

ESSEX WALKER

REPRESENTATIVE DUTY FOR DAVIS

Ilford's protagonist SCOTT DAVIS was selected to represent the South in the annual triangular match versus the North and the Midlands, which this year was held on Sunday afternoon at the nearby Dartford track. Going to post in the 5,000 metres, Davis was always just out of striking distance of Welsh champion MARK WILLIAMS of Tamworth AC, who was representing the Midlands, and fellow Southern competitor DOMINIC KING (Colchester Harriers). With rapid pace on offer, Davis was always in sight of the leading duo and ready to take advantage of any slip-up. This duly happened when King, twice a Commonwealth Games representative, retired leaving the Welshman to break the tape in 22 minutes and 22 seconds, with the Ilford man taking advantage by moving into 2nd position, clocking 23.38. Indeed Davis needed to be on his mettle to ensure that former international JIMMY BALL (Southampton AC) didn't close the gap, as he finished 3rd, just 17 seconds in arrears. Davis helped the South win the overall event!

The above account is somewhat different from the one submitted by a reader (who shall be nameless) who rang to notify me that Scott had won easily, having pulled away from all-comers as the race went on! Hmmm! So this account was checked out and it transpired that Scott was 3rd for much of the race and had Jimmy Ball in close order. It's worth checking out what info you get sent!



CLICK-CLICK-CLICK

Ilford AC staged Day One of the Essex County AAA Championships on Bank Holiday Monday, and thanks to those who helped out – particularly Dave Sharpe who spent most of a very long day on the turnstile – where he took around £1,200 in entry fees/programme sales.

RUB OUT

At all manner of places – Blackheath, Enfield, Basildon, Moulton, Leamington Spa etc., etc – ERROL BIRNEY (BARRY INGARFIELD's half-brother) has set up his massage/treatment table and provided complimentary sessions plus free advice to athletes on fitness and injuries. His table was in great demand at the 2006 Leamington Grand Prix, and it was thought that he'd be providing his usual excellent service at the European Cup of Race Walking. So much so that both Errol and Barry booked in for 2 nights put-up in a good Leamington Spa hotel. Less than 2 weeks before the big day Errol was told that he wasn't needed as they'd got somebody else! When budgets are tight, turning down a buckshee service which has won much praise seems an odd decision. You can imagine what Errol has to say about this decision!

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Recent issues have mentioned former Essex County President EAMONN MARTIN for his efforts to record the International appearances and National Titles of Basildon AAC members (past and present). Eamonn was the last UK athlete to win the London Marathon men's race, some 14 years ago. In 2007 his daughter ROSIE made her London Marathon debut, running for PROJECT TRUST – which raises money for under-privileged children in China. Her aim was £4,000 and her longest training session was over 20 miles some 3 weeks before the big day. Eamonn was on course as an interested observer.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

So wrote the Immortal Bard, and it could apply to Colchester born PAUL NIHILL. He had no contact with his sister WENDY for 65 years – indeed he only learnt about Wendy in 1996 and, as readers know, he's been really trying hard to locate the good lady. He's had help from Essex Walkers in the Colchester and Chelmsford regions. Paul has acknowledged his help and also the assistance given by the NORCAP adoption agency. Wendy had a spell at a Chelmsford orphanage, once lived in Chatham and – wait for it – has now been found to be living just outside Glasgow. Wendy is 2 years younger than Paul, in good health and also enjoys a good long walk. Wendy walks quite a lot, though not race walking. On Saturday 28th April Paul and Wendy spoke for the first time, by telephone, and a meeting is envisaged. Many readers will know just how much time and effort Paul has put into this outcome, and over many years.

We're all really pleased to hear Paul's wonderful news!

LICC HIGH WATER MARK

The best supported LICC race for 2006 was at Parliament Hill Fields track (despite a walker doing pre-race training on Hampstead Heath and returning after the start, and another adding to his long record of dropping out). On Saturday 30th June it's on again, comprising of a 3,000 metres walk and 1,000 metres YAG event at 1 p.m. **Parking warning:** Don't park in the Lido, as that's for swimmers only. Those observed parking there and then wandering towards the track are soft targets for parking tickets. Nearby roads are a minefield with petty regulations on small notice plates and residents parking zones. BILL SUTHERLAND once got a ticket here, so get Bill to 'mark your card'. Best be early and park a few streets away. Better still, GOSPEL OAK station is right next door and on 2 lines: the infamous NORTH LONDON LINE and the dilapidated BARKING-TO-GOSPEL OAK LINE.

THE HEAT IS ON

- FLORA LONDON MARATHON

Big hearted marathon regular 'character' DAVE SHARPE race walked it at a consistent pace throughout, clocking 5.10.17, so raising a considerable sum for Muscular Dystrophy – indeed one of the most successful amounts ever raised by anybody from the walking fraternity.

Another Marathon regular is STEVE ALLEN whose exact time was 3.31.57, in his Post Office uniform peaked cap and mailsack. He also ran at a consistent pace bar a single dip in progress from 20-to-22 miles. It was a most successful appearance considering his injuries of late. A good sum of money was raised for the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Steve also got great coverage on the BBC2 coverage of the Marathon Highlights – as the cameras zoomed in on his fast finishing Post Office uniform! Steve told Eileen to put the kettle on when the TV camera turned in his direction! And what can you say about 80 year old retired postman ALEX ALLEN – Steve's dad – who finished it in such hot conditions and raised money for Cancer Research UK. He ran and jogged to 15 miles then switched to race walking mode, passing the recorders in 6.05. An Ilford AC member drove favourite HAILE GEBRELASSIE back to the finish line after he'd dropped out with indigestion and 'stitch' right by Ilford's water station at Canary Wharf, after he'd got his breath back sufficiently to give an interview to a BBC reporter. Just think, Hon. Ed was having lunch with him at his home on the outskirts of Addis Ababa last November after the Great Ethiopian Run! Finally, if you pledged money to these worthies, please cough-up promptly and make their collection tasks easier. And if you haven't pledged anything, then their collections are still open for donations!

A UNIQUE FEAT

Did you know that PAUL NIHILL is the only walker to have held all the NATIONAL TITLES on both cinders and all-weather surfaces and at all metric and pre-metric distances.

ROBERT MURKIN MEETS RACE WALKER AMOS SEDDON

RM Amos I was keen to focus on a walker for my second interview in this series and I hear it from great authority that you are the club's most celebrated walker. Can you tell me how you got into walking?

AS From about the age of 8, after first hearing about the Olympics I have been keen on sport. When I was 17 I met a lad who was very, very unsporting. However, later that year he competed a 34 miles race walk and never stopped talking about it. So I was determined to do the same race the next year and I did. For this I received a small trophy, my first ever. For my next race I gained a '6 miles in the hour' badge. This made me think "there are easy pickings here". Well it was many, many years later before I won anything again!

RM Were you always a walker or did you participate in other events/sports before?

AS At school I did quite well at most track and field events (I once held the school discus record) but really liked running especially cross country.

I also played the usual games, rugby, hockey, cricket all of which I liked, though I never played football. I later tried sports such as tennis, badminton, squash, but realised games involving a ball did not really suit me. I had a go at judo and wrestling. I was disqualified in my first wrestling competition.

RM Do you think walking was more popular in the past than now?

AS Of that there is no doubt, thirty years ago there would be several races every weekend, each with a good turnout. National Championships and the Autumn Open 7's had fields of up to 200.

RM Do you think enough is being done these days to encourage youngsters to take up walking?

AS Not being currently involved at Junior level (in the 1980s I was National Event Coach for Juniors) or even attending many races, it would be unfair of me to be critical but I am aware that to get youngsters involved (I have 4 grandchildren) is not easy. There are so many sports and activities for them to choose from, as well as, the computers. It does appear to me, though, that there is not the encouragement for sport generally in schools. I feel it is a great pity youngsters don't get more opportunities to try race walking (obviously it would not suit everyone) because it is a great event. As well as the physical effort, there is the self discipline aspect. Unlike running you cannot just push as hard as you are physically able, but must comply with the strict contact and straight leg rules.

RM I guess most events stress the body in various ways. Have you ever had any injuries from walking?

AS The two main 'injuries' which have affected me are back and knees. About 20 years ago I started getting low back pain, much later diagnosed as 3 worn discs. It was not until about 8 or 9 years ago I finally admitted to myself race walking was not helping the problem, but it has not necessarily caused it in the first place. Ordinary brisk walking helps to keep my back fairly comfortable. So for the past 8 years I have done no race walking as training; but as I did not want to stop competing, albeit at a slower pace, I now only race walk in races. The knees problem I have had for about 10 years. This is probably more as a result of all the miles running and walking. Apart from the discomfort, which you learn to live with, the most annoying part of the knees problem is the difficulty complying with the strict straight leg rule. Other injuries such as calf and groin strains have come from running.

RM What was your greatest athletic achievement to date?

AS There are several I was pleased with, such as the National 35 kms Championships in 1980. My time of 2 hours 40 min is still a respectable time even in 2007. That year I had trained very hard hoping to make the GB Team for Moscow. As well as the 35 kms I did several other personal bests, including 20 miles in 2 hours 31 mins and 50 kms in 4 hours 10 mins. 1980 also saw my greatest athletic disappointment and confirmed that I was destined not to compete in an Olympics. As you may remember Mrs. Thatcher (Prime Minister) tried to stop British Athletes going to Moscow (the Russians were fighting in Afghanistan), she did not succeed, but she did have more influence on those in government employ and so the then Police Commissioner for London decreed "no policeman will be allowed to go to Moscow". I was a policeman at the time.

RM Who do you admire most in the world of masters athletics?

AS Arthur Thomson, astonishing, brilliant demoralising (especially to 'young' walkers like me) fantastic, inspiring (again to me) marvellous, superb, just a few adjectives to describe what he achieved in 2006.

RM What do you think of the masters movement in GB in world terms?

AS One of the problems with Veterans athletics I think is contained in your question. MASTERS. I do not consider myself a master. I am an old man, a veteran. Some others may not be as old, but nor are they young.

I cannot agree that calling the movement 'Masters' will make us more glamorous or appealing. We still take our efforts seriously and aim to achieve great results. When I first started competing in Vets events in 1981, I thought it was terrific having represented GB and England about 40 times at senior level. I still found the atmosphere and enthusiasm among the veterans, especially at international events inspiring.

I have not competed in international events recently, partly because my performances are unpredictable, and I have had injuries. Also, the two main reasons are cost and 'attitude'. By attitude I mean being told I must wear British Masters Team clothing. I have never been selected to represent GB and certainly not been provided with expenses. So when I am representing myself in a competition, provided it is not illegal, I should be allowed to wear what I want. I am not ashamed of wearing GB clothing. The night before my first international in 1973 I was so proud of my new tracksuit I slept in it, to make sure I had it to wear the next day. However to return to the main point of your question, as I have not recently had close experience of events outside the UK I cannot give a knowledgeable response. From the results, though, we do appear to give a good account of ourselves, which is great.

RM How much training were you doing at your peak and now?

AS At my peak, I was doing about 100-130 kms per week for most of the year. 1980 was a really serious year, at least for the first 6 months. For 5 weeks (not consecutive) I did about 280 kms a week, and the other weeks were fairly busy too. You can see why I was disappointed re: Moscow, especially as I did achieve some good results. Because of the problems I've had for the last 10 years or so my training has been very much 'of the moment'. I try and walk about 60 kms a week at about 6½ kph. I also do a few sessions on an exercise bike. Until 3 years ago I did one or two runs a week, but the knees don't like that any more.

RM What was your profession?

AS I was a policeman for 30 years. Since retiring I have done a few jobs. I have regularly worked for Bourne Sports at 'outside' events such as London Marathon exhibition and Veterans Championships.

RM Many thanks Amos. I wish you well for the future, and thank you once more again for this information. I'm sure our members will really enjoy hearing all about your career.

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NOSTALGIA – WHAT A SERIES!

In a week in 1979 the late CAROL TYSON broke 2 **World Records** in Sweden. On June 30th at Ostersund she clocked 23.11.2 for a track 5,000 metres. MARION FAWKES was 2nd in 23.19.2. The following day they raced a road 5K at Ottsjoknegan with Marion winning in 23.58, just 2 seconds ahead of Carol. 3 days later they dead-heated in another road 5K at Gakarten, clocking 23.47. 2 days on, the 3,000 metres went to Carol at Hofgangen in 13.25.2, with Marion disqualified during a sprint finish. Both Carol's track walks were world records. In the winning GB team was IRENE BATEMAN, now known as a respected and successful coach. Irene's positions and times for these 4 races were, respectively: 6th 23.44, 5th 24.14, 4th 24.20 and 5th 14.00. Our other walker was JUDY FARR whose respective performances were 10th 25.11, 7th 24.30, 5th 24.33 and 7th 14.13. 2 days later all competed in the Open Nordic Championship at Harnosands. Marion set a 10,000 metres world record in 48.11. Irene was 3rd in 50.40 and Judy 4th in 50.52. Carol opted for a 5,000 metres event winning in 23.53. What days!



From Our Readers

WRITES MIKE HINTON

Dear Dave,

I managed to get back in training for a few weeks as my injury problem had eased, and was hopeful of turning out for the club shortly. Alas I have had to call a halt as I am in pain again. The good news is that my MRI scan is booked for this week, so I just hope it shows what the problem is.

It was great to see Steve Allen splashed across the TV screen at the Marathon finish in his postie outfit, clearly shouting "Get the kettle on Eileen", well done Steve.

Regards, Mike

MARK WALL WRITES FOR ALL

All,

On behalf of the Northamptonshire AA Development group and the Endurance forum of the East Midlands region of England Athletics, we are exploring the prospect of a walks meeting including a 50km conducted under 'A' race conditions.

This would probably be a track race, possibly at the Kettering track.

Is there any interest? Time of year? Prospective date?

I would hope it would constitute an East Midlands championship. We have discussed the idea of holding regional titles, at the forum, and it had the support of the previous Regional manager.

Let's discuss.

Regards Mark. marnwal@hotmail.com

EMAILS LEN RUDDOCK

Dear Dave,

Congratulations to Irene Bateman and Greg Fidgeon, editor of the Yellow Advertiser, for interesting Race Walking related articles which appeared in the latest edition of the giveaway paper. Front and back pages to boot! They actually made interesting reading which should appeal to general readers and enthusiasts alike!

Regards, Len Ruddock

EMAILS MONSIEUR KEVIN PERRY

Hi Dave or is it Bonjour Dave,

Just to let you now Alan O has paid me a visit and with the amount of cycling he has been doing maybe he should wear a yellow jersey. Tony Perkins emailed me to say that Ken Rodrigues lives in my neck of the woods so I contacted him but didn't tell Alan, when Ken phoned me later I gave the phone to Alan and said the call was for him.... He said "Who is this" and when Ken replied Alan was well surprised. We have arranged to meet Ken as he only lives an hour away, and he told us to fetch our swimmers as he has a pool (how the other half live!!!) I will be back in the UK for the Battersea race and hope to catch up with you. Don't forget if you get the job of MC I'm Kevin Perry, look forward to seeing you in July.

Best Regards, Kevin, C912.

REPORTS OUR TRAVEL CORRESPONDENT

ALAN O'RAWE

Went to Kev and Kath Perry's house in France, done some training with him getting ready for the 100 in July, also visited an ex-vice president of Southend Ken Rodrigues and Deidre for a meal and a trip down memory lane. TP was most pleased that I visited the Rodrigues as Deidre gave me some bread pudding for him. Thank Kev and Kath for a lovely weekend.

AOR

WRITES OUR KEN

Dear Dave,

I thank everyone for their cards and kind messages. I enclose a cheque to help Essex Walker.

Happy walking, Ken Easlea.

WRITES DAVE SHARPE

Dear Birdseye,

Recently, like you, I did the Nicola 5 Miles at Canvey Island. In the walk there were 49 starters and 48 finishers with 1 faller unfortunately. That can be rectified if we start at 10 a.m. and the running event at 10.30 a.m. There are toilets within the school grounds, so you can have a good dump or stop at a service station before. This event would be a good place to stage an Essex League race with 'B' status; so we can cast the net further to find more walkers, and give the Castle Point Club an Essex League fixture as we haven't had an Essex League 5 Miles down there since the old Southend 5 Miles.

Yours in Sport Dagenham Dave, Centurion 578

Adds Hon. Ed. There were limited toilet facilities at the school last year, but still a few athletes (including a walker) were observed using the school grounds – despite notices ordering them not to. This year additional pre-race toilet and changing facilities were provided at a nearby football club, but not after the race, as the place was locked when we returned.

EMAILS A FORMER CHAMPION WALKER

Hi Dave,

Hope you are well, always look forward to the ESSEX WALKER. I was getting nice and fit for this year's 100 Miles then just after Christmas I found it hard to do anything, got slower and slower, found it hard just to do half an hour. After a load of test's it seems I have ME/CFS (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome), been off work for 12 weeks now, seems no one knows the best way to recover from it. The Hospital is useless, never mind, say hello to everyone. Hope to get along to the 100 to help a bit.

Cheers, DON COX

ANOTHER YARN FROM BILL SUTHERLAND

Hello Dave,

When I did the London-to-Brighton ALAN BALL MBE was with the Arsenal. I was raising money for a disabled jockey PADDY MONAGHAN, who was paralysed and in a wheelchair after a jumps fall. A long article was in the Evening Standard. The Arsenal team sponsored me. When I finished on the seafront a message was sent to PC ALAN HURNED, who manned the reception. He arranged for an announcement to the crowd at the match. Great days eh! Very sad ending for a great footballer.

It was a great article in May's issue on Ilford's Centurions and BILL COCKLE R.I.P.

With best wishes, Bill

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

"It takes 6 months to get into shape and only 2 weeks to get out of shape". From The Times

"The beaten path is the safest, but the traffic's terrible". From the Readers Digest.

"A synonym is a word you use when you can't spell the 1st word you thought of". Burt Bacharach.

"Former Admiral of the Fleet Peter Hill-Norton has gone a little quiet on the subject. That is because he died in May". From the Guardian.

You can make any lie believable by starting it with "In America...." From Rules of Modern Life.

AND THEY GET PAID FOR IT

"Abderrahim Goumri has never won a marathon. That's because he's never run one before". Brendan Foster.

"Trevet wasn't used at all earlier in the season. And when he was, it was out on the right". Tony Gale.

LUGANO 1977 – 2007

In 1977 I first took an SEAC team by road to Lugano to compete in the 115km 5 man walking relay called the Airolo to Chiasso relay, an event in which, over the years many athletes from Essex, the SEAC and Met Police have competed. Every October for 30 years a representative of the SEAC has visited Lugano to compete in or watch the event. This year the Sal Lugano club promoted a 20km walk in April which was awarded Grand Prix status by the EAA, so I thought I would take a 'trip down memory lane' and travel by road with Pat Browning, Dave Railton and Ken Tuson to watch the event. Each trip has had a unique memory such as "look its an eagle" (when it was actually a sparrow), Sid falling a leap within 90 seconds of him getting on the bus after being picked up at the Talbot pub in London, Bill Lear taking £10 worth of 5 pence pieces to put in the German vending machines (pre-Euro a 5p was the same size as a Deutsch Mark). Ken Tuson drinking a Guinness at 0800 as a forfeit, me getting run over by a bike in Mullheim and subsequently getting sued by the driver, the quote "you Steyning prat" when someone ordered 12 snails instead of mushroom pasta, Mike Croft trying to yodel through the window going down the mountains. Bill Lear taking a group photo outside Rivera standing in the middle of the road with lorries just missing him using an old box camera only to find it had no film in it, Ken Tuson getting lost when out early morning training but everyone agreeing to wait until after breakfast to look for him, being held up at rifle point by the Swiss army when I got out of the bus to throw them a 4-pack of Guinness, Ian telling the German border guard at Basle that "we're in the Common Market now", so they couldn't refuse us entry at which point he turned us back into Switzerland and we watched the other vehicle carry on into Germany.

This year was no different we were talking about magpies when Pat said that Norma wouldn't have them on the grass, to which Dave relied "have you a sign up that says 'magpies keep off the grass'?" On Tuesday morning we were all in the car waiting for the engine to fire up when I got a computer message stating I should contact a Renault dealer soon as possible after a few suggestions from the passengers to how to start the car we contact the local garage which was about 3km away (it cost 160 euro to be towed to the garage) so just like in 1977 I broke down in 1977, we used 320 litres of fuel at 80p a gallon whilst in 2007 120 litres at £4 a gallon question is will we make the journey and will the phrase BARS OPEN be heard again.

I attach a photo of the SEAC A and B team (believe someone is missing from it perhaps they are still in the shower, is it Ken or Dave Kates) in the 1980's outside our Hotel of nearly 30 years at Rivera 20km from Lugano holding the trophy is late Paolo Masoni the former owner of the hotel who always made us so welcome during our stay who the SEAC first meet in 1977 when he was sent out to pick us up when we broke down by the organisers of the race SAL Lugano.

Tony Perkins



Stock Exchange Athletic Club 1980's outside our hotel at Rivera

EDITOR COMPLETES HIS RACE AGAINST THE CLOCK

With Kind permission of the Yellow Advertiser

Yellow Advertiser Editor Greg Fidgeon completed his five-mile race walking challenge on Sunday.

Reader Irene Bateman challenged Greg to take up race walking and a month later pass the finish line in the Nicola 5 race, in Canvey Island, in under an hour. And he did just that on Sunday as he crossed the line at Canvey Infant School in a time of 54 minutes 30 seconds – raising more than £400 for YA's Just a Minute campaign in the process. Greg said: "I started right at the back of the group of walkers, but once I got a bit forward, found my pace and stride it wasn't too bad. I missed the first mile marker, so I was a bit panicky about the time, but I used the person in front as a pace setter and made sure I wasn't overtaken by any other walker". Greg's finishing time was more than five minutes under his target time and he was quick to thank coach Irene, a former race walking international, for her help. "I have to thank Irene for getting me in the shape to complete the challenge and to my training colleagues Alan, Phil, Steve, Chelsea and Steve for all their help too", Greg added. "I also have to thank all my friends, family and readers who sponsored me, allowing me to reach this wonderful total, which all goes to such a good cause".



The Nicola 5 road race was a success all round with more than £3,000 raised for Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Institute of Child Health. Organiser Steve Kemp said: "It was a really good day and I thank everyone who took part, as well as the marshals, police and those helping out on the course". If you want to donate, call Little Havens' donation line on 01702 220350. Alternatively, visit www.littlehavens.org.uk and click on the Just A Minute campaign link to download a donation form.

HARD CORE MICK

Mick Barnbrook's attempt to become the most prolific walker in the UK in 2007 suffered a crushing blow when he was the victim of an unfortunate accident on Tuesday, whilst working in his garden.



Mick who has already toed the line on no less than eighteen occasions so far this year and intended racing on 25th, 28th, 29th and 30th April in order to bring his total up to 24 races dropped a heavy piece of hard core on his left toe whilst building a patio which left him in excruciating pain and unable to walk properly.

He hopes to be fit again by 12th May 2007, when he is scheduled to travel to Guernsey for a 10K race with Sarnia Walking Club.

THE GOLDEN SHOT

The Independent conducted a full-page article with London Marathon supremo DAVID BEDFORD on April 16th. David was asked about the time he eased the boredom of training for the 1972 Olympics by shooting at walker PAUL NIHILL's backside? Stated the marksman, "That was widely exaggerated. It was only an air rifle and there was no blood. He was about 200 yards away, so by the time the pellet reached him, it dropped like a snowflake. He slightly over-reacted. But he had it coming". Essex walker published a full account (Paul's version) some years ago – and the tale was often featured in Paul's role as an after-dinner raconteur. As the late Wilfred Pickles would have said to "Mable at the Table" on the Light Programme's 'Have a Go' show – "That was a right good yarn. Spare no expense Mabel, give him the full ten bob".

WRITES THE RWA PRESIDENT PAUL NIHILL MBE

Dear Dave,

The David Bedford shooting saga continues. I confronted Dave before I realised that a cutting was displayed at The London Marathon press get-together for all to see (on 20th April). I confessed to Dave that it was me who shopped him to the press (St. Moritz 1972) and that I got £50 for my efforts. It was then that Dave led me to the press board which had the article displayed on it. What does he mean "But he had it coming?" My version of the incident was far closer to the truth than his! Bedford accepted my confession with a laugh – he's OK.

My 'friend' in Bournemouth who wrote a letter to the Daily Mail reference a Knighthood for me has written to Tony Blair, stating my case for one. Oh well, stranger things have happened.

Best Wishes Paul.

"AN EALING COMEDY"

This is how STEVE UTTLEY described events surrounding the evacuation which disrupted the walking warm-up at Pickett's Lock Track during April's Southern Veterans Track & Field League Meet. In fact the walkers warm-up went down-the-pan when a fire alarm was set off in a toilet – later deemed a false alarm. Over 2,000 metres the host club's PHIL WILLIAMS won the race, from STEVE UTTLEY – exactly as they had finished in the LICC 3,000 Metres at Copthall Stadium 2 days' earlier! Full result in AW/Record.

COUNTIES ATHLETIC UNION NEWS



Our last issue reported that Essex athletics stalwart GRAHAM WILLIAMS was emigrating to NZ. Correct surname and family, wrong brother. It's MARTIN who is dreaming of pastures new. Thanks to another brother HOWARD for pointing this out.

Howard also reported that Martin was present recently, when the CAU held its first ever outdoor Committee meeting – under a tree at Bedford, when work-in-hand prevented them using a stadium room. Full marks for initiative. An outdoor meeting probably encourages brevity!

SERVICE IN THE FIELD

After winning the first ever event to be staged on the brand new PICKETT'S LOCK track, DAVE SHARPE sought out the Field Referee and offered his services as a field judge. We salute Dave Sharpe – true helper

IN PROFOUND APPRECIATION – 1997-2007

Issue No. 201 in August 1997 looked better than those immediately before it, as Mrs. EILEEN ALLEN took over the typing and layout duties from Hon. Ed. Eileen has been hard at the task ever since – and we're now on Issue No. 283. That's 82 issues and with an 8 page format, it's 656 pages of A4 paper that Eileen has filled. The last 51 copies have also been available on email; and after gaining just 9 email subscribers in the first year of availability, the number of takers is now over 240. In addition, Eileen has used the email list to rapidly circulate hot and important news as and when required. The good lady enjoys doing the work, and does so in honorary capacity. Not once have any expenses been asked for, or paid. A reader suggested that we mark Eileen's decade as the Essex Walker's typing and layout expert and the idea was well received. A sum of £247.50p has been presented to Eileen on the readers behalf, with of course all our profound thanks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As common with all appeals, it is the done thing to acknowledge all donors and pledges (unless such persons indicate otherwise). We wish to thank all who've chipped-in towards Eileen's decade as Essex Walker's email-list administrator and our typing and layout expert. Contributions gratefully received and acknowledged from (in no particular order):

R. Dunn, R. Dobson, V. Mountford, A. Thomson, M. Hinton, K. Ballam, D. Sheppard, G. Chapman, B. Ficken/P Ficken, P. Selby, N. Silvester, J. Webb, L. Kelly, L. Dordoy, J. Rooke, S. Clements, G. Pells, I. Lindsay, C. Berwick, P. Hodgkinson, G. Smith, A. O'Rawe, H. Nyman, K. Perry, A. Wilmott, R. Wallwork, D. Fotheringham, A. Perkins, D. Ainsworth, W. Sutherland and C. Flint
Three donors/pledgers specifically requested that they be recorded as 'Anon'



Adds Eileen: What a truly wonderful surprise – it brought tears to my eyes. I am going to use the money to stock our new garden with plants. (Steve and I moved recently to Southend) So your wonderful gift will live on and on. Thank you all so very much.

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY RACING

The walking action over 5 Miles at Pednor saw victory for Ilford's STEVE UTTLEY over PHIL WILLIAMS. TREVOR JONES made a welcome return to action after injury, and completed the frame. Much travelled holder of many offices CHRIS FLINT came fourth. Full result in AW/Record.



ADDRESS CHANGE

Former International and Champion Walker ROGER MILLS now resides at 1, Coxs Drove, FULBOURNE, Cambridgeshire. CB1 5HE Tel: 01223-880555. We wish Roger and Hilda many happy years in their new abode, on the outskirts of historic Cambridge City.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

This is a current chant of the footie terraces. It's also a question posed by 1968 Olympic 20K walker JOHN WEBB while out training between Bristol and Bath, on a disused railway line which has been converted into a footpath. John's met quite a few walkers and ex-walkers over the years as he's pounded this path. This time he saw 2 walkers really moving fast. He stopped one of them and asked his question. It turned out to be National Coach ANDI DRAKE. The lady he was with didn't stop and pressed on at pace, so she never faced the same question. So who was the mystery lady? Answers on a postcard.

ON THE WIRELESS

Many readers tune in (Mondays-to-Fridays) to ROGER BUXTON's morning round-up on BBC ESSEX, which often features local athletics. It's been moved in a scheduling shake-up. Roger now reads brief headlines on the hour, and gives his main sports bulletins immediately after the news summaries at 6.30, 7.30 and 8.30 am. Roger's a great supporter of local sport, and his spot is always worth turning in for.



NICOLA 5 MILES RESULT

THE TOP 25

April 29th at Canvey Island

1	Nickolas Silvester	Aldershot F & D	0.40.28
2	Philip Barnard	Castle Point AC	0.41.07
3	Oliver Browne	Iford AC	0.43.14
4	Steve Allen	Iford AC	0.43.17
5	Steve Crane	EWC	0.46.12
6	Dave Sharpe	Iford AC	0.46.48
7	Laurence Dordoy	Iford AC	0.47.39
8	Anne Belchambers	Hillingdon AC	0.49.11
9	Fiona Bishop	Aldershot F & D	0.53.28
10	Jo Miles	Hillingdon AC	0.54.22
11	Greg Fidgeon		0.54.30
12	Ron Wallwork	Enfield & Harringey	0.54.31
13	Peter Howard	Cambridge & Cole	0.54.55
14	Eric Hall	Belgrave Harriers	0.56.30
15	Tony Bradley	Dagenham 88 Runners	0.59.59
16	Dave Ainsworth	Iford AC	1.00.27
17	Kerry Barwick		1.02.15
18	MT Blyth	Roadhoggs (Leicester) AC	1.03.26
19	Sheila Kerr		1.04.47
20	Marion Clarke	Thurrock Harriers	1.04.47
21	Bettina Maccanelli	Thurrock Harriers	1.04.47
22	Teresa Clarke	Thurrock Harriers	1.04.47
23	Irene Clarke	Thurrock Harriers	1.04.47
24	George Beecham	Belgrave Harriers	1.04.52
25	Patricia Macey	Castle Point AC	1.04.52

ATHLETE 'HITS THE WALL'

Loughton 2nd claimer KEN LIVERMORE came to grief in April's Nicola 5 Miles on Canvey Island. Within sight of the 4 miles marker he was jostled by overtaking runners along the narrow path by the sea wall, against which he hit his head and fell to the unyielding concrete surface. Hon. Ed. was 10 yards behind though with at least a couple of runners in front. Seeing Ken on the ground and trying to get up immediately, it was he who stopped and pushed Ken back onto the concrete. After a fall, one's immediate reaction is to rise quicker than a Jack-in-the-Box, but that's wrong. Fallers should remain where they lay for a while (unless they are in danger), for to rise with broken bones could easily worsen their injuries. There was no danger of Ken being trampled, for as well as Hon. Ed, a few runners also stopped to see what could be done. In fact little could be done as between them, they had no 1st aid materials or phone. So Hon. Ed, set off in search of race officials – and by coincidence the next 2 marshals were both walkers! They were alerted and came to assist. LIZ McSTOCKER and ALAN O'RAWE took centre stage. Liz correctly assessed the situation and deemed that Ken required more than 1st aid, and an ambulance was called for. Waiting at the finish was MARGARET, and the former athlete was quicker off the mark than the ambulance service when hearing the news – for Margaret got to the location faster than the 999 crew! Like Liz, the ambulance team's assessment also decided that he needed proper hospital attention and X-rays. He was taken to Southend General, where Liz and Alan also went. Later that day, after getting the all-clear and being cleaned-up, Ken was well enough to drive home to Hemel Hempstead.

One walker, who's often 1st with the news, phoned around telling people that Ken was rendered unconscious. Not so! Explained Ken, "While waiting for the ambulance I was propped-up against the sea wall where I had a view of the sea and the shipping". Ken was watching ships pass by – a week later he was walking up the gangplank of one, for he set sail from Southampton with Margaret on a Mediterranean Cruise. One hopes his facial injuries healed before the couple dined at the Captain's table! Ken shrugged it off and even made light of the incident by using an athletics term – "I hit the wall" he stated! We're pleased that Ken, who suffered a swollen hand and injuries to his side and face plus a lost tooth, was given good treatment at Southend General and was well enough to come and give us his support at Pickett's Lock on Monday evening for the Vets Meet. And we thank Liz and Alan particularly and all those who stopped to help the grounded Ken.



"ALONG THE PROMENADE I STROLL"

"With my little stick of Blackpool rock, along the promenade I stroll" so sang the late George Formby. Well race walkers got to stroll along the promenade on Sunday morning – at Canvey Island – in the Nicola 5 Miles. For the 3rd successive year a walking race was included with the main run and exponents of pedestrianism did well, with 49 facing the starter. 1 failed to finish (see article). Local dignitary Ray Howard started the walkers off 15 minutes before the runners, sending them along 2½ miles of the Island's Esplanade before being directed around a 180 degrees' turn to head back along a narrow path in front of the sea wall. Weather forecasters had predicted heat, but low cloud ensured temperatures never rose much so providing perfect conditions for athletes.

With the leading pair getting well clear the closest contest was for the honour of completing the frame, which eventually OLLY BROWNE got by a few strides after a 'battle royal' throughout the distance with team-mate STEVE ALLEN. Indeed Oly put so much into his big finish, that he threw-up twice as he dug deep into his reserves. 6th placed DAVE SHARPE was returning to successful ground, as he'd won the inaugural event in 2005. Last year's victor TREVOR JONES, though injured, came along to give support. LAURENCE DORDOY, who returned to competitive action after being sidelined with bad blisters. Two of Iford's walking squad – PETER RYAN and MICKY SUTTON opted for a change of code and pitched in for the running event along the same course. Both acquitted themselves well! The race was won by NICK SILVESTER (Aldershot, Farnham & District AC) – the 2006 second placer – in 40.28 with Canvey Island local prospect PHIL BARNARD (Castle Point AC) 2nd in 41.07. ANNE BELCHAMBERS won the ladies title. Further down the order, Canvey stalwart GEORGE BEECHAM walked around with Olympic decathlete DEAN MACEY's mum PATRICIA. And the local newspaper editor GREG FIGEON walked with distinction after IRENE BATEMAN's coaching sessions. A number appeared despite completing the Flora London Marathon a week earlier – DAVE SHARPE, STEVE ALLEN, ALEX ALLEN, GEORGE BEECHAM and DENNIS JONES (ex-Loughton member who ran it in Pitsea's colours). Double Olympian ERIC HALL's daughter graced the running field, as she did in 2006. Full result in AW/Record.

This race is clearly getting more popular as each year passes. It's a memorial event in the name of the late and much missed NICOLA KEMP and it also aims to raise considerable sums for charity – which again it did, with enough in the pot to pay out sums to 2 charities (Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Institute of Child Health). Everybody had a good morning's sport and, as always we thank all members of the Kemp family and their many helpers. It's so well organised that the local Special Constabulary look after traffic matters! Last year parking was a concern, so this year extra space was found at nearby Concord Rangers Football Club, and even their large car park was filled to capacity. The club was opened to allow entrants to change and use the toilets. It was a surprise to return and find the place locked, bar the car park gate.

There was a mishap along the narrow path beside the sea wall. Perhaps last year the runners start was a few minutes later than 10.30 am, for this year the runners caught up with the walkers (10.15 start) a bit earlier. Once the leaders had passed the bulk of middle order runners came along in clusters of half-a-dozen at a time, and experienced difficulty in getting past walkers at places where there was only room for 2 abreast (i.e. by staircases to/from the sea wall to the esplanade). LAURENCE DORDOY reported that he got brushed against/jostled on 3 occasions. Of course, for KEN LIVERMORE it was more serious as he got brushed against and knocked into the sea wall. Perhaps if walkers started at 10 a.m. that would give us more space on the return part of the course? Just an idea!

But Hey folks; it was another great race and it's achieving the sort of 'fun' that we experienced at the well supported Moulton Stakes. So let's keep building on the numbers, which rise every year, and welcome even more onto the start line in 2008.

FIXTURES

Sat Jun 2	Southern Counties Vets 3,000 metres	Ashford	11.30 am
Wed Jun 6	WWW 3,000 metres + YAG	Ashtons Track	6.40 pm
Sat Jun 9	Moulton Stakes (5 Miles) + Enfield League	Moulton	2.15 pm
Sun Jun 10	Great Scottish Walk	Edinburgh	
Tue Jun 12	Vets 5 Miles	Battersea Park	7 pm
Wed Jun 13	London Business House 3,000 metres	Hendon (Police)	8 pm
Sun Jun 17	Ilford/Essex League 5 Miles	South Park	10.30 am
Wed Jun 20	City Charities 3,000 metres	Hendon (Police)	7.15 pm
Sat Jun 23	IOM 85 Miles Parish Walk	Douglas	8 am
Sun Jun 24	LPR Open 9K Yacht Handicap	Blackheath Park	11.30 am
Sat Jun 30	LICC 3,000 metres + YAG 1K	Parliament Hill Fields	1 pm
Mon Jul 2	Southern Counties T&F League 2,000 metres	Copthall Stadium	6.30 pm
Sun Jul 8	Welsh Masters 3,000 metres	Cardiff	
Wed Jul 11	Sir Sefton Branker 3,000 metres	Copthall Stadium	
Sat Jul 14	Centenary 50 Miles	Blackpool	7 am
Sun Jul 15	LPR Open 9K Yacht Handicap	Blackheath Park	11.30 am
Tue Jul 17	Vets 5 Miles	Battersea Park	7 pm
Wed Jul 18	WWW 3,000 metres + 1K YAG	Ashtons Track	6.40 pm
Sat Jul 28	SWC/RWA/BMAF 50K & 100 Miles Champs	Battersea Park	noon
Sat Aug 4	Enfield League 5 Miles Yacht Handicap	Donkey Lane	2.30 pm

Notes: Non veterans may appear at Battersea Park 5 Mile races in guest capacity. Walkers not directly involved in the LBH and City Charities Meetings at the Hendon Police Training School will also be welcomed in guest capacity.

ONLINE CHANGE

RON and JOAN WALLWORK wish to announce that they now have a new email address, which is ronandjwallwork@btinternet.com

WOODFORD GREEN CENTURION HANGS UP HIS SHOES

Chadwell Heath resident RON EATON, who frequently observes DAVE SHARPE out training, has called it a day. Ron raced in Woodford's colours in the 1979 Ewhurst 100 Miles where he came 26th in 21 hours and 25 minutes (from 107 starters and 78 finishers) to become Centurion No. 655. Ron hasn't race walked for many years, but he's kept active as a runner with several London Marathon finishes up to 2005. Ron started to get knee trouble and returned his 2006 entry in return for a guaranteed 2007 start. Sadly a replacement knee operation was not 100% successful resulting in Ron having to use a walking stick. He didn't take up his place in the 2007 Marathon and announced his athletics retirement at the age of 86. As well as The Centurions, he's a member of running's 100 Kilometres Club. He's still keen on athletics – indeed he dug into his pocket to help offset losses sustained at the 2001 'John Hedgethorpe Memorial 100 Miles'. He occasionally has chats with Dave Sharpe when he sees him out-and-about. Ron knows a youngster that Dave used to coach at Loughton AC. Said Ron, "Dave told his youngsters that a good way to get the better of rivals is to put rough sand in their Vaseline". He is a one!

As for Ron's 1979 Ewhurst 100 Miles, it was won (by some distance) by DAVE BOXALL in 17.24. ED SHILLABEER was 4th in 18.23.21. The Borough of Enfield Harriers won the team race (10th KEN ROOST 19.52.53, 13th JACK ROSSITER 20.12.01 and 15th the late PETER WORTH 20.20.44). Other notable finishers were the late ARTHUR EDDLESTONE, the late PHIL HASTINGS, MICK BARNBROOK, the late GEORGE WOODS, TONY PERKINS, CHRIS HAYES and RON PURKISS.

OVER AT MIDDLESEX

Walkers with Essex connections gave them the old 1-2 at this County's 3,000 metres championship. Leading lights TREVOR JONES and ANDY COX didn't race, keeping their powder dry for the Non-Stadia Walk. So County Walking Secretary JOHN HALL won yet again, with experienced RON POWELL coming second. Not a bad field, though the only competitor looking like a youngster heard a loud call of his number! Full result in AW/Record.

EMAILS EDBANGER

Thanks for e-mail ref team for May 20th.

As a 35 yr long racewalking athlete and supporter who has helped sponsor the centenary meeting, I have no problem with the selections as announced. However, as the event is on home soil (tarmac), I am disappointed how few Brits are competing. The future is all very well, but this is a current landmark event, I know we are not competitive at the front any more but I can think of a couple of in-form deserving internationals who could be persuaded to take part (assuming they have not already declined invites).

Talented Barcelona Olympian Andy Penn has just won the National 20K, clocking a fine 95.24 despite the heat, and twisty course, and being unpressed, which was a remarkable result for an athlete coming back from injury. I believe Andy, with a month longer to prepare, and given sufficient encouragement to motive him, would be a credit to the U.K. team and unlikely to have 'judging problems'.

Highly placed Commonwealth Games 50K specialist (K.L. 4th, Man, 6th) Steve Hollier has put in the winter work to justify starting for us at Leamington. How can UK, in the RWA centenary year, after our prestigious (granted not recent) record in world racewalking, have NO starters in this showcase event? Steve 'took a packet' in bitter conditions in Dudince just 3 weeks earlier, but unlike half the field ground out a 50K finish. Even the 20K lost nearly half the field? So to recover well enough to take bronze in the National 20K suggests again that Steve would be a worthy wearer of the Great Britain vest.

For events like Leamington Spa the character of the athlete is as important as recent time clockings in selection consideration, for it is that venue where performance is wanted by British athletic supporters.

Yours in Sport,
Edmund Shillabeer (100K record holder etc.)

p.s. Why not both King twins?

VIEWS OF DAVE SHARPE

Dave phoned up a couple of times after the Essex 3,000 Metres to discuss the race. Firstly he said, "Well today I think it was a good race, but an appalling turnout". He's correct for we had almost as many judges as walkers. He called later to announce selections for the Inter-Counties Walk at Portsmouth Naval Barracks on August 12, which we'll publish when confirmed.

ILFORD GO NAP

Ilford's walkers went nap at the Essex County AAA 3,000 Metres' Championship Walk at Chelmsford's impressive Melbourne Stadium on a wet and miserable Sunday afternoon (May 13th). By fortune, the steady hard drizzle which had descended on the arena for most of the meeting suddenly abated just as the walkers wiggled into action, giving them the benefit of a dry outing, with rain returning just as the back marker finished his efforts!

There was a clear leader, in versatile athlete SCOTT DAVIS, who had made his name over recent seasons in much longer events than the one on offer. Leading from gun to tape he was never troubled. With no serious rival he clearly gave the impression that he could have 'pressed the pedal' had the need arose. Second place was equally safe from start to finish was STEVE UTTLEY just days before his 50th birthday – belied his age to claim a sound and again unchallenged position. The real race was on for the honour of completing the frame as a trio of Ilford walkers battled and tactically tried to outwit each other. STEPHEN CRANE SWC – (Ilford 2nd claim) LAWRENCE DORDOY and DAVE SHARPE formed a phalanx for half the race, before the latter dropped back, when Dordoy began to force the pace. Then Dordoy himself was upstaged at the bell as youngster Crane started to pull ahead, with Dordoy doing his level best to maintain the increased speed. Crane claimed the bronze medal, sub 16 minutes, with Dordoy 4th just 5 seconds in arrears. Dave came 5th with Hon, Ed bringing up the rear just outside 20 mins.

Sadly the walk was poorly supported with just 6 men (all with Ilford connections). What an advert for race walking in Essex when so few support the Championship Walk on the final Day 3 of the major meeting. **Again those badly let down were the likes of RAY PEARCE, PETER CASSIDY AND DAVE SHARPE, who put so much effort into getting the entry forms around to potential entrants – who then, in many instances were too bone idle to fill up the form and walk to their nearest pillar box.** Do we really want to be dumped back into the opening day 1 of the meeting at a lesser venue, and among juniors, heats and no-hopers? Well by repeating the fiasco of 2003, we're actually doing our best to be ditched from the main meeting haven't we? We have tried very hard to build up the meeting in recent years, since that 2003 shambles. Indeed the only 2 male walkers who raced in that infamous 2003 Championship were both injured this time - ALAN O'RAWE (who came to give encouragement) and PETER CASSIDY (who came to judge). A former event medallist, Canvey prospect PHIL BARNARD was abroad – watching the Eurovision Song Contest, so when it came to claiming Essex League points that go with this race, he was down for 'Nul Points'. The Senior Ladies race was even worse. None! Any senior lady turning-up would now be the County Champion subject to merely finishing! However, 2 regular supporters of the race were unavailable, in KIM HOWARD (injured) and VAL MOUNTFORD (recovering after an operation).

The 'Jewel in the Crown' was young CHELSEA O'RAWE-HOBBS who sped around in the Under 17 Women's category claiming overall 3rd place in the composite event. And Chelsea was holding something back for a hard 1,500 metres run in the District Schools Championships which awaited her on the Monday, where a title had to be defended.

What an advert for the state of Essex walking for the top final day (Day 3) of the 2007 Essex County AAA Championships! Perhaps, in 2008, we can get everybody who is County qualified to walk just 3,000 metres in our own main meeting?

1	S. Davis	Ilf	13.41.11
2	S. Uttley	Ilf	15.12.81
3	C. O'Rawe-Hobbs	B&B	15.56.03
4	S. Crane	SWC/Ilf	15.59.37
5	L. Dordoy	Ilf	16.04.83
6	D. Sharpe	Ilf	16.35.67
7	D. Ainsworth	Ilf	20.12.90
	7 started and finished.		

WISE DENIS

Regular punter ALAN O'RAWE backed a long-priced winner the day before the Essex 3,000 Metres. Was he thinking of DENIS SHEPPARD when he put his wad down on WISE DENIS, which romped home? Indeed 'Wise Denis' himself has not been seen much of late at the races, and we'd love to see him romp home again as a long-priced winner somewhere, like at Enfield, Blackheath Park etc.

HOW DID WE GET ON AT LEAMINGTON SPA?

If you weren't there, then our next issue will wise you up. If you can't wait, then it'll be in AW/Record.

ALAN JAMES R.I.P

Just days short of his 92nd birthday, this former RWA National Judges Secretary passed-on in May. Also a long serving Honorary and most active Walking Secretary of the Metropolitan Police Race Walking Club (he held the post immediately prior to DOUG FOTHERINGHAM) and member of the famous Highgate Harriers he rose to Superintendent rank in the Force. Sadly information of his death appeared to have been 'sat on' and only came to light 2 days before his funeral service at Southgate Crematorium. JOHN HALL, DOUG FOTHERINGHAM, MARTIN OLIVER, CHRIS FLINT, PETER CASSIDY and Hon. Ed managed to get info out at late notice, and a number of walkers stated that they would get there if they could. Many also had other arrangements planned at short notice, and quite a few never opened their emails until after the time of the service on the Monday at noon. Still we tried. Perhaps those who do get knowledge of walks and former walkers deaths could get the info out as soon as possible, as Alan deserved a really good send-off for all that he'd done for our sport. Only two walkers attended GEORGE BROWN and JOHN HALL.

ANOTHER YARN FROM BILL SUTHERLAND

Much of my training towards my 1970 COMMONWEALTH BRONZE MEDAL for SCOTLAND took place on my favourite Hampstead Heath at Parliament Hill. I was always greatly motivated by a LONE PIPER, who would play regularly at the top of one of the hill paths. He was DAVID BROOKS and was self taught after early guidance by his tutor in Islington.

Recently I met him again whilst playing his lament at the bandstand by the cafeteria/bowling green/tennis courts for those who know the area well. He told me that he had been taken to court by the Corporation of London, charged with 'playing a musical instrument to the nuisance of the public'. In defence he mentioned that in 1748 a man named Paul Reid was convicted and hung for playing bagpipes as an 'Instrument of War'. David's crime was merely playing a musical instrument as he perceived to the pleasure of the local public. He was duly fined £15 and an agreement reached for him only to play bagpipes on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 8am/10am only on the bandstand. The prosecution demanded substantial costs as the case had continued over many months. The magistrate responded by saying it must have cost £1,000? Quite so my Lord! £50 costs and a smile towards the defendant! So my memories of that great time go on! Had a great chat with David, who asked to be excused as he only had 10 minutes left to remind the English of his Scottish laments! More to follow.

Yours in Sport and Friendship, Tartan Bill
p.s. Good luck to our 5 walkers at Leamington Spa!

Adds Hon. Ed. Bill has a fund of yarns; which is why he keeps rising to entertain punters with 'after dinner' speeches. Alas Bill also reports that he's not been well of late, hence he's not been seen at the meetings. Let's hope he'll soon be well enough to make further appearances.