

PART TWO - From World War II up to 1970

A time of rebuilding and growing potential

Chapter 14 Waking up from a long hibernation.

The show must go on

The war years were tough for everyone, whether in the Forces or at home, and organised sport was hardly a priority. Many sportsmen were among those who lost their lives during the Second World War. Even those who came home safely had often missed those years when they would have been at their athletic peak.

By 1943, the tide of war had turned and a victory looked probable, even if not for some time yet. Club members felt it was time to enlarge the scope of activities and that every effort be made to recruit new members. It is interesting to note at the time the club had just three pounds and three shillings in the bank!

Trying to get the Club fully functional again was not an easy task. A special meeting was called on September 12th, chaired by Andy Forshaw. Many avenues were used to promote Liverpool Harriers: advertising in shop windows, displaying trophies, publicity in the "Ranger" column in the "Echo", plus an open run during the winter season. The efforts certainly paid dividends; even though Britain was still at war, the Club started to grow. At one Committee meeting, 23 new members were taken on, including Tom Mylett. He not only became a top sprinter and a UK-ranked triple jumper for the Club, but also did a fine job over many years as a coach with the youngsters.

The Committee's efforts continued to yield success. By 1946, the membership had increased to 211. Andy Forshaw and Doug Read were at the helm plus, as quoted in the minutes, "the best Treasurer a club could have: J.C. Rice".

Up and running

Liverpool Harriers won the "Salute the Soldiers" team race at Newsham Park. Meanwhile, the young track runners were kept busy with a series of 18 evening meetings at the Liverpool Boys' Association (LBA) Greenhill Track in Allerton, in which Ernie Gallagher beat Tom Mylett by just half a point.

The Club decided to host a cross-country meeting for youngsters, partly aimed at recruitment, and about 80 runners took part: from schools, Scouts, Air Training Corps (ATC) units and other youth organisations. A new trophy was at stake: "The Sangster Cup", which has been an annual event ever since. Although there were no new members from that first race, the fixture did produce a steady influx of runners to the Club over the years. Jim Sangster had a powerful reputation, having won many races in his time, including the Northern 10 mile championship, and he showed his loyalty by attending many times to present the trophy and the minor prizes.

The war had left the Club very much weakened.

At the Club Cross-Country Championships in the 1944-45 season, the senior race was cancelled because so many members were still on active service. One Club member, Phil Cummins, was recorded as winning a race whilst in Burma, in 80% humidity! At the Club's half yearly meeting, members stood in silence as a mark of respect to members who had still not returned. Many members who were overseas demonstrated that their thoughts were back home: the Club received donations from Italy, Middle East, and North and South Africa.

Chapter 15 1944 to 1949 - New faces... more honours.

The youngsters star on the country

Ernie Gallagher showed he was not just an excellent track runner, by taking the Club Junior Cross-Country title in 1944-45. But it was in the Youths age group where Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club was about to have major successes, beginning in 1946, when the team finished 8th in the National Cross-Country at West Bromwich.

The following year, 1947, the Youths were the toast of the Club when, after a gap going back to 1885, they won a national title over the country for the Club. Starting off with a one point victory in the Liverpool & District, which they had won the season before, they went on to take the West Lincs title easily. Then it was a long journey to the North East for the Northern at Gosforth Park Racecourse in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, to make it a hat trick of wins, with just 38pts, well ahead of Clayton Harriers on 72pts. On March 8th 1947, they travelled to Apsley in Hertfordshire and became joint Champions of the English Youth Cross-Country championship, tying with the famous South London Harriers. The first counter for SLH was Peter Pirie, whose brother Gordon the rules on training mileages (sometimes running over 200 miles per week, totalling 216,000 in 40 years!) and went on to be one of the country's top distance athletes as well as one of the most controversial! In a field of 250 or more starters, our team consisted of Douglas Bowcock (9) Jim Kirby (12) Michael O'Donoghue (14) and John Jackson (34). The consistent John Jackson was the only runner to appear in all the four Championship races during that season., John went on to occupy the posts of Club Treasurer and Club Secretary in later years.

Tom is back!

Tom O'Mahoney was not back from service until 1949. But he soon made his presence felt, once more becoming the Club's Senior Cross-Country Champion. This photo of Tom (wearing 22) in the mud was taken in the late 40s or early 50s. A close examination shows barbed wire running off to the left - no cutting corners in those days!



At the end of 1949, the traditional Christmas Handicap was won by Harold Benson who, of course, went on to become our Handicapper. Another winner of the race around that time was 14 year old Paul O'Brien, who later became a Club Vice-President and was a highly-respected sports journalist at the Daily Post & Echo over many years.

The first ever Lancashire Cross-Country Championships - New Year's Day, 1949.

Up to this point, there had been track and field championships at County level, but the winter fixtures jumped from "West Lincs" level straight up to "Northern". The inaugural county event was organised by Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club, on a cold day, over a tough course at Childwall Hall. The Senior race was won by R. Williams of Winton Harriers, with the first nine home selected for the Lancashire Team. The Club's youngsters, Vic Black (3), George Bunner (6), Stewart Evans (8), and Roy Dailey (9), comfortably won the Junior event. The City's Lord Mayor, who presented the awards, congratulated the Club on the magnificent organisation.

And there was a lot to celebrate on track and field

Tom Mylett and Ernie Gallagher continued to clean up at the local open meetings. The Club welcomed three new names onto the scene in 1947 who would have great successes in the future: Don Atherton (High Jump), Ken Box (Sprints) and Denis Watts (Long Jump and Triple Jump). Denis moved to the area to teach and joined Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club, having achieved excellent results with Polytechnic A.C. He had finished 6th in the Long Jump at the 1946 European Games in Oslo and was expected to be picked for the 1948 Olympics. However, he had recently become part of the national coaching regime and fell foul of the rules of the time, whereby earning any money through athletics (including coaching appointments) meant he was deemed "professional". Thus he missed the Games and suffered a premature end to his competitive career with our Club. Nevertheless, he did go on to be a wonderful Olympic level coach, well-respected throughout the sport, and was awarded the MBE in 1976.

George Bunner had already given notice of his ability in the early months of 1949, with good performances over the country. He then showed considerable versatility when taking the Club 2 Mile Walk that summer, but of more significance was his aggressive victory in the Junior 880 yards at the Northern Championships, held at Butlins Holiday Camp in Skegness. At the same fixture Brian Freeman took the High Jump and Roy Dailey was second in the Mile.

There was a significant double victory at the Lancashire Championships that year, when a young but up-and-coming Tom Farrell won the 220 yards and 440 yards Junior titles.

The young Don Atherton leapt into the limelight in 1949, when he won the Northern High Jump and cleared 6'4" (1.93m), to rank 3rd on the UK All-Time List. Who was second? Club President, Benjamin Howard Baker, with his 6' 5" (equivalent to 1.956m) achieved in 1921! It should be remembered that, until the 1970s, the High Jump was performed into a sand pit at the same level as the cinder/shale take-off!

Don't forget the Ladies!

There were only four Ladies present at the Club's 1947 AGM, but the section was expanding. In particular, the O'Donnell sisters had joined the Club. Dorothy O'Donnell was to light the fuse which sparked the Ladies section into the next decade. Also joining the Club in 1949 was a young girl from Dovecot, Nancy Abrams, who went on to be the backbone of the Ladies section and serve the Club with distinction until her early death in 1974.

In 1949 Muriel Scott was placed in both sprints in the Women's Lancashire championships and was fourth in the WAAA final. She was coached by Liverpool Pembroke international sprinter Ken Anderson who was

known as 'the flying policeman'. At the Northern Counties Championship, our Ladies 4x110 yards relay team won the silver medals and they finished in bronze medal position in the 660 yards relay on the same day.



It might be surprising to some readers to learn that the governing of women's and men's athletics were wholly separate, with separate championship meetings, until the AAA and WAAA united fully in 1993.

In this photo of the relay team, taken at the Liverpool Tramways Sports in 1949, we see the O'Donnell sisters flanked by Kay Bassano (on the left) and Peggy Osborne.

Their prizes may look suspiciously like ash trays but were actually biscuit barrels!

Busy times for Gerry Malcolmson

We have already noted Gerry Malcolmson making a promising Marathon debut just before the outbreak of war. Ten years later, at the age of 36, he produced a remarkable sequence of results. On June 18th, 1949, he ran 2:52:24 for 6th at Chiswick, in the famous Poly Marathon.

Just two weeks after that, he won the Midlands event at Rugby in 2:52:39. A mere three weeks later, he showed his resilience with a superb 2:44:15 for 5th place in the AAA Championship race at Birmingham. The winner was the great Jack Holden, in 2:34:10, which was fastest in the UK that year. Gerry's performance ranked him 7th in the UK for 1949.

Finally, on August 27th, he ran 2:54:03 at Peterborough!

Chapter 16 The early 1950s - growing success for the Ladies.

Quality sprinting

In 1950, the young Nancy Abrams won her first of many Club titles at 100 yards. The next year saw her taking the Royal Iris Trophy for the 100 yards at the Cheshire Championships and the Ladies team bringing home the Lever trophy from the annual Centenary Inter-Club meeting at Port Sunlight.



This photo shows many notable Club members. On the back row are (left to right) Don Arnot, Ron Johnson, Tom Brown, Tom Mylett, Charles Rice, Andy Forshaw, Ian Grave, Ron Davies, John Jackson, Tom Farrell, Alan Lee and George Rice. The front row consists of Barbara Gordon, Betty Black, Pat Travis, Jean Whitehead, (unknown), Joan Williams, Nancy Abrams, Dorothy O'Donnell and Wyn Gaffney.

In the 1952 Lancashire County Championships, our Senior Ladies finished third in both relays. With a stronger team available for the Northern Counties event, they were favourites for the title, but sadly dropped the baton, though they recovered to take the bronze medal.

Dorothy O'Donnell finished third at the Women's Lancashire championships in 1954, in both the 100yards and 80metres hurdles, and ran a creditable fourth in the British Games short sprint, but the highlight of the Ladies' season on the track was our team's victory in the Northern 4x110 yards relay with Nancy Abrams, Barbara Gordon, Ann Sherman and Dorothy O'Donnell (*see photo*).

They followed it up with second spot in the 660 yards medley relay, while a hard-working Dorothy also finished a close second in the short sprint.

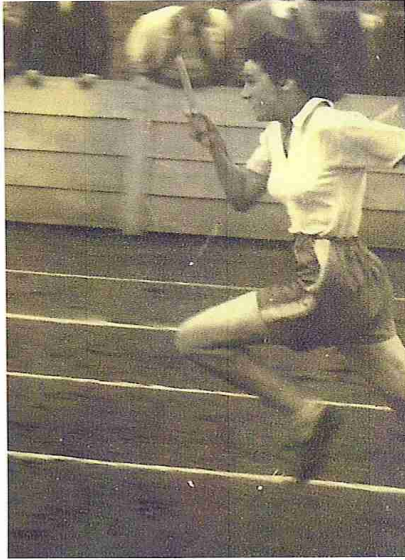


Elsewhere, 1954 saw the highly-talented youngster Jean Whithead win the WAAA intermediate long jump with a record 18ft 5½ins (5.63m). This was just the first of many major titles Jean would win over the next few years.

It's not track, it's not field, and it's certainly not cross-country...

Not all our Lady track athletes were enthusiastic about running cross-country during the winter and, in 1949, a group of them decided to keep in shape over the winter by forming a team to compete in the Liverpool Senior Netball League.

Clearly they were pretty fit, because they won the Shield at the first attempt. They repeated the success on several other occasions in the 1950s, dominating the local scene. For example, in 1957 they won every League match and, despite fielding a weakened team in the Shield Final, won it 11-2! Some of the team also played at a higher level: Kay Bassano and Betty Shaw represented Lancashire, Pat Travis and Betty Shaw did even better by having trials for England.



Here we see Pat Travis demonstrating good sprinting technique. In the team photo, on the back row: Dorothy O'Donnell, Joan Knowles, Beryl Atherton (Don's sister), and Margaret Martin. On the front row: Pat Walker, Muriel Scott, and Nina O'Donnell.

Chapter 17 Track & Field titles for the Men.

Ernie Gallagher and Ron Davies fly the flag at middle distance

By 1950, Ernie had already run 1min 58.6secs for the 880 yards, but it was his tactical ability and his "kick" which made him a feared competitor. He won the half-mile at the 1952 Lancs Championships and represented Lancashire and Northern Counties in 1954. Ron Davies was also a consistent winner, taking the Lancashire One Mile title in 1954 and coming third in the Northern.

In the AAA Junior Championships of 1950, held in Port Sunlight, George Bunner took his Northern form to a new level, when he narrowly achieved a shock win in the 880 yards.

In this photo, from the Dunlop Sports, held at Speke in the early 1950s, we see Eric Hornby, Roy Burrows, George Bunner, Doug Read and Tom Mylett.



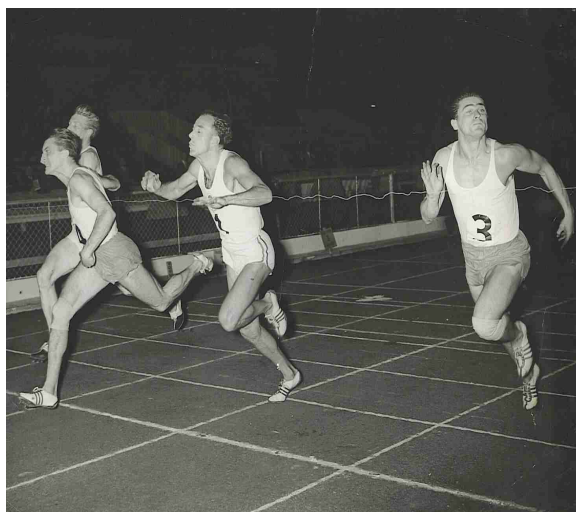
Strength in High Jump and Long Jump.. and even Pole Vault

When 17 year old Brian Heenan won the 1950 Northern Junior High Jump, at Skegness, with a new Championship Best of 5'10" (1.78m) it looked as if he might eventually challenge Don Atherton and the youngster Brian Freeman, but that was his only major success, whereas Atherton and Freeman produced a string of quality jumping performances. Also in 1950, "bearded Pole Vault" Jim Hetherington was second in the Northern Championships.

At the Northern Championships of 1951, Don scored a double, taking the High Jump and Long Jump, while young Tom Farrell did a less likely double of the Junior Long Jump and 440 yards. Second to Don in the High Jump was Brian Freeman, still a Junior. A few weeks later, Brian won the Northern Junior event, setting a Club Junior High Jump record with 6ft 1ins (1.85m), which was also a Championship Best and a new English Junior Record. In the Junior AAA event, he cleared 6', but came second on count-back.

The following year, 1952, saw Brian Freeman complete a remarkable "double double", when taking both Senior and Junior High Jump titles at the Lancashire Championships and at the Northern meetings. At the latter meeting, Don Atherton switched events and won the Long Jump title.

Ken Box makes big improvements and we see the emergence of Tom Farrell as a hurdler



1953 saw the Club's top sprinter Ken Box win the Lancs 100 yards title. But it was the following year when he made his breakthrough, taking both sprints in the Lancs and finishing third in the AAA Championships 100 yards in 9.9secs, which was the same time as the winner, George Ellis. Here we see Ken (third from left) finishing a close second for GB against Poland at the White City, running just outside 11secs for 100m.

He gained selection for the 1954 Empire games in Vancouver, where he competed in the 100 yards, the 220 yards and the Long Jump, but with no great success. He came close in the 4x110 yards relay, where the team was fourth. In the European Games of the same year, in Berne, he won a silver medal in Great Britain's 4x100 metres relay team.

With Tom Farrell's titles at 220 yards and 440 yards titles in the 1949 Lancashire Championships, and his Long Jump / 220 yards double at the Northern in 1951, it was obvious that the youngster had lots of talent in terms of speed, agility, and versatility. By 1954, he had improved his stamina and made the switch to 440 yards hurdles, winning that event and the flat 440 yards at the Lancs Championships. There was more to come!

Chapter 18 Lots of personalities, but we lose two of them

This picture, taken at a training night at the Holt Grammar School in 1951, shows many people who made major contributions to the Club in the 50s and later.



The back row consists of: D. Ruscoe, G. Fraser, M.F. Cowan, D. Jack, Arthur Fryer, K. Waugh, R. Johnson, D.K. Morris, George Bunner, Henry Crocker, R. Wright, A.S. Jones, D. Willett, B. Faulkes, Ken Box, Alan Lee (Hon Sec), Derek Finney, Tom O'Mahoney, and Ron Davies.

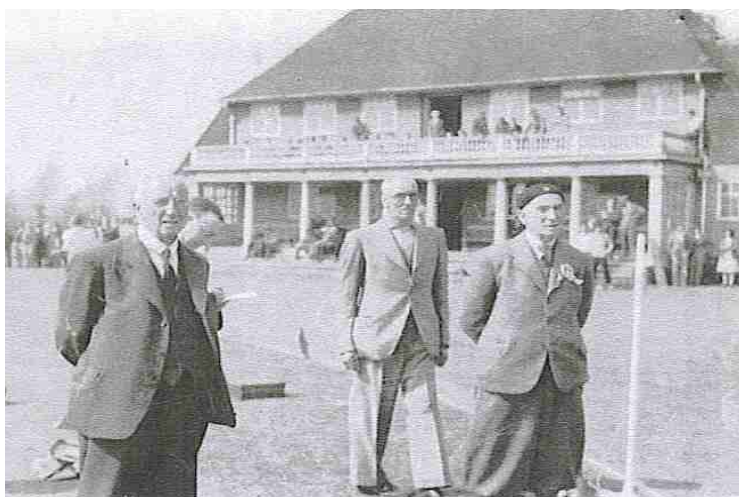
Those kneeling are L. Norstraum, A. Monaghan, B. Gordon, Nancy Abrams, Wyn Gaffney, J.C. Williams, Dorothy O'Donnell, Ellis Barnard. Those sitting include J. Mulvihill, A. Mystry, V. Cambell, H. McManus and M. Abrams.

The deaths of two magnificent servants of the Club

The decade started with great sadness, when George Neville White died in February 1950: a colourful character who would be sorely missed. After a serious internal operation, he appeared to be recovering well, but had a sudden relapse. He had not only competed successfully for the Club, but worked hard behind the scenes, organising functions to raise funds, supporting the our teams, and officiating at many meetings at Club and Northern level. The "Athletic Review" gave several column inches to his memory.

During the 1951 AGM, members stood in silence for the passing of the Club President, Tom Blair, who had been much respected in athletics and other sporting circles. He also served periods as President of the Liverpool & District Cross Country, West Lancs Cross country, and Northern Counties AA. Another claim to fame was his role as official announcer at the London Olympics in 1908. Fortunately, the Club had an excellent man available to take over as President: Benjamin Howard Baker was elected to the post, which he would hold until his death in 1987. At that same AGM, Tom O'Mahoney was re-elected Cross-Country Captain and Ernie Gallagher became the Club's first Track Captain.

This photo was taken beside a grass track marked out at "Wyncote", on Mather Avenue. We think it was during the annual fixture between Liverpool Harriers and Liverpool University, probably in 1948 or 1949. It shows (left to right) Tommy Blair, Andy Forshaw and George Neville White. Many years later, "Wyncote" would become a happy training venue for the Club from the 1960s until the late 1980s.



Chapter 19 Successes on the country for all age groups in the 1950s.

The first race for the "Booth Cup".

The Sangster Cup had been a successful venture for the Club for several years. In 1951 it was decided to promote another race on the same day for younger runners, again aimed at the recruitment of new members. The inaugural under-16 race took place on the 3rd November, 1951, at Woolton Woods, with Jim Sangster as starter and Tom Owen as the official time-keeper. It was initially called the "Merseyside Boys' Cross-Country Race", but soon became the "Booth Cup" (named after Vice President Charles Booth)



120 runners started and, to the delight of the organisers, eight of the first twelve joined the Club: Arthur Maltby (the winner), R. Jones (2), Bill Parr (3), Arthur Fryer (5), Keith Thomson (6), Dave King (10), Arthur Lomax (11) and Rob Capstick (12).

Although the start line was near the Club hut, at the top of Camp Hill, the course used an "interesting" lap. The Secretary's report for 1958 refers to problems in staging the Sangster and Booth Cup races: "*...each year the control of the ever-increasing fast traffic on Hillfoot Road becomes more difficult. Hillfoot Road has to be crossed twice in each race and is a derestricted dual carriageway*". Not ideal!

A string of successes for our Boys, Youths and Juniors.

In the March of 1950, on a boisterous, windy afternoon at Western Point, Widnes, the Club's youth team won the West Lincs with Bob Hamilton taking the individual title. Michael O'Donogue made it a double by winning the Junior race.

The Junior team took the 1951 District title, while D. Russell won the Youths race and finished a creditable seventh in the National CCC. The following season, all the youngsters recruited via the inaugural Booth Cup race ran in the Club's youth and boys winning teams.

Keith Thomson kick-started the 1953 cross-country season by winning the Lancashire Boys title, then won the Boys race at the District Championships, held at Pembroke Harriers headquarters at Court Hey Park, where the Youths won the team race with Bill Parr leading them home in fourth place. In the West Lincs CCC at RAF West Kirby, Arthur Fryer in 9th place led the Youth team to the silver medals.

In 1954, the fair-haired Vic Cowen won the Boys West Lincs CCC and would gain more honours in the next few years.

And there was success for the Club's Senior road and cross-country runners too

In 1949 and 1950, our team won the Liverpool & District Road Relay Championships, held over eight laps around Sefton Park. The 1950 performance was especially strong, with the team of George Bunner, John Jackson, Ron Davies, Derek Finney, Harold Benson, Bob Hamilton, Tom O'Mahoney, and Stan Evans finishing four minutes ahead of Wirral AC.

The early 50's saw Tom O'Mahoney dominate the Club's cross-country scene, with Ron Davies making progress and good support coming from cross-country captain Don Arnot. In 1953, Ron ran a creditable second in the West Lincs CCC at RAF West Kirby, behind Sutton's Bill McMinnus, who won the Liverpool Marathon in 1951/2/3. But the big news was Tom being awarded his first international vest, to represent Ireland in Paris, having finished fourth in the Irish Championships. In this photo from the 1950s, we see Tom in the District Road Relay, around Sefton Park, accompanied by Harold Benson on his bike.



Over the winter of 1953/4, the Liverpool & District C.C. League was held for the first time. Our Club won all five fixtures, although Tom noted that they were "very keenly contested".

In 1954 the senior cross-country team finally won the District team race, for the first time since 1892, with the stylish fair-haired Ron Davies leading the team home, followed by Bob Hamilton, Ellis Barnard and Tom O'Mahoney, with Derek Finney the non-counter. The team went on to finish second in the West Lincs and third in the Northern.



The photo shows Andy Forshaw in the background, behind a back row of Derek Finney, Ron Johnston, Brian Bowering, Bob Hamilton, and Ellis Barnard. On the front row are John Jackson, Tom O'Mahoney, and Ron Davies.

Chapter 20 Olympic dreams.

Two Club members with hopes of Olympic selection

In 1954, Ken Box had competed at the Empire Games (later renamed the Commonwealth Games) and the European Games. In the former, held in Vancouver, Ken was the lead-off leg in the 4x110yds relay team, which came fourth and set a new English record.

At that time, Tom Farrell was still "learning his trade" as a 440 yards hurdler, but clearly had great promise. With the 1956 Olympic Games on the horizon, both of them had a serious chance of being selected for the trip to Melbourne.

The 1955 season was a big step forward for Tom, when he took the Inter-Counties title and the Northern title at 440 yards hurdles, finished third in the AAA championships in a personal best time of 53secs, and earned his GB vest against Germany. Ken was maintaining his form and took the short sprint title at the Northern, as well as a second place in the Long Jump.

Made it!

Both of our stars finished as runners-up in the AAA championships of 1956, and both were deservedly selected for the Melbourne Olympic Games: Ken in the 100metres and Tom in the 400metres Hurdles. Sadly, they did not do themselves justice.

Ken easily got through the first round, with a sparkling 10.7secs (which was the fastest of the British entrants). But in the quarter-finals, he slipped in his blocks, only ran 11.3secs and was eliminated. A repeat of his 10.7 would have seen him to the semi-finals, where a time of 10.6 could have seen him into the final - it was as close as that! Ken also ran the first leg for the GB 4x100 metres relay team, which reached the final and set a new GB record of 40.6, but finished outside the medals.

Tom also suffered a disappointment, when he went out too fast in his first round heat and faded badly in the last straight, recording 52.7secs but not qualifying for the next round.

Nevertheless, the pair had significantly raised the reputation of Liverpool Harriers and the Club recognised this by promoting the "Melbourne Trophy" Track and Field meeting as an annual event in their honour. The fixture continued annually until 2009, when it was renamed "The Tom O'Mahoney Memorial Meeting".

Ken had been very impressed with Australia and he eventually emigrated there, later becoming a senior figure in the management of track and field for the country.

... and they were still improving..

In the following season, 1957, our two Olympians both won AAA titles. Ken Box took the 100 yards in 10secs dead, ahead of international Dave Segal (a performance which Ken later described as one of his finest achievements) and Tom Farrell won the 440 yards hurdles title in 52.1secs, which was a Championship Best Performance. Tom also found time to "relax" by coming second in the Northern Long Jump!

This photo was taken in 1957, when Tom produced a great finish off the final hurdle to win against USSR, in 51.1 seconds - a British record.



Tom Farrell was back on the big scene in 1958.

After competing in the Empire Games at Cardiff, he went on to captain Great Britain's team in the European Games in Stockholm where he finished 4th in the 400 metres hurdles and, after the closing ceremony, the British team carried Tom shoulder high into the local town hall!

The season finished off on a high with Ken Box equalling the English Native Record of 9.8secs in a match against New York.

We think of these two stars competing at the highest level, but they also turned out regularly for their Club. A good example of this concerns a trophy which was awarded to Tom in 1959: it was for his 9th consecutive appearance for Liverpool Harriers at the Cowal Highland Games at Dunoon!

Chapter 21 Ken and Tom weren't our only Track & Field stars in the late 1950s.

Steady improvements by our "regulars"

1955 saw the emergence of Carole Carter as a sprinter of real class. She won the Northern 100 yards and 220 yards titles, setting a new Championship record of 25.8secs in the latter, having already taken the short sprint title at the Lancashire Championships. Despite only turning 18 in June of that year, Jean Whitehead demonstrated amazing talent in the Long Jump with an unlikely double: after a predictable victory in the English Schools, she established a new record of 18ft 9ins (5.71 m) in winning the Northern Senior title! Also in 1955, Ernie Gallagher ran brilliantly to win the Northern 880 yards title in a new record of 1min 53.6secs.

In 1957, Carole Carter repeated her Northern sprint double, setting new record times in both events, and the relay team finishing second: Carole Evans, Nancy Abrams, Ann Sherman and Carole Carter. A highlight of the late 1950's was Carole Carter's duels with the famous Dorothy Hyman (who won one silver and two bronze medals at Olympics).

There were representative honours for Club members in 1958. Charles Miller (who was in the RAF and ran 15.2 for 120 yards hurdles) finished first in the Lancashire Championships, third in the Northern and represented AAA. We had a list of other athletes representing Lancashire, including Bill Parr, Carole Carter, Carole Evans and Nancy Abrams. The following year, Club members finished with seven county titles and twenty places.

Members.. but only just!

Club documentation for 1956 shows other Club members performing well at the AAA championships in 1956: Gerald Brown winning the Decathlon and second places for Titus Erinle and Dewi Roberts. Although these three athletes were certainly members of our Club, having been elected in December 1955, there are no records of them competing regularly in our teams.

Further research shows that Gerald ("Gerry") Brown was from Rhodesia and had competed at 220 yards in the 1954 Empire Games (now Commonwealth Games) prior to joining Liverpool Harriers. He went on to be appointed National coach for Rhodesia. Titus and Dewi were both sprinters, from Nigeria and Wales respectively. Interestingly, both Gerald and Titus were at Loughborough College with Ken Box, so it seems reasonable to assume that he helped them join Liverpool Harriers so as to allow them to gain access to domestic championships.

In this photo from Loughborough, Titus is first from left on the back row and Ken is second from left on the front row.



Empire Games - 1958 - Cardiff

Liverpool Harriers were well-represented at Cardiff. Tom Farrell, representing England, reached the semi-final of 440 yards Hurdles. Dewi Roberts re-appeared after a prolonged struggle with injury, ran 10 seconds for the 100 yards in the Welsh Championships, and represented Wales in the Games, clocking 10.1 in the quarter-finals.

Jean Whitehead also competed for Wales, finishing 4th in the Long Jump, with just under 19 feet (5.78 metres). She went on to compete for Great Britain in the European Games at Stockholm the same year, where she again performed well to reach the Long Jump final.

Chapter 22 Meanwhile.. on the mud and in the Committee meetings..

Some good youngsters succeed on the country

Vic Cowen continued to run well, taking the Youths title at the 1955 Lancashire CCC. Among the Seniors, it was Ron Davies who stole the show, by winning the District and West Lincs titles, then becoming the first Liverpool Harrier to represent Lancashire in the Inter-Counties.

Vic continued to show good form in 1956, when he led the Youth team to victories in the District, the West Lincs at Southport, and the Northern at Port Sunlight's recreation ground. But when the National was held at Warwick in the March, it marked the emergence of future Club icon Mike Turner, who led the team home in 25th place followed by good packing with Michael Cogan 26th, Vic Cowen 28th, and Phil Addison 47th giving the youngsters a winning total of 126 points, for the third National CC title in the Club's history. Another youngster who was part of the triumphant team, but finished outside the counters, was Harry Oakes, who figures prominently in the Club's life to this day.

The Boys' team won the District and West Lincs championships in 1957, with Neil Thompson our first counter. In the West Lincs race the Seniors also did well, finishing second to Sutton, who had been national champions a year or two before.

Mike Turner appears to have missed these cross-country races through injury, but he was one of several Club athletes who competed for their schools in April at the London Athletic Club meeting. Mike was 5th in the mile (running 4:27.6), while John Cleator ran 5:05.6 in the One Mile Steeplechase and would have many more successes over the barriers in later years.

Neil Thompson and Mike Turner continued to perform well, at Youth and Junior levels respectively. Neil had a splendid victory in the 1959 Northern Youths CCC and Mike had a brilliant run in the Junior National CCC, finishing just outside the medals in fourth place and laying the foundations for the years to come.

The Club's road relay team finished the 1959 season off by winning the 'Milk Stamina' race. The Club also won the Finney trophy at Kirkby with a team consisting of Doug Bell, Ellis Barnard, Paul Stevens, John Wright, Neil Thompson, Fred Mennarry and Laurie Hyland.

Behind the scenes..

Over the 1950s, the Club membership was steadily growing. In 1957 alone, there were 116 new members. The administration was stretched: two key officials were Wyn Gaffney and Iris Purcell, along with fund-raisers Bob Hamilton and Brian Riley. When Wyn resigned in 1959, it was a big loss to the Club, but the records of the time show the coaching team was now strengthened by the presence of Val Connors, Frank McAllister and a coach who is still producing great successes today: Stan Roberts.

Several Club officials were prominent on a wider front: Charles Rice was on the AAA General Committee, Andy Forshaw was President of the Liverpool & District CCU, George Rice was President of the West Lincs and Alan Lee was a member of the Lancashire County AAA Committee.

In 1957 the Club lost the services of the loyal Ron Davies, who emigrated to Canada with his new wife. He had brought many honours to the Club and would be sadly missed.

Chapter 23 The 1960s - our Club is on the move again!

What a nice place to spend the summers!

The decade began with the Club using the cinder track at Wavertree (noted for its downhill back straight!), then in 1962 also using the LBA Ground just off Greenhill road, in Allerton, which had limited facilities. But in June 1964 the Club started to rent facilities at "Wyncote", the Liverpool University sports complex on Mather Avenue in Allerton, for three evenings each week in the summer. As noted previously, our Club had occasionally used a grass track on the site back in 1950, but recent improvements (in particular, a new cinder track and well-equipped changing rooms) now made it very attractive. The land had been given to the University as a gift by Sir Thomas Harrison Hughes in 1920, in memory of his brother Geoffrey Hughes. Its extensive grounds were a secluded setting, which made training all the more enjoyable. Conveniently, the perimeter of the grounds measured around a mile, mainly consisting of springy grass, which was used for repitition work by many distance runners over the years.

A popular story at the time (which may or may not be true) concerned the architect's vision for the track layout: he thought it would better if the steeplechase water jump was in the centre of the arena! The track was maintained meticulously and fanatically by "Mr. Iveson", a no-nonsense Cumbrian, who would not tolerate any footballers or hockey players daring to take short cuts to their pitches by crossing his precious surfaces!

The fact that Liverpool Harriers were the only club using Wyncote at the time naturally encouraged an excellent team spirit and using this facility meant that there was close contact with the University's athletes, several of whom joined the Club. In 1965, the Club recruited 102 new members - the most for several years. The Club had three successful decades at the venue and it is sad to note that the running track was dug up shortly after our departure in the late 1980s.

.. and during in the chilly winters..

Distance running headquarters for the evenings in the early 1960s were at Earle F.C. Pavilion, which stood at the corner of Woolton Road and Lance Lane (described as "a well heated building with excellent hot baths"), where there were also some weight training facilities which Nancy Abrams and Jean Heath used regularly. By 1965, the Club was also running from Old Swan Boys Club, Derby Lane, on Tuesday nights in the winter. Weekend running training was based at Woolton Woods, using the Club Hut on the crest of Camp Hill. The hut was cold, short of any luxuries, and dependent on the efforts of Club members to maintain the building itself and to do day-to-day jobs like heating water for the bath. A Newsletter from 1962 notes "Billy Fitzsimmons in charge of the baths and the tea"! During the 1960s, our Club Hut was repeatedly vandalised - only the grassed-over foundations remain today. The Cross-Country headquarters moved to the village end of Woolton Woods at Woolton Boys Club and, after a few years more, to a building in the grounds of Allerton Priory on Woolton Road, opposite Clarke Gardens.

The course for the Christmas Handicap remained constant over those years; a testing two-lapper involving two climbs of the gruelling path up Camp Hill. We may not use the same course today, but the other traditions still apply - plenty of prizes and lots of refreshments! Back in 1962, it was recorded that victory went to "hard-working" Don Hobson, ahead of the "aggressive" George Bunner, with John Cleator clocking the fastest time and the catering provided by Margery Arnot, Ann Crocker and Mrs Edwards.

Tom has a dream!

By 1965, Tom O'Mahoney, who was back as Secretary because John Jackson had unexpected studies, noted in the Newsletter his regret over the absence of winter training facilities to match "Wyncote". His article makes fascinating reading in the light of what has happened since:

"We could build a H.Q. of our own, but this would be a most uneconomic use of money (part of which would be a grant from the Local Authority!). We would use the building on perhaps 20 occasions per year and not at all from April to September, when it would be at the mercy of vandals. Because of the short-sightedness, apathy (parsimony?), broken promises and sheer neglect of Liverpool City Council, we have been forced to abandon the track at Wavertree for winter training - the dressing accommodation is too unspeakably bad. Despite constant pleas since the track opened in 1958 nothing, absolutely nothing, has been done to improve buildings which must have been out-of-date 40 years ago."

Chapter 24 Club officials to be proud of!

Tom was busy

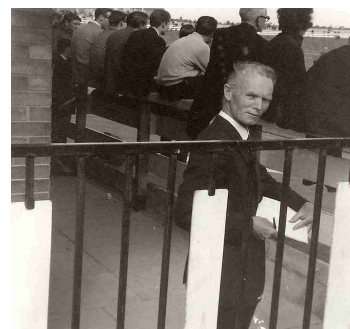
With no central place to train and to meet regularly, it is perhaps not surprising that the Honorary Secretary (TJO'M) recorded that he had posted 5,500 letters in the year 1960/61!

In 1963, Tom expressed grave concerns over membership turnover, citing the reasons as: very poor changing accommodation for track and field in both winter and summer, too many changes of venue (such as being forced to move out of Wavertree during the annual Liverpool Show), and a shortage of specialist coaches. At the AGM of that year, with Howard Baker in the Chair, Tom retired from the Secretary post, passing it to John Jackson, who relinquished his Handicapper role to Laurie Gaskill. Harold Benson and Janet Brown were elected Track Captains and Dave Lonsdale took on the role of Newsletter Editor. A few years later, Dave emigrated to New Zealand but, at the time of writing, is still in regular contact and is still competing.

Charles was busy too!

Track training in the winter became feasible, when Kirkby Stadium opened in 1963. It had a cinder running track surrounded by a banked concrete cycle track, plus decent floodlights. Although not located very conveniently for the majority of Liverpool Harriers, it had reasonable facilities and soon became our winter venue for track and field. It had the added benefit that excellent coaches Les Williams and Denis Watts (by this time a AAA Senior Coach) operated there and helped several of our members.

The Stadium opened with a major meeting, where the Lancashire team beat those from Cheshire, Northumberland and Durham, Warwickshire, and Staffordshire. The photo shows our own Tom O'Mahoney at the event. Club athletes in the Lancs team included three winners: Jean Heath (Discus), Roy Lyon (Shot) and Peter O'Hare (Hammer), plus Pam Jones (2nd in 80m Hurdles in 12.3) and Junior Mike Gilbert (3rd in the 440 in 49.3).



Towards the end of 1964, Charles Rice took over the management of Kirkby Stadium, bringing his customary efficiency to the place and eventually overseeing the installation of ones of the first "tartan" (all-weather) tracks in the UK. In 1966, Charles became the Club's fourth Northern Counties President - a well deserved honour which he held for three years.

Sterling (!) efforts by Frank Godfrey and the "Two Harrys"

Frank Godfrey was the force behind many of the fund-raising activities in the early 1960s, as well as social events such as the Dinner and Dance held at Reynolds Park, which followed the Christmas Handicap.

In April 1967, the first 'pop' dance was held and, even though a bus strike was in force, the evening was a success, thanks to the efforts of Harry Oakes and Harry Kinnear. Harry Oakes continued to organise many of the Club's social functions for some 30 years thereafter, with enthusiasm and efficiency coupled with a nice sense of humour, and is still active today in the Club's coaching set-up. Harry Kinnear was a valued official for many years, operating at high level, mainly as a time-keeper. His death in January 2000 left a big gap.

Memorable events!

In 1964, the course for the Sangster and Booth races moved to a new venue: Clarke Gardens, thus avoiding the need for the racers to cross Hillfoot Road. Mrs Joan Edwards would remember the Sangster and Booth Cup races of 1963, but for an unpleasant reason. She was injured when there was a gas explosion in the kitchen while she was preparing the refreshments.

That same year Joan's husband, Peter, was one of the first Club members to try Orienteering. With Tom O'Mahoney and Mike Davies, he took part in an event near Blackburn. The official distance was 7 miles, but our first to finish was Mike, in just under two hours, having covered an estimated 10 miles! A few weeks later, in foul conditions, a team comprising Mike, Brian Jones, Dave Lonsdale and Alex Sinclair ran a relay from Moel Famau to Wavertree Playground, covering the 46 miles via nine stages of 2 to 6 miles, for a time of 4:32:50.

Chapter 25 Liverpool Harriers' star of the 60s - Mike Turner

"The King" rules the UK at cross-country!

During the 1960s, Mike Turner became arguably the most consistent cross-country runner ever seen at top level in the UK. Although the National title narrowly eluded him, he was held in total respect by his friends and rivals and acquired the fitting nick-name: "The King"!

In 1960 Mike took the Junior titles in the District and West Lincs, going on to finish eighth in the Lancashire Championships and thus earn his first County vest. Another personal milestone was reached the next year when, at the age of just 21, he finished sixth in the National CCC, gained a place in the England team and went on to finish 23rd in the International CCC - the start of ten successful appearances for England in the annual event.

Mike's first major title came in 1963, at Blackburn, when he became the Club's first Northern CCC winner since Teddy Waterson in 1887. His 8th place in the National was a good effort, given that he had spent the previous four days in bed with bronchitis!

The next season he made further improvement. Having finished second in the Lancashire, the Northern and the National Championships, he took the Inter-Counties title at Epsom. The National winner, Mel Batty of Essex, had led by 15secs, but Mike caught him and passed him to win. This gave Lincs another team title, with 88pts, well ahead of Middlesex with 209pts. On the road, he finished second in the Inter-Counties 20 miles, again leading the Lancashire team to victory.

Mike was a convincing winner of the Northern in 1966, ahead of Ron Hill, and went to the National as favourite. He must have thought his day had finally come when he was in the lead with just 200 metres to go, but Ron Hill caught him on the line and was given the verdict, although the time-keepers could not split them.

This photo of Mike appeared in an article in "The Guardian" in March 1970, entitled "A Lion In Winter".

At the AAA Standards Meeting at Warrington in 1963, Mike ran a solo 13:43 for three miles, smashing his own track record by 13 seconds. That would be worth around 14:10 for 5000m - a terrific run on your own.

The following year he continued to show his breadth of talent by finishing third in the famous New Year's Eve Sao Paulo "Round the Houses" race and being ranked in the top ten for six miles with a time of 27mins 59secs (circa 29 minutes for 10,000m).

In late 1965, with the Mexico Olympics due to be held at considerable altitude in 1968, there was a real need for research to be done, so the GB team could prepare properly - especially for the longer running events. An ideal person to participate would be someone intelligent who could handle hard long runs. How about Mike Turner! After a month of tests in the UK, the squad spent a further month at altitude in Mexico. They concluded that there should be no long term adverse health effects, but that times would slow by about one minute per 3 miles! Furthermore, even a 4 week acclimatisation period would still leave the runner some 40 seconds slower in a 3 mile race.

The decade finished with a familiar story at the 1969 Inter-Counties CCC, when Mike finished third, leading Lancashire home for their ninth consecutive team title, with the Club's influential Tom O'Mahoney as team manager. It was fitting that Mike finished that season by captaining the England Cross-Country Team for the first time, to a team victory in the International Cross Country Championships at Clydebank in Scotland. He reckoned this was the most pleasurable moment of his long athletics career.

Mike Turner, of Lancashire—England have never had a captain like him



Chapter 26 Early 1960s distance running - some promising youngsters.

Seniors a bit disappointing

In the 1960 District Road Relay, there was a rare demonstration of strength in depth, when the Club had a fine win over local rivals Pembroke, with Doug Bell running a responsible last leg after taking over a meagre six second lead once Turner, Rimmer, Wright, Barnard, Benson, Mennarry, Hobson, Stevens and Thomson had all done their bit.

Also in 1960, Ellis Barnard ran an excellent 2:33:07 Marathon, but this popular Club member emigrated to New Zealand the following year. He is still in touch with the Club today and still competes as a Veteran.

Mike Turner took the 1961 West Lancs Senior title by a big margin, but the team was only 4th.

Dave Jenkins shows potential

At the 1961 West Lancs Championships, it was good to see the Club's teams win the Boys, Youths and Juniors events, with promising runs from Bobby Lyons (Boy) and Dave Jenkins (Youth), plus victory in the Juniors for Neil Thompson. A little later, via a Club Newsletter, Tom O'Mahoney reflected on the need for the Club's runners to train harder, perhaps influenced by the way Mike Turner was improving. He particularly singled out Neil Thompson, who obviously had real class, and was perhaps seen as another Turner. Tom advised him to step up his weekly mileage from 40 to 80, and to do more hill running! There is virtually no further mention of Neil after that time and we can only speculate whether he was put off by the advice!

In 1962 the talented Dave Jenkins won the West Lancs Junior race, passing Colin Maclachlan on the last lap. These two led Liverpool Harriers to a clear team win, with 16 points against Waterloo's 50 points. They then excelled at the Northern CCC, held at Milnerfield Farm in Bingley, winning the Junior team title for the first time in the Club's history, with Colin Maclachlan (11) and Dave Jenkins (12) leading the successful team home, backed by John Morgan (20) and Doug Bell (30).

High hopes for the Juniors in the National at Blackpool were soon dashed, when Dave retired with a stomach upset and Colin was badly spiked. For some time, Colin had been travelling from Margate to compete for us, but this was his last race for the Club: he relocated to Essex and joined Woodford Green.

Young distance runners join up

The following season, 1963, saw excellent performances from our Juniors. Dave Jenkins retained his West Lancs title, with Mike Fearon second and new member Brian Jones 6th, ensuring a convincing team victory.



Dave then finished sixth in the Northern, where Brian was second counter ahead of Mike. But Dave was missing for the National at Blackburn, where Mike Fearon finished an excellent 8th, in a field of 466, and was judged to be the Club's most improved runner.

That same season, the Youths team won the District and West Lancs team races, with another new member, Trevor Moore, running consistently in both races. Keith Burrell joined the Club in 1963, as did Alan Gerrard. Keith began his Club career with a solid fifth in the Boys race at the Lancashire CCC and did even better in 1964, with a fine win in the Lancs. He continued to be a solid performer as a Junior and Senior for many years. This photo of Keith (just ahead of Richie Brown of Pembroke) was taken at Town Park in Runcorn, in the West Lancs race of 1979.

The Seniors finished an unexpected 2nd to Wirral in the 1964 Sefton Park Road Relay, but that was largely due to Mike Turner knocking 20 seconds off the lap record! The year finished with 440 Hurdler Angus Duncan winning the Christmas Handicap and, significantly, Brian Jones running 13:39 against the previous record of 14:13.

In 1965 there were more new names in the Club. Keith Oliver and Mike Dooling both had reasonable runs in the Lancs XC, and Keith won the Army Apprentices XC. As we shall see, Keith went on to achieve some remarkable performances in a somewhat different event, and Mike competed at a good level for many years before moving into the administration side of athletics with great success. First prize for the Christmas Handicap was still the traditional turkey. That year it was won by relative newcomer Vic Thomson, who generously brought samples back for those attending the morning run on Christmas Day itself!

1965 was also the first year of the "Waterloo Festival of Road Racing", which benefited from good sponsorship. The top events were a 7 miles road race (generally packed with international stars) and an evening 6-man relay on a fast 2 miles lap. Another new member, big Tony Swindlehurst, ran reasonably in the "7" and the team finished 6th in the relay, after Brian Jones had run a good first leg. The next year, Tony won the Club Senior CCC and then had two good runs in local races in 1967, clocking 1hr 54mins in the annual Pembroke 20 miles and finishing a creditable second in the Liverpool Marathon in 2hrs 25mins 3secs (although the course was subsequently recorded as "short").

Chapter 27 Flying the Club flag away from home!

In those years, it was a "tradition" for our distance running teams to travel to open races at venues well away from Merseyside. In 1965, our youngsters made the trip to Coventry for a classy Young Athletes road relay, which was won by National Cross Country Champions, Mitcham. Our team in a respectable 8th place was Alan Gerrard, Keith Burrell, Colin Howlett and Mike Dooling.

Over the Easter weekend in 1966, there was a worthwhile "outing" to the annual Isle of Man Road Race Festival, where regulars Brian Jones, Tony Swindlehurst and Mike Fearon were joined by Trevor Moore in the 4x5 miles relay. On the third stage, Tony took Liverpool Harriers into the lead, but Olympic 1500 metre runner John Whetton overtook Mike on the final lap.

A long journey to Essex for the 10-man Johnston Relay resulted in only 22nd place out of 40 teams, even with Mike Turner thrashing several other internationals on his way to a course record. He broke yet another stage record in the 5-man Luton-to-Bedford relay, where good runs from Mike Fearon and Brian Jones resulted in 3rd place overall.

April of that year witnessed a rather special trip, to the 4x4miles Chiltern Relay. Mike Turner would make his way to High Wycombe from Cambridge via public transport, but Mike Fearon, Brian Jones and Tony Swindlehurst decided to save money by hitch-hiking from Liverpool the day before.

Mike Fearon (being a student!) started out early and reached destination before night-fall. But it was a very different story for Brian and Tony, who only got as far as Leicester that night. The next day, after three soakings, 80 miles in a travelling theatre (yes!), and a final taxi ride, they arrived with just twenty minutes to spare!

An unflustered Brian finished 11th on the first stage, which Mike Fearon improved to 4th with a great run. After Tony had maintained that placing, Mike Turner ran 37 seconds faster than anyone else and brought the team home third. Quite a weekend!



This photo shows Tony, Mike Turner, Mike Fearon, and Brian, reunited at Kirkby Stadium many years later.

Chapter 28 At last - some real backing for Turner!

Healthy signs

The autumn of 1966 saw our distance runners steadily improving, resulting in a triumph in the Sefton Park road relay event, having been narrowly beaten the previous year. This time Mike Turner received good support from a consistent team, allowing him to start the final lap just 4 seconds behind the leader. Of course he won.. of course he broke the lap record yet again!

Brian Jones again clocked the fastest time in the Christmas Handicap that year.

More new faces in the late 1960s

In 1967, several new members appeared who would play a prominent part in later Club victories at the highest level. They included that slim, gritty lad from Widnes, Roger Harrison, Tony Farrell, and Frank Davies (who had joined the Club after graduating from Liverpool University).

The Club Cross-Country Championship of 1967, held on the tough course around Camp Hill, was particularly well-supported, with Brian Jones winning the Senior race ahead of newcomers Frank and Roger. The Junior race was won by the battling Mike Dooling, while the Youths and Boys titles went to Ron Symington and Nick Fennell respectively.

No Mike Turner, Mike Fearon departs, but the standard continues to rise... then tragedy.

In the build-up towards the 1968 Olympics at Mexico City, the AAA wanted to research the effects of altitude on distance running. Mike Turner was one of the "guinea pigs" who went to the Pyrenees for several weeks, producing statistical evidence of the very real problems our distance runners would face. Without Mike's contribution, the team did well to take second place in the District relay and eighth in the Lancashire event. In the District race, Mike Fearon ran fastest lap of the day on the final stage. However, we then lost his services when he moved south after his graduation.

However, we did gain another promising runner, junior Dick Strutt, who was studying at Liverpool University. In 1968, with Mike Turner on another trip overseas, Dick was our fastest in the District relay, just ahead of Frank. For the Lancs relay, Mike Fearon was eligible to run in our team, as was John Linaker (who had left the Liverpool area some years before to live in Scotland). John was our fastest, ahead of Dick and Frank, and the team equalled the Club's best ever placing with fourth.

Then tragedy struck, when Dick took his own life, possibly because he had become so depressed by what he saw during his charity work with old people.

Turner is back... and the AAA 6-stage is born.

When Mike was back in the team in 1969, we saw another step forward. The team won the annual Luton-to-Bedford relay, inspired by Mike's amazing record stage, the day after he had (again!) broken the lap record at the District race in Sefton Park.

When a Liverpool Harriers' team took part in the the inaugural AAA 6-Stage Relay, at Crystal Palace on 25th October, 1969, Mike was at it again. He ran fastest lap of the day to anchor our team into 7th place. That finishing position sounds pretty good, but there were only 9 teams present and the last one was lapped!

Onward and upward?

With Mike's consistency, and the gradual improvement of the others, the future for the Club's distance running team looked good as the decade came to a close.

Chapter 29 Ladies' Track & Field team goes from strength to strength in the 60s.

Carole Carter and Nancy Abrams lead the way

The Ladies were making a habit of winning the Centenary Trophy, completing their ninth successive win in 1960. Also that year, the Senior 4x110 yards relay team won the Northern Championships in a new record time of 49.3secs, with Nancy Abrams on leg one, followed by Carole Carter, Carole Evans, and Joan Hoyland.

Carole Carter was running better and better. In 1960 she completed an impressive sprint double in the Lances Championships and also represented the WAAA at 220yards. The next season she finished a creditable second in the 100 yards at the Women's AAA Championships in 10.9secs to Jenny Smart's 10.7secs, with Daphne Arden third. Then, in 1962, she finally earned her first international vest against West Germany, finishing third in the 200 metres in 24.3secs, and also impressed when running for Great Britain against USA. She represented GB in every match in the summer of 1961, maintaining a presence of LHAC at international level every year since 1953.

Carole joined Nancy, Carole Evans and Joan Holroyd to form a sprint relay team which ran 48.0 to finish only just outside the medals in the WAAA Championships. She was also an asset away from the track: the Secretary's report for 1960/61 thanked her for her typing and duplication of the Newsletter. However, all that was to end at the end of the 1961 track season, when she became Mrs Carole Bailey. The couple moved to Salford and we lost her valuable services, both on and off the track.

.. and two stars of the future emerge on the scene..

We had another victor at the 1960 Northern Championships, when the 17 year old Jean Heath won the Discus. The youngster then represented Lancashire in the Inter-Counties and competed in her first WAAA later in the year. This was the start of a long and successful throwing career, as we shall see.

Nancy Abrams was heavily into the coaching scene by 1965 and she was a major factor behind the astonishing performances of a young girl from Highfield Secondary Modern School: Wendy Kavanagh (shown here training at "Wyncote"). Electric sprinting saw Wendy take the Junior WAAA 100 and 150 yards titles, having already won the English Schools 100 yards in a new record of 11.1secs.



Lots of titles!

Jean Whitehead represented the WAAA in 1961 and Janet Brown won the National Junior Women's High Jump title that year. Although the Club lost Carole Carter at the end of that season, there were several others who continued to keep Liverpool Harriers in the limelight.

In 1963, Pam Jones took the Northern title for the 220yds Hurdles. Hilary Fairclough was another new star for Liverpool Harriers: she achieved a double victory at Shot and Javelin in the Northern Junior, breaking records in both! Then she did the double again in the WAAA Junior Championships, setting a UK record of 12.91m in the Shot Putt (2.72kg). Unfortunately, it was short-lived joy for the Club, because Hilary resigned the next year and joined Wigan.

The following summer saw Janet Brown move into the Senior ranks and take silver in the Northern High Jump.

Jean Heath married in 1964 and became Jean Fielding, but she was still winning Northern titles.

In all, Jean won the Northern Discus title an amazing 12 times over the period from 1960 to 1979!

Performances of the year came from the young Wendy Kavanagh. She was awarded the Northern Women's trophy for best performance at the championships and, at the tender age of just 13, she won the Senior 100 yards event at the first ever indoors meeting to be held at RAF Cosford! Wendy swept all before her the next year, taking the Junior 100 yards and 150 yards events at Northern and WAAA level. Another highlight was her 11.2secs in the Under 15 age group at the Lancashire championships, which was faster than the Intermediate and Senior winners, and was also a UK best performance at that age.

The 1966 track season began well for our Ladies, with an unexpected victory in a strong inter-club meeting at Bradford, where our stars were sprinters Wendy Kavanagh and Carol Dutton, plus throwers Carol Keary and Jean Fielding. Both relay teams also won, with the 4x220 yards squad (Carol Dutton, Pam Lewis, Pat Davies and Wendy Kavanagh) producing one of the best times in the UK that year. In the Northern Championships, our team of Dorothy Grocott, Linda Jenkins, Carol Dutton and Wendy Kavanagh broke the Club record for 4x110 yards, with 48.6 in second place, in a year when the WAAA event had been won in only 48.1 seconds.

But Wendy's individual performances continued to be astounding. In 1966, she won the Northern 100 and 220 Senior Championships, despite being still only fifteen! Then she represented Great Britain against France, on September 18th 1966, thus becoming one of GB's youngest ever female internationals. She acquitted herself well, with a creditable third in the 100 metres, clocking 12.0secs, plus a sound anchor leg in Great Britain's 4x100 metres winning team.

Meanwhile, Pat Davies was flying the flag for the Ladies during the winter, finishing third in the Northern CCC in 1966 and, after a few impressive runs, was rewarded with selection for the North in an Inter-Area match. The next year she was second in the Lancs race, 12th in the Northern, and an excellent 27th in the Women's National.



Chapter 30 Early 1960s - Men's Track & Field team getting stronger too

A new challenge for Tom Farrell

A newsletter of the time mentions that Tom Farrell's training over the 1959/60 winter is worrying him, because he is getting more stamina and thinks perhaps he should switch to half-mile, which he regards with some dread! His first race of the 1960 summer was indeed at that distance, in the annual fixture against Liverpool University. He shot away at the gun, ran a 55 first lap, then coasted to a solo win in 1:52.2 (worth sub 1:52 for 800m). Clearly he could go under 1:50 if pushed - i.e. international standard!

The Olympic programme for Rome would not allow Tom to double the 800 and the 400m Hurdles. A difficult choice had to be made! He decided to run the 880yards in the AAA Championships and won it narrowly in 1:49.4, beating two 800 metre specialists: John Wenk and Brian Hewson. He was duly selected for the GB Olympic team, but the standard in his chosen event at the Games was high, with New Zealand's Peter Snell winning the final in a new Olympic record. Hewson failed in the first round, but Tom won his heat in 1:48.9. In the Quarter-Final, he recorded 1:50.7, but was eliminated, as was Wenk.

Tom had certainly proved himself at the event. He ran his personal best of 1:48.0 for 800m that year - but even that time would not have got him to the classy Olympic final. Somewhat disappointing possibly, but how many athletes compete at two Olympic Games in significantly different events?

Mike Gilbert appears!

Among the highlights of 1960 were the performances of 15 years old Mike Gilbert, who achieved 51.7 for 440 yards and 2:06.4 for 880 yards, plus a Long Jump of 20ft (6.10 metres). That was the beginning of a wonderful athletics career for Mike, with many honours, as recorded in the following pages. He contributed a lot to Liverpool Harriers over many years and, 50 years on, still dons his yellow vest for the occasional race on road or country.

The following year, Mike recorded 50.6 in poor conditions, to win the Lancashire Schools title, then took the Lanes 440 titles at both Junior and Senior level in 1963, which led to his selection for the Inter-Counties. Later that summer, he won the Northern Junior in a new personal best of 49.3, with Paddy Byrne 4th, and was selected to represent the Northern Counties. In 1964, Mike had moved into the senior ranks, but his successes continued, with victory in the Northern Senior 440. It took a blistering 47.8secs by Olympic hurdler, Peter Warden, to stop him repeating the victory in 1965.

We had some other good runners

Young Angus Duncan ran a highly respectable 440yards Hurdles of 54.9 in the AAA Championships of 1960, just failing to make the final. He was also active in the Junior cross-country team in the winter of 1959/60. In the 1964 Northern 440yards Hurdles, he was third - an excellent run, but behind the Club "number one", Tom Farrell, who was second!

Dewi Roberts ran 10.0secs again in 1960, but in the colours of Cambridge University rather than Liverpool Harriers & AC. At the Perth Empire Games of 1962, two more Liverpool Harriers, Colin Maclachan and Brian Whitehead, both represented the Isle of Man in sprint events. But, like Dewi, Titus, and Gerald, there is no record of them competing in Club teams on the domestic scene.

Andy Lloyd had a short but successful athletics career with the Club. He won the 1962 Lanes 440 in a record 49.9, just 30 minutes after a 50.9 heat, and having already finished second in the 880 in 1:55.4. The same year he came 3rd in AAA Junior 880. At the Northern Men's Champs, John Cleator dead-heated for first place in the 3000m Steeplechase with the great Ernie Pomfret, setting a new Northern record of 8:55.8. Elsewhere in 1962, Dave Jenkins (still a Junior) ran an excellent time of 4:12.2 for the Mile. But that was as fast as this talented runner could manage.

A new set of middle distance runners were about to emerge. In 1966, Alan Gerrard was making quite a name for himself, as a consequence of a solid winter's training. At an early-season meeting at Wigan he won the Junior Mile, then came second (1:59) in the Senior 880 yards. The Club Mile Championships of 1966 was a classic. It developed into a duel between Mike Fearon and Alan Gerrard, with Alan surprisingly being outsprinted and both doing P.B.s (4:21.7 and 4:22.0).

We even had a star walker!

Julian Hopkins put the Club back on the Road Walking map in the late 1960s, winning several county titles. In most events he wore the colours of Lancashire Walking Club and his high point was being part of their excellent team which won the National 20k in 1970. Later he became a well-respected coach, being appointed National Event Coach from 1974 to 1984. He also found time to be the announcer at many Club fixtures, which he continues to do up to the present.

Poor relations?

Up to the 1960s, there seems to have been an underlying sentiment that field events were far less important to our Club than running events. This may have dated back to the foundation of Liverpool Harriers as primarily a cross-country club or, perhaps, it simply reflected the general attitude in athletics at that time.

An interesting point is made in the Club Newsletter of August 1963:

"It has been part of the club policy since before 1939 to encourage field events... on which we rely for valuable points in inter-club meetings."

A glance through the fixture list for 1961 reveals just how important those inter-club fixtures were in those days and how much the track and field scene has changed over time. In addition to the Lancashire, Northern and National championships, there were a series of four "Liverpool Parks" events, plus various Club Championships, several Open Meetings (such as St Helens, Widnes, Warrington and Manchester) and eight inter-club competitions across the summer. The following year, 1962, saw the Club competing in thirteen inter-club meetings over the summer, winning eight of them! These fixtures were treated seriously, in terms of getting our best performers to turn out in non-championship meetings and asking athletes to compete away from their normal events. Of course, all this pre-dated the inter-club league competition structure of the present day.

Around this period, the development of our field event competitors was possibly aided by the presence of coaches such as Denis Watts. Whatever the reason, our Club history after that time shows field events receiving much more recognition and many County, Area, and National champions emerging from our ranks.

Quality performances from our jumpers and throwers

The "High Jump Dynasty" of Liverpool Harriers, begun many years earlier by Howard Baker, was in good hands!

Colin Flewitt had represented Lanes the previous year in the Inter-Counties, but he showed his class in 1960 with a good pair of marks: a 22' Long Jump (6.71m) and a 6' 2" High Jump (1.88m). The next year he gained his first AAA vest. Then Nigel Reid appeared in 1962, taking the Lanes title at 6'1", an inch better than Colin. At the Northern Men's Champs, Nigel won the Senior HJ and Jeremy Harrison won Junior event. In 1963, both Colin and Nigel competed in AAA colours, which was very nearly equivalent to an England vest in today's terms. The next year, Jeremy took up the High Jump mantle, when he won the Northern title.

We also had three good Hammer throwers in 1960: Roy Brewer, Peter O'Hare, and Bob Middlefell, while Roy Lyon set a new Club Shot Putt record of 46'6" in 1962 and represented AAA the next year. An even better thrower emerged a year or two later, when Barry Williams won the Hammer events at the English Schools and the AAA Junior Championships - the start of a long sequence of quality performances for "Baz".

Brian Wilkins was another making good progress. In 1966 he made a huge improvement in his Javelin best, throwing 186' 1¾" (56.74m), with what is now termed the "old spec" javelin.

Chapter 31 The Men's Track & Field team make the big time.. eventually!

As the decade evolved, the Club's senior team became stronger, with the youngsters maturing and new members arriving - many from Liverpool University. The extent of the Club's track and field talent was shown clearly in 1967 when, with many of the Club's leading athletes at the Edinburgh Highland Games, the Club won the prestigious Telegraph Trophy at Blackburn for the first time. Probably the notable improvement was the quality of our field event competitors, but there was real strength all round.

Jumps

Towards the end of the decade we had two quality youngsters covering the horizontal jumps: Steve Wright and Chris Allen.

For the High Jump, we had the amazing Bob Bruynooghe (of Belgian origin), a solidly-muscled athlete who did not fit the normal image for the event, but who had plenty of raw power and exhibited terrific enthusiasm plus an unexpected spring in his step. He looked as if he should make a good thrower - and he did! In 1968, while studying at Edinburgh University, he won the Junior AAA High Jump and took an interesting array of titles at the Scottish Under 20 Championships: High Jump, Triple Jump, Discus and Shot! In the coming years, Bob was often seen in Club colours, running from the High Jump apron, changing his shoes to compete in a throwing event, before returning in time to take his next jump!

Throws

Barry Williams was big and strong, and performed well at Shot and Discus, but Hammer was his favourite. In 1966, he won the Cheshire Hammer title with a superb throw of 189ft 2ins, then he made his international debut the following year, for Great Britain versus France. Also in 1967 he broke the Northern Counties Championship record, with a throw of 56.00m, for which he was awarded the "Kingston-Upon_Hull" trophy as top field event competitor. He repeated this double feat in 1968, with a distance of 57.70m. He would stay at the top for several years and compete at the 1972 Olympics, so it was a big loss for the Club when he moved away after the 1972 season, to join Stretford AC (now Trafford), although he remains a Life Member.

In 1969, this impressive array of field event competitors was supplemented by a Liverpool University graduate who would go on to have a huge influence on our Track and Field team. Shown here with his certificate commemorating a victory in the University Championships, Mike Holmes was primarily a Hammer thrower, with a well-honed technique, but his sheer strength (English Universities Weightlifting Champion) meant he could perform well at Shot and Discus when required.



Mike's student friend, Dave Sorrell, also joined the Club. He was a champion Javelin thrower when at school in Essex, and still potentially one of the best in the UK in the late 60s and early 70s, but a chronic shoulder injury often restricted him to competing at Discus and Shot. However, he still won Northern Counties titles in 1969, 1970 and 1975. He threw a terrific 77.36m with the "old spec" Javelin at a British League fixture at Kirkby in 1972, which still stands as a Club best today.

Sprints

Joe Speake joined the Club in 1966, having decided to return to athletics after a period playing Rugby which included trials for England, and impressed everyone with his sprinting speed and sheer power. He was explosive over 60 metres: his Club record of 6.8 seconds still standing some 40 years later. His first appearance as an international came in 1967, the year when he finished fourth in the AAA 100 yards and also ran 9.6 seconds for that distance (worth 10.5 for 100 metres). In 1968 he took the Northern 220 yards at Grimsby, although it was only 22.6 because of the gale-force wind. He was selected for the sprint relay team for the 1968 Olympics, at altitude in Mexico City, where they missed out on medals but smashed the GB record.

Mike Gilbert was not our only 440 runner. In 1964, the Club's team won the Lancs 4x440 yards title in 3:23.8: Paddy Byrne, Tom Farrell, Mike Gilbert and Don Wainman. In 1966 they won it again, in 3:28.0 (Don Wainman, Mike Gilbert, Paddy Byrne, and Alan Gerrard), then ran seven seconds faster in the AAA Championships but were outside the medals.

Middle Distance

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS June 28 1970

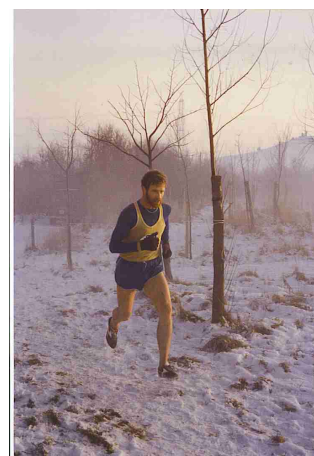


Alan Gerrard comes home to win the 800 metres in a Lancashire county record time of 1-52.2secs.

Alan Gerrard was establishing himself as a classy middle distance runner, winning the Devon county 880 yards several times, beginning in 1967 with 1min 56.7secs, and later switching allegiance to Lancashire. He had plenty of natural speed, plus an ability to withstand the barging of a close race. These attributes, coupled with his growing stamina, made him a feared competitor.

Tony Farrell (here shown running in the West Lincs at Runcorn, in 1979) was another quality performer at 880 yards, as was Alan's training partner, Frank Davies, whose speciality was the Mile, for which he now held the Club record.

Back in 1961, Mike Turner produced an impressive 3 miles in 13mins 51secs in the Northern, to remind everyone that he was no slouch on the track. His consistency at that distance, and also over the Steeplechase, was exemplary.



Hurdles

Olympic sprint hurdler, Bob Birrell, joined the Club in 1965, initially as second-claim. He considered that he "retired" in 1966, but that is contradicted by his run of victories from 1966 to 1969 in the Northern, and by his Club record of 14.2 set in 1968, which still stands in 2010.

We also had two younger sprint hurdlers capable of winning major races: Keith Purves and Nick Winter.

It's time to face the big challenge..

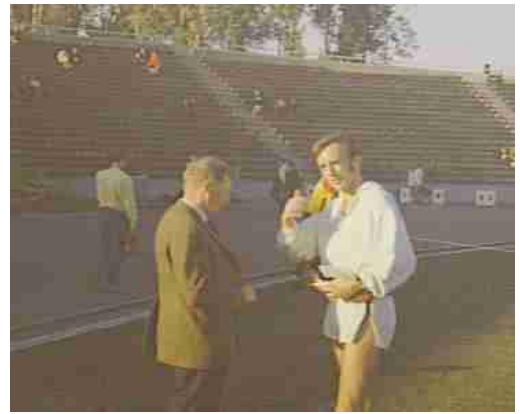
It had become apparent by the mid-60s that the relaxed, social atmosphere of trophy meetings was no longer meeting the competitive needs of many clubs. There was growing demand for a more structured system, where the top teams in the country could meet head-to-head. Following a lead from the continent, a Midland Area League was formed in 1967 and a pilot National League of two divisions was established the following year. The pilot was a success, leading to a formal League of 18 clubs, in 3 divisions, being proposed for 1969. Liverpool Harriers was clearly among the best in the country at this time and we expected to be among those taking part. However, the selection was based on a convoluted computation of every club's best individual performances. Somehow our club just missed the cut.

Good news arrived in early September 1969, when the Club received a letter confirming their place in a qualifying competition to join the second season of the British Athletics League, to take place at Crystal Palace on the 20th of the month. There was even better news on the day, when Liverpool Harriers won comfortably, with Wolverhampton & Bilston taking the other qualification spot just ahead of Reading.

Two of our stars on that epic day were Barry Williams (taking the Hammer by a huge margin) and Mike Turner (with a winning double of Steeplechase [8:57.2] and 5,000 metres [14:20]), but it was the indefatigable Bob Bruynooghe who stole the show, with first in the High Jump, third in the Shot, third in the Discus, and a token jump in the Pole Vault. He scored 43 points, on a day when the eighth team only scored 91 points altogether!

As usual, team management was a key factor!

Although the performances on the track and field at Crystal Palace were excellent, all the athletes knew that a key factor behind the Club's success had been the organisational effort put in by Tom O'Mahoney and Tony Farrell.



In the left photo, we see some of the team that day. From left to right: Bill Harper, Nick Winter, Alan Gerrard, ??, Alan Ascott, John Isaac (bending down), Tony Farrell, Frank Davies, Paddy Byrne ("resting!"), Mike Gilbert.

To the right, Charles Rice and Mike Turner reflect on what has been achieved.

That day in 1969 kicked off the Club's participation in the BAL, which has been a key focus for the Men every summer since then.