

## **PART THREE - The 1970s**

### **A golden era in the history of Liverpool Harriers & AC**

#### **Chapter 32    We're in the British Athletics League!**

**Mike Holmes has written a detailed account of the participation of Liverpool Harriers & Athletic Club in the British Athletics League, from our very first fixture in 1970 up to promotion to the top division in 1983. That forms a separate strand of the Club's documented history, so our BAL activity is only covered in outline within this section.**

##### ***A very different experience***

In 1970, the Club's track and field team included a few athletes who had experience of competition at National or even International level, but most of the competition was lower key: inter-club meetings, possibly with a team trophy at stake, possibly skipping your speciality event for a bit of variety. Suddenly it all changed. Team points were vital for survival and progress in the BAL, so the pressure was intense.

Moreover, the BAL soon became renowned for the high standard of competition, so quality athletes naturally migrated to BAL clubs, which added further spice!

##### ***A positive start***

Our first fixture was on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1970, at Iffley Road in Oxford. The venue had been made immortal in 1954 by Sir Roger Bannister, as the plaque commemorates. By 1970 the original cinder track had been replaced by a synthetic one, but running round it was still quite special.



For that first season, our squad which won the qualifying competition had been strengthened by the arrival of Pete Waddington and Mike Holmes. By the time of the fourth fixture, at Croydon, promotion was virtually certain. The Club slaughtered all opposition, with Bob Bruynooghe contributing an amazing 42 points out of our total of 267 points. Thus promotion to Division Two was gained at the first attempt, arguably proving that we should have been in the BAL already! Over the season as a whole, Mike Holmes accumulated the most points, but top honours must go to Mike Turner who successfully doubled in the 5000 metres and Steeplechase in all four matches, turning in times such as his 8:59.2 and 14:19.8 at Nottingham.

##### ***1971-1975 Feeling the pressure***

Our first season in Division Two resulted in a close third position overall, narrowly missing promotion to the top level, by virtue of less match points scored. On the track, Mike Turner was still churning out double wins, supported by Alan Gerrard and Frank Davies at 800/1500. Mike Gilbert was producing some fast sprinting (11.2/22.3/48.3), while Olympian Tom Farrell still showed elegance and determination at the age of 38. ?? field events??

The following year, 1972, was a disaster, with the Club team last in all four matches. However, there were some good individual performances, especially in the Kirkby fixture, where Barry Williams threw the Hammer 66.92 metres in the Kirkby fixture to set a Club Discus record, Dave Sorrell launched a mighty 77.38 in the Javelin (still a Club best with the old specification), and Bill Hartley ran 53.6 for the 400m Hurdles in his very first appearance for Liverpool Harriers. Others to make a good contribution during 1972 included Mike Gilbert (48.6), Alan Gerrard (3:50.1) and, of course, Bob Bruynooghe! Two notable events during 1972 were Mike Turner throwing the Javelin at Reading (well, he used to be an excellent cricketer when at school!) and the first appearance of triple jumper Brian Camp (pictured here), who would be a key man in the seasons to come.

It was generally felt that relegation back to Division 3 would just be a "blip" before we returned to Division 2.



After an inconsistent season, promotion was ultimately missed in 1975, albeit by the narrowest of margins. Star performances of the year in the BAL were Bill Hartley's inspirational 51.8 at the new all-weather track at Kirkby (where Charles Rice was now the Manager, and Jean Fielding helped with the administration) and brilliant long jumping from youngster Steve Wright, who gained a Junior International vest.

The fixture at Swansea provided the high spot: a beautiful day, at a track overlooking the picturesque Mumbles Bay, where our match win was due to a good all-round performance. There were notable contributions from Paddy Byrne (50.8 for 400m), Nick Winter (15.8 Hurdles and 3.40 Pole Vault), Paul Carey (14:33.8 for 5000m), Nick Parry (13.56 Shot), John Newett (46.58 Javelin), Alan Ascott (9:40.6 Steeplechase) and Frank Davies (3:52.8 for 1500m).



The following season was very disappointing, ending in relegation. The fixture at Meadowbank provided most of the few bright spots. Bill Hartley set a 400m divisional record of 47.4, and a personal best 100m of 10.8, Ron Symington ran an excellent 1500m in 3:48.2, followed by young Phil McEvoy running 3:52.1, and Steve Wright competed in five events! The photo shows Steve knocking off the Pole Vault bar during a BAL fixture, possibly it was at that Meadowbank fixture.

Olympian Tom Farrell, who had been an inspiration to many and a great team member, made his final track appearance at the last BAL fixture that year.

Luckily, the BAL had recently been expanded to four divisions, so relegation from Division 3 no longer meant falling out of the BAL altogether. However, 1975 was another "great escape", when we finished equal 4<sup>th</sup>, but survived by a margin of just 6 event points!

### ***1976-1979 Up and Up!***

After the worries of the previous season, 1976 was very satisfying for two reasons. Firstly, it saw Liverpool Harriers gaining promotion by winning Division 4. Secondly, the initial fixture at Brighton marked the appearance at this level of several youngsters under the age of eighteen, including Rob Harrison running a personal best of 1:56.6 and a 49.4 relay leg from Maurice Ducasse. The season finished at Parliament Hill Fields, where sprinter Joe Speake ran his final race, after a career which included the Mexico Olympics.

In both 1977 and 1978, the Club pressed for promotion, but had to settle for third on each occasion. These years saw the end of BAL competition for several of the "regulars", but there was a new crop of talent, producing cracking performances, such as: Geoff Smith (with a 1500/5000m double of 3:49.7/14:15.0), John Woods (doubling Steeplechase and 5000m in 9:15.6/14:16.6), Pete Nickson (setting a Club Pole Vault record of 3.70m while still under-20), and Tony Baker (58.80 Javelin). It was good to see Bill Hartley back after serious injury, while the "ever presents" Mike Holmes and Brian Camp provided points and continuity.

Haringey were promoted into Division 3 for the 1979 season, and were on a meteoric rise to the top, but we held off the challenge of the other teams to secure the second promotion slot to Division 2.

There were some unusual problems during the year. Delays on the journey to Enfield meant that Vaulters and Hammer Throwers had to change on the coach, then the return journey was enlivened when the coach windscreen blew in, showering the front passengers with glass. The coach was also delayed en route to the next meeting, at Bristol, by heavy rain and motorway tailbacks but, "fortunately", the track conditions were so bad that the start of the meeting was also delayed and we were able to fully compete, apart from the Pole Vaulters, whose event was cancelled.

By the end of the 70s, the Club had completed ten years membership of the exclusive BAL group. There had been good times and bad times, but most clubs in the UK could only dream of attaining such a level. Liverpool Harriers was not only fielding a BAL team, but was also participating in the Northern League (the photo shows Peter Carey (brother of Paul) leading Mike Dooling in a fixture at Kirkby). In 1979, it was decided to join the Cheshire League too, with the object of giving a chance to shine for those members who could not make the National or Northern teams. Obviously, the Club's administration was further stretched by this and the success of the venture was down to fine work by Cath Hardaker Senior and Dave Tripp as Team Managers.



## **Chapter 33    The Games at Edinburgh, Munich, Christchurch, Rome, Edmonton .. and Sapporo, Innsbruck and Lake Placid too!**

### ***Edinburgh - Big Baz bags bronze***

When the Commonwealth Games were held in Edinburgh in 1970, two Liverpool Harriers were in the England squad. Jean Fielding missed out in the Discus, performing well below her best, but Barry Williams finished an excellent third in the Hammer, completing an England clean sweep, behind team-mates Howard Payne and Bruce Fraser.

### ***Sapporo, Innsbruck, Lake Placid - Keith Oliver - the unsung hero!***

At the Winter Olympics of 1972, held at Sapporo, Japan, a member of the GB team in the 20km Skiing Biathlon produced the best ever finish by a Briton in that event, in 11<sup>th</sup> place. He also competed in the 30km cross-country skiing race and the 4x7.5km Biathlon relay. That athlete was 24-year old Keith Oliver, from Garston, who also ran cross-country, road relays, and 5000m for Liverpool Harriers. He was in the army, but he worked as a cook and received no preferential treatment with regard to using the ranges to practice his rifle shooting. Interestingly, his 11th place was due to his shooting - purely on his skiing he only ranked 27th. They must get more snow in Garston than we thought!

Keith was back for the 1976 Olympics in Innsbruck, for the Cross-Country Skiing event, but finished well down the field. He made his third Olympics in 1980, at Lake Placid, to compete in three events again, and was a commendable 16<sup>th</sup> in the Biathlon. He was deservedly honoured by being chosen to carry the British flag at the closing ceremony.

### ***Munich - not a happy time***

Barry Williams was the top UK Hammer thrower by the time of the Munich Olympics in 1972, easily making the final, where he finished 16<sup>th</sup>. At his best, he could have made the top ten, but competitors from the Eastern Bloc dominated the leader board.

Of course, those Games will always be remembered for the massacre of members of the Israeli team by the "Black September" group. The Reverend Tom Farrell (the Club's star Olympian from 1956 and 1960) was there as padre to the GB team and no doubt he had a daunting task.

### ***Christchurch - up and over, down under!***

By the time the 1974 Commonwealth Games came around, we had two new Club stars in the England team. Val Harrison was only 5' 5" tall, and hardly fitted the standard image of a High Jumper, but she gained her first international vest in 1973 and won the WAAA title the following year. Our 400 metres hurdler, Bill Hartley (an "acquisition" from Waterloo), had also achieved a big breakthrough in the 1973 season, including a victory in the Inter-Counties. Both Harriers went to Christchurch, New Zealand, in February with outside chances of medals. They both made their finals, but missed out narrowly: Val coming 5<sup>th</sup> and Bill 6<sup>th</sup>. There was some consolation for Bill, when he was part of the England team which finished second to Kenya in the 4x400 metres relay.

### ***Gold at Rome***

Val and Bill were both selected for the Great Britain team for the European Championships later in 1974, in

Rome. Again, neither of them were in the individual medals, but Bill came back with a Gold from the 4x400 metres relay, with Glen Cohen, Alan Pascoe and Dave Jenkins, when they beat West Germany and Finland by a matter of two metres.

Our two stars were also selected for the Commonwealth Games at Edmonton, Canada, in 1978. Val jumped the same height as four years previously, but was only 7<sup>th</sup> this time. Bill did not figure prominently in the Hurdles and this time there were no medals for the 4x400 relay team.





## **Chapter 34    Plenty of individual titles for our Men in the 1970s**

### ***Away from the BAL and the Games, there was a lot happening.***

The decade of the 1970s witnessed local and county championship wins for Club members, so we shall focus on those at a higher standard.

In 1971, there were titles in the Northern Championships at Derby for Barry Williams in the Hammer, Nick Winter in the sprint hurdles, and Frank Davies in the 1500 metres. Bill Hartley's victory in the 400 metres Hurdles was one of his final races for his previous club before joining Liverpool Harriers.

A few weeks later, in the AAA Championships. Barry Williams came away with a Silver, behind Howard Payne. The next year, Barry turned the tables with a throw of over 67 metres, having already won the Northern again. He also set a British, National and Commonwealth record of 69.42, which stands as our Club record to this day.

Bill Hartley soon became the Club star on the track. For the Northern in 1973, at Kirkby, he switched to the flat 400 metres and won it in a sparkling 47.8 seconds. At the AAA Championships later that year he came third in the 400 metres hurdles, then second the next year, and finally won the title in 1975 in 49.65 secs, which would turn out to be the fastest of his career.

Bill was back to his normal event when the Northern Championships were held at Hull in 1978, recording an impressive 400 metres Hurdles victory in 51.9secs. At the same meeting, young Dave Hughes was third in the Youths 3,000 metres. Mike Holmes also took home a bronze medal, with a personal best of 14.43 metres in the Shot, to go alongside the silver he had collected earlier in the year at the indoor championships - a meeting where Junior Shot Putter Phil Davies also finished second.

### ***Emerging talents - young and not so young***

These years saw the emergence of several other good young runners besides Rob Harrison and Dave Hughes. They included Sean Butler, Dave Murphy, Ian McEvoy, Steve Lynch and Dave Everett. Here we see Sean (36) running in the Youths race during the 1973 West Lincs Cross-Country at Lancaster University, with clubmates Andy Kennedy (43) and Gary Gore (42).



Liverpool fireman, Geoff Smith, was a reasonable runner who had joined Southport Athletic Club with one of his friends. In 1976, he decided that his athletic development necessitated a switch to join Liverpool Harriers. Actually, he had been training with our squad for some time, so it was a natural progression. Because he was moving between local clubs, he had to serve several months suspension from team competition, but that did not prevent him making a fine Club debut by finishing fifth in the Northern 5,000 metres, clocking 14mins 14.2secs, followed by an impressive win in the prestigious "Glasgow 6".

In 1978, Geoff broke the Lancashire Championship 5,000 metres record, with 13 minutes 50.8 seconds and the following year was awarded the "City of Hull" trophy for best performance in a Northern Counties Championship, on the basis of his record-breaking 10,000 metres victory in 28 minutes 3.6 seconds - the fastest in the world that year. He was certainly getting his name known nationally, coming second to Dave Black in the UK 10,000 metres, which earned him his international debut, running against the great Kenyan Henry Rono, although this sadly meant he missed being a member of the Club's winning team at the Sefton Park Road Relay!

The 1978 season also witnessed a big breakthrough from Rob Harrison, who finished strongly to win the 800 metres at the Northern Under 20 Championships and was awarded an international vest at Under 21 level. The next year he moved up to the Senior ranks and showed further improvement when he came second in the UK 800 metres.

Not surprisingly, Rob Harrison and Geoff Smith were among the Club's recipients of "Echo Awards" in 1979.



Manx-born teacher Brian Camp had been jumping for the Club since 1972, but was improving steadily during this time, winning the Lancashire Triple Jump title four years in a row, including smashing the record on the first occasion, in 1974, (shown in the photo on the left - it appears that the run-up was cinder rather than all-weather). In 1976, Brian was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Inter-Counties, then in 1980 he was finally awarded a AAA vest.

Brian went on to captain our Track & Field team for six years and competed for us in 69 consecutive BAL matches. This is a Club record, equivalent to not missing a fixture for 17 years of 4 matches each year! The photo on the right shows Mike Holmes presenting Brian with a salver to mark his 50th match.



There were many other stars in those days, in many events. Tony Baker in the Javelin and Pete Nickson in the Pole Vault both set Club records in their events. Tony was selected for the Great Britain v France Junior international match at Dole in 1977, where Sean Butler also made the team in the Steeplechase. Meanwhile Dave Roberts' new championship record of 58.18m in the 1979 Northern Counties Youths' Hammer earned him the "J.W. Turner Memorial Trophy" for best Northern Youth on track or field.

### ***Life begins at 40!***

By the late 1970s, the Veterans Athletics movement (now known as "Masters") was well-established, and several of the Club's stars found renewed successes at the various age group championships.

In 1977, the evergreen Ernie Gallagher won the Northern Veterans 400 metres Over 50 title in 57.3secs with Tom Brown taking the bronze in the same race in 59.1secs. Ernie went on to be a member of the 4x400 metres relay team that took the bronze medal at the world Veterans Games.

Mike Turner reached the age of 40 in 1979, and promptly won the 1,500 metres and 5,000 metres UK Veteran titles at Kirkby Stadium, before finishing second in the Worlds Veterans 10k road race, behind long-term rival Mike Freary. But perhaps his best performance was setting a UK Veterans 5,000 metres record of 14:22 at Stretford the following year, during a BAL race for the Club.

George Bunner was no longer competing, but he made a major impact on the sport in the late 70s, when he founded Sportshall Athletics. The activities included standing jump, paarlauf (a continuous relay where each runner does several stages), short sprints and relays. The concept was designed for younger age groups, as enjoyment and as part of their athletic development. It was first held at Wavertree Sports Centre, with support from the likes of Tom O'Mahoney and enthusiastic coach Ben Laing. The meetings attracted large entries; the idea become countrywide and eventually spread outside the UK.

Charles Rice was still a key part of the Club, as Treasurer and "elder statesman". He was also playing a major part in the Northern Counties operation and at National level. In 1979, he received the great honour of being elected a Life Vice-President of the AAA.

As the Club's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday approached, a special "Centenary Committee" was established to discuss possible celebrations. But, before then, there was a magnificent opportunity to show club spirit: participation in a country-wide 100x1 mile relay, on June 4<sup>th</sup> 1978, for which Liverpool Harriers chose to use the cinder track at St Edwards College. Pete Waddington started proceedings off in the morning sunshine, which continued into the afternoon, when the young Dave Hughes ran what turned out to be the fastest mile by a Youth in the event in the country. But then large clouds formed and the heavens opened. The determination of club members not to give in under torrential rain, thunder and lightning, was one of "no surrender"! Members from all different events took part, in front of lots of spectators, making it a very special Club event. Geoff Smith, wearing number 100, finished off with 4mins 15secs in the evening rain.

## **Chapter 35    Women's Track and Field in the 1970s ... titles galore!**

### ***Multi-talented Ladies triumph at multi-event meetings***

The 1970s saw our Ladies win a staggering set of Pentathlons, in those days before the Heptathlon became the "standard" for combined events. Such a string of successes was a clear indication that Liverpool Harriers had now developed a very strong coaching set-up, including the retired Club sprinter, Tom Mylett, who was often seen beside the Long Jump pit at Wyncote. We were also fortunate to have coaches of the calibre of Ben Laing and John Mullin, both of whom worked hard with their training groups and achieved plenty of successes. At one stage, John's group sported sweatshirts emblazoned with "Mullins Mob"! Ben's daughters Manndy and Wendy, plus his son Rob, would all eventually achieve International level in multi-event competition, as would John's daughter Val.

Val Harrison showed that she could do more than just High Jump, when she took the Lancashire Pentathlon title in 1972, and represented the North along with Val Mullin and Pat Burns.

It should be noted that the County (i.e. Lancashire or Cheshire) Championships were, unlike today, major events which attracted much kudos and were highly coveted. In 1974, the Merseyside boundary was adopted within women's athletics., but the men held out until 1992.

Manndy went on to dominate the Northern Junior Pentathlon of 1975, with wins in the 100 metres, 80 metres hurdles, high jump, long jump and third in the 200 metres! Not surprisingly, she scored a personal best.

The next year, 1976, saw Manndy win the Under 17 WAAA Pentathlon. She was rewarded for her progress with a Junior International vest. That same year, Sue Wright ("Hodgson" until her marriage to our Long Jump star Steve Wright), won the Southern Pentathlon with 4081pts and was awarded a Senior International vest.

In 1977, young Wendy Laing followed her "big sister" into top level multi-eventing when she won the Under 15 WAAA Pentathlon with 3399 points. She was honoured with that year's "Echo Athletics Award". The following year, Manndy's hard work both in the gym and on the track, guided by her father, paid dividends when she was awarded a richly deserved full international vest.

### ***.. and the Ladies won other events too..***

Barry Williams' wife, Pam (née Lewis), was an excellent Long Jumper, and she took the Northern title in 1972, the first of a sequence of three such victories. Meanwhile, Jean Fielding continued to dominate the Discus at the Northern Championships, with victories in 1973 and 1975

In a previous chapter we noted with pride Val Harrison's participation at both Commonwealth and European Games in 1974. She began the build-up to such performances when she won the 1972 Northern High Jump at Kirkby and finished third in the WAAA event. She was back at the WAAA Championships the next year, and brilliantly won the title, with 1.82 metres, ahead of two Canadians, Debbie Brill and Louise Hanna. To take Debbie Brill's scalp was a real boost for Val. Debbie had already finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the 1972 Olympics and was, of course, famous for the "Brill Bend" - her version of the "Fosbury Flop". By 1980 Debbie had become favourite for the event at the Olympics, but Canada withdrew their team, so she missed her chance.

Val Harrison won the Northern High Jump again in 1974, with a Championship record of 1.79 metres, but the following year it was a different "Val" from our Club who took the crown: Val Mullin. In 1976, Miss Harrison was back, taking her third title in the Northern Championships. An interesting point to note: all of her wins took place at Kirkby - Val's normal training venue.

The growing overall strength of the Ladies side was shown when they won the 1973 Northern Women's Division 3 League, with a team well-managed by Pat Burns Snr, Fred Smith, Cath Hardaker Snr and John Mullin.

By the time of the 1978 Northern Women's Championships, at Stretford, Val Harrison had become Val Rutter and Jean Fielding had become Jean Robertson. Val equalled her personal best of 1.83 metres, but she had to settle for only made second place. However, Jean won the Discus yet again that year, and did so in 1979 for her tenth and final title.



The same year saw Jane Holmes, wife of "big Mike", emerge as a quality distance runner, breaking the Club record for the 3,000 metres in 10mins 29.6secs and, at the end of the year, running fastest Ladies' time in the Christmas Handicap. Jane only took up jogging to keep fit, in her late twenties, but would go on to reduce her 3000 metres time to 9:22.8 at age 36 and become one of the world's leading Veteran runners. She still holds the Club Mile record at 4:46.7.



Rob Harrison and Geoff Smith were not the only Club's recipients of "Echo Awards" in 1979. The others were Manndy Laing and Jayne Christian (pictured here), the 16-year-old lass from the Wirral. Jayne had a superb season, being placed in both sprints at the women's AAA, setting a Club record for 200 metres of 24.7secs (although the 220yards record at the time was worth a little faster), and going on to represent England at 200 metres.

## **Chapter 36     Relay titles for the Men's Track team - at all sorts of distances**

### ***Titles at National level***

In 1970, the annual AAA 4x800 metres relay was held during a meeting at Kirkby Stadium. After a tight struggle with Wolverhampton & Bilston, our team of Tony Farrell, Frank Davies, Peter Lake and Alan Gerrard was victorious, in a swift 7:44.2.

Later that year, Brian Jones replaced Peter Lake when the squad came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the AAA 4x1500 metres at Leicester. When the next year's race was held at Blackburn, our team won easily. The photo shows Nick Marler, Pete Waddington, Frank Davies and Alan Gerrard.



### ***It's all about timing!***

The clever part of this story is that these two relay victories for Liverpool Harriers marked the last occasions when the events were held, so, strictly speaking, our Club are the reigning champions to this day!

### ***Northern Counties wins for our Club relay teams too***



Distance runner Frank also figured in another relay team in 1971, as a sprinter! He had gone to support the Club team in the Northern Medley Relay, at Cleckheaton, only to discover that they were a man short. Luckily he had taken his spikes along and (rather slowly) contributed one of the two 200 metres legs, when the team (pictured left) of Mike Gilbert, Frank, Alan Gerrard, and Howard Bolton finished a close second behind Waterloo.

Although the men did not fare well in 1973 in the BAL or the Northern League, a Club 4x400 metres relay team won the Northern title that year: Dave Whitfield (51.7), Brian Thompson (50.8), Paddy Byrne (49.2) and Mike Gilbert (49.0secs). In the 4x100 metres event our team of Brian Camp, Steve Wright, Mike Gilbert and Dave Whitfield was first across the line, only for the race to be declared void. When it was re-run, they turned on the gas again to win by four yards with a time of 43.0, which was even faster than the initial run!

## **Chapter 37    The 1970s - "Kings of the Roads" - Liverpool Harriers.**

**Frank Davies has written a detailed account of the many victories of the Club's Senior Men's road relay teams during the 1970s, the reasons behind those successes, and the personalities who made it happen. It forms a separate element of the Club's documented history, so only the headlines are included here.**

### ***Autumn road relays - successes at top level***

The Club's men's distance running had been getting stronger for a couple of years, at long last giving Mike Turner the team support he deserved, but the arrivals of Pete Waddington and then Paul Carey produced a squad which had the potential to challenge for road relay honours at area level - perhaps even at national level. That potential was proved in the autumn of 1972, with victory in the Northern 6-stage at Clarke Gardens, beating the strong Bolton squad by nearly two minutes.



The photo on the left shows Alan Gerrard on stage 3, and the one on the right is the full team of Alan Gerrard, Frank Davies, Pete Waddington, Tony Farrell, Mike Turner and Paul Carey.



The following weekend saw the Club's first ever victory in the 8-stage Lancashire Road Relay at Southport, but the season finished on a disappointing note in the AAA 6-stage at Leeds, when an unexpectedly strong performance from North Staffs & Stone meant that our team took silver medals rather than the gold which had been expected.

1973 was a year of mixed fortunes, and injuries at key times, but the autumn of 1974 saw the beginning of a superb sequence of results. Easy wins in the Northern 6-stage and the Lancashire event were followed by a convincing win in the AAA 6-stage at Wimbledon Common - the Club's first national senior team title since the 1800s! Our team of Dave Evans, Roger Harrison, Pete Waddington, Mike Turner, Paul Carey, and Frank Davies was in contention from the gun, pulling away over the final two laps.

The AAA title was retained in 1975, again at Wimbledon, with the same team (but a different order) again pulling away over the final two laps.

For the 1976 event, at Southport, John Woods replaced Dave Evans, as the Club aimed to win for the third year in succession. The competition was tough, with several teams fighting it out, and we had to wait until the final stage before Liverpool Harriers hit the front. After a fine run by Mike Turner on the penultimate stage, Frank Davies started the final leg in second place, just behind leaders Aldershot. But he was well clear at the finish and able to celebrate the hat-trick.



One factor behind these successes was the weekly "eye balls out" training session, attended by virtually all the squad, hosted from Pete Waddington's house. It was so tough that it made racing seem easy! But the vital ingredient was the commitment from every team member to turn out for the Club team in all the championship events, even if it meant missing valuable "pot hunting" elsewhere.

In 1977, Mike Turner was away, but the Club team won the Northern and the Lancashire. With Geoff Smith available for the AAA event, at Melton Mowbray, gold or silver seemed probable. Sadly, although Paul Carey and Geoff Smith had run sub-14 minutes in the AAA 5,000m, they could not reproduce that form on the road and the eventual fourth place was a real disappointment.



### ***Springtime road relays - 12 stages proved a real challenge!***

For most of the 1970s, Club teams were dominating the District relay (often having the first two teams home) and the Lancashire event. Having become AAA champions for the 6-stage, the next challenge would be the annual Northern and National 12-stage events, held around Easter. However, the team found that it was difficult to translate successes at 6-stage events, typically with stages of around 4 miles, into victories over 12 stages, with distances of 6 miles alternating with 3 miles.

In 1974, the Club won the Northern race for the first ever time. The race, held around Stanley Park in Blackpool, will be remembered for the colour of Frank Davies' vest at the end of the final stage: a vivid red due to a heavy nose bleed! The National race, on the traditional tough course in Sutton Park, produced a disappointing 11<sup>th</sup> place.

The following year the Northern title was retained by a huge margin, on our home patch, with a course based in Allerton. But again the Club finished well down the field in the National event, which was won by a Gateshead team which included Brendan Foster.

In 1976, the Northern event was held at Gateshead, with the home club installed as firm favourites, especially as several top runners had joined their ranks recently. But all the Liverpool team ran well and the hat-trick of victories was achieved comfortably. A few weeks later, our team ran consistently well at the National 12-stage, especially 37-year old Mike Turner, and broke the course record. But we had to settle for second place behind Gateshead, who fielded a team almost entirely composed of Internationals.

When the next year's Northern event was again held at Gateshead, Liverpool finished ahead of the hosts, but were surprisingly beaten by Airedale. At Sutton Park, good runs by Frank Davies and Paul Carey, and especially by newcomer Geoff Smith, meant that Airedale were easily disposed of, but Gateshead's all-star cast turned out in force again, to give them a third victory by a convincing margin. That set of silver medals in 1977 marked the end of a great period for Liverpool Harriers.

## **Chapter 38     During the 1970s - other major successes for the Club on the road.**

### ***Lots of prizes in local road races!***

In the 1970s, it seemed that every road race in the North West had at least one Liverpool Harrier in the first three home, generally in top spot.

The "Birkenhead Park 5" was a good hunting ground, with wins for Frank Davies (3 times) and Pete Waddington. Frank also had a hat-trick of wins in the prestigious "Salford 7", two in the "Salford 5", and two in the "Linotype 5" at Altrincham. In most of these the Club took the team prizes too.



This photo from the "Wallasey 7" shows Club members Pete Waddington (second from left), Frank Davies (35), Frank Maguire (17, running for Blackpool then, but later to join Liverpool Harriers), and Paul Carey (34).

Towards the end of the decade, John Woods was becoming a real force. One of his highlights was an excellent victory in the "Bolton 6", beating the legendary Mike Freary.

### ***... and in the longer ones too..***

In 1974, Dave Evans took the popular Freckleton Half Marathon, then Roger Harrison won it for the next two years. Roger also won the famous and well supported "Red Rose 20", which was the Lancashire Championship in 1976 and took special delight in beating Ron Hill in the Rossendale Half Marathon "on Ron's own course". In 1979, Dave was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the "Red Rose", leading home our winning team which nalso included Trevor Moore, Mike Dooling and Catholic Father Fechin McCormick.

Paul Carey had a superb run to win the classic Morpeth-to-Newcastle road race on New Year's Day 1975, but it was a close one! His time was 66:26, which was excellent for the undulating 13.625 miles.



Trevor Moore had been a promising youngster with the Club, before emigrating to South Africa. By the time he returned in the mid-70s, he had built a reputation as a marathon specialist. He confirmed his class with a silver medal in the Northern Marathon in 1977, having led for much of the race. The following year he finished just behind Frank Davies in the "Pembroke 20". They both ran inside 1:47, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> on a course around Huyton which had been made famous a few years before, when Ron Hill ran an amazing 1:36:28. Trevor also recorded an excellent marathon time of 2:24:21 in 1978, to go second on the Club's all-time list, behind John Linaker.

For several years, the "Chas Kendall" 10 mile race was held annually at Barrow, with a superb prize list and very generous expenses for invited runners. In 1978, it was won by Mike McLeod, ahead of fellow Olympian (and bitter rival) Brendan Foster, in a race which was blisteringly fast from the gun and produced a winning time of 45:44!

The photo shows the winning team, from Liverpool Harriers: Frank Davies (7), Geoff Smith (4) and John Woods (8). The fact that John's time of 48:08 only made him "last counter" could well be something of a record! Incidentally, the perpetual trophy was solid silver, with an estimated value of (in the 1970s) some £1500, so the guys left it with the organisers, rather than ask Club Treasurer Charles Rice to insure it!





## **Chapter 39     1970s - a stream of Cross-Country victories for LHAC.**

### ***Not just Mike Turner any more!***

For many years the Club's Men's Senior team victories had depended on Mike Turner. Although the 1970s saw the emergence of other runners who also took Senior titles, Mike was still a force to be reckoned with, as he showed when he finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the National Cross-Country at Blackpool in 1970.



Mike went to work overseas for a couple of years, which gave the chance for others to shine. The winter of 1971-72 saw Pete Waddington's heavy training schedule start to pay dividends, when he came a surprise second in the West Lancs race at Clarke Gardens, and we saw seconds in their respective age groups for Jeff Lashley and Chris Fennell. The photo above was taken at the start of the inaugural Barnoldswick Hill Race, held in Peter's home town. Despite a classy entry, Peter (59) won easily and, helped by Frank Davies (next to Peter) and Alan Ascott (56), led the Club to the team prizes too.

After finishing in the medals in 1971 in the District and West Lancs races, without Mike Turner, his return to the UK was what was needed for the next level of success. The Club's Seniors won the District event in early 1972 (for the first time since 1955) and the West Lancs championship for the first time ever, with Mike taking both individual titles. This started a thirteen year domination of the District team championship, while Mike's title was followed by others for Frank Davies and Geoff Smith, plus six for John Woods. There was also a memorable race at West Derby, where Mike, Geoff, John, Pete Waddington and Paul Carey dead-heated for first place!

During the same period, the Club won the West Lancs team title virtually every year, with individual wins for Pete Waddington, Frank Davies, Geoff Smith and, of course, Mike Turner.

This photo shows Frank on his way to victory, ahead of Mike, in the 1979 race, which was held in freezing fog at Town Park in Runcorn.

Not surprisingly, the team also dominated the Liverpool & District League races over these years, generally outscoring all other teams combined. At many of the fixtures, our "B" team would have been second!





Mike Turner had been part of the Lancs team for so many years, but now other Harriers also qualified and went on to be part of medal-winning teams in the Inter-Counties: Pete Waddington, Frank Davies, Geoff Smith, Roger Harrison and John Woods. Outside the Seniors the Club had other Lancs representatives at Junior or Youth level, such as Phil McEvoy, Pete Kennedy, Dave Murphy and Chris Dagnall.

Meanwhile, Pat Burns qualified for the Lancs women's team and another of our lady members to do well at cross-country was track runner Rona Livingston, who showed her strength by taking the Merseyside Women's title in 1978, when Liverpool Harriers teams had two sets of golds and two sets of silvers.

### ***Medals for the Men in the Northern.***

With our Seniors providing the first 3 men home in the Liverpool & District in 1975, and then first 4 in the West Lancs, chances of medals at a higher level looked good. In both races Paul Carey had shown a new level of stamina, which he then repeated in the Northern race at Burnley, being our first counter. Some of our team that day had been suffering from colds, and not much was expected overall, but excellent performances by every runner resulted in LHAC beating Gateshead (at last!). Unfortunately, Airedale did even better - so we settled for silver.

By 1977, Geoff Smith was the Club's number one distance runner and he got the year off to a good start with a hat-trick of wins, taking the Lancashire at St Helens, the District CCC at Warrington, and the West Lancs at Beacon Park, Skelmersdale. In the Northern Championships, at Roundhay Park in Leeds, he looked likely to win but was surprisingly outsprinted by the Airedale runner Alwyn Dewhurst.

### ***... and in the National!***

Club history was made in 1975, when the Senior Men's team gained National Cross-Country medals for the first time since 1885. On a basically flat course at Luton, they finished second to Gateshead. Mike Turner was our first home, followed by Frank Davies, Roger Harrison, Pete Waddington, Dave Evans, and Paul Carey (who had badly bruised feet and did well to finish at all). In the Junior race, won by Steve Ovett, John Woods made the first ten and potentially qualify for the England team. However, his heart was set on using his Irish ancestry and wearing the emerald vest, which he would do for many years to come.



While John chose to run for Ireland, we still had Dave Murphy wearing an England vest at Junior level in 1976, for the World Cross-Country event held on Chepstow racecourse. The photo above left was taken during a 3000m at Kirkby Stadium in August 1978, won by Geoff Smith in 8:09.6 ahead of Dave Murphy in 8:22.4. Dave is wearing 144, running behind pace-maker Frank Davies (55) and Geoff Smith (66). Lying fourth is Sean Butler, with Dave Evans a few places further back, against the kerb.

Although just outside the medals in the National at Luton in 1979, finishing 5<sup>th</sup>, young Chris Dagnall (above right) achieved the highest place by a Youth in the Club's 97 year history.

## **Chapter 40 Camaraderie, good food, good entertainment... and good people!**

### ***Organisation was the foundation for the Club's successes***

During the 1970s, the Club competed at a higher level and often at far-away venues. This stretched the organisation, and the funds, more than ever before. Members had come to rely on Tom O'Mahoney and Charles Rice to work miracles, and they continued to do so, but many other people stepped forward to help: organising social events, preparing the Club Magazine (which suddenly had so much more to report), expanding the coaching side, or managing the increasing number of Club teams.

The list of "helpers" was huge, but we must mention several particularly important individuals (in no special order): Ann and Henry Crocker, Maurice McEvoy, Harry Kinnear, Jean Fielding, Jack Myers, John Butler, Harry Oakes, Alys McEvoy, Ben Laing, Joyce Dagnall, Harold Benson, Mrs McGowan, Joan and Dave Tripp, Tom Middleton, John Thornhill, Cath Hardaker Snr.



On the left is Henry Crocker, wrapped up warmly while helping at a cross-country race.

On the right, Harry Oakes hands over to Dave Tripp for a Club Veterans relay team at Sefton Park.



### ***Successes should be celebrated...***

With the higher levels of performance enjoyed by Club teams in the 70s, it seemed natural to celebrate in some way: a wonderful series of "Everyman Nights" was the outcome. Club 400/800metre runner, Paddy Byrne, had given up his teaching career to put his culinary talents to full use by taking joint ownership of the Bistro under the Everyman theatre, which then became the ideal venue for Club social evenings from 1975 onwards.

Harry Oakes' enthusiastic organisation, coupled with Paddy's hospitality, guaranteed a good time would be had by all! But the additional ingredient which made the evenings so special was the entertainment.



The photo shows Tony Swindlehurst, Mike Turner, and Geoff Gaskell. Mike showed an unexpected talent in the form of witty and evocative songs and poems, about Club victories and personalities past and present. Geoff (who sadly died in 2009) will be remembered as an excellent singer and guitarist, while Tony Swindlehurst (who had moved away from Liverpool, but was still very close to what was going on in the Club) made the ideal compère for the evenings.

***.. and losses mourned..***

In 1973 the Club lost a very loyal club man, when George Rice (no relation to Charles) died at Lime Street Station on his way to an athletics meeting. He was an excellent official, who did his work in a quiet and unassuming manner, which endeared him to competitors and officials alike.

The following year the Club mourned the death of young Vice President Nancy Proctor (Abrams), who had served as an athlete, committee member, coach, captain and Ladies Secretary over a 25 year period. She had achieved a lot for the Club and many athletes owed their successes to her help.

***.. but we still had a wonderful President!***

As the decade came to a close, we were still fortunate to have Howard Baker as our Club President and, as ever, he supported Club events whenever he could.

Back in 1973, as part of a feature on Everton-Liverpool Derby matches, the "Liverpool Echo" retold the exploits of Howard Baker, including many of the legendary performances detailed earlier in this History.



The photo which accompanied the article shows the man as many will remember him: approachable, friendly, and well-liked by all who met him.