

PART ONE - From 1882 to World War II

The Club is born... flourishes... and then almost disappears!

Chapter 1 How it all began.

To state the obvious, no-one is alive today who was present when our Club came into existence.

For many years it had been assumed that the club was founded around 1880. As the date for the Centenary approached, a lot of research was done to confirm the details, so we could hold a "birthday party" on the right date. But, perhaps surprisingly, there are few definitive written records from those days which could help to clarify our origins.

It took a fair bit of detective work, therefore, to establish with any confidence what probably happened. It is not a straightforward story, as you will see!

There is some evidence of a "Liverpool Athletic Club" as far back as the 1860s.

This is recorded in the Northern Counties files. Further research has revealed that such a club was indeed founded in 1862, by two locals: philanthropist Charles Melly and gymnastics expert John Hulley. But, although it did include a few runners, it was aimed at gymnasts and general exercising activities and there is nothing to indicate any direct relationship with today's "Liverpool Harriers and Athletic Club", other than some of its members may well have subsequently joined LHAC.

However, it is interesting to note that those two prominent local public figures played a part in the forming the National Olympian Association, when they called a meeting at the Liverpool Gymnasium in November 1865, which Hulley chaired. It is also believed that John Hulley's ideas had some influence on Baron Pierre de Coubetin in his formation of the modern Olympic Games, some 30 years later.

At this time Athletics, or "Pedestrianism" as it was known, was largely professional.

Rich men with a sporting interest would look for potential winners from their neighbourhood - especially from among their workers (often the footmen who ran alongside their coaches) - then challenge others of like mind to put forward their "champions" for a race, with a financial wager at stake.

These events attracted spectators and serious betting, which inevitably led to instances of cheating. The "Oxford Companion to Sports and Games" refers to a much-publicised sprint race at Fulham in 1887, which was cancelled because the two competitors and their managers could not agree who should win!

Amateur athletics was a summer pastime and there was little or no "club" set-up.

In those days, "tracks" were generally marked temporarily on cricket grounds. There were no team events. Amateur athletes ("Gentlemen") who trained together might well give their group a name, but would probably form new alliances the following summer, under new names. All this existed without any formal framework - the Amateur Athletic Association was only formed in 1880 and took time to exert any real influence.

There was no concept of a winter cross-country season.

From the early 1800s onwards, there were occasional races based on "paper chases" or "hare and hounds" (the origin of the title "Harriers"). But, amazingly, cross-country running on any formal basis only began in 1867, when the Thames Rowing Club, based at Putney, organised events to keep their rowers fit through the off-season. This led to the formation of the Thames Hares and Hounds club in 1868. It would be several more years before a nationwide set-up was established.

Something special happened on September 27th 1882.

A meeting was held in the Farnworth Hotel on Prescott Road, Liverpool, to form a club which would actively participate in distance running through the winter. That building became "Farnworth Arms", before being demolished around 2008.



The meeting was chaired by Tom Crellin, a licensee, who was elected as the Club Captain.

It is documented that their first run was staged from the Queens Hotel, Aintree, and the first official Club colours were recorded as red vests with a fox badge on the shoulder. They chose the name "Liverpool Harriers".

We believe that today's Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club is the direct descendant of that meeting on September 27th 1882.

How the name was changed, and how the kit evolved to what is worn today, are interesting stories, which are covered later.

Chapter 2 The first cross-country titles for newly-formed Liverpool Harriers.

A great start - Northern Champions after just five months!

In 1883, the Club became a member of the Northern Cross-Country Association. When the National Cross-Country Association (now known as the English Cross-Country Union) was formed, after a meeting held at the Anderson Hotel in Fleet Street, London, Liverpool Harriers became affiliated to that organisation.

Founder Tom Crellin won the Northern Counties Cross-Country title on February 17th 1883. The time was 65 minutes 7.8 seconds, so it was clearly a long race. The Club also took the team prize with 31pts, well ahead of Cheshire (109) and Lancashire (137): other counters being Paddy Shay 2nd, Tommy Burns 4th, George Pennington 5th, W.G. Nancarrow 7th, and W. Parry 12th.

In the English Cross-Country Championships, held at Roehampton two weeks later, Tom Crellin finished 10th. However, he is recorded as representing "Birchfield and Liverpool Harriers". This is just one of many examples of the way athletes frequently switched between clubs teams in those days. We shall find many others on later pages!

The following year the Club retained their Northern Counties title, scoring a low 28pts ahead of Wirral Hare & Hounds (118) and Heywood (142), with Tom Crellin again leading the team home in first place.

In 1886, it was Paddy Shay who won the individual title at the Northern race, with Liverpool Harriers again taking the team title. Although the Club lost its hold on the team title the following year, to Salford, Local Government council official S.V. Cannon (who later joined Liverpool Pembroke and eventually became their President) kept the flag flying by winning the individual title.

The first national team title for Liverpool Harriers

The English National Cross-Country Championships was first run at Buckhurst in 1876, with a field of thirty two runners, but was declared void when they all went off course! By 1884, the fixture was firmly established and Liverpool Harriers entered a team in the race, held at Birmingham, only to withdraw subsequently in protest at certain Midland clubs being represented by runners from other parts of the country. But the following year, 1885, our Club won the **Senior National Cross-Country team title** (the only occasion so far), ahead of Birchfield Harriers. The team consisted of the popular Paddy Shay, Edward McCabe, Tommy Duckett, George Henry Bannister, P. Giblin and McAfee.

The 19th Century finishes on a strong note

The 1892 cross-country season started well, with the Club winning the inaugural Liverpool & District Championships, with our trio of Ted Watterson, Arthur Jones, and Harry Cross filling the first three places. The second team was Liverpool Gymnasium Harriers, with Wirral Hare and Hounds gaining bronzes. The race was held over 9 miles, around the Aintree Grand National course, with the runners required to tackle the daunting water jump four times! When the Northern was held over the same course, expectations were high. But the race did not go to plan. The course was covered in snow and was so icy that the water jump was omitted. The Club's only "success" was Arthur Jones, who won the gold medal for the first home from an unplaced team.

In the District championships of the following year, it was clear that the key members of the team were past their prime. We were well beaten by Sefton Harriers, although the consistent Ted Watterson retained his individual title and followed it with fourth in the Northern, despite a stitch in the final stages. In 1894 the race was again dominated by Sefton, with Ted finishing third. In that era, the District Championships were a major sporting event. When the 1886 race was held, on the Wirral Hunt Steeplechase course near today's Wirral Way at Parkgate, special trains were scheduled for runners and spectators, and it was reported that "the race was witnessed by close upon a thousand persons"!

It was Ted Watterson who kept the Club name in the news - week in and week out. He improved further in the Northern of 1894, finishing second out of 143 runners, but he missed the chance of a good position in the National when the Club committee had a mix-up over the entry date! The Northern was a good hunting ground in the Club's early years, generally winning team or individual medals on the day. In 1895 they were once again placed and the following year finished runners-up.

It wasn't all about competing in Championships

A report from that era describes a "Club Muster Run", held over a course covering Mossley Hill, Aigburth, Garston, Woolton, Broadgreen and Allerton Church. Pretty much what happens today, except that most of the route in those days was fields, not housing estates and dual carriageways!

Chapter 3 Early successes on the track too.

Liverpool Harriers was clearly a 12-months-a-year club - both organising and competing.

Club activities and successes in those days were not confined to cross-country. As early as 1883, there were reports in the Liverpool Mercury covering a series of summer meetings, comprising running and cycling events, organised by Liverpool Harriers. These were held on the Kensington Fields track, which was oval, at five laps to the mile, but also had a 100 yards straight.

The first inter-club match involving Liverpool Harriers took place in May 1883, at Kensington Fields, against Birchfield Harriers. The return fixture was held at Lower Grounds, in the Aston area of Birmingham, in June. Conditions were wretched, but the attendance was still some 1,200. This was reported as "disappointing", which just shows how popular the sport was as a spectacle in those days.

We had some classy track athletes.

One of the Club's stars of the fixture with Birchfield was William Wren Huddleston (***pictured here in around 1906***), who is believed to have joined Liverpool Harriers from Wirral Hare & Hounds because of our successes in the Northern Cross-Country. He won the half-mile convincingly in a time reported as 2:00.3. At first, this time seems doubtful. However, hidden away in a 1903 issue of the boys' magazine "The Captain", we found a reference to T.M.Cox, by then a master at King Edward VI School in Birmingham, who had competed for Birchfield in the same race and had come second to Huddleston. Cox produced many fast times himself, including a victory in a half-mile handicap in 2:02, off just 7 yards, so seems that Huddleston's time was probably genuine.



The Echo gave good coverage of George Parry's victory in the Beacon Mile handicap at Manchester Oldfellows, among other triumphs. George was noted for travelling to races outside Merseyside (not easy in those days) and used his skill to win plenty of prizes, including a half-mile handicap at Huddersfield in 2:06.5.

Tom Crellin had already achieved major successes prior to the founding of Liverpool Harriers, having taken the AAA Steeplechase championship in 1882 and the Northern title for both Steeplechase and One Mile two years earlier.

Another Liverpool Harrier whose name was often to the fore around this time was Alfred George. He won many races for the Club, including the Northern 1,000 yards and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile titles, went on to gain victory in the AAA Steeplechase in 1894, and also competed in the USA.

When the AAA Championships were held at Sussex Road, Southport, in 1885, the Liverpool Mercury reported "*Unfortunately, the entries for the events set for decision were in the majority of instances of attenuated dimensions, and the sport witnessed in the pedestrian contests was of the tamest possible description*". In other words, the Southern athletes did not bother to travel - nothing has changed there! But that was no concern for the Club's James Jervis, who won the 7 miles Walk title in 56:10.6.

The Northern 2 Miles champion of 1899 was recorded as Jack Rimmer, representing "Liverpool H. & A.C.". He went on to win two Olympic gold medals in 1900, in the 4,000m Steeplechase and the 5,000m Team Race, as well as taking the AAA 4 miles title in 1901, but not in the colours of Liverpool Harriers; more of that later!

Chapter 4 The Merseyside athletics scene in the 1880s/90s.

Athletics meetings were very popular on Merseyside.

In Liverpool, there were a number of open meetings for track and field, alongside cycling events. Many were held on Kensington Fields (see above), with a subsequent popular venue being sited behind the Cattle Market Hotel, where Tom Crellin was now the publican.

It is interesting to read of Club members' results from those days, because so many of the venues are long closed: G.W. Stopford (440yards) and Harry Cross (Half Mile) won at **Liscard**, Alf Wigglesworth (120yards) won at **Garston**, W. McNally and Dave Little came first and second in a 440yards race at the **Stanley Track**, Ted Watterson won the mile at the **Bebington Sports**, Jack Walker lost out in the short sprint handicap at **Birkenhead**, when he was pulled a yard for being over his mark and then lost by a yard. At the **Hoylake Festival**, the Club took all three places in the 440yards. Third man home was Bill Fryer, but he probably has a claim to fame as Liverpool Harriers first International, even if it was at Baseball rather than Athletics. In case you wondered.. yes.. he was related to Club Archivist Arther Fryer, being his grandfather!

Open meetings were well supported by spectators and athletes. They provided good entertainment for the spectators and there were attractive prizes to be won, which were highly saleable! Handicap events were particularly popular and, given the value of prizes, some athletes went to great lengths to trick the handicapper. Jumping their mark, making false entries, imitating other runners and giving false ages were a few of the ploys used to improve their chances of winning.

Gambling was prevalent, too, with all the attendant temptations!

Two Club members, P. J.Gilbin and W.G. Mancarron, were called in front of the Northern Counties (NCAA) for "roping" - i.e deliberately running below expectations, with the aim of improving their handicap marks for the next race. In a race at Widnes A.C., Mancarron was leading in the final straight when caught by Gilpin, whereupon both ran at a very slow pace, apparently neither wanting to win! Finally, Gilbin pushed Mancarron through the tape, but both were disqualified and the prize was awarded to the third man. They denied the charge and said they had no connection with bookmakers, but were both suspended for 18 months.

A big issue of the 1892 season concerned allegations made by the N.C.A.A. over betting at an athletics meeting promoted jointly by Liverpool Harriers and Fairfield A.C. It was commonly known at the time that there was jealousy and ill feeling between officials of various clubs within the N.C.A.A., which may have been behind the accusations. Both of the accused clubs threatened to stop organising meetings, which would have been detrimental to the local amateurs. Although there was little doubt that some betting was taking place at these meetings, and at others in the area, a reprimand rather than an expulsion was the punishment.

There was more evidence of bad feelings when J. Little was accused of "roping" at a meeting in Goole, but it was proved that he had not even attended the Goole meeting! It was a cut-throat business!

Towards the end of the 1800s, there were a number of athletics clubs in the local area.

These included Birkenhead Eagle Harriers, Roby Harriers, Birkenhead Gymnasium Harriers, Fairfield A.C., Liverpool Florence Harriers, Liverpool Boundary Harriers, Sefton Harriers, Liverpool Golden Eagle Harriers, Liverpool Pembroke Harriers, Liverpool Kingsley Harriers, Domestic Mission, Liverpool Gymnasium Harriers, Wirral Hare and Hounds, South Liverpool Harriers, North Liverpool Gymnasium Harriers, Gordon Institute, West Cheshire Harriers, as well as **Liverpool Harriers**. Most of those clubs went by the wayside, but the likes of Sefton Harriers, Liverpool Pembroke Harriers and Wirral Hare & Hounds (renamed Wirral AC in 1911) have survived and have provided excellent competition over many years.

Our long-time rival club Pembroke Harriers was formed in a chapel at Pembroke Place in 1890, but changed their name to Liverpool Pembroke to avoid the confusion with the Pembroke area of Wales. In the 1980s, there was a move to amalgamate that club with Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club but, probably due to deep-seated rivalries between older members of both clubs, the merger never happened. However, in 1995, Pembroke did amalgamate, with Sefton Harriers, to produce today's Liverpool Pembroke & Sefton Harriers.

It was common for athletes to switch clubs.

Today any athlete who moves between nearby clubs must expect to serve a ban of several months from team competitions, which tends to reduce such movements. But, in the 1890s, runners frequently changed allegiance, even several times per season. Two examples are Alfred George and Jack Rimmer, both mentioned earlier. Alfred George, who was a member of the Club's successful National winning team of 1885, later appeared in Sefton Harriers winning team in the Liverpool & District Cross-Country of 1893. It would appear that Jack Rimmer, having won the District Cross-Country in 1899 as a member of Liverpool Harriers, then joined Southport Harriers. That club was not affiliated to the District, so he was unable to defend his title. However, he later regained it in 1909, in the colours of Sefton Harriers, having become a loyal member and eventually Club President from 1951 to 1961.

Perhaps a more controversial case occurred in 1885. Liverpool Harriers comfortably won the Northern Cross-Country team title and, a few weeks later, took the National event. In the former race G. H. Bannister was third home, representing Salford but, by the time of the National, he had switched to Liverpool Harriers, even though Salford were competing themselves in that event, finishing third team! Two runners from Wirral Hare & Hounds also switched allegiance in that short time, with one of them (W. F. McAfee) in our counting six.

Just imagine the furore if that happened today!

Chapter 5 The Club finished the 19th Century in good shape.

By now the Club was strong - organisationally, socially, and financially.

A key part of the Club scene was the Club Championships, which were all taken very seriously. In a report about the annual Club Christmas Handicap (which was based at the Club's Headquarters of the time, the Cattle Market Hotel), it is noted that qualification to take part depended on the runner having made at least three appearances at Club runs.

Many venues were in use. Around 1890, the Club hosted an inter-club run, losing to Liverpool Masonic by five points, with the race HQ being the Coffee House pub in Wavertree. Then the 1891/2 season finished on a high note with a Ball at the Rodney Hall in the April. And, around the turn of the century, the Club had moved HQ again, to the Lamb Inn, Wavertree. Yes, another pub!

At the 1892 Club AGM it was announced that the Club had won £560 in prize money - a huge amount by today's standards - and this grew to £670 the following year. Club President and popular handicapper H.P. Ellis was elected to the Northern Counties Committee and, two years later, was elected to the post of Northern Counties President, where his strong character was to steady the ship at a time when the governing bodies were not in harmony - a sequence of events very similar to those involving Charles Rice many years later!

What's in a name?

Our Club had started out as "Liverpool Harriers". But, by 1890, race results show many established Club members (such as Tom Crellin and Teddy Watterson) were running for "Liverpool Sefton Park and All Saints". There is no record of the existence in parallel of a separate club called "Liverpool Harriers" so this was not simply a case of athletes switching clubs. The logical assumption is that the members simply decided to give their club a new name, which better reflected the catchment area at the time.

This conclusion is supported by the report in the Liverpool Football Echo edition of October 11th 1890: "Liverpool Harriers (Sefton)" had made slight alterations to its rules *"for the welfare of the Club and to make the new Liverpool Harriers worthy of the justly famous grand old Club which bore the name of Liverpool Harriers, famous in the North"*. Clearly the members and fundamentals of the Club itself had not changed - only the name.

At the beginning of November 1894, having attended a District meeting, Jack Walker and Ted Watterson reported back the same evening to a Club meeting where a decision was taken to resign from the District. We do not know what the issue was about, but it could have been a factor in the next event:

On Monday November 19th 1894, the Club was renamed "Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club".

However, the new name and the "Liverpool Harriers" title seem to have been used inter-changeably from that time forward. Sometimes the name "Liverpool", on its own, was deemed sufficient, even though several other clubs existed with that word as part of their full title! A classic case is the report in the Birkenhead News of March 13th, 1901, covering the Liverpool & District Cross-Country Championships, where it states that the entry included "Liverpool (champions 1892)", but then refers to "Liverpool H. and A.C." in the results. All very confusing when looked at from many years later!

Chapter 6 Early 1900's - two amazing sportsmen join the Club.

George Neville White Senior - multiple sporting champion and great administrator.

He worked for the Cheshire Lines Railway and was a member of Sefton Harriers before joining our club. In all he won 157 medals and over £1000 worth of prizes, across sports including boxing (competing in the Northern championships of 1903), football, cricket, and water-polo, as well as athletics.

He won the Club Cross-Country Championship five times in as many years. At the age of 40, he finished fourth in the Club Handicap, with his young son Len finishing just behind him.

When his competing days finished, he became a timekeeper, then President of the N.C.A.A., and organiser of the Liverpool Marathon. Over several years, he was the organiser of the Club's social functions which helped to raise funds for the Club. He maintained his interest in other sports: he was a qualified football referee for over 20 years and even refereed an Everton v Liverpool game.

Benjamin Howard Baker - England's best-ever all-round sportsman?

A young lad who was perceived to have too much surplus energy was taken along to a Liverpool Harriers training session by his father. The lad in question became the Club's first International athlete and represented Great Britain at two Olympic Games. In 1912 he competed at Stockholm in High Jump and Standing High Jump. After The Great War, he finished 6th in the High Jump at the 1920 Antwerp Olympic Games and participated in the Triple Jump too. Earlier in that season he had set a new Northern Counties Championship best with a leap of 6ft 3¼ins, but he went one better the next summer with a UK High Jump record of 6ft 5ins, at Huddersfield, which also equalled the European record, and he held the UK record for 26 years!

This all-round athlete also won the first three Discus titles ever held in the Northern Championships, plus a Northern title at the 120 yards hurdles and other Northern medals at the Long Jump, Hammer and Javelin. Some athlete!

But athletics is only part of the story of Howard Baker!

"HB" was also an outstanding football player. After having an amateur international trial as a centre-half, he won full England caps as a goalkeeper in 1921 and 1926, keeping clean sheets on both occasions. He played for the famous amateur team Corinthian Casuals and, still retaining his amateur status, he also played for Everton and Chelsea. His highlights as a goalkeeper for Everton included a derby match against Liverpool which was won 1-0. At Chelsea, still playing as goalkeeper, he once scored a penalty, demonstrating his renowned ability as a lethal kicker of the dead-ball. At that time cigarette manufacturers often attempted to increase sales by enclosing small cards in the packets, which buyers would collect. One such range covered famous sportsmen. HB is probably the only Liverpool Harrier to have been featured on cigarette cards!

He also performed at the top level at lawn tennis (playing at Wimbledon), water-polo (in goal for England) and cricket (scoring two centuries for Liverpool CC).

It is surprising that he also found time to be a very successful businessman. In later life, he was proud to be our Club President, where one of his favourite duties was presenting the prizes at the Christmas Handicap.

Standards in sport are improving all the time, but all an athlete can do in his own time is to succeed over his peers. To succeed at top level in two or more sports in any era is clearly something very special. We can be extremely proud of what these two Club members achieved.



Chapter 7 **The Great War and the early 1920s - quiet times for the Club.**

A time for re-building

There had been virtually no sport during the period of World War I and, after the conflict, many of the pre-war Club stars were no longer competing. There were not many tracks where athletes could go to train. Most clubs used facilities adjacent to Stanley Cattle Market or Lister Drive Power Station.



Howard Baker effectively retired from athletics not long after his participation in the 1920 Olympics. He was awarded Life Membership in 1925 at a Hot Pot supper held at the Durning Hall, where "Echo" sports journalist "Bee" also received that honour. In the photo above, "HB" is third from the left in the second row, with T.H. Blair (Club President) in the middle and George Neville White at the right end of the row. On the left end of the third row is C.F. Trotter, who was Treasurer at the time.

The future of our Club in the early 1920s depended on a new group of youngsters. We can see evidence of an emerging coaching set-up, with one of the prominent figures being Joe Bailey who, like many good coaches over the years, and all over the world, was considered to be a somewhat eccentric character.

Our Club has provided many excellent officials, who have given the sport their time and expertise. One such official received due recognition when, in the mid twenties, the Northern Cross-Country Association formally placed on record its appreciation for the services rendered by H.P. Ellis.

In 1923, there was a key event in the Club's history.

The minimum age for joining the Club in those days was 20, so the Club was in a dilemma when a cheeky 18 year old applied to be a member. The Committee of the day made possibly the wisest decision in the Club's history when, on June 7th 1923, they agreed to the young lad's request to join and wrote to **John Charles Rice** informing him of his successful application. "JC", as he became known, was to dedicate his life to the Club and to athletics in general throughout the country. Despite being small in stature, and quietly spoken, he had a very strong and determined personality. In 1925, although still only 20, he was elected as Club Treasurer: the start of sixty years in office, during which he steered the club through some troubled times.

A new generation emerges.

Among the results of that era, we find Charles Rice winning a One Mile Handicap at Blackpool, with George Neville White Jnr coming third in the Youth's race - an excellent run as he was off scratch.

Young Club member Jim Gilliland won the School's ½ mile and the 3 mile Boy's Club titles. Being a proud Harrier, he ran wore his Club vest when competing at the Liverpool Boys Club championships. Unfortunately the meeting was not sanctioned under AAA rules and his vest drew the attention of their officials, leading to a formal warning!

A new member joined in 1926, courtesy of the "eccentric" Joe Bailey, who did a good job when he told Dick Georgeson that he would make a better runner than footballer and persuaded him to join the Club. Joe's prediction proved right, as Dick finished second counter in the Club's District Cross-Country team in his first season and went on to be a solid performer for Liverpool Harriers.

Another youngster, Len White, was clearly following in the footsteps of his father George Neville White. He won the Junior Mile at the annual Good Friday meeting in 1923, after which he raced ¾ mile against a boy on a bike and just lost in a close finish! He went on to win the Junior title at the District Cross-Country Championships in 1925 and led the team to a comfortable team win, including "JC" in 6th place and George Neville White Jnr in 19th. The youngsters also showed good form in 1926, with the promising Ernie Ackers winning the inaugural District Youth Cross-Country Championships and the team taking medals in the West Lancs race.

Chapter 8 Here come the girls!

1925 - the first lady member.

There are some minor references to a few girls participating informally alongside male members of the Club in the early 1920s - notably Josie Bailey (sister of Joe Bailey) and Dorothy White (was she related to George and Len?). But the first mention of a **lady member** in the Club was when Shirley Parker Roberts of 32 Chapel Street, Flint, was accepted as a first claim member on the 2nd December 1925. At the 1926 AGM, George Neville White's proposal that a Ladies section be set-up was approved and Miss Macrae became their first Secretary.

Not just making the tea!

In 1926, it is recorded that Margaret Macrae won the Club sprint title and, as far as we can tell, she became the first winner of a Liverpool Harriers Ladies title. Furthermore, it would seem that the 100 yards was the only title they contested at that time.

Then, in 1927, the ladies' section started to do some cross country running. They used a mission hall called "Horne's Smithy" on East Prescott Road, on Saturday afternoons. The men were given the unpopular task of taking the girls for a couple of miles slow run before doing their own training, so they took great delight in leading them across the muddy fields by the now demolished Bluebell Inn, through the Alt stream, and up the hill beyond!

The scantily-clad ladies attracted the attention of the local newspaper photographers. One of these Lady Members was Violet Dennison, who was described in the press as "a smasher". A photo appeared in the Liverpool Daily Chronicle, entitled "running cross-country", showing Violet draped over a farm gate. This upset the establishment within the chauvinist men's section so much that the girls were threatened with "train or else".

However, the Club archives for the next few years show that the two sides actually got on quite well. Club Captain Jim Cross married Ivy, Flo Ranard married future secretary Eric Thomas, and another future secretary Bill Horn married Ann Parker, who was later awarded the MBE for services to Liverpool via her work with the League of Well-Doers!

Chapter 9 Late 1920s - new venues, new events, new characters on the scene.

1927 - a new Club HQ and the first Liverpool Marathon

The Club was on the move again, setting up headquarters at the bowling pavilion at the Knotty Ash Hotel, with the girls at the Turks Head café, on the island separating the traffic on East Prescott Road opposite the end of Thomas Lane.

One of our new members was Jim Cross, who joined the Club's cross-country team and tried (unsuccessfully!) to impress the Club officials by telling them he had ran 4mins 13secs for the mile, when Paavo Nurmi held the World record at 4mins 10.4secs! Ernie Ackers continued to impress, taking the Junior District cross-country title.

In the summer, W. H. Blake set a new Youth long jump record of 20ft 4ins and the Club won a double Lancs title at 440 yards: Tom Daly taking the Senior and H. Davies the Youth event.

Liverpool was one of the first to hold a City Marathon. The inaugural race took place on September 28th 1927, in the city's "civic week", starting at St Georges Plateau and finishing at the Liverpool FC ground at Anfield, which had been redesigned in the summer to hold 30,000 supporters. The Club was heavily involved, with George Neville White the organiser and Tom Blair the referee. Victory went to the well known international Sam Ferris, who commented afterwards that it was the best organised marathon he had run in. It was hailed "the greatest event the City of Liverpool has ever known". Two loyal members, Bill Horn and Jim Cross, received medals for finishing the gruelling course.

The year finished with the Youths winning the District cross-country title and the Juniors doing the same in the West Lancs.

1928 and 1929 - Some high class race walking and yet another HQ location

An event entitled "The All-England Walk" was held in Liverpool in the 1920s and 1930s, starting at Stanley Cattle Market and going out to the Bluebell pub in Huyton, before returning to the Market. There is no record of it having any real national championship status, so we assume it was a high class invitation race. A former Scots Guardsman and Liverpool Pembroke walker who had joined the Club, Tom Garner Jones, won the event in 1928. Tom had made his race walking debut in the 52 mile London-to-Brighton walk, representing his army unit, on the strength of having won the Army's prestigious Aldershot & District Area cross-country title. Clearly this was not a wise choice for his first walking race, and he suffered badly!

After his success in the Liverpool walk, a photo of Tom appeared in an advertisement for "Clarke's Blood Mixture" in the "News of the World" of July 15th 1928. The advert referred to Tom having spent six weeks in hospital with rheumatic fever, but was not feeling much better after he came out, until taking the Blood Mixture apparently did the trick! Not surprisingly, the advert led to an embarrassing appearance in front of a AAA committee.

Also in 1928, young Ernie Ackers kept his name in the news by retaining the District Junior Cross-Country title and finishing fourth in the Northern Junior CCC. Dick Georgeson continued his progress by winning the Tom Garvey trophy for the fastest man in the Club's 5 miles road race sealed handicap, which was run from Greenfield Road in Old Swan, via Broadgreen Road, Court Hey Road, around Roby Post office and back home (no need to avoid the M62 in those days!).

Here we see Tom Garner Jones, Charles Rice, Dick Georgeson, Jack Monier, Fred Heath, and Ted Jones.



Among the Club champions in 1929 was H. Davies in the junior mile, who also won the Northern Counties title. Dick Georgeson retained the Tom Carvey trophy, won the Club one mile championship and, later in the year, the Club cross-country title.

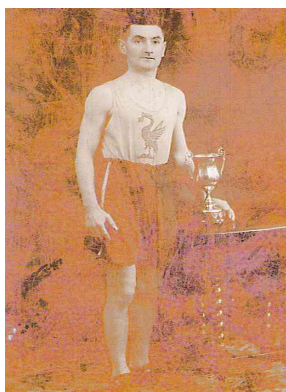
One of the stars at the Club in the late 1920s was Jim Sangster. Although born in Liverpool, Jim had become an established star with Surrey A.C., so it was good news when he moved back north and joined the Club, going on to become a key member, achieving many successes over the next ten years. As the Club's Cross-Country Captain, he caused something of a stir when he returned from a trip to the States wearing a track suit he had bought across the Atlantic with "Holy Cross" emblazoned across the chest. His trip had been fruitful, winning seven out of eight races, one of them indoors.

By the end of the 1920s, the Club's headquarters were at St Paul's Church School, Greenfield Road, Old Swan - definitely not a pub this time!

Chapter 10 The 1930s start with the Club active on many fronts.

Cross-Country, road running and walking - mixed results

Although the Seniors were among the medals in the District Cross-Country in 1930 and the Youths won the team and individual competitions in the same fixture the following year, the early 1930s saw relatively few medals for the Club's cross-country teams. Jim Cross (Club Cross-Country Captain), Fred Heath, Eric White and Dick Georgeson were all prominent in Club Championships over these years. Dick also clinched the Tom Garvey trophy for keeps with his third consecutive win in the Club 5 mile race in 28:40.



The Club's walkers were doing well enough and the annual Club Championships were hotly contested, with successes for Tom Garner Jones, Henry Finnagan (*in the photo*) and the Meikle brothers, Hugh and John.

After an impressive performance in the Eccleston-to-Warrington, Tom was rated highly and was offered a visit to the States, where race walking was very popular, but turned it down on his father's advice.

Hugh Meikle stole the limelight by winning the 1936 holding of the "All-England" 10 miler in style, in 82mins 32secs. Although Tom Garner Jones had been pulled out of the race near the Regent Cinema in Old Swan, for "lifting", the team still finished second to Sheffield with the other counters being John Meikle (9th), G. Hardwick and G. Faddon. Tom gained some pride by taking the one mile walk at Deepdale, Preston, in an excellent time of 6 minutes 32 seconds.

When the first Mersey Tunnel ("Queensway") was opened on July 18th 1934, by King George V and Queen Mary, 200,000 people watched from the Old Haymarket, facing the entrance. As soon as the general public were allowed access, a number of runners ran through the tunnel and, although no official report was recorded, Club member Stan Bailey claimed to have been first to reach the other end. He went on to be a respectable marathon runner, who did well in the AAA event and finished 9th in the Manchester Marathon. He was highly ranked in the event by the Sporting Chronicle and the Daily Dispatch, two papers which sponsored the Manchester event.

More organisational changes

At the start of the 1930s, the Club's track runners did their training on a track at the back of Edge Lane, which was also used for dog racing, as was the case at White City in London in the 1960s. Much of the other training was based at Anderton's Café at 245 East Prescott Road in Knotty Ash.

These arrangements changed towards the end of the decade, when the City Council agreed to a request to use land on the Harthill Estate (now integrated as the north-west quadrant of Calderstones Park) for training purposes during the summer months. At the same time, the Club relocated winter training to the Gateacre Institute. The nomadic nature of the Club's headquarters continued: located on St John's Lane in 1930, then moving to the Stanley Arms on Roby Road, opposite today's Huyton Leisure Centre.

The Christmas Handicap has always been a big feature on the Club calendar and for many years the first to finish was awarded a turkey. In 1935, it was recorded that Bill Horn somehow contrived to obtain the turkey for the Club as a free gift. Also that year Jim Cross brought in two big buckets of ham and salmon for the buffet, to the considerable pleasure of all present, but the handicapper still put him off scratch! At the end of an enjoyable day there was £38 profit from the draw. In those days, the annual subscriptions were: one shilling (5p today) for ladies and under-sixteens, two shillings and sixpence (12½p) for sixteen to eighteen, and three and sixpence (17½p) for seniors. The club jersey could be purchased for three and ninepence, and the shorts for two and sixpence (18p and 12½p respectively).

Plenty was happening on the track

Alf Finnegan had temporarily taken on the role of Treasurer so that Charles Rice could concentrate on competing. This clearly suited Charles, because he proudly won the Tramways National 880 yards. His big problem was getting the prize home on the train - it was a grandfather clock! Records show that prizes at Open Meetings at that time were to a value of around £7 for first place, which was a significant amount, and many athletes trained hard to aim at such rewards.

Among the other highlights was promising young sprinter Reg Cox, who won the English Schools 220 yards sprint and W. Cox (possibly a brother?) who won the Club's Junior sprint double title and went on to win the Northern Counties 100yards crown.

Another impressive performance was put up by Walter Boyack, who represented the Club on the road and track. He experimented with the Pole Vault in 1932 (not very fashionable at that time) and cleared 12 feet (3.66m) - a brilliant standard given that the third placer in that year's Olympics had cleared only a little over 14 feet (4.27m), whilst the GB representative achieved just over 13 feet (3.96m)!

When comparing these performances with today's standards, we must remember that they were achieved with bamboo poles, which had no bend or spring. Furthermore, as this photo of Walter in action clearly shows, there was no nice soft landing area - just a sandpit!

Dick Georgeson was still the Club's star miler, winning the Widnes Police Sports one mile handicap in 4 minutes 7 seconds, although we do not know what his mark was. In the Club Championship of 1936, Georgeson won the Mile, ahead of H.G. Morris (who also won the 440 yards and 220 yards sprints), while the promising Fred Heath took the 880 yards.



Looking back through the documentation for the early 1930s reveals an interesting snippet. Club member "J.S.Tudor from Runcorn" is recorded as having a busy track season, including winning the 880 yards in 2mins 14secs at an inter-club evening meeting at the Tramways Sports Ground on Prescott Road (where Liverpool Harriers were successful in beating Pembroke Harriers and Liverpool Business Houses), travelling to Leigh Harriers where he had to be content with third place in the 220 yards, gaining a victory over the same distance at Ellesmere, near Oswestry, and eventually winning the Liverpool District 440 yards title at Orrell Park. What makes this story special is that the runner in question was Jim Tudor, who was the oldest living past member of Liverpool Harriers for many years, until his death in late 2010 at the grand age of 103.

Chapter 11 The late 1930s - Sad departures, but valuable arrivals

Tragic deaths of two potential stars

A sad loss to the Club came in the summer of 1937, when Fred Heath and Eric White were both killed in a motor bike accident whilst on holiday. They had carried the Club colours with pride over their short careers on the track and cross-country. The Club commissioned a trophy for the Christmas Handicap in their memory, which is still presented annually, and it was reported that the St. Helens & District club also promoted a trophy in memory of our two youngsters at one of their meetings.

On the administration side, Charles Rice was busy and a certain Irish lad joined the Club

During the summers, the venue at Harthill, next to Calderstones Road, was working well. Charles Rice organised the regular rolling of the five-laps-to-the-mile track and, after the training sessions, he would hold forth in his quiet but knowledgeable way, with a group of his "pupils" listening intently.

The cross-country headquarters had moved from the Gateacre Institute to the stables in Grange Lane, from where the training routes covered the farmers' fields of the Childwall Valley area. Club journals refer to the runners returning to the pleasure of using the zinc baths that had been filled with hot water by Billy Leigh and high-jumper Tom Owen! Oh what a delight!

In the June of 1937, a father took his 20 year old son to Harthill to join Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club: **Tom O'Mahoney began his loyal association with the Club which would last the rest of his life.**

Around the same time, a young sprinter called Doug Read also joined the Club and would go on to be the post-war Secretary.

Chapter 12 The mystery of the Bluebird and the Yellow Duster.

It wasn't yellow in the beginning

In the early pages of this History, we noted that the Club's "first official colours are recorded as red vests with a fox badge on the shoulder". So how did today's team kit come about?

The story is not clear, but there are a few clues. Firstly, we note that, in the mid 1890s, "J. King ran in the new Club costume for the first time". Frustratingly, the report does not tell us what this "costume" consisted of, but it is clear that some changes had already been made. Then, in 1923, there is the first mention of the famous "Bluebird", when one of the Club runners was warned by race officials for having a liver bird on his vest - presumably because these were not the registered Club colours at that time.



The **Club photo** above, for the 1925/6 season, clearly shows liver birds on most vests, so we can assume that the changes had now been officially logged with the due authorities. But, although the photo is only in black and white, the vests worn by most athletes look quite dark and were probably still red (as it had been for over 40 years). Mysteriously, though, some vests are much paler. Were they white? Were they yellow? Why was there a variety of colours? We shall probably never know!

We have been able to identify some key personalities on the photo. In the front row, second from left, is W.J. Horne (Hon Sec 1934-36). Further along, in the suit, is George Neville White. Two places more to the right is Dick Georgeson, the classy runner who held the post of Secretary from 1936 to 1938. Andy Forshaw, who would have a major influence on the Club in the 1940s, is the leftmost on the second row, with Howard Baker three places further along. The famous Jim Sangster starts the third row, where the chap half hidden towards the right end is believed to be Charles Rice. The third along on the back row is Walter Boyack, with the last on that row being Eric Thomas (Hon Sec during the war years).

A cunning plan!

The introduction of the bright yellow vest as a standard for the Club is something we **do** know a bit about. Shortly before the Second World War, one of the Club officials (almost certainly Charles Rice and/or Tom O'Mahoney) had a clever idea. This was long before photo-finish cameras and, in close finishes on the track, a brightly coloured vest was more likely to stand out to the judges. What could be brighter than a yellow vest (or "old gold" to be precise), with the liver bird retained as the Club emblem?

Many years later, at a Club Social, Mike Turner entertained those present with one of his most evocative compositions, the "Bluebird on a Yellow Duster", and history was made!

A final point on this subject. It is only since about 1990 that Club members could buy vests with the liver bird already printed on the front. Prior to that, it was a question of buying a comfortable yellow vest from a sports shop, or even M&S, then buying a blue fabric liver bird from the Club and, finally, persuading someone to do the fiddly business of sewing it on! Not only was this laborious, but it resulted in many shades of yellow and many styles of vest. Thank goodness for progress.

Chapter 13 Mixed fortunes for the Club as war approaches.

A worrying drop in standard

Two of the Club's leading athletes over this period, Tom Garner Jones and Dick Georgeson, were now well past their best and would not compete after the war. Many years later, at the age of 80, Tom was still working as a doorman at his local bingo hall and still walked straight and tall.

Dick settled in the Old Swan area and was to live to the age of 93. He had a display cabinet, to which only he held the key, and it contained the 'Tom Carvey Trophy' - as clean as the day he proudly took it home. Both of these characters remembered the Club with fondness and loved to reminisce about their experiences.

In 1937, the ex-international Jim Sangster was elected Club Coach and appealed for the support of the senior members. Clearly he was concerned that the standard had dropped. At cross-country, the Club was active in the popular inter-club runs against Wallasey, Boundary, Waterloo, Pembroke, Sefton, Sutton and Wirral, but rarely captured any championship medals. Although we participated in the championships for Liverpool & District and the North of England, it was not considered worth sending teams to the National.

Equally poor was the overall standard of track and field performances, with very few successes worthy of note. Tom Owen Jnr (no relation to the high-jumper) showed promise when coming second in the Lancs Junior Half Mile. Hugh Meikle was as consistent as ever and showed his strength by taking the two and ten mile walking titles. Gerry Malcolmson was probably the pick of our distance runners, winning the District 4 miles title and finishing runner-up in the Chester "5".

Tom O'Mahoney becomes a major influence!

But things began to pick up. Over the winter of 1937-38, Tom O'Mahoney demonstrated good form, finishing 4th at St Helens, 10th in the District and 7th in the West Lancs. Although he was defeated by Gerry Malcolmson in the Club Cross-Country Championships, his consolation was the "Novice" prize. The definition of "Novice" is somewhat vague, but generally referred to a team or individual who had not previously won an award in that race. The term "Junior" had the same meaning in those days: it was not until the 1920's that it was used to denote a particular age group.

In 1939, Tom finished 5th in the District CC, surrounded by runners from the strong Pembroke team, and then a creditable 23rd in the Northern Counties CC out of 143 runners. The Northern was run at Leyland, mainly through a housing estate in the course of construction - a nightmare when you consider that the normal running shoes for most competitors at the time were bald-soled plimsolls, which were hardly suitable for thick mud!

There was a shock in the April of 1939, at the Sefton Park Road Relay, when Tom established a new course record, beating Pembroke's International Norman Jones on the first leg.

There was also some success in the summer of 1939, when Hugh Meikle won the "British Workers" 10 mile walk in 88mins 40secs. (The "British Workers" sporting organisation had been set up by Labour Party sympathisers in the early 1930s and existed until the 1950s). Tom Owen Jnr continued to improve, winning the Lancs Junior Mile and finishing runner-up in the ½ mile. The junior victories continued, with Jack Ward taking the 440 yards titles in both the Lancs and the Northern, plus Phil Cummins winning the 220 yards at the Lancs meeting. The Ladies tasted success with third in the Northern sprint relay, fielding a team which included Catherine Trotter, who became the backbone of the Ladies Section after the war.

Also that year, Gerry Malcolmson ran in his first Marathon and would continue impressively in the years after the war.

Things were now winding down on the athletics front.

Even though war had not yet been declared, many young Liverpool Harriers were in the Territorial Army and had gone away on service. On September 1st, 1939, a regular committee meeting was held, but could not produce a quorum! Two days later, war was declared. At the AGM on November 4th, an attendance of 38 members was recorded. The elected Officers included Charles Rice, Tom O'Mahoney, Eric Thomas and Doug Read. But they would have little to do for some time.

With the declaration of war, the Club virtually ceased its activities.