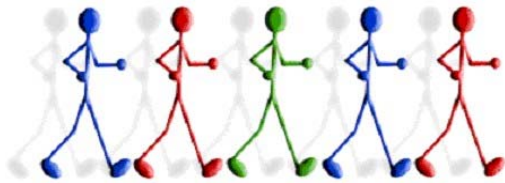


ESSEX WALKER



CENTURIONS A.G.M.

This is set for Saturday 19th February (prompt 2 p.m. start) at Leicester Walking Club's H.Q. in Haynes Road, Leicester. It may seem a long way to go for an A.G.M., but those who attended last year's meeting certainly got their moneys worth in terms of length! There are 15 agenda items including Ron Wallwork's discussion paper on future of U.K. 100 Miles events. Among elections is a nomination from JOHN EDDERSHAW for ultra-distance Queen SANDRA BROWN's elevation to Vice President. For those who can't make it, news should be quickly passed around the regulars at the Essex 10 Miles on the following morning.

ESSEX COUNTY 10 MILES CHAMPIONSHIP (+LEAGUE)

Sunday 20th February at 10 a.m. around South Park, Ilford. Change at Cricklefields Stadium, High Road, Ilford. This is opposite The Cauliflower Public House. Stagecoach Bus. 86 (Stratford-Ilford-Romford) passes the door. Nearest station: Seven Kings (One Great Eastern Liverpool Street-to-Shenfield line). Other Counties will be incorporating their Championships. Please allow at least 5 minutes to get from the changing rooms to the start line in South Park Crescent.

BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES

Veterans A.C. are a Club which many Essex Walkers belong to, and to which almost all our readers are eligible to join. They're going to introduce a new vest, which will see the 'VAC' logo placed higher up – so it will no longer be covered up by essential items such as race numbers!

OMISSION

Our resume of Essex interest in the 2004 Enfield series missed out that CHELSEA O'RAWE-HOBBS topped the Younger Age Group table by a wide margin. Our apologies to the promising one, whose form continues to impress.

LESS MIGHTY THAN IN BLIGHTY

U.K. 100 Miles races are pulling in more punters than across the pond. In the recent 100 Miles at Addison (Texas), PER PEDERSEN (Denmark) won it in 21.54.41. Only 1 other got his 100 Miles – SCOTT DEMAREE of TEXAS in 23.22.42. 3 others blew out at 81, 48 and 46 miles respectively. Not much scope for a postal match here!

FIRST OF THE LAST

Congratulations to DOMINIC KING who will go down in history as the last winner of the long-established Met. Police Open at Imber Court. Organisers NOEL & LYNN CARMODY received awards for their work in organising the event over many years.

NO HAPPY NEW YEAR – AND ILFORD'S TEAM CHANCES 'GO DOWN THE PAN'

The long established City of London Walks took place in Victoria Park, but it hardly saw us see in 2005 with a bang! The Men's 10K saw 9 entries, before Hon. Ed. purchased a last minute number so giving the event double figures respectability. Ten on the card (half from 2nd placed Ilford one of only 2 teams to even start). The ladies 5K and Junior races were even less well supported. The December E.W. contained an article explaining what goes on to stage such a meeting. It was hoped that, having digested it, readers would be keener to reward such efforts by attending them. Can any Club justify hiring changing rooms and obtaining prizes for a handful? Both walkers and officials were in short supply, making it a testing day for protagonists PAULINE WILSON and PETER CASSIDY; which was not helped when the latter lost his car keys during the morning's sport (subsequently found).

As for the meeting, in perfect weather conditions, STEVE UTTLEY was the best-placed Essex man taking 2nd in 53.21, while HELEN CROFT won the Girl's Under 11 One Kilometre in 8.41. Some had travelled long distances: DON COX, KEVIN MARSHALL and SUE CLEMENTS from East Anglia and CHRIS HOBBS from deepest Kent. Of course some will be saying that 'B' status could have increased the field. True, but that's a proverbial red herring. Britain's most prolific walker – CARL LAWTON - has strong views on the A/B controversy; but those views didn't stop him supporting the meet, despite working until 5.30 a.m. and attending without sleep. He knew a P.W. was probable (it was), so we salute Carl Lawton – prolific walker. And... a word of consolation for former New Year's Day victor STEVE ALLEN. After 1 circuit of the 6 on offer, he right-wheeled into the Club H.Q. to answer the call of nature. Having lost 5 minutes he also lost heart and recommenced racing among the back-markers; strolling the next 4 laps with MICK BARNBROOK, so it's safe to assume

that Steve now knows all about U.K.I.P's policies! While Steve lost time 'on the pan' the meeting is going 'down the pan' for Pauline had announced that next year's would be the last. This was stated even before the 'All Out' cry and reiterated during the presentation. Seeing piles of unsold sandwiches and cakes being given away at the end really brought home the enormity of the loss.

Where were you all? You couldn't have all been under the table recovering from merry-making and revelling! So another meeting is coming to an end and another year sees the average age go even higher. The last E.W. speculated that, soon, Enfield will be all that's left. So please try to support what you can – while you can. Every (sic) 2005 attender got a City Of London souvenir badge. When based on London Wall, it was so well supported that only those bettering limits could get a start. As fields declined it was then thrown open (changing at the City of London Corporation Cleansing Department). It then moved out of the City to Victoria Park, while retaining its name. On a bright note RACE WALKING out-survived the RUNNING RACE which folded some years ago. Runners prefer the New Year's Day 10K at the Serpentine, which this year pulled in over 400 starters. Despite the Victoria Park gloom we sincerely thank Loughton A.C. for staging the meeting.

A TEMPORARY FAREWELL

The new Essex County A.A.A. President is BRIAN HART, Secretary of Walthamstow A.C. for 42 years and Honorary Treasurer of the E.C.A.A.A. for several. He has recently retired and moved to Haltwhistle. Where's that – in Outer Mongolia? No, it's in Northumberland. Loughton A.C. dipped into their riches to contribute towards his retirement present. But...as President, he'll still be coming south to don his chain of office.

TROPICAL EXTRACT

"Walking is an essential part of French life. There can be no better exercise; you work the legs from the top to bottom, and the buttocks". This is an extract from French Women Don't Get Fat by Mireille Guiliano, published by Chatto & Windus on January 6th price £12.



A LOAD OF OLD POLLAKS

Newshound TOM POLLAK, who nowadays admits to being in semi-retirement (whatever that means), is still giving race walking meritorious service. Indeed he got Ilford's 10K result into the Daily Telegraph. Tom, who has been an after-dinner speaker at both the Metropolitan Police and Ilford A.C. annual functions, always pops in to see us after the Belgrave Open 7. He did this time, but we'd all gone home! He recently decided to update his contacts book, which is a tome. About 2/3rds of those listed are no longer with us. Phil Fisher, Frank Jarvis, Len Michell (and many more) were still listed – and have now only just been expunged. "No wonder I was getting so many unobtainable numbers" mused Tom.

"WHISKEY IN THE JAR"

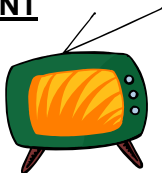
Loughton's Clubhouse was awash with sewage and waste material; so bad was the smell that some arrivals went back home to change. A man from Thames Water came and removed an empty ½ bottle of whisky/whiskey (we don't know which country it originated in) from a drain and the situation improved. To be positive, as they say in Yorkshire, "Where there's muck, there's brass".

NEWS OF A GREAT ONE

KEN MATTHEWS MBE, the last U.K. walker to win an Olympic Games Gold Medal (1964 – Tokyo 20 Kilometres) was recently interviewed by respected athletics journalist NEIL ALLEN for an article in 'The Olympian'. Commenting on the Athens Walks, Ken stated, "Robert Korzeniowski is a great champion with a marvellous style, absolutely fair and correct. Which is more than can be said of some of those in the men's and women's 20,000 metres walks". Ken was one of those former greats to attend the recent Royal Leamington Spa Reunion.

BEST TELEVISED ATHLETICS MOMENT IN 2004

Alistair McGowan's 'Big Impression' of Dame Kelly Holmes. It was wickedly accurate and highly entertaining.



WATER – WATER

Centurion and former international PETER HODKINSON is the Deputy Superintendent of Romford Market Place (scene of the now defunct Romford Brewery walking races). During Christmas trading a shopper passed-out and Peter's first-aid skills were called upon. But something went badly wrong, as the ambulance took 1½ hours to arrive while the casualty got very cold. So Peter whipped out his wallet and purchased 2 hot water bottles from a shop, went to his office and filled them, before returning to warm-up the casualty. That's initiative, spoiled only by a market trader who – on learning of Peter's action – boasted that he could have sold him water bottles for less than half-the-price!

AMSTERDAM MARATHON

Congratulations to JACKIE PARR (Loughton) who walked it in 5.14.04 (2.30.10 at ½ distance). We look forward to seeing her at most of our walking races.



L.P.R. OPEN 9 KILOMETRES YACHT HANDICAP

Following an appeal in Essex Walker, the final race of the 2004 Blackheath Trophy series saw a much improved turnout. We call on an equally large field (numerically that is) and hopefully even more, to support the 2005 series. This kicks off on Sunday March 6th (11.30 a.m.) from the Old Addeyans Club, Blackheath Park, LONDON, S.E.3. Hope to see you all there.

LOUGHTON A.C. JOTTINGS

The Club has a new Safety policy, and has just negotiated a new lease with Epping Forest District Council. In 2005 Loughton will be appearing in the Eastern Young Athletes League. They have purchased a new trophy (with money donated by the Ryan family) which will go to their SPORTS PERSONALITY-OF-THE-YEAR. Personality or character? There's a thin dividing line. They've fixed their AGM date – Monday 21st March (more details later) – so we hope all their walkers will ring-fence that date. Loughton are still working hard towards a memorable 2006 – Centenary Year. They also enjoyed a well supported and highly successful Christmas Dinner, when they filled the Royal Oak, though a few more walkers present would have been welcome. Finally, to get back to basics, Loughton's members have all been reminded that annual subs fell due on January 1st. Life goes on!

ESSEX COUNTY 3,000 METRES CHAMPIONSHIP

In 2004, this was the cock-up of all time. For walking it was an embarrassment. We must get it right. The main Championship days are on Sat 14th/Sun15th May. We expect to be allocated a Sunday timing. The venue is to be Havering/Mayesbrook track at Lodge Avenue, Barking (next to Barking Football Stadium). Ring-fence this date NOW – and remember that individual entries are mandatory. We must erase the debacle of 2004.



MARK
THIS
DATE

WHERE DID IT ALL GO WRONG?

The U.K. 2004 MERIT Rankings, compiled by Athletics Commentator and Statistician PETER MATTHEWS (with acknowledged help from JOHN POWELL) makes a grim read. Only 6 men are rated high enough to be ranked at 20 kilometres, and 4 of them have birthdates which go back in time to the swinging sixties! States Mr. Matthews, "There is again no British walker near my international class (world top 100-150) standard of 1.25.00. As in 2003 only 5 men bettered 1.35.00, the worst since 1967 and far, far below our former standard". Messrs. Easton and Partington have set an event record with a 19 year span since they were first ranked.

The 50 kilometres saw just 3 men listed, all of whom were born in the 60s. Three men broke 5 hours, an improvement on 2003 when just 1 did. All but 1 year from 1978 to 1987, the 10th best in Britain was under 4.30.

In the Women's rankings 10 U.K. walkers made the list, despite no appearance by the 2003 top ranked athlete LISA KEHLER and just 1 by the number 2, WENDY BENNETT. Mr. Matthews commented that top junior walkers offer hope in this category.

These rankings include races not held under the full I.A.A.F. definition, and these are annotated 'B'. The compiler is willing to accept any missed performances at: 10 Madgeways Close, GREAT AMWELL, Hertfordshire. SG12 9RU.

EDITORIAL

What is the future of the ESSEX LEAGUE. You could ask if it has a future? Three recent letters have asked questions as well as providing answers. Another 2 letters have been penned, but without permission to publish (yet). There is now open talk at Essex meetings about forming a breakaway ESSEX LEAGUE using the County Championships + 'B' races. By continuing its all 'A' race policy (clearly against the wishes of the majority) the Essex League is heading for the Knackers Yard. 'B' races are where the large fields can be found, and it's also where newcomers can get the hang of pedestrianism (which is a springboard to then tackle 'A' and Championship events).

A breakaway 'Real Walking Association' was a strong probability had the R.W.A. decided not to continue with sanctioning 'B' races. Plans were well advanced with potential office holders waiting in the wings. That threat was fuelled by a number of leading lights advocating the end of 'B' races. Fortunately the 'powers-that-be' realised what the majority wanted and decided to let things be. Now we have the same threat in the Essex League. The Essex League is not democratic, in that all decisions are made at the top; for years that was the late JOHN HEDGETHORNE who frequently boasted, "The most effective Committee is a Committee of One". But he knew what the rank-and-file wanted. What we need is an Open Forum – say after the Essex 10 Miles at Cricklefields?

We need to look at our distances (as Peter Ryan's letter suggests). Reducing distances had a great effect in boosting numbers. The Essex Police reduced their 10 Miles Championship to 15 Kilometres and then to 5 Miles. Each reduction saw higher numbers. STEVE KING's decision to go for 5 Miles was dramatic. Do readers remember the Essex Police Championship over a traffic-free 5 Miles at Harlow in October 1997? If not, look it up in your Record or Essex Walker (Issue No.203) 115 finished the 5 Miles and 60 the Ladies 2½ Miles – and, if you remember, the organisers even ran out of numbers-and-pins. We would do with that problem now!

We've been metric for years, and the R.W.A. have long since ditched 10 and 20 Miles. We already have a 10,000 Metres Championship (which we hope will see a 2005 upsurge in interest). So those distances should be 15 Kilometres and 30 Kilometres respectively. 30K is just that bit easier for entrants with an ever-rising average age. The Essex 20 Miles in recent years has seen entrants seeking some distance in preparation for the Guernsey Church-to-Church (19½ Miles). We didn't have an Essex 20 Miles in 2004 (that's been well covered and won't be rekindled here) but for some years we've had more Essex League regulars 'doing Guernsey' than appearing in our own County race of similar distance. Mind you 'Super Salesman' MICK BARNBROOK can take much credit for that. Unless there's a sudden onrush of newcomers, the Essex 50K seems doomed as a separate event. This year, the Essex 50K saw 1 Essex qualified man and 1 lady start – with just the latter making the result sheet. In recent years a separate Essex 50K has seen single-figure starts with finishers who could be counted on one hand. No other County even contemplates staging its own 50K Championship. Can we justify using Officials time for almost a whole day for a handful? Perhaps it's time to emphatically state that this race will – in future – always be held in conjunction with the National 50K, wherever that may be held. **The downward spiral of the Essex League for the past 5 years cannot continue – so, what about an Open Forum to air ideas for addressing our concerns?**

IN AND-OUT AT ENFIELD

KEN BATTAM has signed the dotted line while respected inform Loughtonian CHRIS FOSTER has signed his letter of resignation.

BRACING RACING

The 2005 Enfield League series opened with 5 miles on a sunny but blustery and cold afternoon on the twisting 5 circuits course. For an impressive 5th consecutive time, a plus 40 field assembled in earnest (more than at Imber Court). As in 2004, the race was held on the same weekend as the Met. Police Open. A year ago it was a contentious issue which generated a good 3 months of hullabaloo. There are many, including Hon. Ed., who believe that if an organiser is staging a SPECIAL EVENT (i.e. anniversary, memorial, heavily sponsored or a final race) then they should be given a clear run, so to speak, to maximise attendance. When put to our Enfield host he had all the answers when stating, "I have fully consulted with the Met's organiser and we are both totally agreed that the races should go on over the same weekend. There is no problem – I just wish that somebody would tell the Southern Area, which I certainly intend to".

As for the Met. Police Open, as it was not a Championship race, surely – just for the final race – a 'B' race could have been considered, like is the case at the remaining major opens (Leicester, Enfield and Belgrave)? The main object of any SPECIAL EVENT must surely to be get 'everybody in'. Essex Walker has frequently commented on how the Met. Police committee have been the authors of their own decline. One remembers two Loughton 2nd claimers being denied even a 'non-scoring guest walk' when the field was under 30 in numbers, after a genuine entries mix-up left them off the programme. One remembers a great Met. Police stalwart being 'bounced' because his entry missed the strict closing date. To this day there are Essex Walker readers who vowed never to appear at Imber Court after the Met's Race organiser, at the Belgrave Open, boomed out that race walking could well do without all those old boys at the back (as previously reported in this organ). They happen to be a higher percentage of British race walking as each year passes by! However we still thank NOEL and LYN CARMODY for their efforts in keeping the race going – and for all those who did the job going back to the 1940s. We applaud those who raced both at Enfield and Imber Court, and we commiserate with those who abandoned their journeys to the latter event on account of road and rail difficulties.

BARRY INGARFIELD, a keen onlooker, described the Imber Court course as the best in the country. Met. Police Chairman CHRIS FLINT has also spoken highly of the course and we'll let him have the final word, "We must try to salvage the event". As they say.... watch this space.

ENFIELD IN MARCH

The date set for the 5 Miles is Saturday 19th March at 2.30 p.m. from Donkey Lane.

NO WALK ALONG THE PROM

Littlehampton, about which the late Max Miller used to make cheap jokes, will not be staging the Southern Area 20 Kilometres Championship (Essex Championship in conjunction) on Saturday 26th February. It's off, due to major works at the Littlehampton Sports Centre. It appears that the local version of Gordon Brittas has thwarted us!

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"If you know nothing, then keep it to yourself". The late Peter Cook.

RETURN OF 'GLUCOSAMINE MAN'

At Enfield on Boxing Day, complete with Santa hat, we welcomed back RON WALLWORK to active competition for the first time since he publicly recommended glucosamine tablets to our readers. Ron followed this up with a sound appearance at the Ely 10K on New Year's Eve. SUE CLEMENTS has got a walking race established at Ely, and hopefully numbers will increase next time. It's worth working on.

BACK IN HISTORY

In her book 'PAULA: MY STORY SO FAR' by Paula Radcliffe (£17.99) her endurance genes are jokingly attributed to her great, great grandfather who she says was a committed road walker who did the London-to-Brighton. Perhaps our readers who have access to past records might unearth the performances referred to?

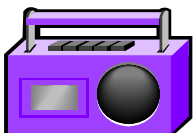
GEOFF HUNWICKS MEETS THE GAMBIAN VICE-PRESIDENT

GEOFF and ROHEY run the Gambian Home for Children With Learning Difficulties at Hart House in Serrekunda. Former junior international Geoff was the Essex 50 Kilometres Champion in 1976 and 77, clocking 5.01.23 and 4.47.25, respectively on the old Basildon course. He's a County standard chess player and is finding it an uphill struggle to get the game going in his new locality. Geoff thanks all who have sent donations and parcels. Geoff received a donation of 2 beds in the presence of Gambia's Vice President. Madam Vice President entertained Geoff at the State House with the visit featured on Gambian T.V.

If readers can help by sponsoring a child, making donations or selling locally made items such as necklaces, small woodcarvings and pictures (which can be posted to you), then please get in touch directly with Geoff. Contact details: P.O. BOX 3139, Serrekunda. The Gambia, West Africa. (0020) 9926258 phone, or email: geoffharth102@hotmail.com

STEVE WRIGHT IN THE AFTERNOON

Radio 2 seems to feature a number of walkers. Latest on were requests from a Katherine or Kathleen (not quite sure which) who wanted to be an international race walking judge. As the late JOHN HEDGETHORNE (a former RWA Press Officer) said, "All publicity is good publicity".

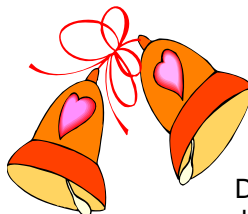


"I COMPETED AGAINST CHESTER BARNES"

The December issue contained an item about JOHN PERKINS (Havering 90 Joggers) receiving table tennis coaching from an old boy who once coached Chester Barnes. Several readers remember Chester but MICK BARNBROOK went one better. **He played against him!** Talented sportsman Mick used to be an enthusiastic table tennis player, and played for St. Andrews Church in Plaistow (where he was brought up). Recounted Mick, "We played a match at St. Luke's Church Hall and I faced Chester Barnes. He won 2 - 0". "He's been in with the best" as they say.

GUEST OF HONOUR

It was nice to see Enfield stalwart, former Ilford President and Essex-based Councillor KEN EASLEA at the opening 2005 Enfield League event. Ken, who completed 50 Enfield Open 7s was a fast man on his feet and attained Great Britain 'B' International status. Ken performed the duties of Mr. Starter and presented the awards.



WEDDING BELLS

DAVE SHARPE wishes it to be announced in Essex Walker, that he tied the knot on January 5th at a wedding ceremony abroad. We wish Dave and his lucky lady all success and happiness in their future years.

EXAMPLE TO THE REST

The Met. Police held their last Open from Imber Court. It was once their flagship event, and had been going for decades and at times saw over 200 puffing and groaning their way around the suburban streets. One would have confidently predicted that several former Met. Police walkers would have attended the final event, to walk, assist or even just to spectate and show support. With few exceptions, it didn't happen. Yet DOUG FOTHERINGHAM (a former Walking Club Secretary) drove from Spalding in Lincolnshire for Enfield's 5 Miler on Saturday - drove home - and then drove to Imber Court on the following day to support the last Met. Police Open. He's in his 70s and put his former colleagues to shame! We salute DOUG FOTHERINGHAM - true stalwart!

WRITES REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR MIKE HINTON

Dear Dave,

It was a pleasant surprise to see Ken Easlea at the last Enfield race, but sad to see how much he has suffered with his health in recent years. Ken has had more than his fair share of health problems, and it must have taken a great effort to watch the race in such blustery conditions, and make it up the stairs to the presentation. I am sorry to say I didn't recognize Ken at first, the last time we met was at the Ilford A.C. dinner when he was President some ten years ago.

My first recollection of Ken, was when back in the early sixties I used to watch the track meets at the White City Stadium. I remember him taking part in the inter-counties and AAA Champs two mile walks. The track then being cinder, and dry in the summer, Ken was very noticeable as his action used to send up clouds of dust as he progressed.

I would say the two mile track races were his forte as I think he was doing them in about 14 mins 30 secs back then, a tough man to get the better of at this distance.

Let's hope Ken's mobility improves and we see him again at Enfield soon.

Regards, Mike.

"DING-DONG"

MICK BARNBROOK, prospective Parliamentary Candidate (UKIP) for Old Bexley & Sidcup frequently peddles propaganda pamphlets around our changing rooms - though it's unlikely that too many potential readers reside in his Constituency. Recently one reader certainly let Mick know that he took a much different viewpoint on the European Union. Well...it certainly hones up Mick's debating skills for when he goes out to garner votes by bandying words on punters doorsteps. And who is tipped for a good showing at the General Election? The 'Don't Vote' Party!

CHALK AND TALK

After a few years in the field of Municipal Leisure, respected teacher PETER CRANE is returning to the classroom. Chadwell Heath based Peter is taking up an appointment that involves teaching English Language skills to adults.



WRITES FORMER INTERNATIONAL BARRY INGARFIELD

Dear Dave,

My analysis of the current state of Race Walking, is now as an independent observer, therefore my comments are neither political nor personal, they are essentially pragmatic, if we are to compete at the highest level. Principally, if team GB is ever to vie for medals in major championships the way which the RWA prepares its young athletes needs a drastic rethink! Nostalgia is a wonderful thing, but I do not necessarily believe that our sport requires hundred of competitors to succeed, as in years gone by. I suggest that the way forward is the creation of an elite squad, fully financed, and supervised by a full-time coaching staff. I envisage a set-up along similar lines to the Jerzy Hauslieber system in Mexico during 1970s and 80s.... one essential aspect on hand at all times: physiotherapy and medical back up, the latter provided by the BAAB. This approach would need a huge commitment from both athletes and coach, with constant performance evaluation. Do we have the talent in Britain to achieve greatness... yes we do?

Best Wishes

Barry

POSTAL MATCH

The December match over 10K was between ESSEX and THE NETHERLANDS. This is stressed to explain why some who appeared in the Chigwell Row race did not see their names in Essex Walker's result list. We only published those who had Essex connections, and therefore scored in the match. The full result was in Record/A.W. In the previous issue, the figures alongside each Dutch finisher denoted the year of their birth. Had such facts been published for Essex finishers, then all would have been shown as veterans – which is worrying for our race walking future.

KING'S LYNN INFO

Just a reminder that all you need to know about the big East Anglian Hundred can be found on:

www.100milewalk.co.uk

ON THE GROUND

Colchester Harrier JERRY EVERETT made few walking appearances in 2004, which is a pity for when he attends, Jerry usually brings along a car load. Much of his time is now devoted towards coaching events other than walking, and he's also finalising a 3 volume book about the history of athletics in Colchester. Those who have seen draft copies can concur that walking is fully covered. Jerry couldn't make the opening 2005 Enfield fixture as he was following his beloved Colchester United on their successful away trip to Hull. Jerry went because Hull City play at a new ground. Jerry has personally visited each of the original 92 Football League grounds, and now seeks to update his list by attending new stadiums/grounds which now feature professional football.

EVER THE OPTIMIST

That's MARTIN OLIVER. At the opening Enfield League meet, a couple of unlikely looking 'Jack the Lad' characters ambled into the upstairs café at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium (Enfield's centre of operations since arsonists applied Swan Vestas to the adjacent Clubhouse). Martin's eyes bulged as he uttered, "They must be novice walkers". Genial Martin approached the potential newcomers only to be asked, "Is this where the cafeteria is man?" We live in hope!

MICK BARNBROOK'S EXPERIENCE

Mick raced at Enfield and Imber Court and, on his way to the latter, spotted former International PETER HODKINSON out training. Mick stopped and enquired why Peter was not racing the last Met Open? Peter had not seen the Record advert and therefore hadn't entered before the closing date. Had entries been permitted on the day, Peter would have raced. On the line a decision was taken to delay the start because an international walker's journey was being held-up. This prompted a start line row when 'shop steward' Mick boomed, "You wouldn't hold-up the start for me". Mick then threatened to walk off. When the organiser took offence, Mick stated, "You do not appreciate my sense of humour". **Hands-up, who does?** The latecomer? Oh, he never made it!

BARRY INGARFIELD'S EXPERIENCES

Another spectator was ex-International Barry who once clocked 4.19.57 for the Basildon 50K and went even faster overseas. Barry stated, "This race is put on around residential streets and we see walkers who are up to ¾ stones overweight and who clearly don't train. What message does this send?". He continued, "I observed 11 walkers who, in my opinion, should not have been allowed to finish. Some were transgressing for lap-after-lap. Knees were visibly bent. This is permitted in a 'B' race". Barry should know about disqualifications as hearing a loud call of his own number was not an unknown experience. Barry overheard a frustrated judge moaning that he had put in cards for walkers who kept on coming round, and questioned if it was time for him to give walking a miss? Barry predicted, "We won't get anymore U.K. walkers at the Olympics unless we have a proper coaching structure, with coaches who really understand walking". All is not lost for Barry predicted that it can be done.

"If the right financial package for coaching can be put together, I will step forward". Barry also criticised the now perfunctory pulling-out of an old boy from the back of the field – which is a regular feature at the Met. Open.

Barry is a genuine admirer of that great coach of Mexican walkers, JERZY HAUSLEBER, who he knows personally. Barry has always been known as one of walking's great thinkers and one who only advances his views in order to benefit the sport. Indeed, at Imber Court, he encouraged and advised walkers (including constructive words about the Met. Chairman's arm action) during the walk and passed-on tips to others after they'd finished. **Barry stresses that all his remarks are made with the greatest of respect.** On a personal note, we wish Barry well in his new role as a grandfather!

ELY NEW YEAR'S EVE 10K

From an entry of 400 a walking section saw 8 finishers. SUE CLEMENTS got walking included and her effort paid off, for up to 40 locals expressed an interest in walking it next time (it's an annual event). This single lap race is worth supporting in greater numbers on New Year's Eve 2005.

1. A. Ellam CH 54.04, 2. M. Brown E&H 65.43, 3. D. Braverman (L) E&H 65.55, 4. S. Clements (L) LV 67.07, 5. E. Hall Bel 68.12, 6. R. Wallwork E&H 70.40, 7. D. Toms (Brandon) 75.51 and S. Queeney (L) Brandon 78.48.

SPACE RACE

If Enfield League fields continue as they are, more dressing rooms will have to be booked, as 2 will not be enough (as they can barely contain a soccer eleven). It's been heaving in the Men's side, and it isn't helped by so many vandalised/missing clothes hooks. The Council, at this ancient listed building, should purchase some more 6 inch nails. In the 2004 Series, a truly impressive 134 different names were listed in the final table. **Can we top that?**

YOU NEVER SEE A POLICEMAN NOWADAYS

Well, there will be one less in the Metropolis, for GARRY SMITH of Enfield and formerly of both Ilford and the Stock Exchange, has been selected to go and train up-and-coming policemen in Iraq. Garry hopes to be back before the end of the year, when we'll look forward to him popping into our changing rooms and saying, "Allo, Allo, Allo".



OFF THE SCENE

Bill Sutherland reports that BILL SYMES, at 92 thought to be our oldest living Centurion, is in: Lady Skinner Ward, Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, LONDON W.6. Visiting times are at anytime. Hopefully readers will send cards/letters to Bill, who completed 8 100 Miles races, having qualified during Coronation Year by walking from Birmingham-to-London in the colours of Queen's Park Harriers. There was an Essex qualifier in the same race: TOMMY LOWN of Essex Beagles. We all wish Bill well during his spell at Charing Cross Hospital.

DETAILS OF TWO STOCK EXCHANGE ATHLETIC CLUB FUNCTIONS

London-to-Brighton Reunion at Coppingham Arms, 14th May 2005 from 11.00. Contact Tony Perkins 01376 321392, cper188186@aol.com

Annual Supper – 24th February 2005
Old Dr. Butlers Head (off Coleman Street)
Menu

Vegetable Soup, King Prawn or Pate
Steak & Kidney Pudding or Roast Chicken
Apple Pie, Blackberry & Apple Crumble, Fruit Salad or
Cheese & Biscuits.

Vegetarian meals available on request.
6.30 p.m. for 7.00 p.m.

Price £32 which includes half a bottle of wine
Contact: eric.gabbitas@investec.co.uk
(0207 5975077)

WRITES DAVE SHARPE

Dear Dave,

It was nice to see Ken Easlea at the Enfield 5 Miles on January 8th and that he was able to do the presentation. He did, in the Essex Walker, state his hospital attendances and listed his illnesses. I remember having hard races against him in the mid 70s and 80s when he produced fast times.

Yours truly,
D.W. Sharpe (IAC)



O.B.E. FOR FORMER ESSEX WALKER

The New Year's Honours List brought an O.B.E. for MIKE BRACE (of Elms Farm Road, Hornchurch) for his services to disabled sport. He is Chairman of the British Paralympic Association and Chief Executive of Vision 2020UK.

Mike race walked in the late 80s/early 90s, often with ALEC ROSS as his guide. Now 54, Mike was blinded by a firework when aged 10. Mike is pictured on the front cover of Race Walking Record Issue No. 561 (July 1989) along with guide Alec; as they sped over Romford Market Place cobbles during the Romford Brewery Company Walk. The 2,800 metres dash saw him clock 14.36 for 42nd position (from 52 starters and won by FRANCISCO REIS in 11.06). The Brewery, cobbles, Alec and Mike sadly are all no longer part of the Essex Walking scene. Also in 1989 Mike was an inspired choice as guest speaker at the Metropolitan Police Walking Club's Annual Dinner and Reunion. And a highly entertaining and amusing after dinner speaker he was. We congratulate Mike on his Civil Award.

HE KNOWS YOU KNOW

DAVE SHARPE has a photographic memory for awards, and he knew where the BERT ANGEL TROPHY was (see January issue). Sadly the person identified has left the U.K., so it's safe to assume the trophy has also. Big-hearted Dave has donated a number of trophies, plaques and medals to race organisers in recent years and he's in possession of much information about such awards.



TRANSPORT FOUL-UPS

In its heyday, a long line of men with sports bags would alight at Thames Ditton station and briskly walk towards the Metropolitan Police Sports & Social Club for the Open 7 Miles. The gremlins struck this time and engineering work upset Bradshaw's timetables causing the few using the service to miss the start. A fire near the Dartford Crossing closed the bridge and tunnel – sending thousands of vehicles-per-hour onto South Essex Roads causing gridlock. This resulted in some of our County's Imber Court bound drivers abandoning their journeys.

"JOHN POWELL AND HIS MIGHTY ORGAN"

Our last issue mentioned Southern Area Honorary Treasurer JOHN POWELL's hobby as a keen amateur player of traditional cinema organs. Well, eagle-eyed top judge and respected statistician John has an ESSEX connection. The esteemed Highgate Harriers life member spent a year (in the late 50s) teaching Social Studies at Canvey Island's secondary school. He worked and lived in Essex and now resides in Middlesex – but his County qualifications during his active racing days was, and still is, DORSET.

NOT SO DUSTY

Mention of 'The Pub With No Beer' singer SLIM DUSTY MBE (January issue) brought response from PAUL & PAULINE NIHILL both committed fans of the late and great one, who departed in 2003. Paul reminds us of a link between Slim and sport, for at the Sydney Olympics closing ceremony, the last song sung was a rendition of Waltzing Matilda by Slim Dusty. He literally brought the house down!

MET POLICE DINNER REUNION

On Wednesday March 2nd at 6 for 6.45pm in Peelers Restaurant (Scotland Yard). This is opposite St. James Park Underground Station. Tickets are £24 (cheques payable to MPWC). Book your place from KAREN (Paddy) BAILEY on 0208 721 3819 or email Karen.Bailey@met.police.uk. Post orders to: Karen Bailey, MIR, Fon House, 43-59 Clapham Road, LONDON SW9 0JZ

An Essex Member of Parliament – Colchester's BOB RUSSELL, the Liberal Democrats Front Bench Spokesman for Sport – is to be guest speaker. Hopefully that will generate support in the County, especially in the North Essex area. where Mr. Russell has been most supportive of athletics (as attenders at the last two 100 Miles races in Colchester will know).

WALKING GOES DOWNHILL

Britain is not walking. In the past 20 years, the distance we walk has dropped by about 70 miles a year and fewer than one-third of our journeys are now made on foot. That is not because we are jogging or cycling either. Almost all of the shortfall in walking has been taken up by driving, according to an audit by Living Streets. Can walking, which is how we were originally designed to move in the most energy-efficient way really get you fitter? "Any increase in activity is beneficial" says Joanna Hall, fitness and diet expert and patron of the physical activity, campaigning body Move4Health. Clinically-proven benefits of regular walking include a lower risk of colon cancer, osteoporosis, depression, heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. The government advice is 30 minutes walking a day, which is not insurmountable. "You can break that up into three lots of 10 minutes and still get the benefits" says Professor Ken Fox, and expert adviser. Adds the professor, "As word spreads, walking groups are now springing up like reading groups. They're sociable. You can't hold much of a conversation while you cycle, swim or pump iron – but you can always walk and talk".

ILFORD A.C. ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE

This is to be held on Friday 11th March at the Chigwell Manor Hall, commencing at 7.30 p.m. Guest speaker is international discus and hammer thrower PAUL DICKENSON – now the B.B.C. commentator for athletics, Superstars and World's Strongest Man. Ilford's President – Hammer Thrower WESLEY CLARKE – is better known by his bodybuilding title of MR UNIVERSE. He'll be divesting his suit in order to perform his full routine! Cost is £30 per ticket, which includes guest speaker, cabaret and disco. (How many functions charge similar and don't offer any such quality entertainment?) As always, bookings are welcome from those belonging to other Clubs who just want a good night out. Book from: Geoff Williams, 25 Hanover Gardens, Hainault. Essex. IG6 2RA 020 8500 3744. gpsw@aol.com Cheques to Ilford Athletic Club. Please state any specific requirements.

WRITES MRS TONI MEADOWS

Dear Dave,

Thanks for the Essex Walker, which made me cry. Even writing this note fills me up, which I know was not your intention. For this to happen to 'such a man' is unbelievable. I took EW to the Medical Centre where George is, but he slept the whole time more or less. We wouldn't know if he can understand but I will take EW in tomorrow. We just talk and rub his limbs, some days he is so alert – other days more tired. We just let him know that he is loved I visit everyday for about 2 – 3 hours. He is kept clean and warm. Many Thanks
Yours sincerely

Toni Meadows, (George's wife)

WRITES GEORGE MITCHELL

Dear Dave,

Many thanks for Essex Walker, it is the best magazine in the athletics world. No results from Mongolia or dreary articles on training. My Essex connections are rather limited but I was a good friend of Charlie Megnin from way back in 1947 when Charlie and Harry Forbes (Birmingham W.C.) represented G.B. at Prague (Czechoslovakia). I had gone there with Freddie Blackmore (Team Manager). I was classified as Assistant Team Manager but was really a general dogsbody helping in all ways necessary. I obviously knew the Essex lads from 1930s onwards as I competed all over the Country and I also met many in the Dutch marches.

Celebration of my 90th birthday came before the fall. I fell and fractured my left hip just before Xmas. After a fortnight in hospital I'm now home and walking round the house (luckily we have a bungalow). Taking pills and doing exercises, but it is a slow haul and I'm doubtful about any more races. I am optimistic I might do some training – not sure when. My best wishes to all Essex

walkers and I hope to see you sometime.

George Mitchell.

WALKER'S TRIP

Our good friends, HANS and DERRI RENNIE have been celebrating – their silver wedding anniversary and Derri's recent retirement from the Metropolitan Police (Hans took that step a couple of years ago). They celebrated with a 35 days cruise around the South Pacific (with more success than the Aurora cruise around the Isle of Wight). While on land they walked four 30 Kilometres sessions in training for the Nijmegen Walks (which in 2005 sees Hans clock up 31 appearances). This was followed up by 3 weeks in New Zealand then 2 weeks in Australia. States Centurion Hans, "Thanks for the newsletter, it's great to read what people are up to".

CAN YOU HELP?

LES BROWN, aged 82, has been Honorary Treasurer of Veterans A.C. for 20 years. He was recently in hospital with heart trouble and has made a good recovery. He would like to ease up a bit and asks if somebody with a bent for figures and tidy practice could give him a bit of help with his books. Please let Les know when you see him at Enfield League meets.

THE CROSS-COUNTRY RACE

By Ray Platt

As I stand at the line
I gaze all around
Are these the right shoes?
For this treacherous ground
Should I wear studs
Long spikes or soft leather
Oh God how I wish I had
Studied the weather

My hands are all red
My legs are so white
I do wish my shorts
Were not quite so tight
With thermal tops
And rolled down socks
My fingers grasp the bottle top

The gun goes off – a sudden push
I find myself astride a bush
I rise from the ground and chase thereafter
To the echoing sounds of the crowd's wicked laughter
One by one I pass them by
I know today that I can fly
If only I could keep this pace
Then surely I should win this race

The miles go by
I start to tire
My face is wet
As I begin to perspire
As I round the last bend
I sight the end
I know my last breath
Could be my best friend

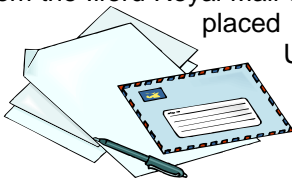
The finish line arrives at last
My mud-spattered legs give their last blast
The cross country race that I have just run
could only be grief or hysterical fun.

THE LOST WORLD OF MITCHELL AND KENYON

One hopes that readers will have seen the instalment on January 21st (BBC2), where among the excellent early moving film from around 1901/1902 was the start of a well supported and properly organised walking race – among other athletics and sporting events featured. The series, well presented by Don Cruickshank, is well worth picking up come the inevitable repeats.

CATCH THE POST

Latest to surface is NOEL MOONEY (recently retired from the Ilford Royal Mail Sorting Office) who is a former placed man in the Post Office-in-Uniform race. Noel walked for Ilford A.C. and lives in Romford. He's thinking about a comeback!



WRITES THE MOST PROLIFIC

CARL LAWTON

It always seems that the majority of letters state that we should keep to 'B' races, who makes the decision to keep Essex League 'A's? Stand up and be counted on both sides.

As one who attended the Met. Police event (and a few others last year) I spoke to an ex walker (with a good knowledge of transgressing) who commented on the number of transgressors and yet the only one to get disqualified was a near back marker who had travelled a long way to support the last event and he was probably making gauges in the road with contact. It does seem we have been over-ruled by international decisions of judging. As Mick Barnbrook's top man is stepping down from UKIP then perhaps Mick should now stand for election to the IAAF panel some people might listen to him!!!!

Another thought for the pot. In open events, or even Nationals, where top prizes are available should we not introduce time penalties for any card submitted, one minute per card, that will soon get people back to the ground. It seems rather unfair that someone will push hard until he gets two cards then ease back to the finish and lose nothing.

Carl.

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ESSEX 20 MILES CHAMPIONSHIP

This is scheduled for Saturday 11th June at the Ford Sports & Social Club, Gardners Close, Basildon (1 p.m.) with a post-race presentation in the taproom. In view of the balls-up in 2004, we call upon all readers to support this event by appearing, helping or supporting – to make it a right good day's sport.

