

Harold Benson

A club stalwart for over 60 years! He has served the Club as athlete, coach, committee man, Club Handicapper, Women's Secretary & Team Manager, and (proudly!) as **Club President**.

Born on October 30th 1931, he was brought up in the Speke/Garston area and attended Speke Secondary Modern School. On leaving school he started a working career and an athletic one at the same time. It was by chance that he joined the Club in 1948. He had started work as an apprentice joiner, and the owner of the firm next door was former Northern one mile champion Billy Almond of Liverpool Harriers. Billy arranged for Harold to meet Ernie Gallagher, and to go with Ernie to the Club HQ of the time (a hut on Camp Hill), where he joined the Club and the long association began.

Harold represented the Club through the ranks, from youth to senior level, at cross-country and road running in the winter and on the track in the summer. He didn't have a personal coach, but Club Cross-Country Captain Tom O'Mahoney arranged various training groups. His only break with the club was serving his two years National Service in the Kings Own Regiment. The regiment were famous for their boxing teams, but athletics was given a low priority. However, the big "plus" was being stationed at Formby.

In the 50s and 60s, Harold raced over the country in the local championships, the Northern and the National, plus the plethora of Inter Club races which were held in those days. In the Northern Championships at Horwich in 1950, running in the junior team, he just missed out on a team medal: he was the fourth counter in a team finishing fourth, with a number of his team colleagues absent through National Service. On the track he won the bronze medal in the 880 yards Club championship in 1952 but, six years later, became champion at the distance beating the future Club international Mike Turner! Admittedly, this was not a distance suited to Mike's abilities, but it was still a nice scalp! Harold twice reached the final of the 880 yards in the North of England championships, and won many valuable individual prizes when running for the club in the then popular 'open meetings'. His personal best times on the track were 1min 57.2secs for 880 yards, 4mins 25.8secs for the mile and 9mins 41.0secs for two miles. It's not surprising that, being a loyal club member, his highlight was being a member of the Club's invitation relay team at the Highland Games in Dunoon, Scotland, where the Club had many successes over those years. (In the photo, he is flanked by two other "Club Greats", Ernie Gallagher to the left and Tom O'Mahoney to the right.)



In recent years he has been team manager of the senior women's cross-country teams, which have achieved many successful honours at North of England level. As an individual, he has been coach and adviser to club international Jenny Clague, who represented both England and Great Britain on the track, country and road, over distances from 5000 metres to the marathon, and has twice been reserve for major Games.

Harold retired from his job as a Building Inspector, and lives with his wife Lynda in the Woolton Road area. They have two grown-up daughters.

Olympians and Internationals bring honours and media attention to their clubs, but we now live in times where loyalty is not always top of the agenda. It is people like Harold that give their club continuity, and a chance to grow ever stronger in the future.

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