

Essex Walker

Editor: Dave Ainsworth

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

You were all asked for your options about a possible "Enfield Race Walking Virtual League". Ron Wallwork received most replies in favour - and a few against. **So, it's going ahead.** Now a majority have voted for it, it's hoped as many of you - if not all - will support it. Richard Emsley proposed this idea. *Here's Ron's announcement:*

The Virtual ERWL is to go ahead with first race 5km on last weekend in January 2021.



[Guidance update - 8 January 2021 - Athletics & Running \(englandathletics.org\)](https://www.englandathletics.org)

Following the UK Government's [announcement on Monday 4 January of a new national lockdown](#), guidance for athletics and running now reflects these enforced **Covid-19 restrictions across England**. Details of the suspension of athletics and running activity as well as confirming what activity is permitted to take place can be found via the link above. *England Athletics* believes athletics and running play a vital role in improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of participants of all ages and abilities and remain in constant dialogue with the UK Government to ensure a full, and safe, return to the sport as soon as possible.

THE ESSEX WALKER JOURNEY

This article was featured in our previous edition and 'caught on' as it was then reproduced in other athletics publications/newsletters. The article highlighted **Issue No 1** and published a history of this newsletter, mentioning former Hon Editors plus those who've assisted in its production and distribution. A couple of readers have added recollections. For instance, Issue No 1 (June 1970) also mentioned an aim of inaugural Editor Reg Wells to introduce a new Essex County Championship in 1971 over 20 miles, and wrote that he was looking at a possible "point-to-point" course from Chelmsford-to-Southend. Point-to-point racing was once a most popular feature of athletics - with both runners and race walkers. Alas, ever-increasing levels of vehicles on our highways ended that format - including the C-to-S. For some reason so many got their 20 miles' personal best times on this course. It commenced near Essex Police HQ at Springfield (Chelmsford) and followed the A130 to join the A127 Southend Arterial Road which took competitors towards Southend-on-Sea, where it ended outside Southend Police Station near the town centre. Held in May, which was usually hot, post-race hospitality in a Police Station canteen always included peaches and ice cream. Afterwards John Hedgethorpe arranged for a somewhat basic Police coach to transport us back to be reunited with our belongings at Police HQ. Not all "point-to-point" organisers were as thorough as John, as returning to a start was often left as an initiative test for finishers! There are many great recollections of a truly popular race. However, John himself called "time" on this event, on account of increasing traffic along a route all on 'A' class roads. Several objected to John's decision - but John had the right response by saying, "**It's better to stop a race the year before the accident than the year after one**". Of course, John was correct - he always was! John was ahead of his time, as it was one of the earliest such races to fold - over the years so many other organisers fell into line behind John when making the same decisions.

Another reader's recollection concerned an Essex Walker dark moment. One of Essex County's keenest supporters was Brian Ficken, who was acknowledged in our last edition's article as being

one of our volunteer printers of Essex Walker. As the 400th Essex League approached, to be held in memory of a then recently departed John Hedgethorpe, Brian suggested an additional 50 copies of this newsletter be printed - to be sent out with result sheets to all Essex Police entrants. Brian's well-meaning rationale was that this newsletter would contain news of Essex race walking activities and details of forthcoming fixtures, which he hoped would enthuse Essex Police walkers (who'd participated in the race) to enjoy further competitive outings. Who knows - some might take to it with enthusiasm? Brian duly printed an additional 50 copies, which were brought along to Springfield HQ in a plastic carrier bag and left on the entries table, with a request they be sent out to Essex Police entrants with result sheets when distributed (no emails then). Eagle-eyed "character" Dave Sharpe was one of the last leaving, as he liked hanging around to "discuss the race" with anyone who'd listen. On his way out he saw the entire bundle dumped in a wastepaper bin under the entries table. Over the next few days, "compulsive communicator" Dave phoned up many to report his observation. Well, hats off to Brian - for he tried to encourage participation, even though this initiative failed.

Writes **Tony Taylor**: "Many thanks! At an appropriate moment in the coming weeks, I'll link to this revealing piece, especially as in the decade I was seriously competing there seemed to be bond between Lancashire and Essex walkers."

Writes **Ron Wallwork**: "An excellent piece! And as Tony Taylor says there was a strong link with Essex and I well remember Joan and I putting up 5/6 Essex people prior to a National at Little Hulton. Ken Carter and his wife's sister were two of them. Of course I entered the Essex scene in the late '70s when joining Essex Police AC so that I could race midweek, the only time I got off work for a day."

Writes **John Constandinou**: "A good read indeed. Names of people I have known. If you have a copy of Issue 1, then I will add it to the website." (*Ed's note - copy now supplied*)

"ALL OUR YESTERDAYS"

This is a quote and one uttered by Macbeth himself. It could refer to Essex Walker issue No 1 which hit the streets back in 1970. Over 50 years since it was published. Now online for posterity. John Constandinou has it posted on his popular website. Here is the link if you need to share:

<http://racewalkingassociation.com/Newsletters/EWJune1970.pdf>. (Note: Back copies of all Essex Walkers have been sent to John, so that he can upload in due course).

TIME'S ALWAYS ON YOUR SIDE

We're sorry to be told of Australian Centurion No 30 Merv Lockyear passing-on aged 89. In October 1996 at George Knott Athletics Field (Victoria State) when clocking 23:45.51 he became the Australian Centurions' oldest qualifier - aged 65. So readers, if considering taking on this challenge, *there's your incentive*. In this country the late Len Creo of Worcester AC was our oldest Centurion qualifier when completing the challenge in 1996 on a tough Hungerton course (22:20.55) when aged 67. His mark stood until Essex worthy, *septuagenarian* John Borgars of Loughton AC, finished the blustery 2016 Redcar 100 Miles in 22:31.52.

- **Sue Clements** (Australian Centurion No 35) writes: "Merv and I corresponded for many years after I qualified in Melbourne. His excellent support and gentle but persistent encouragement was the most significant contribution to my success. Remembered with fondness and gratitude."

LOOKING BACK TO 1980

This year saw a talented visitor from Australia take up temporary residence as our guest for a most productive spell on our race walking scene - as 1978 30K Commonwealth Games bronze medallist **Tim Erickson** (2:26.33.9) appeared. In Essex he became our RWA National 50K champion over the infamous 5 circuits Basildon 50K course, which was staged from the Ford Sports & Social Club with the late Arthur Croft to the fore as a most successful local organiser. Good as Arthur and his team were, they could do nothing about torrential rain, which in 2 separate prolonged spells drenched one-and-all. Rain left many puddles so deep that water

rose above the height of competitors' shoes. Between such rainfall, sunshine was so strong that roads which had been "rivers" became bone dry! Tim clocked 4:10.33 to win by 6 minutes from Dennis Jackson (York Postal). 97 started/71 finished/3 DQ'd. 13 teams set out with 9 closing-in as Sheffield United won the Milan Trophy - awarded to the first team closing a full declared 8. It was a shameful day for Essex, who at the time were acknowledged as a "hot house of British race walking. Despite being held in Essex, **no** County walker made the top 10, and only **one** Essex team started (Ilford - who failed to close-in). However, as "Race Walking Record" informed its readers, Essex did win one category - as they provided over half the "*other way around trainers*", this being a well supported feature of Southern race walking at that time. Outspoken Charlie Megnin condemned such goings-on, as he asked if they'd paid entry fees to use dressing rooms, showers, car parks and other facilities provided to stage a National Championship? Also in Essex, Tim won the 8 Miles Colchester-to-Mersea Island in 55.27 with local man Amos Seddon 2nd in 57.07. Organiser John Hedgethorpe organised it well, as in 1980 he'd consulted tide tables before setting a start time, as high tides cover the causeway between mainland and island twice daily. Another summer point-to-point was the annual Hastings-to-Brighton over a testing 60.64km route. Tim won in 5:31.40 well ahead of 2 Peters - Hodkinson and Selby, who clocked 5:44.59 and 5:49.50 respectively. Summer victories continued at the other end of the distance range, as a 5 miles in Worle was won by Tim in 36.39 from Welshman Steve Barry who was just behind in 36.48. Tim has a zest for travel as most UK walkers wouldn't know where Worle was, let alone find it (it's in North Somerset). Readers will recall the West County staging many small village races in past times. One in nearby Burnham-on-Sea drew stars and locals from a wide area, and always a few "*pot hunters*". National races in 1980 attracted big names, and the 35K version in Victoria Park saw Amos Seddon break the tape in 2:40.04 with Tim next in 2:42.55 as Adrian James completed the frame in 2:43.07. Before summer was over Amos and Tim met again over 20K at Enfield, with a 89.32 to 90.27 victory for our Australian victor over the local favourite. Earlier in the year in the Southern 20K, again at Victoria Park, Tim was 2nd (90.22) beaten only by another guest walker - Norwegian E Andersen who clocked 89.53. You'll see Victoria Park was a much-used venue by athletes - so it's a shame the Council owning this park now prices themselves out of our business, forcing us to go elsewhere. In South London an annual Lambeth Festival again hosted a walking race (organiser Phil Collins) in Brockwell Park. This race used to be 2 circuits around the outside of this park, but already traffic had increased alarmingly and a revised course was devised on 3 circuits inside the park's railings. A large crowd at the festival saw us racing before an audience, even though too many crossed our racing path on numerous occasions - but at least we were seen. A short 10K dash saw Tim Erickson, Steve Barry, Amos Seddon and George Nibre finish in that close order, although Steve had the kudos of winning the 1st handicap prize, such racing being very popular in earlier times in close order (68 started in an evening event). Another Festival race was the Gloucester 7 Miles, around 3 circuits of an "*around the houses*" course, starting/finishing in the City's main park. Organiser was legendary and genial Chris Newman. Steve Barry won in a course record 47.22 with Tim Erickson second in 48.08. Recently departed Pete Ryan was 3rd in 52.16, followed home by Ed Shillabeer and Mike Angove in 54.19 and 55.06 respectively. Veteran superstar Alf Poole won the "over 60 prize" when filling 26th position in 63.47. Team honours went to Greyfriars, Roath Labour and Trowbridge & District AC in that order. Greyfriars and Roath even closed in 'B' teams. None of these 3 teams are seen at walking events nowadays. Another summer 1-2-3 was Phil Collins, Ron Wallwork and John Hedgethorpe as they were "*in the money*" when a RWA 200 draw was made. Peter Worth ran this fund-raising scheme in those day - and it still goes strong, now organised by Mark Easton (please approach him if wishing to invest). We've looked back at a time Tim joined-in our races, and it's sad to reflect great race organisers (as mentioned above) such as Phil Collins, Arthur Croft, John Hedgethorpe and Chris Newman are no longer with us - but, hey, didn't they leave us with wonderful memories of truly enjoyable walking races.

GET WELL SOON

We're sorry to hear that Commonwealth Games bronze medallist **Tim Erickson** has suffered injury following a spill on his bike. Tim needed emergency treatment and an operation on a torn

and damaged retina in his right eye. Despite this setback he still managed to compile, edit and distribute "Heel-and-Toe" newsletter with just one good eye! Many Essex Walker readers enjoy reading Tim's newsletters. Tim's a popular UK visitor and a successful one when he dons his racing kit. *We all wish him well.*

IN THE PEWS

Peter Fullager was certainly much admired "down under" as it's reported many old walking mates showed-up for his funeral service, including Internationals Tim Erickson and Willie Sawall.

NOT BEING PUBLISHED

We've received a couple of contributions reflecting on the life of recently departed GB International Peter Fullager, who found further fame after relocating to Australia and winning a bronze medal (behind Jake Warhurst and Roy Thorpe) in the 1974 New Zealand Commonwealth Games 20 Miles Walk. Clearly Peter wasn't everybody's cup-of-tea, as they say, as such words submitted aren't complimentary. They'll **not** appear, as Essex Walker will stick with the old phrase, "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*".

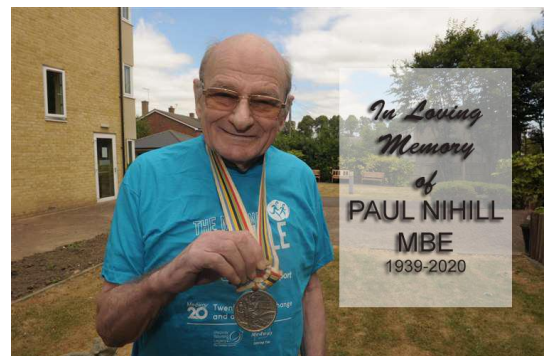
PETER FULLAGER RIP

- "Another sad departure." **Brian Keegan**
- "Peter was deadly serious about race walking, a fearsome model of commitment and rationality in training. I tried, I think unsuccessfully, to get his track 30km and 20 miles times from 1967 accepted as records. In the end he'd had enough of the nonsense of English officialdom and went to Australia." **Greg Smith** (Basildon AC Secretary when Peter was a member)
- "We have now lost 2 of Surrey Walking Club's great team of the early and mid-1960s in a matter of days. I remember competing against Peter in many Club Championships, he was a difficult man to beat and continued the achievements started by brother Maurice until he (Maurice) was seriously ill for a long time. Peter was an unassuming quiet athlete who trained hard and had one focus (similar to Paul) and that was to get to the top, which he did and his Bronze medal in the 1974 Commonwealth was just reward. A respected stylist who worked on technique and stamina, his training regime was tough for those halcyon days. Many of us here had not seen Peter for some time but he is remembered by all. My condolences to Peter's family." **Peter Selby**
- "We remember Peter as the consummate competitor, as tough as nails, with a relentless surging action that left most walkers in his wake." **Tim Erickson**
- "I remember Peter as a fiercely competitive Race Walker with a very unique racing style. I remember too watching as a spectator (through injury) the Olympic trial for the 1968 20k in which several walkers including Peter went off course through no fault of their own. How do you live with that disappointment, but he did, and to his credit carried on to represent his country in internationals. Another race walking legend crosses the finishing line of life and enters the annals of race walking history. Our deepest condolences to his family. May he rest in peace." **Roy Lodge**

PAUL NIHILL'S FUNERAL SERVICE

For those who missed Paul's service, it remains available until the end of Tuesday 16 February. Log onto: [Obitus - Home](#) Username is Sava6799 - Password is 555039. The first couple of minutes lack action, as recording commenced before the coffin and mourners arrived - service then begins.

Clare Denness - Paul Nihill's daughter – writes to inform that the family has set up this page [In Memory of Paul Nihill MBE](#)



Podcast



Last Word

Radio 4's weekly obituary programme

CATCH-UP BROADCAST

If you missed the tribute to Paul Nihill RIP, here's a link that'll make the programme (presented by Matthew Bannister/pictured) available on BBCiPlayer. [BBC Radio 4 - Last Word - Available now](#)

MORE ABOUT PAUL NIHILL MBE RIP

When The Centurions held their 2011 Centenary Dinner at the House of Commons, Paul was the evening's guest speaker. Before professional toastmaster Andy Bignold called upon Paul to address a "full house", Centurions' President Carl Lawton had spoken. Paul commenced his speech by saying, "This is a momentous occasion as it's the first time I've ever followed Carl Lawton". It brought the house down as they used to say in music halls.

- Comments **Carl Lawton**: "Having read the obituaries on Facebook it just confirms what a well-liked person Paul was and such a friend to all who knew him. You mentioned his comment at the Centurions' dinner, how true, I never managed to beat him. I still have a newspaper cutting of the inter-club match held at Wimbledon in January 1968 at the start with Paul in the lead and a humble novice in the background. I think the first time I put wind up him was two years later in the Surrey County 20 miles when I was in striking distance with 5 miles to go and he just up a gear and was gone. A repeat performance came a year later in the National 50kms at Redditch (my first attempt at the distance) - he and I had dropped everyone with, I think ten miles to go, once again he was gone, although it was probably more me going backwards. It has been an honour to have known him and the opportunity to compete against such a superstar."

LAST WORD FROM ALISTAIR AITKEN

We're indebted to reader Olly Flynn for obtaining a quality article by respected journalist Alistair Aitken, which gives us another look back at the remarkable Paul Nihill MBE, RIP.

Olympic Walker Paul Nihill by **Alastair Aitken**

Vincent Paul Nihill, died on 15 December 2020, in a care home, where he spent the very last part of his life but, when Paul Nihill was competing he was amongst the very best race walkers in the world. To signify the place he loved and lived in, Addiscombe, Croydon, where he was educated till he was 15, a road was named after him called Nihill Place. That was in recognition of his contribution to Croydon sport. One does wonder if Ovett Close, at Crystal Palace might have been named after Steve's contribution to 'Great' athletics at the National Sports Centre.

Paul was involved with helping the lads with boxing and other sports, at sports clubs in the region and was even a presenter on a local radio station at one time.

Going back to when he was young, he had some very tough times, even in an orphanage. However, when he was 8 years old, he did his first race on grass and won over 60m. Paul Nihill, who left school at 15, to join a grocers', was a senior in the bank when I first talked to him in 1969 in Athens and then at his home in the Croydon/Thornton Heath area.

He made some interesting observations: *"The greatest lesson I have learnt really is the fact that you never get anywhere unless you put your mind to it, one hundred percent, to that one thing. I feel now that, when, years ago I was doing mainly boxing plus a little running, a little walking and several other things, had I gone about my training in the same way that I do now, dedicating myself to walking and to making a success of it, I would have been a top junior. The lesson learned are so many people just play around with a sport when, as runners they could probably become 'Derek Ibbotson's if only that they put their minds to it, train more conscientiously, realize their potential. To me it is strange that when I was doing walking just to fill a gap, nobody gave me any encouragement. Nobody came up to me and said 'You could be a World beater. if you put your mind to it', or offered to take me in hand. Nobody cared, and I just drifted out as it were, finishing usually in the middle of the field doing nothing outstanding."* GB won the gold medal in the 50k race walk in 1932 with Tommy Green and in 1936 with Harold Whitlock and **Don**

Thompson in 1960. The next athlete to obtain a medal for GB, over the 50k distance was Paul Nihill, coming second in the Tokyo 50k in 1964 and, no one else for GB since then has obtained an Olympic medal in that event for GB. However, the **disappointment is that it has been struck out for the 2021 Olympics** and would have also been if the Games had been in 2020. Yet the UK had and have many fine walkers who have now been deprived of one of their special events. The first six in the Tokyo Olympics of 1964 were: 1 Abdon Pamich Italy 4:11.12.4 (World Record); 2 Paul Nihill (GB - who moved up to be with Pamich at the 30k distance till 40k). He did a time of a time of 4:11.31.2; 3 Ingvar Pettersson (Sweden 4:14.17.4).

In 1965, after the anti-climax of the Tokyo Olympic Games, Paul had a series of tremendous setbacks *“Tokyo for me was certainly an anti-climax; I had trouble with my job, problems at home - nothing seemed to go right at all. I could not, of course, concentrate on training and in fact lost all enjoyment in the sport. I found it a strain and was really just going through the motions - because I had to. I was the Olympic silver medallist and therefore it was the thing to do to continue racing even though I was most unhappy and, as a result of all the pressures building-up, I had a breakdown, and had to withdraw altogether. Later I came back again, but still did not seem to be fully recovered. I trained for a few months again and then dropped out once more. It was rather like going back to a bad job that you have got to do; trying harder each day, getting nowhere, and cursing your luck for trying. **Now however I am happy. My frame of mind has changed completely, and I see it all in quite a different light.**”*

The late Charlie Elliott, the Editor of ‘Athletics Arena’ said 1969 had been a tremendous year for gold-hunter Paul Nihill, culminating of course in his great victory in the European Championships 20 kilometres race where he rested the title from a truly outstanding field of competitors. Nevertheless this was no recompense for his disappointment in Mexico City (where he dropped out with sunstroke). In comes Paul Nihill, when I talked to him after his fantastic European win: *“This year has been very similar to last in that I have been fed much better competition. In 1968, before the Olympic Games, I did not have many international races, and therefore, the actual class of my opponents was not too impressive, but this year I was sent to France in May to the Six-Nations meeting and met the fifth and sixth finishers in Mexico, Gerhard Sperling of East Germany and Otto Barch of the Soviet Union, most formidable opponents. I beat them very easily (when it was 80 degrees F in temperature) which I regarded as a great victory, not least because many people say that I am ‘suspect’ in hot weather since my passing-out in Mexico. Here, though, I had took on the cream of six countries in very hot conditions - including the West German Bernar Nermerich, the fastest 50 kilometres walker in 1968 - and beaten them all in this 20 kilometre event. Then I went to Czechoslovakia and won again.”*

“After this I had the big meeting in Los Angeles and raced for the Commonwealth against America and the USSR. Here I had to race against the Olympic Champion of 20 kilometres Vladimir Golubnichiy and the bronze medallist Nikolay Smaga. For World’s Number 1 and 2, plus Ron Laird (USA) one of the World’s top 5, in his own back yard, where to win, beating all three, whom I knew very well, convincingly. After I had beaten an Olympic Champion and these other top liners, I thought ‘You have beaten the best in the World, so why not do it again in two months’ time?”

In comes Paul to tell me *“The walk in Athens went perfectly to plan. I talked over the possibilities with all my friends beforehand, and it was generally agreed that it would be a highly tactical race. Whatever pace was set by any leaders, whether very fast or very slow, I would go with them, and would not attempt to drop anybody at least till the three quarters mark - 15kms. At that stage I would have two or three walkers with me, and drop them one by one. It is very, very rarely that you can plan before a race just what you are going to do, and for it all to fit into place with a pre-race plan, work through it only for another competitor to completely spoil it all. This time however, everything went as according to plan.”*

European Athens 19/8/69 first three: 1 Paul Nihill (GB) 1:30:41.0; 2 L Caraiosifoglu (Rum) 1:31:06.4; 3 N Smaga 1:31.20.2. Paul Nihill gained a bronze medal in the 20k in the European in Athens in 1971 behind Smaga and Sperling. The latter was 4th in Athens. In Munich in the Olympics of 1972 Paul was 9th, and 30th in the 1976 Olympics over 20k in Montreal, still

competitive but not the fantastic winner of the 1960's - but Paul Nihill was a nice fellow with a strong will as an athlete, someone to be admired. **Alastair Aitken**

JOHN LEES - A TRUE FRIEND OF ESSEX WALKING

On the run-up to our Festive Season one of our readers enquired if former GB International and Centurion 488 John Lees (18:15.34 1972 Leicester-to-Skegness, 2nd to Dave Boxall) still completed his famous Christmas Day 50 kilometres walk, which he'd done for decades, and long after stepping aside from competitive race walking. Not for a while has 50 kilometres been the going rate, but this hardy athlete still steps out on Christmas Day to complete at least 4 miles. Brighton-based John always heads towards Hove Cemetery to pass the grave of England and Surrey star batsman Sir Jack Hobbs, who is still ahead of the rest with 61,760 first class runs (5,410 scored in tests) and 199 centuries (15 in tests). His first-class record stands but test match totals were overtaken by Wally Hammond in 1937. He'd have scored more, but for a break during World War 1 - he was in the Royal Flying Corps. Hove resident Jack died in 1963 aged 81. John himself knows cricket well - as he professionally commentated at Sussex home matches for the BBC. When Essex travelled to Hove for County Championship matches, listeners to our County radio would often hear John in the commentary box. On one occasion race walking "fan" Roger Buxton was presenting a 'live' Saturday afternoon sports show when he told listeners, "Now let's go over live to Hove to hear from John Lees - the only Brighton man ever to win the London-to-Brighton Walk". *What an intro!* This, the 52nd Open Brighton in 1977, saw the home town man (it's a city nowadays) hit the seafront in 7:54.32, followed by French International Alain Moulinet 8:08.11, Ken Harding (earlier that year he'd set a Manchester-to-Blackpool record) 8:19.07 and "A23 regular" Ray Middleton in 8:23.45. John led a Brighton & Hove AC team to 2nd position. 57 made the result sheet before 12 hours elapsed. Many well-known names were successful that day, including Peter Worth, Nolan Simmons, Len Ruddock, Ed Shillabeer, Jon May, Graham Peddie, John Laing, Fred Baker, Ken Roost, Chris Hayes, Enfield's M Booth, Eddie McNeir, Chris Hayes and Southend stalwart George Woods. 1972 saw John Lees make the Guinness Book of Records for walking across America in 53-and-a-half days. He'd "warmed-up" for that with a distance challenge from John O'Groats-to-Lands' End in March. Another challenge was a televised long-distance pram push across England for Esther Rantzen's "That's Life" show. John has so many great performances - including a brilliant 3rd place in the 1974 Accolade 8 Hours endurance event at New River Stadium, organised by Bill Sutherland - when Ray Middleton and Ken Harding were the 1-2. John was our lead commentator when Britain staged for popular Lugano Trophy for a first time - at the Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes (1977). Often when Soviet superstar Vladimir Golubnichy sped past he boomed, "Good golly - let's hear it for Golly". In Essex he again was lead commentator when a successful and well supported European Friendship road walk was promoted in the mid-70s. This was based on ASDA's Chelmer Village superstore, with an evening social function and dinner in Chelmsford town centre (nowadays also a city) and then a Sunday morning track meeting at Cricklefields Stadium in downtown Ilford. Yes folks, John still has an active Christmas Day - *and long may this be so!*

THANKS

Ex-Royal Air Force regular, Centurion and sub-20 hours 100 miles' finisher **Ken Roost** celebrated his **90th** birthday on Boxing Day at his Stevenage home. Sadly he's suffering health setbacks at present, so we hope he'll turn the corner as 2021 progresses. He wishes to thank the walkers who sent Birthday cards, which certainly cheered him up. *Thanks readers!*

ESSEX COUNTY AA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We thank Andy Catton and Kaye Merrywest for sending attachments so readers can be informed as to what happened at our 7 December Essex County AGM when around 26 "assembled" on "Zoom". Chairman Andy Catton opened proceedings by paying tribute to former Chairman David Staines and stalwart Mike Emms for meritorious service to County athletics. As you'll know relatively little 2020 activity occurred for obvious reasons - so it was decided to re-elect County President (Gerry O'Doherty) and President-Elect (Brigid Wallen) as they can now more enjoy their

roles into 2021. Esteemed Life Membership was awarded to Honorary Treasurer Gary Chandler. The Honorary Secretary position remains shared as Claire Levey looks after admin and Malcolm takes care of minutes. Long serving Rodney Silk continues as Hon Auditor - established readers will remember his contribution going back to the days of Essex Beagles before an amalgamation with Newham AC. Melanie Peddle was formally elected your Honorary Walking Secretary and Race Walking Association Representative - **so let's all give Melanie our full support.** Trustees are Kaye Merrywest, Ray Pearce and John Weir. Welfare Officers are Malcolm Bailey and Jean Tierney. Richard Casey is our Essex Schools Representative - wouldn't it be nice to see new race walking talent again emerge from schools as used to occur over decades? Andy Catton retains the gavel. Words of praise were rightly said about Keith Palmer, who after many years tireless service has stepped down as Track & Field Secretary and also County Men's Team Manager. Worrying is that there were no takers for these offices. Also vacant is a Trophies Secretary position plus Team Manager positions for our U/15 and U/20 Mens and U/13 Girls age groups. *Does anybody know of persons who might be interested in helping fill these important positions?* Before the first Covid-19 restrictions back in mid-March we reported on one Essex Club AGM which failed to secure the services of a Trophies' Secretary - that Club announced they'd store all trophies in a cupboard at the HQ and there they'd remain until somebody came forward to fill this post. On a 20 strong Executive we're fortunate to have a quartet with sound knowledge of race walking: Peter Cassidy, June Cork, Keith Palmer and, Lance Williams. Four Executive Committee positions are vacant. However with walking well represented on that Committee, we now **need** to be strongly supported roads and tracks, don't we? A reader who doesn't wish to use his name, suggests conducting all Essex County Walking Championships as 'B' races in order to kick-start a return to staging those Championships we've so sadly lost. What few left are threatened - as County qualified walkers continue declining to enter. So, **please** readers - think about returning in 2021 and beyond!

IN THE MONEY

We congratulate a trio of Peter Cassidy, Lancashire Walking Club and Pam Ficken who were respectively 1st, 2nd and 3rd in a recent RWA 200 Club draw. **How about more joining to assist our sport?**

[200 Club - Race Walking Association](#)



CYRIL REBAK RIP

Sadly Covid-19 sufferer Cyril has parted with us aged 88 while a patient at London's University College Hospital. A loyal Surrey Walking Club member who joined in 1977, he also belonged to Stock Exchange AC where he served as a Vice President. He was a frequent official at race walking events including the memorable Centenary (1903-2003) London-to-Brighton Walk, where he was a timekeeper with his good lady Sandra on the Recording Team. Cyril was prominent in serving the London Football Association and also active in assisting in a then active Stock Exchange football scene. He was a committed Charlton Athletic supporter. To Sandra and all other family members we express profound condolence.



SUPPORTING BEN BLOWES

Three of Suffolk's Centurions outside Moulton Post Office on 28 December to support Ben Blowes. Why? Read the full story here: [Runner Ben Blowes completes 31 marathons in a month and raises £138,000 - BBC News](#)

Photo Left-to-right: Ron Wallwork C893, Ian Garmston C899 and Angie Underdown C1095. This Post Office is owned by former Tottenham Hotspur central defender Mike Dillon, who played in the 1974 UEFA Cup Final, and has both raced a Moulton 5 Miles and presented awards/prizes.

OLYMPIC 50K RACE WALK EVENT by Paul F Demeester

"I first learned of the proposed elimination of the Olympic 50K Race Walk Event at the World Masters Championships athletes' reception held at the Perth Zoo in late 2016. The news was just a whisper then and would remain so as World Athletics headquarters (then called IAAF) quietly worked to get rid of the 50K at major championships. The secret ploy would have worked but for Heel and Toe having exposed the duplicity in a special issue on [6 April 2017](#). Exactly one week later, the IAAF Council refused to go along with cutting the Men's 50K for Tokyo 2020. The Council asserted itself further in launching a December 2018 demand to make the Tokyo 2020 50K gender equal and in committing to two race walk distances at its March 2019 Doha meeting, where Seb Coe's second 50K elimination attempt sparked heated discussions behind closed Council doors."

"We know why the International Olympic Committee (IOC) wants to get rid of the 50K. They need to cut athletics at the Olympics so as to be able to accommodate other sports that are new to the Olympics without taxing host cities that need to accommodate athletes, officials, journalists and spectators. The IOC has therefore downsized by capping the total number of Summer Olympics athletes to 10,500 (compare to 11,238 at Rio). The IOC has become an entertainment conglomerate, no longer interested in sports other than as a medium to increase broadcast revenue. The IOC viewed [50K elimination as easy prey. After the 2016 Rio Olympics, the IOC](#) provided three disingenuous reasons for doing so: 50K was not gender equal; there was too much doping in it; and it did not generate sufficient broadcast interest. None of those reasons withstood scrutiny. The gender equality argument was pure dishonesty, as it was the IOC that fought the legal effort to include 50K women at Tokyo with all its might. The IOC feared that their inclusion would make it harder to get rid of the 50K. The doping argument had more to do with Russia than with the 50K. We don't see the IOC try to eliminate the 100m or the marathon, events that have seen an inordinate amount of doping violations by athletes from different countries. The broadcast interest argument falls flat in light of the thrilling 50K finishes at Rio (2016) and Doha (2019)."

"The IOC may have tried to put some faulty reasoning behind its 50K cutting effort but their real purpose has never been a secret. But what about World Athletics? President Seb Coe is the first athletics leader to permit the Olympic athletics footprint to shrink. He's done so by championing the elimination of the 50K and by instituting World Rankings, the surest way to implement the Olympic directive to reduce the number of Olympic runners, walkers, throwers and jumpers. Now that Coe has joined the IOC as a member, one may wonder which athletics event he will sacrifice next to fulfil his ambition of becoming Thomas Bach's successor as IOC President when Bach term limits out four years hence. Or which sports Coe will favour at the Olympics over athletics?"

"The recent request by World Athletics to add a Women's 50K at the Paris 2024 Olympics underscores the point. That request was not a change of heart for Coe with regards to his antipathy to the 50K. Not at all! The request was simply a way for Coe to look like he supports gender equality, placate the Council members who support long distance race walking, and shift blame for the 50K demise to the Olympic Movement. The circumstances of the Paris request demonstrate that nothing has changed for Coe."

"When World Athletics CEO Jon Ridgeon announced on [2 December 2020](#) that the governing body was asking the IOC to keep the Men's 50K race for 2024 and to add a Women's 50K, it was news to the race walk community. Ridgeon answered a question asked by a journalist whether World Athletics was seeking to add any events besides cross country to the 2024 program. Coe had not volunteered the information in his initial comments. A top international race walker first read about it on the [insidethegames.biz](#) website and told Heel and Toe about it. The author of the insidethegames article, Liam Morgan, later interviewed the former World Athletics Athletes' Commission chair Iñaki Gomez ([2018-2019](#)), who seemed equally surprised and reportedly faulted the IOC for a "lack of engagement with athletes." ([Insidethegames.biz, 9 December 2020.](#)) I join the Canadian two-time Olympic 20K race walker and fellow lawyer in his criticism of the IOC. But

we must look in-house first, which Gomez may be reluctant to do given that Coe appointed him to his chairmanship.”

“Note that World Athletics proposed two new events for Paris 2024: the Women’s 50K Race Walk and a mixed cross country relay. We never heard about the Women’s 50K until the eve of the IOC meeting in December but Coe used his bully pulpit to push for cross country inclusion at his press conference following the 222nd Council meeting last July. (See www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUJSCBXI11U; cross country proposal discussed by Coe between [15:56](#) and [16:52](#) and press question about it answered by Ridgeon between 31:43 and 33:25.) The unequal treatment should surprise no one. Cross country has been Coe’s pet ever since 1969 but Coe dislikes the 50K so much that he refused to accept the booklet about the Women’s 50K that I tried to hand him at the Monaco Council meeting in December of 2018, despite Coe’s responsibility under the 2017 IAAF Constitution to “liaise and facilitate effective communication and relationships with Member Federations, Area Associations, sponsors and other stakeholders.” (2017 IAAF Const., Art. 8(4)(j).) In my capacity as the legal and lobbying representative of women 50K walkers, I certainly fit the bill of “other stakeholders.” (In fairness to Seb, he was most gracious when I introduced the members of our lobbying party to him - including five top 50K walkers - shortly before I tried to hand him the booklet.)”

“Needless to say, had World Athletics announced that they were asking the IOC to add a Women’s 50K Race Walk Event for Paris 2024 besides a Men’s 50K Event, the wider race walk, athletics and gender equality families could have made themselves heard in favor of the proposal. But World Athletics was mum. So much for Coe’s broken promise of transparency. And thanks to the changes Coe brought about in the IAAF Constitution, Council Members were prohibited from openly discussing any 50K Olympic addition request; only Coe could do so and ... he chose not to. (See my discussion of Coe’s authoritarian muzzle rules in Don’t Speak Up: Anything You Say Can And Will Be Used Against You, Heel and Toe Online 2019/2020 No 32, [4 May 2020](#).)”

“Coe’s bias did not abate after the IOC turned down any proposals for additions to the event program for Paris 2024 (a total of 41 events across all sports). World Athletics put out a press release lamenting the rejection of cross country for Paris 2024: “Cross country is an exciting and fast growing sport around the world so we are clearly disappointed it will not feature at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.” (World Athletics Press Release of [7 December 2020](#), World Athletics statement on IOC announcement about the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.) Not a word of disappointment about the non-inclusion of the Women’s 50K or, for that matter, the deletion of the 50K altogether. At least Coe did not hide his true feelings. This is exactly what he wanted.”

“Fortunately, the Council has asserted its independence and the just released entry standards for the 2022 World Championships in Eugene include 20K and 35K races for both men and women, in line with what the Council wanted at its [2019 Doha meeting. At least our efforts since 2017](#) (and those of Erin Taylor-Talcott long before that) have not been in vain, even though 20K and 50K would be a better match. World Athletics should not bend to the wishes of the IOC. Back in 1976, the IAAF responded to the Olympic elimination of the 50K by starting the World Championships Athletics, first just for the 50K in 1976, then in 1980 for two women’s events that did not then feature at the Olympics (400m and 3000m). By 1983, the IAAF organized its first all-event World Championships, which has become our top World Athletics event. The governing body was right in continuing to have two race walk events per gender at the World Championships. We should not let the IOC dictate our own program. After all, we have World Championships in cross country and the half-marathon, even though these events are not Olympic events either. World Athletics needs that Spirit of ’76 again and change the 35K back to 50K for its Worlds, irrespective of what the Olympic folks think (and that includes Coe, who has sworn an Olympic oath that puts him in direct conflict with the interests of athletics). Long distance race walking does not end at 35K; it merely starts there.”

CENTURIONS AGM

It was held on Saturday 23 January via "Zoom" for obvious reasons. All Officers and Committee remained in their posts, so it was a case of "As You Were": President Pam Ficken, Immediate Past President Eric Horwill, Hon Secretary Sue Clements, Hon Treasurer Richard Cole, Captain Martin Fisher, Vice Captain Frans Lejtens, Social Walks Organiser Steve Kemp, Merchandising Officer Chris Flint, Archivist Sue Clements and Committee members Dave Jones and Carl Lawton. Two new Committee members were elected to serve: Richard McChesney (qualified at Southend in 2014) and Olympian Ian Richards.



Most business was for the ears of Centurion members, however an important piece of news affects readers. It's hoped a 100 miles' track walk can be held at Southend's Garon Park during 2021 - this obviously depends on Government restrictions being lifted and our general National medical situation later this year. Staging a 100 miles relies on an "army" of helpers and officials - and appeals are to be issued nearer the time. It's hoped most existing Centurions will be on hand to assist in this event, so enabling others to become Centurions. **Watch this space!**

BILL GARRETT RIP

Iford AC members are mourning the passing of popular former race walker **Bill Garrett**, who turned out for the Cricklefields-based Club between the mid-70s and mid-90s. Although never a leading light, Mr Garrett was a good solid back-up walker who could be relied on. Twice he closed home winning Iford teams in Southern Area 50 Kilometres' Championships, on both occasions around a bleak deserted Basildon industrial estate. On a more popular course around Battersea Park's Queen's Carriageway he was the Club's 3rd scoring finisher (of 4) when winning a Southern Area 10 Miles' Championship so claiming the coveted "Garnet Cup". He was proud when awarded race walking's 10 kilometres-in-an-hour badge, achieved in an Essex County AA 10,000 metres championship on Hornchurch Stadium's track. Garrett twice race walked London Marathons, raising money for "The Marriage Guidance Council" and "Relate" - they being the same charity, having changed names between his first and second completions. He also appeared in triathlons.

He suffered a couple of notable setbacks. In a Southern Area Garnet 10 Miles, Iford with 3 men home waited for 4th scorer Bill to clinch certain team victory, when the man himself was "*pulled*" for a bent knee 15 yards from the finishing line on a bracing Clacton-on-Sea esplanade. Not downhearted Bill was Iford's Club 3rd scorer a year later at Battersea Park in a winning "Garnet" quartet. In an Essex County AA 3,000 metres championship at Hornchurch Stadium, organisers combined all categories into a composite event. Each category had race numbers issued from 1 upwards. We saw *Murphy's Law* on the first bend of lap 1 when a youth was disqualified wearing No 8, resulting in a loud call of this number. A startled judge panicked as two disgruntled No's 8 trudged towards him unpinning numbers - a transgressing youth and Bill. Bill lost much ground before it dawned on the judge what had gone wrong - so Bill rejoined the race - and finished it!

A keen supporter of Iford's social functions he suffered back complaints in his later time with the Club, which he didn't attribute to athletics but a daily commute to inner London on decades' old Central Line rolling stock which always gave a bumpy ride. Mr Garrett worked in telecommunications and was presented with an engraved tankard in appreciation when retiring to Forfar in the mid-90s, where he died aged 86.

MESSAGE from Leonie, Bill's daughter

"This is to let you know that my father Bill Garrett passed away. He was a member of IAC through the mid-70s to mid-90s when he moved to Scotland. He enjoyed race walking and triathlon at Iford Athletic Club." Should you wish to express condolence, his daughter's email address is: leonie12@cooptel.net or write to: "Blytheswood", 21 Rosebank Lane, FORFAR, Angus DD8 2BE



Photo:

Bill finishing the Colchester-to-Mersea Island "point-to-point" 8 miles on August Bank Holiday Monday 31 August 1981. Bill clocked 81 minutes and 18 seconds which saw him 27th from 31 finishers. (Note crowds lining the streets). This race lives on in history as it was that infamous occasion when the organiser failed to consult tide tables - the causeway between the Essex mainland and Mersea Island being covered by a high tide twice per 24 hours, so causing walkers to wade across the causeway!

ESSEX WALKER IS LISTENED TO

Last year, when announced our men's and women's British Olympic Marathon Trials would be held in traffic-free Kew Gardens on the morning of Friday 26 March, Essex Walker suggested the Race Walking Association and others connected with promoting race walking should consider such a quality venue for **our** major events. In race walking nowadays important news is often not announced to rank-and-file participants - indeed **major** changes to our 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games walks was announced to us via "**Heel-and-Toe**" - *an Australian newsletter*. Also we learned of an Olympic 50K demise via a newsletter few ever see. An individual reader contacted Essex Walker to reveal our 2021 British Olympic 20K Walk trials are to be held in **Kew Gardens** along with those above-mentioned marathon trials. Our informant stated it's to be a "*behind closed doors*" race. *One can understand why as the National medical situation now stands*. So spectators can't gain free admission to enjoy ambling around this major attraction. We hope some of our readers will be able to make bids for Tokyo places. But, hey, it's nice to see a suggestion **first** made in Essex Walker has been acted upon by those at the top. [OLYMPIC GAMES TRIAL FOR THE 20KM RACE WALKS TO TAKE PLACE AT KEW GARDENS IN MARCH – British Athletics.](#)

BERNHARD "Bernd" KANNENBERG RIP

Sadly, one of our all-time greats has passed in Germany aged 78. At the infamous 1972 Munich Olympics he won gold in the 50 Kilometres' Walk clocking 3:56.11.6. He never got an opportunity to defend his Olympic title in 1976 at Montreal, as his event had been dropped from the programme (alas rows about continuing this event are still ongoing today). Over 20 Kilometres he struck silver in the 1974 European Championships clocking 1:29.38 just 8 seconds behind legendary Soviet walker Vladimir Golubnichy, as Roger Mills earned bronze in 1:32.33.8 with Amos Seddon 6th in 1:34.17.6. Where was our 3rd walker you may ask? - well shamefully those in a smoke-filled Selection Committee Room only picked 2 this time. Bernd had 2 Olympic 20K races (1972/76) but retired during both. This former soldier's expertise was in demand as his "*know how*" was made available as Coach to Germany's International race walking squad.

A number of Essex Walker readers (Peter Marlow, Brian Adams, George Nibre, Roger Mills) have expressed their sadness on hearing of Bernd's death. Other comments include:

- "Yet another one lost that knew how to walk properly." **Carl Lawton**
- "Very sorry to hear about another great athlete and race walker." **Peter Selby**
- "More sad news from what has been a terrible series of losses during the last 12 months. To those around in the '70s, Kannenberg seemed like a kind of superman and his time for 50K seemed beyond the reach of mere mortals." **Steve Uttley**
- "Oh wow ... my two favourite walkers ever were Kannenburg and Raul Gonzales. Sad news." **Tim Erickson**

- “What a shock! A lovely guy and a great stylist, he thoroughly deserved his Olympic gold.” **Bob Dobson**
- “Another truly great champion and innovator leaves us.” **Olly Flynn**

Bernhard ‘**Bernd**’ **KANNENBERG** (Germany) (b. 20 Aug 1942 Königsberg) died on 13 January at Münster, aged 78. Olympic champion at 50k walk in 1972 (DNF 20k), he was also DNF 20k in 1976. At the Europeans he was 9th at 20k in 1991, 2nd at 20k and 9th at 50k in 1974 and also won the Lugano Trophy 50k in 1973 with 2nd at 20k in 1975, and was FRG champion at 20k in 1972 and 1974-5 and at 50k 1972-3 and 1975. He set six world records: track 20,000m 1:24:45.0, 30,000m 2:12:58.0 and 2 hours 27,153m in 1974, and 30M 3:48:23.4 and 50,000m 3:56:51.4 in 1985; road 3:52:45 in 1972. Further FRG records included 5000m 20:51.0 and 10,000m 41:36.2 in 1972, 1 hour 13,635m and 14,241m in 1974, and 20M 2:30:37.4 in 1975. 26 internationals 1970-6. He became the German walks team coach.

Information supplied by Peter Matthews, Editor Athletics International & International Athletics Annual

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Gerald Paynton, then of the London Distance Walkers Association (LDWA), is a Centurion who qualified in Essex at a memorable 100 miles' walk around Colchester's Lower Castle Park in August 1996. Also present were Anglia Television, local press and the Mayor of Colchester. We've not heard from Gerald in decades - however he recently surfaced - now aged 78 and living in Ware (Hertfordshire). Gerald states he now has no interest in walking, and is no longer on any mailing lists. Others qualifying that day included Glen Robertson and Jerry Everett from their home town Club of Colchester Harriers, who clocked 23:10.45 and 23:47.37 to respectively claim numbers 946 and 951. The latter, who badly struggled over the closing 10 miles and showed great fortitude to complete the distance, was an Organising Committee member. Popular "Postie" John Fenton of Birchfield Harriers clocked 23:20.42 to become Centurion 947. Sue Clements, then of the LDWA, made her debut at a Centurion qualifying event and become No 950 with 23:42.37 on the stopwatch. Sue's become a key player in the world of long-distance events, such as the Roubaix 28 Hours, and Centurions' qualifying events on the Continent and around the globe. As well as LDWA membership, qualified coach Sue has raced for London Vidarians, Enfield & Harringey AC and Cambridge & Coleridge AC - where she's tried hard to enthuse beginners to take up race walking. Now a Centurions Vice-President, Honorary Secretary and Archivist Sue has also served as an enthusiastic Vice-Captain and edited/compiled their informative current Handbook. As for the race, 39 started/26 finished with 11 becoming new Centurions. The other 6 new Centurions were all from Holland, including Frans Leijtens of Rotterdam Wandelsport Vereniging (RWV Club) who clocked 23:36.14 and is now a Centurions Vice-Captain, having completed many UK hundreds. At the 1997 Colchester 100, Organiser John Hedgethorpe found out the hard way that "I'll get there if I can" means most saying so are too polite to state they've no intention of appearing, but seem content that whoever asks will go away pleased you'll probably put in an appearance. Alas from a dozen promising to get there if they could, (to act as marshals) only a couple turned up. Despite being overall organiser with so many tasks to attend to, John himself had to stand on a point directing walkers. When marshalling goes wrong chaos ensues - be it at the 1968 Olympic 20K trial or the 2012 joint 100 Miles/National 50K at Lower Castle Park - when walkers strayed off course onto Colchester's inner by-pass before the Referee abandoned this event after 2 miles. All trudged back to the start with much grumbling as the whole event began again from scratch.

THANKS

Noel Mooney - former stalwart Ilford AC race walker of the '70s - who celebrated his **80th** birthday on Sunday - has been in touch to thank those who sent birthday cards and messages. Noel said, "I had trouble working out some of the signatures, but I got them all in the end. Many thanks".

STOP PRESS - RWA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Your Race Walking Association AGM was held on Saturday 30 January for a first time on "Zoom" - which proved successful as numbers attending were up on previous years. One regular attender, former Essex Walker Hon Editor Peter Cassidy, speaking *"from the floor"* said what a benefit it was not spending 3 hours on the M1 to be present. Race walkers expressed satisfaction with the work being done by your Association, as all were re-elected unopposed, with only one position unfilled.

Your line-up to take us forward remains: **President Colin Vesty**, **Vice-President Carl Lawton**, **General Secretary Colin Vesty**, **Treasurer Mark Easton**, **Championship Secretary Noel Carmody**, **Auditor John Elrick** and **Press & Publicity Officer John Constandinou**. Chairpersons of 2 important Committees remained in their posts: **Coaching & Development Committee Peter Marlow** - **International Committee Mrs Pam Ficken**. No nominations were received for a post of **Minutes Secretary** which is to be covered by **Colin Vesty** alongside his other duties. This post remains vacant - it was suggested as a way-in for a volunteer to become familiar with RWA work at the top level. *Could any volunteers please make themselves known.*

At the meeting John Constandinou and Helen Elleker were praised for promoting highly successful "virtual" races which have kept competition going with good numbers participating, as was Ron Wallwork for his decision to go ahead with a "virtual" Enfield League series. Colin Vesty gave advance information about his President's Appeal, which is soon to be launched. Proceeds will fund an initiative to take race walking to the people. So readers, please put aside a few bob (or pounds) to make this appeal - and its worthy aim - a great success.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Loughton 2nd claimer and Centurion 972 **Paul King** is to celebrate a milestone birthday - his **70th** - on Thursday 4 February. He's remains a stalwart participant at his first claim Club - the Bels - and a distinguished member of Stock Exchange AC. In the latter's events he completed 10 London-to-Brighton Walks between 1979 and 2003, winning 9. His first shot at the 52.2 miles' distance saw him fill 16th spot as 51 started/39 finished - however his 10:37.08 debut was rewarded as he went home with the Novice prize. Another prize - the Sealed Handicap Award - came his way in 1995 when clocking 9:18.16 to also win the overall race. As years progressed he went into a higher age group, and won the Veterans Cup 7 times. (*Note for newer readers: in Paul King's heyday, "Masters" were called "Veterans"*). Paul saved his best until last - the last ever London-to-Brighton race in fact. Surrey Walking Club and Stock Exchange AC joined forces to combine their 2 races for a Centenary occasion (1903-2003). The day's sport ended with a wonderful reception in *"The Long Bar"* at Brighton Racecourse. Not for nothing is it called *"The Long Bar"* which was full as participants, officials, supporters and previous competitors from past decades were present in considerable numbers. In the Open race 65 started/52 finished with Paul 6th in 9:15.27. This time saw Paul's *fastest victory* in the Stock Exchange as 25 had started in that category with 20 reaching the finish line. We give our best wishes to Paul on reaching septuagenarian status.

DAVE STEVENS RIP

Dave Stevens (Steyning AC and Stock Exchange AC) passed away on the morning of 31 January in his care home after illness.

Dave was a former RWA Southern Area President. Ten times he raced a Stock Exchange London-to-Brighton Walk between 1957 and 1975, winning in '75 (8:43.15). He was truly a great supporter of race walking. May he rest in peace. DA



Dear Dave ...

MOULTON FILM SHOW

How nice to see Linda's 2015 Moulton video get another airing recently. Funny enough, she filmed that after we had attended RWA General Committee where her video efforts were criticised!

Trevor McDermot

ANOTHER CALL TO ARMS?

In 1974 John Lees and I went on behalf of the RWA to Varna in Bulgaria to canvass Olympic delegates at the Olympic Conference as the Olympic 50 Kms Walk had been dropped in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Following a tremendous campaign by so many the 50 Kms returned in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. It would appear that there is now an urgent need for another campaign to prevent the 50 Kms being dropped from the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Bill Sutherland

FORMER INTERNATIONAL RECALLS AN ENJOYABLE 1980

I well remember that Colchester to Mersey race - I had to battle hard against Steve Barry. Olly Flynn was there watching and I was there and so was Brian Adams so we had 3 of the top 4 from the 1978 Commonwealth Games. That got a bit of attention. I had a few other great battles with Steve, perhaps the toughest in Weston Super Mare in a little local race organised by Bill Lawrence. I was at my peak at that time and Steve Barry was the up and coming next big thing. His wonderful win in the 1982 Commonwealth Games two years later was no surprise to me. I also have wonderful memories of the Lambeth 10km which was held around a hilly undulating park and through the midst of a big festival. Amazing stuff. I did my PB of 42:30 in that race. England was a wonderful place to race in 1980. Lois and I were based in London (living in Parsons Green) and I raced most weekends for the 3+ months that I was there. I used to train with Adrian James when I could - we would meet at Regent's Park and walk on a course that took us around the zoo and the park - I think it was around 5km. The Race Walking Record archives are a wonderful gift to us all.

Tim Erickson

WRITES A POPULAR FORMER ESSEX RESIDENT

We have been in Derbyshire for eight years in January and for six years I have been chairman of the club I founded in 1977, Buxton AC. However I will be retiring from that position next year. Since being back up north I have occasionally raced and trained with a mixed age group organised by Brian Adams an old club colleague from the Glory days of Leicester Walking Club. Four years ago I had a full hip replacement which went very well, but a year after I had a knee replacement, the recovery from which was initially almost miraculous. My physio said he had never seen anyone recover so well from that operation. However he should have kept his mouth shut as the knee became infected and had to be operated on three more times over the next six months before the ordeal was over. I can still get around pretty well on the fells and can even race walk in Park Runs without finishing last. We were walking on the fells last week and I said to Angela "40 years ago I would have flown down this hill" (I was a very useful fell runner at that time) and she said "there are a lot of people who 40 years ago would have flown down this hill, but would have been happy to walk down it now, but they can't because they are dead". In the light of one of my best friends, David Staines dying this year, along with Peter Ryan and several other walkers and runners I raced against. One has to concentrate on what we can do today and be very grateful for health and life itself. Hope you are managing to stay safe and healthy during this surreal time. Thanks again for the magazines. Some of my happiest sporting times were walking on the roads and tracks of Essex and it is nice to be part of those times again even at a 140 mile distance.

Chris Bent

DOUBLE TRIBUTE

How very sad two top British walkers lost in such a short time. I knew **Paul** very well, as we competed against each other on many occasions, with Paul always getting the better of me. **Peter** I seldom raced against from memory and the last was the Commonwealth in Christchurch in 1974 with him collecting third and me retiring.

Carl Lawton

WRITES A NOW CANADIAN-BASED CENTURION

Very saddened to hear about the recent losses of some very fine people and great athletes in this last year and very saddened to hear about Ilford AC club members and about Paul Nihill - but pleased to see the sort of write-ups about him such as in the Guardian piece and in the Essex and Tim Erickson's excellent newsletters. That was quite a surprise to see my first ever marathon time is still amongst the top twenty Ilford AC times – that means a lot to me. Here's wishing you and all club members the very best that the New Year can offer. Sad to see what is happening in the walking world with another Olympic blow but sincere thanks for all you continue to do for the sport.

Steve King

Adds Hon Ed: Steve is Centurion 492 - 21:29.17 - 1972 Leicester-to-Skegness

APPRECIATION

Brian Keegan: "You are amazing at keeping doing this, and I am amazed at how many names I remember, Peter Selby, Carl Lawton etc!!

Bill Wright: "Thanks very much for keeping me in touch with RWA and sundry other race walking sources of information. Above all I am grateful for the excellent piece you wrote about my contribution to race walking. I thoroughly appreciated listening to the broadcast on Paul's place in the history of race walking. Dave, you are making a major contribution to the support of race walking in these disruptive times and it is essential for the involvement in the sport for isolated "old timers" whose performances have declined. I hope to meet up with walking friends in the future even if it is restricted to observing rather than powering at a 7 mph! Stay healthy and keep up your fantastic communication service."

Adds Hon Ed: As previously mentioned, credit to Tony and Christine Perkins who suggested we publish monthly to keep everybody in touch as we no longer meet at the races.

READER WRITES

Re Paul Nihill's Obituary in the Guardian. Yes, very apt. I liked one of the comments about not knowing anything about Race Walking but knew Paul Nihill. That says a lot doesn't it? Very sad to hear reported that Paul did not feature in the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year, 'Hall of Fame who have departed during the year', despite being reminded. Just confirmed what a trashy show this has now become and holds no interest for me. All the best Dave and your latest Essex Walking Newsletter was another excellent edition and I think well in the tradition of what Reg Wells envisaged.

Len Ruddock

AS IT WAS

I was just reflecting on how difficult it was to gain a GB International for Race Walking in the Golden era of the 1960's. Style played a big part and finishing at all costs. Finishing 4th meant very little just as being a member of a lesser-known club did. Big mistakes were made on 'doubling up' in major games and team selections were made far too far in advance. Many of us raced too often, but you had to as GB had so many top race walkers and one had to keep in the selectors' eyes! Often we were told with too short notice greatly affecting ones performance on the day that mattered most. I treasure a letter from Ken Matthews congratulating me on my Bronze achieved despite rigorous shift week. 6 weeks alternate 0600 to 1400 or 1400 to 2200 then 3 weeks nights 2200 to 0600. Add to that am and pm court attendance, plus the detrimental effect on your digestion of food hence I ended up being a member of the 'No Gall Bladder' Club at aged 38! My surgeon's brother was a copper in Devon so he knew all about it.

Bill Sutherland

FROM GUERNSEY

Thank you for the kind words regards myself in latest edition of the Essex Walker.

Skimming through some old AW mags in last few days and came across this photo and write up. I remember Mike from his visit to Guernsey and then the Friendship walks in Chelmsford.

Rob Elliott



NEWS FROM AN ESSEX CHAMPION WALKER

Still training a lot on my own. So hard to swim though. Very stop-start with pools locking down a lot. Hey ho though, we are all in this together! No running races run since lockdown and my British Triathlon world champs have been moved to mid this year hopefully. I have started racing though of a different sort. Orienteering races. Brilliant fun. Covid-secure and tactical if like me you enjoy compass use and map reading. Love it. I've been in a few leagues and already won a race via the Essex Stragglers Orienteering Society Summer-Autumn 2020 League. Up to date I've completed 55 marathons. Very strange ... 2020 was first year with no marathon times for me since 2005! Your publication ... do like reading it.

Seb Parris

Adds Hon Ed: Seb's target is to join an esteemed list of those who've completed 100 marathons - he's over halfway there. Seb had a moment of fame on the Andrew Marr Show (Sunday 3 January) as when credits were flashed-up at the show's end, his name was listed as a member of the production team!

OVER TO YOU

We have to protest at the 50k being dropped from the athletic programme. Please write to Sebastian Coe at seb.coe@worldathletics.org

Peter Marlow

Member of the IAAF Committee for 43 years

A READER'S VIEW

Please keep the 50km walk for men and women in future Olympics. London 2012 was awesome and a better spectacle than the Marathon.

Dr Edmund H Shillabeer BVSc MRCVS C590

True Corinthian, holder of GB 100km track walking record, World M70 Champion 20km walk Sacramento 2011

RECOMMENDATION WORTH FOLLOWING UP

Very good recording on BBC Radio 4 for Ann Sayer, our first ever female Centurion. I remember her quite clearly as being a very strong and well-built female athlete, as well as being coached by the Great Centurion Tommy Richardson of Woodford Green. Can you remember the famous Dr Barbara Moore in the 60's? Great as Ann was in her era in the late 70's and onwards I feel that Sandra Brown of Surrey Walking Club is quite extraordinary as well and the best female distance race walker ever in the United Kingdom. Time and again I have given my personal opinion that she ought to have been honoured and given Life Membership of the RWA and I can't understand how this has been overlooked for so long.

Bill Sutherland

Adds Hon Ed: I concur and believe Sandra should also be inducted into the England Athletics Hall-of-Fame.

EMAILS MIKE SCAMELL

I hope you are keeping well in these troubled times. I'm still teaching, working from home to provide online lessons, but getting very fed up with it. On the bright side, I've been able to do a lot of training. I covered more miles last year than I've ever done in a year - 2650 miles. I have a training diary listing every training session since I started on 15 February 1970. **Mike Scamell**

BBC RADIO 4 "LAST WORD"

I listened with great interest to your BBC Radio 4 interview with Matthews Bannister featuring the amazing athletic career of Paul Nihill as a Race Walker. What a great shame that we have to wait for the death of one of our greatest Olympians before we get this amount of air space to discuss and explain the technicalities of Race Walking. So well done to you David for making the most of this opportunity and for using the air time to highlight the amazing life story and athletic career of Paul. One can only hope that Seb Coe may have the opportunity to listen in and take note of this four time Olympian and the contribution that Race Walking has made to the Olympic movement and will continue to make, if given the chance, and the credibility it deserves.

It is also true that there are aspects of a deceased person's life that we only come to realise and appreciate in their obituary so it was interesting for me to hear that Paul was brought up in an orphanage, an experience that I share with him having been brought up in Local Authority Children's Homes and Dr Barnardo's. Neither did I realise that he had a short spell in the Army and achieved some success in the Boxing ring. We each have our own story to tell, like and unlike everyone else's story. We each need to discern it and marvel at how, in retrospect, it begins to make sense, and we can see how everything - was grist to the mill, and how, a bit battered, we have not only come through but learned lessons that make us more rounded people, how all in the end is part of the harvest of our lives.

The world of athletics and Race Walking in particular will celebrate and honour his memory for all time. "Love is not changed by death, and nothing is lost and all in the end is harvest."

Dr Roy Lodge MBE (former International and National Champion 1967)

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