

ESSEX WALKER



PAUL NIHILL MBE

On October 7th at Monks Hill (South Croydon) Paul Nihill MBE of the famous Surrey Walking Club, competed in the Gazette Cup 4 Miler. It was 50 years to-the-day that he competed in his first ever walking race.

Paul nowadays resides in Rochester, but of course he was born in Essex (Colchester). He's now aged 67 and is still racing! He's connected with the Kent and Croydon Ex-Boxers Associations (he's Secretary of both). Paul was the 1st British male athlete to go to 4 Olympic Games (1964/68/72/76) and in 1972 did both walks (20K and 50K). He was the silver medallist over 50K in 1964 missing out on gold by seconds.

Paul used to present a midweek show on **BBC Radio Medway** (before it got taken over and became BBC Radio Kent) on 50's rock 'n' roll music – of which he is an expert and has a huge collection. Paul is the President-Elect of the Race Walking Association, and in December is to be its President!

Paul came 13th in 41.29 on the testing course. A '50 years cake' was baked and a card signed by all – including 13 former internationals who turned out for Paul's big day.

“THE TRUTH WILL KILL YOU”

It's a novel written by WILLIAM TUSON – son of former Southend and Stock Exchange star KEN (also a former London-to-Brighton victor). It's available on www.trafford.com. ISBN 1 4120 8682 5. TONY PERKINS states, “It's a griping page turning thriller”. He adds that it's even cheaper on Amazon.



BOOK REVIEW

“The Winning Experience – How to Win” by RICHARD BROWN (World Long Distance Walking and Running record Holder) is a good read, with yarns from epic walks undertaken by Richard and Sandra Brown – which were supported by helpers known to readers of Essex Walker. The book contains advice and provides motivation. It can still be purchased – see Richard & Sandra. Or...for a cheaper copy, do what eagle-eyed MARTIN OLIVER did. He unearthed one in a second-hand junk shop for 50p!

THANKS

National 50K bronze medallist ED SHILLABEER has recorded his thanks to TONY PERKINS, PAULINE and DAVE KATES for their help and support in the UKA 50K Championship at Earl's Colne on September 10th.

MONEY MONEY MONEY

Athletics clubs subscription rates are much the same, and we all wish they could be lower. But they still compare favourably with many other sports and pastimes. For instance a 'plug' for Billericay Chess Club in the Yellow Advertiser touts adult membership at £50 per annum.



FIXTURE – 4 WAY CLASH

Some issues ago, in all good faith, we published that both VAC and SVAC were staging their 5K Championship in conjunction with October's Bexley League event. This came from a regular Essex Walker information supplier. So come September and we found out that both VAC and SVAC had chosen to stage their 5K Championships with October's Enfield League event. The Enfield League event itself clashed with a long-established Surrey Walking Club (the Gazette Cup and YAG at Monks Hill). That event clash is not such a big issue – but by then moving 2 more races onto the same Enfield card, the SWC promotion then had 3 other events clashing with it. Again, it's not such a big issue for most of our readers, but you have to have sympathy for SWC members who would love to support the VAC and SVAC Championships – but through Club loyalty were drawn towards Monks Hill.

Also in good faith (last year) we published a statement from the RWA stating that fixture clashing would not be tolerated in 2006. Yet we've recently published DAVE SHARPE's comment about having weeks with no races – and then 5 on the same weekend, including 2 high profile races at Bedford & Crawley. Perhaps we can avoid a 4-way 5K clash in 2007? If the VAC and SVAC want their 5K in with an Enfield 5K, then perhaps we could swap an Enfield 5 Miles and 5 Kilometres about? But don't blame Enfield – it was the VAC and SVAC who decided – very late in the day – to go to Donkey Lane and settle into the Surrey date.

ANOTHER SEPTUAGENARIAN

Yet another reader has reached the big 70. Woodbridge-based Centurion (No. 490) Squadron Leader MIKE PERKINS celebrated his 70th birthday on September 29th. **Congratulations.**

GET WELL SOON

We're sorry to learn that JOAN WALLWORK, a pillar of the New Astley Club, has recently had a spell as an in-patient at Bury St. Edmunds General Hospital. We're pleased to also learn that the good lady is now back home in Moulton village, and we all wish Joan a full and indeed swift recovery to top health!

STAR MAN

Canvey Islander BRIAN BOGGENPOEL is now a well established race walker who is showing good form. Among his interests is astronomy. Brian is well up on the subject and frequently attends seminars and gatherings of other astronomers.



“RACE WALKING IS A WASTE OF TIME”

This was the viewpoint of a so-called comedian on a BBC4 panel quiz game. In his armchair watching was AMOS SEDDON. Commented Amos, “These sort of comments are not so bad when uttered by comics, as few people take them seriously and they are usually forgotten by the following day. What does harm race walking is when similar remarks are made by known former athletes like STEVE CRAM”.

E.I. ADDIO – OUR MAN ON THE TERRACE

Footie means that we'll see less of Harrier JERRY EVERETT this term. He's a loyal follower of Colchester United, having supported them during spells in lower leagues (and even outside the Football League). Now they've made The Championship (the old Division 2 in real terms) he wants to savour every moment – home and away – as it may be a one-and-only shot at this level.



DON THOMPSON MBE

One of walking's all time greats has sadly left us, after a spell in Frimley Park Hospital, where he was being treated for an aneurysm. Don was 73 and will be forever remembered for his Olympic 50 Kilometres gold medal at the Rome 1960 Games. In searing heat Don broke the tape in 4.25.30, just 17 seconds ahead of J.A. Ljunggren (Sweden). A Parmich (Italy) was 3rd in 4.27.55.4. He will equally be remembered for his preparation. No warm weather training for Don – he created the heat in his bathroom with fires and steam from boiling kettles while he toiled on the spot in heavy clothing!

His medal collection was impressive: Gold in the National 20 Miles in 1961 at Chiswick (2.44.49). He had a number of place and team medals in that Championship. He won all the RWA 50K Championship titles from 1956-1962, leading his Metropolitan Walking Club to team success in 1959 at Baddesley near Nuneaton. The winning team was 1. D.J. Thompson, 2. T.W. Misson, 3. N. Thompson and 16. A.G. Thomson. The top 3 times were 4.12.19, 4.14.03 and 4.38.0. At one time he held several U.K. records: 20,21,25 and 30 miles; 3,4 and 5 hours and the London-to-Brighton. He was 'King' of the A23 winning from 1955-to-1962, with a 7.35.28 course record in 1959. So associated with the event was Don, that his action photo was on the front cover of many race programmes.

When he approached Brighton from a different direction, Hastings, he also saw the empty road unwinding before him as he racked up victories in 1957, 60, 61 and 62 and all well under 6 hours (of course). In 1962 at Belgrade he earned a European Games 50K bronze medal with 4.29.00.2 on the stopwatch. When Team GB were a force to be reckoned with in the early days of the IAAF Lugano Trophy, Don played his part over his favourite 50k distance winning the preliminary round at Wimbledon Park in 4.25.19.2 and coming 2nd in the final, clocking 4.30.35 some 5 minutes behind Italy's A. Parmich. Team GB won the overall trophy.

Don became Centurion No. 631 when he pounded the point-to-point roads over 100 Miles from Leicester-to-Skegness (via Peterborough) in 20.46.48 with faithful attendant and fellow Kent resident DEREK APPLETON in support. Derek himself became a Centurion (888) at Ewhurst in 1991. Don really took to the ultra-distance scene and it opened-up a new avenue for him to explore. He completed 4 sub-24 hour UK 100 Mile races and got himself back onto the International stage. Indeed he made the world famous Guinness Book of Records by becoming the UK's oldest international athlete when selected for the 200 Kilometres Walk at Bazencourt (France) on April 20/21, 1991. He was 58 years and 89 days at start time.

Five months before his death he quit his Hythe home in Kent and moved to Fleet in Hampshire. Don was a modest man and at the 2006 Royal Leamington Spa dinner, he was to be the subject of a tribute speech. But there was a hitch – an empty chair was left where Don once sat. He'd legged it as soon as the coffee and biscuits came round! In the June issue of Essex Walker Don wrote an article about his training, and stated that being full time and paid from lottery takings would not have improved him in any way. Don paid tribute to his coaches and indeed was the finest example of true amateur spirit. In the same issue fellow Olympian PAUL NIHILL paid tribute to Don by writing, "You can measure fitness, but what you can't measure is guts. In my opinion 2 walkers with plenty of guts were DON THOMPSON and the late DICKIE GREEN". Very true – and both were hot stuff on the A23.

We record Don's obituary in Essex Walker even though he had no connection with the county. Indeed he didn't race much in Essex, although he did race – and do well – in the Colchester-to-Ipswich 17½ Miles classic (which, of course, actually took its competitors out of the County)! We record his obituary because he was so admired by all in Essex. It is an admiration that will continue on well beyond his death and funeral service, which was held on October 18th at Aldershot.

The late bowler-hatted Fleet Street journalist DESMOND HACKETT of the Daily Express wrote a feature on Don, in which he called him "the Iron Man of the Highway" and added "surely he is the noblest footman of them all". We may not have seen that much of Don in walking races over past decades, but his name cropped up time-and-time again in runs – anything and everything attracted his attention, particularly 10k and ½ marathon events. Don liked to keep himself busy and did so until his final days.

DONALD JAMES THOMPSON MBE – 20/1/33 to 4/10/06 – R.I.P.

TRIBUTES TO A LEGEND

Deeply sorry to hear that Don Thompson has passed away. I was at the Rome Olympics in 1960 to witness Don winning his gold medal. Colin Young was on the road all the way (we were in the stadium) and came up to our place in the stadium sweating like a pig. You can imagine Colin's state of mind as Don was now leading and due in the stadium at any moment. Our athletes were somewhat under par in Rome and Don's medal was the only gold achieved by the athletic fraternity. Gave a great boost to walking at that time. Time unfortunately marches on.

Regards, Rod Silk (Essex Beagles)

From: Cllr. Rev. Dr. R. F. LODGE M.B.E

44 Eton Road,
STRATFORD UPON AVON
CV37 7ER
7th October 2006

Dear Dave,

I was sorry to receive news of Don Thompson's death. He will be greatly missed in the Race Walking fraternity leaving a legacy of total commitment and dedication to the sport that he graced for many decades. He inspired so many young men including myself to seriously take up Race Walking following his Rome Olympic Gold medal. What impressed me most about Don was his utter commitment and preparation for his races – training was an integral part of his life with nothing left to chance.

I never forgot some advice he gave to me at a Race Walkers Weekend academy which was that a training session should never be less than 6 miles – and 120 miles minimum per week. Don had the same philosophy as myself – he entered every race to win. It was just unfortunate that in the National 20 miles championship in 1967 our respective philosophies met head on, and one of us had to come second – the rest is history.

To achieve anything worthwhile in life one must have a certain self-confidence, a certain belief in oneself but no less important and often more important is the knowledge that there are others who believe in us and are confident that we will not let them down. Over the years the selectors invested enormous confidence, belief and trust in Don and he did not let his family, his country, – his friends or selectors down. He rewarded that trust by living up to everyone's expectations. Where much is expected of an individual he may rise to the level of events and make the dream come true. That dream culminated in Rome and in the race of life to the very end.

There is always something in Shakespeare, a speech or a line, for every occasion, and, I have found in that greatest of writers words spoken of Brutus by Mark Anthony which for his family are the finest tribute.

"His life was gentle and the elements so mixed in him That all nature might stand up and say to all the world – This was a man."

I salute and pay tribute to an honourable gentleman and sportsman who will forever live on in our memories.

Yours sincerely, Roy

Dear Dave,

Your message about the death of Don Thompson came through in the middle of a busy morning of phone calls and report writing, all of which was laid aside as I reflected – with great sadness but also that profound sense of admiration which Don always inspired in me – on the loss to Don's family and friends, including the 'family' of sporting friends who came to know and love him over the years.

When Richard is home this evening, and over coming days, we shall talk of Don – of his great achievements at home and abroad; of the awesome model of commitment to excellence in training and competition which he set for us all as athletes; of the kind and good-humoured friend who helped Richard on his Land's End to John O'Groats journey; of the venerable and still formidable fellow England team member in the Roubaix 28 hours – deservedly held in admiration and feted by the French; of the brother Centurion whom we shall remember with respect and affection.

Don was an athlete's athlete who also caught the public imagination, and a delightful man. We are privileged to have known and been inspired by Don. He will truly never be forgotten.

In sadness and affection,

Sandra C735

Thanks for the comments, it will only be now that the true greatness of his achievement will be acknowledged. Albeit as such a reluctant hero that is only to be expected.

Sincerely, Oliver Flynn

He'll be sorely missed.
Ed Shillabeer.

Don Thompson was one of my heroes when I was a young walker and, in particular, I was in awe of his London-to-Brighton achievements.

Tim Erikson,, Secretary Australian Centurions.

Tributes to a Legend continued...

As with Roy Lodge, Don was a hero of mine particularly since I took up long distance race walking in earnest, one of my proudest achievements was to finish only four places behind Don in the 1993 Battersea Park 24 hours race.
Rev David Watson.

I would like to share deep sorrows with all the British Race Walking Family for the passing away of Don. Please, forward my condolences to his family
Luis Salide (Spanish Athletic Federation)

DOUBLE SILENCE

On Oct 7th at both Enfield and Selsdon pre-race silence was observed in respect of the Late
DON THOMPSON.

1ST CLASS SERVICE

Congratulations to Essex entrants in the annual Post Office-in-Uniform race around the twisting streets near Mount Pleasant Sorting Office. Regaining the National 3 Miles titles last won in 2004 was KIM HOWARD of Benfleet Sorting Office. Kim took 29 minutes and 22 seconds to cover 3 miles in her uniform. With the 2nd placed competitor, Steve Wynn's daughter competing in guest capacity, it was GERALDINE LEGON who claimed silver in 33.19.

In the Men's 6 Miles, Essex athletes took the 1st 4 places in the London section, courtesy of STEVE ALLEN 52.42, a rejuvenated ROY LEWIS 59.28 who was racing for the first time since appearing in the corresponding race of 2005, SIMON MORGAN 61.39 and MICKY SUTTON 61.44. Micky had other things on his mind for after an enjoyable post-race social, he headed towards Victoria Coach Station where he boarded an overnight service to Newcastle in order to give it his all in the highly-popular Great North Run. Steve came 3rd in the National section and 3rd veteran overall, so he carried plenty of silverware back to his Grays residence.

Colchester-born PAUL NIHILL, representing Rochester, was 11th in the National stakes and his 59.45 earned him a time standard medal. In 32nd place came event regular ALEX ALLEN in 74.48. Alex represented the Upminster office. STEVE WYNN and HARRY JEFFORD proved, yet again, what a good organisational double-act they are – and among many helpers were several Essex Walker readers. Helping out this year was DENNIS JONES whose injury prevented him racing – we wish him a speedy return to active competition. **It was a most enjoyable afternoon's sport – especially as numbers showed an increase over 2005!**

I KEEP ON BUMPING INTO CENTURIONS

On the morning of the Post Office-in-Uniform race, I cut through Romford Market Place, where Centurion PETER HODKINSON is the Deputy Market Superintendent and bumped into Centurions Vice Captain SUE CLEMENTS who was browsing the stalls. On the Monday following I attended the Fords Sports & Social Club for a meeting – on Mondays the main hall is hired out to a local judo club, and who should be grappling on the mat but another Centurion, blue-belted STUART BENNETT. D.A.

EMAILS NICK SILVESTER RE: THE OCTOBER 7TH CLASH

God give me strength why are these two clashing
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

WRITES CENTURION NO. 450

Dear Dave,

Just to let you know I am still active despite a fall which fractured my left wrist. This was early in the morning and I have now recovered. Unable to attend The Centurions' 95th Anniversary Dinner. Shall try to last out till the 100th.

Enclosed a tenner for the Essex Walker fund.
Best Wishes, George Mitchell.

ILFORD AC OPEN 5 MILES (ESSEX LEAGUE) + YAG

at South Park Ilford on 1/10/2006

1	Scott Davis	Ilf	41.28
2	Steve Uttley	Ilf	42.43
3	Arthur Thomson	HP	43.53
4	Olly Browne	Ilf	44.54
5	Steve Allen	Ilf	45.39
6	Amos Seddon	E&H	45.54
7	Laurence Dordoy	Ilf	46.21
8	Dave Sharpe	Ilf	47.17
9	Jon May	E&H	48.46
10	Ron Powell	E&H/Ilf	50.20
11	Cath Duhig (L)	Ltn	51.30
12	Brian Boggenpoel	CP	52.22
13	Peter Cassidy	Ltn	52.25
14	Ron Wallwork	E&H	54.40
15	Kim Howard (L)	Sth	59.28
16	Alan O'Rawe	Ilf	59.28
17	Pam Ficken (L)	SWC/Ltn	60.30

19 started, 1 retired (Peter Ryan), 1 dq (Phil Barnard).

Awards: 1st 3 Men and 1st 3 Ladies.

1st Veteran gaining no other ind award: Steve Allen.

1st Centurion: Olly Browne

George Woods Trophy (1st Essex Centurion): Olly Browne

Style Trophy: Amos Seddon

Teams (3-to-score), 1st Ilford 'A' 7 pts, 2nd Ilford 'B' 20 pts, 3rd Enfield & Harringey AC 25 pts.

Ladies teams: 1 Loughton (2 scoring), 28 pts

Ilford AC Club 5 Miles' Championship: 1st Scott Davis, 2nd Steve Uttley and 3rd Olly Browne.

Weather: Torrential rain.

+

Younger Aged Group 1,700 Yards

Joint 1st: Daisy Brown, Ilf and Olivia Kerr Ilf 15.41

Judges: Pauline Wilson (Chief) and Brian Ficken

Chief Timekeeper: Sharon Herbert

Recorders: Dave Ainsworth & Doreen Sparrow

Mister Starter: Dave Searle

Chief Marshall: Mike Hinton

Report: Few walkers were seen to be warming-up in a torrential downpour, most preferring to shelter under trees. They were forced into the open when Mister Starter – former Ilford AC President Dave Searle – called them under orders bang on the appointed start time!

From the 'off' a quartet formed the van, with 2004 and 2005 victors Steve Uttley and Scott Davis respectively among them together with promising prospect Phil Barnard and distance international Peter Ryan. The latter sensationally wheeled-off the course and retired after 1-and-a-half circuits. Davis opened up a lead, but was always tracked by Barnard who kept within striking distance. Another sensation well into the last circuit as Barnard heard a loud call of his number while attempting an advance towards race leader Davis. This enabled Uttley to move into 2nd spot without having to overtake anybody. Congratulations to all who raced and helped in any way, on a most miserable morning. Fortunately numbers remain better than when we last held the 'A' law in 2004, when just 10 started. Dave Ainsworth.

A GOOD FIELD....BUT!

These days 47 on the card is a really good turnout, and we saw that number at September's Enfield League meeting. But... only 2 (PHIL BARNARD and MIKE SILVESTER) were not veterans. The breakdown of the veterans was:

Men	<u>40</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>75</u>
	2	5	8	4	6	6	5	1

Women	<u>40</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>75</u>
	1	1	3	1	0	1	1	0

What's just as worrying for the sport's future is that, of the 45 veterans, only 9 are under 50 (of whom just 3 are under 45). It is clear facts like this which prompt so many to confidently predict the near total demise of UK race walking in well under 2 decades, even a decade-and-a-half! Like the band on the Titanic, we can play on and enjoy it while we can. Or...we can all try and recruit some younger newcomers?

SANDWICH TIME

At the recent Earls Colne National 50K feeding station helpers (like the participants) toiled under the searing sun for up to 6 hours. It was a nice gesture when the family of race winner SCOTT DAVIS offered them all sandwiches. We must never forget our vital helpers.



CONGRATULATIONS

SHARON GAYTOR, the only race walker who completed the 2003 Captain Barclay 1,000 Miles Challenge (in fact the only walker the organisers accepted) has now claimed the Lands End-to-John O'Groats running record. Sharon has an Essex connection for she became a Centurion 2 years ago at Castle Park in Colchester becoming member 1006 in 22.41.08.

E-BAY SPOTTER

Eagle-eyed BOB DOBSON spotted a Centurion cloth badge (No.419) up for auction on E-bay. That belonged to Mr. J. R. Reed of Southampton, who became a Centurion in the 1968 Leicester-to-Skegness 100 Miles. Also qualifying that day was the late JOHN HEDGETHORNE (413) who came 2nd in 19.01.40 after an almighty sprint finish with MART KASTELIJNS of the Telstar Club (Holland). The Dutchman lost out on 2nd place by 2 feet. In that race Mr. Reed clocked 21.58.38. Sadly his badge is up for sale as he no longer needs it, having passed-on. When Hon. Ed did his 1st London-to-Brighton Walk in September 1970,



J.R. Reed was also on the programme and, even then, was listed as a veteran. So at least he's had a good innings. But who will bid highest for his numbered cloth badge?

AND THEY GET PAID FOR IT

Steve Cram (a noted opponent of race walking): "Sherone Simpson wins in 10.98 seconds. So she's under 10 seconds again".

Rob Lee: "Newcastle United don't need any more players. They need defenders".

Andrew Strauss: The pitch really suited one bowler in the match. Steve Harrison and Monty Panesar".

OOPS TIME

In our last issue we wished JOHN & BARBARA DUNSFORD well as they settle into Hampshire life. We mentioned that John was Centurion No. 934. Just a small slip up – John qualified way back in 1982 and was allocated No. 734. So we correct our error and apologise to both him...and the real Centurion No. 934, who is PAM FICKEN who qualified in 1995.

IN THE PICTURE

Recent events covered by LESLEY RICHARDSON were the Post Office-in-Uniform race and October's Enfield League Fixture.

You can view the photos on www.rikko2photo.co.uk and also order as required.



COVER MAN

Congratulations to SCOTT DAVIS whose picture made the front cover of the Race Walking Record.

DELAYED OCCASION

We recently reported on the official opening, by Sir Ian Blair, of the new Sir Philip Game Youth Club in Croydon. Among former members are light entertainer ROY HUDD and Olympians CLINTON MCKENZIE and PAUL NIHILL. The main hall in the magnificent building is to be officially named THE PAUL NIHILL HALL. The organisers of the hall naming ceremony want all 3 big names present. Clinton and Paul are O.K., but as you may have seen in the National newspapers, Roy has suffered chest pains while playing the part of undertaker Archie Shuttleworth in Coronation Street. So the ceremony is being delayed until Roy gets better. Big-hearted Paul has sent him a get well message.

GRAND PRIX SUCCESS

Well done to CHELSEA O'RAWE-HOBBS on winning the RWA Grand Prix Under 17 Girls category with 200 points. Second was Sheffield's KATHRYN GRANGER who had won the category for the past 4 years. Sadly Chelsea was the only Essex resident in any of the 8 individual categories.

ON OFFER

Former Southend member MIKE HOLMES has complete yearly sets of ATHLETICS WEEKLY (1972-84) which he'd like to see going to a good home and appreciated by an athletics/walking fan. All are intact and boxed. If interested contact Mike on 01274 419530. Collection needs to be arranged.

AND THERE'S MORE!

The Guernsey Church-to-Church has long had a traditional date of the 1st Sunday in September. Soon after (in 2006 it was 9-17 Sept) the island stages the Autumn Walking Festival. It comprises of 40 specially designed walks in 9 days, ranging from easy strolls to day-long hikes. All are conducted by accredited guides who possess expert knowledge of the history and mystery of Guernsey. Worth stopping over for in 2007.



IN MY DAY

GEORGE TOWERS was organiser of the 1981 NATIONAL 50k AT Sleaford at which 102 started. He said, "This year's winning time would not have got a team medal in any of the first 2 scoring teams. In fact my club, LEICESTER, had 6 faster men in that race".

WRITES MIKE BATEMAN

37, Wiggins Lane,
Billericay,
Essex.
CM12 9PS

Dear Dave,

Last year I watched an Essex League race, held under grade 'A' rules, and was so disgusted by the appalling standard of walking and judging that I vowed not to attend another race walk in this country.

But I was persuaded to go to the National 50km Championship at Earl's Colne. I was amazed to find that the same illegal mode of walking is now accepted by the judges in National Championships. There were only 1 or 2 men walkers complying with grade 'A' rules (and I do mean 1 or 2) and 1 lady walker. The torrid conditions excuse the slow times but it does not allow the judges to turn a blind eye to the proceedings.

There were several ex-champions watching the race, Brian Adams, Irene Bateman, Bob Dobson, Amos Seddon etc and I couldn't help wondering how they must have felt as their past achievements were being devalued by this sham of a race. There are now several walkers proudly displaying their individual and National team medals who are undeserving of this prestigious award.

Yours sincerely, Mike Bateman.

COME AND HELP IMPROVE THINGS

In this issue MIKE BATEMAN from his position on the sidelines, tells us what's going wrong. He has a point, as do many others who also write from the sidelines. BARRY INGARFIELD has also expressed criticism on aspects of contemporary walking but he goes further – in that he's prepared to roll up his sleeves and get involved. He comes to many walking races and gives advice and encouragement to participants. Several walkers are now beneficiaries of Barry's words...while Barry himself is going through the rigmarole required to become an official coach. Essex Walker is now taken by almost 300 readers (225 on email). Sadly over 80% were once active walkers (who still get great pleasure in reading such newsletters). Yet when we put on races and events we find we're down to the bare minimum (if that) of helpers, officials, feeders, timekeepers, judges, lap scorers etc. Can we appeal again to a large army of former walkers to come and put something back into the sport? Some already do and we're truly grateful. Others now live in areas well away from race walking activity (as UK race walking is now restricted to just a few areas). But as for the rest – come along and get involved....and help to turn things around. **There's no shortage of sideline snipers so can we suggest that every future writer of a critical letter adds a p.s. stating what they are prepared to do in order to try and turn the situation around!**

EMAILS JOHN CONSTANDINOU

Hi,

Regarding the comments in the October issue of EW about the National 50k Championships at Earls Colne, I feel I must respond in defence of the walkers. I think the tone of the published comments were that walkers nowadays are just not trying anymore.

i) The conditions on the day were far worse than you may have realised, despite being September. Eight starters were unable to complete the distance due to the heat and humidity, which were at a level that made it impossible for anyone to perform well due to the heat stress.

ii) Being ready at the start line with the adrenalin flowing and raring to go, and then having to wait 20 minutes, leaves you drained and sluggish. Shouldn't they have tried to set up the course sooner than 1 minute before the start, especially as the officials had stayed overnight?

iii) A wheel was used to measure the inside line of the road to ensure accuracy. I was threatened for not walking the return leg on the outside line (opposite side of the road), which I believe was up to 40 metres longer per lap. Return legs always took proportionally longer than outgoing legs.

iv) Cars and HGV's driving between competitors in a National Championships? Does any other country do this? Competitors being told to make allowance for traffic isn't going to get anyone a decent result.

v) The date of the race was too close to other long distance walks to allow sufficient recovery to do both, and some specialists chose to do a different race.

vi) I am not going to dare criticising the judges!

For people who think I am just making excuses – three weeks later I walked 50k in the Dutch Nationals on a very bendy, traffic free course in cool overcast weather, an entire hour faster...And there are 25 current UK walkers I believe can beat me over 50k, 14 of which I believe are capable of sub five hours. It is right that some of them don't attempt the 50 due to success at shorter distances, and it is fair that some of them just don't want to try 50 as it is hard to master. Can you blame them when a difficult task is made even more so, and they read negative comments about such races?

Before I go, I really would like to thank all the people at Earls Colne who helped on the day with encouragement and support, especially at the sponge stations and feeding tables, where they went and got cool bottled water mid-race – a real life saver! It was a successful event. And bravo to all the walkers who started, and better luck next year!

Ps. I believe the winner of the 2003 National 50k finished in over five hours. Does that mean the credibility has already gone?

Pps. Only one competitor in the Dutch National 50k beat five hours, and the Belgian National 50k was won with a time of 5.39.32!

John Constandinou

Adds Hon. Ed. Ref iv), until recently most National 50K races were on public highways, with even more vehicles than seen at Earls Colne. Ref i) many established readers will recall many similar hot days as this Championship was usually in July.

ADDS OLLY FLYNN

My comment in the recent EW was not a reflection on all the athletes that still worked very hard to earn their National 50K medals rather my surprise at how far we are falling behind the rest of the world in standards.

LOCAL FIXTURES

Sun 5 Nov	LPR Open 9K Yacht Handicap (+Presentation)	Blackheath Park	11.30 am
Sat 11 Nov	Enfield Open 7 Miles (+LBH/VAC/SVAC)	Donkey Lane	2 pm
Sat 25 Nov	Belgrave Harriers Open 7 Miles	Wimbledon	2 pm
Sat 2 Dec	SWC Christmas Cup 5K	Monk's Hill	2.30 pm
Sat 9 Dec	Cambridge Harriers Winter League 5K ('A') + Essex League	Bexley	2 pm
Sun 17 Dec	Ilford Xmas 10K (+Essex League)	Chigwell Row	10.30 am
Sat 23 Dec	Enfield League 5 Miles (+Presentation)	Donkey Lane	2.30 pm
Tue 26 Dec	Enfield Boxing Day 5K	Donkey Lane	11 am
Sun 21 Jan	LPR Open 9K Yacht Handicap	Blackheath Park	11.30 am
Sat 27 Jan	Enfield League 5 Miles	Donkey Lane	2.30 pm
Sun 4 Feb	London Walks (+ Essex League)	Victoria Park	1 pm
Sat 10 Feb	Cambridge Harriers Winter League 5K ('A')	Bexley	2 pm
Sun 11 Feb	LPR Open 9K Yacht Handicap	Blackheath Park	11.30 am
Sun 18 Feb	Essex County 10 Miles (+ League)	Chigwell	10 am
Sat 24 Feb	Enfield League 5 Miles	Donkey Lane	2.30 pm

2006 – A BETTER RECORD

Last year's Great North Run saw 4 deaths, all from heart failure, as the many toiled in hot conditions. This year it was cooler and better support was provided on-course. But sadly, heart failure claimed the life of a 29 year old man.

BEST VALUE EVER

At September's Blackheath 9K we saw **OLLY BROWNE** in his **ESSEX LEAGUE 300TH RACE T-shirt**. The printing was still clear and its shape was perfect. It was just one of many that still exist. What great value – thanks to **TONY PERKINS** and **ROGER MILLS**.



NOSTALGIA COLUMN – BY DAVE SHARPE

Dear Captain Birdseye,

Memories of my 100 Miles.

I did the Woodford 24 Hours in May 76, organised by CHARLIE MEGNIN. I managed to come 8th at 100 Miles. My handler was MATT DAVITT (Centurion 556) who I had helped at the Ewhurst 100 Miles in 75 (Matt did 22.01.21). I wanted to pack-in at 2 am and was told to get off my backside and get on with it – so I did. The winner was DEREK HARRISON (IOM) who covered 131 miles and 336 yards. People who walked were JOHN HEDGETHORNE, COLIN YOUNG (Essex Beagles – 2nd with 129.35), PETER WORTH (Verlea – 3rd with 121.609) GEORGE EASTWOOD (WG – 4th with 115.1705), KEN TURNER (WG – 5th with 103.1434), ALAN PICKERING and GEORGE HALIFAX – both of SWC who completed 100 Miles in 22.01.35 and 22.49.35 respectively. JOHN MORRIS and JOHN KEOWN (both Belgrave) raced. The latter's back went and he ended-up like The Leaning Tower of Pisa. PETER RYAN had the same problem in his 100 Miles at Newmarket in 2003. Judges and officials were LEN MITCHELL, REG WELLS, TOM RICHARDSON, RON DAVIES, JACK GOSWELL and timekeepers TOM REYNOLDS and BOB PORTER. On the sidelines were ROGER MILLS, TONY PERKINS, STEVE GOWER, MICHAEL CROFT and DOUG FOTHERINGHAM. I did training from 3-to-4 hours up to 8 hours sessions around Epping Forest. Time on my feet my son – old marathon training. The event was originally going to have a 100k in it, but that was dropped. Matt Davitt was going to do the event; but he got picked for Kent in the MAGOG TROPHY in France the week after at 50K, so he withdrew. I then walked 100 Miles instead of 100K. TOM KENT, my coach at Newham AC, had died so I walked as a mark of respect to him. It would have looked bad if neither of us had done the race. I managed to get the Newham AC and Mount Pleasant 100 Mile records. The first LONDON POSTAL REGION walker to complete 100 Miles was DENNIS VALE (SWC) at Ewhurst in 1975. It took me 3 weeks to recover from bad blisters like cloven hoofs. I was gone mentally after the race for 3 months and had a job finishing other races. Some people would say I still have a screw loose now. It was my greatest honour to become a Centurion 578 (in 21.39.26). It is one number that I want to be put on my tombstone. I have helped out at other 100 Mile events: Hendon, Newmarket, Battersea Park, Colchester and Woodford in 1986. I respect everybody who takes part in 100 Mile races – finishers and non-finishers, because it is an experience of life.

Yours truly,
D. W. Sharpe, IAC/C578

Adds Hon. Ed. Dave is modest about his recovery time, for on June 13th 1976 he raced in the VIAARDIGEN OPEN 20k in Holland. BOB DOBSON won it 97.05, MIKE SCAMMELL was 3rd in 104.34, BILL SUTHERLAND 6th in 106.03, JOHN SALES 8th in 107.50, JOHN HEDGETHORNE 9th in 110.05, MATT DAVITT 14th in 114.26, DAVE SHARPE 18th in 119.03 and ALAN KING (Essex Police) 19th also in 119.03. Havering's JULIE ROBERY came 4th in the Women's 5000m (29.41).

LOUGHTON CONNECTIONS RESUMED

The Loughton Club (At the north end of Station Road) was built with donations from Sir William Davis (its first Chairman) and other local dignitaries. It was officially opened on the 13th of July 1901.

Apart from its social function, it was also the sporting centre (at the rear of the Club) for Loughton's population. Sporting activities included gymnastics, hockey, cricket and football. But for the first few years, no athletics section.

There had been a town sports (which included some athletics events) for some years before The Club was built. These were held in the Loughton cricket ground at the bottom of Traps Hill.

At meeting held in Lopping Hall in September 1908, it was decided that the town needed an athletic club. Thus Loughton Athletic Club was formed. Several of the first Committee Members were also town dignitaries and members of Loughton Club, so it was a natural consequence that the Athletic Club was housed in Loughton Club.

In those days, most of the area south of Loughton Club was still open land, so athletic events (apart from the town sports day, now organised by the Athletic Club) could be held close by. In fact, the shot putt championship was often held at the rear of the Loughton Club!

Gradually, the land became all built up with the houses seen today. The Athletic Club Committee felt that the original advantages had gone, because there were no track facilities nearby. A temporary track venue was found in the 1920s at the High Beech speedway circuit. But that was not very central in those days of few motor vehicles.

In 1929, the Clarnico (sweet producing company) ground next to Loughton Station was sold to the (then) London and North Eastern Railway. Several of the Athletic Club Committee Members were workers for the railway, and obtained permission for the summer events to be held there. Loughton Club was still in the headquarters for winter activities.

But in 1936, for reasons which are not recorded in either Club's Committee Minutes Books, the Athletic Club moved completely to the Railway Ground. Rooms in the Ground were also used for Committee meetings.

When running costs became too high, a decision was made to sell off the Ground for housing, so in 1980, with the help of Epping Forest District Council, accommodation was found in the old Pavilion at the bottom of South View road. This is still the headquarters and is close to where the Athletic Club's summer and winter activities take place.

But the Pavilion has never been suitable for Committee or Annual General Meetings. Since the move there, a succession of temporary venues have been used. Initially, a room in the Woodcroft School (run by our Club President Barry Edwards) was used, but when this was no longer available, a succession of function rooms in High Road Pubs were used.

Then, when a venue for a recent Annual General Meeting was needed, the Loughton Club was suggested. It proved to be a good and popular choice.

Following on from that, a number of Athletic Club members have become members of The Loughton Club, and it is hoped that all future Committee and Annual General Meetings will be held there.

After 70 years apart, the two organisations again have firm connections.

George Richardson. COURTESY OF LOUGHTON LINES.

GRAPE NEWS

Enfield's pre-Christmas League event will offer complimentary post-race wine.

Cheers! See Fixtures Column.



NEWS FROM ENFIELD WALKER EXTRA

Thanks to the above mentioned publication, news is issued about much respected and highly experienced judge GEORGE BROWN. He is currently reported as having a bad time. The last couple of years have not been kind ones for George's health and he's had a couple of spells as a hospital in-patient. **We all wish him well.**



FIRST WITH THE NEWS

DAVE SHARPE enjoys a reputation as being the first to break major news. An early morning phone call from him advised Hon. Ed that the 2007 British Masters Indoor Championships is coming to nearby Pickett's Lock.

A NEW DIGNITARY

We were introduced to a new dignitary at the Enfield League 5K, as PAT GREEN came along to present the Southern Veterans medals. He was also invited to present the Enfield League 5K awards. MIKE CROFT did the honours for VAC.

DOORSTEP-TO-DOORSTEP

On October 7th, JON MAY made both venues. In the morning he was at an exhibition in Selsdon – just down the road from the Monk's Hill venue. He boarded the local tram and arrived at Donkey Lane with 2 minutes to spare before the afternoon start. That's loyalty for you!

WRITES CENTURIONS SECRETARY CHRIS FLINT

Dear Dave,

You did a magnificent job last night as the MC, and many thanks for doing this with such aplomb.

I've just sent a note to Cliff Royle thanking him for attending the AGM and the Dinner and leading the sing song. He's come a long way in his 84 years from poor Lancashire lad to playing in the RAF Club under the baleful glare of the Air Chief Marshall of the RAF, the Lord Trenchard (who later became a Metropolitan Police Commissioner), and other glitterati of the RAF. It was a enjoyable evening and thanks to you and Cliff for your great contributions in making sure everyone had an enjoyable time.

Good to see you at Blackheath with others taking off the calories after the Dinner!

Best Wishes, Chris, C.849

GREAT TURNOUT FOR A GREAT ATHLETE

The funeral of the late Don Thomson, at Aldershot Crematorium on October 18th saw a good turnout from walkers and other athletes. The service was a low-key and very personal celebration of Don's life, conducted by a lady from the Humanist Society.

GOOD WORK – IF YOU CAN GET IT!

Pub chain entrepreneur DEREK MAPP has been appointed Head of Sport England and will be paid £32,000 per annum for a 2-day week overseeing the distribution of Lottery cash. Some have attacked his appointment, but the Department for Culture, Media and Sport insisted it had been made 'on merit'.

LEAMINGTON 2007 RAFFLE RESULT

First prize of a 4 night trip for 2 to Addis Ababa for the Great Ethiopian Run and dinner with the great Gebreselasie was won by Dave Ainsworth.

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

DAVE SHARPE won the star prize in a high value raffle (i.e. no tat) at The Centurions 95th Anniversary Dinner in the Royal Air Force Club (Piccadilly). It was a gentleman's watch. The raffle was based on the ticket number and Dave had function ticket No. 56 – the same number as on his front door in Dagenham. The following morning he wore his new watch at Blackheath Park, where he sped around the course a whopping 10 minutes faster than on his previous appearance there – and easily trawled in 100 points on a **double points** morning!



THE 95TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE CENTURIONS

The afternoon's AGM was a routine affair with no great changes and which ended with all Officers remaining in their posts. Captain CHARLIE WESTON was elevated to Vice President status.



The evening dinner was a most enjoyable occasion – also at the Royal Air Force Club in Piccadilly. Centurions President CARL LAWTON showed his linguistic skills by welcoming Dutch attendees in their own language! CHARLIE WESTON spoke on behalf of The Centurions and guest speaker PETER SELBY responded with a highly amusing speech which recounted many experiences as an attendant at ultra-distance races. Attendants are the background workers at such events – and The Centurions are to be congratulated on allowing an attendant to appear in the spotlight! Peter also proposed a toast to the late Centurion No. 631 – DON THOMPSON MBE. With the function being staged between Don's death and funeral, it was right that past form was recollected. Following Peter's toast, a pair of unbilled speakers rose to add their tributes – BILL SUTHERLAND and COLIN YOUNG. KATHY CRILLEY staged a quality raffle based on admission tickets. Past President

JOHN EDDERSHAW had said grace and CARL delivered the closing speech. But there was another 'turn' on the bill. The Centurion present with the lowest number was CLIFF ROYLE (148) of Lancashire Walking Club who qualified in 1949 on the track at Bradford. He is also a member of the GEORGE FORMBY APPRECIATION SOCIETY and he brought along his ukulele. He opened-up with 'Blackpool Rock' and performed a couple more. He had the audience in the palm of his hand. Perhaps The Centurions have a 'stuffy image'. Well anybody seeing the dinner would have soon had that dispelled as all joined hands for Cliff's finale of 'We'll Meet Again'. We will meet again – the next big anniversary of The Centurions will be the Centenary Dinner in 2011.

VIEWING TIME

Centurions 95th Dinner photos can be viewed and ordered from Tim Watt on

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/timwatt>

OUT ON THE TOWN

KEN LIVERMORE, as he did in 1997, organised a guided walk around London. Ken led the way and it was staged to provide something interesting for guests and family members to do, while the members were at their AGM.



MANX HARRIERS ANNOUNCE

Manx Harriers are pleased to announce that the popular annual Open Meeting will take place on Saturday 3rd March 2007 at the National Sports Centre, Douglas, Isle of Man. We are delighted to have secured HSBC Bank International Ltd as a sponsor for this event.

The programme of events for the day will be as follows:

10.00am: Junior Mile and Half Mile Walks (male and female, under 15)

10.30am: 5k & 10k Walks (male and female age 13+ for 5k, age 15+ for 10k)

12 noon: 20k and 30k Walks (male and female, age 17+) – time limit 3 hours

3.00pm: 10k Run (male and female, age 15+)

We have added a half-mile option to the junior race as there are likely to be some very young entrants in this race.

There will also be a 30k race starting at the same time as the 20k race. This will give an opportunity to those who are perhaps aiming for 50k events later in the season to have a work-out over a distance longer than 20k. There will be a time limit of 3 hours for this race.

Entry forms and further details regarding the meeting will be available in the near future on www.manxharriers.com. This website already has links to last year's and previous years' events – click on 'race walking' and scroll down to 'Manx Harriers Open Meeting'.

Last year's meeting was a tremendous success, with more visiting race walkers than ever before from the UK and Ireland, and some very high-class performances being recorded in all the races. Several of the competitors went on to enjoy success at international level later in the season. We hope to see an even bigger contingent of visitors from both sides of the Irish Sea in March.

As in recent years, we plan to have a social evening after the racing on the Saturday and a coaching session on the Sunday morning in order to give everyone a full and enjoyable weekend on the Isle of Man. More details will be available regarding both these events in due course.

Travel

If you definitely plan to come to the meeting it is never too early to book flights – the earlier you book, generally the cheaper it is. The best website to use is www.iom-airport.com – click on 'Airlines' and this will show which airlines fly from which airport. This also gives a link to the appropriate website for each airline, which will allow you to shop around for the best price. Alternatively, contact me or any of the organising committee (contact details below) and we will make enquiries for you. We strongly suggest you stay for 2 nights, arriving on Friday 2nd March and departing Sunday 4th March.

Accommodation

As he did last year, Manx Harriers race walker Michael George is offering a generous discount at his hotel in Douglas, the Welbeck, for anyone travelling over for the meeting. Prices offered (per room per night) are as follows:

£37 for single (reduced from £54)

£58 for double or twin (reduced from £73)

£78 for triple room (reduced from £110)

£92 for quadruple room (reduced from £115)

The website of the hotel is www.welbeckhotel.com – Michael can be contacted at mail@welbeckhotel.com or by telephone on 01624 675663. Make sure you speak to Michael and say you are coming for the Manx Harriers Open Meeting.

Contact details for the organising committee are:

Bridget Kaneen – bridget@manx.net – tel 01624 852884

Allan Callow - a.callow@lineone.net – tel 01624 672159

David Griffiths – griffmuss@manx.net – tel 01624 801341

Liz Corran - mr_mrs_corran@hotmail.com – tel 01624674566

Paul Jackson - paul.jackson@manx.net – tel 01624 611179

We hope to see you on the Isle of Man in March.

Best wishes,
David Griffiths
Manx Harriers

AT TOOTING TRACK

The last time STEVE ALLEN raced at Tooting, somebody nicked his moped. We hope so similar setbacks were experienced by SANDRA BROWN, SUE CLEMENTS and KEVIN MARSHALL as they toiled away (while The Centurions were enjoying their Anniversary Dinner). It's a 'go as you please' event, so you can run, walk (or do both). Sandra lived up to her reputation and again passed 200K, Sue clocked 23 hours and 38 minutes for 100 Miles while Kevin retired after giving-it-his-all for 50 Miles. Competitors change direction every 4 hours. Some Anniversary diners went straight to Tooting after the function – while some Sunday morning Blackheath attenders came via Tooting (where they'd called-in to offer encouragement). RICHARD BROWN attended both events, for he attended to Sandra, but also got to the dinner in order to receive a RECOGNITION AWARD in respect of Sandra's many achievements – the award having been sponsored by Midlands Centurion BRIAN SCRIVENS (No. 337)

IN THE FOREST

STEVE ALLEN couldn't race the last Blackheath 9K as he was running in The Princes Trust 10K – an off road trail event around a single circuit of forest, starting and finishing in Legoland near Windsor. Steve came 28th in 41.10.

A DIFFERENT VIEW ON THE SAME ISSUE

A proposal for the 2004 Essex County 20 Miles Championship to be incorporated with the National (and Essex) 50 Kilometres Championships was killed off in 'a smoke filled room'. The culprit was never identified as Committee members broke ranks with seemingly everybody blaming 'somebody else'. One leading person at that Committee Meeting stated emphatically that if the proposal had been accepted, those completing the 20 Miles event would have had to have also completed the race's full distance (i.e. 50K) in order to be counted. Now, from the very top, we have a proposal to incorporate the 2007 National 50 Kilometres Championship with the 2007 SWC 100 Miles at Battersea Park on 28/29th July. Will that same person now be stating that 50K finishers will also have to complete the race's full distance (i.e. 100 Miles) in order to count? We think not! It makes sense does this proposal (but so did Ray Pearce's 2004 proposal also). With the National 50K now being a single-figures competition, hiring facilities and arranging a course and officials for so few is difficult to justify. As UK walking heads for meltdown, combining events will help to keep things going for longer. We hope this idea is adopted and congratulate the foresight of those advocating it. And... it might even throw up a 'dark course'. Somebody might come and do the 50K only and – if doing well at 50K – might press on and surprise us all. We remember MICK BARNBROOK's performance in the 2001 JOHN HEDGETHORNE MEMORIAL 100 MILES RACE at Colchester's Castle Park. He came only to do 20 miles as a 'warm-up' for the Church-to-Church Walk. Still going well at 20 Miles he decided to keep going... until he completed 100 Miles – 22 years after he'd last finished a 100 Miles race!

OFF TO PASTURES NEW

PAUL BROWN of Loughton AC has been standing as a judge at our events, including the County Championship at Melbourne Park. He's accepted a 2 years contract to instruct Police personnel in the Caribbean. We wish him well.... He'll be missed here!

EMAILS GEOFF HUNWICKS

Hi DA, Congrats again on the last 3 EW and the rib tickling inclusions as well as publishing our news and also to say that there has been one response offering assistance for a past top walker who is now a top organiser etc, and in the mortal words of H.E. 'A BLOODY NICE BLOKE' as well as a pal.
Geoff