

‘Run through a brick wall’

A sideways look at the history of Liverpool Pembroke Athletic Club* (1890-1995)

Charles Gains



*The club has had various names from Liverpool Pembroke Harriers through Liverpool Pembroke Athletic and Cycling Club, a bizarre moment of just Pembroke Harriers and a final, later manifestation as Liverpool Pembroke Athletic Club (having ostensibly lost “harriers” and “cyclists” somewhere en route). Here we just stick with the latter name.

Where it all began ...



Fig. 1 An impression of Pembroke Chapel in Victorian times, by an unknown artist.

The first 50 years

1890-1940

Apologies

To my knowledge there have been several attempts to write up the history of Liverpool Pembroke Athletic Club stretching back, unbelievably, sixty years. The enormity of the task plus personal distractions have so far defeated a succession of optimists and may well scupper your present scribe. In order that this should not occur I am taking the liberty of dealing with the history in two 50 year chunks starting in 1890. I'm pretty confident this first "bite" will appear thereafter things will just have to take their own course.

Constraints

In researching this history I have been constrained by lost minutes and other records. There are gaps and these have been bridged in a variety of ways. I have, for example, used short biographies or recollections as with Norman Jones. I have also drawn on newspaper cuttings and publications of various kinds. Inevitably this is more of a "sideways" view.

I am particularly impressed with the history of Salford Harriers (Scott and Bent 1984). The authors have gone way beyond the mere recapitulation of honours and results and attempted "A Social History of Running". They have succeeded admirably and it's my earnest wish that I can create a similar feel for the sport the other end of the East Lancashire Road. The reader will judge.

I am going to regard this history as elastic and invite the reader to play a part. If any inaccuracies are spotted let me know and I will adjust as appropriate. Additional information, stories, memorabilia please forward. It's your story as well !

Brick walls and the like

If the title of this intrigues let me first explain. *Run through a brick wall* was a traditionally used metaphor deployed to describe a particularly courageous, or perhaps foolish athlete, who could pull out of nothing astonishing performances well beyond their supposed ability. Unfortunately they were often bonkers and addicted to this pastime with predictable dire results. They had, of course, their counterparts in the field who believed they could 'jump out of the pit', 'leap over a hedge', 'throw it out of the stadium' and so on. A sort of crazed running, jumping or throwing up, one supposes.

Every athlete whether gifted or not will have some understanding of this. There comes a time in competition, or more likely training when nobody else is there to witness it, when everything clicks and one finds oneself in uncharted territory. At that exquisite moment the world record is in your grasp, you are standing on the Olympic rostrum. (If you actually hear the national anthem the delusion is complete. Go book an appointment with the psychiatrist). If you've never experienced this delicious feeling put your kit on and go out and try again. You've obviously never pushed yourself and are not worthy of this club.

This account then is dedicated to ‘brickwallers’ of all ages and ability, the occasional ones and those that made a career of it. I will argue that Pembrokians had more ‘brickwallers’ than anybody else but that is just the sort of thing an old unreconstructed codger like me would say.

Pembroke, as in its resent incarnation as Liverpool Pembroke & Sefton, has never been a large club. Other club histories bristle with endless columns of honours won and trophies captured but I would argue that is more than likely to be based on volume, a large through-put. Given a perennially modest membership Pembroke has evolved into a powerful force in the sport. It has, of course, produced its share of international athletes and highly successful teams but its reputation lies principally in its durability. When it sagged it was always ‘resting’. Like the proverbial rubber ball it just bounces back, often to the chagrin of its rivals. As we go along I will try and unravel the qualities that have made this a great club. In the meantime I hope the reader simply tags along and enjoys the trip.

Serendipity

Sometime in the winter of 1995, the then secretaries of the two oldest athletic clubs on Merseyside (disputed territory but we'd better not go there for fear of offence!), Sefton Harriers (1889) and Liverpool Pembroke (1890) were walking a cross country course. Both Robbie Wood of the black hoops and Charles Gains of the red variety were acutely aware of their clubs long and distinguished histories but the conversation surprisingly turned to the prospect of a merger. Already within the sport there had been mergers brought about largely by the fact that the recruitment pool was drying up. There were, simply, too many clubs chasing too few potential athletes as they still do. The prospect of members accepting this was slim but as the clubs had enjoyed a long amicable relationship it was decided to take it to their respective committees for some exploratory talks.

Astonishingly the proposal aroused considerable interest and it was agreed a final decision would be taken at the AGM's due in September of that year. September 15th was the crucial date for both clubs and in order to preclude one decision affecting another the Sefton club duly gathered at their headquarters, Sefton Rugby Club while the Pembroke contingent made their way to Bootle Stadium. Of course, the matter had been hotly debated for about three months and the issues were already clear to everybody. Nevertheless both Wood and Gains, as agreed, stood to outline from a prepared script the pros and cons of a merger to packed meetings. Debates ensued, everybody had their say, and ballots organised. The Pembroke result came first and there was an amazing 92% for which included postal votes. Sefton took a little longer but everybody remained rooted to their seats waiting for the exchange of phone calls. Eventually it came, there was a massive 88% yes from Seftonians ! Applause broke out simultaneously some three miles apart across the city. History was being made.

Liverpool Pembroke and Sefton Harriers had been conceived and the birth date was scheduled for the 1st October, 1995. It was a breathtaking risk but the enthusiasm generated was to take the merged club into new and exhilarating territory. More of that later.

The history of the Sefton club had already been meticulously documented by Norman Wilson and should be read in conjunction with this much belated Pembroke version. Some 18 years or so after the merger one looks at the old photographs of our ambitious forebears staring at us and wonders whether they would have approved our subsequent actions. Somehow I think they just might.

Prequel

Athletics as we know it did not really evolve until the mid to late 19th century. Initially competitions took place at rural fetes and fairs which offered young men (and women?) the opportunity of winning prizes although events were not specified. It was the growth of *pedestrianism*, professional running involving betting, which took the sport to a new dimension. In this context working class runners were paid a fee to compete while heavy bets were placed by wealthy sponsors, in the same way as other activities like bare knuckle fighting.

Lovesey in his admirable *The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association* (1979) notes that landowners with businesses in both town and countryside found communications in the days of ill made roads easier by employing fast runners to take messages hence the term 'footmen'. This evolved into neighbours making wagers on the superiority of their servants. Gradually this activity spread across classes and the most famous of pedestrians were often 'gentlemen' the most well known being Captain Barclay.

The extraordinary feats of pedestrians are recorded in the classic *Pedestrianism* by Walter Thom (1813). He also offers occasional advice the contemporary athlete might take to heart. For example he quotes a well known physician of the time, a certain Dr Willich regarding the benefits of walking. "The most obstinate diseases and the most troublesome hysteric and hypochondriacal complaints have been frequently cured by perseverance in walking". In other words, one supposes, before heading for the doctor or physiotherapist try going for a good walk instead. Sound advice, almost certainly still applies.

The transition from pedestrianism to modern athletics was dogged by systems which divided society and precluded competitions between young men of differing classes. Those fortunate enough to benefit from private education were able to enjoy several sporting outlets and equally universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge, encouraged such activity, even rewarding talent through the blues system. The picture was rather different in the emerging elementary schools where rigid military style drills dominated. Similarly hard physical work place demands and constraints of time prevented mid-Victorian mass participation.

Perhaps the most significant influence on the spread of sport downwards was what Lovesey (1988) termed 'muscular christianity', the concept of a healthy mind in a healthy body *Mens sana in corpore sano*. The city gymnasiums arose from this movement. Liverpool, unsurprisingly, was in the forefront of this largely due to the influence of a great benefactor John Hulley who brought to the public entertainments known as "assault at arms" where groups and individuals demonstrated gymnastic and athletic skills. He had been influenced while at the Liverpool Collegiate School where the instructor had been the famous French gymnast Monsieur Hulot.

Hulley first entered the world of gymnasia when he and a business partner set up the Rotunda Gym in Bold Street. He left this venture following a business dispute but his constant letters in the Liverpool Mercury attracted interest and with the financial backing of a wealthy Liverpool philanthropist Charles Melly the Myrtle Street Gymnasium came into being and was quickly recognised as one of the finest in the world.

Hulley was also the originator of the Liverpool Olympiad and arranged for a series of event first to be held at Mount Vernon and later transferred to Llandudno. He was influenced and cooperated with the organisers of the Much Wenlock sports who are credited with founding the modern Olympic movement. In other words Hulley and his mates in Liverpool really are the founders of the modern Olympics. Anybody want to argue ?

“On 14 June 1862, the parade ground at Mount Vernon, Liverpool, was the scene of an ‘Olympic Festival’ arranged by the Liverpool AC. The programme included events untried in London, for as well as running and walking races, throwing the cricket ball and throwing the disc, interspersed with boxing, wrestling, fencing and gymnastics. Up to 10,000 spectators ‘of a highly respectable class’...On 6 November 1865, the enterprising John Hulley and Charles Melly opened a vast new gymnasium in Liverpool...A shock wave ran through the running-grounds of the capital. The prospect of athletics controlled from anywhere but London was unthinkable.” P. Lovesey. The Official Centenary History of the AAA. Guinness Superlatives 1979

The beginnings

The Pembroke Chapel stood at the V-junction of Crown Street and West Derby Road looking down Pembroke Place (Fig 2). It was a heavily populated area but by 1890 the red brick Liverpool University (1881) had been created and the brand new Royal Infirmary (1887), in Neo-Romanesque and Gothic style were already dominating the neighbourhood. It was a few hundred yards from the venue of the Liverpool Olympiads in Mount Vernon, mentioned earlier, also less than half a mile from the influential Liverpool Gymnasium in Myrtle Street. It is reasonable to conjecture that these occurrences most have played some part in the emergence of Pembroke Harriers.



Fig. 2 The Chapel, built in 1839, was never strictly in Pembroke Place, but was situated at the junction of Derby St and West Derby Rd, looking down Pembroke Place. It was demolished in 1931 due to declining congregations.

From its opening in 1839 the Pembroke Baptist Chapel seems to have attracted outspoken and flamboyant pastors not least of whom was the Rev Charles F Aked, the incumbent from 1890-1906. It is reported that just before he took up his pastorate he went fishing at 3am one morning and finding a suit of clothes on the bank jumped in to save a supposed drowning man. He brought out a dead body. As a result on the morning he preached his first sermon in Liverpool the chapel was crowded to the doors to see this new hero. He was thereafter known as the 'Swimming Pastor'.

Aked claimed the Pembroke Chapel (seating 1100 people) was the largest Baptist congregation in the British Empire but given his record he may well have been guilty of exaggeration (Fig 3). He later accepted the position of Pastor at Fifth Avenue Chapel, New York where his eccentricity, including turning up to church in a blue striped automobile, enabled him to prosper.

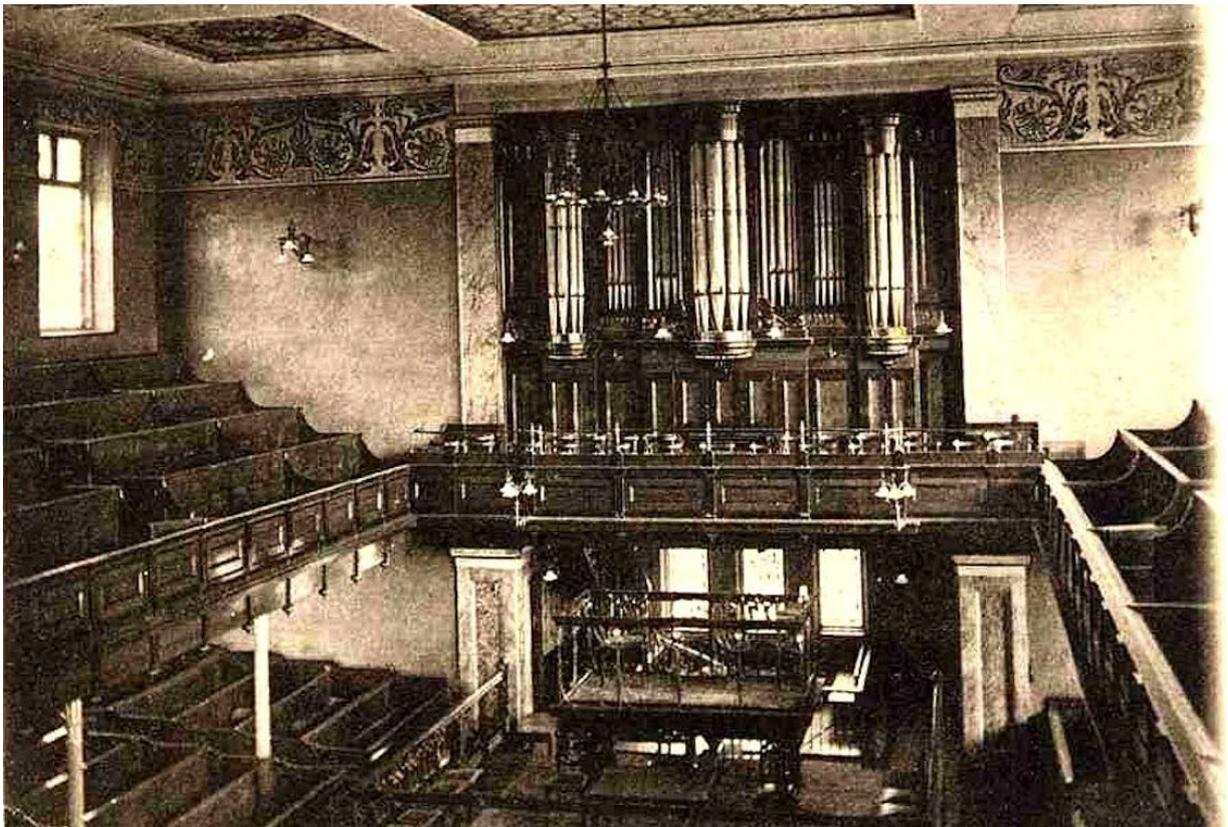


Fig. 3 The inside of Pembroke Chapel from a postcard dated 1910. It seated over 1,000 churchgoers.

He is described as '...of an athletic type and his early youth included cycling, swimming, hunting and other sports during his recreations'. It is tempting, therefore, to believe that he was instrumental in founding the Liverpool Pembroke club but there is no evidence to that effect. He must have known about the club and may well have approved, initially at least. Nevertheless he is, we concur, sufficiently bizarre a person to be designated a Pembrokian and we are happy to claim him as ours. Charles Frederick Aked was an extraordinary person and deserves somewhere a biography of his own.

The bedrock of working class sport in Victorian times was the youth club, gymnasia, churches, wherever young men gathered. As Saturday afternoon became free from work sport prospered. In 1885 an athletically inclined young man, Charles Edward (Teddy) Pugh was the Secretary of the Pembroke Rounders Club associated with the Chapel. When the club changed its interest the following year to cricket, being at a loss for some sport during winter, he joined the South Liverpool Harriers. This sport was very much to his liking and he had little trouble persuading like minded young men to go for a run along the country lanes after the mid-week Bible classes. There is some evidence that individuals quickly called themselves Pembroke Harriers and started to compete but it was not until the early months of 1890 that a club was duly formed with, appropriately Pugh as the first captain and winner of the inaugural club championship the following year (Figures 4 & 5).



Fig. 4 Liverpool Pembroke Harriers in the early 1890's. Founder Charles Edward Pugh is seated in the middle. He would appear to have a woolly mascot at his feet !



Fig. 5 A much faded photograph from the 1890's. Charlie Pugh (seated) can be identified as the athlete with the most medals. Very few of these medals were won in open competition, most would have been awarded for handicaps and club championships. They were designed with a pin to be worn in group photographs like this.

Early competition

By the standards of the sophisticated world of today athletics was gloriously unstructured in the late Victorian era. Athletes swapped clubs on a regular basis without restriction and depending, one supposes, on whether they could win something elsewhere.

The first mention we have of Pembroke's activity is reported in 1891. Leo Carroll (2010) has written a splendid and entertaining account of the first 10 years of the Liverpool and District Cross Country Championship and reproduced here is taken from the Birkenhead News of October 10th, 1891.

The cross country season was formerly commenced on Saturday afternoon when the Liverpool and Birkenhead clubs assembled at the Brook House Hotel, Smithdown Road, Wavertree at the invitation of the Liverpool Masonic AC. Twelve clubs were represented and the total muster was the largest on record for this district, comprising no less than 170 runners. A silver whistle was offered to the club with the largest muster and the newly formed Sefton Harriers carried off the prize by turning up 29 strong.

Pembroke Harriers are recorded as fielding nine.

The captain DF Jackson (Liverpool Gymnasium Harriers) sprained his ankle near Woolton and was obliged to take a cab back to the hotel. The route...traversed some splendid 'harrier' country offering good opportunities for showing leaping powers but after it was found that the far side of one hedge was several feet below the near side the runners were a little cautious about leaping. After crossing a ploughed field and working round by Woolton the pack followed the trail into the road and went away at a swinging trot when they suddenly came upon a 'Jerusalem' (presumably a donkey) tugging at a cart. He began to bray but in a moment his voice was drowned for 170 lusty voices mocked and derided the poor animal. However when this subsided Jerusalem, not to be done, started again and with hearty laughter the pack proceeded merrily on its way at a smart pace....One of the packs after going down a lane and losing the trail again discovered that the only way of proceeding was by climbing a wall which was fully eight feet high, so with much hauling and pushing the pack transferred to the other side, when they proceeded along the road towards Allerton Church where they found their brethren all ready to start the mile race home. Mr Joseph Bennett fired a pistol and the crowd dashed off and a grand race (not including those who clung to a cab until the cabby whipped them off) resulted.

Waterson of Liverpool Harriers won the dash and was presented with a marble clock. The prize offered for the first novice home was taken by Davies of Pembroke Harriers. This is the first mention of a Pembrokian winning anything! Davies does not appear elsewhere in club records but given the highly flexible nature of membership at that time it could even be the same HE Davies who turns up successfully in the West Cheshire club later. The important feature of this grand occasion though was...

Mr Allen Tooth offered to present 12 medals for a Liverpool and District championship if an association could be formed to carry it out.

An association was duly formed and survives to this day.

The 1890s

The inaugural Liverpool and District Championship was held on Saturday February 13th 1892 over the Grand National Steeplechase course at Aintree and it was arranged that runners would have to jump the celebrated water-jump no fewer than four times ! The race was won by the clearly talented E. Waterson of Liverpool Harriers who led his team to victory. His time was 54:43 min which suggests nine miles. The first Pembroke man home was Teddy Pugh in 21st position with the team 8th. The awards for the race were presented some weeks later at the Prince of Wales Theatre in Clayton Square which was then showing the pantomime *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Cross country running at this time was organised in a somewhat slapdash manner. There were many clubs who dabbled in the sport. They simply met together for pack runs on a Saturday afternoon. The accent was on the social side and it was not unknown for them to stop en route for a refresher at a local hostelry. Racing was usually confined to a break over the final mile or so. The Pembroke tradition of cooperation and sportsmanship was established at an early date and in March 1892 the local newspaper *The Courier* informs us that Pembroke laid the paper trail for the South Liverpool Harriers 6 miles handicap from the Bourne Arms in Smithdown Road. It is recorded that "...The trail was laid by the Pembroke Harriers who are ever ready to assist their comrades in arms but it is rather unfortunate that the Pembroke boys misjudged the distance which resulted in a run of about 8 miles through Wavertree, Broadgreen, Childwall and Woolton, finishing up via Allerton Road". Perhaps the Pembroke sense of mischief was present even then? The South Liverpool club apparently didn't hold this against the club and invited Pembroke back the following January for an inter-club match. SLH packed the first six men home in the break but the result was deemed not to have counted. Perhaps they took off early in order to get their own back ?

The Liverpool and District (L&D) Championship Cross Country Championship created the previous year was to be repeated in 1893 and subsequent year. The venue shifted from the main Grand National course to the nearby Greenwich Park Trotting Track. The ubiquitous E Waterson of Liverpool Harriers won again and the team title went to the powerful Sefton Harriers(55 pts) from the Harriers(101 pts) with our Pembroke forebears well adrift on a forgettable 312 pts. Club Captain and Secretary, Teddy Pugh, clearly did not take kindly to this humiliation and in 1894 rallied his troops with effect. Sefton Harriers had their eye on both individual and team championship and took both with AW Geddes leading them home. However, a JW Hale of Pembroke finished 13th and his team took a far more respectable 4th place.

Although there is ample evidence that there were a number of track meetings during the summer months we can find no evidence of Pembroke interest. However, not all Pembrokeians were prepared to simply await the reappearance of the cross country season. An early nut case called Ted Battersby successfully set up a record for a run from Llanberis Mountain Railway Station up the track to the summit of Snowdon and back. He managed a decent 53 minutes up and 38 minutes back which is no mean achievement. Having arrived on his bike he simply remounted and went home. This reputation for eccentricity in the club was to have a long and happy history.

In 1895 the L&D Championship migrated to the Wirral Hunt Steeplechase course at Parkgate. Sefton were to brook no challengers once more with W. Collett and the team ascendant. A certain W. Powell had taken over the lead spot in 9th but the club had consolidated its position as fourth again with the redoubtable Teddy 5th counter in 45th place almost certainly urging his colleagues on to even greater efforts. Despite his efforts the club was incomplete in 1896 and slumped to 7th in the following three years but at Parkgate in 1900 Pembroke finally made it into the medals behind Sefton(62) who provided the leading individual as well(J Roberts) and Farnworth(115) on silver. It is worth noting that Pembroke's(154) bronze medallists were JW Hale(7), J Henderson(17), W Close(29), A Spiers(32), J Spiers(34) and J Molyneux(35). Our first recorded team medals.

Some time in this decade the club severed its relationship with the Pembroke Chapel. Clubs needed additional funds to provide prizes for its own bedrock handicap events and were constantly harassing support from business people often in the bewery trade. One of those approached was the eminent John Houlding of 'Houlding Ales' who was later to form Liverpool Football Club(1892) as a breakaway from the Everton club. It is also rumoured that the Bible Class members who took to the lanes after meditation were fond of secreting cash about their persons and dropping into hostelrys for an occasional uplifting beverage. This connection with the 'demon drink' was too much for the Chapel elders and Pugh and his stalwarts were duly evicted from the premises. In a typically defiant gesture they retained the title Pembroke even as they drifted around the city mainly from pub to pub looking for a generous licensee. Ironically the chapel was pulled down in 1931 through declining congregations. Our predecessors in the 1930's must have laughed themselves silly to think they were preserving the name while the wreckers moved in to demolish the building. It is even more amusing to think that the name is carried with pride on today's vests.

"A major pre-existing institution to play an important role in the origin of athletic clubs was the public house....Apart from being a place where men would meet, pubs were traditionally associated with a whole range of sporting activities...Pubs very often had material advantages, provide facilities for changing before a run and for dining after it."

Duncan Scott and Chris Bent, Borrowed Time: A Social History of Running. Salford Harriers 1884-1984,Salford Harriers

Summary of the decade

The first ten years of the club's history was no more different than a score of others in the Liverpool area. Indeed the separation of the club from its chapel headquarters could easily have seen it buried as a minor occurrence, a footnote somewhere. But there was one huge difference, the club had some very determined founder members, notably Teddy Pugh and James Molyneux. As we traverse decades having good officials is probably more important than having talented athletes !

The new century

The end of the Victorian era finds us with an itinerant club strongly into social activities, occasionally rallying to find a team for the Liverpool and District Championships that were still dominated by their neighbours Sefton and Liverpool Harriers. Occasionally a stab at the Northern Championships in more ambitious moments was deemed appropriate. The records for these early years of the century are sparse but there is no evidence the club went any better than their 1900 endeavour in the L&D which was the local benchmark of a successful club. Instead they seem hunkered down and inward looking.

Surviving Minutes from 1907 onwards show that the club headquarters was at the Knotty Ash Hotel, an entirely appropriate location due to its accessibility to the nearby lanes and countryside, not to mention its fine ales. It was also popular with other clubs. It is noted that on the 26th October 1907 Charlie Millington won the handicap from the Sefton Arms, Aintree off scratch in 37.05, that another 7 mile handicap on 12th December was to be re-run owing to runners going off the trail and that a Christmas Handicap would be held on Christmas Day. Clearly club handicaps occupied the minds of the Committee almost to the exclusion of all else although a team for the 1908 Northern at Haydock Race course was selected. By 1909 when the Northern was to be held at Doncaster there was a less enthusiastic response.

An inkling of the season is gained from a complete fixture list for 1909/10.

October	2	Invitation Run	Warrington
	9	Club run	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	16	Club run	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	23	Wallasey AC	Knotty Ash Hotel
	30	Cyclists and Harriers 5 Mile Handicap	Knotty Ash Hotel (including Hot Pot, Smoker and Presentation of prizes)
November	6	Club run	Knotty Ash Hotel
	13	Liverpool Harriers	Knotty Ash Hotel
	20	Married v Single	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	27	Richmond Harriers	Knotty Ash Hotel
December	4	Liverpool Gym Harriers	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	11	Seven Mile Handicap	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	18	Club run	Knotty Ash hotel
	25	Christmas Handicap	Venue not stated but handicaps over 100 yards and 3 miles plus 1 mile Cycle Handicap
January	1	Club run	Knotty Ash Hotel
	8	Wallasey AC and Liverpool H & AC	Fairhaven Institute, Sea View Road, Wallasey
	15	Liverpool Gym Harriers	Away
	22	Ten Miles Club Handicap	No venue given
	29	Club run	Knotty Ash Hotel
February	5	Liverpool & District Champs	Bebington Show Ground
	12	Northern Cross Country Champs	(Haydock Race Course)
	19	Club run	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	26	Richmond Harriers	St Mary`s Mission, Cherry Lane
March	5	Liverpool Harriers & AC	Lamb Hotel, Wavertree
	12	Eight Miles Handicap	Sefton Arms, Aintree
	19	Club run	Knotty Ash Hotel
	26	Club run	Knotty Ash Hotel

What can we glean from the above?

- 1 This is a pretty full winter calendar of events.
2. There were 'friendly' events either at home or away with one or more clubs. This practice continued through to the 1960's when leagues took over competition. Friendlies were decided at the beginning of the season but some were traditional encounters held over the country, probably around 9 miles. The host club invariably provided refreshments after a wash down in a tin bath.
3. Club handicaps were popular with handicap times hidden until the race was over or *yacht* handicaps where runners were sent off at intervals according to ability. The role of handicapper in a club was very important and he had to be tough enough to handle inevitable complaints. Substantial prizes could be on offer so fund raising was crucial.
4. Reference is made to cyclists. Pembroke was both an athletic and cycling club, as were many others (more later). It is not clear here what the event on October 30th consisted of but cyclists versus harriers became a popular pastime. They actually raced against each other over the country. Where the going was rough cyclists would dismount and run with their bikes over their shoulder often overtaking runners ! Unless the conditions were very poor the advantage, surprisingly, was with the cyclists.
5. Social aspects were very much part of the scene. Hot pots are self-evident but *smokers* are a little vague. These were probably drinking sessions in a public house accompanied by a fag or two. There might well have been entertainment, possibly a singer with piano accompaniment. Almost certainly they were all male events.
6. The L&D Championship, here at Bebington, was the highlight of the competitive season. Members would be selected for the Northern as it was local (Haydock) but if it was any distance away they would have to make their own arrangements. This would be debated at committee level.

During this decade we have the first indication of track activity. The Liverpool Cyclists Club held an open meeting at the old Stanley Athletic grounds on Saturday, August 2nd, 1902. An E Cannon was the club's leading cross country runner and in the mile race, won by the talented Jack Rimmer (then Liverpool Harriers) off scratch in 4:28.2 Cannon claimed third off 130 yards, an equivalent time of about 4:47. A sprinter no less, one WB Jones, took third spot in the 440 yards handicap. Something was happening albeit of a sporadic nature.

Summary of the decade

After 20 years of ups and downs Pembroke was settling into an average sort of club of that period. Membership is hard to determine but probably around 40 or so. The emphasis was on social activity. The indomitable Teddy Pugh was a driving force in the administration but gradually retired runners like Charlie Millington and James Molyneux took on responsibilities. In particular Harry Kelly became Secretary. He was an outstanding administrator and following Teddy Pugh's role as a former Secretary of the Liverpool and District Cross Country Union took on responsibilities beyond the mere ambit of the club. A long line of competent officials with additional significant roles outside of Pembroke was initiated through to the present day. The clubs that have survived from the Victorian era all had similar enthusiastic and driven individuals.

The war years (1910-20)

As the Club Committee gathered in the secretary's house at 77 Granton Road on January 18th, 1910 there would be no idea of what a turbulent decade was to follow. It was business as usual with a 12-man team to be selected, plus reserve, for the L. & D. Championship. There was also the small business of a previous seven mile club handicap that had been abandoned 'owing to the trail being lost' and was to be re-scheduled for February 12th. Later in the year there was the move of headquarters from Knotty Ash to the Sefton Arms, Aintree. This was the beginning of the club gradually cementing its North Liverpool base. Although there are no records of where members lived we do know where committee meetings were held over the next 20 years often in the Secretary's homes which were variously Granton Road, Walton Breck Road, Whitefield Road (all Anfield), Coltart Road (Toxteth), Brock Street (Kirkdale) and Priest Street (Wavertree). It looks like there was a slew of members across a two to three mile area just north of the city centre but favouring the Anfield/Walton end. Other committee meetings were held in the centre of Liverpool, especially AGM's, the favourite spots being McGhies Café in Whitechapel and the Bee Hotel, St Johns Lane. Other clubs also used these venues.

The cycling section

Cycling was a very popular pastime in Edwardian times and it was not uncommon for it to be linked to athletics. Pembroke was such a club. Although referred to as a *cycling section* the bikers were very much a self-contained unit with sophisticated fixture lists. Confusingly they referred to themselves as Liverpool Pembroke Athletic and Cycling Club, a name the whole club was to adopt later, and even met for committee meetings at the same venue eg. 77 Granton Road. James Molyneux seemed to play a role in both sections. It is not known when this arrangement came about but by 1908 they had a membership over 70 which almost certainly exceed their harrier counterparts.

The principal function of the cyclists was to meet on Sunday mornings for long rides, referred to as *impromptu runs* which took them all over the region. A popular gathering point was *Anfield Clock* which again gives some indication of the club's catchment area. There were also competitive rides over distances up to 100 miles including handicaps. One such took place from Rufford to Preston and back twice, a distance of 50 miles taking advantage of the largely straight A59. Officials and marshalls were necessary and fund raising activities were required for the prizes.

On August Bank Holiday 1910 a 50 mile invitation race was promoted from the Rocket in Edge Lane around the immediate area and finishing at the Bridge Inn, Gateacre. Of 20 clubs invited the following accepted, Baden Powell, East Liverpool Wheelers, North Liverpool YMCA, St Augustines and St Anthony's with R Wilson of North Liverpool the winner receiving "a prize in the region of 21 shillings". The story of the cycling section merits more research.

The National Cycling Union came into existence in 1878 and sponsored numerous events some of which took place at combined track and field meetings. The Amateur Athletic Association had been formed in 1880 at a meeting in the Randolph Hotel, Oxford on 24th April. It was an elitist Oxbridge and southern dominated organisation and obsessed with 'amateurism' (see Peter Lovesey, *The Official Centenary History of the AAA*). It was soon in conflict with the NCU who tolerated both amateur and professionals in its ranks. An agreement was arrived at in 1885 but was broken by the NCU who allowed professional running at its meetings. The AAA in a tit for tat struggle responded by promoting meetings only for amateur cycling and running championships in 1910 and 1911. It took two years to resolve this.

This might well have had little significance to separate cycling and athletic clubs but was more of an issue with clubs like Pembroke as we shall see.

The National Athletic Union

In 1911 on 2nd February there is an intriguing club minute produced here verbatim...

“The Secretary then informed the meeting of the business which had caused him to call the meeting which was consideration of asking certain members of our club to resign and join Liverpool City Harriers who at the present were very weak numerically. The reason for this action was also to assist other clubs, that a competition would thereby be created which meant the future success of us all, as the national Athletic Union of which we and a few other recently formed clubs had joined had offered Gold and Silver medals and a Challenge Cup to both Senior and Junior Clubs. It was therefore necessary that this meeting be called as the NAU had decided that only First Claim Member be eligible. It was proposed that the following members for the good of all be asked to resign and join Liverpool City Harriers.”

This glorious Corinthian spirit in offering members to another club is generous although one suspects they were not the most talented ! Some parallels these days to athletes on loan to clubs participating in higher levels of competition ? Nonetheless it is the reference to the National Athletic Union that needs taking up here. Edgar Illingworth's *A Short History of the Northern Counties Athletic Association 1879-1979* is helpful in this respect.

Illingworth describes in detail the 'serious dispute' with the NCU and the NCAA's equally unflinching role in the matter. It all became extremely complicated with even the NCU taking libel action against the NCAA in relating to a meeting held on Manchester Racecourse. This type of thing simmered for several years and led eventually to the formation of a National Athletic Union comprised of amateur athletes and officials who were sick and tired of the bickering and felt their interests were neglected. It is recorded that '...CE Pugh of Liverpool Pembroke proposed that the NAU should secure an agreement with the NCU as to cycling events and should then set up an amateur branch and a professional branch'. Yes, this is our own Teddy Pugh being eminently sensible. There is evidence to suggest that Teddy Pugh was to become National President of the new body with, unbelievably, the Secretary of Pembroke, James Molyneux as its National Secretary !

The NAU, having formulated its own rules, was proceeding with discussions with the NCU regarding a merger and for the moment the AAA was in serious trouble. It may well have disappeared there and then but had strong support predictably in London and less predictably in Manchester. Panic set in and purportedly secret negotiations between the AAA and the NCU in 1912 had hammered out a base for a settlement. The battle was over particularly when the AAA promised to avail itself of the assistance of clubs and officials of the NAU '...in a spirit of reconciliation'. The NAU disappeared but it is interesting to contemplate that a small provincial club had played such an important role in the events of that time. It was the first but certainly not the last occasion when Pembroke officials were to play a role at national level.

Fair play !

An interesting insight into manners of the time comes from 1912. A club cross country handicap result was protested regarding the winner W.J. Hanna. The Chairman (Mr. Haygarth) stated the case;

WJ Hanna for a distance of about 150 yards ran on the grass of an adjacent field whereas the trail was laid on ploughed land...the grass taken by Hanna was parallel to this therefore the distance was exactly the same. The point you have got to decide is first, how many yards faster was the grass to the ploughed field, second, would the distance have gained/deprived, third, would the person who protested have gained a position had Hanna traversed the plough in place of the grass....Hanna did state that he did take the grass therefore a technical offence has been committed but whether you considerate a mistake serious to disqualify I leave to you.

It was moved and carried unanimously that Hanna receive the first prize as it was not done intentionally. Would that contemporary committee meetings were so entertaining !

Bobby Bridge: The first Olympian

Bobby Bridge was an internationally known walker. Although a member of Pembroke he competed mostly under Lancashire Walking Club which catered for his specialism. He represented Britain at the Stockholm Olympic Games and reportedly held several world records in his day. A tragic accident when he was still competing in 1926 terminated his career. Thereafter he remained steadfastly supporting the club as an official until his death in 1953.

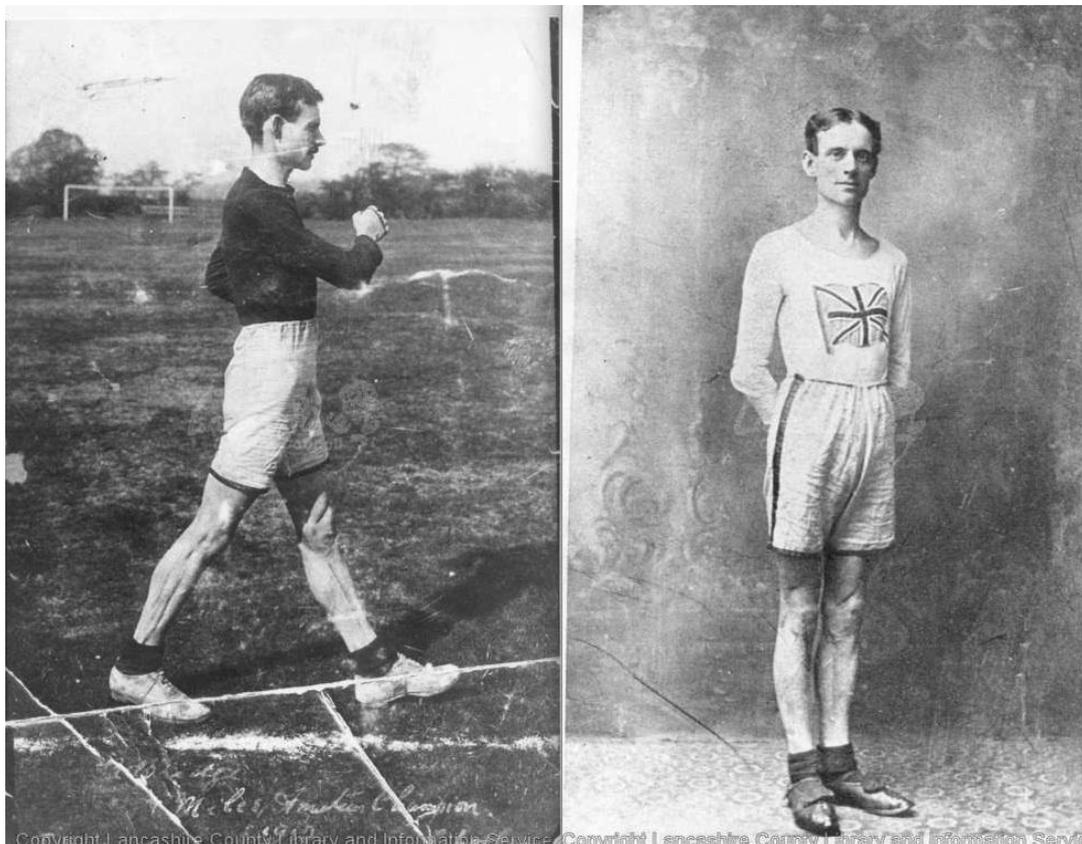


Fig. 6 Bob Bridge training and proudly sporting his Great Britain walking vest. Photos courtesy of Lancashire County Council (possibly from the *Chorley Guardian* circa 1913).

We don't have a full record of all of Bobby's performances but here are two:

30.06.1912	Bridge, Bob	Brighton	2 miles(W)	13:48.8 min
31.05.1914	Bridge, Bob	Stamford Bridge	15 miles(W)	1hr 56:41.4 min

These would still be considered useful times today !

The Chorley Guardian wrote the following obituary for Bob in 1954 :

Robert Bridge was the oldest of 15 children from Lathom, and moved to Chorley in about 1898 where he was a postman and later worked in a dental practice. Robert had a passion for athletic sports and became a self-taught, home trained walker. At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholom, he took part in the 10km walk, but was disqualified (Robert's left arm was deformed at birth, which led to suspicions about his walking style and was a possible reason for his disqualification). In the 1913 season, he beat all competition and became Northern Amateur and International Walking Champion. In 1914, he covered 1 mile in 7 min, 21 and 3/5ths seconds to take the world record. He said "My greatest ambition is to win the Olympic Games walking contest for England in 1916". Unfortunately, he was never to achieve this as the 1916 games, to be hosted in Berlin, did not take place because of the war. Robert was the Amateur Athletic Association champion for 1912, 1913 and 1914 over two miles and seven miles and in 1919 retained the two miles championship. Tragically, in a motorcycle accident in 1926, he lost one of the legs that had carried him to fame as an athlete. Although crippled he continued to act as umpire at athletic events until he was 70. He left Chorley to go into business in Liverpool where he died in July 1953.

By co-incidence Bob was born in Lathom, only yards from the home of Liverpool Pembroke & Sefton Harriers today at Edge Hill.

An imminent war

As usual the main item of business in March 1914 was the selection of a team for the District Championship there were names here that had been the backbone of the club for many years including Charlie Millington but also several others who would shortly be in a very different place altogether. Among those who would not survive the impending holocaust were George Copeland and Jack Humfrey. A named reserve was Harry Kelly who was now Secretary of the club.

By the September meeting there was a "long and animated discussion...on the situation created by the war and its effect on sport". It was decided to arrange to arrange fixtures as usual. By the summer of 1915 numbers would have been reduced by the call up but it is noted that in June of that year a mile hurdle race at Greenwich Park, Aintree was won by J.E. Humfrey off 20 yards.

Jack Humfrey

In 1911 Harry Kelly and his friend Jack Humfrey joined Pembroke. They joined so that they could take part in the Coronation Sports (George V). Clearly Humfrey was a versatile runner and began enjoying early success from 60 yard dashes on the track to 15 miles on the road. Kelly, on the other hand, recognised his limitations and just joined for health and fitness. Nevertheless, he was a gifted administrator and quickly rose to be Secretary of the club.

John Edward Hampingstall Humfrey (Jack) was born in 1890 and was a Builders Company Clerk and lived with his parents at 56 Rosebery Street. Prior to call up he was a reservist in the Kings Liverpool Regiment. Eventually he joined the Lancashire Hussars as a Private in February 1916 and later the 5th Liverpool. He saw some of the bloodiest battles of the Great War, was wounded and invalided. While at home he received a commission in the South Lancs and was later transferred to the York and Lancaster Regiment with whom he was serving at the time of his death on 28th July, 1918.

In a local paper under Fallen Heroes is the following:

Lieut.J.E.Humfrey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Rosebery, of 56 Rosebery Street, Liverpool, is reported to have died in hospital in France on July 28.... He was a well-known on the athletic tracks up and down the country, in Ireland and Wales. In the annual events of the Pembroke and Sefton he was among the top notchers at long distances as well as shorter ones. At New Brighton before the war he won the 1000 yards; at Lincoln in 1914 he brought home a double (100 yards and 220 yards); at Ilkeston, 1915, he won the quarter mile and at Dublin in 1915 he captured three prizes in army and open events.

The Humfrey Challenge Cup

This was presented to the club in memory of Jack Humfrey in March 1920 by J.S.Sablick Esq. It was a perpetual trophy competed for annually and presented to the winner of the club cross country championship. It lasted from 1920 until 1993 when club championships went out of fashion. It contains the names of four athletes who achieved international honours, Norman Jones, Ken Gates, Marty McLoughlin and Dave Dudley (Junior). It also contains the names of Charlie Kelly (Irish 800m Champion) and Trevor Holt (AAA Steeplechase Champion). An astonishing retrospective tribute, one reflects, to a fallen hero.

Summary of the decade

This decade was marred by World War 1 and was to claim the lives of at least two Pembrokians. Nevertheless the club hung together. There were modest individual achievements here and there and some indication of possible longevity. A lot of smaller clubs were disappearing and the remainder getting stronger. Pembroke could still have been scuttled but the relay team of highly competent officials was now joined by the redoubtable Harry Kelly. Something special was bound to happen.

Among new members joining in 1915 was a R.W. Roberts. Bob Roberts was later to become another outstanding official for the club

The Twenties: The breakthrough decade

June 1916 had seen Harry Kelly hand in his resignation as Secretary, informing the committee he was reporting for military service. He had already lost a brother in a recent great naval battle and that might well have influenced his decision. Some competition did occur during the following three years but obviously much reduced. We learn that by the time hostilities were over that Harry Kelly was by April 1919 back at the helm as Secretary. A few months later the club had changed its headquarters once more, this time to the Railway Hotel, Fazakerley. The usual pattern of cross country events was underway including a reference to the Monster Meet.

Monster Meets were a familiar happening throughout the country and persisted for another 40 plus years. These were gatherings of all local clubs en masse for a gentle, friendly run over about 7 miles to open up the cross country season. Literally hundreds took part and frisky runners were hauled back to the pack by 'captains'. There was by agreement, though, a mile 'break' when everybody lined up for a final mile sprint. As honour was at stake these breaks were as fiercely contested as any other fixture. Inevitably there was tea and sandwiches laid on at the finish for all who took part. The 1919 event was to be primarily the Liverpool and District clubs but the West Lancashire Association had asked too be allowed to join. There had been a West Lancashire Association and Senior/Junior Championships since 1911. It is likely that Liverpool Pembroke Harriers hosted the 1919 event.

Much of club activity had so far been winter based although there were numerous examples of athletes entering track events during the summer months. These were in the form of fairly large scale meetings held in conjunction with cycling and attracting thousands of paying spectators. Bank holidays were naturally popular times and thus we find that the club in 1920 was promoting a meeting at the Stanley Athletic Ground on Good Friday. A prime motivator would be the raising of funds. This called for extraordinarily good management skills for promoting and running the meeting and Harry Kelly must have been central to this. It is worth recording the programme for this meeting.

Programme for Good Friday Meeting 1920 at the Stanley Athletic Ground.

Flat (handicaps): 100 yds, 220 yds, 880 yds, 4 miles. Also 80 yds for vets (40 years and over)

Cycling (handicaps): 440 yds and 880 yds

Prizes (value): First 5 guineas, Second 2 guineas, Third 1 guinea plus two extra prizes valued at 15/- and 10/- respectively. Prizes for the veteran's race were £2, £1 and 10/-.

Entry fees were one shilling and sixpence and a shilling for the veterans

Admission fees for spectators ranged from 8 pence to two shillings

It is noted that the Starter was paid one guinea, presumably for cartridges.

This would not seem a long programme but there would be multiple heats for all events except the 4 miles.

The Secretary was instructed to get in touch with the Empire, Hippodrome and Olympia with a view to getting the meeting shown on the screens at those theatres !

Club track events

The concept of cross country club handicaps had gradually been spreading to the summer months. We find that in 1920 no fewer than 8 members meetings were planned at the Tramway Ground, all handicaps of course, continuing throughout the season at fortnightly intervals. This was probably during the early evening and consisted of two flat events and one cycling due to the continuing association with that sport. The events held that year were 100 yards and one mile flat and 880 yards for the cyclists, all with an entry fee of six pence for each event and two prizes valued each of 25 shillings and 10 shillings for first and second respectively.

As the object always was to raise funds there must have been a healthy uptake for competition and it comes as no surprise that in the spring of 1920 there was a total first claim membership of 149. Something was beginning to happen.

Collaboration

A practice had grown of sharing and promoting evening and Bank Holiday meetings with other club's and Pembroke's principal partners were Sefton Harriers and Liverpool Harriers and Athletic Club. Norman Wilson (A Centenary History 1889-1989) of Sefton Harriers) described the high level of co-operation and 'good feelings' between the three clubs and the successful Good Friday meeting of 1921 resulted in a profit of £20 to each club. However, by 1924 Wilson reports "The Open Sports Meeting on 7th May, promoted by the now established triumvirate of Pembroke, Liverpool, Sefton, was intended to be a big affair. To promote the event, a high profile advertising campaign was launched which included Mersey railways, Wallasey Ferries, Wallasey Tramways, Cinemas and even sandwich-men. It would appear we over-reached ourselves: the meeting made a loss of £100".

A report in the Liverpool Courier (July 4th 1928) revealed that Liverpool Harriers had by now broken away from their *old friends* and were running rival meetings even to the extent of two per week in the summer months. This could not be sustained with nobody able to make anything of a profit. The friction level was high and the suggestion was even mooted that one club, presumably the Harriers, was making an attempt to absorb its rivals. You can get a sense of this from a Minute of a meeting held on May 25th 1928 when the positively mild-mannered Chairman, Teddy Pugh, was moved to describe the Liverpool Harriers move as 'unsporting'. From here feelings simmered and would permeate the sport in Liverpool for decades. Interestingly, in 1990 Pembroke and the Harriers engaged in discussions with a view to forming a joint City of Liverpool Club. These foundered on what was still historical suspicion. No such difficulties existed between Sefton and Pembroke who had enjoyed a century of goodwill. It is not surprising that in 1995, when mergers were seen as unavoidable, these two clubs were able to come together completely amicably to form the currently successful Liverpool Pembroke and Sefton Harriers & Athletic Club.

Branches

A fixture card 1923 refers to *branches* at the Horn's Hotel, Farnworth, Widnes and People's Hall, Aigburth. This is a bit of a surprise. At that time the very large, perhaps better known, clubs did indeed have a satellite branches all over the place. In Pembroke's case these offshoots are likely only to have consisted of a handful of members who just happened to live in that particular area and trained together. Still, Aigburth is understandable but Widnes far less so. There I no reference later so it may well have been a temporary arrangement of little consequence.

Much later branches were understandably banned as they heavily favoured large clubs. I remember taking issue once with an editor of the History of Birchfield Harriers, Wilf Morgan, who detailed the club's very impressive performances between the World Wars. Out of 19 National Championships, Birchfield won no fewer than 15 and secured three second places ! I know for a fact that one branch alone at Halesowen, operating out of a Baptist Chapel, provided significant numbers in the counting teams in this period including JE Webster who won the individual title twice. Birchfield make no mention of branches without which their glory years might well have looked far less impressive. Still, one might observe, is there any difference these days with "premier clubs" drawing membership from vast areas, even different countries ?

Charles Edward Pugh and Harry Kelly

Teddy Pugh, the founder of Pembroke is ever-present and central to group photographs from the 1890s onwards. Clearly a quiet driving force he was only elected a Life-Member in 1920, some 30 years after the club's official beginnings and only after the initial honour had gone to James Molyneux. One senses a very modest personality but that year he had also been elected President of the National Cyclists Union almost certainly in respect of the work he had put in some ten years previous in respect of brokering deals between the governing bodies of both NCU and AAA (see previous section on the National Athletic Union). But how he must have longed for success in athletics ! The final 15 years of his life was to be filled with immense joy as his creation finally blossomed into something more than a run-of-the-mill local harrier club.

We have already commented on Harry Kelly. He was not only an outstanding Secretary of the club but had an interesting professional life as well. He was a keen trade unionist and served on local and national bodies of both the National Union of Clerks and, later, the National Union of Co-operative Officials. He lectured extensively on social and economic issues for the Workers Educational Association. After war service he was invited by Ernest Edwards (Bee), Sports Editor of the Liverpool Echo to take charge of athletics in the Saturday Echo and he held that job with the pen-name of *Marksman* until his resignation in 1941. His columns were wonderfully flamboyant. He also achieved senior positions in the sport at District, West Lancashire, Northern and National level. A truly talented man.

The pattern of Pembroke officials taking on responsibility at higher levels of the sport was to persist throughout its history.

The breakthrough

In spite of the incredible loss of life in the Great War sport began to flourish, even in the harsh economic circumstances of the twenties. Numbers grew and athletes were finding the Pembroke Harriers a very congenial club to be in. The plethora of small clubs was thinning out and strength consolidating in fewer, perhaps better organised clubs. Some breakthrough was inevitable and it was heralded at a Special General Meeting on the 3rd of May, 1921 when the Secretary, was able to report on the preceding cross country season that the club had succeeded in winning the Junior Championship of the Liverpool and District and come a good third in the West Lancashire Championship. Harry Kelly could not help but add "...in splendid fashion."

1922 looked very promising and so it turned out to be. The records of the Liverpool and District Cross Country Championships remain unsubstantiated during the 20's but the letterheads of the club maintain that the senior title at last fell into the hands of Pembroke in 1922 some 32 years after the club's inception. One can only imagine the joy of Teddy Pugh when his club

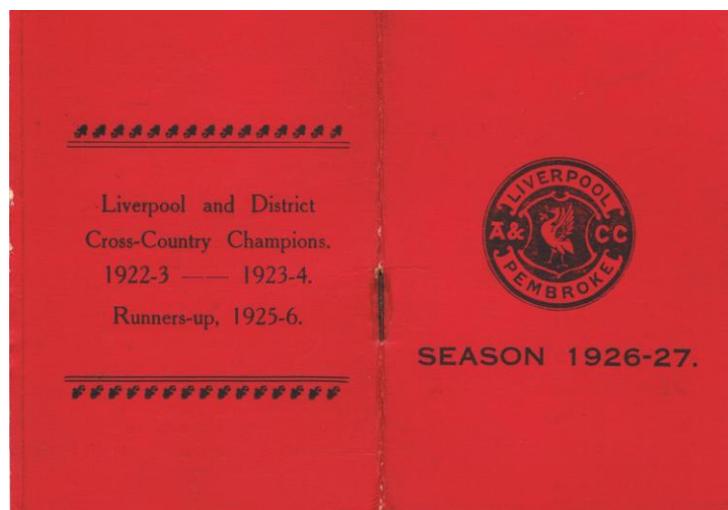
came good at last. An extant photo shows the team posing with, presumably, the L & D shield (Fig 7). Significant members of that squad were veteran Charlie Millington, Gilbert ‘Gilly’ Knowles and Norman Green. (Norman Green was to claim the club’s first West Lancashire title by taking the Junior race at Widnes in 1928.) They are a tough looking bunch and were the backbone of victorious local teams throughout 1923, 1924, 1926, 1927 and 1928. At the end of the decade Pembroke were clearly a major force in the Liverpool area.



Fig. 7 A group photograph from the early 1920’s. Prominent local athletes at the time were Gilly Knowles and Norman Green. An ageing Charlie Pugh is the club President. The club colours of red and white hoops had emerged.

Fixtures 1926-27

By comparing fixture lists we can ascertain changes taking place in the sport (Fig 8).



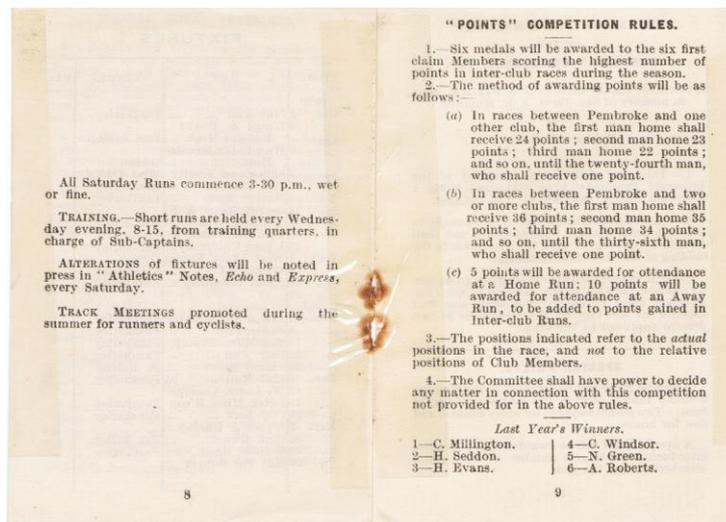


Fig. 8 A membership card for 1926-27. These became a feature of the sport in the 1920's and remained so for about 50 years. They were presented upon payment of the annual sub ! They contained details of the club officers, rules for awarding trophies and fixtures.

Compare this fixture list with that of 1909-10 previously discussed:

October	2	Club run	Fazakerley
	9	L & D Monstre Meet	Port Sunlight
	16	West Lancs Monstre meet	Ditton
	23	Sefton and Varsity	West Derby
	30	Club Run	Fazakerley
November	6	Novice Race	Fazakerley
	13	Sacred Heart and North Liverpool Gym	Fazakerley
	20	Five Miles Handicap	Fazakerley
	27	Liverpool University	Fazakerley
December	4	West Lancs Novice	Ditton
	11	Wirral AC	Fazakerley
	18	Christmas Handicap	Fazakerley
	25		
January	1	Liverpool Harriers and Sefton	Fazakerley
	8	Junior Cup	Fazakerley
	15	Ten miles Handicap	Fazakerley
	22	Club Run	Fazakerley
	29	Sacred Heart	St Helens
February	5	Club Run	Fazakerley
	12	West Lancs Champs	
	19	Seven Miles Handicap	Fazakerley
	26	Club Run	Fazakerley
March	5	Liverpool and District Champs	
	12	Club Run	Fazakerley
	19	4 Miles Road Race	Fazakerley
	26	Hot Pot Supper	

The pattern of the 1920's was not radically different from 17 years previous but we were now competing in the West Lancashire Championships. The club's nomadic life continued and we are now in Fazakerley. The journey wasn't yet over and contrasted with Boundary who appear ensconced at The Old Roan and Sefton firmly embedded at West Derby Village Hall. Still lots of home based activity of the usual nature but it is interesting to see that Liverpool University were entering into local competition.

ATHLETES & ATHLETICS

Another "Great" Monster Meet; Henderson's "Double" Win.

Enthusiasm for cross-country joys appears to have taken a new lease of life. The "tried" runner and the novice both appear to relish the pleasures of prickly hedges, wire, ditches, &c., and grumble not if they are slightly torn on their return. Of course, the old runners would have us believe that the farmers are much more considerate to cross-country men of to-day, and that it would be impossible to find the difficult courses that they used to traverse. Well, well, we will leave them to their "stories of the past"; it is all they have left, and it is more than probable that the boys of to-day will endeavour to persuade others in the future that their runs were so "very trying." There is one good point about cross-country running, and that is, that the old runner never dies; he only favours us with his presence and the benefits he can give from ripe experience, and so our sport improves as time goes on.

ANOTHER RECORD GONE.

The Liverpool and District Cross-Country Union held their opening run from the Blue Anchor, Aintree, the headquarters of North Liverpool Gym. Harriers. It speaks well for the keenness of local athletes that for the second week in succession the muster was a record. Sefton Harriers again topped the poll with 56, followed by Liverpool Harriers and Pembroke Harriers with 34 and 33 respectively. There were actually 197 runners started off under the guidance of Sub-Captain A. N. Fenner, of the North Liverpool Gym. Harriers. A good course, well supplied with obstacles, a comfortable pace, and a good leader made for an excellent run. The usual splitting of the pack took place at a pre-arranged spot, the novices covering about five miles, the seniors going an additional one. Billy Sablick, gunman, started both of the "mile-breaks." It was a notable feature to see the great number of novices who took part in this opening run, and it is hoped that we find among them some capable of bringing local cross-country right up to the top.

NOVICE MILE BREAK.

Newton, of Pembroke Harriers, was a good winner of this mile, and is to be congratulated on winning at his first attempt at this distance. He was followed in by Clec, of Wallasey Harriers, Owen, of Holt Secondary School, being third.

The first six were as follow:—Newton, Pembroke Harriers; Clec, Wallasey Harriers; Owen, Holt Secondary School; Jones, Sefton Harriers; Morris, Sefton Harriers; and O'Prey, Boundary Harriers.

SENIOR MILE.

Dick Henderson, of North Liverpool Gym Harriers, completed a splendid double, as following his win last week he successfully landed this mile also. I doubt if it would have been possible to have found a more popular victor. Proffitt, of Sefton Harriers, pushed Henderson hard all the way, and finished second just in front of Dodd, of Wirral, who was third. Dodd put in some exceptionally hard running near the finish, passing two or three men practically "on the tape."

The first six were:—Henderson (North Liverpool Gym Harriers), Proffitt (Sefton Harriers), Dodd (Wirral Harriers), Cornett (Sefton Harriers), Weston (Sefton Harriers), and Porter (Wirral Harriers).

The president of the union, Mr. A. G. Nicholson, presented the prizes to the successful runners, and also thanked the "Hosts," North Liverpool Gymnasium Harriers, for the very excellent arrangements they had made to stage this monster meet. It was good to see many of the old faces in the crowd. Charlie Ledson, Bob Smethurst, J. T. Rimmer, W. Brooks, to mention just a few.

Before leaving "district affairs," I have been asked by the secretary of the union, to remind all club secretaries, that an expression of their club's wishes with regard to handicaps during the season should be sent to him as early as possible in order that the necessary arrangements may be made.

LADIES' SECTIONS.

The honorary secretary of the Liverpool Pembroke Ladies' Section advises that they held their first run last Saturday, from headquarters (Sefton Arms, Aintree) under the captaincy of Miss P. Edwards. It is their intention for the first few weeks to hold only short training runs for the benefit of new members, and afterwards two packs will be formed. An attractive fixture list has been arranged; but clubs are invited to communicate with the secretary with a view to arranging inter-club runs and handicaps. Prospective members are always welcomed at headquarters any Saturday at 3 p.m.

Liverpool Harriers' ladies' section are holding a run next Saturday, from the Knotty Ash Hotel, over about four miles of country. Interested ladies are requested to watch these notes for special announcements.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SATURDAY NEXT.

Sefton Harriers are at home to Pembroke Harriers and Liverpool University. This is an "annual" which has always been popular, and provides usually very keen sport. All members of the "combatants" are urged to attend at West Derby at 3.15 p.m. Visitors are also welcomed.

Wirral A.C. are holding a club run from their headquarters, St. Stephen's Institute, Frenton. As the course will be selected for the novice race to be held the following Saturday, it behoves all novices to do their very best to attend and "find their way about."

Liverpool Harriers have a club run from headquarters, Knotty Ash Hotel, when a large muster is anticipated. Old members and new are requested to "turn-up" not later than 3.30 p.m., as it is desired to make a prompt start.

The hon. secretary of Liverpool advises his members that all dance tickets not returned by Monday, the 29th inst., will be considered as sold.

Runcorn Tally-ho Harriers held an ordinary run from headquarters on Saturday, when a pack of 23 runners had an enjoyable run over a course of about five miles. No racing was included in, but good promise was shown by several of the newcomers. The annual general meeting, held on Tuesday evening, was well attended, and, under the able chairmanship of Mr. J. Simcock, the business was soon disposed of. Judging by the interest shown in the proceedings, the members are very keen to restore the club to its former prestige in the district. The officials for the year were appointed as follow:—President, Mr. John Littler; captain, J. Simcock; sub-captains, J. Pazel and R. Carson; hon. secretary, J. A. Moorefield; hon. treasurer, J. Povey.

TRAIL-LAYER.

Fig. 9 A report in a local newspaper of 1928. By now Liverpool Pembroke had developed into a major force and was the leading local club. There is a description here of the "Monster Meet".

Here come the girls !

Numbers climbed in the 1920s paralleling success. The name morphed into Liverpool Pembroke and Sefton Athletic and Cycling club in spite of declining interest in cycling. The most significant development, though, occurred on 20th December 1926 when the Committee decided that "...there was a desire to form a Ladies Section Cross Country and it was agreed to give it a trial. Details to be left to Secretary and Miss Bell". By the spring of 1927 the club championships showed an 80 yards Ladies race so the membership must have escalated. A club photo in 1928 (**Figure 9**) shows about 80 men, a sprinkling of cyclists and officials but no less than 22 women. The club vests were by now red and white hoops and the women wore a white top with a broad v-shaped red band. A sprinkling of home- made badges appeared during this decade.

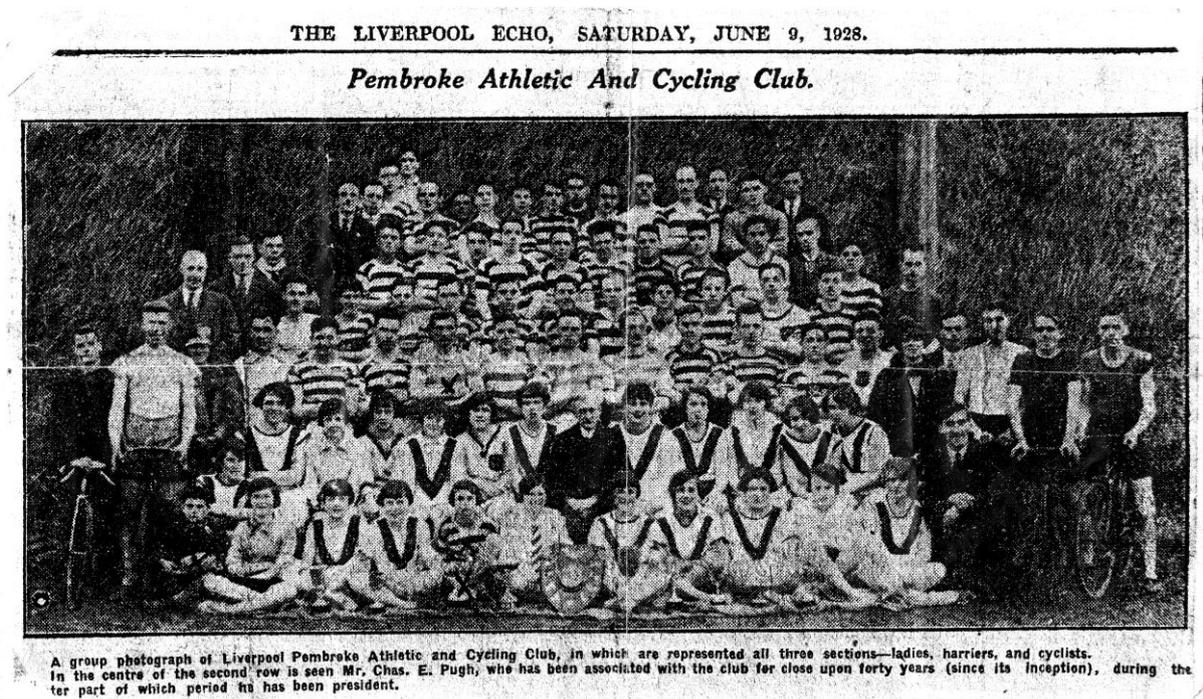


Fig. 9 Taken from the *Liverpool Echo* in 1928 this photo shows how large the club has grown and that it includes cyclists and over 20 ladies ! The ladies section appears to have faded in the 1930's but was resurrected after the Second World War.

The Liverpool City Marathon

In 1927 the Liverpool City Week Marathon (**Figure 10**) was inaugurated and was to continue off and on until the present time. As there were few marathons in the 20's it attracted a lot of interest. In 1927 it was won by a former Olympic runner, Sam Ferris of the RAF. He was now the hot favourite for the 1928 event. The 92 runners changed at Liverpool Stadium in Moorfields and made their way to the start on St George's Hall Plateau preceded by a band. There were an astonishing 50,000 gathered to witness this and there were crowds all along the route that went through Old Swan, Garston, Woolton, Gateacre, Roby, Fazakerley and Clubmoor before finishing at Liverpool Football Club where an estimated 20,000 were there to see a cup match between Liverpool and Southport.

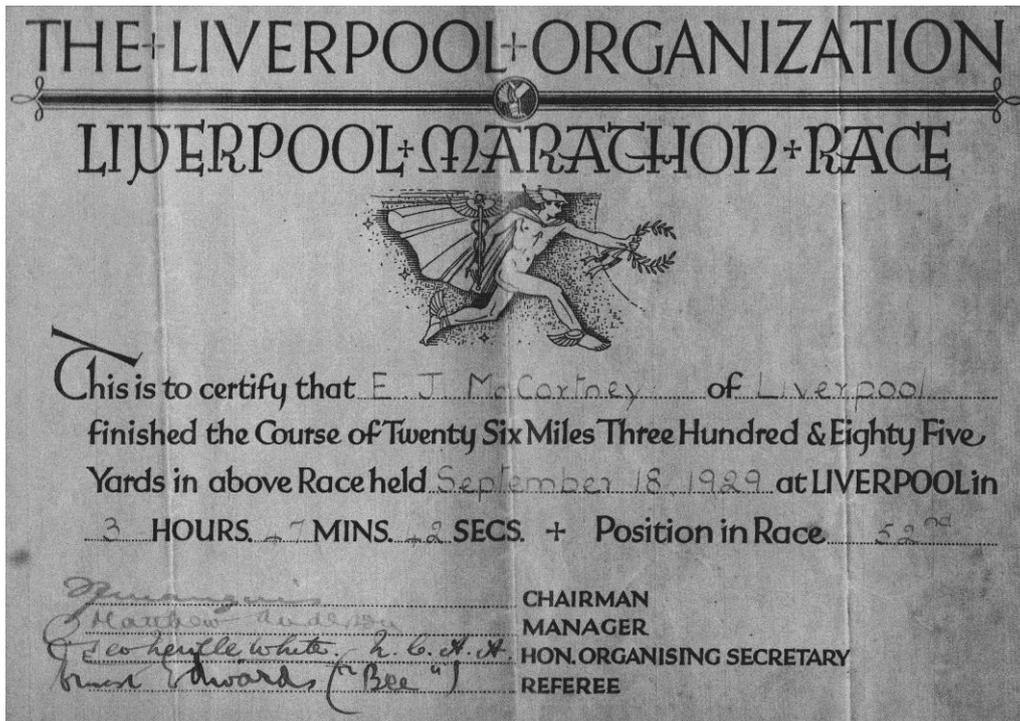


Fig. 10. The Liverpool Marathon began in 1927. This figure shows a finishers certificate from the 1929 race for an Eddie McCartney who went on to become a very proficient secretary for the club.

Sam Ferris, easily the more experienced, took off after Woolton and eventually came home some two miles in front of the second placed man, H Wood of Makerfield. His time of 2 hrs 33:00 min took some one minute 34 seconds off the British record. The Pembroke star Gilly Knowles (**Figure 11**) was fifth in 3hrs 01:34 min and first local home in what was probably his first attempt at that distance. With a further 10 Pembroke runners finishing the beginnings of a tradition was established and for several decades there was what was described as a ‘Marathon Section’ in the club.



Fig. 11. Gilly Knowles (right) was a very talented athlete over a range of distances.

Summary of the decade

This was the definitive decade. Membership escalated and an early success in winning the Liverpool and District cross country title set the pattern that exists to the present day. Pembroke had arrived with a vengeance on the local athletic scene. It was an attractive club to join with numerous social activities as well as a fine programme of events. The cyclists declined but the club set a fine early example in opening its ranks up to women.

The thriving thirties

If the 20's were successful the 30's positively boomed. The Liverpool and District title was collected every year from 1931 through to 1939 less 1935 (**Figure 12**). Although the club had performed well in the West Lancashire CC Champs having been runners-up in 1933-4-5-6 it was not until 1937 that the coveted trophy was collected and held until the outbreak of the Second World War. Club records in this golden period have disappeared but we can get a flavour of the times from an account written by Norman Jones in 1989 when he was about 80.



Fig. 12. Here Pembroke runners receive a trophy, almost certainly for cross country, in the 1930's.

Pembroke in the Thirties: An account by Norman Jones

“I joined Pembroke in May 1930 yielding to the insistent pressure from Bob Cooke the arch enthusiast. The club at that time was holding a series of evening meetings at Aintree Loco’s Ground in Melling Road. The programme each week included handicap races and usually a club championship. I do not recall any field events but there were cycle races. This was probably the last year of Pembroke’s involvement in cycling.

In those days the main interest during the track season lay in the open handicap races at sports meetings around the country and advertised on Monday morning in the Sports Chronicle. The competitors were subjected to a very sophisticated system of handicapping organised on a national basis. There were glittering prizes for the winners such as gold watches, canteens of cutlery and chiming clocks all limited in value by the AAA rules to seven guineas. It was believed, however, at the top meetings they were worth a bit more.

Pembroke had a respectable medley relay team 220 x 220 x 440 x 800 yards of course. Obviously the team relied heavily on the half-miler and we had one in Gillie Knowles. In fact he was good at all distances right up to the marathon. We managed in the early thirties to field a two mile team though not too successfully (this was to change later). Both these events were invariably included in the open meeting’s programmes.

Over the country we had club runs, inter-club runs, handicaps and Liverpool and District and West Lancashire Championships. Early in the season there was a Monster Meet, about four miles or so and then lining up for a ‘mile break’ home with appropriate prizes. Some of us had our thoughts on higher things. Our strength lay in distance running and we set our sights on the West Lancs hammering away year after year. Sutton Harriers were our great and formidable rivals and it took until 1937 to beat them and win the title. We came within a whisker of winning the Northern. Sutton won it with the nucleus of the team which won the National later in 1947. Towards the end of the decade we were able to enter the Manchester to Blackpool Relay: ten men running various distances. In 1938, the last race before the war, we managed to finish third. Meanwhile our two mile track team was unbeaten for over two years. With Harold Marsh winning the Northern Junior title in 1939 we were set for greater things when the war intervened.

The thirties were exciting days for us, the membership was increasing and training became more serious, in no way as serious at present of course. I suppose this was a transitional period. Teddy Pugh, founder and President, and Jim Molyneux, also a founder member, probably regarded us youngsters with some amazement when we would make audacious proposals at the AGM such as a change in the name of the club or the design of the strip.

There were some interesting contrasts between then and now. As previously mentioned, training was nothing like as strenuous, two sessions in the week and competition on Saturday. There was also the bogey of going stale if one overdid it. Transport to events was, in the early days, mainly by train. In fact right through the era special excursions were put on for the big events. So if the Northern was held say, at Sheffield, the train would set off from Lime Street and pick up West Lancs and Manchester district and so on. To and from the venue we chatted with our friendly rivals which added a lot to the enjoyment of the game. The motor coach gradually took over and I now understand cars are used to a great extent, losing out one feels on the social side.

Competitors were strictly amateur (allowing for the previously mentioned 'glittering prizes'). A well-known firm were considering gifts of gym shoes to the club so that the firm could advertise as '...worn by well-known runners' (not named). The idea was quickly dropped as we might have risked our amateur status. Now there is loads of money to be picked up to top amateurs.

For quite a time in the thirties there were bookies quite openly shouting the odds mainly at handicap meetings, despite numerous notices proclaiming 'Gambling strictly forbidden'. It was not unknown for men with a good handicap mark to win their heat and even semi-final on several occasions but be unplaced in the final. 'Hanging back for bets' was the term used.

Another difference is that drugs were unheard of, alas not so now. There was little participation in field events by club members and the Ladies Section was not particularly strong. Changes were to come in both cases. Club finances were perpetually in the red.

To most of us running meant a great deal, a very great deal, as did membership of Pembroke. Facilities were often poor but we had lots of fun especially with someone like Kenny Cookson around: there are many tales that could be told which might form the basis of another article !

The question as to whether the sport was more or less enjoyable then in unanswerable. Speaking personally I must say I enjoyed it immensely, achieved moderate success, met a lot of people in athletics and made many friends. It was an important phase of my life.

Over the years I regret to say I almost lost touch but my good friend Bob Eaton has kept me informed. I was involved some years ago in trying to foster greater interest in athletics in Oxfordshire but with little success. Now in keeping with the general upsurge there is a proliferation of clubs and joggers everywhere. I rejoice in this and the tremendous improvement in standards. It is good to know that Pembroke has done well and continues to do well. That means a lot to so many. Here's to us...after all I am a Life Member."

Norman Jones, 4th December 1989

A full tribute to Norman Jones appears elsewhere in our History section. He was for many years a top local runner. In 1934 he finished 12th in the National at Alderley Edge and gained an England vest. In the International at Ayr he was 7th counter, narrowly missing out on a medal in the victorious team. Later in the year he won the Northern 6 mile track title. In 1935 he sensationally finished third in the AAA 6 miles championship behind the legendary Jack Holden of Tipton. He was sixth in the National in 1938 and at the International in Belfast finishing 24th, this time helping England to a ninth successive victory. Amazingly in 1947 he returned to the sport at the age of 35 and finished 3rd in the National at Durham but failed to make the counting team for the International in Paris. His third place in the National has never been beaten by a Pembrokian although it has been equalled by Marty McLoughlin in more recent times. He died in 2005 at the age of 94.

Farewell Teddy Pugh

Teddy Pugh died in 1937. He would be in his late 70's. He must have been enormously proud of the club he created and the success it was enjoying. There is a group picture, possibly taken in the last year of his life, at Court Hey in which he still sits centre stage appropriately dressed for the occasion ! (Figure 13).



Fig. 13. Possibly the last picture to be taken of Teddy Pugh; the dapper gentleman centre, front rank.

Late 30's success

The club had evolved into a powerful cross country force by the late 1930's (Figure 14). The senior men were to be joint winners of the West Lancashire Championship (with Sutton Harriers) in 1938 but to take the title outright in 1939. Similarly they were silver medallists in the Northern in 1938 and bronze in 1939, helped by athletes of the quality of Norman Jones.

Similarly the club was developing talented youngsters and we discover that a WH (Harold) Marsh wins the West Lancashire Youth (Under 18) title in 1938 and repeats this as a Junior (Under 21) in 1939 leading his club to team victory. Marsh was to crown a brilliant 1939 season by taking the Northern Junior race and later was to earn the club's second international vest when he represented his country in the International Cross Country Championships in France.



Fig. 14. A group photo from the mid 1930's taken in front of the Court Hey house that was to become the club headquarters for over 20 years. Third left, back row is Bobby Cooke who was largely instrumental in the club moving to Court Hey.

The AGM of 1938: A proud season recalled

By now Bob Roberts was Secretary of Pembroke and when in October he stood to give his annual report he was very obviously a very proud man. He stated...

"...this was the greatest report of any season in the life of the club...it was a season of joy although tempered with sorrow at the loss of President Teddy Pugh who would have gloried in the season just ended."

About... an inter-club match...

"....against Sefton Harriers and Liverpool Harriers we placed the first six men home and weren't some older Pembrokites whose memories go back a long time, delighted!"

About... the West Lancs Championships...

"...the championships will be long remembered by all who were there, for the unique result in the Senior Race; a TIE ! Pembroke and Sutton supporters frantic in their endeavour to get their men in first, and after all those sore throats; a TIE !...our Youth's champion, W Marsh, ran away with the Youth's Championship and the team did splendidly in finishing second."

About... the Northern Championship at Stockton...

“...there was an expectant feeling of a wonderful day for the red and white hoops of Pembroke and results justified optimism. The Youths, Marsh, McCartney, Evans and Vic Jones ran a magnificent race, Marsh finished 4th, and the team second. The Seniors went to the start all keyed up and ready to do their best. Norman Jones led them home, being fifth himself, and the team was second, being beaten only by Salford Harriers. It had been about 40 years since a Liverpool club had been placed in the Northern Senior Championships.”

About the Liverpool and District Championships...

“...our previous performances made these championships seem a certainty...the Youths won their cup and W Marsh the individual title. The Seniors mopped up the Lewis Cup and Senior Championship placing actually the first six home. Norman Jones won the individual honour for the second time. We have now won this cup six times out of the last seven championships.”

About the Nationals...

“...southwards to Reading for the English Championships...only finishing 11th. Norman Jones ran like a champion finishing 6th, and was eventually selected for the international team where he was 25th and 7th English counter.”

About... the Sefton Park Relay...

“...no doubts were expressed anywhere regarding the ultimate result of this race and we duly obliged by about 5 minutes, a very easy win. The best cross country season of any Liverpool club for years and years and years.”

About... the track season...

“...we fielded a two mile team in Jones, Johnstone, Frost and Auburn, not necessarily always in that order, that were unbeaten in 8 events, placing the first three home five times. This was team running beyond words...We also had our share of open prizes, W Usherwood, B Nolan, A Frost, J Johnstone and R Eaton all winning or being placed.”

About... the Manchester to Blackpool Relay...

“...Training was zealously carried out, coaches (2) arranged and away we went on 24th September, ready to make the big attempt to improve on last season. Two coaches of supporters, small cars and plenty of colour. Albert Frost started the team off and right through it was one big battle with Sutton who were finally and completely dropped on the last but one leg by Johnstone. Johnstone becomes one of only three who have beaten 24 minutes for this part of the course. A chance now loomed nearer and Jones went after the Hallamshire man who was third and completely licked him to place Pembroke third at the completion of the journey...All I can say is, Bravo !”

Bob Roberts final words...

“...I thank my lucky stars for being Secretary in such a great season.”

The Manchester-to-Blackpool Relay 1938

SALFORD A GALLANT SECOND: BAD LUCK, TIPTON!

(By JOE BINKS, ex-Holder Mile Record)

Birchfield scored their sixth successive victory in the "News of the World" Manchester-to-Blackpool Road Relay of nearly 51 miles yesterday. Their time set up a record for the new course. Incidentally the course was a few yards longer this year owing to the new starting point.

The time, however, does not compare with the records of that never-to-be-forgotten race in 1932, when Salford scored in 4hr 30min 25sec to beat Birchfield by 15sec. The course on that day was about 130 yards shorter than the one used yesterday.

Salford, who are but a shadow of their former selves, ran splendidly to finish second to their old rivals, while Liverpool Pembroke ran a remarkably fine race to gain third position and beat such strong teams as Hallamshire and the Sutton clubs.

Liverpool Pembroke is the first club to split the monopoly of the "old firm" of Birchfield, Salford, and Hallamshire in this race.

Tipton H. actually finished second in the race, their time being 4hr 34min 15sec, but they were automatically disqualified as their representative collapsed early in the race when running in fourth position. Tipton started again at the next take-over in the sixth position, so it is obvious they were unlucky in not being able to secure a place.

Great crowds were seen all along the course, and the event proved as popular as ever.

The police throughout were again magnificent and the race went off without a hitch.

Manchester, true to its reputation, served up its grey skies, mist, and rain in great form. However, as it neared 11 o'clock the rain stopped, and Manchester's popular sportsman, George Hardman, of the Grosvenor, and president of Salford Harriers, started the first relay on the long plug to Blackpool, a large crowd cheering the runners.

Supt. Howard, acting for the Chief Constable of Salford, Major Godfrey, made splendid traffic arrangements to keep a clear course for the runners as they dashed away from the "Flat Iron" Market.

Apparently the humid atmosphere suited the runners, for, despite the slippery cobbles, the leading bunch set up a fast pace, and the beribboned baton, containing a letter from the Lord Mayor of Manchester to the Mayor of Blackpool, continually changed hands.

Large crowds lined the roadway, and the windows, too, were filled with eager faces.

OFF WITH A "BANG"

I was warned to expect a lot of improvement from the young and plucky members of Sale Harriers. A. Toon (Sale) was soon out teckling the more famous representatives fearlessly. F. Wildsmith (Airedale) was another, and A. Harman gave the Tipton boys a much better start than usual.

Birchfield, the holders, had J. M. Smith, who was given a rare fight by the youngsters. Salford, Sutton, Slaithwaite, and the Scots from Bellahouston were all there.

Toon and Wildsmith eventually got away, Toon sending Sale off in the lead from the second relay.

Toon's time, 26min 52sec, is a new record for the first relay, despite the additional 70 yards added, owing to the alteration of the starting point. Harman (Tipton) and Whittle (Salford) were also inside record.

First relay (5 miles 648 yards) leaders:—
Sale H. 25.52
Airedale H. 26.55
Tipton H. 27.11
Salford H. 27.17

From the second course the Airedale International, G. C. Ellis, soon went into the lead with H. Crowther (Salford) next. This pair finished the course as named, the full time 51min 58sec being the fastest ever to this point. No individual records were approached. In fact, only Crowther beat 25min, which speaks volumes for the record of 23min 52sec put up by Briggs, of Bramley. Details:—

Second Relay (4 miles 1,056 yards) leaders:—
Airedale H. 51.58
Salford H. 52.5
Tipton H. 52.49
Birchfield 52.52

In the third run to Horwich, Tipton had the cruel luck to see their representative collapse, and he had to be carried to his coach. Thus Tipton once again had the "bad luck" in this race, and this time it appeared to have the

of 24min 7sec, put up in 1923, and is, apparently, a hot one.

Both Sanderson and Southall also showed fast times.

Fifth relay (4½ miles) leaders:—
Birchfield 2.13.45
Tipton 2.15.40
Hallamshire 2.15.50
Salford 2.16.3

For the sixth course to Preston football ground, that grand ruter, Jack Beman, who won our marathon championship this year, carried on for Birchfield and, as usual, defied his age to increase the lead for his club.

Beman made the second fastest time again, but, of course, he did not touch Fred Light's record, made in the first race in 1932.

Away back in ninth place, H. Wilson (Sale) actually ran 9sec faster than Beman. Only this pair beat 50min.

Salford again came along to gain second place by a nice effort from F. Partington.

Sixth relay (5 miles 1,408 yards) leaders:—
Birchfield 2.43.40
Salford 2.46.16
Tipton 2.46.23
Hallamshire 2.47.7

The rain ceased, and the sun welcomed us in the Blackpool area.

Birchfield, with victory in their grasp, continued to lead without being challenged. At Lea Town they led by over three minutes, which was much faster than last year for this point.

Salford held on to second place, with Tipton, Hallamshire, and the Sutton next. Tipton, Hallamshire, and Sutton next.

Seventh relay (4½ miles), leaders:—
Birchfield 3.7.57
Salford 3.10.40
Tipton 3.11.26
Hallamshire 3.12.19

There was no change over the eighth relay to Warton, and the Birchfield were only 43 seconds behind the record. Still, no runner beat 22min for this "leg," so that Sammy Hill, of Stockport, must have run a remarkable race to clock 21min 24sec in 1933.

Eighth relay (4 miles 352 yards) leaders:—
Birchfield 3.30.33
Salford 3.33.37
Tipton 3.34.45
Hallamshire 3.34.52

It was "breezy" approaching Fairhaven, for the wind blew hard against the runners.

KEEN RIVALS

S. E. Allen, the ninth relay record-holder, led for Birchfield, but the next four teams all gained on them. Liverpool Pembroke passed their keen local rivals, Sutton St. Helens, and were now fifth. Timmons (Tipton) and Johnstone (Liverpool Pembroke) ran fast "legs" and beat 24min. Only Allen had previously accomplished this feat.

Ninth relay (4½ miles) leaders:—
Birchfield 3.55.14
Salford 3.58.9
Tipton 3.58.37
Hallamshire 3.59.43

Over the last stretch the leaders strained every nerve. Richards (Birchfield) ran powerfully, but still Salford, with A. Partington, and Liverpool Pembroke, with Norman Jones, the international, both gained on him. Partington showed the fastest time for the last "leg."

Finally, Birchfield scored in the new record time of 4hr 32min, just 14sec ahead of their 1936 record.

At the Blackpool Town Hall Griffiths handed the letter from the Lord Mayor of Manchester to Alderman Quayle, mayor of Blackpool, who pluckily got out of a sick bed to receive it. He was, however, forced to leave the presentation of the "News of the World" Trophy to the deputy mayor, Alderman T. Fentan, when all the teams and officials had tea at the Winter Gardens.

ORDER OF FINISHING

1. Birchfield 4.32.
2. Salford Harriers 4.34.15
3. Liverpool Pembroke 4.36.25
4. Hallamshire 4.37.52
5. Sutton 4.38.14
6. Sheffield United 4.40.33
7. Bellahouston H. 4.40.49
8. Airedale 4.42.31
9. Leeds A.C. 4.45.59
10. Sale Harriers 4.47.4
11. Rotherham 4.51.50
12. Lancaster Priests 4.56.49
13. Manchester and Salford 4.56.2
14. North Manchester 4.57.11
15. Stockport 4.58.1
16. Bolton United 4.59.35
17. Lancaster Harriers 5.1.27
18. Slaithwaite 5.1.52
19. Manchester A.C. 5.4.7
20. Burn A.C. 5.8.1
21. Sel 5.11.57

Airedale relied on the good work with Crawford, but Arthur Bourton, one of our greatest road racers, was after him in earnest. Bourton, who holds the record for this course, came up to Crawford, and, of course, everybody expected him to dash away. Crawford, however, was not a bit disturbed, and, battling it out strongly, finished in front of Bourton, a glorious run. Bourton again had the fastest individual time, 29min.

DETERMINED CHALLENGE

Liverpool Pembroke came up with a determined challenge into third place, Nolan running only 9sec slower than Bourton. Sutton now passed Salford.

Third relay (5 miles 762yds) leaders:—
Airedale 1.21.50
Birchfield 1.21.52
Liverpool Pembroke 1.22.32
Sutton 1.22.55

Another change came over the field in the fourth relay to Chorley, H. Johnson, one of Birchfield's new team men, going to the front. He went right away to set up a lead of 25sec from Airedale, who were still fighting hard.

Tipton started again through Jack Holden, who went into third position. Of course, they were not in the race. Salford, Sutton, and Liverpool were next, in that order.

Hallamshire were now advancing rapidly from their rear position through fine work from Noble, who gained four places.

Fourth relay (5 miles 1,408yds) leaders:—
Birchfield H. 1.49.20
Airedale H. 1.49.45
Tipton H. 1.50.45
Salford H. 1.50.49

On to Clayton the leader speeded up the pace again, Sanderson sailing right away from his opponents, Birchfield winning this relay by nearly two minutes. Southall took the unlucky Tipton team into second place. Bob Taylor, the Hallamshire champion, put in the fastest run and took third place ahead of Salford, Airedale, Liverpool and Sutton.

Taylor's time, 24min 12sec, compares very favourably with Vickerstaffe's record

Fig. 15. A report of the Blackpool relay as written for the *News of the World* by Joe Binks, a famous sports reporter at that time.

Summary of the decade

Another boom decade and fine end to a half century of existence. Local ambition was no longer enough, the sights were being set at a higher level as evidenced by the arrival of two cross country internationals in the shape of Norman Jones and Junior Harold Marsh (Fig 16). The club was obviously poised for an even better decade but Herr Hitler had other plans. But Pembroke had survived one war and it was certainly going to survive this one as we shall see.

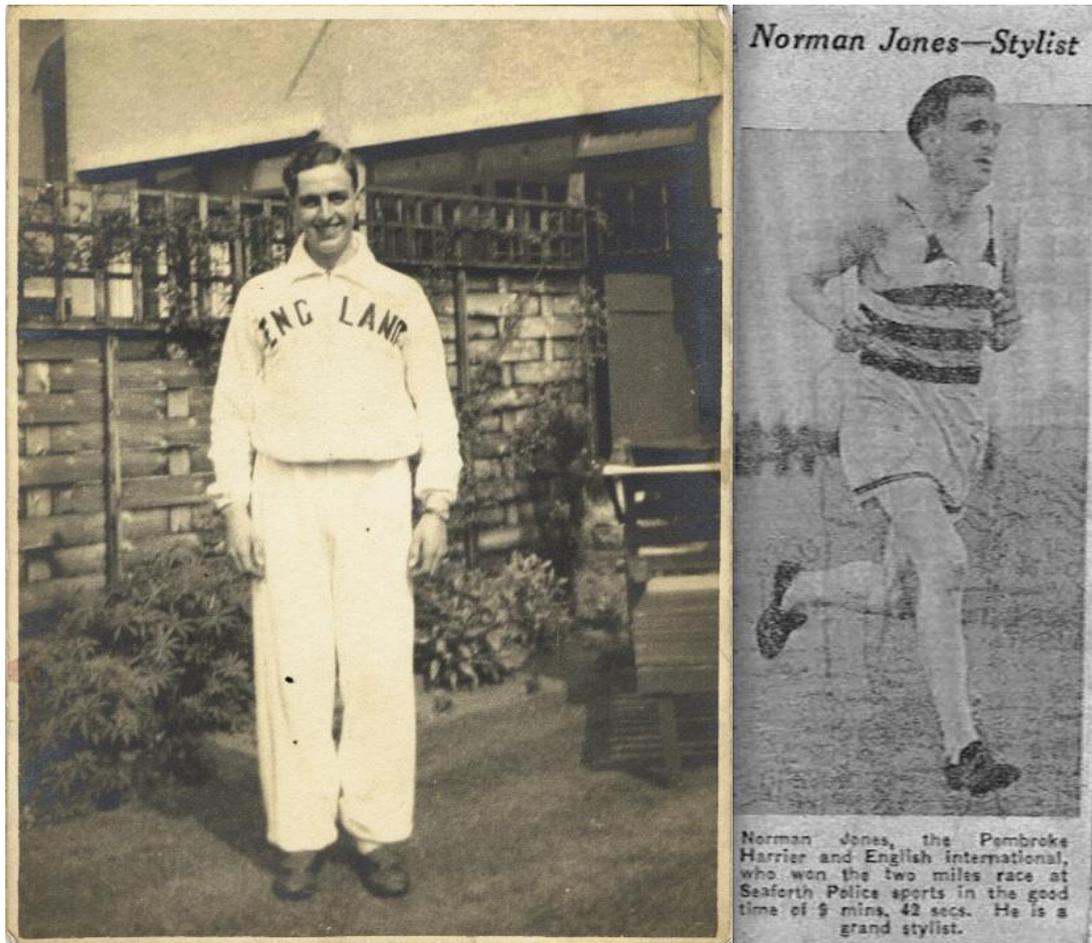


Fig. 16. Harold Marsh (left), a junior cross country international in 1939. Harold was the third club international after Norman Jones (right) (and Bob Bridge).

Ghosts

“...the only way to understand is to run alone. To feel the earth, sense the ancient vibrations beneath your feet. Comprehension doesn't come without effort, don't focus on the now, let that slip away. In time you will discover yourself and where you once floundered you will float. In this other world anything is possible...”

“...the slight figure appears alongside, no more than eight stone, moustached and with shorts from another era. Don't laugh or speak, he will evaporate. He moves smoothly a natural athlete who loves what he's doing, a modest person who creates where others can only copy. He slips back with a wave of his hand and there are voices...”

“... they are noisy, crude and twelve or so in number. They draw abreast and try to engage in banter but you are not of that time and the jokes are meaningless. A stile approaches and their whole demeanour alters, they charge. Seemingly this is some test of virility as you get a sharp elbow and find yourself staring at the rear of tousled ruffian as he bestrides the top bar. He turns and grins broadly, you've just made his day. If you'd any sense you would have spotted the scallies who had bent left and gone through a well-worn hole in the hedge. You'll know next time...”

“...they are gone and for a moment or two there is silence. The next rush is different. You sense this when they are some 30 yards or so behind, about four this time, you guess. These have abandoned the black vest for some sporty hoops and their shorts are, well, shorter. For heaven's sake they even have handmade leather spikes ! They look distinctly serious. As they draw abreast one touches your arm, “Alright, mate ?”. At the pace they are going you are anything but 'alright'. Still you try to hang in and as they recede one says, “Who's that, Norman ?” “A new guy, Harold, likes to train on his own” “Any good ?” “Might make the team next year”.”

Acknowledgements

Lots of people long gone have left their footprints on this account but I am principally grateful to Mark Bleasdale who set out on this task some years ago and collected a raft of valuable information. Without that boost I would not have got this far. Also I am grateful to Paula Wilson who enjoys delving into background material, correcting my typos and querying some of my more abstruse statements. The next part of the story should be easier as I've lived through a chunk of it but time will tell. Keep pressurising me !

Charles Gains
January 2014

charles.gains@btinternet.com

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