldorf
AAA 4 miles Champion
Northumberland and Durham 1 mile Champion
Northumberland and Durham 2 mile Champion

1932 Club Senior Champion
Represented Great Britain at Los Angeles
Olympic Games
Represented British Empire v USA
Represented Great Britain v Canada
Captained England in Cross Country
International, Belgium
National Cross Country Champion

AAA Representative v Oxford University,
winner 3 mile race
Winner of, "All Champions Race" (4 miles)
3 and 10 mile AAA Championship, runner-up
Scottish 2 mile record holder
Northumberland and Durham 2 mile
Champion, record holder
Northumberland and Durham 1 mile
Championship, runner-up
Winner, Elswick Harriers Open Team Race,
record holder
Winner, McConachie Cup

1934 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
Northern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
International Vest
Winner, South Shields Road Race
Winner, Heaton Memorial Road Race
International Cross Country Championship,
Ayre, runner-up
Winner, North Shields Polytechnic Road Race

1935 Club Senior Champion
International Vest
Winner, McConachie Cup

1936 Club Senior Champion
Represented Great Britain at the Berlin Olympic
Games
AAA 4 Mile Champion
Northumberland and Durham 1 Mile Senior
Champion
Northumberland and Durham 2 Mile Senior
Champion
Northumberland and Durham 3 Mile Senior
Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
Winner, McConachie Cup

1937 Club Senior Champion
International Vest

1938 Club Senior Champion
North Eastern Counties Cross Country Senior
Champion
Northumberland and Durham 1 Mile Champion

Below
Club training session, Gosforth Park



The son of a shipyard worker from Scotswood Road, Alex started running around 1923/1924. An odd-job boy with a petrol company, Alex would at first run just for the enjoyment of it, a typical session would entail running from the YMCA, then in Fenkle Street through the City Centre and over Byker Bridge, to the top of Byker Bank, returning to the YMCA by the same route. There was a great incentive to be first back to the YMCA in that the winner got the clean bath water, the fate of the last one home can only be a matter for conjecture! From the YMCA Alex joined a Boy Scout troop operating from St. Stephens Church Hall at the foot of Rye Hill in the west end of Newcastle. The scouts met on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Alex would work-out on the gymnasium equipment.

If he was to progress further, Alex realised that he would have to join a recognised athletic club, and coming from the west-end, naturally, Elswick Harriers was his first choice. Actually finding Elswick Harriers proved to be quite a job! Someone told him to go to the Chesterfield Arms (this was the club's first HQ), naturally, no-one there had ever heard of the Harriers (nothing changes). Finally, he was directed to Barrack Road and the Black Bull Public House and at long last Alex Burns became an Elswick Harrier.

At first the young Burns would take part in 2.5 mile training runs with the other youths around the Spital Tongues area, it must have been apparent even then that the youngster had great potential, for the club officials started to take an interest in him. Alex remembers winning his first race, this was soon after joining the club and was a cross country event at Gosforth Park.

Alex enjoyed those early days at the club, he remembers when, on Saturday mornings the Elswick lads together with the Gateshead Congregational Runners and Heaton Harriers would organise boxing matches. Doctor Shaw of Sunderland Harriers acted as Medical Officer to those who were unfortunate enough to require medical attention. Elswick, in fact, had several good boxers amongst its membership and the weights room in the cellar of the Black Bull was always well used. To Alex Burns this was the only social life in the club that he remembers; except that there was a rule of no smoking, no drinking, no swearing and no women, especially no women. To compensate for this there was hard graft and hard running.



Off to the Nationals at Sheffield.

In the late twenties, sprinting had started to take off in a big way at the club. Joe Donaghue who at the time was working in London had joined Enfield Harriers as his second-claim club and he was of the belief that in the South, runners had a more scientific approach to the sport. On his frequent trips back to Newcastle he would encourage the Elswick distance men to take up sprinting in the summer so as to improve their basic speed over cross country races during the winter season.

At this time there was a friendly relationship between Elswick Harriers and Birchfield Harriers, and because of this Alex Burns was invited South for invitation races, travelling overnight and returning immediately after the event. Travelling in those days was certainly very different from today. In 1931 Alex was entered for the AAA 4 mile championship at Stamford Bridge, the manner in which he travelled to London for the race would be considered quite unacceptable by today's stars. Travelling overnight Friday, getting what sleep he could on the train, Alex arrived at Kings

Cross at 5 in the morning. He made his way on foot to Shepherds Bush and had a cup of tea and a bun prior to the race. There was nothing else to do apart from just hanging around and waiting for his race to begin.

His race plan was to stay in about second place and to go "at 3.5 miles. Much to his surprise the race worked out to plan and Alex won handsomely. The great Harold Abrahams then a sports reporter for a national newspaper was to pen the immortal words; "Alex Burns, Elswick Harriers, a man dropped from the blue!" Although, he had to return home on the 11 pm train Alex attended the AAA dinner, together with Norman Woodcock and Joe Donaghue.

The 4 mile event was scrapped by the AAA when the championship was moved from Stamford Bridge to the White City the following year, so technically Alex Burns is still the English 4 mile champion.

Burns Wins Junior North Eastern Title – 1926

The twenty seventh annual North Eastern Cross Country Championship held at Gosforth Park may be deemed to have been a success from every point of view. The attendance was gratifying and the support of the athletes was much better than might have been expected when the conditions were taken into consideration.

In the junior event Elswick scored over the much fancied Wallsend team, and that despite the fact that Joe Nixon, last year's junior

champion was compelled to retire after one lap. Wallsend were without the services of their leading runner, D. Laing. The individual junior winner was Alex Burns who won the youths championship last year. Elswick's team took first place, with a total of 81 points over Wallsend, 83 points and Heaton Harriers with 98 points.

Burns Retains Title – 1927

Adverse conditions prevailed on Saturday at the Stockton Race Course, where the championships of the North Eastern Cross Country Association were decided before a disappointing attendance. Enthusiasm for field events is not, unhappily, very keen on Teesside. Moreover the fixture suffered by reason of counter attractions at Stockton and Middlesbrough.

Conditions under foot were bad for onlookers but infinitely more trying to the competitors. At its best, the low-lying course is inclined to be soggy, on Saturday the turf lifted at virtually every step, and as a direct consequence competitors had a gruelling time.

The reputation of Alex Burns (Elswick Harriers), holder of the junior championship, was of course, established, and the "knowing ones" asserted, when he went to the mark that the individual championship was all over bar the shouting. Events vindicated their judgement, for Burns went to the front early in the race and remained there apparently without serious effort.

Elswick retained the team title with 80 points ahead of Wallsend 94 points and Heaton Harriers with 112 points.

Alex Burns leading the field in the 1926 running of the Junior race in the North Eastern Cross-Country Championship at Gosforth Park.



1927 Burns First in "McConachie"

At the last of the open road races of the season in the North East was held today by Elswick Harriers from their Headquarters on Barrack Road, Newcastle.

The war period having been a blank this was the tenth contest, and Heaton Harriers with four wins having won the original McConachie Cup". A new trophy was offered year ago and won by the Royal Corps of Signals team for whom Corporal Cotterell finished first, in a time 38 secs slower than the record by J. Ormston of Blaydon Harriers in 1913 when he covered the course of approximately 6 miles in 28 mins 48 secs.

The signals were among the thirteen teams entered again, and in view of the strength of Heaton and Saltwell particularly, the holders were regarded as having a difficult task to retain possession.

Other entrants were Heaton, two teams, Gateshead Congers, Saltwell, North Shields Polytechnic, Elswick, Sunderland, Newcastle, Benwell, Gateshead St. Marys and Blaydon.

In the races for the original trophy the first club to finish six men irrespective of points were declared the winners, but the conditions were altered for the new cup presented by the President of the Elswick Club, Mr. George McConachie and the positions are now determined by the lowest aggregate of points.

The course was from the Leazes Gates on Barrack Road, Hunters Road, Cow Hill, Two Ball Lonnen, West Turnpike, Brighton Grove, Barrack Road and back to the starting point.

The winning team take the cup and prizes for the six counters and additional prizes are for the first and second individuals home, whilst a gold medal is offered to the first man to break the existing record.

The race was favoured by splendid weather, and a big crowd witnessed the start. There was a total of 112 runners and the spectacle as they streamed away through a long lane of spectators several deep was an inspiring one to the members of the North Eastern Counties Country Association who were present in an official capacity. They are a body who give ungrudging service to the cause of amateur running on road and track as well as cross country running.

Mr. McConachie the donor of the trophy was the starter in the absence of Mr. G.M. Todd, the timekeeper was Mr. J. Farriels. Mr. Joseph Holmes, Secretary of Elswick Harriers was in charge of the arrangements.

The prospects of a new record being made under such favourable conditions as prevailed were fulfilled, and two men actually finished inside the previous best figures. Alex Burns of the promoting club, and a North Eastern junior champion, took the lead after 100 yards and running grandly all the way lopped 8 secs of Ormston's time, while Broodley of the Signals, also finished 3 secs inside.

At two and a half miles, Howie, a past "North Mail" cup-winner ran into second place to Burns, with McShane next, but passing the Work-house on Westgate Road Broodley drew into second place without, however, being able to make any impression on the leader who won splendidly.

The start of the McConachie", Alex Burns No 92



Four Miles AAA Title for Elswick Harriers

North Mail July 6th 1931

"Never a Victor of Cooler Judgement"

England gained a larger share of the honours than usual in the Amateur Athletics Association Championship, which were concluded at Stamford Bridge, London, on Saturday. In the field events foreign athletes predominated, but generally English runners gave a much better showing.

R. Murdoch, of Glasgow University, scored the sole Scottish success, in the 220 yds championship, while England's successes were gained in the 100 yds, high jump, half mile, 120 yds hurdles, 4 miles, 1 mile, 2 mile steeple-chase, and 440 yds.

Thousands of North-Country sportsmen who have seen Alex Burns, the Elswick Harrier, in action during his many local triumphs, will share enthusiasm for his great feat in winning the 4 miles title in masterly style, and being the first since 1907 to win a AAA honour for the district.

This great accomplishment is all the more notable because for several months – in fact since failing in the Cross Country National of 1930, and losing his Northern title last winter, Burns' prospects of gaining highest honours have been under something of a cloud, but on Saturday Burns came into his own with the race of his career.

Making sure of a place near the leaders, Lindgren (Sweden) and Sutherland (Army and Scotland), Burns was content to run in a handy position and let the others make the pace for 2 miles, but when he began to let himself go it was soon seen that the issue lay between himself and J.F. Wood (Heriots), who had spurted fiercely during the third mile.

Burns trusted to his stamina, keeping him in front during the last quarter of the tussle, but the crowd were thrilled by the smooth raking stride with which the Newcastle man continued to eat up the leeway.

In the penultimate half mile he made up 60 yds to catch up the dour Scot, and without semblance of effort repeated his superiority over the last 880 yds to win by 60 yds in 19 mins 49.25 secs: Wood's time being exactly 20 mins. Last year L. Virtenen (Sweden) won in 19 mins 38 secs which had only been beaten by G. Hutson's 19 mins 32 secs way back in 1913.

Interviewed by a "North Mail" representative after the race, Burns was very modest about his achievement. "My friends tell me that my good

judgement was the cause of my victory," he said. "But all I know is that I put my best into the race, and well, I found myself the winner."

A notable critic of 44 years experience said he had never seen a victor in any race who had displayed such coolness or better judgement than the new champion.

Alex and the "Rubbers"

Between the wars Elswick Harriers had the valuable services of two masseurs or rubbers as they were popularly known. Alex had been massaged by rubbers the world over but he reckoned that "Danny" and Mr. Holmes were the best in the business. He remembers Mr. Holmes, in particular, who was deaf and dumb from birth. He used to pound and punch the Elswick lads in a merciless effort to bring life back to tired and damaged muscles. These men with their bottles of liniment and ice bags were the forerunners of the professional physiotherapist, so much in demand in today's sport.

As with today's athletics the local press always gave good coverage to local events, and on occasions would produce cartoons to accompany their race reports.

Alex was a good supporter of local athletics and would take the time to run in local events even at the height of his international career. One race however, that he never ran in was the "Morpeth". His views on the race were quite straightforward. Alex was not prepared to put in the necessary mileage to have any hope of winning the race and to him, New Year's Day was a welcome break from work.

During the winter months, between major events paperchases were held, and Alex remembers Tommy Davidson collecting all the old socks that he could get hold of, the lads used to put them over their sandshoes to give extra grip in the icy conditions.

Los Angeles Olympic Games 1932

In 1932 Alex Burns was picked to go to the Olympics being held in Los Angeles. At this time the country was deep in recession, everywhere money was tight and poverty widespread. Because of the financial restrictions placed upon the authorities only 20 competitors actually made the long trip to the games with Alex, doubling-up in the 5,000 and 10,000 metre events.

The epic journey to the west coast of America took 10 days to complete, with the exhausted athletes arriving at the Games only 24 hours prior to the opening ceremony. From Alex's point of view the journey was an exciting experience for the Tyneside lad. Following the train journey to Southampton the Team embarked on the liner, "Empress of Britain" for the ocean crossing to Quebec. During the voyage lasting five days and four nights Alex rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous, including Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin who was en-route to the Ottawa Conference.

The only place for the athletes to train was on the liner's promenade deck, sprinting up and down on the heaving deck was not an experience to be enjoyed. On the five day journey from Canada to Los Angeles on the "Santa Fe Railroad", training sessions were held on station platforms during the frequent breaks in the journey.

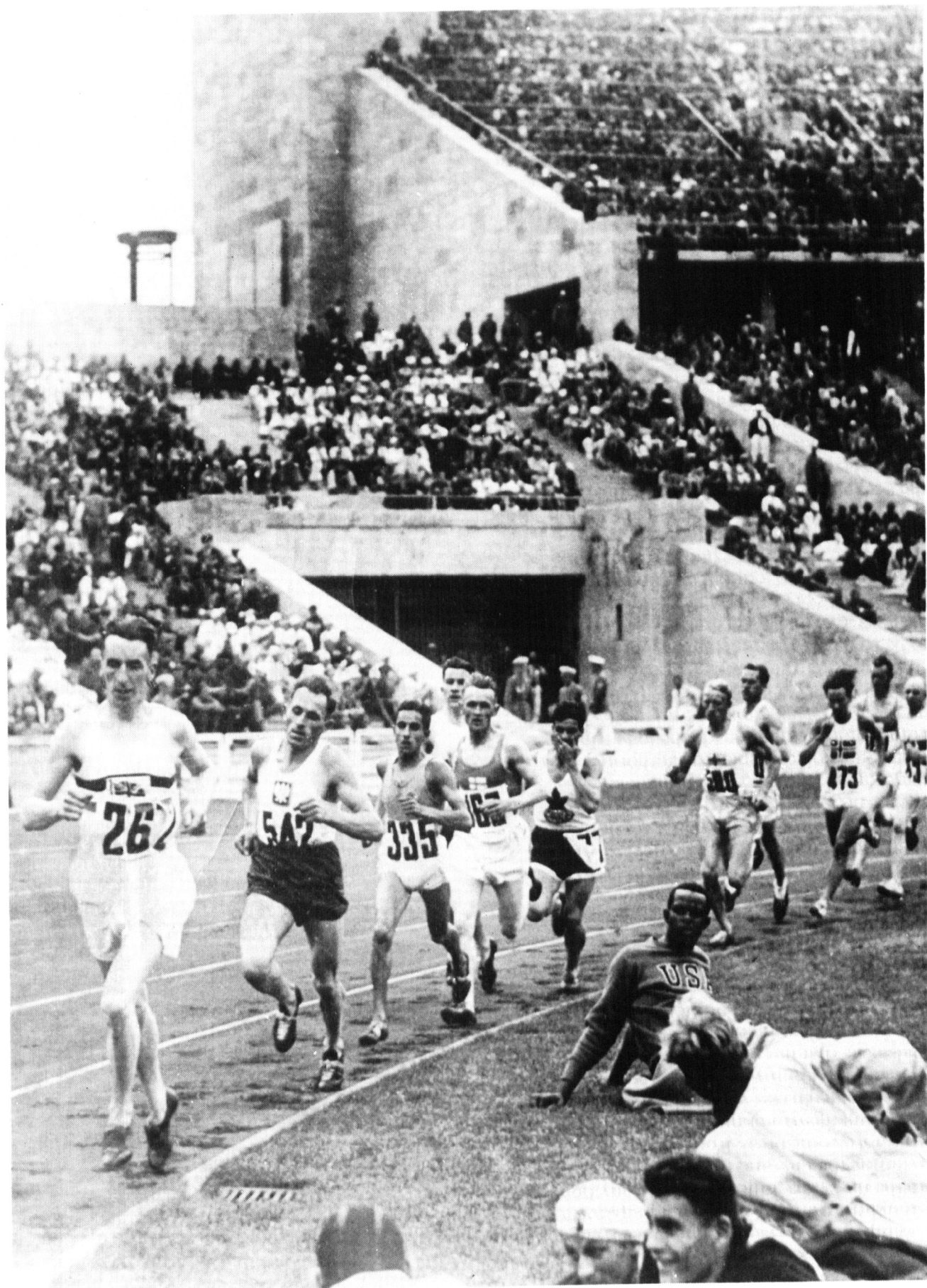
Less than 24 hours after reaching his destination, Alex found himself in the oppressive atmosphere of the Coliseum Bowl ready to take part in the heats of the 5,000 metres. Despite the tiring journey and soaring temperature Alex easily won his heat, but sadly there was to be no fairy-tale ending. In those



Alex Burns Los Angeles 1932

days, distance running was dominated by the Finns. The Finnish team had been in Los Angeles for weeks, getting acclimatised in the unfavourable conditions and naturally, because of this they were successful. Alex came fifth in the 5,000 metre final and fifth in the 10,000 metres, setting a new British record, a truly remarkable achievement considering the odds stacked against him.

After the games had finished, Alex and the rest of the Team had the opportunity to see the sights of Los Angeles. Lord Burghley, the team captain took Alex into the homes of the rich and famous, such as film stars, Mary Pickford and Lon Chaney, he visited the film studios and enjoyed the colour and vibrant atmosphere of the City of the Angles. Four years later Alex would find Berlin a very different place.



Alex Burns (No.26) 10,000m. Berlin 1936

Alex Burns Returns

Elswick Harriers Canadian Record and Los Angeles Games Impressions:

"J.A. ("Alex") Burns, the Elswick Harrier and England champion was welcomed home to Newcastle from his Olympic Games travels last night by a large number of his own club men and other athletic representatives. The latter body included Dr. J.M. Shaw of Sunderland, the North Eastern Cross Country Association President. Burns, who was sun-tanned, though not so straight and vigorous as usual, lost 7 lbs in weight during his stay in the United States, but has picked up a good deal of weight on the return journey, and expressed himself perfectly fit and ready for work today. He cannot over-appreciate the generosity of his employers, the Anglo-American Oil Company in releasing him for the most wonderful experience of his career".

"I ran up to my best form in England", Burns stated, "equal to my 14-22 for the 3 miles at Oxford, but this was not good enough to beat men like Lehtinen of Finland or Hill of the U.S.A., the first and second in the 5000 metres final in which I was fifth, about 120 yards behind the winner".

The Elswick man, is of the opinion that the warmth and sunshine, whilst delightful for short distance men, was very exhausting for the stayers – he ran his 5000 metres in a temperature of 112 degrees F – and considers the sprint times likely to be slower, and those for the longer distance races faster, at the next Olympiad, in Berlin.

Moving to San Francisco after the Games, Burns ran second to Hill in the U.S.A. v British Empire Match in conditions so much colder as to be rather upsetting, but in a run at Montreal on the way back he felt very fit and took 4 secs off the Canadian record of 7 mins 11 secs for one and a half mile distance.

Alex, who may be taking part in a promotion which Duncan McLeod Wright of Maryhill is hoping to arrange in Glasgow, with many of Britian's Olympic men included, in a week or two's time. Alex will be guest of honour at a function to be held by Elswick Harriers at the Oxford Galleries, Newcastle on September, 20th, 1932.

Tyneside's first Olympic Games representative, who has had scarcely two seasons concentration on track running, speaks in the highest terms of the courtesy and sportsmanship shown by the American athletes and public alike.

"There may have been occasional bubbles of discord", he remarked, "but in such a terrific crowd, many of whom could not understand each others language, this was not surprising, and generally the feeling was splendid, and everywhere the British were wonderfully popular".

Berlin Olympic Games 1936

"When I shook hands with Adolph Hitler at the athletes reception, all I could think about was that Hitler had an inferiority complex, in my day, moustaches were looked upon with suspicion, a man with a moustache had something to hide." I have paraphrased Alex Burns first impression of the most evil man who has ever lived, he then went on to describe his meeting. "One couldn't help being affected by the aura that surrounded him and his lieutenants, to the German people he was both their God and saviour. It was Hitler who had led the German people from defeat and subjugation in 1918, and had turned Germany into the powerful war-mongering giant of 1936, a nation flexing its muscles ready for expansion and European domination.

To Alex Burns, however, the clouds of war seemed far away, if they were even noticed at all. Alex got on very well with the German people, for he had been to Germany many times and he admired their youth, so disciplined and healthy. The Team were quite unaware of the concentration camp only 9 miles away from the stadium, and even Hitler's curiosity as to the origins of Alex's grandparents were passed off as mere interest by the athlete. Alex was in Germany to run and all his engeries were channeled in this direction.

As in Los Angeles in 1932 the 10,000 metre event was dominated by the Finns, Alex had no great hope of winning a medal and this proved to be the case. Ilmari Salminen won the race followed by two of his countrymen, Aslola and Isoholle. Burns was, however, not far behind finishing in fifth position in a British record time of 30 mins 58.2 secs, he had given of his best. Alex's great North East rival, Jack Potts from Annfield Plain made the early pace but could not sustain his advantage and could only finish in seventh place.

After the Berlin Olympics Alex continued his career in athletics to great effect for several years. He won the Senior Club Championship in 1937 and again finally in 1938 and in this year Alex still had the speed to win the Northumberland and Durham One Mile Championship.

After retiring from competitive running, Alex redirected his energies into promoting his club from the side-lines, and his help was invaluable when the club celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1939. As an athlete of international standing, Alex was able to use his good offices to persuade Sidney Wooderson, world mile record holder, a member of Blackheath Harriers to run in a one-mile handicap at Elswick's Jubilee sports at the Cowgate sports ground.

During the war years, and for some time after the end of hostilities Alex was engaged in important work for his employers, the Anglo American Oil Company, and because of this his connection with athletics on a day to day basis lapsed.

A sprightly octogenarian, Alex now lives in retirement in a Newcastle suburb. His 6'3" frame ramrod straight belies his years and his ability to pull into sharp focus, events long forgotten is quite uncanny. He retains a deep affection for his club of whom he is a life-member, but as far as top class athletics is concerned Alex is not really interested. A true Corinthian he rejects the philosophy of running for money. In my time'', Alex stated, we ran just for the love of the sport and money or prizes were never a consideration, and the greed for money is the reason why athletics today does not interest me.'' Alex Burns speaks with authority, and has about him, that indefinable aura that seems to be vested in all great champions and he finished his reminiscences with this message for the Elswick men. Tell the lads to drink plenty of milk and wear heavy boots for training!'' and who, I wonder would argue.



One of the great advantages that the club enjoyed when Alex Burns was accepted as an International runner, was the granting from the Army Northern Command, permission for the club to use the garrison ground for training. This was wonderful news, a central meeting place for the club to train together. No more having to put up with the Nuns Moor or Town Moor with its golfers, manure, or deep holes in the ground. The club took full advantage of the Army's facilities and went from strength to strength. Another advantage was that some of the soldiers stationed at the garrison became involved in running and "Hookey" Walker, an officer, coached the shot and Sgt. Fred Wool was a useful sprinter, training with Elswick and competing in all the local sports as an Elswick Harrier. Elswick because of their connections with the Army were invited to all their social functions such as the Inkermans Ball. 1939, was to see this association quickly disappear.

During the dark nights when out training there was never any danger of a runner being knocked down, for in those days traffic was very light and no-one ever thought of wearing any distinctive clothing, just an old vest, shorts and sandshoes. As the winter season got under way in September the first of the six paperchases were staged, this was a complete misnomer as proper paperchases had not been held since the turn of the century. The first race

of the season was the Heaton Memorial, then on Boxing Day Gateshead Congers staged a youth's race for the Tradesman's Challenge Trophy, an event won by Elswick in 1928. After the "Morpeth" came the Signals Relay at Catterick, other races that were well supported were the North Shields Polytechnic and the Sunderland to South Shields Road Races.

The cross country season kicked-off at Blaydon where the North Eastern Cross Country Championship was staged on the old race course. Darlington and Gosforth Park were also popular venues. The "Northerns" came next, these were usually run at Sheffield, Manchester or Doncaster as well as Gosforth Park, scene of many fine runs by Alex Burns.

As soon as the days lengthened, the Elswick lads began to prepare for the coming track season, and training began in earnest. The first meeting of the track season was the Gateshead Police sports held on Whit Monday at the North Durham Cricket Ground. This race was followed by the Sunderland Police sports and the Durham Constabulary sports, this latter event was attractive in that there were four prizes for every event. August Bank Holiday was the day for the Newcastle Police sports, held at St. James' Park. Terry Monaghan won the 100 yds for Elswick on the last occasion that this particular event was held.

Terry Monaghan breaks the tape, Newcastle Police Sports



As the police fixtures waned in popularity gaps began to appear in the summer fixture list and this led to the formation of the North East Track League. The league proved to be a very popular idea and was open not just to the club elite but to anyone who wished to turn out. Each meeting contained just one track league event, and it is worth noting that no prizes or trophies were on offer. These meetings had tremendous atmosphere and the club's spirits were sky-high as a result. Before the start of the league, the Northumberland and Durham Championships were spread out right across the season. Sunderland Police staged the 100 yds; Swan Hunters the 220 yds: this, the only 220 yds straight known to man, it was an absolute killer''. The 440 yds was held at Durham, the 880 yds at Darlington and the mile at the Ingham Infirmary sports. This meant that almost every meeting had an added attraction, whereas now a special meeting is organised for all the Northumberland and Durham Championships held on the same day.

Elswick Harriers were nearly always involved in these sports and had more than their share of the honours, with the one-mile medley relay being a popular event. The most well organised event was the Newcastle United Sports held at



BEN GORDON of Elswick Harriers set his teeth, but just failed to catch W. Wilson (Jarrow A.C.) at the end of the mile relay at St. James's Park.

St. James' Park. Arthur Wint of Jamaica, one of the worlds' finest quarter-milers appeared there after running at the Olympics.

During the 1930's 95% of all track races were based on the handicap system. Taking the 100 yds as an example; time standard was 10 secs, on your first outing there was a starters mark of 6 or 7 yds, so that the handicapper could see you in action. The top mark was eleven yds, after each time out, if unplaced, you received one yd until you were off the top mark. If you won a 100 yd sprint you could expect to be pulled a yard and a half, or half a yard for coming second.

Unfortunately, the handicap is no longer with us so that the average club man is not catered for. Every man cannot be a champion or even to grace the same track as a champion, but the system did give the club man an opportunity to run against the finest and sometimes even to win.

Prize Giving in the Thirties

In these days of inflationary money values and the astronomical payments made to top athletes it is hard to come to terms with the prizes on offer to amateur athletes in the twenties and thirties. The prizes were invariably clocks, canteens of cutlery, barometers and glassware, occasionally a runner would be lucky enough to win a decent watch. The rules laid down by the AAA were not rigidly adhered to. The first prize value had not to exceed seven guineas (£7.35). In the Northumberland and Durham Championship for instance the winner would receive only his county badge and medal.

In the late 1930's Alnwick Cricket Club arranged a sports meeting to be held on their cricket ground. The programme contained the Northumberland and Durham quarter-mile championship. The race was won by Ken Anderson of Elswick and when he received his badge and medal he was presented with a special prize, a solid silver propelling pencil donated by the Duke of Northumberland. As the value of the special prize was in excess of the stipulated amount Anderson had to return it! When one thinks of the payments made today it seems that amateur athletics no longer exist.



Terry Monaghan receives his clock

Social Activities Outside Running in the 1930's

At one time there existed a very strong and friendly spirit between the club and the young men of the Jewish community which operated from the Macabi club at the foot of Westgate Hill. We organised football matches which we played on the Hunters Moor and had table tennis tournaments on a home and away basis. Only two members of the community ever joined Elswick, one to do weight lifting at the Black Bull with Norman Bains and Jimmy Hindson. The younger chap, about 18 used to train with the lads but never competed in a race.

This was in the days of Sir Walter Mosley and his Black Shirts who were marching in every city in the country, there was a strong anti-semitic atmosphere prevailing, and it is to the credit of the Elswick lads that no such attitudes ever surfaced at the club.

Every winter season dances were held in the Brighton Assembly Rooms at the cost of half-a-crown a ticket. Sometimes, however, the

function was held in the Oxford Galleries, taking place on any day of the week except Saturday. Joe Mirley and Terry Monaghan were the organisers of the dance evenings, during the course of a dance one of the committee members would go to the box office with the ticket stubs which were counted, the more tickets sold the better for the club, as sixpence was refunded on every ticket sold, so on a good night this refund would be enough to pay for the hire of the hall and the wages of the band. The only drawback to these dances was that the hall may have been booked by other organisations on the same night so facilities would have had to be shared. On other occasions Joe and Terry would organise social evenings in the Westacres Hall, near the Fox and Hounds Pub on the West Road, and these evenings proved to be very popular with club members. Unlike the Oxford or the Brighton events, the social evenings were much more intimate affairs, fancy-dress competitions were often held, perhaps, with the senior men dressing-up in school boy clothes and creating a

mighty rumpus. With our sophisticated tastes in entertainment, these events may appear to have been not that attractive, but friendships made and cemented in those far off times still stand even to this day.

With the country gradually coming out of the depression, times became a little easier, the purchase of running-kit for instance was no longer the problem it had been in the twenties, and for the first time in many years there was no unemployment amongst the Elswick men. The winter-season club captain, Syd Wilson perhaps high lighted the new-found prosperity by becoming the first club member to take a holiday abroad in Switzerland. Syd, incidentally, was a well respected runner, a fine half-miler and anchor-man in many an epic relay race.

Gradually the Elswick vest was to move out of the confines of Tyneside, Terry Monaghan and Joe Mirley travelled to the Isle of Man and ran in races organised by Cunningham's Holiday Camp; the boys were successful also at Butlins, with Terry and Tommy Wood clearing the decks. Together with Alex Burns the lads ventured into Scotland and to the Galashields Common Riding, known as "The Braw Lad and the Braw Lass". The Elswick team won the St. Mungo Shield that day for the 1 mile medley relay. Syd Wilson ran the half mile, Tommy Wood and Jack Croudace ran the 220 yd legs, alas, the name of the runner on the quarter mile leg cannot be remembered.

As Joe Mirley had moved to Glasgow to take up work, the "Red Vest" could now be seen at the Glasgow Rangers Sports staged at Ibrox.

Each year the U.S.A. athletic selection committee would send a team to compete at the Ibrox event prior to competing at the White City against the English AAA on the following Monday. One year Elswick sent a team up to Glasgow to compete in the Ibrox sports, and Syd Wilson reached the 220 yards final but was unplaced.

During the summer months club members and friends would spend Sundays on the beach at Whitley Bay or Seaton Sluice, or perhaps venture further afield by charabanc to Warkworth.

Donny McDonald the club's self-appointed jester and entertainments officer would keep a party atmosphere going throughout the day. Donny, a pitman from the colliery at the end of Diana Street, near the Big Lamp would pretend to hold union meetings and would discuss at length conditions existing in the mines and factories. Holiday-makers would gather around at these meetings and listen, unaware of the joke being played upon them. Donny was the club's star field event man, handsome and strong, he would in later years become the Mayor of Appleby in Westmorland for two terms of Office.

Norman Woodcock and Clubmates, club outing to Seaton Sluice



The First Ladies (1929-1933)

Even after scanning through two years issues of the "North Mail" 1921 – 1931, it is still difficult to come up with a reasonable explanation as to how Elswick Ladies Section came into existence or the reason that lay behind its formation.

What we do know, is that for some time prior to 1929 certain ladies, probably friends or relations of the Elswick men used to travel around the local meetings as supporters cheering their men to victory or comforting them in defeat. The ladies were also conspicuous at the many club outings to Whitley Bay or Seaton Sluice.

It is a matter of record that Elswick Ladies Section was formed on the 6th of November 1929, with a membership of 22. This was followed by the formation of Gateshead Congers Ladies on the 14th of November of the same

year, with South Shields forming a ladies section a week later. Soon Elswick's membership had swollen to over 50 and regular training runs started in earnest. At first the ladies were quite tentative about trespassing on what was traditionally a male preserve, but with the help of one or two of the senior men they soon found their feet. The following report from the "North Mail" the 7th of November makes interesting reading.

"I have enjoyed it very much and would have liked to have run a little bit further. When we have had a few weeks practice we will be challenging the other ladies clubs in the district". So said one of the 22 Elswick Ladies Harriers who took part in the club's initial run last night over a course of about one and a half miles at Spital Tongues, and this view seemed general among the other members.

This inception of lady harriers on Tyneside certainly passed off very successfully and

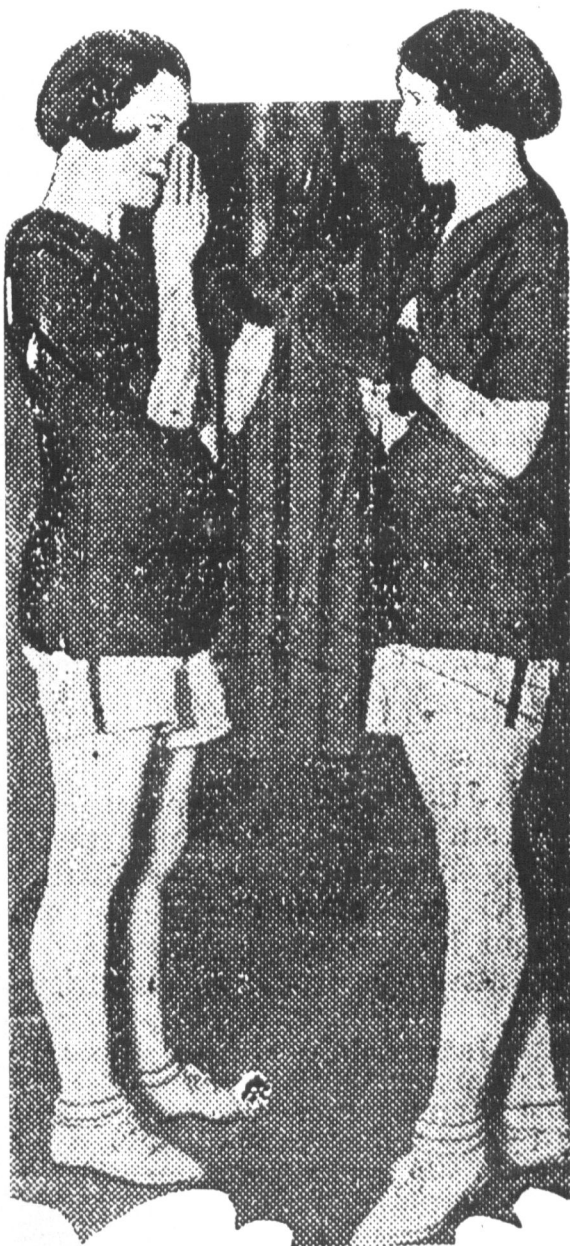


several other clubs which have watched the Elswick innovation with interest are expected to be quickly following the pioneers example. Conditions could scarcely be less attractive, rain falling when the runners turned out, while the roads were slippery with occasional pools. Never having had a test of any description several girls were undoubtedly afraid that they would do badly, but with two or three of the Elswick mens section acting as "pace" and "whipper-in" a good start was made from Hunters Road into Claremont Road.

The course lay then along Grandstand Road to Ponteland Road and completed a circle with a quarter-mile stretch along Hunters Road. There was no increase in pace for the run-in and the runners finished in good order. The outing occupied a few seconds outside 14 mins. There would be a second run from headquarters to be announced later.

One of the ladies by all accounts who would have held her own in today's sport was Winnie Bramley, winner of the "Haswell Cup" in 1930, 1931 and 1932. Agnes Mirley, sister of Joe Mirley was another leading light in the section, together with Jennie Sewell; Jennie later became married to the Labour MP. Ted Short. The club's first patron was Miss Haswell, the owner of Jacksons Lemonade Factory in Fenham.

Although meetings were held between Elswick Ladies and other local clubs, and championships contested, the movement died around 1933. Forty years or so later Elswick Ladies would rise again and this time they would be a force to be reckoned with, and a force that would certainly last a lot longer than their sisters, "The First Ladies".



DAINTY TOUCHES.—Harriers of the Elswick Club making up before their run from Spital Tongues.



Elswick & South Shields Ladies 1932



Halfway There (Golden Jubilee 1939)

As Europe prepared for war, Elswick Harriers prepared to celebrate their Golden Jubilee. The summer headquarters of the club at this time was the Co-op Sports Ground at Cowgate and this was where the celebrations were to be held. Through the intervention of Alex Burns, Sydney Wooderson, the world-famous miler from Blackheath Harriers agreed to run in a 1 mile invitation handicap, off scratch; it was a race that certainly caught the imagination of the local press.

Crowds Gaped as S.C. Wooderson Triumphed – 26th July, 1939

Sydney Wooderson made a new record for the North of England last night, when, at the Elswick Harriers Golden Jubilee Sports, at the Newcastle Co-operative Welfare Ground, Cowgate, Newcastle, he clocked 4 mins 15.2 secs in a special mile handicap. The previous best time was 4 mins 21 secs recorded in 1895 at Berwick by F.E. Bacon, who was the English champion for the distance. More than 7,000 spectators saw the race.

Wooderson competed against a dozen invited runners, including Alex Burns, J.H. Potts, Tyneside's English Internationals, and the Scottish International W.C. Wylie.

Wooderson off scratch, was giving Potts and Wylie 65 yards and Burns 70 yards. When in the first two laps he had only gained about 10 yds, the crowd probably felt that they were not going to see him at his best. In the third lap he gained a few more yards, Potts was then in front followed by Wylie and Burns, but there had been nothing in the race to suggest what was going to happen.

Wooderson makes his Bid

Three hundred yards from home Wooderson made his effort, and the spectators gasped as he went through the field. He passed the leader, Potts, at the top bend, and running with faultless fluency, entered the home straight and won by 10 yards from Potts, with Wiley 2 yards further behind in third place.

Unfortunately, when about 30 yards from home, Wooderson faltered, and it was later discovered that he had pulled a muscle in his left leg. It was, however, not that serious and would, no doubt, heal within a day or two.



Sydney Wooderson at Cowgate

Wooderson's brother, Stanley, competed in the 2 mile handicap and also won. He received 10 yards from Wiley, who ran a great race but was beaten by 10 yards. Potts, who was off scratch, ran disappointingly in this event.

RESULTS

1 Mile Invitation Handicap –	
S.C. Wooderson, Blackheath H. (scr)	1
J.H. Potts, Saltwell H. (65yds)	2
W.C. Wiley, Darlington H. (65yds)	3
Ten yards; three yards. Time: 4 min. 15 1.5 sec.	

After the War was over – 1946

Only the names of three Elswick members have come to light as having lost their lives during the war. Alan Bowman, Jimmy Bell and a runner Hillard whose christian name I have been unable to discover. Other members who survived capture and injury were Joe Donaghue and George Boak. Joe was captured in North Africa and was imprisoned by the Italians who treated him abominably, and later by the Germans who, at least, kept their prisoners clean. George Boak was severely wounded in the hip, his rolling gait was testimony to his bravery as he trained and raced in later years.

Although athletics continued during the war, it was not organised at a club level. Reserved occupations, such as the Police and munitions workers organised their own meetings, and it was not around September 1945 that the Newcastle clubs began to reform. With the winding down of the Nation's war machine and the "demob" of its forces vast numbers of extremely fit and disciplined men came home. Not to a land fit for heroes, but to unemployment, food rationing and shortages of all kinds, some of these men however were to provide the new backbone for the local athletic clubs.

Elswick's first committee meeting was held in the "Black Bull" on Tuesday 18th September 1945, and many of the old members turned up. A record of the minutes of that historic meeting no longer exist, but with Norman Woodcock at the helm I am sure the agenda would have covered most eventualities. No time was wasted and by the following Tuesday Norman was busy whipping the lads back into shape.

North Mail –

Wednesday 19th September 1945

"Ready for the Road"

"Elswick Harriers now ready for the road have arranged their initial run for Tuesday, 25th September at 8 pm: over a two and a half mile stretch from their headquarters, Black Bull Hotel, Barrack Road.

I am told by the club's international runner, Alex Burns, that an old-timer, Tommny Burns (no relation) who is over 60 years old, will be in the pack and that judging by the enthusiasm at the re-forming meeting there will be a big turn out.

By the way, the club have secured the use of two athletic grounds, the Co-op Sports Ground, Cowgate and the Garrison field at Fenham Barracks for track runners. George Ross, a former R.S.M. of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers is to coach members who are interested in field events".

Gradually, Elswick, together with the other local clubs, began to splutter into life, and meetings and events were organised. On March 16th 1946 a "Victory Event for Harriers" was staged at the Blaydon Race Course, with a cross-country event for youths (3 miles) and seniors (6 miles). Good Friday 1946 saw the revival of the Benwell Harriers Open Road Race, which Gosforth Harriers won. Elswick came fourth, with the team comprising of, Alex Burns, B. Gordon, S. Urry, J. Furlonger, W. McEvoy and Tommy Davidson. It is interesting to note that when in those days, runners retired at around thirty, Tommy Davidson was still running at the age of fifty!, a "super-vet" before the term was ever thought of.

On May 8th 1946, a track meeting was organised by Kings College, now the University of Newcastle, between the students and Elswick to be held at Cochrane park on May, 8th 1946. Elswick's team was to include; J. Schofield, H. Roberts, A. Laidler (ex N & D Youth's Champion). In the sprints, Elswick fielded, Terry Monaghan, 440 yds, Syd Wilson, 880 yds, B. Gordon, 1 mile and Alex Burns 3 miles. In the event Elswick did very well, Alex Burns still good enough to win the 3 mile race in 16 mins 10.5 secs, with Syd Wilson first in the 880 yds, Jack Schofield second in the 220 yds and Ben Gordon second in the mile.

A Change of Direction

The fifties saw Elswick gradually change direction from the roads to the track, the reason for this may have been that there were so many track events held in the area. Nine out of ten meetings would be run on the handicap system, so that even the most mediocre runner felt that he could compete with some chance of success, and good prizes were there to be won.

From time to time, attractive fixtures were organised where top international athletes competed off scratch against runners from local clubs. In 1952, the Jamaican Olympic team were on a British tour and Elswick were invited to a meeting held at the Middlesbrough and Cleveland Cricket Ground. Elswick were put up as the hares for the likes of Herb McKenley and

Arthur Wint, gold medalists at the Helsinki Olympic Games.

At this time Elswick had an excellent 100 yard relay team in Jack Schofield, Ken Anderson, Jack Croudace and Jimmy Calaghan. In the Boak brothers, Bill and George, Elswick had two formidable road and country runners. Summer training was at the Co-op Sports Ground at Cowgate which boasted an excellent grass track and was conveniently near to the Town Moor for the distance men to train. In those days most runners trained only three times a week, Ben Gordon was the exception, he used to train every day of the week, other members felt that the three days training was quite sufficient as there were often two athletic meetings each week.

Elswick Harriers Club Photograph St. James' Park 1948



In 1952, there could have, perhaps, been a revival of the ladies section. Ted Boulmer, a member who worked at the Metal Box Company used to bring some of the factory girls over to Cowgate to train. The movement never really got off the ground, the girls were never made to feel welcome by the Elswick men. Ted Boulmer, frustrated by this chauvinistic attitude gave up the struggle and the section folded after about 2 years.

Around 1955, the club sunk to the lowest ebb in its history, when only 4 members regularly attended the club's training sessions, the four were Fred Stephenson, "Topper Brown", Stan Robinson and Norman Woodcock. Many youngsters however used to turn up to play five aside football and to do a spot of running to help their fitness. One of these youngsters was to forsake his football and become one of the club's most enduring runner's, his name, Colin Bolton, now club treasurer.

Fred Stephenson, a witness to the happenings of the fifties agrees with the suggestions that Elswick Harriers was not the club of old, the comradeship and spirit of the early days had disappeared. The characters who once added colour and atmosphere to club life had long since drifted away; Elswick Harriers were bankrupt as a going concern.

As well as the lack of runners there were no social activities held within the club, it appeared that members were just not interested

in meeting socially, and this important side of club life was neglected. It could be argued that money was tight, and only the very well-off could afford their own transport, and this may have contributed to this attitude.

Two events, however, are on record, the first was a presentation dinner in honour of Alan Lillington upon his return from the 1952 Olympics, the function was held at the Co-op Rainbow Rooms in Newcastle. Later when Bill and George Boak returned to their home town of Carlisle they organised a track meeting, the first one ever to be held in the city and Elswick were asked to help. Fred remembers taking ten Elswick men to Carlisle in the back of an old van, (nothing changes!) Fred also remembers that the meeting was a great success, Fred won the 440 yard handicap, with Ross Millican winning the 440 yards invitation race.

The club's greatest asset, Norman Woodcock was still in charge, and the club would not die if Norman could help it. With new vigour born out of a burning pride in his once proud club, he began searching for new talent. It is a measure of this man's determination that he was able to persuade the likes of Alan Lillington and Ronnie Henderson to join the club. These were men who were to become the stars of the fifties, and to set a standard of achievement that was the envy of all the North East Clubs.

100 yards sprint – St James' Park circa 1948



Bill Boak

Over the years Elswick have had one or two "academics" drawn to its ranks, the first, a Cumbrian by birth, Bill Boak. He was drawn towards Elswick Harriers by the magnetism of Norman Woodcock. Bill was a must" to be included in any history of Elswick, so in a long telephone conversation between Newcastle and Carlisle the following story emerged.

Best Performances – Cross Country

Second to Frank Aaron, English Nationals, Richmond, Yorks, 1951

Fifth English Nationals, Reading 1953

Second "Northerns", 1953

First Lyons, France 1953

Second Chartres, France, 1953

Second Inter-Counties, Epsom, 1954

Seventh English Nationals. Cardington, 1955

After noting his best performances in cross country events, Bill went on to explain how he came to join the club and talk about the people who influenced him during his career.

"In 1944, as a lad of 18, I began my academic career as a student in the School of Agriculture at Kings College, Newcastle. My first sport was rugby and I accordingly took part in the College trials in the autumn of that year. It soon became apparent, however, that rugby was not my forte', and I took up running, very much as a second choice and with a keen sense of wounded pride. It was one of the most fortunate decisions of my life, however, because it opened up to me a wonderful world."

"One of the most outstanding people of that world was the Elswick Hon. Sec; Norman Woodcock. When I met him he was in his early forties, fairly recently demobbed (this was about 1945 or 46) he was desperately anxious that his old club should be rebuilt and recapture the spirit and achievement that he had known before the Second World War. I don't think he was disappointed, but then a club with Norman at the helm could hardly fail to be successful; in my book he was the ideal club secretary/coach. He would advise, encourage, exhort and cajole his 'lads' regardless of ability. When I left the North East in 1950 to return to Carlisle, he continued the good work by letter, particularly before and after a big race. You couldn't fail to do your best for Norman Woodcock and if you ran well away from home, one of your first thoughts was of the pleasure it would give him.



Bill Boak

The unconscious ability to inspire affection and respect is a mark of the very best mentors, in sport or any other activity, and for me Norman WAS the tops."

"From the winter of 1953/54 another man cast in the Woodcock mould applied the "homing" process to my training methods. He was Johnny Johnston, coach and friend of Jim Peters and Frank Sando, and under his guidance I began an intensive programme of 9-10 sessions a week. Instead of running say 10 miles at one go, I split it into 2 runs of say 5 miles, or 6 miles and 4 miles, or whatever I could fit in with my daily work. This was all done at a much faster pace than hitherto. Of course this system is well known now, but in those days it was still very new. Its effectiveness had been demonstrated, however, by such people as Gordon Pirie and Jim Peters."

"The same principle had been employed for track running by Zatopek, needless to say the results in my case were not so illustrious! But there was no question that I became far fitter and stronger. Perhaps, my pulse rate mirrored this, for it was usually in the low forties around 1954, and my diaries tell me that on two occasions it was 38 and 39. The new system was also much more fun, I never cared much for doing more than 7 or 8 miles at one go, but it also meant much more frequent injury to muscles and tendons, and I missed quite a lot of important races as a result. I am sure that the principle was sound; perhaps I was just not ready for it".

As with all athletes Bill's running career was a series of ups and downs, as someone once said 'athletics is what happens between injuries' and Bill remembers his downs just as well as the good times.

His most satisfying performances were; coming second in the Nationals of 1951 (until then he reckoned he was just a useful club runner). Following his first international vest, a tremendous thrill to him, coming second in the Inter-Counties of 1954 and second in Chartres in 1953 rank as the best moments in his career.

Disappointments; Bill remembers them well.

"I had a lot of disappointments in my running career over a period of 12 years, but, perhaps particularly in retrospect, the greatest disappointments were the three full international races of 1951, 53 and 55, in which I was nowhere near peak form. One of my physiological shortcomings which I discovered in the summer of 1951 was a susceptibility to heat exhaustion and this effected me badly in the 1953 international in Paris, apparently I started running around in small circles and lost consciousness. This happened three times between 1951 and 1953 but only once in an international race, and thereafter, I was rather nervous of top-class races in above average temperatures; I particularly remember feeling, before the 1955 International in Spain, that I mustn't repeat the Paris experience of 1953. Having said that, I make no excuses for performances that were apparently below par. I you are not good enough on the day for whatever reason – physical, physiological, or mental, then you're not good enough."

"Having such a state of mind is no way to go into any important race. This was true of the Northern Cross Country Championships at Gosforth Park in 1947, my last year as a junior. It was one of the worst winters on record, and

Ingham Infirmary Sports 1954: Two-Mile winning team Elswick Harriers:

Left to right: M. Snaith, W. Boak and G. Boak. Rear: N. Woodcock and C. Lamb



I recall, we had deep snow in the North East for about seven weeks. Many races were cancelled, and I remember wishing with all my heart that the same fate would befall the "Northern", but it didn't. On the day of the race the snow was shin – deep and the whole affair had a air of unreality about it – one felt as though the result didn't really matter. I think I finished about seventh, this uncertainty shows the measure of my interest. My abiding memory of the race is of a runner by the name of Quax of Rotherham who ran the race in his bare feet.

I still have many fond memories of my running days. In 1948 I was working on a farm following my degree at Kings College, Newcastle. I seem to remember that the farm was at Stocksfield, we worked shifts in the summer, when I was on early shift I was able to run at sports meetings in the evening. These were an absolute life-line to a runner living out in the sticks. On one occasion I remember returning from a meeting at Newcastle on the train, I fell asleep and missed my station, waking up at Hexham. I didn't fancy the walk back to Stocksfield so I lay down on a Park Bench near Hexham Abbey. I endured this discomfort until about 2 am by which time I had had enough of the open air, and prevailed upon a passing man to give me a cell for the night. This accommodation was absolute heaven and was woken up with a nice cup of tea.

In December 1954 I ran for Cumberland and Westmorland in a cross country match at Durham on a course that must have been chosen by an eccentric. It was mostly "country" but it included quite a stretch of tarmac and footpath, the country bit included a wood which was muddy and slippery. I remember falling three times when leading from Bobby Poxen and Alan Turner of Bedlington, twice I lost my spectacles and both lads stopped to help me look for them! For me this was the true spirit of running, a spirit which I think is lacking in today's sport.

George Boak

Sadly George Boak is no longer with us, he died suddenly in February 1987, and his story is told below in the words of his brother, Bill.

"In the 63 years that George Boak lived I never heard anyone say a bad thing about him – not once. It wasn't that he set out to be popular, it was just that he had a powerful personality that people just couldn't help liking, and a calm unhurried confidence that marked him out as a

leader. "Good old George" had the happy knack of all good leaders: the ability to inspire confidence in others. George did this to good effect in his work as a deputy headmaster and as a member of Elswick Harriers.

As an athlete, George showed early promise and represented Cumberland in the half-mile at the National Schools Championships in 1938. The war intervened and it was not until his demob in 1947 that he was able to start training specifically for athletics. His range was anything from the half-mile to the marathon and he soon became one of the leading runners in the North East, winning the 6 mile championship of Northumberland and Durham in 1949, the 3 and 6 mile championship in 1952, and many other events on track, road and country. He also represented Durham University and the English Universities while a student at Kings College, Newcastle, between 1947 and 1951.

What possibly gave him more satisfaction, however, was a considerable part he played in establishing Elswick Harriers' formidable reputation in team races during the 1950's.

Team spirit and morale throughout the club were exceptional throughout that period, fuelled by fierce competition from rivals, Gosforth and Bedlington. One could feel the pride of even the lowliest performer, in being a member of Elswick Harriers.

1952 was probably George's best season, but later that year, knee cartilage trouble, which he had experienced even as a boy became so acute that an operation was necessary. Although he continued to figure prominently for the club he didn't quite recapture his early consistency, but his typically determined running style and his storming finishes still helped to inspire and encourage all who were privileged to be his colleagues.

George died suddenly in February 1987, and it is a measure of the man that he will be surely remembered with affection and admiration by ex-opponents and ex-club mates alike.

Jack Schofield

One August Bank Holiday, during a race for policemen's children, a boy about 10 years of age won his heat and final most convincingly. This was the Newcastle Police Sports, staged at St. James Park, and the boy, son of a detective sergeant was called Jack Schofield. From these humble beginnings Jack made his presence felt in the Northumberland and Durham Youths, Junior and Senior Championships.

He developed into a 6' man, weighing 13 stones, with a long raking stride.

Prior to the 1952 Olympic Games to be staged in Helsinki, the AAA's selection committee had to make a choice for a sprinter to complete a relay team. Oddly enough this choice was between two athletes from Elswick Harriers, the other man was Alan Lillington. Lillington was the runner selected so Jack Schofield just missed out on wearing an England vest. Many people at the club thought that he should have had that honour at sometime during his career, but sadly this did not happen.

Jack was a draughtsman, first at Vickers then at Clarke Chapman & Co. Gateshead, and finished his working life in charge of the apprentices school.

Lillington went into medicine and after qualifying worked in Sunderland. Two excellent competitors, they gave great service to the club.

After Jack retired from competitive running, he assumed the mantle of a starter. He dressed for the occasion, and looked every inch the professional man. He did this task very successfully for a number of years, and with his knowledge and efficiency, coupled with personality, became a character to be looked for and respected. However, at one athletic meeting staged at the Gateshead Stadium, he was relegated to that of a very minor marksman, with starters imported to the job he had loved doing. Like Ossie Bulmer, who had been treated in a similar fashion his feelings can be well imagined.

Jack Schofield is no longer with us, for he died very suddenly and the sport has lost a great character.

GEORGE HOWETT

The reader may be of the opinion that Elswick in the fifties concentrated mainly on track running, and with stars of the magnitude of Lillington and Henderson it would be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that road and country were not catered for. In fact during the decade, Elswick had some very good road and country runners.

Together with the Boak brothers there were also Tom Bird, John Blackley, Wilf Urwin, Syd Wilson, Stan Robinson, Bob Brown, Stan Moodie, Robin Hall, Ben Gordon, with George Howett made up the Elswick Road and country squad.

In 1953 George Howett, together with Brian Harbottle, Ron Henderson and Fred Pickering made up the Elswick team that won both the North Eastern, and Northern Cross Country Junior Championships. In the Northern Cross Country, it was the first time that a Tyneside club had brought the trophy home since Heaton Harriers did in 1913.

Brian Harbottle, (4th); Ron Henderson, (7th); George Howett, (10th); and John Pickering, (27th). At the Nationals at Reading Elswick were well fancied, but managed only 4th place.

After this success in the Northern Cross Country in 1953, George was a member of the winning Elswick team in the McConachie Cup Race, the following Easter Monday.

Bill Boak, Elswick's international scored an easy victory, he finished about 100 yards ahead of R.W. Poxon (Bedlington) in 27 mins 38 secs for the six mile course. Bill was closely followed by the enthusiastic club counters to score a convincing team win and collected the McConachie Cup – the four Elswick counters finished in the first ten placings. E. Slaughter of Morpeth set a fast pace in the first mile and he and Poxon led the field until the half-way stage. Boak then decided to make his effort and he gradually forged ahead.

Bedlington was second in the team event with 37 points, to beat close rivals Morpeth. Elswick team — B. Boak, (1st); T. Bird, (6th); B. Harbottle, (8th); G. Howett, (9th).

Days after this victory, George received the dreaded telegram to inform him that he was required to serve both King and Country for the next 2 years. He made his mark in the army as did Ron Henderson a year or two later — "Gunner" Howett when stationed in Gibraltar with the Royal Artillery won the individual title in the Gibraltar Garrison's Annual Road Race Championships.

George, resplendent in his white sandshoes completed the six mile "round the rock" course in 32 mins 35 secs; breaking the previous record for the course by 61 secs, leading from gun to tape.

George continued to run for Elswick after his return to civilian life in 1955, never quite capturing, his tremendous form prior to his National Service. He was a member of the 1957 Sherman Cup Team which came second, but, like most runners of that time he retired from the sport in his early thirties.

George, by trade a plumber retired through ill-health some time ago and lives quietly with his wife in West Denton. His only interest in athletics now is watching the Norman

Woodcock Memorial Road Race which runs past near to his home.

In 1987 George was seen standing near to the finish of the race, side-by-side with Charlie Lamb, a man from another time. Standing four-square to the biting December wind, muffled and capped these two old club warriors paid their respects to the memory of their friend Norman Woodcock, this done, they nodded briefly to each other and went their separate ways.



George Howett

George Howett (No.129) Congers Road Race



ALAN LILLINGTON, Sprinter

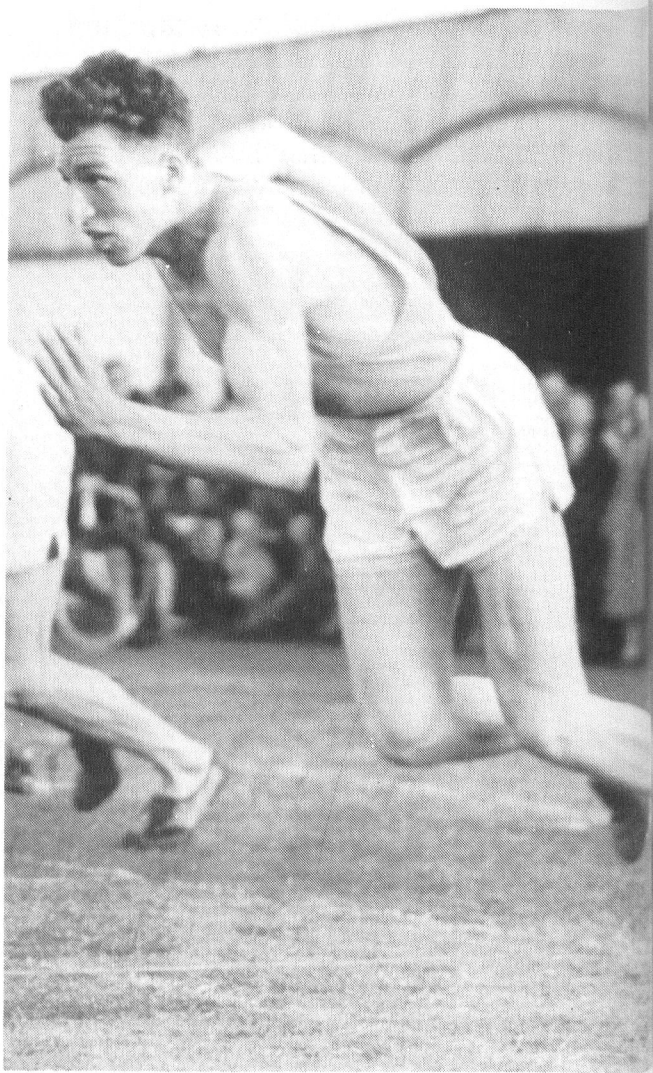
Through the pages of this book, I have tried to illustrate the spirit of Elswick Harriers through the exploits of the men and women who have worn the red vest; the gifted runners such as Alex Burns, who succeeded in his goal with consummate ease, or so it would appear to the lesser mortal. Tommy Davidson who grafted hard and long to reach success; men such as these have one thing in common, they were "club-men". Long after their peak had passed they could be found at all the club functions caring, encouraging, or just being there. Our next hero by his own admission was not a club-man, his connection with Elswick was a tenuous affair that lasted only six years. It was a marriage of convenience that suited both partners, a stepping stone to greater things. If the hackneyed catch-phrase "Born to Run" could be attached to anyone at Elswick, at that time, Alan Lillington would be the prime candidate.

At the age of 16 whilst a pupil at Heaton Grammar School, Alan Lillington had two aims in life; to be a Doctor of Medicine and an Olympic athlete. To achieve one of these goals would have been enough for most people, but for Alan this two-pronged attack on life marked him out as a winner from the very start.

It was 1948 Olympic Games that fired Alan's enthusiasm for sprinting, an all-round sportsman he was at this time keeping goal for the Newcastle United Boys Team. In 1949 he played in goal for England in an A.T.C. international against Scotland at St. James Park.

Alan joined Elswick in 1948, a product of one of Norman Woodcock's scouting missions, and it was obvious from the start that Alan was something very special. In his first year he won the Northumberland and Durham 100 yards, and 220 yards Junior Championship and when not running played wing-three quarter for Northern Rugby Club.

A 1948 press cutting, small as it was prophetic states... "when the next Olympic Games are staged there might be a boy by the name of Alan Lillington burning up the track for Britain. Still only 15 years old, without coaching of any kind, he has filled half his parents home in Newcastle with cups, trophies, medals and what have you. The boy is at his best over short distances, but he will try anything they tell me, because he runs off his heart, remember the name folks"



Alan Lillington, South Shields Ingham Infirmary Sports 1950.

It was at the Elswick Harriers Diamond Jubilee Sports of 1949 that Alan Lillington first came to prominence. Lillington expected the strongest opposition from his club mate, Ken Anderson in the 100 yards. After winning his heat in 10.2 secs off one and a half yards Anderson was pulled" one yard in his tie for an alleged attempt to jump the gun and he gave up after 50 yards. In his race, Lillington running off 8 yards broke the tape in 9.9 secs, this represented a time of 10.7 secs off scratch, this was a remarkable run for someone so young. It was an achievement that would bring him to the notice of the sporting press and perhaps more importantly, the AAA selectors. From then on, Alan Lillington was hailed in the press as a future Olympic sprinter. A more circumspect comment came from Norman Woodcock's pen under his nom de plume of "Whipper-In"

"The form of young Alan Lillington in the 100 yards handicap was most encouraging. His best time of 9.9 secs off 8 yards does not look spectacular on paper, but taking into account the unfavourable wind and the slight rise of the track, it must have been worth not much short of evens off scratch in ideal conditions. On this form Lillington should have an easy task when he runs in the Northumberland and Durham Youth's 100 yard Championship on the Town Moor tonight.

The previous Wednesday, Alan had won the 100 yards at his school's sports in a time of 10.3 secs off scratch, a school record. He then raised the school long jump record to over 20 ft.

Woodcock's remarks in his column proved to be correct, in the Northumberland and Durham Youth's Championship held on Newcastle's Town Moor, Alan Lillington won the 100 yards championship. Winning his heat in 10.5 secs, he went on to beat A. McNab of Tweedside in the final, by a yard and a half in 10.4 secs.

If you had to pick just one aspect of Alan Lillington at 16 and say, "this was his greatest asset", it would have to be his physique — at the age of 16 he looked like an Olympic runner, muscular with a height of 6'1" he was built to magnificent proportions. A thoughtful athlete, one eye on the track and the other on his studies, he carefully rationed his track appearances just running as fast as necessary to win a race, regardless of breaking records.

The 220 yards Northumberland and Durham Youth's Championship that year was staged at a Cowgate meeting, Alan again was successful.

In 1950 Lillington again won the Northumberland and Durham 100 yards Championship, winning from former N & D Senior Champion, Jack Schofield off scratch. In the 220 yards at Cowgate he won in a time of 23.3 secs, running in the outside lane he stumbled off the second and last bend, but held off a strong challenge by the second runner, R.B. Moir, who was only yards behind at the finishing line.

July 22nd 1950 saw Alan Lillington win the All England School's 100 yard Championship at Port Sunlight, Cheshire in 10 secs dead. Just one week later on the same track he won the AAA Junior title. In the heats of the championship Lillington qualified with the slowest time of all — 10.4 secs, reserving his strength for the final. This policy was the right one for in the final he equalled the junior record of 10 secs dead.



Success breeds success and Alan Lillington was having an effect on the local athletic scene.... "Alan Lillington starts boom in athletics" states the press cutting. "Talking point among North-East athletic experts is Alan Lillington's chance of becoming a national sprint champion.

There can be no doubt that the feats of the 17 year old Heaton Grammar School boy are having an inspiring effect on other young teenagers in the area. The competitive spirit in many schoolboys, unaffected by the record-breaking performances of the aces, foreign or British, has been aroused by another school boy simply because they feel that what he can do they can do. They didn't think that way about MacDonald Bailey!

Every club, from Berwick to Cleveland has one or more boy members, aged about 16 claimed to be as good as, or even better than Alan. All for the good of the game.

There were many other than North Shields Poly members, who thought that R.B. Moir had beaten Lillington in the 220 yards Northumberland and Durham Junior Championship, it was a near thing anyhow".

In the 1951 season, Lillington's successes included the Northumberland and Durham Senior 100 Yard Championship. The race was held within the Northumberland Police Sports meeting and Alan won in a time of 10.2 secs. A crowd of several thousand at the Ashbrooke Ground saw him win without being pressed. Club-mate, Ken Anderson broke well, but the starter brought the men back. Then Lillington jumped off extremely fast on the gun and had the race won at half way with Ken Anderson finishing in second place.



Alan Lillington (4) Highland Games, Murrayfield 1950, Invitation 100 yds.

In October 1951 Alan Lillington entered Medical School and naturally combined his studies with running for the University Athletic Club, and in the same year won the U.A.U. 100 Yards Championship.

1952 saw the build-up to the Helsinki Olympics, and the local sports columnists filled the sports pages with articles and interviews about Alan Lillington and his chances in the 100 metre event. The Evening Chronicle reported his selection — "City student in Olympic Games team". "Though he was not even on the long list of possibilities published last autumn, Alan Lillington, 19 year old Kings College medical student, whose home is in Heaton, Newcastle, has been selected to represent Britain in the Olympic Games 100 metres at Helsinki next month. He is the youngest male member of the athletic team named today. He will also represent Great Britain and Ireland in the 400 metre relay race.

"For a minute or two after receiving the letter

from the Duke of Edinburgh this morning telling me of my good luck, I just couldn't say a word; certainly I had no appetite for my breakfast Alan told the Evening Chronicle today".

The race that probably clinched his selection for the Olympics was the 100 yards Senior AAA Championship at the White City on the 20th June, 1952. Alan ran brilliantly into a stiff headwind, to gain second place behind the Trinidad flyer, E. McDonald Bailey who won in 9.6 secs equalling his British National, and all-comers record. Lillington's time was 9.9 secs and this indicated that given a chance he could do even better in Finland.

On July 13th 1952 a civic send-off from the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Ald. V.H. Grantham, saw Alan Lillington on his way to Helsinki. In heat 1 of the 100 metres Alan came a close second to J. Treloar, who won in a time of 10.7 secs, in the second round he lost to Remingino (U.S.A.), the ultimate winner.

Alan is modest about his career, "Getting to the Olympics was my objective, my boyhood dream. I got through to the second round before being knocked out by the eventual winner, I think I was a little over-awed at the time. Perhaps, if I had been a couple of years older I may have given a better account of myself. It would have been nice to have reached the final, but that would have been it".

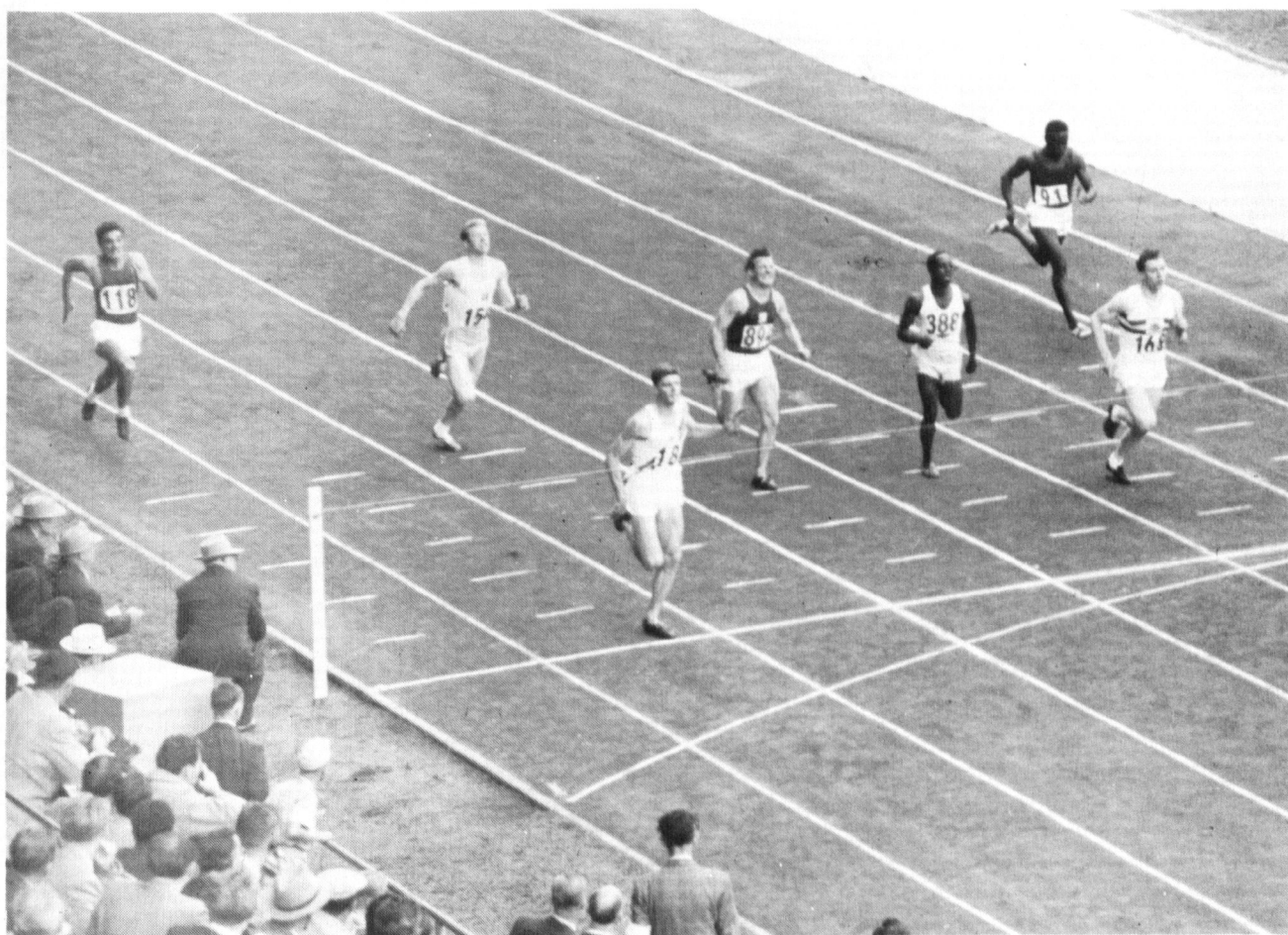
Hampered by poor track facilities in this country, some British competitors resented the teams from the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. because their members had superb training facilities and were able to train all the year round with the aid of university scholarships and state subsidies. It was noticed during the Games that one or two of the American University runners could scarcely write their own name when asked for their autograph.

Alan has some strong views about the pressure on young children in sport and the physical damage brought about by overtraining. As a senior consultant paediatrician working in a Sunderland Hospital he has seen this damage

at first hand. He blames the extra atmosphere of competitiveness that surrounds sport nowadays. With teachers and parents stimulating their children to win at all cost. The youngsters act like professionals before their young bodies have the strength to cope.

On the changing face of athletics in the 1980's, Alan reflects, "I have always admired the person who is doing a job of work during the day and then having to train at nights and weekends, and then having to come out in a competition and produce the goods; these are the athletes that I admire today. In 1952 the attitude of "British fair play" was still around, Olympic athletes were expected to be ambassadors for their country, especially the track team, with their old school tie philosophy. To be a full team member you had to not only look like, but act like an "English gentleman". Alan is saddened by the decline in standards of behaviour in sport, but is pleased that the social snobbery once so prevalent has gone. The ordinary working man or woman has a chance of fame, if he or she is good enough.

Olympic Games 1952: J. Treloar (No. 18) winning 100m. heat in 10.7sec from A. Lillington (No. 168) 2nd.



RON HENDERSON,

There is a widely held view in North Eastern athletic circles that there is a bias against runners from this part of the country when international vests are being issued.

Ron Henderson, Elswick's only AAA half-mile champion would agree with this view. Ron firmly believes that it was because of his working-class background, not his lack of talent that limited his international appearances.

"How could a Geordie shipyard worker compete for an international vest against those Southern university lads?" Ron's words show a hurt that has diminished little over the years. A quiet deep-thinking man, Ron Henderson 30 years on still looks as though he could produce a sub 2 minute 800 metre time without breaking a sweat.

It was Ossie, son of that old club stalwart, Ossie Bulmer Snr. that first introduced Ron Henderson to Elswick Harriers. At the age of 15 he had just broken the half-mile record at the English School Sports of 1949, in a time of 2 mins 9.2 secs, breaking the existing record by 3 secs! By the age of 19 Ron Henderson's house was bursting with trophies and medals, testimony to an early career of brilliant promise.

The magazine "Athletic Review", February 1954, in its feature "Stars of Tomorrow" highlighted Henderson's career from its earliest days.

"Suppose we begin by tracing in chronological order the main performances to date of this 19 year old Tynesider.

1949 National Schools AA 880 yards (under 15 years) champion in 2 mins 9.2 secs.

1950 Triple Northumberland and Durham Youths Champion — 440 yards, 52.1 secs; 880 yards, 2 mins 0.48 secs; mile, 4 mins 34.5 secs.

1951 Northumberland and Durham Junior Champion — 440 yards, (3rd) 52.7 secs; 880 yards, (2nd) 2 mins 03.5 secs; mile, (2nd) 4 mins 40 secs.

1952 Triple Northumberland and Durham Junior Champion — 440 yards, 52.4 secs; 880 yards, 2 mins 04.8 secs; mile, 4 mins 34.5 secs; Northern Junior 880 yards Champion, 2 mins 00.2 secs; AAA Junior Championship (4th) 1 min 59.8 secs.

1953 Duel Northumberland and Durham Junior Champion — 440 yards, 53.4 secs; 880 yards, 2 mins 04 secs (these championships were run on the same day so that Ron missed the mile and was advised not to do more than was necessary to win the two titles), Northern AA Junior Champion — 880 yards 1 min 58.5

secs (record); AAA Junior Champion — 880 yards, 1 min 57.7 secs (he was spiked in the heat and the track at Cardiff was waterlogged); British Games — Invitation Junior — 880 yards (1st), 1 min 57.2 secs.

Until last summer, Ron was limited to run in his own age group. Last summer he ran in senior relay teams and showed about 50 secs on the first leg of a 4 x 440 yards at Westoe. In 2 mile team races he did around 9 mins 30 secs and his mile handicap runs showed him capable of about 4 mins 22 secs.

During the winter Ron Henderson runs over the country. In 1952, he finished 3rd in the Northumberland and Durham Youths Cross Country Championship. Last year he was a member of the Elswick team which won the North Eastern Counties Cross Country Association Junior title, won the Northern Counties Cross Country Association Junior title and placed 4th in the National Junior Cross Country Championships.

Ron Henderson: British Junior Championship 1953



Now for some background history of this beautifully built (6ft; 149lbs) young athlete. There is a history of running in the family, his grandfather was a useful professional runner. Ron's 13 year old brother, Steve, already shows promise and although it is early yet to assess distance, looks like making a good 440 yards runner. As a youngster, Henderson was keen on football, and, indeed, it was injury at this sport which diverted his interest to running. He works as an apprentice shipwright with Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson and in the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights competition in 1952 for the best apprentice in Great Britain, Ron was placed second, gaining the "Torrey" prize and £20 for books and tools.

His training has always been planned to give steady improvement throughout the year with the AAA Championships as the big objective. He has been advised not to go out each time to beat the watch, but to do enough to beat the opposition. It was felt that, for youngsters, the better times will come along automatically as strength and condition are built up without

trying to force things. Ron often turns up for training looking rather tired and his training has therefore to be arranged using a lot of commonsense. He is a very willing worker but is not overworked when he feels and looks jaded."

Winter training consists of two runs each week on the roads, a road race or cross-country run on Saturdays, plus about 30 minutes of lapping of the track on Sundays or else a steady 5-6 mile run across the Newcastle Town Moor over fairly fast and level grass.

From Easter the accent is on speed. After warming up laps, the quarters are split up into fast 300 yards and half-pace 140 yards for recovery. Some all-out 600 yards and fast 200 yards, usually with Elswick senior star, Ross Milligan, are also included. About once a week he does a full 880 yards, using club-mates off useful starts as pacemakers. At home on non-training nights Ron spends some time in the back-yard doing exercises, and if he feels like it canters over the nearby golf course.

Elswick 4 x 440 yds. Relay Team, N & D Championships 1953. Left to right: Brian Steel, Ross Milligan, Ron Henderson, Fred Stephenson.



FUTURE AMBITIONS

Ron's great ambition is to represent England at 880 yards and it may well be that he will come into the picture during the coming track season. After National Service it is probable that he will go up to the mile and even the 3 mile distance. In any case, considering the way in which his talent has been developed steadily and without forcing it unduly, there would seem a very bright athletic future ahead of the young Tyneside star.

TRAINING

Way back in 1950, Ron was convinced that he could not race more than 880 yards. In a trial-run for the 1950 Championship he did not complete the race and it was only after considerable persuasion that he entered and won the title race. His first 3 mile youths road race saw him finish second last, and he just didn't like the hills on the course. However, time and patience has broken down his antipathy to distance, steady cross-country work during the winter having built up basic strength and stamina.

Having often to work overtime on ships on the Tyne is not the ideal sort of job for an athlete with international ambitions".

In his first year as a senior and still only 20 years of age, Ron finished second to David Law in the Northern Counties 880 yards Championship in a time of 1 min 53.2 secs and was to improve this time at the AAA Championships of 1954.

The AAA Championships of 1954 were eventful to say the least. When two British athletes, Freddie Green and Chris Chattaway set up a new world record for three miles and Roger Bannister runs the final quarter mile lap of a 1 mile in a fantastic time of 53.8 secs; and the "Athlete of the Year", Gordon Pirrie is compelled to retire when defending his six-mile title, other performances tend to go un noticed. For the North's followers of amateur athletics, the highlight of that year's championships was the sterling performance of Ron Henderson of Elswick Harriers. He failed by the narrowest possible margin to win the 880 yards championship at his first attempt. Timing to one tenth of a second, the watch-holders could not separate Hewson, the champion, and Henderson, and the time, 1 min 52.2 secs has rarely been bettered in the history of the championships.

Ron previously had been a regular competitor at all his local meetings and made several

appearances at local road and cross-country events. His road and country work was carefully planned to build him up for the domestic championships, and hopefully, an international career.

The result of this race put Henderson second in the rankings and hopefully was to book him a place in the European Games. His time of 1 min 52.2 secs was 2 secs faster than Hewson's time in the championships of 1953.

His quick rise to fame brought its rewards for Ron Henderson, soon afterwards he was invited to run in an 880 yards race at the White City, where he was beaten by Gundar Nielsen, Denmark's fastest ever half-miler, though Henderson returned a good time of 1 min 51.5 secs.

In the British Games the following week Ron won the 880 yards in 1 min 51.7 secs after letting Stanley (U.S.A.) lead for most of the way. He finally won by 0.4 secs from the Hungarian, I. Parkonyi.



Hewson No.1 wins the A.A.A. 880 yds. by inches from Henderson



What does our No. 2 half-miler have to do to win his place?

ELECTORS IGNORE RON HENDERSON

OLD SCHOOL TIE? NOT THIS TIME, SIR!

PERSISTENT probing at Westminster into special privileges granted to Services sportsmen could be the reason for Ron Henderson being only a reserve and the selectors insisting on Brian Hewson running the half-mile in addition to the mile against Germany at London's White City next week-end, writes W. Capel Kirby.

In view of Henderson's powerful finish which brought him almost to a dead-heat with Derek Johnson in the A.A.A. half-mile championship, his omission is difficult to understand. But even if special Service privileges are not the cause, I must defend the selectors from insinuations that Henderson, a working lad

from Wearside, is being victimised by the old school tie brigade. Nothing of the kind.

The fact is Henderson began his National Service with the Army only last Monday and it was felt he would take time settling in.

Still, my prediction is that Henderson, as far as Army duty will allow, will be first choice for the clashes with France, Hungary, Russia and Czechoslovakia.

Much as I hope to be proved wrong, I fear Germany will beat us.

So long as Heinz Fütterer comes under starter's orders both sprints are in the bag for Germany.

RON Henderson, a Tyneside apprentice shipwright, joined the Army on Monday... and was entitled to expect a spot of early leave—to represent Great Britain in the athletics match with Germany at the White City, London, on July 30 and August 1.

He was shocked and disappointed yesterday to learn that he had been passed over for this match, that he had been named only as a reserve for the 880 yards.

This, to my mind, is the only serious blunder made by the British selectors in naming the team to meet the powerful German athletes in the first of five big international athletics matches.

Lost by Inches

Henderson is without question our second best

year he was by inches by Hewson, the Mill-taller, in the championship returning the same the winner.

going over the 1st for a dead-heat. Saturday he was used to know blaze of public TV and radio for visibility. Let's hope it.

By
GEORGE HARLEY

same event by Derek Johnson—and again returned the same time as the winner.

What more does a boy have to do to get one of the two half-mile places in a British athletics team?

The British selectors have taken advantage of the fact that the match against Germany is over two days to choose Hewson, A.A.A. mile champion, for the 880 yards on the Monday and the mile on the Saturday.

Same Time

Henderson, who joined the Army on Monday, lost by inches to Derek Johnson in the A.A.A. championship final on Saturday. And he returned the same time as the winner, Brian Hewson, in the corresponding race last year. The British selectors have taken advantage of the fact that the match against Germany is over two days to choose Hewson, A.A.A. mile champion, for the 880 yards on the Monday and the mile on the Saturday.

He will be partnered by Johnson in the half-mile and Ken Wood in the mile.

Gordon Pirie, who collapsed in the A.A.A., has been left out of the team. The selectors quite rightly, have named Ken Norris and Frank Sando, first and second in that final, as our six-milers.

Not Strong

But Mr. Jack Crump, British team manager, told me yesterday that Pirie will be in the team to meet Hungary at the White City on August 12 and 13.

The Germans are not particularly strong over the "Pirie distance" of three and six miles; the Hungarians are.

The match, sponsored by the News Chronicle, is the first with Germany in England since 1937. There are eleven new internationalists in the men's team and four in the women's team.

Selectors leave Henderson out again

MIRROR SPORT REPORTER

RON HENDERSON, a Tyneside apprentice shipwright, is entitled to wonder what a man has to do to get into Britain's athletics team.

The selectors have named him only as reserve for the 880 yards in the match against Germany at the White City, London, on July 30 and August 1.

Give Henderson break

TWO men capable of eclipsing John Landy's 3min. 58sec. mile right now are Brian Hewson and the Hungarian Sandor Iharos.

Yet for some reason best known to British selectors

RON HENDERSON AGAIN MISSES HIS ATHLETIC "CAP"

RON HENDERSON, the Elswick Harriers half-miler and A.A.A. championship runner-up to Derek Johnson, has not been invited to represent Great Britain against Hungary in the international athletics match at the White City, London, on August 12 and 13.

Henderson, a close second to Johnson, recently



Ron Henderson: England v. Belgium, White City 1954

Ron's first England vest came in 1954 when at White City he represented his country against Belgium. It was Chris Chataway who Ron had to thank for his victory, as the following press report suggests.

Ron Henderson beats Belgian by 3 Yards

"Chris Chataway the man with the amazing flair for helping his pals to win races or smash records did it again in the floodlit match at the White City, London last night.

He threw away any chance he had of winning the half-mile for England against Belgium — to make certain that young Ronnie Henderson would do so.

Henderson, 20 an apprentice shipwright from Newcastle duly stole the show by beating the brilliant Belgian, Lucien de Muynck, by 3 yards in 1 min 51.6 secs; his best-ever time for the distance.

De Muynck proved himself one of the world's greatest half-milers when finishing second in the European Championships 800 metres at Berne.

But Chataway saw that race — and believed he knew the way to stop the Belgian. So he had a quiet tactical talk with Henderson before they went on the track last night".

"Chris made my victory possible", Henderson told me, "the idea was that he should run a fast first quarter, forcing de Muynck to keep with him. Then the last quarter would be a test of stamina, which I might win, rather than a test of speed, which would strongly favour the Belgian. That's how it worked out".

Ron Henderson together with Derick Johnson winner of the 880 yds. A.A.A. Championship at White City 1955: both runners recorded the same time (1min.51.4secs.)



Shortly after coming second to Derek Johnson in the 1955 AAA 880 yards Championships with the same time as the winner — 1 min 51.4 secs, Ron found himself in the Army doing his National Service.

Within 48 hours of his enlistment, Henderson demolished the Services half-mile record time by a full second in 1 min 54.8 secs during the Inter-Services Championships at Aldershot. Henderson, who was in R.E.M.E. won by 3 yards from Ted Caiger, after a great burst down the home straight.

Meanwhile, Brian Hewson, Ron's great rival withdrew from the half-mile for Britain against Germany at the White City on July 30th and August 1st. Hewson stated his reasons, firstly, he felt that concentrating on the mile race only would bring a greater chance of success than if he doubled-up with the half-mile. This would also leave the way open for Ron Henderson to be selected for the latter event. Inexplicably, the selectors chose to ignore Ron, naming him as reserve only and they insisted that Brian Hewson compete in both events. This decision caused an uproar in the national press at that time.

To add insult to injury Ron was again ignored for the international against Hungary at the White City, London on August 12th and 13th 1955 with the British line-up for the half-mile being Derek Johnson and Brian Hewson. One week later, however, Ron gained his first British vest. He was selected to run in the return match against Hungary in Budapest on August 20th and 21st in the 800 metre event. Ron came third, the race was run by the Hungarian champion, Svengali.

1955 was to prove to be Ron's last year in the top flight. On a visit to Moscow to run for Britain against the U.S.S.R. he was seriously injured during his warm-up prior to the race. A discus thrower somehow managed to throw her projectile through the side-netting of the circle, the discus hit Ron on the knee causing serious damage. He was hospitalised in Moscow for some considerable time, resulting visits to Harley Street specialists at the AAA expense proved to be in vain. A come-back in 1956 saw Ron gain third place in the AAA 880 yards Championships. Unfortunately, third place was not good enough to gain Ron's selection for the Melbourne Olympics of 1956.

For Ron Henderson, Elswick's finest half-miler it was the end of the road, I will quote Ron's words as a full-stop to his story, "After not being picked for the Olympics there was nowhere else to go, so I just "chucked" it in".

Ron Henderson



The Forgotten Sixties

There is a well known story that when soccer legend, Len Shackleton was writing his book about the game of football, he left the chapter about club directors and their knowledge about the game simply as a blank page. When trying to say something about Elswick Harriers during the early sixties I was tempted to resort to the same trick as Len Shackleton! Not wishing to hurt the feelings of club members from that era however, I tried to do some research but sadly came up with very little hard information about club achievements at this time.

The Local Studies section of Newcastle City Library have all the local newspapers from that time but strangely, these papers contain very little information on local athletics. It is as though running in the sixties was not a high-profile sport and editors were not interested in including reports on the various events. Fortunately with the arrival to the club of sprinter Alan Nendick in 1964, his beautifully kept club records have been of enormous help in trying to cobble together something interesting for the pages of this book. Unfortunately many of Alan's contemporaries have been unable to help due to a widespread outbreak of amnesia within their ranks.

"The sixties? don't remember much, sorry, why don't you ask whats-his-name, he was around at that time", whats-his-name, turned out to be as much use as a chocolate teapot. Even club coach, Peter Hammill, had an alibi, being away at the time! Peter suggested I contact Harry Matthews, Harry turned out to be of great help, he was able to tell me a little about the Northumberland and Durham Harrier league in which Elswick had some success between 1962 and 1967. Elswick were also successful in the North Eastern Cross Country Championships of 1962, 1964 and 1965 when the youths figured prominently. Harry himself, as a youth won the North Eastern Cross Country Championship in 1964. Harry also produced a press cutting, showing a picture of himself side by side with a story of someone from another club!

To be fair to the lads, the club at that time was in dire-straits, top class runners such as the Boak Brothers, Ron Henderson and the formidable relay teams of the fifties had retired or drifted away from the sport. The result of this was that the younger members had no one to look up to, no one to try and emulate. Only Norman Woodcock remained of the old guard together with one or two of the senior runners. Remarkably the club survived and

gradually the membership increased and the foundations of solid club athletes were once again laid. Prominent members of that era Harry Matthews, Colin Bolton and Alan Nendick still carry the club colours today.

Club Life in the Sixties

At the time of writing, 1989, the club both in terms of membership, finance and morale is at an all time high, it is hard for us today to appreciate what it was really like in the sixties. Recently some faded remnants of the minute book for that period have come to light, they make interesting reading, especially the comments from Norman Woodcock.

1961

It has been a year of continued progress, to what is I am sure, the goal of every member, i.e. to see Elswick Harriers "Cock-of-the-North-East", a title we have held for many years. To comment on the many successes it would take up too much space so I list below the main highlights.

Newcastle Athletic Clubs Inter-Team Champions. (The surprise of this victory was our winning margin of 36 points).
Northumberland and Durham Championships

Senior
100 yds. E. Wilson 1st.
Javelin J. Johnson 1st.

Boys
220 yds. J. McBride 2nd.
440 yds. J. McBride 3rd.

Junior
220 yds. A. Wilkinson 1st
Shot R. Almond 2nd.
Youths 440 yds. P. Wilkinson 2nd.

Senior Relay 3rd team (C. Bolton, J. Backley, G. Nelthorpe, A. Wilkinson)
Tyneside Harrier League 6th Team. (We finished last in 1959)

Berwick Senior Relay 2nd Team. (H. Baxter, A. Wilkinson, P. Wilkinson, J. Backley)

Berwick Youths Relay 1st Team. (M. Cairns, K. McKeag, P. Wilkinson, K. Dixon)

In School championships H. Matthews, W. Weddle, P. Wilkinson, A. Wilkinson, M. Cairns, A. Cope, A. Foreman, G. White and D. Land all achieved distinction.

We have had a very successful season in handicap events. No club has done better than Elswick. At every meeting at which Elswick were represented, at least one prize was won. I estimate that between them, John Backley, Angus Wilkinson, Edgar Wilson, John Ibbitson, Dick Almond, Peter Wilkinson, Mick Cairns and K. Dixon collected prizes to the value of well over 100. In road and cross-country events we were usually well represented. We showed an improvement in our final placings in all three sections of the Northumberland and Durham Harrier League, B. Harbottle and P. Plimmer were individual winners; Colin Bolton a greatly improved runner and Harry Matthews showed great promise of being an outstanding boy next season. In both the North Eastern and Northern Junior Cross Country Championships John Backley and Colin Bolton filled forward placings, and it was a cause of some protest, not only by Elswick, but by most of the other clubs that John Ibbitson was not awarded his "County Badge." You will see from this list (which may not be complete) that the Elswick colours have been well to the fore, but if we are to continue to make progress, then we cannot be satisfied with congratulating ourselves on past achievements.

The foundation on which to build a great club is there. The average age of our current active members is probably the lowest we have ever had. Several other club secretaries have expressed to me their envy of the class and promise of Elswick's boys and youths sections. If we are to achieve our object and regain top place, then every member (and official) must be prepared to give of his best. As an example of what club spirit and whole hearted endeavour can achieve I would remind you of our run-away victory in the Newcastle Club's Championship. With every member of the team giving of his best, and, just as important, those for whom it was not possible to find a place, giving their support, Benwell, Gosforth and Heaton felt the might of Elswick. If we consistently produce this spirit and enthusiasm then I have no doubt what-so-ever that next year's annual report will again be a satisfying one.

We have continued to recruit a fair number of new members, but there is always room for more. We should always try to bring along a pal, but what is more important is, that having introduced a new member, every effort must be made to see that he is encouraged to give the sport a fair trial.

And here I appeal to those of our members who have packed away their shoes. With so many promising youngsters on our books you can still play a very important part in the welfare of the club.

I don't have to tell runners how important it is to get a good start, what better start can Elswick make to the coming year than a good attendance at the annual meeting so if it is at all possible for you to come along please do.

If you have any doubt where the new Labour Club is I suggest that you get to St. James Boxing Hall and ask for directions there. Before ending this report I must make reference to the loss suffered by the club brought-through the deaths of, Mr. Davidson, a founder member and life-member of the club and his son Tommy'' who was one of the few Elswick runners to win the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race.

1962

Prompted this comment from Norman Woodcock "Never in the club's long history have we had such an array of promising young members. I wish I had the space to enlarge on those successes. It may be possible to do so at the meeting, but for the present may I sum up by stating that 1961/62 has been a satisfactory year, one that has shown the continuing improvement of the club, but one that allows for no complacency by any member or official.

Indeed, it is my opinion, that we are entering the club's most important phase in its 73 year history, we either go forward to the goal of re-establishing Elswick as the leading club in the North or we slip back into the position of "also-ran", from which during the past 5 or 6 years, we have made a slow but sure recovery. With so much potential amongst the younger members of the club it would seem that we must go on from strength to strength but this will, I submit, depend entirely on whether the present wave of enthusiasm and team spirit can be maintained, and if possible accelerated".

1963

Norman had some words to say about the committee: "The administration of the club's affairs during the year has not been up to standard, mainly, I think, because too much of the work has fallen on the shoulders of one or two of the older officials, who each year are

finding it more difficult to give the time needed in organising the club. Unless we can interest more of our younger members in the running of the club's affairs, the day is not far distant when we will be really be in "queer street". I suggest you bear this in mind when electing your committee".

1965

With the club bereft of senior runners Elswick relied heavily on the youngsters to pull them through. In 1989 we could certainly have done with the services of the field event men so prominent in the middle sixties.

Newcastle Schools Championships

Newcome (under 17) 440yds 1st
Matthews (under 20) 1 mile 1st
Matthews (under 20) 880 yds 2nd
Davidson (under 20) 100 yds 1st
Davidson (under 20) High Jump 1st
Duns (under 17) 220yds 1st
Duns (under 17) 100yds 3rd
Henderson (under 15) 880yds 1st

Northumberland and Durham Athletics Championships

Youths Callaghan Shot
3rd
Callaghan Hammer 2nd
Armstrong 440yds 1st
Lowdon 1 mile 3rd
Lowdon 1500m S.chase 2nd

Junior Land 880yds 2nd
Fairley High Jump 1st (5'11") (Record Equalled)

Wood 100yds 1st

Senior Backley 880yds 2nd

You will see from the "Honours List" that our younger athletes were mainly responsible for our successes in the past year. The saddest feature of the year being the lack of senior competitors, especially, in the winter season.

Cross Country and Roads (Winter)

In the boys age group, B. Lowdon proved outstanding. He was assisted by I. Simpson, B. Young, J. McIlmurray, J. Brown and D. Newcombe, made Elswick's boys team nigh-on invincible.

Our Youths Section also had a very successful season. H. Matthews a very active Youths captain, led his team, J. Crofts, A. Clough, R. Tinkler, G. Harrison and B. Pearson to many a fine win against some strong opposition notably from Heaton and Gateshead.

Both the Boys and Youths crowned the season by winning the North Eastern Championships and providing the individual winners (B. Lowdon & H. Matthews) in both races. They followed this up by very creditable performances, at Blackpool, in the Northern, and in the Youths in London in the National. Owing to monetary restriction the Youths travelled overnight to London, were met by a slushy snow-covered course and still gave of their best. Indeed, H. Matthews position of 18th in retrospect of these circumstances, stands very highly on the list of an all-time, creditable, Elswick Harriers performance.

As we still have most of our young athletes available this season the same success could be ours this year. This will not come easily, however, and only the devotion to training which we showed last year will lead to success, comparable to last season. We did it then, why not again.

1966

By this year the decline of the senior section was there for all to see – during the year they did not win a single event. The highlight of their season was coming fourth in the Sherman Cup.

Cross Country and Road (Winter)

Although the Boys Section was not so successful as in the previous season, they performed very creditably and this year should show a vast improvement.

The Youths' Section had an outstanding season winning the Northumberland and Durham Harrier League – a fine achievement as this competition can only be won by good consistent performances by all the team. The Youths again performed very well in the CrossCountry Championships, being placed second in the North Eastern, fifth in the Northern and fourteenth in the National.

The Senior Team's only success was in finishing fourth in the Sherman Cup, but prospects should improve during the course of two or three seasons when our present youths graduate to senior status.

Track and Field Events (Summer)

During the summer, the turn out, although improving on the previous season, was still not up to the standard expected of Elswick. We were successful in regaining the City Championships by the narrowest of margins – a really fine team effort.

We were placed second in the Track League and although fate was against us in the shape of postponed meetings, we should have ensured victory had more members shown more determination to compete. Please remember that officials burn up much midnight oil in attempting to put the club back on the top where it belongs so please support them by turning out whenever possible.

Congratulations to those members who "carried the torch" for Elswick in District and National Championships particularly Dave Wood, Michael McLeod and Bill Fairly.

Back to Mike McLeod and the happenings of 1969; at the first Harrier League meeting of the season at South Shields, the Elswick boys, champions from the year before made a disastrous start to the new season, only managing eighth position. This performance brought the following icy comment from Norman Woodcock in his newspaper column. "They can afford no more slip-ups if they are to ward off the challenge of Sunderland, Saltwell, Heaton and Gateshead".

One runner active in the sixties, Colin Bolton, now club treasurer endorsed the generally held view that nothing much of note happened during that time. One night, at the cricket club I asked Colin about the Northumberland and Durham track championships, or the N & D's as they were popularly known, and he was a little forthcoming. With pint in hand, his eyes glazed over as his mind travelled back to those far-off days. It seemed that Elswick used to struggle to get teams out for these championship races. As far as the 1973 event was concerned, Colin remembered that the club had trials to see who would run, in the event the runners selected were; Alan Nendick, Dave Gibbon, Bob Davison and John Tinkler. Colin remembers that there was some controversy about the selection of John Tinkler as he had not run in the trials! With the Elswick team winning however his inclusion was obviously vindicated. Colin was of the opinion that the victory was a one-off affair, and after this, the race was not to be included in Elswick's calendar of events. Team member, Bob Davison was incidentally Elswick's first veteran, a hurdler in his prime, Bob was by profession a veterinary surgeon.

The actual race was a medley relay, with Dave Gibbon running the 800 metre leg, Alan Nendick and John Tinkler ran the 200 metre legs with Bob Davison running the final 400 metres. The photograph below shows Dave Gibbon, number 13 handing over to Alan Nendick for the second leg.

Northumberland and Durham medley Relay Championships July 1973 Elswick 1st Team. 13 D. Gibbon (Elswick), 19 A. Nendick (Elswick), Photograph Sunday Sun.





Medley Relay Champions, Northumberland and Durham 1973. Front Row: A. Nendick, D. Gibbon, J. Tinkler, Centre Back: R. Davison together with P. Hammill, N. Woodcock, R. Tinkler and O. Boulmer.

Peter Hammill Snr. No.79: 100 yds. Benwell Cricket Club 1950



Dave Gibbon

"I ran for Britain too"

Dave Gibbon lived at Cramlington and was brought to the club as a youngster of 13 by an older club member. At first he "guested" for the club without ever making enough impact to be noticed. Dave's first success was in coming third in the Northumberland Schools Championship, third position did not impress the young runner but it certainly impressed the Elswick hierarchy. After this race he was approached by Norman Woodcock who explained that coming third in the race was very good going considering he only trained twice a week, incidentally, the race was won by Mike McLeod. Norman obviously saw the potential in this young runner and from that time, until his death, Norman Woodcock, together with the boy's father, an ex-professional sprinter would mould Dave Gibbon's running career.

For Dave Gibbon the breakthrough came in 1969, in this year he never lost a race, except the English Schools Championships where he finished fourth in the 1500 metre final. It was the hot weather that was his downfall, just qualifying through the heats he was too hesitant in the final. Dave got his revenge later by winning the AAA's 1500 metre Youth Championship in a time of 3 min 56.8 sec. Running on the new synthetic track at Crystal Palace, Dave remembers taking-off at 300 metres to win in fine style, it is interesting to note that Dave Moorecroft came fifth in that race.

Perhaps Dave would agree that after the AAA's Championships he rested on his laurels, just doing sufficient training to keep his position as "Top-Dog" in the North of England. However, Norman Woodcock, who tried to ensure that youngsters did not over train, no doubt had some influence in this quarter. Dave Gibbon's weekly training plan was quite simple; in the winter he would run six miles with the senior runners on Sunday. On Tuesday it would be a two-mile run, flat out, rest, then one-mile, flat out. On Thursday just an easy jog in preparation for Saturday's race.

Summer training was at the Byker Tip, a typical Sunday session would be; 4 x 300 metres with a 3 min recovery, repeated again. In contrast other top track runners would be running 15 miles with 8 x 400 metres, 3 min recovery, then repeated. Norman Woodcock's advice still was "Don't train too hard, just enjoy yourself".

Around 1971 Dave, at the age of 18 ran 3 min 51.8 secs in the 1500 metre final of the AAA's Junior Championships, coming 5th behind Dave Moorecroft, reversing the position of the result 2 years earlier. This success gave Dave Gibbon renewed enthusiasm and he began to train harder, much to the disapproval of his coach, Norman Woodcock. One result of this step-up in training was that he began to have the edge over his great rival Mike McLeod in track races of 800 metres and 1500 metres, and even, occasionally on the roads.

By the time he was 20 Dave had reached the AAA final at Crystal Palace. He came last and this was a great disappointment to him but a considerable achievement nonetheless. At this period in his career, Dave Gibbon was running the Northern Championships on a regular basis, winning on three occasions and coming second twice as a senior. It was this kind of form that saw Dave be picked to run for Great Britain at the age of 21. Dave remembers going to Rochdale in 1974 for an invitation meeting, together with Mike McLeod, they travelled down in Mike's "flash" car which seemed to impress the locals. The locals were even more impressed however seeing Dave winning the 1500 metre race and Mike the 3000 metre race, Mike beating the likes of Ron Hill, it was a victory that was totally unexpected.

One of the highlights of Dave's career was running at the first Gateshead Games in 1974 on the day Brendan Foster broke the world 3000 metre record. In the 1500 metres Dave beat the New Zealand track star, Dick Quax in a slow tactical race, tactical races were the thing in the seventies.

Dave had a chance of going to the European Games if he could manage the qualifying time of 3 mins 41 secs. In an effort to obtain the time, Dave ran many races within 2 or 3 seconds of the qualifying time, running against the clock too much, rather than the opposition and trying too hard. The best of these races was televised at the Gateshead Games in 1974 when Dave decided to run to win rather than against the clock, and defeated the star New Zealander, Dick Quax who was third in the Commonwealth Games 1500 metres when they were held in Edinburgh.

Dave's time for this race was 4 mins 2 secs after a very slow first half mile. The race, however, impressed the British selectors and he was selected to run in the famous Emsley Carr mile at Crystal Palace, where he finished fifth, clocking 4 mins 3 secs.

Then came the news from the British Board of Selectors that Dave had been selected to represent Great Britain v Norway v Benelux countries (Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg). It had always been Dave's first aim in athletics to represent his country, and in the process, to see some of the world, to make all the hard hours of training worthwhile.

The team flew from Stanstead Airport on the Monday to Oslo, with Dave's race to be held the following day. He was very tense about the race, not only was it his first international but it was also the last chance of obtaining a qualifying time for the European Games. There was still the third place open since only Ray Smedley and Frank Clements had reached the qualifying standard. Unfortunately, the early pace was slow, so Dave decided to try and win from the front, the other five runners just sat on him until 300 metres from the finish. Dave finally finished last in a blanket finish only 2.8 secs behind the eventual winner, Britain's Ray Smedley, who clocked 3 mins 42 secs (the equivalent of a 4 minute mile).

Dave once held the record, for the Good Friday relay course, his time of 9 mins 52 secs has only been beaten by Brendan Foster, Steve Cram and Mike McLeod. It must be said however that this time was not achieved at the relays, but at a yacht'' handicap, an event that used to be held by the Elswick Club during the Christmas holidays.

Dave Gibbon was about to leave after telling his story when he remembered that he ran in the Olympic trials in 1976! At the time he was suffering from the effects of having fallen on black ice, knee trouble was to haunt Dave throughout the remainder of his career. Mangaging only fifth place in the 1500 metres trial it was still no mean achievement to be beaten by the likes of Steve Ovett, Frank Clement and Dave Moorecroft.

Alan Storey who at the time was coaching both Mike McLeod and Dave suggested that he should see a specialist in London to help clear up his knee trouble once and for all. An operation was performed on his knee and 9 weeks later, impetuous as ever, Dave broke the course record for the Gosforth Relays! Perhaps because of this impetuosity Dave would be a regular visitor to his specialist, in all, having seven operations on the damaged knee.

Unable to train, Dave became very despondent, as all runners do, irrespective of ability, and still feels that at this low point in his career, Elswick Harriers, as a club, could have done more for him in terms of interest and



concern than they actually did. It was this perceived indifference that finally led Dave Gibbon to resign from Elswick to join Gateshead Harriers.

In defence of the club, it must be understood that in 1978 the club had no focal point for social activity, when running and training was finished. In 1989 Elswick members meet socially twice a week at Benwell Cricket Club where they can discuss their injuries, their poor runs, good runs, air their many grievances, and speak their mind to any unfortunate club official who may be within earshot. In other words, the vital lines of communication existing today, were unavailable to the likes to Dave Gibbon when he was at his low ebb. Perhaps another factor was that after the death of Norman Woodcock there was a great void in young Dave Gibbon's running career, I am sure that if Norman had been alive at the time of his resignation, Dave Gibbon would still be running for Elswick Harriers.



Dave Gibbon beats New Zealand's Dick Quax 1500m Gateshead Games

Photograph Newcastle Chronicle/Journal

Jim Alder on Mike McLeod

When planning the foreword to the section on Mike McLeod I had no problem in who to ask to write a small appreciation of Elswick's greatest athlete. Jim Alder was the man who first sprang to mind. Jim, a great friend of Mike also had the pedigree of a world-class athlete to back-up his down to earth appraisal of Mike's career.



Jim Alder, of Morpeth Harriers represented his native Scotland for fifteen consecutive years from 1961 to 1977 and his individual performances are quite remarkable.

- 1964: World Record Holder for 30K. World Best for 20 miles/2 hours.
- 1966: Gold Medalist, Marathon, Commonwealth Games, Jamaica Bronze Medalist, 10K. Commonwealth Games, Jamaica.
- 1967: British Marathon Champion.
- 1969: Bronze Medalist: European Games, Athens.
- 1970: Silver Medalist: Marathon, Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh. World Record Holder 30K.

I first remember Mike as a youth way back in the sixties'' when as as even thinner runner than today his class was apparent then.

His mentor of the time was the late Norman Woodcock who drooled over the class that Mike was capable of. In fact the only real tragedy was that Norman never lived long enough to see his prodigy come good!

I recall going once to Mike's house when I was reporting for the Evening Chronicle in 1971 and his father telling me that he was packing him up with food for when he was a senior – regrettably he too never saw the best of his son.

However, as my top career was fading fast because of business commitments, I thought that the North East would never see a runner win as many big games medals as myself – and yet Brendan Foster struck out in the seventies to win more medals than me – and the first runner in Britain to inflict a major defeat of Brendan Foster was Mike McLeod! If I had to pick a fault with Mike in the early seventies – it was that he let himself down on several occasions when his attitude was not right.

For me, the major influence on Mike's rise to world class performance came from Alan Storey, the confident cockney from London, but based in Sunderland now.

Three races in particular spring to mind when Mike really dominated a world class field. First, the Barrow Ten Mile Road Race when he beat Brendan Foster by over a minute when Brendan was ranked number one in the world – with Hugh Jones and many athletes in his wake. Secondly, the Golden 10K in Prague where he beat Brendan Foster.

The Commonwealth Games 5,000 selection race incorporated with the AAA's at Edinburgh where in a bruising race'' with Brendan Foster again – Mike was tripped 200m out and in a phenomenal home straight sprint with Brendan, dipped him to win.

Mentioning road racing again Mike disposed of me when I tried to outrun him in the 1975 Morpeth – despite partying the night before he left me and the rest of the field to record his debut win in the Morpeth, and six years later took my record that had stood for thirteen years.

Since then of course, Mike has shown that on the roads he was the worlds best on his day – and still at the age of thirty seven takes some beating.



Mike McLeod with the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race Trophy

Obviously, his Olympic Silver Medal at 10,000m must rank as his highest achievement – but like many other sages of the sport I watch with interest to see whether his undoubted natural ability can be matched with a ruthless determination and concentration needed to sustain him to high honours at the

full marathon distance.

Finally, my respect for the man grows with his constant touch and contact with the rank and file of local athletics, unlike some of the stars down South who have used athletics as a platform to other things in life. Mike McLeod is a man for all seasons.

Mike McLeod

If Mike McLeod was put in charge of his own publicity he wouldn't last a day in the job! Whilst Coe, Ovett, Cram and all the other great athletes of the seventies and eighties seem to surround or be surrounded by the world's media, Mike remains distant, almost remote from the hype and claptrap that goes hand-in-hand with top class athletics.

In the real world of local athletics too, this aura of remoteness is also evident to the Elswick member who perhaps does not know Mike personally, to such a person he can appear to be more remote than perhaps one would expect from a fellow club-man. To those who really know Mike, however and to others who have been drawn into his circle of acquaintances the change in him is as dramatic as it is unexpected, in the company of friends he is a warm, friendly, good-humoured man.

Sitting cross-legged on a settee, resting after a punishing training session Mike told his story with modesty and a matter of factness that belies the tremendous impact that this Elswick man has had on the sport. From winning the North Easterns as a boy in 1967 to an Olympic silver medal in 1984, Mike McLeod has seen it all and done it all and what follows is the story of his life and times.

As this section of the book is about Mike McLeod and his effect on Elswick Harriers, from time to time other club members will be featured, especially those who have had some influence on Mike in his early years, and others who have figured prominently in the club's affairs, both on and off the track, so to speak. The first person Mike mentioned in conversation was Club-Coach, Peter Hammill.

"Peter was one of the first people that I got to know when I first joined the club in 1966, and I know that his contribution to Elswick is immeasurable, the same goes for Colin Bolton and Alan Nendick. It is people like them who are the back-bone of the club and sometimes they get precious little thanks for what they do for the club".

Peter Hammill

Peter Hammill, Club-Coach, ex-sprint captain, ex-boxer, reluctant National Serviceman, is in the opinion of many at Elswick next in line to Norman Woodcock on the list of the all time greats of Elswick Harriers. Although he was an excellent sprinter in his youth, Peter's true

vocation was to be his work with the young runners at the club. Like Woodcock before him, Peter is always there, whenever and wherever an Elswick youngster is running. From the hail-lashed heights of a cross country event at Crook in mid-winter to the warmth of a summer evening at the Tyneside track league, there Peter Hammill can be found. Peter, in his own inimitable way, encouraging, cajoling or just plain forcing the best out of each young individual in his charge. Peter always has the numbers, always has the pins, the spare vest, his kit bag is bottomless, his head crammed with athletic know-how and plain good sense.



Peter Hammill

In committee Peter is formidable in debate, a dogmatic guardian of Elswick traditions, any new idea has to be very good indeed before it gets his seal of approval, as those of us on the Centenary Committee have found out on occasions!

Traditionalist he may be, but when change is needed for the good of the club Peter will react quickly to the problem. In the early seventies, Elswick were going through yet another bad patch, members were leaving for no apparent reason and youngsters living in the Elswick catchment area would join any other club but Elswick.

It was suggested during an informal discussion at the club that thought should be given to changing the club's name. Members thought that the name "Elswick" conjured up a picture of a run-down area of the city, as indeed it was at that time. It was thought that parents of prospective young members would rather their children went to other city clubs, such as Gosforth or Heaton.

Various discussions were held regarding what the new name of the club should be, and the name that was floated was "Newcastle Elswick". The active body of the club were almost unanimous in agreeing to the change, but it was thought that to be truly democratic an extra-ordinary general meeting should be convened. The meeting it was decided, would be open to all members, those who were active within the club also those ex members who felt that they should still had a say in the club's affairs. It was hoped that these ex-members would respect the wishes of the club committee and the members who actually paid their subscriptions.

This turned out to be wishful thinking, much to the dismay of the proposers, the two-thirds majority for the name change was not achieved. The proposers lost this mandatory two thirds majority by as little as two votes, so the name "Elswick" would have to be retained. The committee in general and Peter Hammill in particular regarded this vote as a stab in the back of the active members whose only concern was that the club should prosper and grow.

Feeling that the vote did not accurately reflect the feelings of the active club members, the decision was overturned at committee and a mandate given to call another meeting where a simple majority would decide the affair once and for all. In the event the motion was carried and the machinery was put into motion to have the name-change ratified by the District Committee and finally by the Northern Committee. Sadly, two loyal servants of the club, Pat Thomas and Bob Tinkler felt that they would have to move on, whether this was as a result of the name-change is a matter for conjecture.

The proposal was first taken to the District Committee but was rejected on the grounds that "Newcastle Elswick" was too all-embracing and would give the impression that it was the only club within the city. The Elswick committee agreed to this decision and a new proposal was submitted, the name to be, "Newcastle Elswick Harriers"; with the proviso that any other Newcastle club should, if they so

wished, be allowed to prefix their own name with "Newcastle".

The district committee accepted the new submission and the proposal now had to go to the Northern Committee for final approval. Two District Committee members, one from Gosforth Harriers and one from Heaton Harriers were mandated to carry the wishes of the District Committee to the Northern Committee for their approval.

To everyone's amazement the Northern Committee overturned the local ruling, it was an unprecedented for the Northern Committee to interfere in what was a domestic issue of local importance only. This ruling is still a major bone of contention when Elswick members meet and a feeling of injustice still simmers under the surface.

Whilst membership is now at an all-time high clearly everyone now knows that Elswick Harriers have their headquarters at Rutherford School, in the heart of Fenham. There is, however, a feeling that if "Newcastle" had been incorporated into the club's name it would have given the club a higher profile and made it synonymous with the city it has served for the past century.

Mike McLeod

The early promise shown by our hero particularly as a schoolboy athlete owes much to the harsh environment that he grew up in. Living on a tough council estate in Newcastle he learned at an early age how to run. Mike's speed was used to great effect, not to win street races, but for self preservation, running from authority, from the local hard lads, and from the law.

At the tender age of ten he was refused entry to his Catholic school because earlier he had broken windows in the local church. Roaming the streets with his friends looking for trouble, and adventure, Mike lived in a twilight world. He was trapped by his circumstances in a way of life that could never promise anything but a very narrow horizon. It was his running ability that would take him out of this world and into a world in which the intelligent youngster would reach his true potential.

Not for Mike McLeod the grammar school education that served his great rival Brendan Foster well in later years, but the rough and tumble of a Secondary Modern Education. Here more attention was paid to the physical side of growing up rather than to achieve any

intellectual goal. Our skinny youngster absorbed himself into the passions held dear by all eleven year olds; he played football for the school team, badly, he admits. On one occasion he had to miss a match through a doctor's appointment, fortunately, both for Elswick Harriers and Blakelaw School, Mike never regained his place on the school football team.

Training for Mike in those days was low-key even by the standards of the day. Two half-hour runs during the week with a race on Saturday. Not that the lack of quality training did him much harm, however. Mike won fourteen consecutive races in the 1966-1967 season. In winning these races he set records that stood for ten years, until they were broken by another skinny upstart by the name of Steve Cram from Jarrow and Hebburn A.C.

Mike McLeod celebrates his 17th birthday by winning the North Eastern Cross-Country Championships at Stewart Park, Middlesbrough Saturday 25th January 1969. Bob Lunnon (Gosforth) 2nd. Brian Baggle (Gateshead) 3rd.

Mike was spotted running in a schools race in 1966 and it was fortunate that he decided to join Elswick and not one of the more fashionable clubs. From the moment he joined and started to train it was obvious that he was to become a very special runner. In the Newcastle City Schools Championships of 1966, Mike won both the half mile and the one mile race in the under 15 category. In the Northumberland Schools Championships he again won the mile race in a time of 4 min 52.8 secs; and in the English Schools Championships, Mike came a creditable seventh in the mile race in a time of 4 min 45 secs. Mike rounded off the 1966 track season by becoming Northumberland and Durham 880 yards champion.

It is easy, when regarding the exploits of



McLeod in those early years to forget the successes of other club members at that time. In the Northumberland and Durham Championships of 1966 Elswick had some notable success. The Junior 120 yard hurdles was won by R.A. Davison; the Junior 100 and 220 yards by W. Wood, the shot was won by J. Callaghan, with B. Lowden and R.A. Davison second in the 1500 metre race and high jump respectively. In the boys' events, D. Law was second to McLeod in the 880 yards and I. Brown came first in the long jump.

1967 saw Mike McLeod consolidate his early success, winning the Boys' North Eastern Cross Country Championship in a time of 11 min 39 secs, for the 2 mile course, this helped the Elswick A team to 4th position. In the City Schools and Northumberland Schools Championships he won both the mile races. Mike finished off 1967 on a high note with fine wins in both the North Shields Polytechnic, and the Gateshead Congers Road Races.

Mike McLeod winning Heaton Harriers Youths Road Race November 1968.



Mike's father was a professional sprinter in his day, and was a great influence on his young offspring, taking the youngster to the Town Moor, Mike can remember his father training in the long grass and cow plats. It was his father's professional back-ground that initially led Mike to thoughts of entering the professional game himself. To supplement his income Mike toyed with the idea of running for a purse at the professional athletic meetings that were popular in the Borders and the Lake District at that time. His idea was that he would make some money and hope to be reinstated as an amateur at a later date. Thankfully this idea did not take root and by the age of eighteen he had rejected any thoughts of being a professional and set about making a name for himself on the roads and tracks of his native Tyneside.

Mike remained unbeaten throughout 1967 in his age group, 1968 saw him retain his North Eastern Cross Country Boy's title by a margin of 8 secs ahead of a runner called Coates of Middlesbrough. Dennis Coates was to join Gateshead Harriers, and as a team-mate of Brendan Foster represented Britain in the final of the steeplechase at the Montreal Olympics, in a British record time.

The Northern Cross Country Championships of 1968 were to be held at Hartlepool, but because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the area, the venue was transferred to Sheffield. The change in venue had little effect on our man, and he swept to victory with an 8 second margin. In those days Mike was very friendly with Dave Gibbon, Elswick's 1500 metre specialist, and together with Mike's namesake, Don McLeod and Malcolm Hillery, Elswick took the team title for good measure.

The eldest in a family of five, Mike left school at fifteen plus in 1967, his first job was that of an errand-boy, employed by the management of an ex-servicemen's home. His next job was as an apprentice motor mechanic at a local garage, and it was this job that was to fuel his passion for motor cars. Encouraged by his father he progressed well in his trade and because of his aptitude for mechanics he learnt to drive at a very early age, practising in the back streets that he had once roamed as a boy.

Over the years Mike has owned a series of souped-up bangers – sorry I mean cars, a Ford Anglia, Bedford van and, his pride and joy a Reliant Scimitar, which he still has in storage. Journeys to races are legend, working Saturday mornings, he would pull himself from under the vehicle he was working on and hurry to the race venue. He would often be seen lining up at

the start, covered in oil and dirt, much to the consternation of poor Norman Woodcock. Norman would have been on tenter-hooks for hours worrying in case his star man was going to be late.

In the Northumberland and Durham Harrier league season of 1968 Mike won on three occasions, running from the fast pack giving the slow pack 2 mins start, an unprecedented achievement. April 6th 1968 was the date that McLeod stepped-up into the youths agegroup and promptly won the Jarrow Road Race in a time of 20 mins 12 secs ahead of D. Hill, 20 mins 27 secs and D. Cannon, 21 mins 06 secs.

Witton Park, Blackburn was the venue for the Northern Track and Field Championships that year and Mike won the mile race in a time of 4 mins 21.3 secs. Later that year the Gateshead Road Race held in October produced a thrilling finish between Mike and Charlie Spedding of Gateshead Harriers, both recording the same time of 13 mins 26 secs.

In 1970, as an 18 year old Mike had abandoned all thoughts of turning professional, but the large purses on offer in the borders were still very tempting to our man! His career as a motor mechanic was blossoming with encouragement from his father. By this time, his height had shot up to 5 ft 10 inches and he was often compared to the great Alex Burns and was tipped by those in the know as a future 5k and 10k champion. He also stepped up his training and was now running up to 15 miles a week, this no doubt contributed to him retaining his North Eastern Youths title held that year at Morpeth as well as winning the Northern title in the same year.

Meanwhile, at the club the youngsters were doing their best for Elswick in the 1969/70 season. Most notably in the Northumberland and Durham Championships, with Spence winning both the long jump and triple jump. In the 800 metres, Dave Gibbon and Mike McLeod were first and second respectively

Gateshead Games Youths Race: McLeod with D. Lowes (Gateshead)



In 1972 the Journal featured McLeod in a four part documentary on Northern athletics.

"Carefree Mick has experts baffled" – reports John Donoghue

If young middle-distance hope Mick McLeod did his training to music then his critics insist the appropriate refrain could be nothing else but "Lazy Bones".

For at 20 McLeod has succeeded in splitting North East athletics right down the middle, annoying the Establishment with his care-free style and sending the opposite camp into unashamed raptures over the depth of his promise that they say will soon make him one of the top attractions on the British track scene.

Lazy, brilliant, quitter, stylist, just some of the words which have been used, often inadequately, to describe his approach to a sport in which few have risen to the top without complete dedication.

And, to add to the intense irritation of it all, while the experts do their best to dissect the chemistry of this bright young star, McLeod, himself, shows little interest in their conclusions.

The justification for promoting him as the great new hope of athletics is indeed strong. But there are equally good reasons, why in 12 months' time Mike McLeod might still be a Newcastle motor mechanic with no particular claims to fame.

He has whipped some of the best runners in the North, including those of international class.

Yet there have also been times when he has flopped with almost unbelievably bad performances.

One leading official said "This boy has provoked more heated discussion than any other young athlete I have ever come across.

"There are many respected voices who insist that he is going to be one of the most successful middle-distance men ever to come out of the area.

"Others get annoyed because they say he hasn't got the right attitude.

"I think the only thing we are all agreed on is that Mick has more natural talent than most of the runners put together "He is what George Best is, or was, to soccer – a bloke who can be brilliant one minute and dreadful the next. An enigma".

McLeod stays detached from the issue as though it didn't even concern him. "That sort of talk doesn't bother me at all", he said.

"I get on well enough with most of the runners although sometimes there are cases of petty jealousy.

"I hammered one of the top names into the ground recently and on his home track at that. The outcome was he didn't want to speak to me.

"If I have got a name as a quitter then it's exaggerated. I can only ever remember dropping out of two races and on both accounts there was a good reason.

"It is true, though, that if I have got no chance in a race I am not really prepared to go slogging on regardless, apparently this doesn't go down well in some circles".

McLeod's attitude to training also comes under heavy criticism, and he's clashed with one of the country's top coaches.

"He had me doing fast 440's all the time. I didn't think that was right for me, so we parted company".

McLeod now trains solo and that's where the "Lazy Bones" tag comes in. He went on: "I haven't really been getting in enough miles, mostly because I can't afford the time.

"But that doesn't mean I am without ambition. The Olympic Games are still a big target for me and I want to get there eventually".

1974 was an important year for Mike, in that his whole career came under the influence of Alan Storey, the Durham based distance coaching specialist. For some time Alan Storey had been watching Mike's up and down form with interest and the effect that the relationship has had on Mike's career is no legendary.

In 1976 McLeod won the Inter-Counties 5000m title but could not capitalise on this victory and could only manage ninth position in the Olympic trials.

McLeod's Morpeth Successes

1976 1st – 66 mins 65 secs

1977 1st – 64 mins 49 secs

1978 1st – 67 mins 15 secs

1980 1st – 63 mins 25 secs

1981 1st – 65 mins 45 secs

Mike celebrated the New Year of 1976 by winning the Newcastle to Morpeth Road Race at his first attempt. To the onlookers he seemed relaxed right through the thirteen plus miles from Castle Square, Morpeth to Clayton Road, Newcastle; Mike won in a sprintfinish 1 second ahead of Keith Angus of Sheffield A.C.

McLeod's time of 1 hr 6 mins 56 secs was just over 2 minutes outside the course record held by Morpeth's Jim Alder, and was remarkably, the first time McLeod had raced more than ten miles! Asked how he felt after the race, Mike

confessed that his legs packed up at the end, but on the whole he said he really had no problems.

Five miles from the finish, Mike, together with Keith Angus dropped the rest of the field, but Mike was worried that Jim Alder would sneak back up to the leaders as he had been in contention in the early stages. When Keith Angus kicked, Mike went with him and the lead changed after eleven miles. At the run-in Angus tried to shake off Mike but turning into Clayton Road the famous McLeod kick took the Elswick man to the line ten yards ahead of his Sheffield opponent.

The victory completed a great Christmas double for Mike, on Boxing Day he had won the Saltwell Road Race, and now he had won the Morpeth. The last time this double had been

achieved was way back in the sixties by Saltwell Harrier, John Anderson. Mike would dominate the Saltwell Road Race throughout his career, winning on fifteen consecutive occasions at the time of writing, one year beating Steve Cram in a thrilling sprint finish.

In 1977 Mike again achieved the Christmas double, winning both the Morpeth and the Saltwell, his time for the Morpeth was 1 hr 4 mins 49 secs, a great improvement on his time the year before, and only 19 secs outside the course record. With only one mile to go Mike was actually one second inside the record. weather conditions were atrocious, the wind and driving rain were held responsible for Mike failing to break the course record at his second attempt.

Mike McLeod together with Keith Angus of Sheffield A.C. after his first win in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race



It was 1977 when Mike really started to break into the international scene, after finishing fifth in the Nationals'' he won the Southern'' 10000m race, running as a guest. Mike then finished second to Ian Stuart in the U.K. Championships – more was to come in 1977 when Mike defeated Dick Quax in Nijmegen in a time of 13 mins 25.2 secs. McLeod rounded off the year in spectacular style by defeating his great rival, Brendan Foster, over 3000m at Gateshead in a time of 7 mins 49.1 secs. This was Foster's first defeat by a British athlete at any distance over a mile as the following report by journalist Colin Diball illustrates.....

Big Bren's Party Shock

Geordie Mike McLeod wrecked Brendan Foster's party last night, running to a shock defeat in front of his own Gateshead fans.

Big Bren had planned to end a season dogged by injury on a high note with a 3,000 metres victory in the Mainitou Games.

But the double world record holder was caught cold by the finishing speed of the 25 year-old Elswick Harrier, whose time of 7min 49.1 secs confirmed him as a front-rank distance runner.

It was the first time Foster has been beaten by a Briton in any race of 3,000 metres or over since he hit the top.

The upset stunned the 8,000 crowd at the Gateshead Stadium, but Bren said I was beaten by a better man. It's as simple as that''. Said the victorious McLeod: I knew Brendan was with me all the way. I only felt certain of victory when I crossed the line''.

Foster, had looked fresh enough despite his 10,000 metres triumph at Crystal Palace only 72 hours earlier. But in a thrilling finish, motor mechanic McLeod caught him in the final straight with Ian Stewart running on third.

Earlier, Foster had been pipped by Geoff Capes in a special 200 metres challenge event...the second sprint defeat by the 21 stone shot putter this year.

The other major highlight of the meeting came when Olympic 1500 metres champion John Walker raced home ahead of Frank Clement to win the mile in 3 mins 56.8 secs.

National record holder Sharon Colyear collected a hat-trick of victories, but was pushed all the way to the 100 metres hurdles before edging out Lorna Booth in a time of 13.25 secs.

Mike finally proved that could successfully challenge Foster in 1978 when they both ran in the U.K. championships 5000 metres at Meadowbank. To call this race a needle-match

race was an understatement.

The race was neck and neck all the way and exploded when Foster bumped McLeod off the track with 200 metres to go, but our man regained his balance and came home two tenths of a second ahead of Foster in a time of 13m.25.2sec. The incident is now dead and buried but in 1982 in an interview with journalist Simon Turnbull, McLeod maintained that Foster did it on purpose. A man with his talent didn't have to do that'', stated McLeod.

Foster did gain revenge later in 1978 by winning the 10,000 metres and being placed 3rd in the 5,000 metres at the Commonwealth Games, with McLeod finishing 3rd and 4th respectively.

After the 1977 National Cross Country Championships at Parliament Hill where Mike was fifth he was besieged by autograph hunters who had mistaken him for Steve Ovett, finding out who he really was they lost interest, incidentally, Steve Ovett came thirteenth in the race.

Mike's bronze medal at Edmonton was won over great odds compared to Foster's who was, at the time, Supremo at the Gateshead Sports Complex. In comparison, Mike was a salesman earning £30 per week. It was his wife Jo working as a telephonist, who made the trip possible at all. It had cost Mike well over a week's wages to complete in the AAA championships to gain selection for the Commonwealth Games in the first place.

During a three thousand metre race at Meadowbank, Mike almost had Jim Dingwall in the long-jump pit in the homestrait to avoid letting him past.

1981 saw McLeod pull out of his first marathon after 10 miles. Earlier that year he had won the Morpeth Road Race in a thrilling duel with Ray Smedley of Birchfield, to gain his fifth successive victory in the event. In the Great North Run of 1981 Mike came close to breaking the world record for the half-marathon, beating Nick Rose and Geoff Smith. The year ended well for Mike with a comprehensive win in the I.A.C. cross-country event at Crystal Palace.

At one period Mike experimented by running in army boots during training sessions. Some of the lads from the club out training noticed the boots as Mike streaked past them on Fenham Hall Drive.



Mike's Golden Double

Apart from Olympic Silver Medal, Mike McLeod's most outstanding achievement, I believe, was the two Golden 10,000m races that he won in 1979 and 1981.

Mike McLeod Beats Big Bren in Thrilling Battle": Bob Harris, reports from Brussels

The fiercesome Geordie rivalry between super-star Brendan Foster and Mike McLeod – so often the man in the shadows ended in glory for the underdog in Brussels last night.

Big Bren, favourite to take the Dubai Golden 10,000m, had to be content with second place as super McLeod stormed to triumph in a world class field.

And in a night of stunning athletics, Steve Overtt ran the gauntlet to go within an ace of Sebastian Coe's 1,500m record.

It was for the Brighton star, a second disappointment in five days. Last Friday, at Crystal Palace, he was just six-tenths of a second outside Coe's global time for the mile. But Overtt was even closer last night. His time of 3.32.11 was a mere 8/100's of a second outside his arch rival's 1500m record – set 22 days previously in Zurich.

McLeod finally stepped out of the giant shadow of Brendan Foster, to win the 10,000m.

The 27 year old Elswick Harrier produced a phenomenal last lap of 54.5 seconds to burn off the challenge of the disappointed Foster and local hero, Leon Schots.

He won in his best ever time of 27 mins 39.8 secs., the fourth fastest ever by a Briton.

Canny", he said, in typical Geordie style, after his outstanding success. I felt really easy out there. I was very disappointed in my run in the Europa Cup Final in Turin, but this has more than made up for it.

It has almost certainly broken down that psychological barrier that seemed to be stopping McLeod's progress.

And beating his local rival, Foster, will be the icing on the cake. He has trailed the 31 year old multi-medallist Foster around the world, waiting for this moment – and how well he grasped it when the opportunity came along.

Foster, typically, gave him every credit, saying afterwards: It was not one of my best races, but it was certainly Mike's best.

I was just in no position at all to challenge him in that last lap, and the nearer we got to the end of the race, the more he became the favourite.

Foster, tasting defeat by a fellow-Briton for the first time ever over the distance, was angry at the suggestion that he would attack Henry Rono's record.

He said: I have been losing far too many races to think of going for records. I lost too many positions early on, and I was never quite there.

Double Olympic Champion Lasse Viren disappeared amongst the also-rans while his countryman, the new flying Finn, Mattie Vainio did not appear at all. Also missing were Rono and Miruts Yifter. Never mind, we will just have to wait for Moscow, added Brendan.

Prague 1981

Mike McLeod headed a strong British quintet in Prague for the Golden 10,000 Race.

Nick Rose, Steve Jones, Geoff Smith and Julian Goater will support McLeod, winner of the race in Brussels in 1979.

McLeod will have to dig deep to strike gold again as a star-studded field includes eleven men who have run the 10,000m in under 28 mins.

Heading the list was Ethiopia's Mohamed Kedir, Olympic 10,000m medallist and runner-up in the World Cross Country Championships of 1981 held in Madrid.

One the biggest threats to Mike was likely to have been Kedir's countrymen Tolosa Kotu, who was fourth in Moscow and has run the distance only 2 secs slower than Kedir's 27 mins 44.6 secs.

The man with the fastest time to his credit was Finland's, Martti Vainio who won the European Championship 10,000m in 1978 in 27 mins 30.99 secs, but he only managed thirteenth in Moscow.

In the race, British athletes took five out of the first six places of the twenty seven runners who started the race.

McLeod, in his first track race of the season won in a time of 27 mins 59.38 secs ahead of Geoff Smith, 27 mins 59.43 secs and Nick Rose, 27 mins 59.68 secs, with Julian Goater in fifth place in 28 mins, 00.20 secs and Steven Jones sixth, in 28 mins, 00.58 secs.

Mike, with this victory has chalked up a golden double" indeed



European Championships: 10,000m final, Prague 1981. Photograph Mark Shearman Sports Photography

The Johnson Boys

During the period of McLeod's breakthrough and his subsequent international career, two of Elswick's senior men were quietly raising a few eyebrows in knowledgeable circles, the unrelated Kevin Johnson and Alan Johnson.

Kevin Johnson joined the club in 1969 becoming colts champion in 1970, boys champion in 1973 and youth champion in 1974 and represented Northumberland Schools from 1972 to 1976.

His early promise was not maintained, and it was not until 1981 that Kevin began to make his mark locally at distance events.

During the years 1981 to 1985 as his list of major successes shows, Kevin enjoyed considerable success, and was emerging as one of Britain's most promising marathon prospects under the guidance of coach, Alan Storey.

- 1981: 3rd Northallerton to Thirsk '10'
49min.58sec.
1st Hartlepool 10' 55min.47sec.(1500m.
over distance)
13th Great North Run 68min. (300m.
over distance)
10th North Eastern Cross-Country
Championships 42min.42sec.
- 1982: 11th Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race
69min.24sec.
1st Team Gosforth Relays
6th Loule 6K. Portugal
71st National Cross-Country, Leeds
- 1983: 62nd National Cross-Country
Championships
1st Team Gosforth Relays
2nd Alnwick 5' 26min.42sec.
1st Aberdeen Marathon
2hr.19min.01sec.
1st Brampton to Carlisle 10' 49min.24
sec.
- 1984: 3rd Signals Relay (North East
Championships)
6th Great North Run 67mins.17sec. p.b.
1st Twin Counties 10' Cornwall
50min.39sec.
7th Kosice Marathon 2hr.19min.56sec.
- 1985: 2nd Hastings Half-Marathon
68min.06sec.

Kevin's victory in the Aberdeen Marathon in 1983, representing Britain, is the highlight of his career so far. The story of this race has been extracted from Elswick's Newsletter dated September 1983.

Aberdeen Milk Marathon – Sunday 18th September 1983

An Athletes View

On Saturday 17th September 1983 I caught the train North to Aberdeen together with my England team colleagues, Dave Hill, Calum Bark and team manager, Alan Storey. This was to be our debut in international competition, a just reward some might say for our performances in the London Marathon! Would it be just another race or would it be something to remember with our grandchildren, only time would tell!

On arrival, we were met at the station by Race Director Mel Edwards, whisked round the course and deposited at the comfortable New Marcliffe Hotel to relax. Later that evening we were wine and dined by the Lord Provost at the Beach Ballroom and then off at a reasonable hour to bed.

Race day dawned, cold and windy. After an early breakfast of toast and coffee, then a few hours relaxing in front of Sunday morning television it was down to the start at the Beach Boulevard where most of the 2,000 runners had already assembled. A five minute jog and a few strides and we were underway. As expected Graham Laing was straight to the front as we headed up hill into the centre of Aberdeen. We concentrated on conserving energy as we cruised along in the chasing pack for the first 8 mile loop around the city. He was 45 secs up at 5 miles and 1 min 20 secs clear at 10 miles as we went through in 52.59 and headed out of town up the banks of the Dee. Dave and Calum together with Mick McGeoch of Wales were surging along in front but I sat in and bided my time, thinking how long can I stay here with my lack of preparation (only steady running for the last four or five weeks with a groin injury).

As the miles ticked by we could see that we were closing on the lead truck with the clock aboard. At first I assumed that Laing was merely taking a breather before the big push for home but no, he was definitely getting closer and soon we could read the clock again. At 17 miles we swept down a steep hill (Fraser Clyne's undoing in the previous two years), crossed the Dee and headed for home down the opposite bank. The race was now on in earnest.

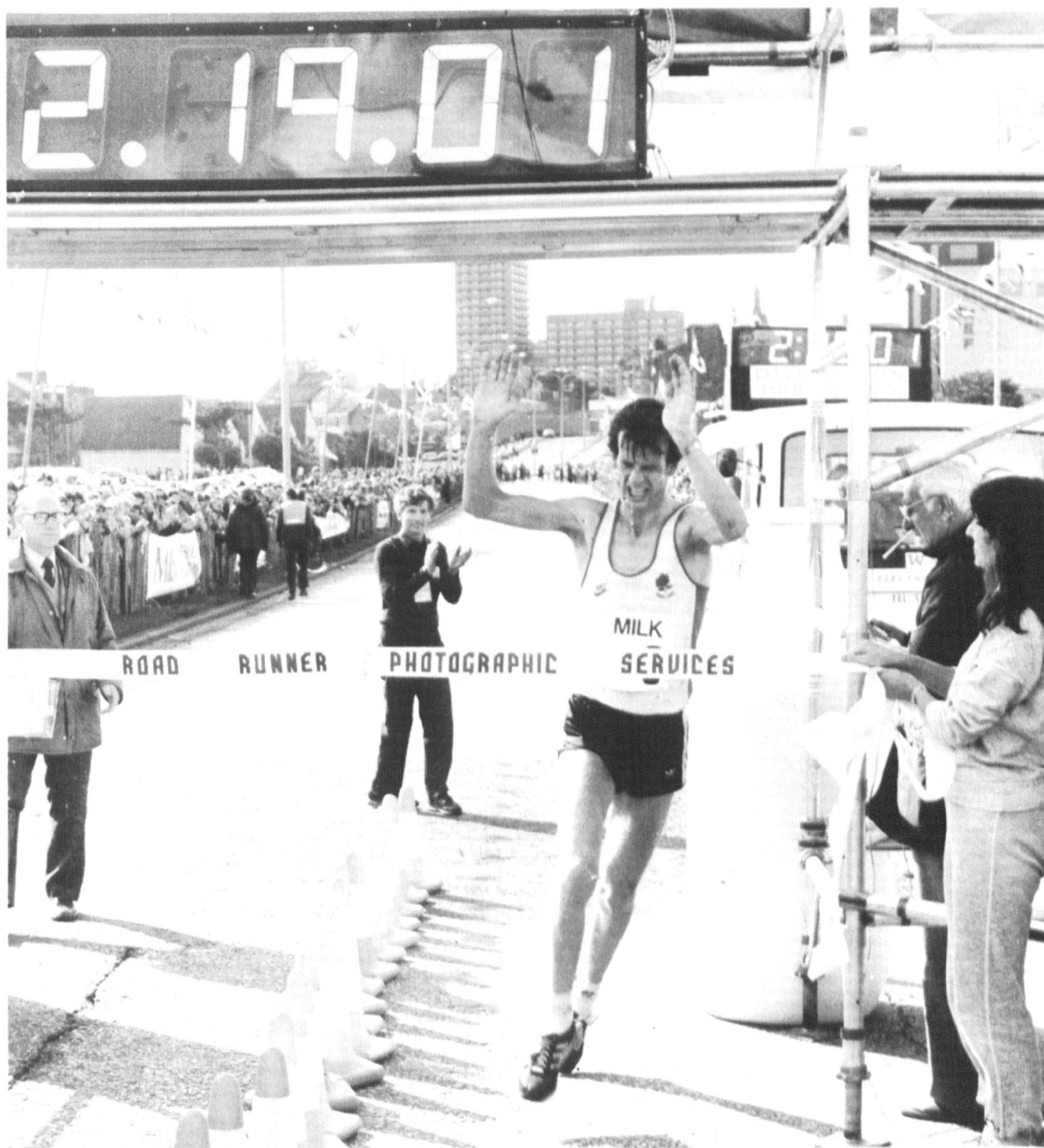
We were battling for the lead as the minutes ticked away. Laing held us for a while then drifted back and eventually out of the race at 20 miles. We charged through in 1 hr 46 mins 3 Englishmen and one Welshman, Trevor Hawes of Swansea. He had beaten all of us in London so it was going to be a tight finish''. First Hawes and then Bark tried to shake it up, Hill

dropped back several times but kept fighting back into contention. He wasn't buried yet! Gradually it was down to three, Johnson and Bark, two yards ahead of Hawes. With 4 miles to go Calum turned to me and said Go on I've had it, it's yours''. Without further ado my foot was firmly on the gas and I was going for it. Over the next two miles I built up a sizeable lead, without knowing it and was going well but the last couple of miles were tough and I looked for the finish round every corner. The

only light relief was when I saw Alan Storey and he called Go on sunshine they couldn't reach you on a bike now''.

Into Beach Boulevard, there it was, the crowds, the finish. I raised gallop, passed the time truck, eased up and it almost re-passes me 20 metres out.

During 1986 Kevin did not compete owing to injury. In 1987 he joined Aldershot as he was now working for Alan Pascoe Associates, and living in London.



Alan Johnson

Alan Johnson, Saltwell Road Race 1986. Photograph – John Burles Photography



Alan Johnson, club stalwart, is equally at home on track, road or cross-country. In his early years at the club he was helped considerably by coach Alan Nendick, and more recently under the guidance of Gateshead based coach Stan Long. Alan's career highlights include coming 1st in the Pearl Assurance two mile race at Gateshead in 1987 winning in a time of 8min.38sec. beating John Solley. Back in 1986 he came 3rd to Mike McLeod and Steve Cram in a thrilling finish to the Saltwell Road Race.

In cross-country Alan has been successful in North East Counties Cross-Country Championships coming fifth, fourth, third, second, in consecutive years.

His impressive form in the 1987 winter season led him to be chosen for the England Team for a 6K road race in Alesund, Western Norway. Elswick's club secretary, at the time, Ian Pillar, was also asked to accompany the team as manager. The rest of the All-Geordie team being Jake Harper (Morpeth), Paul Cuskin (Jarrow) and Morpeth's Tony Patterson who was also making his first international appearance.

Fortunately Newcastle Airport was kept open during the Arctic conditions, and surprisingly even though the roads in Norway were icy there was only a light covering of snow (it had apparently all fallen on Britain).

Alan was so cold he wore tights during the race but he came away glowing with pride after finishing in 5th place, 3 places and 12 seconds ahead of the next England team counter Tony Patterson, winning a bag of salmon for his efforts.

Position	Name	Time	Country
1	Lars Erick Nilson	19:29	Sweden
2	Atle Tanum	19:30	Norway
3	Sven Brik Boole	19:35	Norway
4	Ha'Han Bo'rjison	19:53	Sweden
5	Alan Johnson	19:55	England
6	Jan Hajelbrand	19:59	Sweden
7	Helge Dolsua'g	20:02	Norway
8	Tony Patterson	20:07	England
9	Jake Harper	20:11	England
10	Kurt Hegguold	20:17	Norway
11	Paul Cuskin	20:25	England

Course measurement 6670m.

Teams 1 Sweden 2 Norway 3 England

All the England team did exceptionally well in difficult conditions, with Alan's performance particularly impressive.

Alan is coached by Stan Long and during the winter trains on the roads from Stan's house in Felling with the likes of David Miles, Robin Powell and Paul Donachey.

Mike McLeod Slams World Field.....

November 1978 by Brian Kirkley Shields Gazette

Mike McLeod of Elswick, achieved his greatest cross-country victory when he slammed a world-class field in the Schweppes International meeting at Gateshead.

McLeod's coach Alan Storey told me before the race that Mike has been nominated by the BAAB as Britian's representative in the famous Sao Paulo Round the Houses' race on New Year's Eve and his training for the past month has been over the Gateshead hills.

And this preparation certainly worked as McLeod always up with the leaders, made an early break to go ten yards clear after the second lap. But to me the crucial point came just after the half-way stage when Wales' Steve Jones, whittled away the advantage as McLeod cast an anxious glance over his left shoulder before Jones passed him.

With Bernie Ford, Dave Black and Tony Simmons making little impression behind, Jones and McLeod fought out a fascinating duel with Jones gaining four yards on each of the two steep hills only to be caught by McLeod on the down hill stretches. Roared on by North Eastern supporters lining the course, the brilliant Newcastle International tracked Jones but, ominously matched the Welshman stride for stride up the penultimate climb on the last lap.

A fierce attack on the final ascent took McLeod ten yards clear, a tremendous surge towards the finish giving him a 25 yard lead as he crossed the line to a great ovation. The Elswick Harrier said afterwards that he had suffered an attack of stomach cramp but recovered to stay close to Jones.

Poor Domingo Tipaduiza must have wondered what had hit him as he struggled to finish 12th in bitterly cold conditions having left the searing heat of Colombia arriving in Gateshead on Thursday after travelling for 20 hours.

International Team Race - 4 Miles

1 M. McLeod (England A) 23 mins 38 secs; 2nd S. Jones (Wales) 23 mins 40 secs; 3rd B. Ford (England A) 23 mins 42 secs; 4th D. Black (England A) 23 mins 43 secs; 5th A. Simmons (Wales) 23 mins 45 secs; 6th N. Lees (ECCU) 23 mins 47 secs; J. Wild England A) 23 mins 51 secs.

McLeod Finishes First But They're All Winners Great North Run 1982..... Bill Bradshaw The Journal

Run-believable! The Great North Run won the hearts of Britain yesterday as a record 20,000 field raced, jogged or staggered through the rain from Newcastle to South Shields.

A joyfully-enthusiastic crowd, estimated at more than 400,000 many with a relative somewhere in the huge throng of runners watched Elswick international Mike McLeod win the half marathon for a second successive year.

Britain's biggest road race provided a stunning spectacle, undiluted by the driving rain.

The massed start on Newcastle's Central Motorway, triggered by two Royal Artillery field guns, set in motion a breathtaking, articulated mass of runners which slowly, but surely headed south-east.

It was all watched by millions nation-wide as BBC TV networked live coverage.

McLeod – whose injury problems had ousted him from the favourite slot – was among those who helped lead willing followers over the Tyne Bridge and on through East Gateshead, Heworth, Wardley, Jarrow, Harton, Marsden, and on to the finish at South Shields.

The second running of the Brendan Foster-inspired People's Race'' was undoubtedly a success. Organisers will today tally the full list of finishers – but an estimated 17,500 could see the race entered into the Guinness Book of Records as the largest road race in Europe.

The victorious McLeod said What a fabulous race to win. It means a lot to me, living in the North-East, to retain the title. This is a magnificent event both in the athletics sense and as a spectacle.

I did not really know how my injury was going to stand up to the race. But I went out to win and I'm glad it worked well. The race went entirely the way I planned it''.



Mike McLeod wins Silver in the Los Angeles' Smog

Elswick Harriers had to wait to 95 years for a club member to bring home an Olympic medal, and who better than Mike McLeod. Although McLeod himself, Alex Burns and Alan Lillington had represented their country in 1932, 1936, 1952, and 1980 they had been unsuccessful in as much as never winning a medal. 1984 was to be the year when an Elswick Harrier would mount the Olympic rostrum for the first time.

In 1980, Mike had a wretched time at Moscow. He easily qualified for the final of the 10,000 metres but when warming up for the race he pulled a hamstring, and together with Brendan Foster who was suffering from a stomach upset trailed home well out of the medal positions.

In 1984 Mike's preparation was impeccable – to acclimatise himself to the inhospitable conditions of the American West Coast he flew out to the States early to begin his build-up. He confessed that his priority was to get through the 10,000 metre heats and, hopefully, run a good final. To bring home a medal, any medal, would be a bonus!

With the crippling Los Angeles smog swirling round the stadium bowl, Mike successfully completed his heat, finishing fifth in heat one behind world record holder, Fernando Mamede of Portugal in a time of 28 mins 24.92 secs. After the race, Mike reckoned that the final would be a very tactical race and not much faster than the heats.

Mike McLeod was considered to be an outsider in the medal stakes when he lined up for the 10,000m final at the Los Angeles Olympics alongside Portugal's Fernando Mamede, world record breaker with 27.13.81 to credit, over 63 seconds faster than McLeod's best time this year. Italy's Alberto Cova with a PB of 27.37.59, but with the deadliest finishing kick in the business and a master at peaking at the right time.

The race was a dramatic one, Mamede was last at 5000m and dropped out and after a relatively slow first half, race leader John Tracey (Ireland), 14.19.84 (Mike McLeod 14.21.81) the second half saw a titanic clash between Cova and his predecessor as European champion Martti Vainio (Finland). Vainio moved to the front and gradually opened up his lead until by 9000m he was almost 100m ahead of Cova, but Cova wasn't going to be shaken off and with a

devastating kick he closed the gap, passing Vainio with 150m to go, completing the final lap in 58.75 seconds for victory by a margin of 230m with a time of 27.47.54.

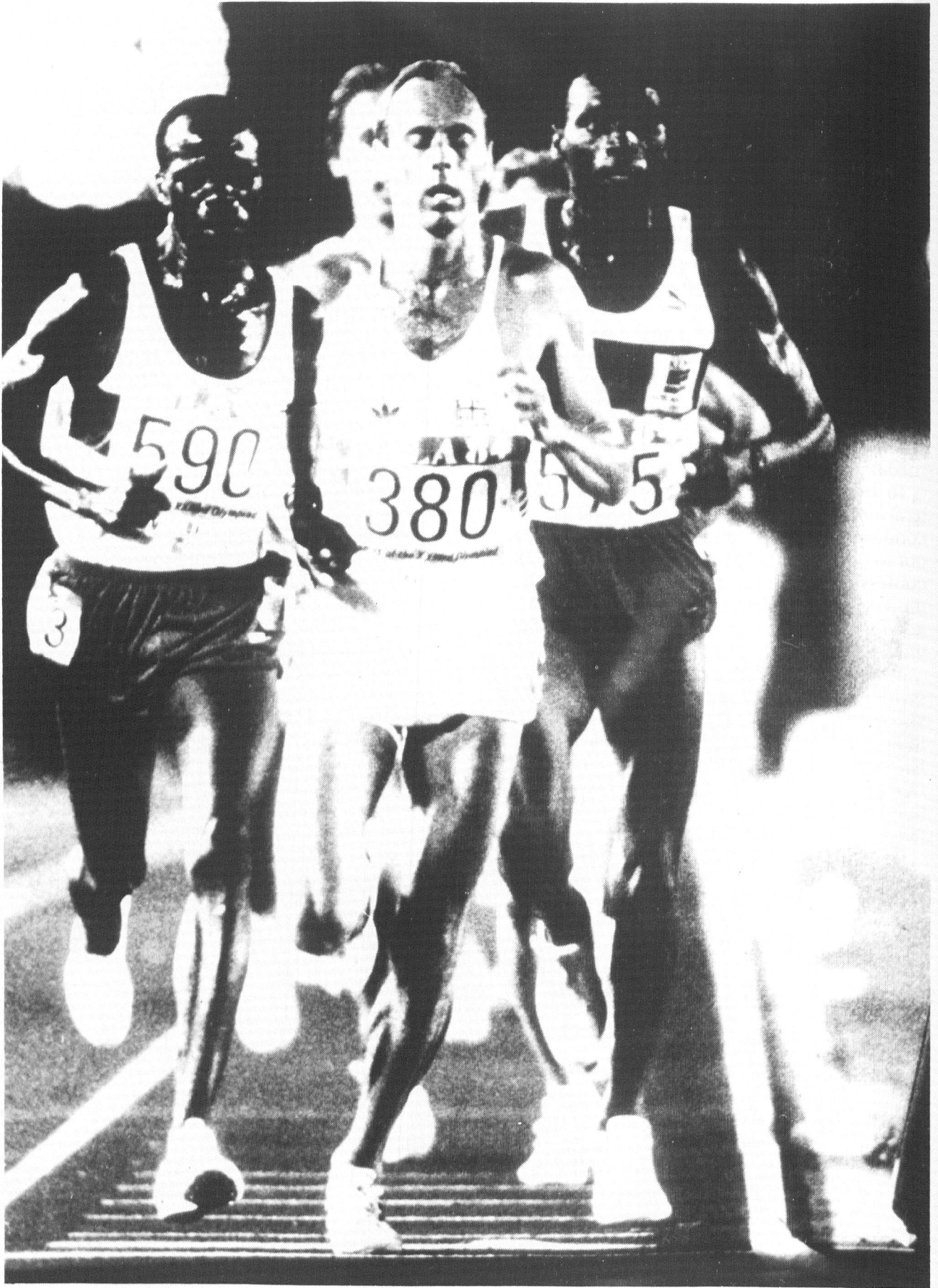
Far behind the two leaders less than 3 metres covered 5 runners at the bell and Mike McLeod's sustained sprint (58.78 last lap) enabled him to win the coveted bronze medal. He thus equalled the highest ever British placing in an Olympic 10,000m by James Wilson in 1920 and Brendan Foster in 1976. McLeod, admitting at being caught napping when the two leaders broke away, decided to settle for bronze rather than try to catch up and run the risk of blowing up later in the race.

Mike arrived breathless from the track, sank into a chair and started to tell 23 British reporters just how he had won the bronze medal he was wearing around his neck. Suddenly a shout from the next room announced that Tessa Sanderson had arrived with her Gold Medal. McLeod's audience disappeared. Some ran, some walked quickly and a few had the grace to look embarrassed but they left just the same.

McLeod simply smiled and shrugged. A fine athlete, been around a long time, and never really expected to be famous, but it would have been pleasant if fame had lingered for more than 30 seconds. Still he understood, you can't compete with a gold medal.

Mike, who returned early from Los Angeles because of the death of his father-in-law, was very surprised when he was asked to return his Bronze medal and instead to be awarded Silver. News had come through that 2nd placed Martti Vainio had been disqualified for taking anabolic steroids. Mike's promotion meant that his was the best ever performance by a British athlete in Olympic 10,000m history.





Cheating

Mike's opinion of drug abuse in sport is straight to the point – As far as Los Angeles was concerned if Martti Vainio had not run, or had run honestly a different result would have occurred. Had Vainio not been present the race would have been a cat and mouse affair with possibly a sprint finish' and with the famous McLeod kick who knows, a gold medal may have been his, and in the opinion of some, should have been. When Vainio was positively dope-tested he should have been banned for life and fined heavily – on the suggestion that top athletes should have boycotted subsequent races where Vainio was competing, Mike just shrugged his shoulders and said with so much money involved I don't think that this would be a viable proposition.

Blood-doping is another issue that insenses McLeod, by way of explanation, prior to a race an athlete will under medical supervision have a quantity of blood extracted. The blood is then spun-down in a centrifuge and the oxygen carrying red cells separated and stored at low temperature. Before an important race the red blood cells are re-infused into the athletes bloodstream. The effect of this is much the same as giving a racing car an extra gallon of fuel over the opponents. The car will go faster or for a longer distance and will win. Specifically blood-doping is not illegal, simply because there is no way of detecting it. Mike reckons that if athletes wanted the practice stopped it is within their own power to do it. Athletes just pay lip-serviceto the anti-drug campaign, there's a lot of hypocrisy about'', Mike added.

Then'', said Mike, there's those athletes who say that they have been got at', someone put something in their tea when they weren't looking. If you believe rubbish like that you will believe anything!''

Mike used to have a dog called Rex when he lived in Gateshead, and the dog ran with Mike every morning and every evening. On one occasion the dog was looking lethargic so Mike took him to the vet's. The vet examined Rex and asked Mike if the patient got much exercise, Aye', Mike replied twelve to fifteen miles a day and twenty on a Sunday!'

Training

When asked about a typical week's training plan Mike was at first not very forthcoming – It doesn't matter what Mike McLeod does'', he said, it's what's best for the individual that counts. What's good for me is not necessarily good for another athlete, and it's got a lot to do with talent. Some athletes such as Sebastian Coe are born to run, others given the right training will also reach their potential. Brendan Foster was in the latter category'', he said without training, Foster couldn't catch a bus but with the right training he became a world beater. The reason for this was that Brendan had another vital ingredient and that was the will to win.

Mike then relented and spelled out a typical week's training plan, but, on the strict understanding that it was not a plan for success for other runners just that it was the best plan for himself.

Sunday – one and a half to two hours long run:

Monday – two steady runs, the first in the morning 5 to 8 miles then in the evening 8 to 10 miles

Tuesday – easy morning run, in the evening a track session, this would probably be 5 x 1 mile with a lap recovery between each, or, 6 x 1,200 metres or, 4 x 1,200 metres depending on the time of the year. It could be 10 x half mile or 10 x 1,000m or simply 300m hard with 30 secs recovery, then a half mile with 1 lap recovery, might do 4 or 5 reps

Wednesday – 2 easy runs 5 miles in the morning and 8 miles in the evening

Thursday – 30 mins sustained hard run or, 12 miles at 5 minute mile pace

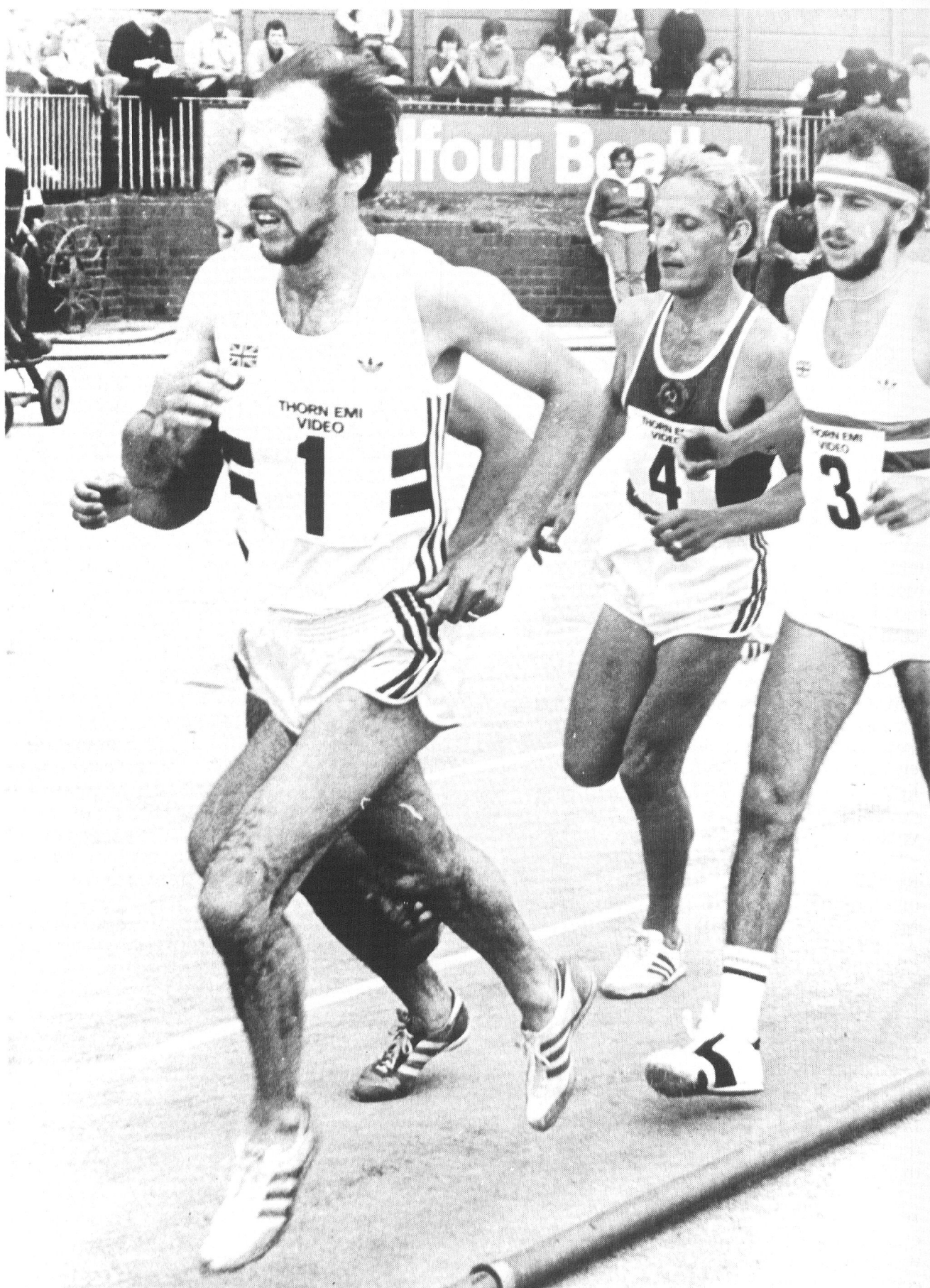
Friday – just a couple of steady runs to recover

Saturday – if not racing 12 short hills

Mike is never really happy on the track, he finds it boring. Just going around in circles is not very enjoyable and it is hard to concentrate, I much prefer the roads, even cross-country if there is not much mud.

The long term future for McLeod, who knows. If he continues to do what he does best he will probably be around for a good few years yet.

Training one Sunday morning with Ray Smedley through Plessey Woods, Mike slipped trying to avoid a dog and fell up to his waist into the river Blyth (in January). Ray was unwilling to help our man, knowing full-well that Mike would just pull him in as well!, eventually he struggled ashore and ran another ten miles dripping wet – that's dedication!





Opposite: International Match at Gateshead 1982: Great Britain v Russia

Newcastle City Centre 5K. 1984.

Ian Pillar's Headgear

Ian Pillar is a man of many talents, a mediocre club runner by his own admission, his talents lie in his amazing ability to organise the most complicated events with apparent ease. A man with many 'hats' his official capacities include – Chairman, AAA. No.1 District Committee, Representative on the No.1 District Committee on the Northern Counties Executive Committee, Member of the Northern Counties Athletic Association Development Committee, Northern Counties Athletic Association First Claims Qualifying Committee. Ian also represents the Northern Counties, that is from Derby in the South to the Scottish Border, on the AAA. National Development Committee and last but not least, current President of the North Eastern Cross-Country Association. As an after thought Ian added that he was also a Representative for the North East on the Executive Committee of the English Cross-Country Union.

I asked Ian what was the highlight of his running career, he found this a difficult question to answer, but on reflection said that it was breaking 1 hour 20 minutes on the old course of the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race.

City Centre 5K

The initial concept for a road race around the centre of Newcastle was Brendan Foster's, who approached the B.B.C. who, had the contract for athletics. The idea was to have a race over a measured course of 5K run through the city centre and to have the event televised live, and the B.B.C. were receptive to the idea. The City Council were also keen on the idea as this would give nationwide publicity to Newcastle. The agreement was that sports manufacturers, Nike, would provide 50% of the input with the City Council providing the other 50%.

As it turned out the Council found that the organisation of the event was beyond their scope and Elswick Harriers were approached by the city's promotions officer to lend their expertise to the venture. Ian Pillar, together with an enthusiastic club membership, the City Council, and Nike, put on a race that will be remembered for a long time to come.

5000 spectators gathered in Newcastle City Centre for the night of the Champions on a cold, fine Wednesday evening, 4th April and excitement increased as the 6.50 pm start approached

An impressive line up of elite runners were assembled including world record holder for 5000m on the track, Dave Moorcroft, world 1500m champion Steve Cram, international steeplechase champion Dave Lewis, the 'local Lad' who drew roars of encouragement from the crowd and in particular from the many Elswick Harriers, Mike McLeod, together with another popular Elswick Harrier, Alan Johnson.

Six laps of 769 metres string in John Dobson Street and finishing on Northumberland Street, excellent for the thousands of spectators lining the route as the runners were never out of sight for more than a few minutes.

It was bound to be a very fast race and at the gun Moorcroft went straight into the lead and pushed the pace hard but McLeod wasn't going to be dropped and he shadowed Moorcroft until he lost his initiative and McLeod and Lewis moved to the front.

One mile passed in 4 minutes 17 seconds, 2 miles in 8 minutes 44 seconds and on the final lap Lewis was leading with McLeod hard on his heels. Lewis commented after the race 'When you enter the closing stages of a road race with a guy like him on your shoulder you know you are in trouble.'

Rounding the corner for the final sprint to the finish down Northumberland Street the television camera picked out the look of sheer determination on McLeod's face as he kicked to the front and no-one was going to beat him.

Crossing the finish in a time of 13.30.7 he beat Lewis by 1.6 seconds, with Moorcroft coming through in third place in 13.39.

Steve Cram was a little disappointed with his 6th place 13.54, and a little further back Alan Johnson crossed the line but still under the Olympic qualifying time.

McLeod entered the race determined to do well after the England Cross Country selectors decided not to pick him for the World Championships, which many believe he could have won. And for good measure, his win came in front of the Olympic selectors and on B.B.C. Television 'Sportsnight' cameras who transmitted the whole race later that Wednesday night.

The race was so successful that the next year Ian Pillar and Elswick Harriers were asked once more to lend a hand. In 1986 Ian was appointed by the AAA. to be in overall charge.

Back to the race in 1984, it was the first time that a mobile TV camera had been used during a road race. At first Ian was not in favour of this as he thought it would present a threat to the safety of the athletes. It was pointed out,

however, that the same TV crew had used a motor cycle to televise the City Centre cycle races with no mishap whatsoever. Ian agreed, subject to him pointing out to the runners, that a motor cycle would be used to film them during the race. As it happened the TV coverage, from the mobile camera, was superb, the sight of Mike McLeod 'tearing' down Northumberland Street, sweat flying off him, was a sight to gladden the hearts of his watching club mates.

Elswick, together with other local clubs, Host the Nationals

Over the years Elswick Harriers have organised many races but surely the 'jewel in the crown' was the organisation of the National Cross-Country Championships held on the Town Moor in Newcastle on 1st March 1986. After successfully staging the 'Northerns' in 1984 on the Town Moor the club felt it was well able to put on the 'Nationals'. The club made a bid for the race and it was accepted at that point the club called in specialists from within its ranks especially the nucleus of members who had organised the 'Northerns'. It must be said, however, that this was not totally an Elswick affair, members and officials from other local clubs played their part too. A committee was formed with Ian, Colin Bolton and Harry Matthews and a plan of campaign was drawn up. It can be imagined that organising an event such as the 'Nationals' was a very complicated exercise and despite the heavy snowfall prior to the race the event was a great success, as the following report shows:

ECCU NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, 1 MARCH 1986

Requests for course marshals by Championship secretary Ian Pillar got a good response from all the North East clubs who were determined to show the rest of the country how well the North East could organise such a prestigious event and even though it was a bitterly cold day and the Town Moor was covered in snow, the whole meeting was hugely successful and proved to be one of the best (and toughest) 9 miles cross country course.

1983, Stopsley Park, London. Winner Tim Hutchins (Crawley AC), 1st team Aldershott. 1984, Newark & Notts Showground. Winner Eamonn Martin (Basildon AC), 1st team Aldershott. 1985, Campbell Park, Milton Keynes. Winner Dave Lewis (Rossendale AC), 1st team Aldershott. 1986, Town Moor, Newcastle, winner Tim Hutchins (Crawley AC) and Aldershott lost their domination of the team title, won this year by another Southern club, Tipton, with Basildon 2nd and Wolverhampton 3rd.

With the exception of Dave Lewis, practically everyone of any importance ran at the Town Moor, one noticable absentee being Gateshead's Northern Champion, Geoff Turnbull, who along with a number of other locals decided against turning out on the moor. Gateshead in particular were weakened by this thinking, although their team made 4th place, just outside the medals and their excellent performance gave them the trophy for 1st Northern area squad.

Not since Bernie Ford (1976 and 1978) has anyone won a second title, and Tim Hutchins 'run means he leads one of the strongest England teams for a number of years in the World XC Champs in Neuchatel, Switzerland on March 23rd.

At the start the cavalry charge of about 1800 runners was spectacular, (surprisingly, a few managed to miss the start). Elswick Harriers were glad to see that Mike McLeod, making a last minute decision on whether or not to run, was contesting the lead alongside Dave Lewis, Neil Tennant, Steve Binns, Roger Hackney, Eamonn Martin and Tony Milovsorov.

At around 2 miles on each of the 3 laps the field had to negotiate the notorious ski slope, high enough to remain frozen despite the slight thaw on lower ground. This sorted out the hill men and gaps began to appear, although amazingly Hutchins didn't seem to be affected and he broke away to what was to be an impressive victory. Having lost about 1/2 stone in weight since Christmas, he commented that he 'hadn't felt too pressed'! Considering his hamstring had been giving some trouble and had been suffering from a sore foot for a week, what is he capable of if 100% fit?

Mike McLeod had dropped back to 8th place around 6 miles. However, over the last lap he made a resurgence and got back to 4th place, with about 2 miles to go. At the line, Hutchins had no challengers as he finished in 47.25, over 1/2 minute ahead of Dave Clarke (Hercules Wimbledon), 47.59. Eamonn Martin (Basildon) was 3rd in 48.10 and Mike McLeod was 4th in

48.33, ahead of Tony Milovsorov (Tipton), 5th in 48.37 and Steve Binns (Bingley), 6th in 48.43.

Steve Cram was another undecided starter and after just over 1 lap he decided to drop out, troubled with a previous ankle injury.

View from Cow Hill: English Cross-Country Championships: Newcastle Town Moor 1st March 1986



After winning a place in the 9 man England team for Neachatel, McLeod immediately announced that he would not be running, however, by the Saturday evening he had already reconsidered his position. The team selected being so strong he didn't want to let any of them down by depleting the team when there was a possibility of winning.

Following Gateshead's excellent 4th team place, Jarrow & Hebburn were the next North East team in 23rd place, then came Morpeth 27th, and Elswick 46th, their 6 man team being Mike McLeod (4th), 48.33, Alan Johnson (121), 52.39, John Morton (54th), 56.54, Mike Ligema (600th) 57.24, Peter Richardson (606th), 57.27 and John Pearson (647th), 57.45. Non-counters were Paul McLeod (758th), 58.36 and Tom Renwick (1137th), 61.34. Other North East teams in the first 100 were Newton Aycliffe 75th, Wallsend 76th, Heaton 84th, Chester le Street 86th, and Blaydon 94th. 188 complete teams finished and 1706 runners.

In the Juniors 6 mile race, 54 complete teams finished and 430 runners.

Winner was Birmingham University's Chris Sweeney in 32.57, followed by Darrell Smith (Tonbridge) in 33.11 and a superb run by Tynedale Champion Michael Hutchinson produced 3rd place in 33.19.

Elswick's only competitor in this event was Martin Connelly who finished in 322nd place in 40.13.

First three teams were Tonbridge, Birmingham University, Belgrave. Wallsend were the 1st NE team in 6th place, followed by Tynedale 18th and Middlesbrough 32nd.

The Youths race was over a 4 mile course. 78 complete teams finished and 538 runners. The winner was Darren Mead (Thetford) in 20.49, followed by Paul Daly (Bracknell) in 21.11 and Jonathan Dennis (Camberley), 3rd in 21.16. R West of Chester le Street was the first North East athlete in 11th place in 21.44.

The team results were: 1 Birchfield, 2 Norfolk Olym, 3 Morpeth.

Elswick contested a full team for this event which was placed 56th. Team counters being Simon Murray 156th, 23.49, Peter Hammill, 323rd, 24.53, R Quarrie 402nd, 25.34 and J McNally 432nd, 26.00. Non-team counter was A Grant 477th in 26.39.

Several athletes were disqualified on the day for not wearing club vests. Hard to believe that anyone would compete in the National without his club colours. However, the event was a great success even though Newcastle United were playing at home on the same day despite a plea

to the FA to make it an away game, and Newcastle University held their Rag Week parade. Only one sour note which is now far too common at athletic meetings, a number of sports bags were stolen during the day while the races were in progress. Fortunately, they were discovered later in other parts of the Civic Centre, but minus money and valuables. Whereas we might feel ashamed that this happens in our city, it occurs throughout the country and is an unwelcome predator which has crept into our sport.

McLeod wins the Nationals'' and joins Cram in England Team: Brian Kirkley (Shields Gazette — 6th March 1979)

Elswick's Mick McLeod slammed one of the highest quality fields ever assembled when he added the coveted English National Cross-Country to his list of successes at Luton.

Brendan Foster, Steve Ovet, Nick Rose, Bernie Ford, and Tony Simmons were just a few of many stars competing but after the end of a gruelling nine miles the brilliant Newcastle international triumphed by ten yards over Ford to take the Chesham Cup'' as individual champion.

I was really chuffed about that'' said McLeod when I talked to him afterwards about the race. I was always in the leading bunch but felt the climb on the second lap''.

He now prepares for the world championships in the International CC meeting at Limerick on March 25.

In the most spectacular sight in British athletics, a record number of 1,668 spread out at the 100 yards across the course, poured out down the field like a cattle stampede and after only 300 yards Tony Simmons, on his home ground where he won in 1975, already showed ahead.

But relentlessly tracking him were Bernie Ford, with the remarkable record of 5 2 2 1 2 1 in his six national runs, Northern Champion Steve Kenyon and McLeod.

Although the leading bunch still included Nick Rose, Steve Ovett and Julian Goater, a significant break emerged after five miles as Ford stepped up and the pace tracked by McLeod and Rose. Up the steep hill for the final time it was still Ford in front with McLeod looking strong only a stride away and Rose also close up. Sweeping round into the final mile, McLeod, poised for his greatest victory, burst through with a magnificent turn of speed to kill off the challenge of Rose and Ford and held his advantage to the tape. Ford finished an inevitable second with Rose third followed by Kenyon, Goater, Steve Ovett and Barry Smith of Gateshead, seventh.

McLeod, forever master of the understatement, when asked by a television interviewer how he had enjoyed his recent trip to Australia replied Aye, canny, not so bad, a bit warm though!

Mike famed for his fast driving once caused Jimmy Alder to say en-route to the U.K. Championships in Edinburgh, I'll be on tranquillisers for a month after this'.

Mike McLeod: Commonwealth Games 1986. Photograph: John Burles Photography



The Ladies Section

Over the years Elswick have had two attempts at organising a ladies section, as you have read elsewhere in the book. In the 1930's the ladies were significant in as much as they were a pioneering group, a very new idea in a male dominated sport. The ladies did not prosper, not from lack of ambition or talent, but merely because the concept was born before its time. Even the brief re-emergence at Cowgate in 1952 was doomed to failure for the same reason.

It was the fun-run boom of the early '70's with its philosophy of families taking part together in organised events, which I believe finally led to women entering the sport at club level. Perhaps, at first, just bringing their children to athletic clubs, then being gradually drawn into the social and organisational activities within the club. To many women, this was as far as their commitment went, to others, however, the lure of competitive running proved to be too strong.

The key to the success of women participating in local athletics was the formation of 'Harrier Leagues' both for road and cross-country, organised by the clubs under the umbrella of the WAAA. For the first time events were organised on a 'professional' basis and to the same standard that the men had enjoyed since the founding of the AAA.

Elswick's Ladies section was formed in 1979, it was committee member, Terry Fox who was responsible for getting the idea off the ground. Terry was also the caretaker of the club's headquarters, Rutherford School, and was able to publicise the club's activities to the pupils and fortunately quite a few girls joined the club as a result. Terry, together with his wife Ann, acting as secretary, soon had a group organised. Terry would take the girls out for training sessions; once a week at first, then on both club nights as the venture became more popular.

As the group prospered, other senior club members began to take an interest, and the responsibilities of running the group were

Elswick Ladies South Shields Road Race 1986





shared out. Remarkably, as in the thirties, it was the senior men who took this initiative.

Founders included Jimmy Douglass, Mike Avery and Ian Leighton, who gave up their time to become coaches to the ladies section. It is because of these pioneers that Elswick now have such a successful ladies section, with many fine young athletes through to a formidable senior and veteran ladies squad.

Many may disagree, but I would suggest that the ladies sections greatest achievement is that of guiding so many youngsters in our city schools to City, County, and National honours on both the track and cross-country events. The City of Newcastle owes a great deal to the local athletic clubs for grooming their youngsters and providing the right atmosphere for training, so important to success.

The reader may have noticed I have not mentioned individual runners by name, but, this book is not written about the club runner but for the club runner. It is a book about the Elswick 'Greats' and club members who by sheer dedication and hard work have provided an environment where talent could be cherished, and in this the ladies section is foremost.

The book has come too early in the history of the ladies section in so far as to write about the first Elswick Heroine'', but who knows what the future holds.

Mary Avery

Mary joined the club in 1980, prior to joining the club she had not taken part in any sporting activity at all. Mary, as so many other ladies did, just came along with her family.

Mary has a string of excellent victories to her credit, the first being, 1st veteran in the Flymo Half Marathon in 1982, and in 1983 she became North East veteran track champion. Perhaps, the highlight of Mary's career was winning the Veteran Commonwealth 25K Race in 1986.

McLeod wins Gasparilla Classic 15K Road Race February 1985

Julian Goater and Mark Curp knew they were in big trouble Saturday morning when they crossed the Platt Street bridge and headed toward the finish line of the Gasparilla Distance Classic 15K road race.

For there by their side was Mike McLeod.

McLeod, as Goater and Curp remembered quite clearly, was the runner who sprinted past them and four other runners to win the 1984 Gasparilla race. Goater, Curp and the others learned to respect the McLeod kick.

So when McLeod, Curp, Goater, Peter Daenens, Tom Wysocki, Ivan Huff and Adrian Leek ran together over the bridge Saturday with the finish not far away, at least three of those runners knew McLeod would win.

There was a feeling of *deja vu*. The names and faces had changed from last year but the scene was just the same.

Play it again, Mike. For the second straight year, McLeod unleashed an awesome kick near the end to win the 9.3 mile Gasparilla race.

McLeod, a silver medalist for Great Britain in the 1984 Olympic 10,000 metre race, ran 43:02 to beat Belgian Olympic steeplechaser Daenens by two seconds. Daenens, who ran 43:04, barely held off Goater, who ran 43:05. Wysocki (43:06), Huff (43:08), Curp (43:14) and Leek (43:25) were right behind.

For the second straight year only six seconds separated the first five finishers. The race among the men was just one of four close races on the cool and windy day.

Britons Eamonn Martin and Kevin Forster were among the large group of runners that ran the first mile in 4:39. The lead runners were on 43:02 pace, putting them far off the world record (42:28) pace.

Mexican Jose Gomez, who ran in the 1984 Olympic 10,000-meter race, moved to the front of the pack soon after the first mile and quickened the pace. He brought the pack to the 2-mile mark in 9:06.

After 2 miles, 22 runners were in the lead pack with several others within striking distance. Gomez stayed in front until fellow countryman Marcos Luis Barreto surged ahead 2.5 miles into the race.

Nobody wanted to take the lead," said Barreto. I tried to push the pace."



Barreto led the pack through 3 miles in 13:40, 4 miles in 18:13 and 5 miles in 22:47. He faded after 5 miles, however, and the lead pack dwindled to 10. Mike Musyoki of Kenya and Bill Rodgers were among the elite runners who dropped back as the pack pushed on.

Eight runners hit the 6-mile mark in 27:28 and the 10K line in 28:28. With the wind now in their faces, only the foolhardy dare to break away.

Curp, an American who did not want to be anywhere near McLeod at the end after placing sixth behind him last year, attempted to move away from the pack.

But the wind was too strong to pull away," said Curp. I tried. I just couldn't hold it."

Curp succeeded in getting Kenyan Simeon Kigen to fall back after 6.5 miles. After 7 miles in 32:08, the lead pack had been narrowed to seven.

And McLeod had the runners just where he wanted them, choosing to run a step behind one of the leaders.

There was no reason for me to go ahead," said McLeod. If my leg didn't bother me from last week I might have tried to take it out. Try to test them."

I learned to sit in after last week," said McLeod, referring to the Orange Bowl 10K in Miami where he placed second behind Kigen after leading for most of the race. It cost me \$2,000."

If I had done that last week I would have won," said McLeod.

McLeod, Daenens, Goater, Wysocki, Huff, Curp and Leek ran up the Platt Street bridge. They all prepared for the final assault down Ashley Street. Right before they reached Kennedy Street, McLeod made his move.

All of a sudden he took off," said Daenens. I didn't know what to do at first. I was surprised. He did it so quickly, so fast. He saw the Hyatt Regency and, zoom, took off."

McLeod. Boom. Like a rocket," said Huff.

All systems were go for McLeod and he cruised to the finish with the others spaced seconds behind.

I think they were expecting me to kick around the bend like I did last year," said McLeod. It took them by surprise. That's what it's all about. Put the pressure on."

I didn't come all this way for nothing," said McLeod. If you come that far with the leaders, it's pointless throwing it away."

McLeod earned \$7,000 for his efforts, while Daenens pocketed a check for \$4,000.

King Mike Still Reigns Supreme.

by Simon Turnbull The Journal

Mike McLeod, one month short of his 37th birthday, still reigns supreme as master of the Saltwell Road Race.

Colin Walker made a brave attempt yesterday to snatch the most coveted crown in North-East athletics, but he ultimately became the latest international to be steamrollered on the annual festive time parade of the Elswick Express.

The FA Cup was proudly on display in the Roker Park trophy cabinet the last time McLeod failed to win the annual 10 kilometres race.

Yesterday the North-East's road running king recorded his 15th successive victory, an achievement without equal in British athletics history.

The trophy he first won in 1974 remains in the loft of his home in Wideopen. I decided not to tempt fate by bringing it today," said McLeod, who returned across the Tyne Bridge with a new cup donated by organisers Saltwell Harriers.

He earned it with another vintage run, missing his course record by a mere three seconds despite battling into a headwind most of the way.

Pre-empting the promised challenges from Walker, last year's UK steeplechase champion and Commonwealth 1500 metres bronze medalist John Robson, McLeod abandoned his customary sit and kick' tactics and took off from the start, near Gateshead Leisure Centre.

He drew with him the two principal threats as he sped down Bensham Bank, passing the one mile marker in 4 mins 34 secs and two miles in 8.44.

Robson, one of Britain's fastest ever milers and once fifth in the world cross country championships, could not cope with the pace along the Team Valley. He was a detached third when McLeod passed three miles in 13.24.

It was on the steep part of the drag up Chowdene Bank that Walker made his bid for glory. Instantly responding to the danger signal of McLeod rolling up the sleeves of his thermal top, he shot into the lead.

Walker reached the summit still in front but like Steve Cram the previous two years he could not break McLeod on Chowdene.

Walker was grimacing with the effort of the long haul up to Low Fell when McLeod, shrewd tactician that he is, moved into over-drive along Durham Road.

He reached the finish line, behind Gateshead Technical College, 15 seconds clear of his young rival in 29 mins 19 secs – an outstanding time in the conditions.

I might have got the record if I hadn't drank too much beer last night", said McLeod, who attended his local residents' annual Christmas party on the eve of the race.

I was a little worried when Colin took the lead on the bank", he added, in more serious vein, but it wasn't a decisive break. I could just tuck in behind.

I'll be back again next year. Somebody's got to beat me sometime. It would be nice to see more of the good lads in the North-East having a crack at me.

It was a shame Steve Cram wasn't running today. He gave me a good race last year, but so did Colin today".

Walker, a prison officer at Durham's Frankland jail, was still shaking his head in admiration of McLeod an hour after the race.

He was just toying with me out there", said the 26 year old Gateshead Harrier. He kept looking at his watch and putting in little bursts.

I was tired at the bottom of Chowden but I knew what was coming when he rolled up his sleeves. I knew I had to have a go then".

Walker's next races is the ECCU invitation cross country event at Durham on New Year's Eve. McLeod, although proclaimed as one of the starters by the organisers, said yesterday: It's only a possibility at the moment. There are still one or two things to sort out".

Working towards a spring marathon, however, is McLeod's main concern as he contemplates his 13th year in international athletics.

Mike McLeod, Elswick: 1st, 29 mins 19 secs, 5th Chris Lees, Elswick: 30 mins 47 secs, 9th Alan Johnson, Elswick: 31 mins .06 secs

First Team, Elswick 38 pts: 2nd Team Durham City 58 pts: 3rd Team Gateshead 82 pts.

The Marathon

As to his future plans Mike was cautious in letting anything out of the bag but when pressed on marathon running he said that he may give it a try in the future. Mike has to date run in three marathons and his record is not that impressive – ran three – finished one, this in high humidity in 2 hours 22 mins. Some 5k and 10k runners can adapt to the marathon, others can't, it takes an awful lot of commitment, we will just have to wait and see".

Mike McLeod's National Indoor Victory January 1988

Mike McLeod still prefers road racing despite his thrilling 3000m victory in the AAA indoor championship at Cosford. The competition was by no means sparkling and neither was his winning time of 8 minutes 6.07 seconds, but the manner of his victory provided the most spectacular sight of the day for the capacity crowd in the RAF hangar.

After finding himself in the lead with 3 laps of the 200m track remaining, Mike resisted a challenge from Bingley's Mike Hawkins on the penultimate circuit before leaving his rivals standing when he moved into overdrive at the start of the back straight of the final lap.

Remarkably it was Mike's first national title since he won the UK 5000m Crown ahead of Brendan Foster at Meadowbank in 1978.

Australia, Mike lay for an hour in a ventilator shaft in a hotel to listen to the reaction of female athletes, Mary Stewart and Shirley Strong on finding lizards in their beds and sports bags.



The Rise of the Vets

Life begins at forty? Wishful thinking for many people but to an athlete it heralds the beginning of an exciting new phase in their sport. No longer does an athlete have to hang up his running shoes at the age of forty, or thirty five for women but can look forward to many more years of health and fitness.

Veteran running, is the strongest growing area in our sport today. Those runners who were youngsters early in the running boom have become veterans and are still happily competing, and this side of the sport is getting a ready supply of new men and women to join the ranks.

The running world recognises the veteran boom, major marathons and other big road races pay more attention to veterans which,

John Spells hands over to Colin Bolton: Signals Relay 1987

since they number over one third of the competitors it is only right in the opinion of Eric Cassels, one of Elswick's leading veterans.

The veteran framework offers the runner a never-ending pathway to new horizons and goals. As the veteran runner nears the end of one age group a new age group beckons the runner to new records, new titles, new areas of competition. This adds greatly to the enjoyment of participation and gives valuable incentive to continue a running career.

One of Elswick Harrier's most outstanding veterans is Bob Peart, founder member and secretary of the North East Veterans Athletic Club and President of Elswick Harriers from 1981 to 1989. Initially Bob joined Elswick Harriers in the mid fifties, but spent seven years in Africa between 1957 and 1964 in connection with his work for the G.P.O. He ran for the club



between 1964 and 1968 when he was looked upon as being unusual, still running at the age of forty. Bob was back in Nairobi from 1968 to 1974, returning again to Britain at the age of forty six when he then began serious training.

From the age of fifty, Bob was a highly respected competitor, seldom beaten in all types of races, from 800 metres to the marathon. He ran the first London Marathon in 1981 and won the over-fifty prize, with a time of 2hrs. 38 mins 49 secs, his prize was a trip to Israel to take part in the Sea of Galilee Marathon. Bob was again first in the over fifty category, in a time of 2 hrs. 42 mins 30 secs.

At the age of fifty five he completed the North Tyneside Marathon in a time of 2 hrs 42 mins 03 secs, breaking the U.K. All Comers Record that had stood for ten years. Shortly after reaching the age of sixty Bob wore his Elswick vest during a trip to the U.S.A. and reduced the record for the New York Marathon by 3 mins, with a time of 2 hrs. 50 mins 55 secs. At the age of sixty, much to his surprise he set a new world record in the indoor 1,500 metres at Cosford, with a time of 4 mins 53.8 secs, this was completely unexpected as this was his first indoor run.

In 1981 another of Elswick's good senior runners, Colin Bolton, joined the veteran ranks. Colin had been senior club champion on occasions between 1961 and 1979 and carried off the club's veteran champion trophy for six years, only to be succeeded by Harry Matthews in 1988.

Harry Matthews began training with Elswick Harriers as a youngster in 1959, but under the guidance of Elswick's distinguished personality, Norman Woodcock, did not specialise in the sport until 1960. He was a promising youngster, a steeplechase champion as a youth and was always tremendously inspired by the Morpeth celebrity, Jimmy Alder. Joining the vets ranks in 1987 Harry emerged as the best veteran athlete in the area and in his first year was listed as the sixth fastest vet in the British rankings. His many successes have included a silver medal in the BVEF 10km race at Corby, fourth in the ten mile National Championships at Oswestry, and second team, together with Keith Chadfield, John Spells and Colin Bolton. It was the first time in well over thirty years that an Elswick team had won national medals. Harry's first year as a veteran saw him finish in the first ten in all national veteran championships.

Elswick were pleased to welcome Stockton based Keith Chadfield to the vets team in 1987.

Taking up running two months before his fortieth birthday mainly because of his son's interest in the sport. Keith's only regret is that his addiction to running came late in life. A good club man and a valuable team member he excels in the over forty five category, with a capability of breaking 52 mins for ten miles on the road and just outside 32 mins for 10km.

Ex-Scottish International and marathon specialist in his younger days, Sandy Keith was another valuable addition to the Elswick vets. An Olympic contender in 1980, his hopes were dashed by injuries. Training hard for the Olympic trial he won five races then developed an achilles injury caused by excessive repetitions. In the centenary year Sandy took over from Harry Matthews as the club's veteran champion.

Keith Graham joined the veteran squad in 1988 and added to the renowned strength of the Elswick team. After a long period of inactivity due to a back injury Tommy Turnbull returned to competition with a vengeance to challenge the best. Tommy took part in the 1982 Great North Run, found he enjoyed it, and ran six marathons in twelve months! Tommy did this because he thought that this was what runners usually did. Joining Elswick Harriers at the age of forty he soon proved he was capable of impressive performances over the shorter distances, and has clocked 32 mins 45 secs for 10km and 54 mins 06 secs for ten miles.

Prior to 1981 the club veterans had always been unrepresented on the committee. Therefore at the Annual General Meeting in 1981 Eric Cassels was elected veteran captain, and although they are too numerous to mention, he was proud to see the veteran section develop in quality and depth for which any club in Britain would find hard to match.

Veteran running is not confined to the men only, it is an important part of the ladies section too. I am sure that the ladies section will not mind if I single out one of their members for special mention.

Fred Stephenson, a sprinter for Elswick in his youth rejoined the club in 1982. During the past seven years has competed in a remarkable series of marathon events. Having run to date the 26.2 miles on 76 occasions: his best time being 3 hours, 18 minutes in London in 1983. Fred hopes to bring his tally to 100 runs during the next two years.



Looking To The Future

Many people at the club have said from time to time how they would like to see the club evolve in the coming years. It would be unnatural for any committed club member not to have his or her particular axe to grind or a vested interest not to be pursued.

Such interest and commitment is the life-blood of any club. My idea of how the club should evolve would not necessarily be the right one, the club is for everyone, I think Ian Pillar summed it up best when he said -

The most important thing that Elswick have achieved is that they are still here after a hundred years. They are still a club with a great reputation within athletics, a club with a history and a tradition that is continuing.

The backbone of athletics is the 99.9% of runners who will never reach, or even aspire to, international standard, and clubs such as Elswick meet the needs of such athletes. Elswick Harriers have never set out to cater for the elite', for elitism is self-defeating in the long run.

The club has had its ups and downs but has overcome its problems to a large extent. Athletics is at a cross-roads, there are some very big clubs who are becoming elitist, yet there are more clubs than ever before. Now we cannot have a polarisation of big clubs yet an

expansion of clubs throughout the country, the two just can't mix. There will be a cessation of expansion no doubt, but for the large clubs who attract very good runners this policy only lasts for a certain time. Good club runners who do not aspire to be elite find they cannot get team places, consequently if they cannot get a place on a team within their own club they will look elsewhere. Perhaps, they may find another club locally where the standard is perhaps slightly lower. Elswick have always been a homely club, drawing their membership from the surrounding area, but, still manage to attract people from beyond.

The essence of a good club is that it must be well organised and well managed. In this matter, Elswick are highly critical of themselves and feel that they never get it quite right, This policy is far better than to think that the club is right all the time.

Elswick's philosophy is to get the very best out of any individual regardless of what talent the runner may or may not possess; to hopefully achieve excellence but certainly strive to achieve it, but, perhaps most importantly to accept the best that anyone has to offer.

The club will always be a force to reckon with, Elswick will not always be the premier club in the area, circumstances will dictate this, but I will put my money down that the club will be around in 2089.

Sports Council Dinner 1988: Ian Pillar shakes hands with H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh



The Herne Hill Connection

AUTHORS NOTE:-

As this was to be the last chapter of the book I decided to treat the subject of the Herne Hill trip in a slightly different way. To the reader in 1989, the style may seem a little strange, but a reader in 2089, assuming a copy of this book is still in existence, may find the various explanations helpful. As an eye-witness to the events leading up to the race at Herne Hill, the race itself and the aftermath, I have couched the chapter in what hopefully passes as a humorous vein to give a flavour of the times, which after a hundred years may have otherwise been forgotten.

As part of their own centenary celebrations, Herne Hill Harriers from South London organised a cross-country race and invited other running clubs celebrating their own centenary in 1989 to take part. In all, three clubs responded to the invitation, Elswick Harriers, Sefton Harriers from Liverpool and Dundee Hawkhill Harriers, together with a number of Southern clubs, not celebrating their centenary. These other clubs were invited to help swell the field and make the races more competitive.

The race was to be held at Brockwell Park, London on Saturday, 7th January, 1989. The Elswick lads left Gallowgate Bus Station at 3.30 pm on the Friday afternoon prior to the race.

The journey to London would take five and a half hours on the "Clipper" (a six-wheeled diesel powered two deck vehicle). In 1989 it must be remembered that the primitive motorway system that scarred the face of Britain was subject to closure and had a maximum speed limit of seventy miles per hour.

Although, the vehicle was air-conditioned, smoking was still at that time a socially acceptable habit, so the lads, some with stomachs full of ale cowered in the no-smoking area of the bus, lest their mighty lungs became affected by the fumes. On arrival in London that evening, the Elswick Team were met by members of the host club, and swiftly dispersed throughout the London Suburbs to their appointed billets. Team Manager, Brian Smith, and the author were treated to a hot meal at the local McDonalds (a fast food establishment) by our host, Martin Harris, after which we made our way to a local public house for a glass of ale before retiring for the night.

The Race

I think it would be true to say that the Elswick men lining-up for the start of the race were treating the business more as a hard training run for the "Northerns" at Sheffield the following week, than as a competitive race. In the young athlete's event, Joe Hammill had finished an elegant fourth to gain third team place for the Elswick youngsters.

Harry Matthews, Elswick's fine veteran



appeared at the start sporting a pair of lilac coloured tights, much to the disgust and amusement of the other Elswick men, after a false start, the race was on.

At the beginning of the race of five miles, over a heavy three-lap course the runners were confronted by a stiff incline. Peter Hammill, like some raging bull, led the field running at a pace that he was unable to maintain, slipped back into the field, after the first lap. Harry Matthews, wily as a fox worked his way through the field with Martin Connelly and Alan Thompson close at hand. Harry was the first Elswick man home in a creditable 44th position, closely followed by Martin Connelly 52nd and Bob Drysdale 57th.

As the leading men finished, attention turned to the back-markers in general and Bill Gardner in particular. Team manager Smith, spotted the unfortunate runner almost on all-fours at the start of the last lap, in a state of complete exhaustion. Smith, squeaking and braying like a demented beast put new strength into Bill's legs and he came strongly into the finish. 400 metre track specialist, Colin Jeffrey with little stomach for the job in hand who also appeared to be hampered by a faulty watch brought up the rear of the Elswick team.

As ninth team, Elswick's first ten runners were each presented with a large ceramic tile bearing the centenary logo of Herne Hill. As to what use the tiles could be put to was a matter of serious debate at the official reception later that evening.

At the reception in a social club nearby, large amounts of ale were consumed and many speeches were delivered by the centennial clubs. Harry Matthews on behalf of Elswick Harriers presented the Herne Hill club with an engraved rose-bowl. Harry's speech was constantly interrupted by ribald remarks from the now florid Elswick men. The biblical Bob Drysdale taking a prominent part in this outburst, outshouted only by C.F. Turner (Snr).

As the evening drew to a close, the assembled runners were treated to a fine rendition of Tyneside's anthem, "the Blaydon Races" by Peter Hammill. Team manager Brian Smith who, by this time had lost the dignity befitting an official mounted the podium and proceeded to give a display of jiving, learnt many years previously in the seedy dance halls of Tyneside. This exhibition signalled the close of the evening and the Elswick men, rising unsteadily to their feet left the building and were swallowed up into the night.

Miraculously at ten o'clock the next morning all runners had reported to Battersea Park, for a ten-mile sight seeing run around London before embarking upon the return journey to Newcastle. As on the night before, the Elswick lads were in fine form as they took their seats for the long journey home. In 1989 toilet facilities and on board catering were recent refinements to coach travel and the lads made great use of both features. Taking over the rear section of the coach, vast quantities of coffee and sandwiches were greedily consumed to the annoyance of the other passengers who had to go hungry until an unscheduled stop was made to bring aboard more refreshments.

As the weary runners stumbled stiffly from the coach into the cold northern night, it was generally agreed that the expedition had been a great success and would be repeated at the bi-centennial in 2089.



Youths: J. Hammill, A. Gray, C. Clarkson,
Juniors: P. Hammill, S. Murray, F. Turner, C. Jeffries

Seniors: M. Connelly, A. Thompson, C.F. Turner, J. Alder, R. Lambert

Veterans: H. Matthews, J. Spells, W. Gardner, R. Drysdale

Conclusion

One of the many good things that came out of the Herne Hill trip were the friendships which were formed between Elswick Harriers and the Southern athletes. I hope that return visits to the North will be made by the men from the South, as it can only be a good thing for North East athletics in general and for Elswick Harriers in particular.



Part of the Elswick Team at Herne Hill (Back Row, Left to Right): Martin Connelly, Bob Drysdale, Harry Matthews, Bill Gardner, Fred Turner, Jim Alder, Fred Turner Jnr, Mark Lambert.

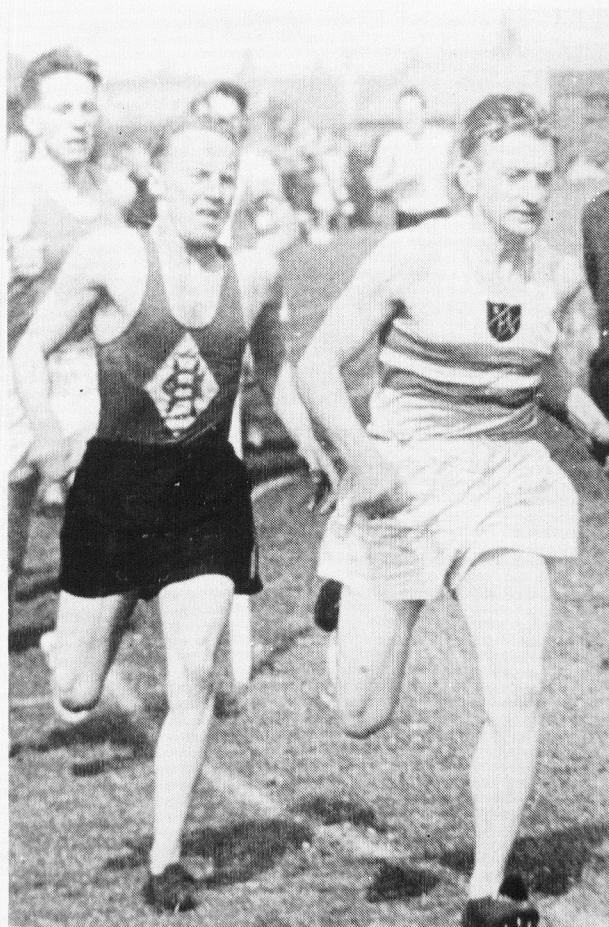
Front Row Left to Right: Simon Murray, Colin Jeffrey, Alan Thompson, John Spells, Brian Smith (photograph courtesy of Fred Popplewell)



The Coaches

Vital to any athletic club are its coaching staff, dedicated, put-upon, long-suffering and always there. They are blessed with infinite patience, good common sense and boundless enthusiasm for their task. In this Elswick are no exception, the abilities of Elswick's coaching staff, in particular is evident in the success of the club's young runners.

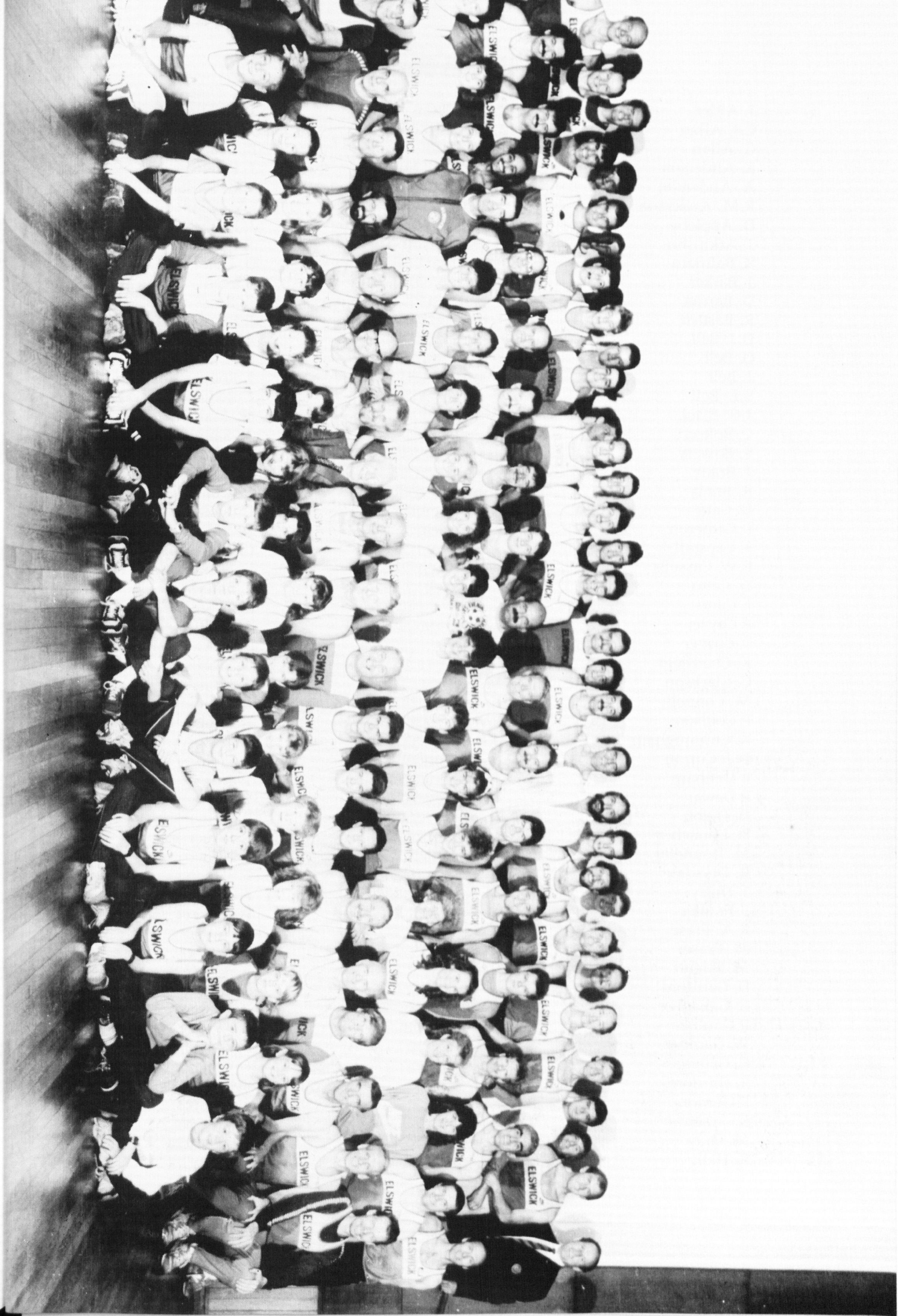
Elswick Harriers owes to this group of enthusiasts a great debt of gratitude, for without them and their predecessors there would have been very little material for this book.



Sprint coach, Rippon Hall (during his running days)

Left to right: Alan Nendick, Brian Smith, Maureen Thompson, John Barker, Mike Avery, Ann Blight, Peter Hammill, Bob Walker, Elsie Wright (not in picture)





The Boys in Red" 1989

J. Alder
C.J. Allan
G. Allan
K. Anderson
A. Anderson
R.M. Anderson
D. Appleby
J. Atkinson
K. Balmain
J. Barker
D. Barron
R. Bartlett
D.J. Bell
G. Bell
J. Bell
S.E. Bell
J.G. Black
C. Bolton
S. Bowery
J. Brady
R. Brady
D. Cain
I. Cameron
J. Capstaff
E.W. Cassells
D. Catto
I. Catto
P. Cayzer
Y. Cayzer
K. Chadfield
C. Clarkson
M. Connelly
P. Coulson
K. Cunningham
D.J. Curran
P. Denham
P. Dewar
D. Dixon
D. Donachey
M. Donnelly
R. Drysdale
J. Duffy
F. Franks
K.A. Fraser
M. Fraser
M. Friend
D. Gainford
E. Gallagher
P. Gardner
W. Gardner
C. George
S. Gilmore
P. Gordon
K. Graham
M. Gray
R. Hall

J. Hamilton
J.G. Hamilton
J. Hammill
P. Hammill Snr
P. Hammill Jnr
T. Hansen
J. Hayes
D. Henderson
K. Heslop
P. Heslop
E. Hudson
T. Hudson
K. Hughes
D. Hutchinson
J. Ianson
C. Jeffrey
D. Jenkins
A. Johnson
K. Kennon
S. Keith
B. King
A. Kirkwood
R. Lambert
T. Langley
A. Laycock
T. Laycock
C. Lees
I. Leighton
G. Lester
G. Lewis
M. Ligema
K. Lowden
P.M.P. Lyons
S.R. McDonald
N. McDonough
T. McDonough
D. McGovern Snr.
D. McGovern Jnr.
M.R. McGregor
M. McHugh
M. McKenna
M.A. McLanagen
M. McLeod
H. Matthews
T. Maxwell
P. Murdy
N. Murray
S.P. Murray
A. Naughton
K. Naughton
P. Naughton
D. Nelson
K. Nelson
A. Nendick
B. Newman
J. Oates

J. Parkin
J. Pearson
R. Peart
J. Percival
J.M. Philipson
I.S. Pillar
J. Poole
J. Porter
D. Dyle
P. Reed
C. Rees
T. Renwick
A.H. Robson
D.A. Robson
J. Rodgers Snr.
J. Rodgers Jnr.
M. Rudden
A. Saunders Snr.
A. Saunders Jnr.
A. Savage
J. Scott
L. Scott
D. Serginson
C.P. Shaw
K. Shortland
J. Smees
B.A. Smith
J. Spells
F. Stephenson
B. Stobbs
B. Stonehouse
M.G. Suttle
H. Taylor
L. Taylor
T. Taylor
J. Trezise
T. Turnbull
F. Turner Snr.
F. Turner Jnr.
P. Turner
S. Urwin
A. Waheed
A. Walker
B. Walker
L. Walker
R.P. Walker
R. Walker
N. Wallace
D. Walter
F. Watson
I. Whitonstall
R.H. Wilkes
S. White
W. Wright
M. Zarraga

The Girls in Red" 1989

Kathryn Allan
Margaret Anderson
Mary Avery
Denise Barker
Carol Blackett
Ann Blight
Judith Blight
Amanda Bowery
Emma Brady
Elaine Cameron
Jill Cameron
Marion Cleghorn
Gillian Cowell
Beverley Douglass
Valerie Douglass
Sara Findlay
Kelly Foreman
Lucy Franks
Joanna Gaffney
Jacqueline Graham
Karin Hutton
Amanda Kirton
Anna Lawson
Elspeth Lawson
Mandy Liddle
Wyn Lowden
Margaret Pyle
Sarah Robson
Clare Rodgers
Julie Russell
Lynzie Russell
Tracey Sahina
Irene Scaife
Jill Scott
Hazel Simpson
Evelyn Smee
J. Spells
Adele Thompson
Maureen Thompson
Joanne Thomson
Anne Turner
Andrea Weallans
Kelly Wilson
Elsie Wright

Bert Stobbs

E. Johnson

B. Smith

H. Hunter

W. G. W.

Eric Cassel

~~D. J. J.~~

N. S. Wallace

P. R. Walker

D. Hunter

W. A. Alphant

~~W. A. Alphant~~

E. Johnston

H. Crofton

W. Gardner

E. G. W.

A. Wilson

Paul Gash

Bobby Bartlett

C. Turner

Johnson

D. Bain

Johnson

~~W. A. Alphant~~

~~W. A. Alphant~~

W. A. Alphant

W. A. Alphant

Harry Wrightman

John Linker

Robert Linker

Alan Thompson

Rippon Hall

Madison Tinsell

Geo. McKee

Pat Dickinson

Mike Friend.
Hein Bowden

Wyn Bowden

Tom John

Michael Donnelly.

Daryl Simpson

Simon Murray

George Cyle

L. L. L.

Martin Conolly.

Brian Armstrong.

John

John Mayes

Paul van

Bob Both.

Mike

Stan Egdeall

Frank O'Hane

Joe Hickey.

Vernon Monaghan.

W. J. Gordon

T. Shuhner

Alan. Saunders

Tony Sayed.

Hally Tathew

Jimmy Rodger.

J. England

Geoff Lewis.

Jack Loder

V. Johnson.

Tom Pillar

Robt. Tyle.

R. J. M.
R. J. M.

Mary Avery

E. Austin

Tom Henderson

Mike Henry

Pat Thomas

Bob Brown (Tommy)

Dennis Hanson

Alan Hendrick

Maurice Callahan

J. M. Leichter

Jim Fearn

Tom Alden

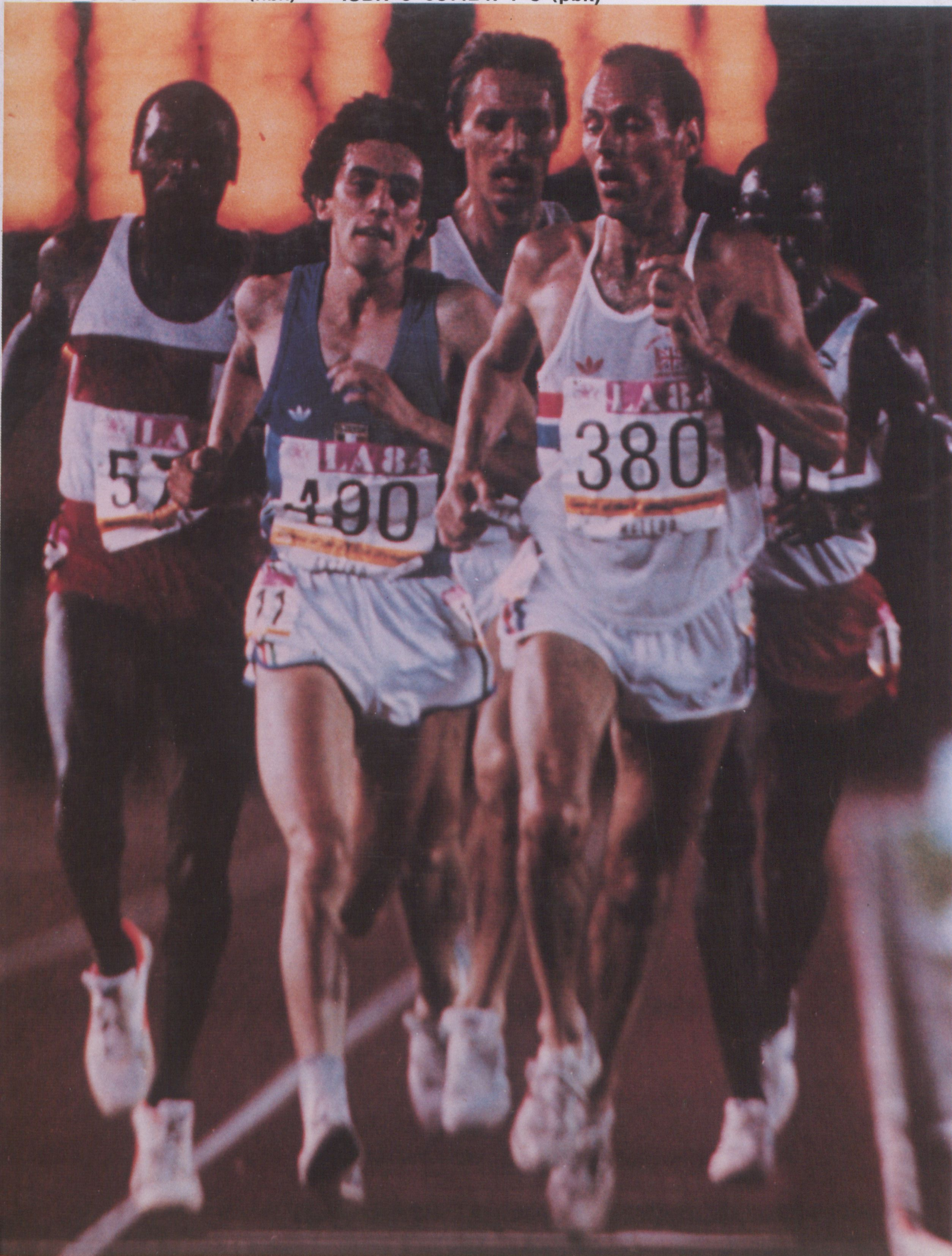
Nick Murray

B. Dean

"Go for it Mark"

Photograph Nick Murray





Mike McLeod 10,000m. Final, Los Angeles 1984 Copyright ALLSPORT/STEVE POWELL