

## A HARDY RACE

THE SCOTTISH MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIP 1946 TO 2000  
and  
THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP 1983-2000



by FRASER CLYNE and COLIN YOUNGSON

Leaders at the five mile mark of in the 1957 Scottish marathon championship: left to right, George King (22 - 3<sup>rd</sup>), John Kerr (11<sup>th</sup>), Andy Fleming (16 - dnf), Hugo Fox (2<sup>nd</sup>), Hamish Robertson (4 - 6<sup>th</sup>), J Garvey (Vale of Leven - 4<sup>th</sup>), Harry Fenion (17 - 1<sup>st</sup>), Tom Scott (12<sup>th</sup>) and Ronnie Kane (24 - dnf).

## INTRODUCTION

The A.H. Blair Memorial Trophy is a fine piece of silverware which has graced many varied mantelpieces and trophy cabinets since being donated to the Scottish AAA for presentation to the national marathon champion in the austere days following the end of the Second World War. The engraved list of winners' names commemorates the endeavours of generations of endurance runners. Glasgow's Donald McNab Robertson leads the line. The Maryhill Harrier was the first winner in 1946. An Olympian in 1936 and six times AAA marathon champion, Robertson won the Scottish title again in 1947; but his life was cut tragically short two years later. He died of a thrombosis at the age of 43.

Time marched on. Other names emerged and the championship developed its own history and generated its own statistics, its own trivia. Joe McGhee became the first man to win the title three times in a row, between 1954 and 1956. His 1956 winning margin of 13 minutes 22 seconds was the biggest until Simon Pride's margin of 14 minutes 32 seconds in 2000. Fraser Clyne emulated McGhee's feat of winning three in a row en route to a total of five championship victories in five attempts between 1991 and 1999. Alastair Wood established himself as the most prolific champion with six wins between 1962 and 1972. John Emmet Farrell could claim to be the unluckiest competitor. He won five medals between 1946 and 1954 but never collected the gold. Colin Youngson won a record ten medals in thirteen championship appearances between 1972 and 1985 – three gold, three silver and four bronze. English runners occupied the top three places in 1990 – the first occasion 'foreigners' achieved this feat. London-born Jack Paterson (Polytechnic Harriers) recorded the slowest-ever winning time – 2.57.07 – when winning the 1949 championship over a route between Gourrock and Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow. It was a very hot day.

And so the statistical tales go on. Donald Macgregor won three gold medals and six silvers – accumulated over a remarkable period of 21 years (1965-86). Jim Alder's three second victory over Macgregor in 1970 is the narrowest winning margin so far. And Macgregor's time that day – 2.17.14 – was the quickest non-winning performance until the overseas invitees appeared in 1999. Jim Dingwall's time of 2.16.05 in 1977 is the fastest ever in the championship by a Scot.

The two fastest Scottish Marathon runners of all-time – Allister Hutton and John Graham – have never competed in the championship. This last fact is not surprising. Hutton, Graham and other top Scots of the 1980s were often criticised for not taking part in the national championship. But the reasons were obvious. The carrots being offered elsewhere were decidedly more tasty. When Evan Cameron won the national title in 1984 he received a jar of instant coffee as a prize. Hutton and Graham, meanwhile, were able to command thousands of pounds in appearance fees plus many thousands more in prize money on the international circuit.

The women's championship is a much more recent addition. First held in 1983, it is still developing its traditions and history. Lynda Bain won the first two titles, and her time of 2.41.41 in 1984 was the championship best performance until Esther Kiplagat's 2.33.09 in 1999. No woman has won more than two titles. Bain (1983 and 1984), Liz Hughes (1989 and 1990), Eileen Masson (1988 and 1991) and Eleanor Robinson (1993 and 1996) share the record for most wins. The biggest winning margin was in 1990 when Hughes finished more than 35 minutes ahead of her closest challenger; while the tightest finish came in 1987, when just 14 seconds separated Stephanie Quirk from Janine Robertson. The event, unfortunately, has failed to attract Scotland's elite. Bain and Trudi Thomson are the only two of Scotland's ten fastest

women to have taken part in the championship. Like the men, it's because of richer rewards on offer elsewhere.

## ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Although a Scottish championship was not held until 1946, many 'marathons' took place in Scotland during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these were of varying distances. The Edinburgh Exhibition marathon of 1908, for instance, was actually held over a distance of no more than 16 miles.

The first recorded marathon in Scotland over the now traditional distance of 26 miles 385 yards was held in conjunction with the Powderhall New Year professional meeting. The 1909 Powderhall marathon, run from Falkirk to the Powderhall Grounds in Edinburgh, took place in bitterly cold conditions with snow and slush lying on the roads. Frenchman Henri St Yves won but contemporary reports do not confirm the racing distance, stating only that 'it was over a distance of some 26 miles'. The following year the marathon was certainly held over the full distance, but on this occasion the whole race was run round the Powderhall track – for 105 laps. Englishman Jack Price won in 2.40.07, with Lochgelly miner Fred Clark runner-up just 46.5 seconds behind.

The first official amateur marathon, held over a course between Fyvie Castle and Aberdeen, didn't take place until April 1923. The decision to hold the race was inspired by the hope that it might, according to one contemporary newspaper account 'reveal obscure talent capable of representing Great Britain at the following year's Olympic Games in Paris'.

The talent it did reveal was that of Clydesdale Harrier Dunky Wright who would, 23 years later, take part in the inaugural Scottish Marathon Championship. Wright made his marathon debut in the Aberdeenshire race – and won by the narrowest of margins. The experienced cross-country champion held a big lead at 20 miles but then hit the wall and was almost caught by local man Jim Ronaldson in the closing stages. Wright gouged out a victory in 3 hours 13 minutes 12.4 seconds, with Ronaldson just 37 seconds adrift.

Dunky went on to take part in the 1924 Olympics but failed to finish. At the 1928 Games he took 20<sup>th</sup> place but went on two years later to hit the highspots by winning the inaugural Empire Games title in Canada. In 1932 he came close to Olympic Gold in Los Angeles but eventually had to settle for fourth place.

Marathons have grabbed their fair share of attention in Scotland over the years since then. Perhaps the most notable performance in a domestic marathon occurred in 1966 when Alastair Wood set a European and Commonwealth best time of 2.13.45 when winning the Inverness to Forres race. The Association of Road Running Statisticians ranks Alastair's time as fastest in the world that year. Wood also won the Shettleston marathon on a number of occasions during the 1960s.

But it wasn't until the early 1980s that marathon running became a mass participation sport in this country. When Mel Edwards organised the first Norco Aberdeen marathon in 1979 it attracted 77 competitors, 62 of whom completed the challenging four-lap course at Bridge of Don on the northern outskirts of the city. It was reported as the biggest marathon field ever assembled in Scotland. Then came the road running boom fuelled by the success of the inaugural London marathon in 1981. Races popped up everywhere. At one time during the mid 1980s there were 14 marathons in Scotland – at Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fort William, Loch Rannoch, Black Isle, Galloway, Easter Ross, Motherwell, Elgin, Dumfries, Greenock and even Benbecula. Benbecula once attracted just four participants. The following year there were 16 and the organisers claimed it was the fastest growing marathon in the world! Nowhere else could claim a 400% growth rate!



Today, however, just a handful of marathons survive – and none of Scotland's four cities holds such an event on a regular basis. (Actually, Edinburgh has reintroduced such a race.) The Glasgow marathon was the most successful. Bob Dalglish got the event underway in the late 1970s but it was the 1982 race, sponsored by Scott's Porage Oats and billed as the 'Scottish People's Marathon' that really captured the headlines. An incredible 8242 folk entered and 5061 finished. The Glasgow Herald described the start of the race from Glasgow Cross as 'one of the most amazing spectacles Scotland has ever seen'. The newspaper published a special 16-page souvenir pull-out the following day to mark the occasion.

But Glasgow was to grow even bigger. In 1985 the event attracted an amazing entry of 20,062 – although there was a significant fall-out rate as 'just' 11,417 started and 10,928 completed the course. The expectations for continued growth were unrealistic and when the inevitable downturn in interest occurred the great race was killed off, to be replaced by what is now the Great Scottish Run – held over the half marathon distance. The final Glasgow marathon took place in 1987 when the Glasgow Herald reported that 5516 took part with 5300 finishing – more than the 1982 'amazing spectacle' but not enough to ensure the future of the event.

## **THE SCOTTISH MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIP**

### **THE FIRST FOUR RACES**

Who were the stars of Scottish marathon running before the Second World War? In 1932, Duncan McLeod Wright (born 1896) had finished a close fourth in the Los Angeles Olympics, and Donald McNab Robertson (born 1905) can be seen finishing seventh in the marathon in Leni Riefenstahl's epic film about the 1936 Berlin Olympics. These two 'giants' of Scottish Athletics (in Dunky's case, the description can only be metaphorical) finished first (Donald) and second in the inaugural Scottish Championship event in 1946. Third was Andrew Burnside, who ensured a Maryhill Harriers clean sweep, like the good team man he was. (Later, Andrew became a well-known race organiser.) Previously, in 1930, Dunky, whose race diet was rumoured to be brandy with raisins, had won a gold medal in the Empire Games in Hamilton, Ontario, beating Sam Ferris of England by half a mile to finish in 2.43.43. As well as that, he had captured two AAA titles; and Donald Robertson, famed for his finishing sprint, no fewer than six AAA titles as well as a silver medal in the 1934 London Empire Games. He won his first AAA championship wearing a pair of shoes from Woolworths which cost 1/11 halfpenny – not much cushioning there, then!

Undoubtedly the SAAA marathon championship was started because of pressure from the Scottish Marathon Club, which had been founded in 1944, to foster marathon running in Scotland. The SMC itself derived from a sequence of events before and during the war. In 1936 Dunky Wright, who had run in the three previous Olympic marathons, won one of the qualifying races to be used for selection purposes for Berlin. He was told that it would not be necessary to compete in the others to make the British team – but unfortunately he was not selected and decided to retire from competitive athletics.

When war started in 1939 he was appointed Sports Officer in a Home Guard Battalion and tried to find ways of keeping himself and others fit. He had contacts with people who raised money for the war effort and convinced them to include road races in their campaigns. 'Muster runs' attracted enthusiasts to cross country races in the winter and to road races in the summer. Unfortunately it was difficult for individual athletes to obtain clothing coupons to replace the thin sandshoes which running quickly wore out. However Dunky supplied many with army issue sandshoes; and Jimmy McNamara got hold of pads which were used to reinforce Fire Brigade helmets. These pads, if smeared with Vaseline to reduce friction and blistering, reduced destructive impact when sandshoe struck road. The friendship between such rugged pioneers led to the formation of the SMC.

That fascinating magazine 'The Scots Athlete' started in April 1946 and continued until May 1957. Walter Ross was the inspirational editor, and George Barber wrote well on marathons. Perhaps best of all were Jim Logan's athletics articles and John Emmet Farrell's detailed, knowledgeable 'Running Commentary'. The first Scottish marathon championship took place on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1946, in conjunction with the Scottish Junior track and field championships at Meadowbank track, Edinburgh. The route was: Falkirk, Laurieston, Polmont, Maybury Road, Ferry Road, Pilrig, Easter Road and then into Meadowbank. Much of the credit for the 'enthusiasm for road running at present' was given to the personality and example of the famous 'Dunky'. Donald Robertson wasn't even demobilised yet but looked fit and, at 40 years of age, as a careful liver and keep-fit 'faddist' still rated as a probable Olympic competitor. Participants stripped in Falkirk Technical School and were conveyed by bus to Laurieston, where the race was started by the Provost of Falkirk. Seventeen runners

started against a fairly heavy breeze. Neither Donald nor Dunky were too confident, since it had been many years since the tackled the full distance. However Dunky's pace gradually dropped all the others apart from Donald, until the latter burst away up a stiff hill and won by about 200 yards in 2.45.39 from Dunky. Andrew Burnside moved up ten places during the last ten miles to finish third. 'The winner was cheered loudly by the Meadowbank spectators.' 'Unplaced runners who finished the course are worthy of mention as the fact of covering the full distance was a feat in itself – W. Kennedy (Kilbarchan AAC), H. Duffie (Dumbarton AAC), R. Sime (Edinburgh Southern), J.E. Farrell (Maryhill Harriers), A. Gold (Garscube), P. Pandolphi (Maryhill Harriers) and R. Devon (Motherwell YMCA).' A few well known future members of the Scottish Veterans there! The report finishes by commenting that, while refreshments, wet sponges, medical support and traffic control were all well organised, 'surely arrangements could have been made to provide a nice meal for the runners after the race.' 'A mug of canteen tea and a bag of buns was not quite the thing. Catering facilities may have been difficult that day, but we peeped through a door in the Pavilion and saw fine tables set. Were the people invited to the spread more worthy of it than any of the runners? The pertinent question is not asked in any disparaging manner but in the spirit of fair play and with a thought for future races.' Nevertheless 'The first SAAA marathon championship will be remembered. It was a great occasion.'

John Emmet Farrell, best known as a cross country champion – on that surface he seemed to 'come alive' – won the National in 1938 and 1948. However he took up the marathon 'as a challenge and because of its romantic and historical past'. He remembered that the rules were stricter – drinks were only permitted at specific and well-spaced out intervals. Although finishing times seem slower than nowadays, Emmet pointed out that competitors were hard-working amateurs running in their spare time and without sponsorship. His Maryhill Harriers clubmates and friends, Dunky and Donald, were remembered as contrasting personalities. 'Donald was quiet and modest but ambitious. A marathon runner only, he reached his standard by hard consistent work. Dunky was more of an extrovert. He was more talented and versatile – on track and cross country as well as road. Yet Dunky's sense of humour was not universally appreciated!'

Gordon Porteous, a Scottish cross country international in 1946, was another Maryhill Harrier who continued to run amazingly fast for an 'ultra-veteran', even in his 90s. What diet did his club members follow to ensure such longevity and fitness? After the war the problems were digesting dried egg and getting hold of enough food to sustain them. Runners lucky enough to be 'possibles' for the 1948 Olympics received food parcels from South Africa, courtesy of the AAA! Survivors of the Saturday long run replenished reserves with Bovril (served in special club Bovril mugs) and cream crackers or a pie. Gordon remembered that Maryhill road men had one advantage over their rivals. Dunky was a member of the Home Guard – 'Dad's Army' no less. (This was entirely suitable for the future broadcaster called 'the Daddy of them all' by Scottish Radio announcers introducing his Saturday evening athletics reports!) The crafty fellow obtained a supply of heavy brown Army plimsolls, which had much thicker rubber soles than the usual ones! More cushioning and fewer blisters. The alternative was Dunlop Green Flash – a tennis shoe which would ensure blood on the road for its masochistic owner. This brand was still used in the early 1960s!

Other kit comprised shorts, a vest, grey flannel trousers for the warm-up and a jersey with long sleeves to be pulled down over the hands on cold nights. Training was usually thirty miles a week. Maryhill Harriers (motto – 'Good Fun – Good Fellowship – Good Health') ran together from Maryhill Baths on Tuesdays and Thursdays – about

seven miles a night. There might be a slow pack and a fast pack, each one with a Pacer and a Whip (self-explanatory). A good deal of wisecracking could be heard, especially as the fast pack whizzed past, unless runners were breathless. On Saturdays, if there was no race, a pack of runners might cover fifteen or even eighteen miles over road and country, followed by tea, buns and a sing-song to the music of mouth organs etc. An alternative was some serious hiking. Victoria Park AAC changed for their Saturday epic at the West of Scotland dry-cleaners in Milngavie! How did they remove the mud afterwards? John Emmet Farrell said that the National cross country distance of nine miles suited him because it seemed 'a good balance of speed and stamina'. He didn't mention that it was only half the distance he covered on Saturdays!

Not surprisingly, Sunday was considered the day of rest. However Dunky and Donald (who was considered 'a bit of a horse' by Gordon Porteous) added a long Sunday run to the regime. Donald McNab Robertson was reputed to be the first of the 'hundred miles a week' men, perhaps twenty mile runs up to four days a week, 25 on Saturday, and a thirty mile hike on Sunday; and Dunky certainly used to put in more 'six-minute miles' than most of his contemporaries. Gordon remembered that Dunky absolutely hated to be defeated in races, and was known for scoffing at opponents with satirical comments like 'I could have beaten you with my shoelaces untied!' (Not unlike Ian Binnie in the fifties and Alastair Wood in the sixties).

The second Scottish marathon championship, on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1947, resulted in another victory for the redoubtable Donald Robertson, in 2.37.49 – this time with a favourable wind – on a similar course to the previous year. The race was held in conjunction with the revived International between England, Scotland and Ireland. Donald went on to win the AAA title that year as well. Third place (2.56.05) went to a real enthusiast – the short-striding John ('Jock') Park of West Kilbride Harriers, who had dropped out in 1946. Thus he had the satisfaction of beating the standard times in both Scottish and British events, since he had finished a splendid 9<sup>th</sup> at the White City in 1946. He was an Ayrshire farmer who showed great determination by training consistently and doggedly on his own. Tragically he was destined to die from kidney disease at the age of 29 in August 1948, and 'The Scots Athlete' printed heartfelt tributes from many friends in running.

In second place (2.42.53) was John Emmet Farrell, who went to win a total of three silver and two bronze medals between 1947 and 1954, when he was 45 years old. He remembered that 'he lost considerable distance over the last three or four miles, where Donald's experience and stamina proved the deciding factor.' This sounds like a familiar syndrome to anyone who raced Donalds Macgregor or Ritchie in later years! Emmet's finest marathon however was the British (AAA) event during a Loughborough heatwave in 1947, when he finished fourth in 2 hours 39 minutes behind Jack Holden (2.33), Tom Richards (2.35) and Donald Robertson (2.37) – three well-known Olympic contenders. Richards, in fact, went on to win the silver medal in the 1948 Olympic Marathon.

In August 1947, 26 Scottish runners, including Dunky Wright, Donald Robertson and Charlie Robertson, took part in a unique event – The 'Fiery Cross' Edinburgh to London Relay Run. Photographs were supplied by one of the athletes – George Mitchell of Edinburgh Southern. Another participant was Walter Ross, the editor of 'The Scots Athlete'.

Willie Carmichael was team manager and his article explains that the idea was to advertise the 'Enterprise Scotland' Exhibition. The team wore blue vests bearing the lion rampant and tracksuits boldly lettered 'Scotland'. Thousands thronged Edinburgh Castle to witness the ceremony of lighting the crosses and extinguishing them in goats'

blood according to ancient custom. The skirling of the pipes added to a background of medieval and barbaric splendour. Donald Robertson received the first cross from the Lord Provost and all the runners accompanied him for three miles along the High Street and Princes Street and out of the city. Then he continued on his own to complete the 25 miles to Peebles, in two hours forty minutes!

There were no fewer than thirteen hand-over ceremonies with waving flags and pipe-music – in Peebles, Galashiels, Hawick, Newcastle, Darlington, Northallerton, York, Doncaster, East Retford, Newark, Grantham, Stamford, Biggleswade and the City of London.

The most stirring part of the journey was the last ten miles through London to the Guildhall. As in other sections of the run, timing was important – runners had to hurry up or slow down according to the schedule. In this case they arrived right on time, despite the fact that London traffic was not delayed to facilitate the runners' progress. Dunky Wright had the honour of presenting the message from the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Fiery Crosses were handed over, each bearing the flag of the country for which it was destined. Every runner stepped forward, held aloft his cross, and loudly proclaimed the name of the country to which it would be sent by aircraft.

Quite an event! A memorable eccentric journey covering 406 miles in 47 hours 31 minutes.

1948 saw the emergence of a new Scottish talent – Charlie (or 'Chick') Robertson (Dundee Thistle Harriers), an ex-major in the Black Watch, who was advised by Dunky Wright and whose running style was particularly elegant. Charlie won the Scottish Marathon in 1948 and 1952, as well as being squeezed into second place in 1950. Previously he had been a good cyclist and had made an immediate impact on turning to distance running in the 1947 Perth to Dundee 22 miles road race, when he was second, less than two minutes behind his record-breaking clan member Donald McNab Robertson. Charles (Chick) Haskett, father of well-known runners Christine and Charlie, remembered that era well. During the War, Dundee Hawkhill kept going, and joined up with Thistle athletes, since the Thistle club hut had been bombed out! Perth to Dundee was the big event – occasionally a full marathon. Chick used to sell race programmes along the route, while the competition was actually on. Training in Dundee was similar to the Glasgow pattern, only some runners went rambling in the hills on Sundays. Of course several athletes were religious – especially the famous cross-country champion John Suttie Smith. He was even a non-smoker! Charlie Robertson himself was a keen churchgoer and hill walker. Mr Haskett remembers that he designed jewellery, being an art teacher, and was conscientious – a hard trainer. Charlie wore a small neat moustache and had a normal build, with a heavy chest – not as skinny as many runners. He gave the impression of 'being in control'.

This impression is emphasised by Gordon Porteous who actually competed on September 11<sup>th</sup> 1948 over the Perth to Dundee course (extended to full distance) during Charlie Robertson's first success in the Scottish Marathon. Gordon wrote that 'the first few miles were rather sedate, there being a pack of six or seven runners, yours truly amongst them, none of whom wanted to take the pace, till Charlie decided to go at about five miles.' The break was clean and Charlie (2.45.12) won by over three minutes from John Emmet Farrell.

Third in that 1948 championship, a young interloper from Edinburgh Southern Harriers, was Bob Sime, who felt like 'a wee boy' compared to the famous Farrell, (who described Bob in 'The Scots Athlete' as running 'a remarkably fine and gallant race though desperately tired at the finish.')

However Bob remembers that (once Charlie Robertson was out of sight) he was running along with Emmet on a quiet part

of the route when they passed a parked van and the driver called out, 'Come on, Farrell!' And then, 'Come on, Sime!' Bob was pleased to be recognised (probably because of one of Chick Haskett's programmes) and admired Emmet's sporting spirit when he confided, 'That was my son.' After the race, Bob Sime felt absolutely 'jiggered' and sick, especially after a 'helpful' first-aid man gave him something unpalatable. Dehydrated on the train home, he remembers lying slumped in a corner, sipping a flagon of iron brew, and worrying about what fellow passengers might think of him. Yet Bob was very pleased with his third place, since it was his first time near a medal. Unfortunately medals were presented only to the first two! But justice was done when ESH presented a special cup to young Bob. His club used to train from the Liberal Club in Buccleuch Place, running a route which took them through the Meadows and down Lovers' Lane. On one occasion, running from Liberton towards Lasswade on a snowbound Saturday, the pack of runners combined to lift a lady's trapped car right out of a ditch, before continuing their training - naturally. Sundays for Bob might mean a twenty mile walk in the hills, just to stretch the legs!

Charlie Robertson receives several honourable mentions in John Emmet Farrell's excellent book 'The Universe is Mine'. Charlie had two valiant attempts to make the Olympics. In the 1948 trial he led narrowly at twenty miles but was forced to retire at 23 miles 'when his legs gave out'. The winner Jack Holden, later gold medallist in both the European in Brussels and the New Zealand Empire Games in 1950, admitted that 'Robertson had him worried for a time'. Then in the 1952 trial, Charlie finished fourth, only one place off the team, in his best time of 2.30.48 - a gallant performance. John Emmet commented that when Charlie won that year's Scottish Marathon, his time was 2.38.07 - so either the 'Polytechnic' Windsor to Chiswick course was faster, or the importance of the trial made runners try even harder. Other finishers in the 1952 Scottish event, all past or future notables, were J. Duffy (2<sup>nd</sup> - 2.38.32), J.E. Farrell (3<sup>rd</sup> - 2.40.54), J. Paterson (4<sup>th</sup> - 2.41.28) and J. McGhee (5<sup>th</sup> - 2.44.46).

Everyone was shocked by the sudden death, from thrombosis, on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1949, of Donald McNab Robertson, who was 43 years old. He had been training well for the Marathon championship and had finished only a few seconds behind Tom Richards, the 1948 Olympic silver medallist, in the 20 mile race from Greenock to Ibrox on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Brian McAusland has written that Donald was 'an ideal figure to hold out to youngsters as an example - modest, unassuming, dedicated and, although naturally proud of all that he had done, not boastful at all. He had made himself what he was by hard work and was a real credit to himself, to his club and to Scotland'. 'The Scots Athlete' article said 'Donald, by virtue of his courageous spirit, the charm of his modesty, and the warmth of his smile and his friendship, endeared himself to every sports-follower in the country. He was a loved figure in Scottish athletics.... Words fail to express the sorrow at his passing. He was good in every way. We bow our heads in deep and grateful remembrance.'

In 1949 over the Gourock to Ibrox course on a blisteringly hot day in July, the winner was 36 year old Jack Paterson from Polytechnic Harriers, who had been an excellent 4<sup>th</sup> in the famous Poly marathon earlier that year. He also won the Scottish championship in 1951. In 1949 the runner up was from England, too - James McDonald (Thames Valley Harriers). Third was Harry Haughie, a Springburn Harriers stalwart who later emigrated to Australia.

According to Jack Paterson in 'The Scots Athlete' it was the sporting James McDonald who had ensured a) that after the Poly race Paterson knew about the existence of the Scottish event and b) that he himself would not finish first! After establishing what looked like a winning lead, Charlie Robertson the holder had to retire

from the race with blisters and Paterson defeated McDonald by only four seconds (2.57.07 to 2.57.11). 'This after he had nursed and advised me for the last 16 miles of the race. Truly a great sportsman and the gamest of runners!'

The victor enjoyed a good season's running, which displayed his great enthusiasm, grim determination and resilience, based on long slow distance training as suggested by Arthur Newton, the great ultra distance champion. He was most consistent, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> in the AAA Championship, but perhaps his best race was in September when he won the City of Edinburgh Marathon in 2.46.04, defeating in another sprint finish by five seconds Cecil Ballard, a well-known English athlete. In February 1950, Jack Paterson went on to represent Scotland in the Empire Games in Auckland, New Zealand.

## THE FIFTIES

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1950 the Scottish Marathon Championship finished at Meadowbank in Edinburgh once again. 'The most coveted honour in long distance racing' was gained by 36 year old Harry Howard from Kilmarnock, representing Shettleston Harriers. By a margin of only 13 seconds he defeated Charlie Robertson of Dundee Thistle. Howard's time was 2.43.56. Evergreen Emmet Farrell was third in 2.48.24. Jack Paterson could finish no better than 6<sup>th</sup> in 2.57. Hugh Mitchell remembered his clubmate Harry Howard as a particularly hard man who used to roll in the snow after cross-country races!

Charlie Robertson was fit enough in August to break the record for the famous Perth to Dundee 22 mile race, but for Scottish runners, 1950 was Harry Howard's year. He went on to win the other Scottish marathon at Edinburgh Highland Games in September, defeating Farrell and future Olympian Geoff Iden of England, in 2.40.10. Howard had also finished a brilliant 3<sup>rd</sup> in the AAA Marathon Championships. In previous years he had raced successfully on the road and sometimes cross-country, starting his career in the Army – as a boxer before he turned to running. Emmet Farrell remembered his 'pillar to post' style of running and considers him to have been 'a tough little character'. Long road races for which he held records included Glasgow to Hamilton 13, Kilbarchan 14, and Carluke to Lanark and back 12. Anyone remember those? In 1946 Harry Howard showed versatility by winning a Scottish cross-country vest at Ayr Racecourse after the 9 mile 'National'. Overall, deserved success for a dedicated and persevering athlete.

The English sportsman of the year (for all sports, not just athletics) was of course Jack Holden (Tipton Harriers), 43 years young, and the winner of five marathons in 1950, including the Commonwealth and European Championship events. In Auckland (2.32.57) he battled through three terrific thunderstorms and finished the last ten miles shoeless, with blistered feet. In Brussels he had a real battle with Karvonen of Finland and Vanin of Russia, eventually winning by half a minute in 2.32.13. The AAA was won in 2.31.03 and he also finished first in the Midland and Poly races. And all this two years after failure in the Olympic marathon which he probably lost because he trained too thoroughly. He pickled his feet in permanganate of potash until they were like leather. After he had run eight miles, blisters formed under the outer skin which was so tough it couldn't be broken. Having struggled on to the limit of human endurance even he had to give up. But how he fought his way back to glory in 1950!

Held with the SAAA Track and Field Championships for the first time, the 1951 Scottish Marathon, from Symington to Hampden Park on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, was very humid, and a number of the more prominent runners had to drop out due to heat exhaustion, including the extrovert Willie Gallacher (Vale of Leven) who was notable for having his own coach and publicist. Other casualties were J.E.Farrell and Alex McLean (Greenock Glenpark Harriers). Gordon Porteous ended up fifth. One notable phenomenon is that Gordon's time was 2.51.11, just 24 seconds faster than his superb run a marathon of years later in the 1975 Scottish Marathon – a deterioration of only one second a year! Jack Paterson would have enjoyed that statistic – Emmet remembered him as having a prodigious memory for times and facts about running.

A hard man to beat in tough conditions, it was Jack Paterson who won for the second time (2.43.21) from A. (Willie?) Arbuckle of Monkland Harriers (2.47.42) and J. (Duncan?) Bell from Kirkcaldy Y.M. (2.50.38).

Charlie Robertson had been training more for shorter road races and had also achieved third place, his highest position, in the National Cross-Country Championships. However he produced a really excellent run to break his own record



and defeat Harry Howard in the Perth to Dundee 22; and ran even better to achieve a famous victory two weeks later in the Edinburgh Marathon. In the latter race Robertson and Howard missed the start and joined in after the first lap of the track – faced with the prospect of running an extra lap at the end of the marathon! The quality of the field was almost unparalleled: not only all the best Scots but two good Englishmen. After a very competitive struggle Charlie Robertson managed to catch and overtake Harry Howard and run strongly to the park, complete his extra lap, and win by eighteen seconds (2.38.15) from J.W.Stone of the RAF. Harry Howard was third (2.40.50), Jack Paterson 4<sup>th</sup> (2.41.59) and these were followed by A. Kidd (Garscube), Joe McGhee (St.Modans), J.Bell (Kirkcaldy), J.E.Farrell, J.W.Winfield (Derby) and young Andy Brown (Motherwell YM). In winning the battle of the Scottish Marathon Champions, Charlie Robertson produced his best performance to date.

In March 1952 'The Scots Athlete' featured an article by G.S.Barber on Charlie Robertson. It starts 'Here is an athlete who has studied all angles of the running game and found health and joy in it.' A family man, he had two boys and two girls and was a keen gardener (fruit and vegetables) in his spare time. As well as detailing his many successes, the article comments on Charlie, the man who became a well-respected captain of the Scottish team in the 1952 International Cross-Country. 'Charlie adopts common sense and a fresh approach ...has his own ideas and says that every man should work out his own requirements and methods and apply them diligently and conscientiously.' Variety in training was important to him but he believed in distance work. 'If you train for stamina, speed will come.' In marathons he thought that one should run one's own race, ignoring others. He was a strict non-smoker and teetotaler. His pre-race meal was scrambled eggs with toast followed by cereal with honey and milk, taken two hours before a marathon. Hard work was the secret of his success. Amusingly, a photograph is also mentioned of Charlie 'training for a marathon with his wife and kiddy accompanying him by bicycle and his dog trotting by his side' – not his usual method perhaps.

The AAA Marathon and Olympic trial over the Windsor to Chiswick course on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1952 was 'the fantastic marathon' in which Jim Peters finished in a world best time of 2.20.42. He went out very fast, followed at a distance by Stan Cox and then by Geoff Iden. These three established a widening gap on the others. Charlie Robertson was determined not to start too fast in order to finish strongly. This tactic worked well, but the first three were simply too strong and speedy on the day. However Charlie was a valiant fourth and unlucky not to make the team for Helsinki. In fact his time of 2.30.48 had only been beaten once before in Britain and was the fastest time ever returned by a Scot. 8<sup>th</sup> was Anglo-Scot John Duffy (Hadleigh Olympiads), Broxburn born and bred, in 2.36.35. Alex Kidd (Garscube) ran 2.38.39 and Joe McGhee (St Modans) 2.39.29.

After Emil Zatopek's marvellous triple victory in the Olympics, finishing with the marathon in 2.23 - Jim Peters dropped out after trying to burn the Czech off - the Scottish Marathon on August 9<sup>th</sup> must have seemed an anti-climax. Once again, the course was the lengthened Perth to Dundee one – and there could only be one victor in his best year – Charlie Robertson, the winner of the inaugural D. McNab Robertson Memorial Trophy for best performance in Scottish road racing. However he had a serious rival in the John Duffy. The Broxburn man, who had served in the Army from 1940-45, and had shown immediate talent for running, and also for boxing, had settled in Southend, Essex, in 1946. Having put on two stones in weight, he started road running with his local club in 1947, eventually building up by cross-country and distance training. He had been second to his friend Jim Peters in the Essex 20, and had

then won the race the following year before doing so well in the Polytechnic Marathon from Windsor to Chiswick. The Scots runners he had met there encouraged him to travel north for the Scottish Marathon.

Joe McGhee challenged earlier on in the 1952 race, but by fifteen miles it was a two-man affair with Robertson trying to bridge a 23 second gap to the leader Duffy. By 24 miles Charlie had a hundred yards lead, but then he felt cramp and had to stop and touch his toes before sprinting off and then stopping again! Still he finished with 25 seconds in hand (2.38.07) from Duffy, with Emmet Farrell third and then Jack Paterson, Joe McGhee, Alex Kidd, Andy Brown and Harry Haughie – some well-known warriors there. A fine finish to a glorious year for Charlie Robertson of Dundee Thistle.

1953 was to see Charlie Robertson fading from the running scheme – because of business commitments he was unable to train properly – and he must have been sad that a runner from Leeds, Eric Smith (winning narrowly from Joe McGhee) broke his record in the Perth to Dundee 22 by 28 seconds. But that is the way of athletics – everyone can hope to reach a peak, but records will always be broken eventually.

Another runner to start showing considerable promise was Harry Fenion of Bellahouston Harriers. John Emmet Farrell describes him as ‘pint-sized but with immeasurable pluck and tenacity’ and having ‘come right back to form after a spell in the wilderness’ to show himself ‘a sound classy runner’. Four years were to pass before Harry reached his best.

Two months before the Perth to Dundee classic, the Scottish Marathon Championship had taken place on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1953 on the old Lauriston to New Meadowbank course, finishing during the SAAA Track and Field Championships. The road race developed into an exciting scrap between the former Scottish ten mile champion Alex McLean (Greenock Glenpark AC), Joe McGhee (St Modans) and John Duffy from Broxburn and Hadleigh Olympiads. McLean took the lead after 18 miles and had 49 seconds on Duffy by 20 miles. By 24 miles this was increased to 68 seconds, and 33 year old Duffy was resigned to finishing second again. However ‘the knock’ (Fifties equivalent of ‘the wall’) intervened and poor Alex McLean was forced to walk until caught by Duffy. Then they both ran the last mile but the Army runner proved stronger, winning in 2.38.00 by 43 seconds. Joe McGhee showed obvious potential by finishing faster than the others and was only 62 seconds down on the winner. A disappointed McLean admitted his lack of long distance training, but the exhausted John Duffy had shown real guts in running himself out to the tape and he fully deserved his Championship victory.

John Duffy, born in 1919, was known as ‘Jock’ in his childhood, and inevitably during his years in the Army and in Essex, but as John to his family. He was a bricklayer and later a builder, and his hard physical work tired him for running – unlike Jim Peters, who was an optician. Nevertheless, John trained every day, sometimes running home from the building site, which could be up to fifteen miles away, and then making the return journey in the morning. On Sunday early he tried to cover fifteen to twenty miles, so that he could have a day and a half to recover before Monday evening’s run. The weekly total was between eighty and ninety miles. In the final stretch of a marathon, his strength usually enabled a fast finish. His wife complained about his training, although later ironically, when she realised how much money could be made in 1980s events like the London Marathon, she commented that she wished John could have won prizes like those!

Before his 1953 victory, John Duffy, his wife and two children, had taken the train from Southend to London, and then the ‘Starlight Express’ to Scotland – a twelve

hour journey. Reaching Broxburn at 3 a.m., he had snatched a few hours sleep before his father arranged for an ex-Hibernian footballer to give him a rub-down. Then it was off to Falkirk for the marathon start. Dunky Wright apparently wrote in the newspaper that 'Duffy always looked tired.' No wonder! John remembered Alex McLean's drive for victory, but although the gap widened, he just kept on trying hard, until he could see the leader struggling, and caught him with a mile to go. Sportingly, Alex said, 'Good luck to you, mate' as John went past. Duffy's parents and brothers were waiting in Meadowbank stadium when it was announced that Alex McLean was about to win the marathon – and then John came in, triumphant.

Fourth was Alex Kidd, fifth D.Bowman of Clydesdale, sixth T.Phelan of Springburn and seventh Hamish Robertson of Edinburgh Southern Harriers in 2.53.18.

By the beginning of the 1953-1954 cross-country season, Joe McGhee had left St Modans AAC and had joined Shettleston Harriers, one of the two top clubs in Scotland. He was also benefiting from training done in the RAF and coaching by Allan Scally. In the 1954 'National' he helped his team to win the title and gained his first Scottish vest after finishing seventh.

John Duffy was disappointed when, before the Scottish Marathon, only Joe McGhee, who he had beaten three times over the classic distance, was nominated for the Commonwealth Games team. Jim Peters even wrote the SAAA on behalf of the 1953 champion. However before the start, Dunky Wright informed John that the committee was not satisfied with the Scottish event as a trial, and said that if he wanted to be considered for a place in the team, he would have to do well once more in the 'Poly'. This made it very difficult to run with conviction in the Scottish race. Rather a shame for Scotland, because John Duffy, who knew his English rivals so well, reckoned he had a chance of third place in the Commonwealth race, although he did not drink water either in training or in a marathon, unless he was having a bad time.

Joe McGhee's fitness just kept on improving, and he took part in the Scottish Marathon Championship on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1954, over a new course from the Cloch Lighthouse, Gourrock to Ibrox Park, where the Glasgow Highland Games were being held. The time at five miles, after a fast start, was 27.11, with John Duffy the holder, McGhee, Hamilton Lawrence of Teviotdale Harriers and George King of Greenock Wellpark all together. Also taking part were Willie Gallagher of Shettleston, John Emmet Farrell, Gordon Porteous and Eddie Campbell (St Mary's), the famous Ben Nevis runner – but due to the warm day and very stiff headwind, only Farrell finished. Lawrence broke away, taking McGhee in his slipstream. After 15 miles and the long climb up from Langbank, Joe took the lead and Lawrence dropped out, saying he felt sick and had eaten nothing since breakfast. Not surprisingly, since he had not been given a chance of Commonwealth qualification, Duffy stopped too. Yet McGhee pushed on, covering the next five windy miles in 30.36 – good going on his own. While many participants were forced to drop out, Joe ran on as if closely pursued and won in the excellent Championship record of 2.35.22. Forty-five year old Emmet Farrell finished strongly in 2.43.08, with a tired George King, who had run the entire second half on his own, just holding off N.Neilson of Springburn Harriers by five seconds in 2.47.04.

George Barber, the journalist for 'The Scots Athlete' bemoaned the fact that the officials made no effort to clear the track for the marathon men or to announce Joe McGhee's splendid performance. He wrote 'Only those who have seen these men the whole way fighting every inch of the distance can understand their disappointment at the lack of interest shown by officials in the park when they finally reach their goal.'

Maybe marathoners don't care much about crowds and officials – they're just happy to stop running! However Joe's next marathon would not be short of attention!

The British Empire Games were held in Vancouver, Canada, between July 31<sup>st</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup>. Undoubtedly the marathon was even more memorable than the mile, in which Roger Bannister of England outsprinted John Landy of Australia in 3.58.8. Unfortunately the longer race is notorious rather than famous – for the sight of poor Jim Peters, badly affected by sunstroke and his own headstrong pace, staggering and collapsing short of the finish. Yet the statistics prove that the winner and gold medallist was Joe McGhee of Scotland in 2.39.36, from South African Jackie Mekler, the famous ultra runner, in 2.40.57 and J.J.Barnard, also of South Africa, in 2.51.49. There were only six finishers.

John Emmet Farrell stated that 'Considering the gruelling almost freak conditions in which the race was run, the Scottish champion may have been said to have run the race of his life.....A race is never won or lost until the tape is broken or the finishing line is crossed.....Judgement as well as pure running ability is an essential ingredient.' Yet Jim Peters did not know that his old rival Stan Cox had retired (eventually suffering from sunstroke and running into a post two miles from the finish), and pushed on hard to the stadium instead of easing back.

George Barber blames officials once again. Not only did they allow the race to be run at a ridiculous time of the day – starting at noon on a scorching Canadian summer day, but once again chaos reigned in the stadium when it became quite apparent that the actual finish line was uncertain – the track event finish was short of the marathon one. Indeed Mick Mays, the England team masseur who caught Peters on the track, did so at what he thought to be the right line – Peters in fact could not have run on because an official had stopped him. Arthur Newton, former Comrades marathon champion, was very scathing about 'the complete ignorance of the authorities about marathon running', complaining that the race should never have been planned for the middle of a warm summer's day and about the lack of sponges and water for cooling and drinking except at strictly limited drink stations. Years later Jim Peters himself said that, he may have fallen down twelve times on the track, but if he had only drunk more water he might not have fallen down at all.

In conclusion there is no doubt that, although it was a pity that Jim Peters retired from running shortly afterwards, Joe McGhee was very unlucky not to get all the praise he undoubtedly deserved for running such a brave, intelligent and determined race. 'The Scots Athlete' published photographs of him finishing strongly for a sensational win; and later standing proudly on the victor's dais as the band played 'Scots Wha Hae'.

The well-known sports commentator, Kenneth Wolstenholme, stated 'Joe McGhee is one of those quiet, modest sportsmen who deserve all the success they can possibly win.'

In the 1954 Edinburgh to Glasgow relay, Victoria Park won for the fifth successive time, partly due to a splendid run by Ian Binnie on the long sixth stage. He chased down Joe McGhee of Shettleston, who had started 1.16 in front, and passed him just before the changeover. On the day, McGhee was second fastest and only 30 seconds outside the record, but Binnie broke the record by 49 seconds to record 32.32.

The results of the 'National' cross-country of 1955 were printed in the April edition of 'The Scots Athlete', which started with a personal message of good wishes from no less than Paavo Nurmi! In the championship, Joe McGhee gained revenge on Ian Binnie, beating him for third place by 22 seconds, to finish only nine seconds behind the surprise winner Donald Henson of Victoria Park. Shettleston retained the team title,

however, helped by 'the much improved and conscientious' Hugo Fox, future marathon man, in 19<sup>th</sup> position. Harry Fenion was 16<sup>th</sup>.

By the time that the Scottish Marathon came round again, on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1955 over the Falkirk to Edinburgh course, Joe McGhee was even fitter than ever, ready to show that he was a worthy Empire Games champion, as well as supreme in Scotland. Emmet Farrell, himself 6<sup>th</sup> in 2.48.44 wrote that 'Joe McGhee's record-breaking 2.25.50 was easily the feat of the SAAA Championships, and puts him into world class and an extra glitter on his British Empire gold medal. Conditions were excellent but the course is by no means an easy one and this enhances the performance of George King (Greenock Wellpark Harriers) whose time of 2.34.30 beat the previous best ever in Scotland and that of Hugo Fox with a 2.37.35'.

George King had made his marathon debut the previous year, winning bronze despite a light training schedule of three sessions a week totalling 23 miles! Like most others at the time, he wore Green Flash tennis shoes, which were extremely heavy (especially when wet) but gave little protection. From March 1955, however, he increased his training load dramatically to over eighty miles per week! (Monday 14; Tuesday 5 + 10; Thursday 5 + 12 fartlek; Saturday 20; Sunday 15). Not surprisingly he felt strong in the 1955 Championship! Later that year George won a one hour race at the famous Ibrox Sports, covering 10 miles 1625 yards. Then he finished third in the Edinburgh Highland Games Marathon to Eddie Kirkup of Rotherham and Jackie Mekler from South Africa. The route was: Murrayfield, Corstorphine, Granton, Leith, Portobello, Morningside and back to Murrayfield.

Earlier in Joe McGhee's record-breaking Scottish Marathon, W. McFarlane of Shettleston had been 4<sup>th</sup> in 2.43.27 and Hamish Robertson of ESH 5<sup>th</sup> in 2.46.58. The final two standard medal winners (for breaking three hours) in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> were Eddie Campbell and Jackie Foster of ESH.

Jackie related that Hamish 'took him in hand' for this, Jackie's first marathon. That morning they went to Woolworth's where Hamish purchased a pair of black gym shoes – 'the type worn by Brownies at the time, with a brown gristle rubber sole, costing five shillings a pair.' Hamish was almost running in bare feet – years before Abebe Bikila !

In a very long interesting letter, Jackie wrote that 'to run a marathon in the fifties, one was considered a) a god and b) a nutter'! He remembered being bussed (runners, officials, trestle tables and water) to the start at 'Cemetery Brae'. The single bus dropped off officials and water station equipment on the way out. About one or two dozen runners took part in an average year. When the starter forgot to bring the race numbers, he said it would be okay to run without them, since he knew all the competitors' names! The same bus followed the last runner, collecting officials, tables and drop-outs en route. Strugglers were encouraged to give up and get into the bus – so that it would arrive at Meadowbank in time for the officials' tea! Spectators tended to laugh loudly at the sight of grown men in vests and shorts, staggering through Leith at 24 miles, often having to ask directions from passers-by. Yet Jackie remembered the warm applause at the end (apart from one year when he 'threw-up' in the finishing straight) and considers that the five shilling entry fee (including bus, a high tea for the stronger of stomach, and a good bronze standard medal for breaking three hours) was a much better bargain than mass marathon entry prices nowadays. However this 1955 event had one unhappy memory for Jackie. When he returned to his RAF base in England, he was hospitalised for a week and had several toenails removed. His medical officer warned him that, if he reported in such a condition again, he would be put on a charge, since it was Jackie's duty to look after his body for the Queen! The same officer

advised him to stop running, since by the time he was 40 he would have the legs of a 70 year-old! In his mid-sixties, Jackie completed ultra-distance races.

Unfortunately Joe McGhee was unable to run in the AAA marathon because of leg strain and had to retire in the Edinburgh marathon but he did achieve fast times in shorter road races – including breaking the record in the four and threequarter mile Nigel Barge event as well as his wonderful performance in the Scottish Championships. And he had great satisfaction in playing his part in the Shettleston team which won the 1955 Edinburgh to Glasgow road relay in a new record time.

By April 1956, a strong rival for Joe McGhee had announced his excellent form on the roads. Harry Fenion of Bellahouston, with his ‘very easy choppy stride’ broke the course record in the Clydebank to Helensburgh 16, beating George King of Greenock Wellpark by one and a half minutes. Yet when it came to the Scottish Marathon Championship, which was held in conjunction with the SAAA Athletics Championships at Meadowbank, it was Joe McGhee who won the title for the third successive year. As Emmet Farrell wrote ‘This was a record sequence and at the same time revealed a successful come-back after doubts occasioned by injury.’ His 2.33.36 was a meritorious performance in warm sultry conditions. The pace was fast right up to the twenty mile mark, which resulted in Joe slowing down considerably during the last few weary miles. George King had a leg injury and had to retire at halfway; Harry Fenion kept up with McGhee for a long time but had to give up at twenty-three miles, due to blistered feet and lack of experience. Alex Kidd of Garscube ran a sound race to finish second in 2.46.58 – a time worth much faster in normal conditions. Third was W. McFarlane of Shettleston in 3.00.18, slower than the standard (designed for cooler days) of 2.55. D.N.Anderson of Greenock Wellpark (3.00.42), M.W.Innes of Braidburn AC (3.02.48, Jackie Foster of Edinburgh Southern Harriers (3.07.4), I.C.Grainger (ESH) and P.Taylor (Dundee Thistle Harriers) also finished this particularly gruelling test.

George King related that in July 1956 he travelled with Joe McGhee to the British Marathon Championships at Birkenhead. Joe had arranged for a taxi, sponsored by the Daily Record, to drive them around the course the evening before the race – but torrential rain, thunder and lightning forced them to abandon that plan. Race day was very hot and sunny. Both Scots felt good, but the temperature continued to rise. Joe had to retire and George too was suffering from dehydration. He passed a young boy carrying a jar of water and asked him for a drink. The boy refused as it had taken him all afternoon to catch the minnows he was taking home in the jar! Poor George retired at half distance.

‘The Scots Athlete’ was falling on hard times by late 1956 – it was difficult to keep it going as a commercial concern – but the quality of writing was as good as ever. Particularly delightful was a piece by Emmet Farrell on the ‘physical and mental tonic’ of training over the country. ‘These easy enjoyable runs act as a gentle massage through increased circulation and the restraint in pace builds up nervous energy for the morrow – providing that feeling of athletic silk commonly known as ‘rarin to go’ .....in autumn with the air clean keen and crisp ...It is good too to look up into the sky occasionally and feel its vastness – a vastness which may put our day to day irritations into correct perspective...If you keep your eyes ever rooted to the ground you may occasionally pick up a threepenny bit ...But you’ll never see a sunset or a rainbow!’ Long, slow distance running never had such an advocate!

The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Marathon was won by Alain Mimoun, the Algerian representing France, who had won several silver medals on the track behind the redoubtable Emil Zatopek. This time the great man was 6<sup>th</sup> but no one could grudge Mimoun, an International Cross-country Champion, his Olympic gold.

The sensation of the 1957 'National' Cross-country Championships was the victory of Harry Fenion of Bellahouston Harriers. 'Harry, Youth champion in 1948, finds himself nine years later the senior king-pin. Everything went right for him and when he elected to go away at six miles no one could hold him. His pace uphill and downhill was devastating and completely demoralised the field. Small, but neatly and compactly built, his running on this occasion reminded (Emmet Farrell) of an old poem remembered from schooldays :

'Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a-huntin'  
For fear of little men.'

Harry Fenion was reported to be keen to add the marathon title to this splendid cross-country performance. He went on to repeat his previous year's first place in the Clydebank to Helensburgh 16, narrowly beating Andy Brown of Motherwell. Since there was some uncertainty regarding Joe McGhee, Harry was installed as favourite to win the Scottish Marathon.

The 1957 race took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, finishing once again at New Meadowbank stadium in Edinburgh – and Harry Fenion (Bellahouston Harriers) did indeed achieve his ambition and became the only runner in history to win both the Scottish Marathon and Cross-country Championships in a single year.

He wrote that several well-known runners took part, including Ronnie Kane, George King, Andy Fleming, Hamish Robertson, John Kerr, Hugo Fox and Emmet Farrell. The training Harry Fenion did was rigorous. "I usually averaged 130 miles per week which included running three times a day, gradually adapting myself to run 5.30 per mile, which was race pace. This was done with the help of my friend who came along on his bike. He used to time each mile which was good because I was able to increase the pace and then settle back to a steady 5.30. The longest run I ever did was 33 miles. Most of my runs were 20 miles which usually included fartlek sessions. All this training was done in the morning at 7 a.m. before starting work, then at lunchtime and then in the evening. During training sessions I never ever drank any fluids. My diet included at least three steaks per week, one of which was eaten two hours before a race. I usually wore ordinary black sand-shoes from Woolworth's and put a Boot's the Chemist insole in them. They did not last very long as the roads were very rough where I trained."

"The weather for the race was cold, mainly dry and at times wet – ideal conditions. For the first ten miles I sat in the pack watching everybody. Shortly afterwards I kept asking where the next drinking station was, making out that I was desperate to take water on board which I wasn't – this was part of my race tactics. When we approached the watering station the other runners moved over to get a drink, expecting me to do the same, but to their surprise I never took any and put in a kick that left the pack. Most of the runners dropped their water to chase after me. I met my coach shortly after the break and said to him, 'Next stop, Edinburgh!'"

"As I was out on my own I started to run my own race and pull further and further away. At 23 miles I took a stitch after stepping off a high pavement and had to ease down for a bit. It wasn't until I entered the track that someone told me I had a chance of beating the record. I gave one final spurt and managed just to beat it. If I had known earlier I would have taken more off the time."

Harry's 2.25.44 broke Joe McGhee's championship record by six seconds. Hugo Fox (Shettleston H.) was second in 2.28.57 and George King (Greenock Wellpark) third in 2.37.20.

“After the race I ate a couple of oranges, had a shower and then went for a three course meal. My time was the fastest in Britain and the second fastest in the world that year.” Harry Fenion included with his letter an excellent photograph of the leading pack at the five mile point in the 1957 race, with nine athletes still in contention. Not everyone enjoyed the race like Harry – Gordon Porteous remembered having the fight knocked out of him by a fierce hailstorm at Bathgate around the twenty mile mark. He ended up taking the bus to Meadowbank!

Jackie Foster remembered Harry as being under four foot ten in height, but making up for this in speed. “His wee legs seemed like Mickey Mouse toys, where the feet are fixed to a fairly big wheel which spins as the child pushes it away. In one race, I was in fourth position about a hundred yards down on Harry and two others (Fox and Kerr) as they approached the large floral roundabout at Maybury. Harry made the break and ran straight across, through rose bushes, flowers, the lot, and the other pair, anxious to keep up with him, did likewise. The policeman on duty tried to call them back, but they were away! However, he did make me and the others follow the correct route. Later, I asked Harry how it felt to run as fast as he did, in the hope there was some secret he would reveal. He replied that it was ‘sheer hell’.” So that was how he managed to do it – pain tolerance!

Jackie Foster of Edinburgh Southern Harriers, who holds the record for longest letter to the writers of this book, had his best Scottish Marathon in 1959, running 2.32.38 for third place. He ‘retired’ the following year, since he got married and had to work long hours to support his family. He did not compete again until he was forty; and at forty-five was delighted to run only two minutes slower than his P.B.

Jackie’s training was unusual. He started improving once he got rid of Dunlop Green Flash shoes, which ruined his feet, and bought some expensive (£5 a pair) kangaroo-skin shoes made-to-measure by his namesake Foster in Lancashire. These were very comfortable, even if they looked like pit boots! Jackie’s training took the form of long slow runs. When in the RAF he had been advised by Bill McMinnis, the British champion, to learn to stay on his feet for three or four hours.

When in the RAF, it was acceptable to run in vest and shorts; but after Jackie was demobbed, he had problems. He lived in a fairly rough district, and wearing shorts would have labelled him ‘cissy’. His employer considered, like many others at the time, that running was ‘only for them at universities.’ Jackie described his solution. ‘To allow me to train incognito, I always ran in grey flannel trousers which I had ‘customised’ by sewing up the pockets and fly, and having elastic in the seam at the ankles, just like tracksuit bottoms, but not so obvious. I would slip out the tenement where I lived, and a half mile up the road would commence my run. At the weekends this took the form of two hours (never miles) in one direction and two hours back. I had a sixpence sewn into the lining of my trousers, which I kept in case I was suffering from ‘the knock’ (now known as ‘the wall’) when I got back to the outskirts of the town. When this happened I would board a bus at the terminus, and strange were the looks I got from bus conductors as I unpicked my stitched-in sixpence. We had a neighbour, who having watched me returning several times from these long runs, soaking in sweat, and having difficulty in climbing the three flats to my house, said to my mother, ‘There must be something wrong with your Jackie, Mrs Foster, it’s no right for a young man to get in that state just climbing the stair!’ But my secret was safe with my mother – she never let on.’

Since water stations were very few in a marathon race, Jackie experimented by going without drinks. He sucked a large pebble, which seemed to help; and also tried swallowing a heaped soup-spoon of salt to stop cramps. This was hard to do, and as he



later learned, dangerous. On the Wednesday before a Saturday marathon, Jackie once attempted to remove the 'fear of the distance' by running twenty miles! When running magazines started giving advice, he learned where he had been going wrong!

Tribute is paid to Jimmy Scott – 'Mr Marathon 1950-60'. Jackie wrote the following. 'I never learned if Jimmy had ever been a runner or not. We always held him in such respect that any questions would have been rude. A wee bird-like man, dressed in the kilt or Harry Lauder tweeds, he was 'kenspeckle' - a true Scot. He never panicked but stood no nonsense and never apologised (had no need to) and had the most amazing ability to organise running events.

A typical example of Jimmy's contribution to distance running was the 'Brechin 12 miles'. Jimmy would pick people up in his mini-bus from Glasgow and Edinburgh and anywhere else along the route. He would start, time and marshal the race. He then instructed the Town Clerk who to give the prizes to, before returning us to our homes, usually issuing us with entry forms for the next race. For all this the charge would be about one pound. Hardly enough to cover his petrol, I would imagine. Jimmy suffered at the time by being overshadowed by Dunky Wright, who was a nice man but an extrovert, which Jimmy was not. Jimmy did all the work but Dunky got all the credit.'

Jackie Foster said that he was always intrigued by Hugo Fox's first name, which seemed exotic for an ordinary fellow. Hugo had been a racing cyclist and then changed to distance running. Once, when he had just moved into a tenement flat with his wife and young family, Hugo set out to explore his new neighbourhood. He was so anxious to discover new running trails that he became badly lost and did not return until hours later. When he checked the map, he found he had run more than thirty-five miles! Hugh Mitchell, Hugo's Shettleston clubmate and another converted cyclist, remembered that Hugo worked as a metal moulder and never wore socks for running. Hugo had shown his strength as a cyclist by winning specialist events involving sprinting up a steep one mile hill. Another memory from Hugh Mitchell is about his first trip to the Morpeth – Newcastle event with the more experienced Hugo. Mitchell ate steak before the race; Fox preferred bread and jam. When Hugo ran much better than Hugh, the latter learned a lesson! Jimmy Irvine of Bellahouston remembered Hugo Fox as being a specialist marathon runner unlike Harry Fenion, who Jimmy considered classier but inconsistent.

Hugo Fox (Shettleston Harriers) had the experience in 1958, when he was 38 years old, of arriving in the lead during the marathon championship at the six-foot spiked gate at the north end of the old Meadowbank track, to find the park-keeper had not opened it. Undeterred, Hugo climbed over without impaling himself and trotted onto the track to claim his title in a finishing time of 2.31.22. The gate was unlocked in time for the second-placed runner (Alex McDougall, Vale of Leven) to enter with less difficulty and complete the course in 2.32.35. Harry Fenion was third in 2.36.05. Harry complained that Hugo had been on the dole for nine months, with plenty of time to train. This was completely untrue, since Hugo had been working a five-day week in the heat and dust of a foundry, plus two nights a week overtime; as well as training up to 130 miles per week, including the occasional 30 mile session! Unfortunately, John Duffy of Hadleigh Olympiads, the 1953 champion, who was fit once more, had travelled up but did not compete, because his name was not in the programme. After the race, to his chagrin, he learned that his entry had in fact been received. So he retired from running once more. Much later, in 1984, he moved back to Broxburn, where he became once more two stone overweight, but was still in good health at almost eighty years old.

The three 1958 medallists – Hugo Fox, Alex McDougall and Harry Fenion – went on to compete for Scotland, in unbearably hot conditions, in the Cardiff Commonwealth Games Marathon. Only Alex McDougall reached the finish.

Jackie Foster considered Gordon Eadie (Cambuslang Harriers) as ‘one of nature’s true gentlemen, very modest and unassuming’. Gordon had a powerful build which made him look more like a boxer than a runner. This may have been caused by his having worked as a coalman, perhaps having to carry a hundredweight sack of coal up many four-storey Cambuslang tenements. Rumour had it that Gordon worked one morning before a marathon! Hugh Mitchell remembered that, if Gordon had been delivering coal on Saturday morning, his racing form certainly suffered.

Gordon himself made no mention of such weight-training, but admitted to having run 80 to 100 miles per week. His longer runs were on road (some including fartlek); and his easier efforts were over the country. He wore a vest (with a jersey on top) and shorts. Footwear was Adidas road shoes – or a lighter pair of Fosters for racing.

In the 1959 Scottish Marathon Championship, he remembered that the route was Falkirk to Meadowbank. Hugo Fox, the holder and a good judge of pace, raced into an early lead from the start. By half-distance, Hugo was several minutes in front; but by twenty miles, runners dropped away from the chasing pack and Gordon Eadie found himself alone in second and closing on the leader. However Gordon wrote ‘Hugo was one fox who wouldn’t be caught and finished on the track to win by over a minute.’ Hugo’s time was 2.28.57; Gordon was second; and Jackie Foster third in 2.32.38.

Eventually, Hugo Fox and his family emigrated to Australia and he took up his old sport of cycling once again. Unfortunately he died of cancer in his mid-fifties. He was a tough, brave, dedicated, determined man.

## THE SIXTIES

The 1960 Scottish Marathon, finishing once again at the Old Meadowbank Stadium, took place on a particularly hot, sunny day. Gordon Eadie started cautiously and ran an even-paced race, making steady progress and passing the leaders in the later miles to win convincingly in 2.36.40 from Johnny Kerr (Airdrie Harriers) and Charlie Fraser of Edinburgh Southern Harriers.

Gordon Eadie, a durable athlete who represented Scotland in the International Cross-Country Championships in 1961, won another silver medal in the 1966 Scottish Marathon and was still running good marathons in the 1970s. He was also a successful ultra-distance runner and was record-holder for the 44 miles of the solo Edinburgh to Glasgow race.

John Kerr had been a cyclist and was known as 'Jack' to fellow bikers, although his mother disapproved of the abbreviation. Hugh Mitchell, one of those cyclists, remembers that John had a low but very powerful running action. Jackie Foster remembered him as 'Johnny' Kerr, and "rather 'fat' for a runner, probably weighing over eleven stones, compared to the nine and a half of 'normal' scraggy competitors. However, his wonderful positive attitude made him state that his extra weight was an advantage, as he had something to lose, unlike 'skinny rabbits' like Jackie himself!" Johnny had a low shuffling stride, and sweated profusely, appearing to stretch his vest and nylon shorts to the maximum. When Jackie worried once about an apparently classy field of opponents, Johnny retorted, 'Nonsense. They just have two legs each like you and I,' and then went on to win.

One day the two of them were running the Strathallan twenty-miler on a red-hot day with black bubbles of tar forming on the road. They had broken away from the field at fifteen miles, and Jackie was highly chuffed at still keeping up with Johnny, and was looking forward to finishing second. With about half a mile to go, Jackie offered his rival one of the little refresher sweets he was carrying. Johnny Kerr stopped still immediately; and Jackie carried on to win in two hours two minutes. When Johnny did come onto the track some time later, he took off his peaked cap and jumped on it! He told Jackie later that he could not believe him fresh enough to offer him sweets after such a gruelling run. So for once, Johnny's strong self-confidence was broken – although Jackie never beat him again.

A very well-known Scottish Veteran Harrier, and Age-group World Marathon Record Holder, Bill McBrinn of Monkland Harriers, took up the story of the 1961 Scottish Marathon Championship. Falkirk to Meadowbank yet again and very warm. Bill had been a miler who occasionally tried longer road races like Brampton to Carlisle or Morpeth to Newcastle. When he decided to train for a marathon, his job as a Locomotive Fireman with British Rail caused problems. Shift work meant he had to run before work one week; and after work the next one. Hardly ideal since the work itself was heavy.

Bill ran ten milers mainly, with a 14 mile effort now and then, and once a month 22-25 miles. He raced most weekends. In April 1961 he was pleased to finish fifth, beating Gordon Eadie, in the Clydebank to Helensburgh 16, won by Ian Harris of Beith Harriers, a Cross-Country International that year.

Two weeks before the Scottish Marathon, Bill was second to John Kerr in the SMC 12. Johnny had been a member of Monkland, but joined Airdrie after a 'fall-out'. Seven days before the Championship, Bill ran the Babcock and Wilcox 14, won by Andy Brown. Obviously, Bill did not 'ease down', and indeed ran ten miles two days before the race.

On marathon morning, Bill devoured a large steak at 11 a.m. – the very opposite of ‘carbo-loading’! Dressed in his club cotton vest, shorts and the traditional Dunlop Green Flash tennis shoes, Bill toed the line. The Press made Ian Harris (of Beith and the Parachute Regiment) favourite. Bill preferred John Kerr – his stamina was not in doubt since he had completed the Edinburgh to Glasgow and other ‘ultras’. Four English runners turned up, poo-pooing the Scots chances and saying they would all break 2.30! Bill himself intended to gain a standard medal for breaking 2.50. He was unbothered by the heat, which suited him well.

The gun went and the favourites shot off. When Bill took a drink of water at the first station (five miles) he ‘got dog’s abuse’ for doing so, since drinking that early was seen as ‘soft’! As Bill continued, running his own race, he was encouraged by Hugh Mitchell of Shettleston Harriers. Hugh was following the race on his bicycle, and started to relay information to Bill from the front of the event. Before Maybury Cross (20 miles) Bill was 11<sup>th</sup>, and shortly afterwards Bill spotted two of the boastful Englishmen ‘lying on the road and another wrapped around a lamp post’. On Ferry Road, Hugh shouted that Bill was up to 7<sup>th</sup>. By 24 miles he was 4<sup>th</sup>. ‘They’re dropping like flies in the heat!’ Just after that, Bill spotted Jimmy Garvie and Jim Brennan, just in front of him. They were staggering from side to side, trying to negotiate the long hill to Meadowbank. This was all Bill needed to give him the will to run past them into second place. Looking at a clock on a building he saw it was four o’clock. He knew that STV was covering the Championships from that time, so he put on ‘a bit of a face for the cameras’, and won a silver medal in his first marathon in 2.37.32, behind the winner John Kerr who recorded 2.36.06. Bill writes ‘two runners from the Monklands on the track at the same time, and my son James (aged 7) shouting me on from my mum’s television.’

Third place was E.W. Holmes (Burn Road) – the surviving Englishman? Although Bill had to stop the car to be sick on the way home, that evening his wife insisted on a trip to the cinema, where a violent attack of cramp sent him ‘jumping in the air squealing, with everybody turning round thinking I was mad’. Next Monday, when Bill McBrinn reported to work, he had evidence that someone else must have watched the event – the board for engine numbers had been brushed clean and chalked up was ‘WELL DONE T.V. McBRINN!’

By 1962 Alastair Wood had moved up in distance and won the first of six Scottish Marathon Championships. Second was J. M. Kerr – a gold and two silvers in three years!

Tragically John Kerr’s successful running career, and his life itself, was cut short soon afterwards. He was a purification engineer on the Clyde and on a freezing winter’s day he was taking water samples near Bothwell Bridge when the bosun’s chair snapped and he fell into the cold dirty water. The task was meant to be a two-man job, but unfortunately his workmate had not arrived, and John had decided to do the work on his own. The fire brigade rescued him, and he walked to the ambulance, but died there soon afterwards, from hypothermia. Jackie Foster wrote ‘A sad end for a really tough guy’. Johnny’s widow put up a memorial trophy which for many years went to the winner of the Airdrie 13. Nowadays it is presented to the victor in the popular Monklands Half Marathon.

Alastair Wood, one of Scotland’s all-time best runners, should have written a book about his eventful athletics career, thoughtful training advice and controversial opinions. Mind you, he should have engaged a good libel lawyer first! Born in Elgin, he went to Aberdeen University in 1952 and worked towards a degree in Political Economy, also competing successfully as a miler and three miler. In June 1955 he ran a

mile in 4.15.9 and followed that with a bronze medal in the SAAA Championships at New Meadowbank. From 1956 to October 1959 he was an officer at RAF Halton. Thereafter he spent a year at Oxford University doing post-graduate work in Economics and Statistics., and also gaining blues for Athletics and Cross-country.

In the RAF his commander was Bill Taylor, much later the president of the British Veteran Athletics Federation. Alastair remembered Bill as a really nice man and a great organiser – everything planned to the second. The 1948 Wembley Olympics red cinder track had been moved to RAF Halton. During his time in the RAF, Alastair did a lot of evening interval training in the dim light of street-lamps – sessions like 40 x 220 yards with a jog recovery across the centre of the track. He competed in Inter-Services competitions and (for Shettleston Harriers) 4<sup>th</sup> place in the 1958 nine-mile Scottish Cross-Country Championship on Hamilton Racecourse. In 1959 he won the event! Perhaps his best cross-country race was in the 1960 International, also in Hamilton, when he finished 7<sup>th</sup> beating that year's Scottish champion, (and fine miler) Graham Everett, and the most unlikely 'Scotsman' Bruce Tulloh, who Alastair blamed for losing Scotland a team medal in a later event in Spain! Alastair ran for Scotland in the ICCU Championships for six years in succession – 1959 to 1964.

On the track, Alastair Wood won Scottish titles over 3 miles (1957 and 1959) and 6 miles (1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961). He was Scottish Native Record Holder for both events. He ran in the 1958 Cardiff Commonwealth Games 6 miles on a very hot day, keeping up with the leaders for four miles before having to drop out. Alastair represented Britain at three miles, six miles, marathon – and in the steeplechase.

By 1960 he was living in Aberdeen and gradually changed his club from Shettleston to Aberdeen AAC, which finished second team in the 'National' of 1962. His main training partner, just out of the RAF, was Steve Taylor (Scottish 3 mile champion in 1961 and 1962, and a Cross-country International in 1960, 1961 and 1962); and Dennis Whiting and Peter Duffy also took part in the two hours long Sunday runs which became part of local legend in the 60s and 70s. Alastair swore that the early sessions were not as viciously fast and competitive as they later became! Repetitions were also an important training ingredient.

Alastair remembered that, on the Saturday of the SAAA Championships, he used to watch the marathon competitors trudging round the track to finish Falkirk to Meadowbank. Joe McGhee and Harry Fenion seemed like 'funny little men in sandshoes' to an unimpressed track athlete. Yet in 1962 he trained over a twenty mile course from Aberdeen out the North Deeside road to the Drum straight, across to Park and back in the South Deeside. One May evening he managed this in just over one hour forty minutes, which seemed 'not bad'.

The 1962 Scottish Marathon Championships was to be run over a new course. Gordon Porteous, whose first marathon was back in 1948, also competed from 1961 to 1981 inclusive, apart from 1978, when he was ill before the race. He remembered the 1962 Championship as being the last one to finish on the ash track at the so-called New Meadowbank stadium. He hadn't been doing much racing prior to the event, but that old campaigner John Emmet Farrell asked Gordon if he fancied having a go at the marathon. Consequently they trained together doing 40 or 50 miles per week with the odd 20 miler nearer the race. Gordon suspected 'JEF of doing an extra run on the QT.'

The new course started outside the stadium, went towards Dalkeith, worked its way back towards the coast through Cockenzie and back into Edinburgh round behind the stadium to finish on the track. Since it was a warm day, the two (not so old) warriors ran steadily together. This was a wise move since John Emmet was notorious for going

off course. Then with 50 yards or so to go, as Gordon wrote ‘the old b..... sprinted to hold me off at the line! I never let him beat me in a marathon after that.’

Alastair Wood (Aberdeen AAC) remembered the new course as being very hilly, with a headwind on the way back. He decided to go for a good time and not be content to ‘sit and kick’. Andy Brown (who had recently run 2.25.28, and was favourite) and he contested the lead until Alastair broke away at a roundabout (about 18 miles) which they had to negotiate before heading in London Road and onto the gravel behind Meadowbank pavilion, where a small boy was almost knocked over by the tired Wood, who reached the finish in 2.24.59, a championship record. Second was Johnny Kerr (Airdrie H.) and third Charlie Fraser (ESH). Charlie, who ran for years with a calf muscle strapped up, had a short pitter-patter stride pattern, and had been a good cross-country and six miles track man.

The 1962 AAA Marathon was in July at Welwyn Garden City, and Alastair ran splendidly to finish second to Brian Kilby. (Alastair won the prestigious Achilles Club gold medal for this performance, as he did again in 1967). Kilby, the best marathon specialist Wood competed against, went on to win the European Championship Marathon for Britain in Belgrade – a race in which Alastair finished a meritorious fourth. He remembered catching up on the bronze medallist in the later stages but ran out of distance, since he had followed the favourite, Popov, the European record holder, for too long before realising the Russian, who finished sixth, was having a bad day. Alastair is meant to have announced after the race that he was bored with the distance and would run no more marathons. However, for his fourth marathon of an arduous debut season at the event, Alastair Wood took part in the Commonwealth Games Marathon in Perth, Australia. It was the last day of the Games on a cold drizzly day quite unlike the previous roasting fortnight. Sadly Alastair was suffering from food poisoning, and the team manager Willie Carmichael didn’t hand out the pink pills to cure the problem. Brian Kilby was a convincing winner, with Dave Power second and another Australian, Rod Bonella, third. The unfortunate Alastair had to head for the bushes at 18 miles and subsequently spent three days in hospital.

Alastair remembered teaming up with Mike Lindsay, Martyn Lucking and Mike Hildrey and confronting chief official Willie Carmichael, who was allegedly hoarding a number of items contributed by Australian sponsors i.e. ‘a team car, oceans of Swan lager, whisky and cigarettes. Each competitor should have received 1400 cigarettes and a thousand cans of lager. These might not have been consumed during the games but could have been used for presents back home.’ However a pleasant memory of the Perth Games was jogging with legendary figures like Arthur Lydiard, Peter Snell and Murray Halberg. Nevertheless, Alastair Wood was not keen on ‘Big Games’ – he objected to uniforms, officials and hanging around forever waiting for the marathon to start on the last day.

In 1963, Alastair Wood did not compete in the Scottish Marathon. Instead, he tried the famous Polytechnic event, in which Leonard ‘Buddy’ Edelen of the USA broke the world record in 2.14.28. Alastair had dropped out and was annoyed to sit in a car watching Edelen indulging in some ruthless course and corner –cutting! Undoubtedly Edelen would have won the race, but the record may have been achieved unfairly.

Enter Jim Alder of Morpeth Harriers and Edinburgh AC, the famous Geordie Scot who is undoubtedly one of the finest competitors and most memorable and admirable characters, ever to don the national dark blue vest. Jim had won the Scottish Cross-country Championships on Hamilton Racecourse in 1962, had represented Scotland (in Belgium in 1963) and Britain in a road race in Barcelona. He’d also won the Edinburgh to North Berwick 22 and, most importantly, the English 20 mile

championship. His training could be as much as 130 miles a week! So this improving 23 year old was favourite when it came to his marathon debut, four weeks after the 20. The Scottish Marathon was from Anniesland in Glasgow in 1963. An official told Jim that the course was out and back and 'dead flat'.

Jim described the 1963 race in his 1981 biography 'Marathon and Chips'. "I took off from the gun and inside a mile was going away from the opposition. There were several gradual but long uphill stretches on the outer journey and at half way a small detour round a trading estate then the truth dawned! I had a similar terrain to negotiate on the return home! A two-minute lead was increased to three and a half minutes at twenty miles but I had slowed up appreciably over the last two miles..... The damage was done and the full penalty was yet to be exacted.....

At twenty-one miles I was barely at walking pace, everything ached, legs, body, mind. God! What had hit me? Approaching the outskirts of Glasgow I was just aware of shoppers, kids, dogs. All seemed to be looking at me – did I look all that bad? A Scottish athletic supporter shouting at me from the kerbside mentioned twenty-three miles – heavens more than three miles to go. My brain was numb – panic – but my aching body screamed to stop, mind and body in conflict. Decision, yes, I will walk one telegraph pole, jog one, God! Who is this passing me – a runner? I am beaten. Oh no.

Ian Harris of Beith Harriers and the Parachute Regiment swept past me when I was walking, the indignity of the situation turned to horror – would the rest of the field catch me? What seemed an eternity eventually drew to a close, the stadium loomed up, into the entrance, 300 yards around a track and the end – bliss. As those officials were in sight, on the home straight a roar from the crowd raised me from my stupor – someone else was catching me. Careering from lane to lane over the finishing line only yards ahead of Clark Wallace, a respected veteran Scots runner. Oblivion! Next thing I recall is lying in the first-aid tent with three St. John Ambulance men looking down on me. Failure!

The journey back to Morpeth interrupted for a few beers en-route despite several attacks of cramp in my legs did little to raise my confidence. The weeks following led to much soul searching as to whether marathon running was a sport or a torture." Many have shared Jim's uncertainty on this point, but the answer depends on the precise nature of the questioner's experience during the most recent race! That such a tough guy and successful marathoner should suffer so badly, must give great comfort to us lesser mortals! The official result in 1963 was: first Ian Harris, who had run well in hill races like Ben Lomond and Ben Nevis, in 2.25.23; second Jim Alder (2.32.04); and third R. Clark Wallace (Shettleston). Clark was an eccentric chap with a funny laugh, but essential to Shettleston's success, since he coached younger athletes and was the club cross-country champion. Hugh Mitchell remembers 'Everyone looked up to Clark.'

The Scottish Marathon Championship in 1964 was over an easier course than in 1962. It finished at New Meadowbank, but went out through Portobello and Musselburgh, continuing until the turn about Aberlady. As usual, Alastair Wood (Aberdeen AAC) was not content to win, but pushed himself hard to break the Championship record for the second time in 2.24.00. Second was Hugh Mitchell of Shettleston in 2.35.01 and third Charles McAlinden (Babcock and Wilcox) in 2.39.22. By this time Alastair was running 80 to 100 miles per week including speedwork with Steve Taylor. Since Steve was faster, Alastair had to keep the recoveries short to ensure his superior stamina took effect! A notable feat in 1964 was by Jim Alder, who finished third in the AAA race in 2.17.46 to make him the first Scot to break 2.20.

Hugh Mitchell, like Hugo Fox and John Kerr, had been a racing cyclist. After competing in time-trials over 10, 25 and 50 miles, and road races of up to 160 miles, he turned to cyclo-cross and cross-country running. Since 'you learn to suffer on a bike', he soon turned to distance road racing, and trained on the cycling model: a period of heavy mileage; then hillwork; and finally speedwork. Not unlike Lydiard schedules. From 1959 onwards, he tried some very big training weeks: starting at 140 miles, he built up to 200, tried to keep this amount up for a fortnight, and then eased down to 140 again. He emphasised 'If you avoided injury, you felt very strong and fresh when you reduced the mileage to only 140'!

Since Alastair Wood was a Shettleston clubmate for a time, Hugh Mitchell had several memories of this character. One is the pleasure of being in a winning Shettleston team in the Edinburgh to Glasgow Relay in 1959 – without either Alastair or Graham Everett, who were the best two runners in Scotland at the time. Hugh remembered Joe McGhee racing in at the end of leg 6, and being so excited that he set off without the baton and had to go back to fetch it! In a Shettleston Marathon he finished second, two and a half minutes behind Alastair, which showed Hugh's stamina, since there had been the same time gap shortly before over the 'Tom Scott 10'. He also remembers a long Dundee road race in which he was pursuing Wood on the outward journey. Eventually Alastair stopped and exclaimed 'That's Arbroath down there!' It turned out that some children had moved the bollard which showed where to 'turn back. Alastair swore he'd love to catch those kids, but would 'kill' the irresponsible officials! Alastair suffered even more later when he was sent off course near the end of the 'Two Bridges' when a clear leader, letting the Wight brothers through for first and second. Such problems are only suffered by fast front-runners!

As well as many marathons, and the North Berwick to Edinburgh race (note the original direction), Hugh Mitchell was a successful ultra-distance runner: second and third in the 'Two Bridges'; taking part in the Isle of Man 40 (a close race with the legendary John Tarrant) and the Liverpool to Blackpool 48; and twice finishing fourth in the London to Brighton classic. Hugh broke Gordon Eadie's record to win the Edinburgh to Glasgow 44 mile solo race.

1965 was a tough Scottish Marathon – a genuine head to head between the reigning champion and a future one. That June, the course was out and back from Westerlands in Glasgow – a real switchback. Donald Macgregor of Edinburgh Southern Harriers, who lived and worked in St Andrews, had finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the Cross-country 'National' and had run for Scotland in the 'World Champs' in Ostend. During April, in preparation for a debut marathon, he managed two training weeks of 100 miles each. Donald finished second to Alastair Wood in a hilly Dundee ten miler; and later at the end of April was given the verdict in the Clydebank-Helensburgh 16, after Alastair and he had run across the line together. This was not acceptable to one official who called the duo 'a pair of sharks'! Then, in May, Donald won the SAAA Track 10 in 50.23 – with Alastair second. The stage was set.

In the marathon, Alastair and Donald were soon in front and at five miles, when Jack White of ESH blew his bugle and shouted, 'Keep up, Donald', Wood replied out of the side of his mouth, 'Surely they don't expect you to be dropped yet?' As Donald wrote 'This confidence paid off, since at about 19 miles I could keep up no more and he drew ahead yard by yard, while I floundered feebly and would fain have given up. But I struggled on, finishing in the almost deserted stadium in 2.22.24.' Alastair Wood won in 2.20.46 – his third Championship record. Alastair remembered how hard it was to drop Donald, but recalls that he finally managed to break away up a long hill. Donald added 'I have a great 'Daily Record' photo showing me propped up by wee Dunky



Wright and a couple of others, with a 'Never Again' expression on my face. Over the full 26 miles, Alastair was too strong for me – as yet.' (The six and a half years between them seemed significant – arguably Alastair reached his peak in 1966 and Donald in 1972. They also won World Veteran Marathons six years apart – Alastair in 1974 and Donald in 1980.) Later in 1965, Fergus Murray won the Shettleston event in 2.18.30 with Wood second in 2.19.03 – the first time that a marathon in Scotland had been completed in less than 2 hours 20 minutes.

In 1966 the course was an undulating course from Westerlands in Glasgow, out to Vale of Leven and back. The weather was sunny and hot. Charlie McAlinden (Babcock and Wilcox), Irish half-mile champion back in 1956, had hopes of being selected for the European Championship team. Although he had concentrated for most of his career on shorter track races, and had avoided running three and six mile events, he had been encouraged to try the 26 mile classic distance by Harry Fenion, the 1957 Scottish Marathon champion. In 1964 Charlie had won a bronze in the Scottish race, and in 1965 had finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the AAA Marathon at Port Talbot, in which Bill Adcocks was the winner, followed by Brian Kilby, Juan Taylor and Alastair Wood. By 1966, Charlie was a much-improved athlete and on form capable of a very good run. Gordon Eadie of Cambuslang, the 1960 winner, was also competing along with his team mate Andy Fleming. Newcomers included Donald Ritchie (Aberdeen AAC) who was attempting his second marathon and only beginning his illustrious distance running career; and Jack MacLean (Bellahouston H) who took part in sixteen Scottish marathon championships in succession, starting with this one!

After a few miles the leaders began to stretch the field as they maintained a good pace. Hugh Mitchell (Shettleston), had been told before the race that sub-2.25 would be considered for the Jamaica marathon, so he moved ahead, accompanied by Charlie McAlinden. Further back, Gordon Eadie was running with a group containing Donald Ritchie. There was little change in the positions as Singers Industrial Estate, the half-way point, was reached. The runners completed a circuit of the grounds before returning to the roads. After keeping up 2.23 pace to twenty miles, Hugh Mitchell had to drop back, leaving Charlie on his own and feeling 'hunted'. An extra problem he had to deal with was that he did not drink at all on this especially hot day. His friend Tony McManus was meant to hand him a special drink at twenty miles, but the officials of the time followed very strict rules about water stations, and Charlie had to carry on without refreshment. At 24 miles Hugh Mitchell dropped out.

Gordon made an effort to close the gap on the leader and chased hard through 20 and 23 miles. He moved into second behind Charlie McAlinden. However the strain of racing fast in hot conditions was forcing some runners to give up and even the leaders were slowing down. Gordon could not manage to take the lead from a struggling Charlie, who found some strength in the last two miles to move away and win the battle in 2.26.31. Gordon Eadie finished in 2.28.19 with Andy Fleming, his Cambuslang clubmate and advisor, third in 2.32.47.

The 1966 European Marathon was won by an Irish athlete – Jim Hogan, running for Britain! Although the Irish selectors sent home-based athletes to the European Championships, and ignored Glasgow-domiciled Charlie McAlinden, in later years he became a very successful veteran athlete, winning titles at 5000m, 10000m, ten miles, cross-country and marathon. In 1974 he was 9<sup>th</sup> in the World Veterans' Marathon in France (won by A.J.Wood). In retirement, he lived in Aviemore and enjoyed hillwalking.

Donald Ritchie managed 2.45.58. He wrote that he had been training between 70 and 90 miles a week including two interval sessions. Racing shoes were Tiger Cubs,

which cost 37/6 from Stan Eldon Sports. On this occasion the weather was very warm, 80 degrees Fahrenheit, under a cloudless sky. The tar was melting on the roads, his feet hurt and he felt sick. The World Record-breaking Ultra-marathoner was not yet the finished article!

Alastair Wood suffered once again in the Poly marathon, mainly due to extremely hot conditions, which affected all the top-class field of competitors, including Jim Alder, who finished not far in front of him. Before the race Alastair had put in his usual 80 to 100 miles per week including tough fartlek with Steve Taylor (efforts between a varying number of lamp-posts). Tired and disenchanted after the Polytechnic event, Alastair spent a month training differently – to fantastic effect. He is quoted as stating ‘The answer to fast running at any distance is to devote a considerable amount of time to moving faster than you plan to race’. He only ran every second day – and ‘to pass the time’ tried as many as sixty 220 strides! By the 9<sup>th</sup> of July and the Inverness to Forres marathon, he was full of energy, his knees coming up of their own accord! That day he made history by romping away to win in 2.13.45 – later ratified as a British and European best performance. It was a day on which Alastair felt he could ‘run forever’ and local rumour has it that he claimed to be ‘the fastest white man in the world’ behind an African (Abebe Bikila), a Japanese (Morio Shigematsu) and a Mongolian! Ming Campbell, who was Britain’s best sprinter in 1962, once referred in an article to Alastair as ‘the sardonic Alastair Wood’. This was not entirely inappropriate – but what a runner! A newspaper wished to pay Alastair’s expenses to compete in the Commonwealth Games marathon in Jamaica, but Alastair suspected that Scottish officials wouldn’t select him, and in any case was not keen to compete in another ‘Big Games’ so he turned down the offer.

In Kingston on a predictably very hot day, Jim Alder triumphed, outsprinting Bill Adcocks of England after being misdirected and losing a fifteen second lead before reaching the track. A gold medal for Alder and Scotland!

1967 proved to be a peak year for Scottish marathon runners – who accomplished the fastest seven times by British runners that season! In the AAA Championships at Baddesley Colliery, Nuneaton, near Birmingham, Jim Alder won narrowly from Alastair Wood (2.16.08 to 2.16.21) with Donald Macgregor third in 2.17.19. Other Scottish stars were Fergus Murray (Edinburgh Southern Harriers); and Mel Edwards, (Aberdeen AAC) who won the Harlow Marathon in 2.18.25. Before his AAA run, Donald had completed three weeks of ‘intense hot-weather training in Vichy, France.’ He ran ten to fifteen miles in about six minute miles; and, on alternate days, a speed session, such as fartlek, or two miles of short sprints and short recoveries, or 30x200, or 4x600, or 4 times a mile in 5.00 to 5.30 with a 200 fast non-recovery! About seventy miles a week. This regime led to good track speed and a personal best in the marathon.

Donald referred to Jim Alder as ‘the excitable Morpeth lad. ‘Have yow ever run a marathon? Have yow ever run a marathon?’ he would ask ill-informed journalists.’ Donald also alluded to Jim’s occasional pre-race pessimism. ‘Due for a bad un!’ he’d moan. ‘Sardonic Alastair’, another friend of Jim’s, related the tale of asking Jim how far he ran every week in training. ‘A hundred miles exactly. Five minute miles,’ came the crisp answer.

‘Never 101 ?’ pressed Wood, ‘ How can you be sure? Five minutes for each mile? On the flat? Downhill? Uphill as well?’

‘Five minutes exactly. A hundred miles a week.’ Jim would not be budged an inch or a second. A champion’s determination! Most acquaintances have a Jim Alder

anecdote, such was the man's unique personality, which inspired humour as well as great admiration and affection.

The Scottish Championships were held in Grangemouth in 1967 and Alastair Wood won his fourth marathon title in 2.21.26 from Donald Ritchie, also from Aberdeen AAC (2.27.48) and Alex Wight (Edinburgh University) in 2.29.36. Colin Youngson, who had just competed in his first SAAA championship over three miles, remembered seeing Wood ease home without apparent effort, and then, bantering with officials and track competitors, wander slowly towards the entrance. He was standing there, sipping tea, ready to shout encouragement to his clubmate, when Donald chugged in, red-faced, to claim his silver medal. A press photograph captured the moment perfectly. In it, Alastair Wood, Rita Duffy (the wife of Peter Duffy – Motherwell YMCA and Aberdeen AAC – and her two daughters are cheering loudly. Earlier, the Duffy family had intended to spectate but missed the start of the 1967 event and drove out the course to the twelve mile point. They had driven past everyone except Alastair, and assumed that Donald must have dropped out. However when he saw the leader making his way back after the turn, Peter wrote "to my amazement and joy, there was Donald running alongside Alastair, who gestured to me and shouted, 'Look at this!' You could hear the respect and congratulation in his voice."



Donald Ritchie reported that the out and back course started and finished at the stadium. It followed the A905 towards Stirling and was very flat. Feeling good, he kept up with Alastair Wood and Hugh Mitchell of Shettleston. Unfortunately they were misdirected by an incompetent marshall, and ended up at the back of the field again. Nevertheless, the two Aberdeen runners moved through and away, passing 5 miles in 26.12, 10 miles in 52.50 and the turn in 1.11.08. Donald was pleased to see a

considerable gap to Alex Wight. Alastair moved away from the tiring Donald at about 14 miles. Donald stated that the remaining miles were tough, but he was delighted to hold on for second place. Other finishers included Brian Goodwin of Bellahouston in 2.29.56, the consistent Gordon Eadie fifth in 2.30.44, and Jim Wight of Edinburgh University in 2.34.34.

The 1968 race, at Grangemouth again, was almost identical. First Alastair in 2.21.18 and second Donald Ritchie in 2.32.25, this time just in front of Don Turner of Pitreavie AAC in 2.32.42. Donald went off with Alastair once again, reaching one mile in 5.10 and 5 miles in 26.03. At this point Donald told his leader that he was finding the pace too fast, so Alastair slowed down, agreeing to run together until ten miles (53.01). Alastair reached the turn in 69.08 and Donald in 69.55.

Donald had a difficult time running into a wind and paid the penalty for the ambitious pace. He struggled through 20 in 1.52, aware that Don Turner was beginning to catch up. Donald Ritchie had cramps in his right leg and could not straighten it or bend it back properly. At the end he was only about 60 yards ahead of Turner, and 'was quite sick once he tried drinking various liquids'. All this despite the fact that his training mileage was regularly over 100 miles per week by now. Yet no doubt Donald's ability to suffer but fight on was to be crucial once he turned to ultras.

Don Turner, later president of the famous Road Runners Club, lived in Inverkeithing from 1959 to 1964, before returning south. He won the inaugural 'Two Bridges' race in 1968, from Hugh Mitchell, and was encouraged by his Pitreavie clubmate John Linaker, and outstanding cross-country and track runner (especially Steeplechase). Don organised two 40 mile track races, during one of which Alastair Wood broke the World Record. In the 1968 Scottish Marathon, Don remembered being told that Ritchie was struggling but 'could never actually see the so-and-so'! Don Turner was another man, like Hugh Mitchell, who ran enormous mileages in training.

1968 produced a notable performance by Jim Alder who ran 2.14.14 in the Poly and was selected for the Mexico Olympics. Unfortunately, the high altitude forced even this toughest of competitors to drop out. However he returned to form with an excellent run in the 1969 European Championships marathon in Athens, winning a bronze medal in 2.19.05 over the hilly course from Marathon itself.

The Scottish Championship marathon in 1969 should be very easy to describe, since four participants have passed on information about the event! Jack MacLean of Bellahouston mentioned that the new course started and finished at the half-completed Meadowbank stadium in Edinburgh, which was to be the venue for the Commonwealth Games in August 1970. The track was ready but little else, so competitors stripped at the rugby ground Jock's Lodge. The Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Sir Herbert Brechin, started the race – eventually – after two false starts since the gun wouldn't fire. The 23 competitors were the first athletes to try out the £60,000 'tartan' track, part of a two and a half million pounds sports complex. Alastair Wood supervised communications in the stadium, since the officials were anxious to make the race a proper try-out for the Games.

However Jack said that 'the SAAA did not want to know about the marathon. The organisation was left to us in the Scottish Marathon Club to do everything: timekeepers, sponge stations, everything. The SAAA was only too happy to have the responsibility removed from them. The Secretary of the SMC for years was wee Jimmy Scott. He was the Club – an enthusiastic and tireless worker on behalf of road-running in Scotland and not always appreciated.' Jack should have known since he was Club Captain and a committee member for years.

In part of a long and interesting letter, Jack mentioned that, although he remembered the days when competitors ran in ex-army sandshoes with foam rubber heel pads, by the 1960s superior footwear was gradually becoming available. Walter Ross imported Karhu shoes from Finland and Alastair Wood continued as agent. There were also EBs from Germany and Adidas Gazelles, although many people actually raced in Tigers, which were little better than sandshoes! Further evidence of masochism is that, after marathons in Edinburgh, Jack remembered vaguely being dragged round Rose Street pubs by the likes of 'Henry Morrison, Wullie Lyall and my pal Heggie. I felt quite ill sometimes, but lots of laughs.'

Jack worked for the Daily Record as a printer, but also knew lots of the Editorial department. "The week before the 1969 marathon, Alec Cameron, who wrote about athletics in the summer, asked me who was going to win the race. My reply was, barring mishaps, Bill Stoddart. Alec asked, 'Is he articulate?' and I said, 'He sure is!'" Apparently back in 1957 Alec had not enjoyed a difficult television interview with that year's winner Harry Fenion, who was a modest man of few words with a stutter when he was nervous. So Alec hoped that Bill, who possessed few nerves and many words, would win!

The runners covered one lap of the track and left the stadium to the cheers of a few workmen, since spectators were banned from the site. Donald Ritchie also took part and indeed shared the early lead with Bill Stoddart (Greenock Wellpark Harriers). The course was Restalrig Avenue, Joppa, Musselburgh, Seton Level Crossing, Longniddry and the Chance Inn Bridge, where competitors turned for home. At three miles they were joined by Jim Wight (Edinburgh A.C.), who later became an international marathon runner. Police, motor-cycles, patrol cars, ambulances and carloads of officials shadowed the runners through the city streets and out over the country course. However by five miles Donald felt the side of his right foot burning and nipping but decided to press on. Jim lost contact on a hill at seven miles. Bill put in an effort before ten miles and passed that mark six seconds clear in 54.10. Donald's foot was giving him great pain so he stopped at eleven miles to investigate. A three inch blister on the sole had burst. Even Donald could not restart and had to return to the stadium in an ambulance. He had 'modified' a pair of EB racing shoes to reduce weight and increase breathability. That is, he had cut holes in them, succeeding only in reducing stability, allowing excessive foot motion, friction – and disaster.

Subsequently, Bill Stoddart became a veteran multi-world record-holder and world champion in track and cross-country as well as the marathon. In 1972, at the age of 41, he recorded 2.21.18. He reported that back in 1969 he was a 38 year old teacher of maths and physics at Reid Kerr Technical College in Paisley. Six weeks previously, he had been silver medallist in the SAAA Track Ten Miles, so he was in good form. However only a fortnight before the Scottish Marathon he had run his first 26 miler in the Shettleston event, starting too fast and fading during the last two miles. Perhaps he would learn better pacing for this championship. At half way (at Spittal, East Lothian) he swung round a policeman guarding a bollard first in 70.40, followed by Alastair Matson (ESH) and Hugh Mitchell (Shettleston) in 73.15. Then came Gordon Eadie, Jim Wight and Jim Irvine of Bellahouston. Bill found the headwind on the way back refreshing on a hot and humid day, but the course seemed boring, with long straights to endure. Still 'when you win, what does it matter!' At 23 miles, out on his own, climbing up the hill to the stadium, Bill remembered that 'Willie Fulton the timekeeper was shouting out my time, which I couldn't hear since I was a bit light-headed by then. I vaguely remember shouting back at Willie not to bother about my time, but would he please tell me (as in the song) how many miles to Dundee!'



Bill Stoddart's winning time was 2.27.25. Second was Hugh Mitchell of Shettleston in 2.31.30; and third was Peter Duffy (Motherwell Y.M.C.A.) in 2.37.04. Other finishers inside the Scottish standard of 2.45 were Bill MacDonald (Inverness Harriers) 2.37.32; T.P. Russell (E.A.C.) 2.38.49; and Willie Russell (Shettleston) 2.42.28.

Peter Duffy became a very well known hill runner and represented Aberdeen AAC in umpteen veteran competitions, often overseas. He remembered that he ran the marathon very steadily since it was a hot day. At half way he was about 12<sup>th</sup> and continued to make progress, somewhat surprised that he was not suffering too much in the heat. He passed four or five runners but suspected others must have dropped out, perhaps on the last hills towards the finish. When he entered the stadium there was some hand-clapping and he wondered why seventh or eighth deserved any recognition. It was an unexpected pleasure to learn that he had finished in the medals. Modestly, he remembered thinking that Scottish marathon running must be in a poor state if 'a very average ability runner such as myself could be third in the championship'. (On a tough day, some talented athletes found the challenge too much. There are no easy medals in marathons! And anyone who was still fell-running in his seventies was not short of 'guts'.)

Peter trained hard, both for Motherwell and when he was living in Aberdeen in the mid 1960s. From 1966-71 he was based in Motherwell and trained to and from work Monday to Thursday; ran a third daily session on Tuesday and Thursday (repetitions with Bert Mackay et al); an easy jog on Friday; racing or hill reps on Saturday; and up to two and a half hours on Sunday. That was thirteen sessions a week. He remembered (sympathetically, of course) that when Fraser Clyne started running about 1975, he came out with Peter and John Graham one winter Sunday and had 'a bad day in the snow'. When the other two went back to rescue Fraser, he was found 'holding on to a lamp-post at Newhouse'!

Alastair Wood had a good race late in 1969. The event was the First Canadian National Exhibition Marathon in Toronto. This started in the dark at 8.20 p.m. – to ensure that the finish would not interfere with stadium entertainment starring Bob Hope! Each competitor was accompanied by his personal police motor-cyclist! Alastair remembered being amused (and mildly embarrassed) by the parade before the start, featuring uniformed national teams from Mexico, USA and New Zealand. They looked slightly more professional than Alastair and his Scotland team-mate Pat Maclagan, in their ordinary warm-up gear. Team racing kit was also in evidence. Alastair remembered competing in a plain vest and a very small, frayed pair of faded red shorts. These suffered during the rigours of the race, and Alastair finished (in the merciful murk) wearing a small mini-kilt! Typically Scottish or what? Anyone wanting a flash of this patriotic garb should consult page 144 of the 1984 'Guinness Book of the Marathon' which shows the race leaders in action – Jack Foster (NZ, first in 2.16), Alastair Wood (second in 2.18) and Jeff Julian (NZ, third).

## THE SEVENTIES

1970 was a very important year for Scottish Athletics with the Commonwealth games at Meadowbank in Edinburgh. Don Macgregor and other contenders requested an early date for the Championship marathon, which was to be used for selection purposes, and the race was run on May 16<sup>th</sup>. This would give time for recovery before the Games event in July. The same course was used for both races – via Musselburgh and out the A1/198 to Cockenzie and then back to the stadium. Competitors included Wood, Macgregor, Alder, Stoddart and Fergus Murray plus Pat Maclagan (Victoria Park AAC), Jim and Alex Wight and Alastair Johnston (Victoria Park AAC) whose promising career came to a painful and premature end when his leg was shattered by a hammer during a race on the Meadowbank track in 1973.

There was a record field of 62, and over 50 started, but some were not at their best. Alastair Wood had been invited to run for Britain in the Karl Marx Stadt marathon, which turned out to be a fiasco. Short of sleep and jaded after a delayed journey, he reckoned that his place (4<sup>th</sup> Scot) in the trial (2.19.17) was not bad considering. Later in the year he was second in Toronto (2.18.31) and won in Harlow (2.17.59). Bill Stoddart had been injured, but was still leading the pack until near twenty miles. Thereafter he wilted quite badly and considered himself lucky to finish 9<sup>th</sup> in 2.23.33.

Five miles were reached in 25.51; ten in 52.18; 15 in 77.58; and twenty in about 1.44. As Donald Macgregor wrote “pretty even-paced stuff. Concentration kept the group tightly together until 21 miles when Jim Alder made a break and luckily I was the only one able to go with it. He allowed me to take up the running between 23 and 24 miles while he gathered himself for the run-in. Little did I know that Jim was having ‘un probleme digestif’ and that the running was not confined to the road. Photographs reveal that he had an ‘accident’ near the finish, but unfortunately my eyes were too feeble to notice or I might have run a bit harder over the last half mile. He sprinted in for a championship record of 2.17.11.” Donald himself was reported by Ron Marshall as “‘Very, very pleased,’ he breathed at the finish, head hanging characteristically to the left, ‘Now I’ve surely done enough to get into the team.’ His time was a personal best of 2.17.14.” Third was Fergus Murray in 2.18.25.

Jim Alder in his book ‘Marathon and Chips’ made clear that he was in an awkward situation in more ways than one, since he had agreed to Chris Brasher’s suggestion that the BBC ‘Look, Stranger’ programme make a twenty minute documentary about Jim’s build-up to defending his Commonwealth Marathon title. After a lot of filming home in Morpeth, the cameras followed him to the Scottish marathon championship. There was considerable pressure. Jim had to do well. Unfortunately, he chose for breakfast a cereal new to him and, unaware of its likely effect, ate ‘a whole big bowl’ of All Bran! Just as the race was about to get underway, he had the urge to visit the toilet, but there was no time for that. Fitness was never a problem, but ‘at twenty miles I made a burst in more ways than one’. After a difficult and embarrassing time, which Jim survived with typical determination, he ran straight through the finishing tape and down the steps ‘to clean up my confusion’. Then on with a tracksuit and out for the medal presentation. ‘Don Macgregor swore blind he could have beaten me but he couldn’t stop skidding.’

In a high quality championship, England’s Barry Wood was fourth; Alastair Johnston 6<sup>th</sup> in 2.19.31; Pat Maclagan 7<sup>th</sup> in 2.20.49; Jim Wight 8<sup>th</sup> in 2.22.58; and Alex Matheson (EAC) 10<sup>th</sup> in 2.25.27.

Jim Alder was rightly proud to be the mystery man who, carrying the silver baton, ran into the stadium at the beginning of the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games. He “handed the baton over to Prince Philip to signify the opening officially. HRH said

with a smile, 'Have you run all the way from Canada?'" (This was where the relay had begun, when the Queen handed the baton containing her message of good wishes to an Indian runner in Yellowstone Park.)

Ron Hill, in his book 'To the Peak and Beyond' mentions that the main contenders were reckoned to be himself, Bill Adcocks, Jerome Drayton of Canada and Derek Clayton of Australia. When someone protested to Clayton, 'What about Jim Alder?' he replied. 'Alder's got no class.' According to Hill, Alder got to hear of this and, not surprisingly, became angry and went around muttering how he would 'show them'!

And show them he did. Although Ron Hill had a truly great day and after a supreme effort came home a clear winner in a lifetime best of 2.9.28 (European record), Jim Alder entered the stadium a very tired but brave silver medallist, holding off the challenge of England's Don Faircloth by 15 seconds to set a new Scottish record of 2.12.04. Clayton and Drayton dropped out. Fergus Murray had a fine run (7<sup>th</sup> in 2.15.32) as did Donald Macgregor (8<sup>th</sup> in 2.16.53). Even now, more than 45 years later, the 1970 Commonwealth Games event remains by far the fastest marathon run in Scotland!

A notable alternative to the results noted above was printed, at exactly the same time as the real event, in the 'Victor' comic, in which the illustrious Alf Tupper, inspiration of a generation of runners, represented Tristan da Cunha in the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games Marathon! Inevitably fortified by a big bag of chips at halfway, Alf passed two rivals on the track to claim the gold medal. Even Ron Hill would not begrudge Alf this peak achievement in a cherished athletic career.

In 1971 Don Macgregor had a less happy experience in the Scottish championship on a similar course when, attempting his fourth marathon in less than three months, he dropped out with weary legs at 23 miles, having reached 20 miles in 1.48.15. This was to be Pat Maclagan's year. The Victoria Park AAC member's personal best time (2.20.49) had been achieved when he finished seventh in the 1970 trial. He worked at the time as a production planner at J&P Coats Ltd in Paisley. Pat, like Bill Stoddart a Scottish Cross-Country International, had been 'pushing his luck' by doing three marathons in 1970. A stress fracture the following winter gave him an enforced but valuable rest! By April 1971, however, he was fit enough to run 48.15 for second place to Andy McKean in the lightning fast Tom Scott ten miler. Training amounted to 100-120 miles per week at this time, and was still at 90 in the three weeks before the Scottish marathon. Most of this heavy work was 'fartlek running in the forests around Aberfoyle'.

Bill Stoddart remembered that 'torrential rain greeted us as we prepared to warm up for the race and people could be seen dashing for cover. In a matter of minutes we were splashing around like ducks in a pond!' In fact the weather was so bad that officials were forced to abandon (temporarily) the SAAA Championship Track events, while the road runners squelched onwards dourly. It was ever thus from a marathoner's point of view - 'track fairies'!

After six days of training totalling 58 miles, Pat Maclagan remembered starting the race running through standing water in his Onitsuka Tiger shoes with added foam padding under the tongue, and heel pads. Since he did not wear socks, he had also taped the soles of his feet. Unfortunately the soaking dislodged a piece of tape, to his considerable discomfort. Pat recalled complaining about this to Don Macgregor, who replied callously or helpfully, 'Why don't you stop and take your shoe off, then?' Instead, Pat spent some time trying to manoeuvre the offending tape between his toes so it became no longer a problem.



Bill thought that no one was too keen to take the pace, due to the depressing conditions, so he led for most of 22 miles. By then Donald Ritchie had dropped back, as had Don Macgregor, and Willie Day (Falkirk Victoria Harriers) had come through. According to Pat, Bill and Willie tried to get away at this point but he hauled them back. Bill remembered Pat “speeding past me as if I was going backwards and he didn’t even say ‘Hello.’” Or indeed ‘Goodbye’! Pat Maclagan won by two minutes in 2.21.17, with Bill Stoddart second in 2.23.31 and Willie Day third in 2.26.07 – good times considering the weather. Willie was pleased to win bronze and take 12 minutes off his best time in this, his second marathon. Donald Ritchie was fourth in 2.28.39; and Charlie Macaulay of Aberdeen University 5<sup>th</sup> in 2.32.03. (Charlie was to emigrate to Australia and run 2.23 for fifth in that championship too). Pat remembered being confident of winning because ‘in general, the longer I ran the better I was, relative to most others.’ In fact he covered the last lap in 70 seconds!

Earlier in the 1971, seven of the first eight finishers in the Edinburgh to North Berwick marathon recorded personal bests, led by Alex Wight (2.15.27), his brother Jim (also EAC) in 2.15.43 and Donald Macgregor (2.19.00). In the Maxol Marathon Jim Alder ran his usual fine race (6<sup>th</sup> in 2.15.43) but failed by 22 seconds to qualify for the British team for the European Championships. Alastair Wood was 8<sup>th</sup> in 2.16.06 and his long-time training partner and Aberdeen AAC team-mate Steve Taylor was 17<sup>th</sup> in a fine (2.19.28). Five weeks previously, in his marathon debut, Steve had won the Shettleston race in 2.23.25.

1972 saw the amazing Alastair Wood’s final victory (his sixth) in the Scottish Championship marathon – and a suitably crushing one it was too.

A tailwind produced a brisk pace and by eleven miles the leading group was down to five: Alastair Wood, Bill Stoddart, Willie Day, Davie Wyper (a marathon specialist from West of Scotland) and Colin Youngson (Victoria Park AAC). The latter, an Aberdonian, was running his third marathon. Youngson was teaching English at Kelvinside Academy and training hard with the likes of Pat Maclagan, Alastair Johnston and that illustrious star of the fifties, Ian Binnie. Encouraged by second place to Andy McKean in the SAAA Track 10 (50.15), Colin was about to discover that marathons inflicted fresh levels of discomfort!

By the turn (and logically into a stiff headwind) Stoddart dropped back, followed in turn by Wyper and Day. Only the foolhardy Youngson sheltered behind the tough near-veteran Wood. This might have gone on for some time, but Wood glanced behind and barked imperiously something like, ‘Please do some work, you lazy good-for-nothing!’ Accustomed to being inferior to the great man, who had humiliated him so often (by tongue and leg-speed) during Sunday sessions back in Aberdeen, Colin obeyed instantly. After half a mile of battling the breeze he heard a brief derisive chuckle and could only watch vacantly as Alastair Wood, tactical mastermind, surged past and disappeared into the distance and out of sight.

Youngson’s training diary read ‘Kept going fairly well till 21; cracked up from there. Curious shivery increasingly weak feeling – must do the ‘diet’ next time. Detached observation of crack-up. Must have lost at least 600 yards on Davie Wyper in last three miles. Innis Mitchell shouting a warning outside the stadium was no use – or losing silver on the track. Couldn’t have cared less – extremely careful walk/jog up the final straight. Albie Smith timed my last 200 metres at 80 seconds! Surrounded by blankets, old nurses and eager stretcher bearers. Hot very sweet tea. Ally Wood’s ruthless but still very good. Determined but tired booze-up later.’

Finishing times were: first Alastair Wood in 2.21.02; second Davie Wyper in 2.26.14; and third Colin Youngson in 2.26.45.

‘Athletics Weekly’ summed it up brusquely. ‘Alastair Wood (39) scored a decisive sixth victory in the marathon, and from all accounts is ready for more yet. He was home and dry for more than five minutes before the next man.’

Jim Logan, a good supporter of Victoria Park AC, was more dramatic in the ‘Bearsden and Milngavie Herald’. ‘Unfortunately in the stadium there was a complete absence of progress reports on the marathon. With an exhausted Colin Youngson being passed on the final circuit by David Wyper (reminiscent of Tom Richards similarly overtaking the late Etienne Gailly at Wembley in 1948), there must have been an exciting chase over the later stages.’

When interviewed by Brian Meek in the Scottish Sunday Express, “the most popular winner’ of the SAAA Championships, Alastair Wood ‘fresh and relaxed after the race’ said, ‘I took the lead after 15 miles and was on my own from then on. These youngsters are getting slow nowadays. This is the tenth anniversary of my first marathon win. I intend to go on running as long as I enjoy it.’”

In a lengthy article in the following Monday’s ‘Scotsman’, Alastair was reported to have ‘given a ‘V’ sign to SAAA officials before he crossed the line five minutes ahead of his younger rivals, and then danced a little jig. He said that he was just running for the fun of it. “The miles are a wee bit longer now but apart from a blister on my foot and a thirst for a gallon of beer I feel great. And don’t call me a veteran until next year.”

He explained the jig by jesting, “I hoped the 1500 metres would be on when I entered the stadium and I could have joined in that.” The article continued, “Wood has an old-fashioned approach to the sport. ‘Not for me excessive training, weight routines, heart measurements and getting all keyed up. That seems to land many of them in hospital. To me, running is something to be enjoyed and savoured, pitting my strength against nature. That’s the great satisfaction I get.

I felt sorry for Jim Alder in a recent marathon. He does 200 miles a week in training then in this important race he had to drop out at 15 miles. That was sad. I just said to him, ‘Well, Jim, you’ll just have to step up your training!’”

Wood explained the ‘V’ sign. “As I passed the finishing line the first time some of the officials put one finger up to indicate that there was a full lap to go. I put two fingers up to ask if it was not two.” But for a man who knows every inch of tarmac between Meadowbank and Longniddry, there were some who thought that in his impish way Alastair Wood was in fact having a little joke against officialdom.” That October, Alastair went on to produce a marvellous performance in winning the famous London to Brighton 52 mile race – in 5.11.00, a record by ten minutes, and still one of the three fastest ever in an event that ended in 2005. After this race he was heard to comment that he felt that his legs had been sewn on backwards!



(Alastair Wood after his superb 1972 London to Brighton victory.)

Undoubtedly the performances of the year by a Scottish marathon runner were produced by Donald Macgregor of Edinburgh Southern Harriers – who shared the Scots Male Athlete of the Year award with sprinter David Jenkins.

In the Maxol Marathon in June, he finished third in a personal best of 2.15.06 (to head the Scottish ranking lists) and thus qualified for the British Olympic Team. In Munich he surpassed even this performance. Timing his effort brilliantly he came through to 7<sup>th</sup> place, the highest achieved by a Scotsman in a final in the Munich Olympics. Furthermore he was less than four seconds behind the illustrious Ron Hill,

who seemed severely shaken when Donald appeared at his shoulder! The winner of a memorable Olympic marathon was Munich-born Frank Shorter (USA) in 2.12.19; followed by Karel Lismont (Belgium) 2.14.31; Mamo Wolde (Ethiopia) 2.15.08; Ken Moore (USA) 2.15.39; Kenji Kimihara (Japan) 2.16.27; Ron Hill 2.16.30.6; Don Macgregor 2.16.34.4; and Jack Foster (New Zealand) 2.16.56.

In 1973 events were inevitably less exciting, but the Scottish Marathon Championship served as a trial for the Christchurch Commonwealth Games team.

Donald Macgregor remained the top man. He had been working in Dunoon and training with runners like young Graham Clark who later ran for Scotland at Cross-Country. They used to run up Glen Masson and round by Sandbank and Hafton Estate or over the hills to Achnafour or Glenkin. Donald's other training partners on the long runs over a wide variety of courses included Tim Johnston, John Bryant, Fergus Murray, Stuart Easton and Ron Morrison (the future president of the SAF). After more than three months of good mileage (90+) and a successful series of races over distances from 5k to 16 miles, Donald 'did the diet between Sunday lunchtime (I lost 4.5 lbs on the morning 14) and Tuesday p.m. (14/3; 7/3; 7/3) and then next to nothing on the carbo-loading phase (3/3; 4; 2).'

Donald remembered the Scottish Marathon Championship race itself as tough but he did not have much difficulty in winning in 2.17.50 by 34 seconds from Jim Wight (Edinburgh AC) with Bob (or Rab) Heron (Aberdeen AAC) third in 2.21.15. Tony Moore, an Anglo from Hillingdon AC was fourth and Colin Youngson (VPAAC) fifth in 2.24.01. Martin Craven (ESH) was sixth, Willie Day (Falkirk VH) seventh and Bill Stoddart (Greenock WH) eighth. Alex Wight, Fergus Murray and Alastair Wood retired; Jim Alder was said to be suffering from anaemia and Lachie Stewart from food poisoning. The splits were 25.23, 51.50, 77.20, 1.44 and 2.11.

In fact this was a typical 'trial' race for the Commonwealth Games, in that competitors tended to hang on until all hope of selection was gone, and then consider dropping out. It was a very hot day, with a fast pace aided by a following wind on the outward journey. The headwind on return added to the strain for those who could not keep up with the leading group. Several drastic slow-downs occurred, with reasons (or 'excuses') such as blisters, cramp, sunburn, sickness, severe stitch caused by a wet vest and the headwind, and simple exhaustion. Just a normal marathon, in fact.

One newspaper report stated that the Meadowbank spectators 'had to rely on five-mile reports about the leading group'. However 'the entrance of Donald Macgregor into the stadium just before four o'clock brought back all the experiences, felt at second hand admittedly, that makes this race the finest of them all.

Macgregor, it seems, dropped Jim Wight between Portobello and the stadium, and in doing so won for himself not only a national title but surely the right to represent Scotland in New Zealand.'

Durable Dunky Wright wrote that at twenty miles, Donald was just in front of the Wight brothers and Bob Heron, but that after Portobello he "strode to a 500 metre win" (in 34 seconds ?) "and a sure place in Scotland's Commonwealth team. 'Plucky Jim Wight should come with me,' was his charitable remark at the finish." And indeed, both took part in the Games.

Rab Heron, originally from Dundee, had been paired with Alastair Wood during Aberdeen AAC's successful attempt in April to break the ten-man John O'Groats to Land's End Relay record. Having run a rapid 2.17.07 in May, he had followed his usual preparation for the SAAA trial. After six months averaging eighty miles a week, he had suffered the pre-marathon 'diet'. He wrote 'To this day I am not sure that form of carbohydrate loading was all it was cracked up to be – the positive points perhaps being

eclipsed by its sheer unpleasantness'. After Macgregor and Wight moved away, he was alone for the last six miles, his nylon Reebok marathons bruising a foot and producing a big blood blister on a little toe. Liberal smearings of nappy rash cream were effective in preventing painful friction in other sensitive areas – such as under his wide-mesh, heavy-duty cotton string vest from Millets!

A glance at the SAAA instructions sheet for the 1973 race revealed the requirement for each competitor to send with his entry form a 'medical certificate from a qualified doctor certifying his fitness to take part in a race of this kind'. Furthermore each runner 'shall be required to take a physical examination before the race by Dr Robertson'. He could decide to withdraw 'unfit' competitors before or indeed during the race.

Water would be provided at 7 miles and every three miles thereafter; with sponges available halfway between Water Points. Otherwise 'no assistance whatsoever from any person' would be permitted.

A map of the marathon route includes precise measurements of ascent and descent all the way from Meadowbank through Portobello, Musselburgh, the Levenhall and Wallyford roundabouts, Tranent, round the turning point 'beyond the Chance Inn Bridge' by Aberlady, and all the way back, finishing with that gruelling drag up to the stadium and the final lap and a quarter of the track.

Apart from the championship race itself, there were a few other noteworthy performances in 1973. Rab Heron led the rankings with a winning 2.17.07 in the North Berwick marathon on 12th May. Jim Alder ran 2.20.41 for third in the prestigious Enschede race in Holland. Martin Craven's time in Harlow was 2.22.03. Colin Youngson won two races in Sweden – the Stockholm championship and the Swedish Winter Marathon; and Alastair Wood was victorious once again in the Inverness to Forres event. Sandy Keith was third in the Poly (2.22.53) and Charlie Macaulay 5<sup>th</sup> in the Australian championship (2.23.00). The Scottish Association of Track Statisticians writer comments "When one considers that Wood, Steve Taylor, Ritchie, Keith, Youngson, Heron, Macaulay and Graham Milne are members of Aberdeen AAC, truly Aberdeen can be called the nursery of Scottish marathon running. Of the top twenty fastest times this year, thirteen were recorded by Aberdeen runners." And all those named were well aware that this was due to the inspiring and exasperating effect of Alastair Wood and Steve Taylor, the leaders in one of the toughest Sunday runs in the world! No wonder that Aberdeen AAC twice broke the record for the John O'Groats to Land's End Relay.

In Christchurch in early 1974, a fast-finishing Donald Macgregor produced another fine race – 6<sup>th</sup> in the Commonwealth Games. This was to be his best ever time – 2.14.15.

Donald wrote that, after a respite period and a second build up, the SAAA Marathon on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1974 was 'probably the easiest – if you can use that word about a marathon – of my victories'. Donald's best racing was off 4000+ miles per year, but he was below his average weekly mileage before this event. "I went off with Rab Heron – I had done the diet again – and we swapped the lead several times till 23.5 miles where he 'gad a weakness' and I kept going to finish in 2.18.08, he in 2.19.15. I remember coming into the stadium and feeling not too bad." Heron's Aberdeen AAC clubmates Colin Youngson (third in 2.21.36) and Sandy Keith (fourth) were next to complete the course.

Rab Heron's second son was born in the early hours of the day before this race. Rab remembers that the headwind on the outward journey encouraged 'a fair-sized group of ruthless runners to shelter behind a protesting Sandy Keith. His pleas for

clemency were met with mocking laughter and a comment that it served him right for being so big. After the turn, Macgregor and Rab eased away. 'We ran together, trying bursts every now and again, until 23 or so where the wily Don finally got away to win. Afterwards in the pub opposite Meadowbank, I saw Scotland being eliminated from the World Cup'. In his build-up to the championship, Rab had been averaging 90 miles per week, including fartlek and repetition running three or four times a week. Later in the seventies he turned to ultra-distances, finishing second four times in the Two Bridges 36 and being up with the best several times in the gruelling London to Brighton – including a second place behind Donald Ritchie in 1977. Nowadays he has retired to West Yorkshire and enjoys caving!

In 1974 Don Ritchie attempted his last Scottish Championship marathon until 1988! After going off with the leaders, he became very tired and at fifteen miles abandoned the race, deciding he was a victim of the carbo-loading diet gone wrong. His stamina was not in question – in October he finished third in the London to Brighton race (5.24.54) behind John Newsome (5.16.07) who just out-sprinted Cavin Woodward (5.16.13).

A good race for Scottish marathoners was the Harlow event on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1974. Mel Edwards had won in 1967; and Alastair Wood in 1969 and 1970. But this was Jim Wight's year. The Edinburgh AC runner romped away to an easy victory in a rapid 2.16.28, from Bob Lunnon (Gosforth) 2.17.36 and Don Macgregor (ESH) 2.17.46. Jim Dingwall (EAC) made a breakthrough to record 2.19.01 in fourth place; Colin Youngson (now working in Edinburgh and representing ESH) was eighth in 2.21.06; and Alex Wight (EAC) tenth in 2.21.53. Team winners were EAC, with ESH second (Sandy Cameron third counter in 2.38.18). An English team was allowed to win the Essex Championships however.

An especially fine performance in 1974 was Alastair Wood's clear victory for Scotland in the World Veterans' Marathon over a course near Paris. According to the winner, it was a very awkward route over cross-country paths, and he did well to record 2.28.40. When a vehicle carrying the film crew got too close to the irritable leader, he remembered waving vigorously and yelling, 'Allez! Allez!' to make them retreat to a reasonable distance!

The winter and spring of 1974/1975 was important not only for traditional road and cross-country team events, but also as a time to log heavy mileage in preparation for a summer marathon. The Edinburgh training scene was very effective at this time. Ten years earlier in the mid-sixties, Edinburgh University runners had set the pattern, and athletes like Donald Macgregor and Jim Wight had built their success on training starting back then. Colin Youngson and Sandy Keith were two newcomers to the city, the former joining Edinburgh Southern Harriers and the latter Edinburgh Athletic Club. They quickly discovered three key sessions which were open to runners from any club.

Monday meant the Meadows: four laps including no less than sixteen repetitions – short or long, on the flat, uphill or downhill on tarmac paths. Wednesday was a nine mile pavement fartlek through Colinton with a series of testing longer efforts. Saturday was race day in the 70s but no matter what state you were in, the Sunday run was compulsory – a basic sixteen miles from the Meadows through Colinton Dell and out the old railway line to Balerno. The route might be extended via the reservoirs and Bonaly tower. Anything between 16 and 25 miles might be covered (the latter with a sadistic little final lap of the Meadows, pretending not to be exhausted, until you parted from your companions/rivals with a cheery wave, turned the corner, and struggled wearily home.) If you added some recovery running or a few hill reps on the intervening



days, you had about eighty miles of excellent training in the hilly city – worth a hundred in the flat south?

Colin Youngson had discovered an important fact two weeks after the 1974 Scottish Marathon Championship – Sandy Keith was stronger. Although Colin had been four minutes clear in the SAAA event, when both turned up for the Inverness to Forres race - ‘pot-hunting’ – the tables were quickly turned. After ten miles of a contest, Sandy’s superior stamina and powers of recovery became apparent, and he rolled away to win in 2.26 (only a minute slower than fourteen days earlier), whereas Colin managed only 2.33 (twelve minutes slower). Therefore throughout the following Autumn, Winter, Spring and early Summer, Colin was very careful to train with Sandy only when he felt fresh and competitive. Training every day with his friend and rival would lead to physical collapse for the Southern runner! Sandy, originally from Caithness, was an ‘iron man’ who had taken up marathon running while in the RAF. Martin Craven (who was to run 2.18.38 at Stoke in 1975) was an important training companion, and many others took part in the key sessions, such as Nigel Bailey, Fergus Murray and that rising superstar, Allister Hutton. The Scottish National Junior Cross-country champion, however, did not quite have the stamina yet to keep up all the way on the 25 milers with his more mature ‘friends’ Colin (27) and Sandy (29), who enjoyed their temporary slight superiority on Sundays – they certainly had no chance racing Allister over shorter distances! Hutton claimed he had no desire to try the marathon, and remained true to this for many years, concentrating on the track in the summer, and eventually breaking 28 minutes for 10000 metres, before winning a thrilling London Marathon in 1990 (five years after running the fastest marathon ever by a Scot – 2 hours 9 minutes 16 seconds).

However, back to 1975. Youngson kept up his 80 miles per week while Keith ran over the ‘ton’. Early season races suggested that the Scottish Marathon was to be a real head-to-head. Colin ran 29.33 in the East District 10000 metres – second to Jim Dingwall; was second again (49 minutes) to Doug Gunstone in the SAAA track ten mile championship; and won the Dunky Wright trophy, presented by the man himself, for the Drymen to Scotstoun 15. Sandy was second in the Airdrie Highland Games 13 and won the tough Fort William 10.

A fortnight before the event, Colin knew he was fit after his Sunday run. Wearing lightweight nylon Tiger racing shoes, he ran eleven miles by himself and then linked up with the group for the Balerno 16 on the old railway track. Over the last three miles he simply eased away to finish, still fresh after 27 miles, at the Bruntisfield Links. Some cautious training, the pre-marathon ‘diet’ and he lined up with Sandy Keith and thirty others on the Meadowbank track on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1975.

It was a warm sunny day, and Sandy Keith took the initiative from the start, racing away down the hill to Portobello into a slight headwind. Only Colin tucked in behind and tried to relax. It seemed a hard way to start 26 miles! Sandy’s ambition was to win a marathon from start to finish, from the front – and how he tried! Five miles in 25.30; ten in 51.30; the turn in 67.30. As the pair, on their return journey, passed Alastair Wood and Donald Macgregor who were approaching the turning point, Wood muttered that the young fools would destroy each other. Macgregor warned that they were about two minutes ahead already!

Since there was now a pleasant following breeze, and to show that he was feeling good in spite of Sandy’s efforts, Colin moved alongside and they ran together for the next five miles. Then, at nineteen, as the route swung into a lay-by to a drink station, an official was clumsy in handing up Sandy’s cup of water. Sandy swore, quite uncharacteristically, hesitated for the drink, and Colin, seeing that his rival was feeling the strain, simply surged away for a full mile, down the Wallyford hill: 20 miles in

1.43.45. A nervy glance back revealed a decent gap, fifteen seconds, and it was head down again and flat out for Musselburgh and Portobello. The pace was still fast, but tiredness and worry set in. To win the Scottish Marathon was Colin's main ambition in the sport, and now it was a case of hanging on grimly. Up the long hill to Jock's Lodge and then, at the twenty-five mile mark, Youngson's right leg suffered cramp. Would Keith catch up, so near to the finish? Keeping the limb as straight as possible, Youngson bashed onwards, into the stadium and round the track. No sign of Sandy until the final bend was reached and it was safe to negotiate the straight and break the tape.

What a relief for Colin Youngson, who felt sure that he must have broken the 2.20 barrier at last, but was very surprised to find that Jim Alder's 'big bowl of All-bran' championship record had been broken by twenty-one seconds. Finishing times were: Colin Youngson 2.16.50; Sandy Keith 2.17.58; Alastair Wood 2.21.14; Davie Wyper (West of Scotland) 2.25.44; Gordon Eadie (Cambuslang) 2.25.48; Alastair Blamire (ESH) 2.26.20; Ian Trapp (EAC) 2.28.26; Mike Logue (Victoria Park) 2.29.56.

The amazing 61 year old Gordon Porteous ran 2.51.35, a world over-60s record which he reduced by eighteen seconds later in the year by winning the world championship event in Toronto. His 'Scottish' time was three minutes fastest than in 1948! Gordon went on to break world records in the following age-groups: over-65 (2.57.00); over-70 (3.11.45); over-75 (3.23.12); over-80 (3.47.04). His first marathon was in 1945 and he showed no sign of his incredible potential when he managed only 3.00.14, since cherry pie for lunch produced severe stomach cramp at twenty miles, and he actually had to stand still for almost five minutes until the pain (and clubmate Andy Burnside) passed.

After the race, Alastair Wood said, 'Well done, Colin. I think you're at your peak now.' To which Colin replied that he felt there was a little more to come. But in fact Alastair did turn out to be right since this remained Colin's fastest time ever.

The rest of the season produced further success for Colin Youngson: second behind Allister Hutton in the 10000 metres for Scotland against Iceland in Reykjavik; second behind Cavin Woodward in a fast 'Two Bridges' 36 miler; and a close second to Danny McDaid of Eire in the International marathon in Berchem, Antwerp. This was Colin's only race representing Britain, and he and Max Coleby won the team race.

Sandy Keith improved even more. He was an excellent second to the great Ron Hill in the Enschede marathon; and crowned his season with a lifetime best, which headed the Scottish rankings, of 2.16.12, recorded when winning the Harlow marathon in October.

In the next few years, Sandy became a regular British International marathon runner, although he never ran faster than in Harlow. Colin, on the other hand, tried a hundred miles a week, got sciatica, and was never quite as good again. Sandy's toughness, resilience and stamina, as suspected, did turn out to be superior.

The other fast times by Scottish runners in 1975 came in the AAA event at Stoke. Martin Craven's eleventh place in 2.18.38 has already been mentioned. Other times were Rab Heron 2.20.40, Don Macgregor 2.20.50 and Doug Gunstone 2.23.56.

1976 was the year of the Montreal Olympics. All over Britain, marathon runners trained harder than ever for the trial at Rotherham on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Some became super-fit and others over-trained. On a hot day over a hilly course, a pack of at least forty were still together at five miles. The pace was remorseless and the competition intense. Many cracked before the three medallists – and British Olympic representatives – reached the finish. Barry Watson (2.15.08), Jeff Norman and Keith Angus were ones who succeeded that day. Even Ron Hill and that other great Ian Thompson, European and Commonwealth champions, failed to make the team. Sandy Keith impressed in sixth



place (2.19.02), with Don Macgregor 12<sup>th</sup>, Doug Gunstone (EAC) 14<sup>th</sup>, Alastair MacFarlane (Springburn H) 27<sup>th</sup>, Jim Dingwall (Falkirk Victoria H) 30<sup>th</sup>, Colin Youngson 40<sup>th</sup> and Willie Day 42<sup>nd</sup> (but still in 2.28.01). A particularly gruelling event.

The 1976 SAAA Marathon, over the usual course from Meadowbank, and in conjunction with the Track and Field Championships, resulted in a win for the evergreen Donald Macgregor (Fife A.C.) in 2.24.12; from Doug Gunstone (EAC) 2.25.23; and Alastair MacFarlane (Springburn H) 2.30.14.

Alastair, who later edited an excellent Scottish Marathon Club Magazine, wrote that he only ran the Scottish Marathon four times but won a medal on every occasion! He remembered that the summer of 1976 was one of the hottest on record, and that this race began at 1.40 p.m., the warmest time of the day. He shared the pace with Donald, reaching five miles in 25.48 – too fast for himself in the conditions. Consequently Alastair ‘came off the back’ and struggled for a few miles while Donald pushed ahead. Alastair recalled the tremendous heat as they passed Musselburgh racecourse and headed into East Lothian. He recalls scanning the road ahead and looking forward to a bit of shade from a row of trees – it was that bad.

Doug Gunstone, a Scottish International on track and cross-country as well as road, and Alastair MacFarlane’s training partner, passed him at eight and a half miles and went away, but Alastair rallied and started to feel better all the way to twenty miles. After that, he describes the final section as ‘a survival job’. Doug had peaked for the AAA seven weeks earlier, recording a good time of 2.21.45 on a very hot day, but had maintained his seventy miles per week since then.

Meanwhile, Donald won fairly easily since Doug, who had perhaps started too cautiously, did not get close enough to apply any real pressure, although he finished strongly. Alastair’s time was to remain his personal worst for the distance. Yet he was delighted to win a Scottish medal in the severe weather conditions. In fact he recovered very quickly, perhaps because he had used the Saltin diet of carbohydrate depletion pioneered by Ron Hill.

The 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1976 was a sad day since Duncan McLeod Wright died at the age of 79. Many tributes were published. These mentioned his three appearances in the Olympic marathon, the first in the ‘Chariots of Fire’ Games in Paris 1924; his fourth place in Los Angeles in 1932, only 65 seconds behind the winner, Zabala; his Commonwealth gold in Hamilton, Ontario in 1930, and his bronze in London, 1934; his presidency of the SAAA in 1958; his writing and broadcasting; his encouragement of generations of young athletes. Yet Harry Andrew wrote for Dunky’s many friends, when he emphasised “to be a champion in the marathon, you have to have a heart of enormous size and quality, abiding optimism, infinite patience and a considerable sense of humour. All these qualities Dunky had in abundance. Plus an enormous unflagging zest for life right up to the end.

He was a warm friendly little man so interested in everybody and everything. A man just as happy reporting some minor affair as some great international sporting occasion. A man whose delight knew no bounds when he was able to help or advise one of Scotland’s young athletes. He had an abiding pride in what he had done as a runner and as an administrator. Yet it was a pride without a vestige of conceit.”

1977 was to see the fastest-ever Scottish Marathon championship. Once again, it was over the usual Meadowbank course on a warm day. The main man was that schoolboy 100 metre sprinter turned middle-distance and road runner Jim Dingwall: ‘the Guv’nor’ as he was known at Edinburgh University; or ‘the Head Waiter’ as he was cursed by those who had suffered his famed ‘kick’ to the finishing tape. Jim wrote ‘I had been blown away so many times in the SAAA 5000 metres by Dave Black of

England, that I thought I'd better try the marathon. I had always been fascinated by these hardy souls charging off to Longniddry, while the posers ponced around the Meadowbank track.'

Jim ran over four thousand miles in 1977, including many weeks of over eighty miles and no less than 96 in the week of the Scottish Marathon Championship! Team spirit in Falkirk Victoria Harriers was excellent at the time, and he trained with other club members on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays if there wasn't a race. 'Guys like John Pentecost, John McGarva, Joe Gibson, Willie Sharp and Willie Day made sure there were plenty of hard sessions.' Recovery runs were from his home in Falkirk to his work in Grangemouth; and back. So he frequently ran three times a day. Rumour has it that, as in the case of Dave Bedford, Jim's first session of the day was not intended to help with his fitness, but merely to offset the beer he occasionally sipped of an evening!

Despite a cold, Jim finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the AAA Marathon at Rugby on May 7<sup>th</sup>, having run to twenty miles with his training companion Willie Day. Seven weeks of steady training was excellent preparation for the 'Scottish', and a personal best 10,000 metres (28.55) in the UK Championships at Cwmbran, a fortnight before the SAAA Marathon, showed his good form. Jim decided that the 'diet' simply upset his digestive system, so did not attempt it on this occasion. His racing shoes were 'Tiger Cubs – what else?'

Jim Dingwall, confidently but uncharacteristically, led from the start, passing 5 miles in 25 minutes exactly. By ten miles (51.12) he had opened a 2 second gap on Sandy Keith, who had 20 seconds on Colin Youngson, Willie Day, Martin Craven and Dave Clark, with Phil Dolan and Alastair Blamire another 30 seconds down. By half-way Willie Day had made a big effort and had caught Dingwall and Keith. The three leaders recorded 67.04, 50 seconds clear of Youngson and Clark.

Dingwall surged strongly after 15 miles and passed 20 miles in 1.43.08, more than a minute clear of Keith and Day. Jim wrote 'My somewhat sentimental memory of the latter part of the race was passing my mother at the side of the road in Prestonpans, around 17 miles. We runners are very used to 'encouragement' ranging from the enthusiastic to the frankly abusive. But Mum said. 'Bless you, son' as I trundled past and for a few seconds my legs turned to jelly. However I kept pulling away.'

At Portobello, Falkirk Victoria spectator Tom Strange saw Jim and 'panicked. Orangey-red stuff was dribbling from my mouth and he thought I had burst a blood vessel, but it was only the 'Dynamo' electrolyte drink I was downing! A cheery word from Don Macgregor as I passed the Piershill Tavern (25 miles) encouraged me. I would soon be back there for a pint. Into the stadium to rousing applause. Whoopee. The added thrill was to be followed home by Willie Day for a Falkirk 1-2.'

Jim had extended his lead all the way to the tape. He broke the Championship Record by 45 seconds with 2.16.05, which has never been beaten by a Scot. Jim reported that the previous record holder, 'heartily congratulated' him, too tired to throw a punch.

Willie Day won silver in 2.17.56; Sandy Keith bronze in 2.18.52. Colin Youngson ran 2.19.35; Dave Clark (of Verlea A.C. and Aberdeen) 2.21.18; Phil Dolan (Clydesdale) 2.21.59; Ian Trapp 2.25.46; R. Stevenson (Maryhill) 2.27.31; Martin Craven 2.28.10; and Davie Wyper 2.30.09.

Jim Dingwall concluded his account with 'Beers at the Piershill. Happy days. I decided I would do the Scottish Marathon again once my record was broken. I've not

been troubled!' A week later, despite tired legs, he won gold in the SAAA 10000 metres!

After a promising start as a Scottish Junior cross-country International, and years of hard training, this was Willie Day's peak. By now an experienced marathon runner, he was Jim Dingwall's main training partner, and had built up for this race very seriously, running up to 110 miles per week. 20 miles on Sunday was followed by days of 10, 15, 20, 15, 10 and 15. Sometime he and Jim ran a ten mile Thursday night fartlek in 53 minutes! Two weeks before the Scottish marathon he broke the record for the Bearsden 10, so he was confident of doing well in the championship.

Willie Day remembered that, after Jim made a break at 16 miles, he stayed back with Sandy Keith, hoping that Jim had gone too soon. At 18, with Jim well ahead, Willie moved away in second place. 'Cutting down the deficit became impossible – all I could see was this figure disappearing round corners. When at last I entered the stadium there was tremendous applause – I had a lap to go but glanced behind to see Jim coming up the home straight behind me. Yet I finished the race still fresh for my silver medal and a personal best.'

Willie related tales of his friend J.D. Jim thought that Sunday 25s might be slowing down the pair of them, so suggested fast 20s instead. The only problem was that he wanted to start them at 8 a.m.! This was because Jim sang in the church choir and had to be back, showered and dressed and ready for 11 a.m. Willie admitted 'It was hard at first, but we got used to it, despite the fact that the runs usually took between one hour fifty minutes and one hour fifty-five.'

One time, Willie passed Jim running home from work. 'He was on a fartlek. We stopped to say something, and when we had done so, I noticed Jim walking back the way he had come. He had obviously been just about to start a burst. That's how he was – so meticulous at times'.

'Another time he had been out on a ten mile run with Davie Lothian. At a junction they had to run between two cars. Davie looked back to see Jim lying on the road. Evidently, since he wasn't wearing his spectacles, he hadn't seen the tow rope between the cars! Could have been nasty but we saw the funny side of it later.'

What Willie refrained from mentioning was Jim's prowess in sinking seventeen pints between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. on the infamous 'Water of Leith pub crawl' between Balerno and Leith Docks – or indeed that Jim was world record holder for high peeing in Colinton Dell. What an athlete – and a gentleman!

The 1978 Scottish Marathon Championship was one which lived on in the memories of participants in widely varying ways. The quality of experience depended on your point of view. It was, as usual, at the end of June, in conjunction with the SAAA Track and Field at Meadowbank.

Donald Macgregor wrote 'My training diary has been found but the pages are blank. That tells its own story. Was that the year Ian somebody from England (Ranelagh) ran away from me?'

Colin Youngson had a foolish but traumatic tale. Having run 2.23 in the AAA Marathon – reasonable but not good enough, he sought a way to run faster without actually having to train harder. The carbo-loading diet worked quite well; and a large cup of strong real coffee (hot or cold) half an hour before gave a jet-propelled start, but what else? Dr Ron Maughan from Aberdeen, a prominent research physiologist, confidently stated that half a pint of cooking oil (or cream) would provide fatty acids to burn as fuel in the latter part of the race. There should be no need to slow down at all!

The credulous (or insane) Youngson therefore drank (with difficulty) half a pint of cream half an hour before the race – and then, surprise, surprise, felt a little nauseous.

He jogged a bit, went to the loo, felt unwell, jogged, went back to the loo, still felt unwell, and toed the line to start. Hopefully, his stomach would settle soon. This sick individual hung on to the leading group for six miles, and then had to let them go. The next twenty miles involved retching, pit stops, walking and struggling onwards, white-faced. Eventually he finished in eleventh place – 2.46.40, a lifetime worst. About five days later, he stopped feeling sick. When Colin mentioned to his ‘scientific friend’ that the plan hadn’t worked too well, Ron remarked coolly that a) the cream should have been ingested about three hours before the race and b) it was only a theory, after all. Moral of this cautionary tale? There are no real short-cuts to marathon success!

Other legendary errors by Scottish marathoners include the athlete who swore by the carbo-loading diet – and did it every single week, as part of his training. And the runner who was very disappointed by his slowest ever race performance. It was pointed out, after discussion, that he had undergone the ‘diet’ the wrong way round – carbo-loading first and only protein before the race! No wonder he felt a trifle weak! The names are known, but their identities will not be printed.

However, back in the world of serious marathoning, 1978. Ian Macintosh of Ranelagh Harriers had never considered himself an Anglo Scot because both his parents were Scots and he had been born in Glasgow, living in Govan until he moved to London in 1952. Ian had run Scottish Junior Cross Country races for Springburn Harriers.

In April 1978 Ian had some dental work done and, within a week he was ‘flying’. His usual plan involved very little training (but a few cross country races) in January and February. He was only 5 feet 5 inches in height and weighed ‘eight stone and a couple of pounds dripping wet’. In March he went straight into several weeks of eighty to 120 mile weeks, all run at under six minute miling! He believes he got away with this because of his weight and natural style and cadence. He used to race the Finchley 20 and maybe the Inter-Counties 20 a few weeks later.

In the Ranelagh 10, over a hilly course, Ian surprised Bob Richardson, an English Cross Country International, beating him by a minute in 49.30. In the bar afterwards, Chris Brasher (of Bannister mile, Olympic Steeplechase and London Marathon fame) suggested to Ian that, since it was Commonwealth Games year, he ought to try for the Scottish Marathon team. Jim Dingwall had already been selected. Ian knew Bob Dalgleish through his Springburn connection, so phoned him up. Bob got him into the SAAA race as a late entry, telling him that he had to win the race and run 2.18 or faster to be considered.

He came up to Glasgow on the Friday, complete with a medical certificate that he was fit to run – the first time he had been asked to provide such a document. The conversation with his doctor went something like the following:

Doc ‘How are you?’

Ian ‘Very well, thank you.’

Doc ‘Then why are you wasting my time?’

Unfortunately it was to be the hottest June day in 25 years, with the temperature touching 90 degrees – so fast times seemed very unlikely, despite the fact that Ian ran well in the heat. His kit at the time was a light pair of New Balance racers, a white thin mesh vest with the Springburn diamond badge, Ron Hill Freedom shorts and white socks with red and white stripes with the tops turned down to the ankles.

Ian remembered the route as probably similar to the 1970 Commonwealth route, which he had watched. At that time he and his friends camped at Musselburgh and ran up the hill to Meadowbank each day.

The Scottish Marathon in 1978 was ‘run at a fairly fast rate despite the heat. By the return journey, Don Macgregor had gained a couple of hundred yards on me and

there was a large gap behind. It was a fairly lonely run back to Edinburgh but as we came through a built up area, there was Alan Storey (later to be London Marathon organiser) with a pint of beer in his hand. Alan told me that Don looked to be struggling and that I could catch him. They all say that, don't they?

Yet that was exactly what happened. I caught Don on the hill before the stadium and won by a hundred metres or so. As I passed him he did question my parentage. I can remember that as I finished Leslie Watson was winning the Women's 1500.'

The result was: first Ian Macintosh 2.23.07; second Don Macgregor 2.23.33; third Eric Fisher (EAC) 2.28.15.

Ian added that they had slowed considerably because of the heat. His shoulders were quite sunburnt. He didn't realise that the finish was shown live on Scottish TV. His sister in law in Arbroath saw this and phoned Ian's wife, so that when he got back to London he was greeted with 'So you won, then?'

As predicted, the hot weather made Commonwealth Games selection impossible. And in fact, although Ian was promised a representative vest for Scotland in another fixture, the phone-call never came. From his Finchley 20 performances of 1.40 – 1.44, he felt he had the potential to run a marathon in 2.15 – but it was never to be. In retrospect Ian felt that SAAA officials were parochial in their choice of athletes for Scottish teams. He cited the more recent case of that fine marathon runner Karen McLeod, born in Skye, who spent a fortune travelling from Bath to represent ESH, before at last her performances were recognised.

Later on, Ian Macintosh helped with the City of Bath Half Marathon; and at the London Marathon Championship desk. In 1990 he was team manager (for England) at the Aberdeen Home Countries International (and SAAA) Marathon. The winner was Chris Tall of England. As he was presented with the Scottish Marathon Quaich, he shouted to Ian that the name of Macintosh was engraved for 1978. Ian didn't even know there was a trophy – he'd only been given a medal. So the morning after the 1990 race, officials gravely presented Ian with the trophy – better late than never!

Further information on the 1978 race was provided by Eric Fisher who won bronze. He remembered that Willie Day, sensing a chance of Commonwealth selection 'went for it', in spite of the heat. On the return journey, an EAC team-mate told Eric that Willie was 'coming back'. However, Eric simply couldn't spot his rival on the long road ahead. Eventually, in Joppa, a distant view was achieved; and Eric succeeded in passing Willie on the big hill up to Jock's Lodge. At the top of the rise, Eric finally dared to look back, and was relieved to find himself safe, 150 yards ahead. Willie wrote that he was impressed by 'Eric's excellent run', but did say that his left knee had become painful because the gristle in his new Gola shoes had snapped at the heel, and was giving less support. At the end, Eric followed tradition, unhygienically cooling his blisters in the Steeplechase water-jump, and sharing race tales with other knackered marathon survivors. Gordon Porteous once more set a World Record, this time for the over-60s. (He continued to do this until he was 75 years old, when he ran 3.19!)

Jim Dingwall, in excellent form, managed 2.13.58 for 5<sup>th</sup> place in the AAA over the Sandbach course. Sandy Keith ran 2.18.15, and was unlucky not to be selected. Only Jim Dingwall represented Scotland on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1978 in the Commonwealth Games Marathon in Edmonton, Canada. Sadly, he suffered during the flight to Canada and his training was seriously affected. Nevertheless, he led until halfway and then hung on bravely to the leading pack to 25km before he had to drop back. Paul Bannon, (formerly of Shettleston Harriers), a Scot who had adopted Canadian nationality, was in the lead at 40 kilometres, but eventually won a bronze medal in 2.16.51 seventy

seconds behind the winner, Shahanga of Tanzania, and another Canadian, Jerome Drayton.

Sub-2.20 Scots in 1978 were: Jim Dingwall 2.13.58; Dave Clark 2.17.55; Sandy Keith 2.18.15; Don Macgregor 2.19.19; Alasdair Kean (Derby) 2.19.42; and Doug Gunstone 2.19.51.

1979 was to see an increase in the number of Scottish marathon races, with the inaugural Aberdeen and Glasgow races in the autumn. However the Scottish Championship Marathon from Meadowbank on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May turned out to be a fine one. After a year of injury free training, a sensible blend of mileage and short or long repetitions, Alastair Macfarlane was in very good condition, having won the Clydebank to Helensburgh 16 by over a minute, and shortly afterwards set his fastest 5000 metres.



(1979: Eric Fisher, Alan McGee, Macfarlane and Macgregor leading early on.)

By five miles (26.20), the leading group included: Alastair Macfarlane (Springburn), Don Macgregor, Colin Youngson, Ian Graves (Fife AC), Graham Milne (Aberdeen AAC), Dave Lang (Fife) and good English fell-runner Alan McGee (Bolton United Harriers). Gerry Gaffney (Greenock Wellpark H), making his debut, was there too. The pace was steady, due to a slight headwind. Halfway (70.23) was reached by a pack of six: Macfarlane, Lang, Macgregor, Youngson, McGee and Gaffney.

According to Colin Youngson's diary 'with the wind behind us, suddenly the pace of the return journey became suicidal – until legs dropped off'. Gaffney and Lang were left behind by 15 miles (80.30) and Alan McGee shortly afterwards.



(1979: down to four – Macgregor, Youngson, Macfarlane, McGee behind.)

Donald Macgregor slipped off the group at 18 miles, and in the words of Alastair Macfarlane ‘at a watering point opposite Musselburgh Race Course – around 20 (1.46.07) and a half miles, Colin went for a drink while I kept on racing. So I was on my own, feeling good and running well, and knew that, although there were still over five miles to run, I would not be caught; a tremendous feeling to have in the later stages of a marathon when you are normally suffering a bit.’ Youngson simply remembered that, on the day, Alastair’s relentless leg speed was impossible to match – he was really in great form. Macgregor, having paced himself more sensibly, passed Youngson, but all three finished strongly to beat 2.20.

The result was: first Alastair Macfarlane (Springburn H), relaxed and fresh in 2.18.03 (a PB by six minutes); second Donald Macgregor (Fife), two months from being a veteran, 2.19.15; third Colin Youngson (ESH) 2.19.48. Then came Alan McGee 2.21.26; Ian Graves 2.23.44; Gerry Gaffney 2.24.09; Graham Milne 2.26.25; Martin Craven 2.29.29; and Joe Small (Clyde Valley) 2.30.01. Gordon Porteous, now 65, produced another remarkable run – 3.03.24.

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the first Aberdeen Marathon was held. This turned into a battle between Jim Brown (Clyde Valley H) and Graham Laing (Aberdeen AAC). The former had beaten the latter by over a minute in the Tom Scott 10 miles; but over the longer distance, Laing, only 20 but very talented, and the 1979 SAAA champion over 10,000 metres, managed to defeat his illustrious adversary, an outstanding cross-country international and Scottish 10,000 metres record-holder. Graham won in 2.21.40 over a windswept, undulating course, with Jim 42 seconds down. Colin Youngson was a remote (2.27.44) but lucky third, after John Bigham (RAF Cosford) had lost thirty seconds by being sent off course to finish fourth in 2.28.00. Willie Day, who had run a very fast first fifteen miles, was fifth, Doug Gunstone sixth and Evan Cameron (ESH) seventh.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1979, Olympian Barry Watson (Cambridge H) won the first Glasgow Marathon in the fine time of 2.17.45 after a real battle with Sandy Keith (EAC) (2.18.08). Significantly, Leslie Watson, who had won in both Aberdeen and Glasgow, was 8 minutes faster in Glasgow. Doug Gunstone, 5<sup>th</sup> in Glasgow, was almost 6 minutes faster than in Aberdeen.

Don Macgregor, meanwhile, had broken the record (30.04.2) to win gold in the World Veterans Track 10000 metres. He had been second in the marathon – a feat he was to surpass in 1980.



## THE EIGHTIES

A new decade and the marathon boom was beginning. Unfortunately the significance of the Scottish Marathon Championship declined from then on. Although some good runners often did compete for SAAA medals, many others preferred to try more glamorous city events in Britain or overseas – the prizes were better for a start. For example John Graham of Clyde Valley ran 2.11.47 for third place in the 1980 New York Marathon; and a marvellous 2.09.28 in Rotterdam 1981. The 1980 SAAA race was to be the last one similar to the 1970 Commonwealth route – a fact lamented by those who had enjoyed a fast course and the pleasure of finishing, like track athletes, in a stadium with many spectators.

In June 1980, weather conditions had considerable influence, since there was a strong following wind on the outward journey. A good group reached 5 miles together: Graham Laing, Colin Youngson, Alastair Macfarlane, Doug Gunstone, Alasdair Kean (Derby) and another Anglo-Scot Fergus Gillies (Banbury). When the fast time of 25.18 was announced, Doug Gunstone, normally a serious quiet runner, was heard to laugh aloud. The reason was that Garscube's Tommy Wiseman, who had done well over shorter road races, was at least thirty seconds in front at this time! Sure enough, a mile later Tommy was seen sitting at the side of the road, fumbling at his brand-new shoes and muttering about blisters. After the race Tommy still claimed he should have won.

On the hill after Wallyford, the group broke up. Colin Youngson surged, and then discovered that Graham Laing was far too fast for him. The young star eased away, leaving Youngson and Kean together. After the turn (Laing 66.46; Kean 67.08), tactics were brutally obvious. It was a case of battle alone into what Alastair Macfarlane recalled as 'the strongest wind I have encountered in a marathon – unbelievably difficult to run into'; share the pace with someone; or callously 'sit' on a victim, waiting for signs of weakness. Graham Laing simply kept on extending his lead. Youngson sheltered from the warm, clammy wind, behind the unfortunate Kean for four miles, then sprinted off before settling down to a steady struggle over the last nine miles. Alastair Macfarlane co-operated with Doug Gunstone until 22 miles and then strode away, overtaking the faltering Gillies and Kean on the final section.

The medallists were: Graham Laing (Aberdeen AAC) 2.23.03; Colin Youngson (ESH) 2.24.56; Alastair Macfarlane (Springburn) 2.27.21. Then came Kean, Gunstone and Gillies. Since the race was sponsored by a Scottish butcher, Laing won £100 worth of meat for his freezer. Not even a chop for the others, however.

One of Graham Laing's teachers at his Aberdeen Secondary School had been Graham Milne, later a 2.21 marathoner. Mr Milne helped young Laing to develop his running at school; and from 1977 onwards was an important training partner. Graham Laing was enormously talented as a runner, and made rapid progress with what looked like considerable ease. Yet his training, partly inspired by Frank Horwill and Mel Edwards, seemed tough enough on paper. Sunday's run was 16 – 20 miles with Fraser Clyne, Peter Wilson, Graham Milne and the rest of Aberdeen AAC's strong squad; Monday was easier; Tuesday, hill repetitions or up to 16 x 400m with 30 seconds recovery; Wednesday, the club run – a ten miler which 'sorted out the men from the boys', followed by a pint in the pub; Thursday might be easier or an 'up the clock' – one minute hard, one easy, two minutes hard etc up to six minutes hard and then down again; Friday was an easy run; and on Saturday, a race or two short fast runs.

Sadly, two months before his victorious Scottish Marathon in 1980, Graham Laing's mother had died. She had wanted him to keep training and do his best, and he certainly kept the promise. After the turn, fighting into the gale, he claimed to have found it hard, although there was no sign of weakness visible to resigned pursuers. Once

Edinburgh came into sight, he felt more confident, and finished 'so happy for myself, Aberdeen AAC and, of course, for my Mum.'

On Sunday August 24<sup>th</sup> 1980, the World Veterans Marathon took place near Bellahouston, Glasgow. After an exciting tussle, Donald Macgregor won gold in 2.19.23 seventy yards in front of John Robinson of New Zealand who, in the same event at Hanover the previous year, after agreeing to run in together, had rather unfairly nipped past the Scot by one second at the finish. Second and third over 45s, in 2.27 and 2.28, were those other former SAAA champions, Bill Stoddart and Alastair Wood.

On September 28<sup>th</sup>, the second Aberdeen Marathon was run, incorporating what became the fashion – a Home Countries international team contest. Graham Laing (Aberdeen AAC and Scotland) was a clear winner over the severely undulating course – although the weather was favourable – recording 2.19.33, in front of 1970 Commonwealth bronze medallist Don Faircloth of England (2.21.46) and Mike Critchley of England (2.23.18). The Scottish team of Graham Laing, Don Macgregor and Evan Cameron were second to the English, but defeated the Welsh and Northern Irish.

The best times for Scottish marathoners in 1980 were: John Graham (2<sup>nd</sup> in Britain) 2.11.47; Jim Dingwall 2.16.07; Andy Robertson (Army) 2.18.14; Alasdair Kean 2.19.01; Jim Brown 2.19.03; Don Macgregor 2.19.23; Des Austin (Victoria Park) 2.19.30; Graham Laing and Dave Clark 2.19.33.

On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1981 the first London Marathon took place. Graham Laing, at last on a fast course, ran an excellent personal best of 2.13.59 in fifth place in a field of over 7000 runners! However he decided not to defend his SAAA title.

Colin Youngson had shown good form in April 1981 by running 2.18.55 in the fast Westland marathon in Maasluis, Holland. He finished fourth, defeating amongst others Evan Cameron, Graham Milne and Donald Macgregor.

The 1981 SAAA Marathon, which took place on June 20<sup>th</sup>, started and finished at Meadowbank, but the course was completely new, and not as fast as the 'Commonwealth' one. The route was London Road, Seafield Road East, Seafield Road, Lower Granton Road; two loops round West Harbour Road, Cramond Esplanade, turn left at the Cramond Hotel, Glebe Road, Lauriston Farm Road, West Granton Road; and then right for Granton, Seafield Road, turn right up Craigentiny Avenue, and right again for the stadium.

Colin Youngson, who had moved north to teach in Kemnay, Aberdeenshire, and had changed clubs from ESH to Aberdeen AAC, was fit and confident. On a warm, sunny day, he started fast and led a group of eight down the hill towards Portobello and then left towards Granton. After a little hesitation, he surged at five miles (25.17) and the group broke up, with Donald Macgregor (Fife), Doug Gunstone and Alastair Macfarlane (both Springburn) chasing hard. Donald Macgregor was by now SAAA event coach for the marathon, but it is not true that he shouted advice to everyone within earshot – e.g. 'Slow down!'

The lead was slender, only six seconds between Youngson (50.42) and Gunstone, who was running with Macgregor at ten miles. By halfway (68.36) it was eleven seconds; and by fifteen (77.06) 16 seconds, with Macfarlane another twelve seconds down, and gaining.

The twenty mile point was reached in 1.44.40 by Colin Youngson, who was really feeling the mental strain of leading by so little for so long. By then the gap was up to 34 seconds – not at all a comfortable lead. So Youngson put his head down and ran flat out for three miles, to stretch away from Macgregor and Macfarlane, who had moved into third place. Colin was about a minute ahead with a couple of miles to go,

but slowed down on purpose while plodding up the steep hill of Craigentenny Avenue, so that he could gain some physical and mental resilience to fight, if Donald's famed strong finish proved a threat. At 25 miles (2.12.58), the time gap was 54 seconds.

Eventually it was a relieved but exultant Colin Youngson who hung on to win in 2.20.42 from Donald Macgregor (2.21.31) and Alastair Macfarlane (2.22.25). These three were followed by Doug Gunstone (2.26.52), Evan Cameron (ESH 2.27.23), Tommy Wiseman (Victoria Park 2.27.57), Dave Lang (Elgin AAC 2.28.28), Donald Markie (Falkirk Victoria 2.29.32) Colin Martin (Dumbarton AAC 2.31.03) and Peter McGregor (Victoria Park 2.33.45).

Donald Macgregor described the new route as 'ghastly ... all very low key'. He felt tired on a warm day. 'Colin never looked like being caught and was determined to win. I can't say it broke my heart to lose; probably I was happy to get back second. After all I was almost 42 by this time, and the renaissance of the Dundee Marathon was still around the corner, where I ran 2.17.23 and 2.18.08 in consecutive Aprils in 1983 and 1984'. Alastair Macfarlane felt the pace fast early on, but continued to work, and was delighted when Doug Gunstone dropped back after twenty miles and enabled Alastair to gain another bronze medal. Pot-hunting Youngson's day was marred slightly because, although the event was in theory sponsored, as in 1980, by British Meat, there was no £100 worth of meat for the freezer this time – not a sausage, in fact. Many years later, and more or less a vegetarian, he was, in retrospect, relieved.

The inimitable Doug Gillon, in the Sunday Standard, described the medallists as 'ageing but speedy war-horses, mounting the rostrum' half an hour after the last track event, 'when Eric 'the Mouse' Stevenson came pattering into the stadium as last finisher, to the applause of the faithful few who had stayed till the end.' It should be noted that Eric's personal best was under the three hour barrier, which was to become the mark of a fast marathoner once the London event was established. Willie Day remembered a previous Meadowbank finish in which some of the faster runners had moved promptly to 'Porter's' – the Piershill Tavern, just down the hill from the stadium. 'Suddenly a shout came up 'Here comes the Mouse!' and there we were, with pints in hand, all standing out in the street, cheering him as he passed by.'

Doug Gillon also made clear the SAAA's masterfully economical attitude to hosting the marathon championship. No wonder the event was soon to be farmed out to races as glamorous as Lochaber and Loch Rannoch, rather than being part of the main track and field programme. Only 45 of the 75 officials marshalling the event ended up with tea tickets. 108 entrants paid £216, but it was considered too expensive to spend £50 to hire a bus for officials (to set up watering points) and drop-outs. Yet it only cost £28.25 for 160 sponges, 300 plastic cups, 12 black bags (for competitors' clothes) and three facecloths. Reliance had to be placed on goodwill and loyalty, with stewards and helpers providing their own transport. Gillon concluded 'Sport on a shoestring, indeed. Truly the marathon is a labour of love.'

However the fact that the SAAA event was no longer a marathon which attracted the very best runners was emphasised by the result of the Sandbach race on the next day. This was a triumph for Andy Robertson of Stirling, an Army runner stationed at Harrogate. He won the Cheshire event and defeated several international runners – finishing in a personal best of 2.14.23. Fourth was Graham Laing who recorded 2.15.29. Andy Robertson said that he hoped the Scottish selectors would take note of this performance, and would consider choosing him to take part in the 1982 Commonwealth Games. Sadly it was not to be, although he did go on to wear the Scottish vest in a track international 10,000m – but Andy's Sandbach run was outstanding nevertheless.

On Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September the Aberdeen Marathon took place during a bitterly-cold gale. Max Coleby of England won in 2.21.29, a second in front of his team-mate Martin Knapp. Don Macgregor of Scotland was third (2.21.52) and cross-country international Fraser Clyne, running his first marathon, fourth in 2.23.36. The Scottish team, completed by Evan Cameron and Graham Milne, was second. 68-year-old James Youngson, Colin's dad, ran a personal best of 3.31.

The Glasgow International Marathon took place on 18<sup>th</sup> October, and after a close race was won by Jim McGlynn of Eire in 2.18.24 from Alan Cole of Wales in 2.18.53. Third was Rod Stone of Stirling and Northern Ireland (2.19.08), fourth Colin Youngson of Scotland (2.19.12), fifth Des Austin (Scotland 2.19.19) and sixth Alastair Macfarlane (Scotland 2.21.01). The Scottish team won on countback. Priscilla Welch won the women's race in 2.55.15, three minutes up on Leslie Watson, legendary for beauty and the ability to run over a hundred marathons without apparent strain. This race had only 144 runners, against Aberdeen's 500, but Glasgow Sports Promotion Council planned 1982 to be a People's Marathon, with 5000 entrants.

The 1981 Scottish Marathon rankings were dominated by John Graham's brilliant 2.09.28 winning time in Rotterdam. Then came Graham Laing (2.13.59); Andy Robertson (2.14.23); Jim Dingwall (2.14.54); Dave Clark (2.18.42); and Colin Youngson (2.18.55). There were fourteen sub-2.20 performances.

Graham Laing remembered the ten-man 1982 'Jogle' relay as his most enjoyable running experience. Aberdeen AAC made a third and final attempt to break the John o'Groats to Land's End record, and succeeded for the second time. They started on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April and finished 77 hours 26 minutes and eighteen seconds – and about 850 miles – later. SAAA marathon champions, past and future, in the team included Alastair Wood, Colin Youngson, Graham Laing, Peter Wilson, George Reynolds and Fraser Clyne. The other warriors were Donald Ritchie, Graham Milne, Mike Murray and John Robertson. They were the basis of the team which won the Edinburgh to Glasgow Relay in 1983. Who says that marathon training doesn't sharpen speed as well as stamina? Mind you, Graham Laing was the only runner who didn't seem to suffer at all during the Jogle – he bounced around happily at high speed, grinning and unintentionally infuriating lesser mortals. Graham wrote 'To have ten runners from one club, so fit and eager to claim a world record, and to achieve our aim, was absolutely brilliant. On the way north before the start, we heard on the radio that the Argentinians had invaded the Falklands – but three days later we were the record-holders, and nothing else seemed to matter!'

The Commonwealth Marathon Trial was the AAA event in Gateshead on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1982. A tough, undulating course on a windy day nevertheless produced an exciting contest for Scotland's best three marathon runners. Eventually, in the words of Alastair Macfarlane, 'Jim Dingwall ran his best marathon for some time while having a momentous struggle with Graham Laing. Jim opened a gap of ten yards at about 23 miles but Graham held on, so much so that the pair managed to pass Ray Smedley in sight of the stadium and indeed almost caught John Graham who had been well clear but tired badly in the last few miles.' Overall, John Graham (Clyde Valley) was fourth in 2.15.14; Jim Dingwall (Falkirk Victoria) fifth in 2.15.30; and Graham Laing (Aberdeen) sixth in 2.15.39. Lindsay Robertson (EAC) ran an excellent debut marathon in 2.19.18; and not far behind were Fraser Clyne (2.20.39) and Evan Cameron (2.22.00). The selectors chose John Graham and the improving Graham Laing. Obviously, Jim Dingwall was extremely unlucky to miss out, since he had defeated Graham in shorter cross-country and road races as well as in this trial. However he realised that there had been financial constraints which prevented three marathoners

being selected – and philosophised that fairness was not always to be expected in life. Certainly, Jim wished Graham Laing well – and he was to produce a good performance in Brisbane.

The SAAA Marathon championship, which might easily have been nominated as the Scottish Trial, took place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July 1982, on an out and back course from Grangemouth stadium. A calibrated wheel was used to ensure that the correct distance was run. Only 30 competitors turned up, but they included a number of good athletes. Conditions were warm and humid.

Colin Youngson had been running fast in training, including six or ten mile time-trials in his 80 miles per week. He had reduced this to 50 two weeks before the race, and had then experimented, running a fairly hard 21 on the Sunday, followed by the protein ‘diet’, a ten mile run at 7 a.m. on Monday, and a carbohydrate-packed breakfast. Thus the tough part of the regime had lasted only 20 hours! No running on Tuesday and Wednesday, a three mile ‘digestive’ jog/stride on Thursday and Friday, and off to the start.

In the dressing room he encountered Jim Brown, who declared his intention of running two hours twelve minutes! Colin had great respect for his younger rival, who had defeated him easily on countless occasions over the country and in shorter road and track fixtures. It was agreed that they would share a sensibly brisk pace to ten miles, in under 52 minutes. Then Jim would make his bid. Colin started quite fast, and led for two miles. Thereafter they went to the front for one mile each, into the breeze. Five miles passed in 26.27, which seemed wrong – rather slow for the pace they seemed to be setting. At this point Sandy Keith completed the trio. By ten miles, on target in 51.49, the watch indicated a speed-up but the tempo had in fact remained much the same, although Sandy had slipped back to 53.00 and was running with Craig Ross, a 2.21 man.

For the next three miles to the turn, Youngson simply sheltered behind Brown and waited for him to surge away. Nothing happened. Half-way was reached in 67.21; with Ross 69.10; Keith 69.32; Peter Wilson and Gerry Fairley (Kilbarchan) 71.40. At the front, nothing continued to happen, and the breeze was now helping progress. Fifteen miles (78.11) saw the duo 2.16 in front of Ross.

Gaining in confidence due to the steady, fairly comfortable pace, and feeling that, although it was hard to imagine Jim Brown beatable, he ought to be tested, at least, Colin Youngson prepared to try. As his stop-watch reached 1.30, he moved to the middle of the road and ran absolutely flat out for the next half mile. A look behind revealed a fifty yard gap! Another hard half mile – and there was no one in sight! Jim Brown, perhaps feeling that his target time was unattainable, had dropped out.

An unsympathetic but delighted Youngson later wrote in his diary ‘Bashed on slightly less hard’. 20 miles took 1.45.14; Ross 1.50.24; Keith 1.50.38; Wilson 1.51.56; John Lamont (also Aberdeen AAC) 1.52.47. Craig Ross had to stop shortly afterwards. The last two miles felt tough to Youngson, since he was striving to beat 2.20, and could see neither the stadium nor a race steward to point the way. However both appeared, and as Colin panted up to the entrance, there was Jim Dingwall leaning against the wall. Jim glanced at a stopwatch and said, ‘Still only 2.16 – should get a decent time if you hurry.’ So there was no steady lap of the track, waving modestly – just a red-faced maximum effort, which resulted in a narrow failure to break 2.18. Still, it was Colin Youngson’s second-fastest time (2.18.02), and one of the bigger winning margins. Second was Sandy Keith (EAC – 2.26.34); third Peter Wilson (Aberdeen AAC – 2.27.01; fourth John Lamont (Aberdeen AAC – 2.28.59); and fifth Andy Stirling

(Bo'ness – 2.30.17). Another good Aberdeen performance – even Sandy Keith used to be a club member.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, Australia featured the marathon, which took place on the second-last day, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1982. Graham Laing remembered the weather as warm but not roasting, since this was near the beginning of the summer season. During the acclimatisation period, Graham Laing recalled socialising with Nat Muir, Allister Hutton, John Robson and the inimitable, wise-cracking John Graham, who set a ferocious pace during training runs. The actual race started at 6 a.m., before the heat built up, and it seemed strange to complete a marathon before breakfast. Obviously someone had learned from the cautionary tale of the 1954 Commonwealth event.

The holder, Gidamis Shahanga, and his Tanzanian team-mate, Juma Ikangaa, started very fast, and maintained the lead until Ikangaa broke away. Rob De Castella of Australia led a group comprising John Graham and Graham Laing of Scotland plus Kevin Ryan of New Zealand. They passed ten miles in 49.06, and half way in 64.10 (forty seconds down on the Tanzanians). After 25 k 'Deek', who was very strong over the Queensland University hills, started to come through, to a narrow victory over Ikangaa, with the Scottish duo performing very well to secure fourth and seventh places. Unfortunately it had to be an Englishman, Mike Gratton, who passed John Graham in the last two miles. With Jim Dingwall running, Scotland could have won the 'team race'!

The result was: first Rob De Castella (2.09.18); second Juma Ikangaa (2.09.30); third Mike Gratton (2.12.06); fourth John Graham (2.13.04); fifth Kevin Ryan (2.13.42); sixth Gidamis Shahanga (2.14.25); seventh Graham Laing (2.14.54); and eighth Ian Ray (England – 2.15.11).

Previously, on September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Aberdeen Marathon had provided a much less illustrious Home Countries international match. After Fraser Clyne and Colin Youngson ran too fast for the first ten miles (50.37), both tired, while Gerry Helme of England (later a 2.10 performer in London) finished powerfully over a new course to record 2.15.16. Second was Ieuan Ellis from Wales (2.16.47); third Fraser Clyne (Scotland – 2.19.58); and fourth Colin Youngson (Scotland – 2.21.03). The Scottish team, completed by Peter Wilson (2.26.20) beat England but just lost to Wales. The event included the **first-ever Scottish Women's Marathon Championship**, and the Welsh runner Jacquie Hulbert (Les Croupiers) won in 2.52.20; from Lynda Stott (Aberdeen AAC – 2.53.04); and Priscilla Welch (Shetland – 2.55.59).

A race of considerable importance was, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, the first Scottish People's Marathon in Glasgow. 7000 competitors started from Glasgow Green – and most managed to finish there too – including 'elite athletes' like Ian McLauchlan of Rugby fame and Madge Sharples, supervet-jogger. Appropriately the race was sponsored – and perhaps fuelled – by Scott's Porridge Oats. A crowd of more than 100,000 cheered and waved. Glenn Forster of England won in 2.17.16; second was Colin Bark (England – 2.18.36); third 21 year-old Peter Fleming (Scotland - 2.19.40); and fourth Jim Brown (Scotland - 2.20.38). Priscilla Welch from Shetland won the **Women's race**.

The 1982 Scottish Marathon lists were headed by John Graham (2.13.04); followed by Graham Laing (2.14.54); Dave Clark (2.15.28); Jim Dingwall (2.15.30); Andy Robertson (2.17.06); Colin Youngson (2.18.02); Lindsay Robertson (2.19.16); Peter Fleming (2.19.40); and Fraser Clyne (2.19.58). There were 18 performances sub 2.20.

The fast Westland Marathon in Maasluis, Holland, was a regular venue for Scottish runners at this time. Excellent hospitality, a fast flat course, two sets of pacers (one to 20k and another to 25k) to 'hide behind' if there was a headwind, and generous prizes – these were the attractions. Colin Youngson made his third trip there and was rewarded with sixth place and 2.17.33 on 2nd April 1983.

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April 1983 was the date for the London Marathon and a lifetime best for Jim Dingwall, who sprinted all the way to record 2.11.44. This single race added many names to the Scottish All-time list and dominated the 1983 rankings: Graham Laing 2.14.20; Fraser Clyne 2.14.29; Dave Clark 2.16.06; Andy Girling 2.16.44; Alasdair Kean 2.16.51; Lindsay Robertson 2.17.02; Paul Kenney 2.19.04; Andy Robertson 2.19.09; Donald Ritchie (at last!) 2.19.35; Peter Wilson 2.20.05; Evan Cameron 2.20.33; George Reynolds 2.20.41; and Graham Milne 2.21.27.

The first City of Dundee People's Health Marathon took place on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1983. Don Macgregor seemed reborn, winning as he pleased in his fastest time since becoming a veteran – 2.17.24. Vast crowds and excellent organisation made sure that the event would continue. Macgregor's training partner, Terry Mitchell (also representing Fife AC) was second in 2.20.50; Rab Heron came back from Brighton to his home area, recording 2.21.26; and there were other good runs from Craig Ross (Aberdeen – 2.22.43); Murray McNaught (Fife – 2.23.34); Sam or Ian Graves (Fife – 2.23.57); and Charlie Haskett (Dundee Hawkhill H – 2.26.31).



## THE SCOTTISH MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIP 1983 onwards (WOMEN'S RACES AND MEN'S RACES)



**Dale Grieg on the Isle of Man**

The Women's championship in 1983 was again incorporated within that year's City of Aberdeen marathon. While the venue for the Men's championship moved around the country, the women's event was held in the Granite City from its inception until 1990.

The full history of Scottish women's marathon running can, however, be traced back to the 1960s when Paisley's Dale Greig was the trailblazer. The IAAF recognises her 3.27.45 performance on the Isle of Wight in 1964 as the first official 'World Best' time by a woman over an accurately measured and accredited marathon course. There were complaints at the time, however, as the Southern Counties AAA reprimanded course organisers for allowing Greig to take part.

Ten years later, in Paris, Dale contributed to another piece of Scottish marathon running history when she collected a winner's medal in the World Veteran Marathon Championships. The men's title went to Aberdeen's Alastair Wood and the race itself marked the first occasion on which men and women were officially allowed to compete together.

Lynda Bain was the first recipient of the Scottish women's title. The quietly-spoken librarian only took up running in 1981 but soon developed into one of the country's finest distance runners. Her first marathon (under her maiden name of Lynda Stott) at Aberdeen in September 1981 was run in gale force winds, with driving rain making conditions almost unbearable. Bain showed great resilience in coming home third (3.21.12) behind Katie Fitzgibbon (3.07.46) and Priscilla Welch (3.08.55).

The North-East woman was quickly captivated by the challenge of the marathon, and ran another six races before returning to Aberdeen in September 1983 to



collect her first national title, clocking 2.50.29 to defeat Welsh athlete Jacqui Hulbert (2.56.20) and Aberdeen AAC club-mate Morag Taggart (3.07.08).

## *Lynda Bain Sets the Women's Standard*



**Lynda Bain after winning the 1989 Aberdeen 10k**

New York based Inez McLean topped the women's rankings in 1983 with a 2.42.42 performance in the Big Apple while Leslie Watson clocked 2.45.47 at London.

1983 was the centenary of the Scottish Amateur Athletic Association, and special medals were struck for the occasion. The Track and Field Championships were held along with the marathon. On 18<sup>th</sup> June, the long distance lads prepared to tackle a similar course to 1981, but with the Cramond loop reversed, which made it seem hillier. Once again every expense had been spared and there were fewer marshals to help. Colin Youngson was quite fit and reckoned he had a good chance of picking up one of these special medals. A gold one would allow him to equal Joe McGhee's three-in-a-row. However good fortune is needed in a marathon – so much can go wrong! His rivals were these two hard-training up-and-coming Scottish Internationals, Peter Wilson and Evan Cameron.

Before the race, Youngson felt a little sick, but put it down to nerves. The weather was very, very hot indeed. Youngson went off fairly fast, and found himself alone. There wasn't much of a wind, so he pushed away from the pack and built up a good lead – thirty seconds by five miles. However by eight miles his nightmare began – this was to be the pit-stop marathon. Despite having to stop three times, by eighteen miles he was still eighty seconds ahead, but another three desperate halts were required by 22 miles. When you're in the lead in a marathon, you've got to keep going under any circumstances – and these were horribly unique. An extra-embarrassing detail was that the lead motor-biker inexplicably chose to cruise a hundred yards behind the leader!

Dehydrated and exhausted, Youngson could not muster any fighting spirit when his club-mate Peter Wilson, who had paced himself well and, sensing victory, had closed rapidly, strode past strongly and went right away. Feeling really bad, physically and psychologically, Youngson plodded in, swearing that if he had to suffer like this again, he would give up marathons completely. Was it too much carbo-loading? No, just a badly-timed stomach bug. And it never happened again.

The result was: first Peter Wilson (Aberdeen AAC – 2.26.20); second Colin Youngson (Aberdeen AAC – 2.28.46); third Evan Cameron (Edinburgh Southern Harriers – 2.29.30); and fourth Brian Carty (unattached – 2.33.45).

Peter Wilson, now a successful Osteopath and Physiotherapist, but then a 27 year old scientific officer at Aberdeen's Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, was an ex-hockey player who had only been running seriously for three years by 1983. An article about him stated 'Peter's weekly training regime is a study in self-imposed torture that would leave the Marquis de Sade drooling'! Every weekday lunchtime, he ran ten miles in 55-60 minutes, followed by another five before his well-earned tea. Add Sunday twenty milers, long repetitions and hill-work, and Peter's reputation as a difficult man to train with was explained. He was also a good cyclist and a competent swimmer, and this cross-training turned him into a successful triathlete.



**Peter Wilson**

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1983 was the date of the second Scottish People's Marathon in Glasgow. This was given extensive live coverage on BBC Television. Amazingly, 9500 started the race. The irrepressible Jimmy Savile, surrounded by the invited runners just before the gun went, commented, 'I suppose you're wondering why I asked you all to meet me here!' A leading pack of eighteen formed after a fast start, and stayed together for many miles since the day was cold and breezy. Eventually it broke up when runners snaked through the narrow tarmac paths of Bellahouston Park and Peter Fleming of Scotland broke away for a victory which delighted local spectators, reaching Glasgow Green in 2.17.48. Second was Bill Domoney of England (2.18.21); third Dic Evans of Wales (2.18.26); fourth Colin Youngson of Scotland (2.19.18); fifth Mick Crowell of Wales (2.19.20); sixth Andy Daly of Scotland (2.19.30); seventh Donald Macgregor (2.19.34); and eighth Malcolm McBride of Northern Ireland (2.19.52). The team race was won by Scotland, defeating Wales, the

ould enemy England, Northern Ireland and Eire. Back in 1973, only 32 Scots finished a marathon under 2.50; in this one event, no less than 169 Scots achieved the feat!

A week after Glasgow, the City of Aberdeen Milk Marathon took place, attracting 1300 competitors. Conditions were not ideal, due to a gusty wind, which exhausted Graham Laing when he tried to race right away from the field and stay there to the finish. The pack, two minutes behind at halfway, took turns to shelter, and eventually passed Laing who was forced to give up around twenty miles. Kevin Johnson of England won the race in 2.19.01, with Peter Wilson (Aberdeen and Scotland) first Scot in sixth place (2.21.53).

Lynda Stott (Aberdeen AAC) now married and re-named Lynda Bain, went one better than her silver medal of the previous year, and recorded 2.50.29 to win the very **first Scottish Women's Marathon** Championship from Jacqui Hulbert and Morag Taggart. (Lynda Bain's improvement was remorseless –she was to break the Scottish Record in London 1985, clocking an excellent 2.33.38.)

Dave Clark, expatriate Aberdonian, and a meticulous planner who brought a scientific approach to marathon racing, demonstrated his status as a world-class veteran by winning the over-40 Masters age group in the New York marathon – in 2.17.30. Dave went on to have similar success in Boston and London, as well as winning the World Veterans 25 kilometres championship.

The Marathon Boom had really exploded in Scotland by now. At least eleven races were available in the eighties: Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, SAAA, Inverclyde, Lochaber, Black Isle, Caithness, Moray and Loch Rannoch. Those were the days!



**Lindsay Robertson**

1984 was a good year for Lindsay Robertson, the hard-training, clean-living runner from Edinburgh Athletic Club. He started the year by finishing an excellent 6th



in the hilly and very competitive International Barcelona Marathon. His time was 2.16.15. A winning performance in the Edinburgh Waverley Market Marathon reduced his personal best to 2.15.55, with Evan Cameron, a 1983 Scottish International cross-country runner, in second place breaking the 2.20 barrier in 2.19.34.

The Scottish Marathon Championship in 1984 was to be included in the City of Aberdeen Milk Marathon on 16th September. This also featured an International contest between three-man teams from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire. The Scottish team was: George Reynolds from Aberdeen AAC and the RAF; Charlie Haskett of Dundee Hawkhill, a Scottish Cross-Country International who lived in Aberdeen; and Colin Youngson of Aberdeen AAC. Fortunately for these three, it was decided that SAAA medals should be reserved for Scottish finishers only. A record 2400 entered the race.

Mick Walsh of Eire set a fast pace, but a chasing pack of Mark Burnhope, Alan Catley and Colin Brown (England), plus the three Scots, kept him in sight and overtook him eventually. This group broke up on the steep descent of Milltimber Brae at 16 miles, and the race quickly developed into a struggle between 24 year old Mark Burnhope, 23 year old George Reynolds and Charlie Haskett. By 21 miles, the Englishman began to stride away on his own down the South Deeside Road and then past the Duthie Park all the way back to the Beach Boulevard finish. There were some good battles for the minor placings, but the English team came in first (Mark Burnhope 2.19.36), a fast-finishing third (Alan Catley 2.21.09) and fifth (Colin Brown 2.22.37). This meant that the SAAA medallists were: gold - George Reynolds second in 2.21.04; silver – Charlie Haskett fourth in 2.21.37; and bronze – Colin Youngson sixth in 2.23.36. Don Ritchie was ninth in 2.26.35. England won the team race by three points from Scotland.



**1988 E to G: Charlie Haskett of Dundee Hawkhill Harriers**

Aberdeen's Lynda Bain made a rapid start to defend her Scottish Women's Marathon Championship, and hung on well to retain the title, taking three minutes off Leslie Watson's Scottish Native Record with her time of 2.41.42. Margaret Baillie of Fife AAC was second in 3.00.57 and Morag Taggart of Pitreavie AAC third in 3.10.03. In 1984, Lynda Bain also represented Great Britain in the prestigious Kosice Marathon.

George Reynolds, originally from Kinloch Rannoch, was at one time based at RAF Kinloss, but had moved south to Lincolnshire, where he worked as an aircraft technician. George, with a personal best of 2.20.40, had trained heavily for London in 1984, after finishing 12th in the tough RAF Cross-Country Championships. For twelve weeks (four weeks build-up, four intense, four taper down) he had run as many as 125 miles in a week, including a three hour Sunday run. However this recipe had not produced the desired result, since after a fast start he had slowed, especially in the last three miles, to 2.28.

Like many others, he had learnt that more does not necessarily mean better. Consequently he altered his plan for Aberdeen. After a good third place in the seven-day Tour of Tameside, he started a nine-week regime (three weeks build-up, three intense, three taper). In total contrast to his pre-London system, he decided to reduce the weekly mileage to 75-80, and concentrated on speed-work. Sunday runs (24 miles) might be on his own or with friends from Grimsby Harriers. The reduced mileage gave him a feeling of speed in the legs, even after a long run. Unfortunately, since the base was preparing for a big flying service in Cyprus, he had to work 12 hour shifts around the clock, and became physically and psychologically low. This ended in the most pleasant way when, just one week before Aberdeen, the SAAA eventually got round to inviting him to represent Scotland in the Home International. George was delighted, and revived immediately.

The night before the race, George tried out his splendid new Scotland strip and tracksuit, and checked his faithful Asics Tiger Jayhawk racing shoes for comfort. He slept well despite constantly thinking about the race next day.

He remembers nervously chatting to rivals before the event, and the unusual weather for Aberdeen – no wind, sunny and warm. At seven miles, going up a near-deserted Union Street, he enjoyed a solitary piper blowing tuneful encouragement to the Scots in particular. There was to be a piper at every single mile marker on the route! It was a surge by Charlie Haskett after fifteen miles which began to split the group. However on the South Deeside road at twenty miles, George and Charlie heard the fateful patter of large English feet, as Mark Burnhope loomed alongside and before long moved away to victory. George was left, isolated and vulnerable, to survive the final miles, gradually tiring and worrying about losing second place. He only looked over his shoulder in the home straight, didn't spot the sprinting Alan Catley, and was relieved to hold his place. His mother, brother Alick and girlfriend Ingrid rushed over to congratulate him. It was an extra pleasure to realise that he had won the SAAA Championship Marathon.

Just one week later he ran the Humber Marathon from Hull to Grimsby, and amazingly won the event in 2.22.38, winning a trip to the New York City Marathon. George eventually gave up competition in 1994, but continued running twenty miles a week, and saw old friends or foes at Highland Games. He attended these events as an expert on the bagpipes.



**Three top marathon runners: Donald Ritchie, Colin Youngson and George Reynolds**

The 1984 Scottish rankings were headed by Fraser Clyne (Aberdeen AAC), who rounded off the year in brilliant style when, on the second of December, he ran a lifetime best in finishing second in the United States Championship marathon in Sacramento. He finished 26 seconds behind Ken Martin to record 2.11.49 which placed him third on the Scottish All-time list. Fraser felt fast and strong all the way – and was mainly delighted about finally beating Alastair Wood’s 1966 Aberdeen club record of 2.13.45!



**Fraser Clyne breaks the Aberdeen AAC marathon record!**

Other fast times in 1984 included John Graham (2.14.40); Lindsay Robertson (2.15.55); Lawrie Spence (2.16.01); Andy Girling (2.17.21); Andy Daly (2.18.01); Don Macgregor (2.18.16); Paul Kenney (2.18.28); Dave Clark (2.18.38); Charlie Haskett (2.18.41); Graham Getty (2.19.34); Evan Cameron (2.19.34); Murray McNaught (2.19.33); Alastair Macfarlane (2.19.56); and Don Ritchie (2.19.58). The London, Dundee or Glasgow marathons were the venues for most of these performances.

In 1985 the premier Scots performance was of course Allister Hutton's fantastic time of 2.09.16 for third place in the London Marathon on 21st April. This is still the Scottish Record thirty years later. Allister's most famous race was his 2.10.20 to win London after the most courageous early break in 1990. Never has there been more compulsive television! Andy Daly also ran a lifetime best in London 1985 – an excellent 2.15.47.



The first Scottish marathon of the year was the 3<sup>rd</sup> City of Dundee People's Health Marathon on 28th April. This took place on a day of chilly, sleet-laden westerly winds, which affected tactics. Eventually Murray McNaught (Fife AC) showed his stamina and good pacing by finishing very strongly, to win in 2.20.25 from Craig Ross (Dundee Hawkhill – 2.23.10) and Doug Hunter (EAC – 2.24.25). They were followed by Ian Graves (2.25.44); Charlie Haskett (2.26.06); Peter Wilson (2.26.31); and Don Ritchie (2.26.35 – only a week after running London).

The 1985 SAAA Marathon was a doomed attempt to bring the event back as part of the Track and Field Championships. Firstly the police objected to a road race on a Saturday, so it had to be run on the morning of Sunday June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Secondly very few entries were received, due to the superior attraction of mass events and good prizes. In fact only eighteen competitors toed the line. Obviously, after this race, the SAAA Marathon would forever be reduced to a subordinate part of City or Country marathons around Scotland.

Nevertheless the leading group ran away briskly enough down to Portobello and into a strong headwind on what was meant to be the course for the 1986 Edinburgh Commonwealth marathon. A group of four went clear: Evan Cameron (ESH), Colin Youngson (Aberdeen AAC), Graham Getty (Bellahouston) and Pat McErlean (Aberdeen AAC). Indeed it was Pat, a 2.23 man who trained in Aberdeenshire with



Youngson, who did most of the leading through three miles (15.52), although he had been dropped by seven seconds at five miles (26.29) and eventually slipped away. Even sharing the headwind and coping with a series of small hills was tiring. Ten miles was passed in 53.54 and by eleven miles, Graham Getty was off the pace.

The turn was reached in 70.53 and, with the wind behind, the pace increased to 5.10 miling. Youngson hung on as best he could to Cameron's determined running, but although Evan's best was 2.19.34 and Colin had managed 2.19.22 in an April Dutch race, on this occasion the younger man was superior. After sixteen miles, Cameron ran a five minute mile and opened an increasing gap on Youngson. The leader passed 20 miles in 1.47.13, thirty seconds clear. After 22 miles, both suffered fatigue, and it was Getty who began to close slightly. At the finish, Evan Cameron was delighted to win the his first Scottish Championship in 2.22.49; with Colin Youngson collecting his tenth and last marathon medal in 2.23.46; and Graham Getty bronze in 2.24.13. Fourth was E. Walker (Livingstone and District) in 2.31.26. Each competitor received a jar of instant coffee!



**1985 medallists: Colin Youngson (2nd), Evan Cameron (1st), Graham Getty (3rd)**

Evan Cameron was educated in Musselburgh and started running at Durham University in 1976. After his course finished in 1977 he "retired" from athletics; but only a few weeks later found himself accepting a challenge while inebriated – to run the Scottish Marathon Championships wearing some else's number. His preparation lasted six days; ten miles for three days; and two miles for the last three! After the inevitable struggle he finished in 2.52, not bad considering.

That autumn he moved to Edinburgh to start work. Living in Marchmont he used to jog around the Meadows three times a week. A passing ESH runner spotted his obvious talent and invited him to join the Sunday Balerno 16 training run. After suffering a few tough sessions, Evan gained fitness, joined ESH and started his steady improvement to International status.

By 1978 he finished third in the demanding Edinburgh University 10, twice round the Braid Hill circuit. Mind you he managed to beat Donald Macgregor amongst others because there was a thick carpet of snow and Evan had the wisdom to wear spikes for the particular road race! Before long it became evident that Evan Cameron's defining characteristic as a runner was his enormous appetite for long, hard, fast training runs. Even Sandy Keith had an easier session now and again.

In 1980 Evan could run 120 miles per week for two consecutive months. The meant: Sundays 20 miles in the morning plus 4 miles extra in the evening; Mondays 8 miles to work and 12 miles home; Tuesdays 8 miles to work, and another 8 home;



Wednesdays 8 to work, and in the evening 7 miles including eight fast 400s on grass; Thursdays 8 mile to and 10 miles from; Fridays 8 to and 4 from; and Saturdays 15 miles, often including a race. Evan admits now that he might have overdone it a little, and not tapered enough for races, but in general his exhausting schedule worked well for him.

From 1979 to 1985, Evan's day started with what was very nearly a race – a very rapid 8 mile morning run with that other great trainer, Sandy Keith. Evan writes “these runs were always conducted running side-by-side, neither one of use conceding an inch to the other. Dandy became a mentor to me, offering advice on race tactics and on the need to introduce speed and hill session into what had previously been a regime of one-paced runs. Our morning efforts really helped me build up towards weekly targets – provided I rested physically while at my desk job during the day.”

Since both Sandy and Evan faded from the running scene before the late 1980s, some might say they trained a little too hard – but both certainly enjoyed successful careers at the top before the workload became too much. Evan Cameron became a Scottish Cross-Country International taking part in the 1983 World Championships, as well as running for his country in marathons and winning his 1985 SAAA title. In 1986 he emigrated to Canada to raise a family, develop a busy and successful career, and very occasionally go out for a five mile jog to prove he can still actually run! Perhaps, if this ever proves possible, he will start training again and even return to the “Master” competition in the new millennium!

Evan Cameron 6 paras missing + 1 woman para P80 in book

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September was the date of the 1985 City of Aberdeen Marathon, featuring an international contest between teams representing Scotland, England, Wales and ‘Rest of the World’! The latter included two Northern Irishmen and a Scotsman. Once again the police had stepped in and banned the fairly fast Aberdeen course, which had been replaced by a slower one. This looped round Union Street, Holburn, Duthie Park and the Harbour, up the Beach Promenade and away out the Tarves road, over to Dyce and back via Great Northern road to the Beach Boulevard. Dave Catlow of England was a clear winner in 2.22.54 from Colin Youngson (Scotland – 2.23.58); Mick Woods (World – 2.25.24); Dic Evans (Wales – 2.26.11); Richard Tough (England – 2.27.19); Doug Cowie (Scotland and the World – 2.27.59); Alan Jefferies (Wales – 2.28.55); Eddy Lee (Wales – 2.29.25); and Paul Wheller (England – 2.29.53).

1<sup>st</sup> Woman: Ann Curtis (Livingston) 2.55.55, 2<sup>nd</sup> Teresa Kidd (Dublin) 3.01.09, 3<sup>rd</sup> Janine Robertson (AAAC) 3.01.57.

English-born Dr Ann Curtis (Scottish Hill Running Champion 1984-86) raced away with the 1985 Scottish Women's Marathon title. First native Scot was Janine Robertson, who won a trip to New York in what was only her second marathon.



### **Ann Curtis winning the 1985 Stirling Half Marathon**

In 1986, as usual, Dundee was the first Scottish city marathon of the year. On 27<sup>th</sup> April the winner was Colin Youngson (2.20.03) who got away from Murray McNaught on the big hill at nineteen miles, and came home a minute in front. In the London Marathon, Aberdeen AAC's Welsh International, Simon Axon, ran 2.19.33.

The 1986 Scottish Women's Marathon title was contested on 25<sup>th</sup> May at the City of Aberdeen Milk Marathon.

Stephanie Quirk, a 29 year-old physiotherapist, won the Scottish title, knocking nine minutes off her previous best. She was based in Kendal and enjoyed some success as a fell runner. She finished well clear of Janine Robertson and Morag Taggart, who pocketed her third championship bronze in four years.

1<sup>st</sup> Woman: Stephanie Quirk (Isle of Man) 2.58.57, 2<sup>nd</sup> Janine Robertson (Aberdeen AAC) 3.16.15, 3<sup>rd</sup> Morag Taggart (Pitreavie) 3.21.26

The 1986 SAAA Marathon was part of the Edinburgh Marathon which followed a tortuous route from outside Meadowbank, up to the Royal Mile, down Lothian Road, right along Princes Street and back to the start. Then it continued to Seafield, Cramond and back to Seafield before climbing up to the start/finish.

This race was to be the battle of the veterans – Donald Macgregor, the favourite, and Brian Carty of Shettleston Harriers. The latter, a steadily improving, strong-looking man, had finished second in the Scottish Veterans Cross-country Championships, although he much preferred road racing. Brian remembered that he was wary of going too fast, too soon, on a hilly course, so he stayed with the second pack some distance behind the group of six leaders. As far as he could see, Don Macgregor was playing 'cat and mouse' with them. Eventually Donald went off into a clear lead, until Brian came through and caught him at Cramond (17 miles).

Carty's coach, Hugh Mitchell, had advised him, 'When you catch someone up, talk to them – it shows that you're fresh.' So Brian asked how Donald was feeling, and shortly afterwards began to draw away. He finished very strongly indeed, while Donald faded. Although he felt good all the way, he was a lone figure, especially through Seafield, because of the lack of spectators. Only at the finish was there applause, as Brian Carty won the Edinburgh Marathon and the Scottish Marathon Championship in 2.23.42, a personal best, with Donald second in 2.27.30 and Robert Marshall, who

much, much later became a British Masters M65 Cross-Country Champion, third in 2.27.59.



### **Brian Carty wins the 1986 Scottish Marathon Championship**

Brian's training was not unlike Hugh Mitchell's twenty years previously. Overcoming initial reluctance, he gradually built up to a very strenuous regime indeed. On weekdays he might run thrice: twelve or fourteen miles to work at British Leyland; four miles fartlek at lunchtime; and another ten to twelve miles home. He remembered many hard sessions in the Bathgate hills. In total he might run 120 or even 150 miles per week. So his 1986 triumph was hard-earned indeed.

Donald Macgregor had less happy memories of the event! He wrote that he was quite fit, having done 2.22.05 in London, followed by six weeks of moderate mileage. Since he had done 'the diet' for London, it didn't work properly for this race because the gap between the two events was too brief. Donald lamented that the Edinburgh Marathon was "the least convincing city marathon because the Edinburghers didn't really give a damn, whereas in Dundee, Glasgow and to some extent Aberdeen you got a lot of interested spectators. Edinburgh is always associated in my mind with a picture of a woman wheeling a pram past us – in the opposite direction, I hasten to add – and seeking to ignore our unpleasant existence."

"However the organisers offered to put up our family in the George Hotel. That was great, but for some reason I sweated a lot and couldn't sleep. At last the fulfilment (not for the first time) of Jim Alder's nightmare: 'Due for a bad un.' The course started through the centre of Edinburgh for once before heading out west – I recall passing through the dreaded Granton area again – and finished climactically in a side-street next to Meadowbank, to make sure not too many of the genteel folk would see us. The 'bad un' started after 11 very boring miles of cruising along in the lead wondering how long it was going to be before someone came up to my shoulder. Then I began to feel weak at the knees. Brian Carty appeared, and ran away from me for a popular and well-deserved win, but one he told me he had not expected. I crawled in (2.27.30), and unfortunately my father and stepmother had come in person to see me run for the one and only time. I looked like an escapee from some 15th Century Durer woodcut (one of the victims of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse) as I was led away to the shelter of the stadium shower room. I am unlikely to be doing another SAAA Marathon unless paid heavily to take part."

The two Donalds: Macgregor (1965-1986) and Ritchie (1967-1988), hold the record for years between first and last medal in the event – 21 years, no less.

The Commonwealth Games returned to Edinburgh in 1986 and for the first time there was a women's race. Australia's Lisa Martin won in 2.26.07 (a time that would have been good enough for second place in the SAAA men's championship – over a tougher course – that season). Injury prevented Lynda Bain for competing but Lorna Irvine performed with great credit to take fifth place in 2.36.34.

John Graham, Fraser Clyne and Lindsay Robertson were selected to represent Scotland in the men's race. Robertson, however, had the sad misfortune to be hit by a stomach bug on the eve of the race and had to miss the big occasion. Defending champion Rob de Castella (Australia) was not in the mood for relinquishing his title as he zipped casually through the opening 10 miles in 49.27. He then increased the tempo, covering the next five miles in 24.10 with only Scotland's Graham for company. The big Lanarkshire man was keen to pick up a medal after finishing fourth in Brisbane four years earlier, but he paid a heavy price for trying to stay with the tough Australian. De Castella continued to power away and went on to win in 2.10.15. Graham ran out of steam and was overhauled by another Australian Steve Moneghetti (2.11.08) and Canada's Dave Edge (2.11.18) and had to settle for fourth place once again (2.12.10). Clyne, who had been struggling with a lower back problem in the weeks before the race, was unable to reproduce the form he had shown over the previous seasons, and struggled home in 1st (2.17.30).

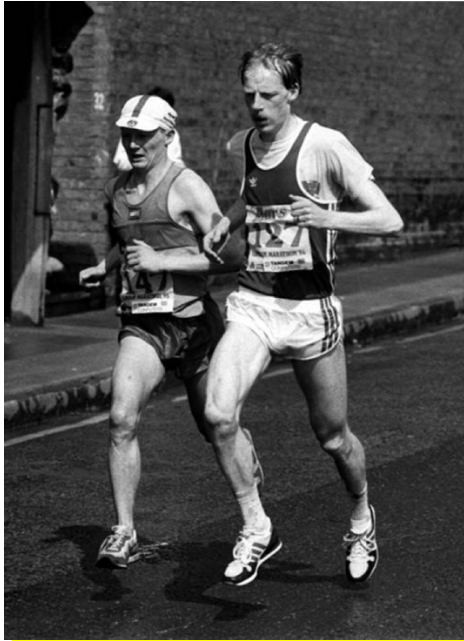
On the 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1987, the City of Dundee Peoples Health Marathon hosted the Scottish Men's Marathon Championship.

1 Terry Mitchell (Fife AC) 2.22.19, 2 Charlie Haskett (DHH) 2.28, 3 Sam Graves (Fife AC) 2.29.13

"Relay", the Fife AC magazine reported: "*Phewwhatascorcha! screamed the Courier headline, and there was no denying that this year's Dundee Marathon was indeed a warm affair, with temperatures in the 60s, a pleasant change from the usual wind and snow. Keeping cool at the front of the field was Fife AC's distance dynamo, Terry Mitchell. The race was expected to be between Terry and Dundee Hawkhill's Charlie Haskett, but an increase in pace along the waterfront section towards Broughty Ferry left Terry clear after ten miles. The fair-haired St Andrews chef went on to serve up a comfortable win, putting almost six minutes between himself and the second-placed Haskett. This was Fife's fourth win in the men's race, Don Macgregor having won it for the first two years, followed by an '85 victory by Murray McNaught. As in '85, Sam Graves was second Fife man home, this year's third equalling his highest finish in the race.*"

Terry, Charlie and Sam were the SAAA gold, silver and bronze medallists. "The only problem was in the last six miles when I began to feel the pace a bit, but I got to the end okay," said the victor.

Sam Graves (formerly known as Ian) had enjoyed a long career with Dundee Hawkhill Harriers and Fife AC, racing well at all distances from 1500m to the marathon and beyond, in the Two Bridges 36 mile race.



**1986 London Marathon: Terry and Charlie**

**Sam (or Ian) Graves**

**P83 Dundee marathon**

Also on 26<sup>th</sup> April, the Lochaber Marathon had featured a duel between two SAAA Marathon winners. Colin Youngson set out over-confidently, building up a two-minute lead by ten miles into what he thought was a headwind. However after the turn he discovered that there was another headwind to struggle into on the way back, and also that Brian Carty was pulling him in steadily. When Brian caught up at 22 miles, Colin assumed he was 'dead and buried' but Brian, true to form, started chatting pleasantly! Too knackered to respond in more than grunts, Colin dropped in behind for a bit of shelter. Just before 25 miles, he had recovered enough to make a last-ditch effort, ran very hard for half a mile and hung on desperately to the finish. Eighteen seconds later, a fresh Brian, such a genuinely nice guy, rolled in to congratulate Youngson who was panting helplessly against a wall. Colin's 2.26.15 was a course record until Fraser Clyne raced Lochaber.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1987, the City of Aberdeen Milk Marathon once more hosted the Scottish Women's Marathon Championship. There was no shortage of drama in this race. Welsh athlete Sue Graham had built up a big lead when she keeled over at the 22 mile point and had to be rushed to hospital with exhaustion. 23 year-old Carol-Anne Gray just managed to overhaul Margaret Oliver to win the Scottish title by fourteen seconds.

1<sup>st</sup> Woman: Carol-Ann Gray (EAC) 3.17.12, 2<sup>nd</sup> Margaret Oliver (AAAC) 3.17.27, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sheila Cluley (Forfar) 3.19.49

1987 was also the year when Lindsay Robertson of EAC reached his peak, recording 2.13.30 on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1988, the Aberdeen event included the Scottish Women's Marathon Championship. This time, Sue Graham ran well all the way to the finish but had to be content with second as Eileen Masson stormed home for an impressive victory in the Scottish Women's Marathon Championship.

1<sup>st</sup> Woman: Eileen Masson (Kilbarchan) 2.47.23, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sue Graham (Wales) 3.01.38, 3<sup>rd</sup> Margaret Stafford (AAAC) 3.10.01

Fastest Scottish woman in the 1988 rankings was Heather McDuff, whose 2.34.26 was second all-time to Lynda Bain's 2.33.38 in 1985.



**Heather McDuff**

1988 was the year when the Men's SAAA Marathon travelled to Fort William as part of the Lochaber race. Colin Martin, a Scottish Road-Running International in the seventies, had become a veteran the previous year. He and his Dumbarton training friend/rival Allan Adams (the 1989 British Veterans M45 Marathon champion at the Flying Fox event in Stone, Staffordshire, when he had also beaten all the M40 runners) had been doing 90 to 100 miles per week, with Tuesdays and Thursdays devoted to 400, 800 or even mile repetitions with Lachie Stewart and his promising son, Glen. Colin's Saturday session might be 22 miles on the road, with Sundays an hour and a half over country trails. Lochaber made an excellent target, since it also hosted the Scottish Veterans and SAAA events. Don Ritchie wrote that on 24th April "a group of six runners formed by the time we left the town. I increased the pace and by the turn there were three of us left. At about 18 miles I managed to drop the Pitreavie runner McNeill, but Colin Martin stuck behind me." Colin remembers that over the next few miles, both athletes made attempts to get rid of the other, to no avail. Shortly after the right turn at Corpach, on a stiff little climb starting at a garage, Colin burst away and held a narrow lead to the end. It was a very gruelling race indeed.

The result was: first Colin Martin (Dumbarton AAC – 2.30.09); second Donald Ritchie (Forres Harriers – 2.30.26); third Bill McNeill (Pitreavie – 2.36.39). Colin Martin went on to represent Scotland in the Nuremberg Marathon in June 1988.





### **Colin Martin winning the 1985 Loch Rannoch Marathon**

Donald Ritchie, of course, was the most famous Ultra-Distance Runner in Britain and, along with Yiannis Kouros, in the World. His normal training was 140 miles per week, including weekdays of 14 miles to work, and another 14 miles home. His Thursday run home might be 21 miles, with a steady 50 k on Sundays. However for a marathon he reduced this to a mere 120, adding effort sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These might be either two or three minutes hard (with equal jog recoveries); or a pyramid session (one minute hard, one easy, two/two, three/three, four/four, five/four, four/three, three/two, two/one, one).

A 1983 article mentions that he held at least eight world records. After several years of gradual improvement he won the Scottish Universities Cross-country title in 1972 and finished eleventh in the 'National'. His ten-mile track time was reduced to 49.32. During a spell in Birmingham with Birchfield Harriers he trained with Ian Stewart and once almost beat Dave Moorcroft in the Warwickshire cross-country championships.

After a second place in the London to Brighton ( a race he later won twice, including a course record), he began to set world records: 50k - 2.50.30; 40 miles - 3.48.34; 100k road - 6.18.00; 100k track - 6.10.20; 50 miles - 4.53.28; 150k track - 10.36.42; 100 miles track - 11.30.51; 100 miles road - 11.51.11. After becoming a veteran, he set countless age-group world records, and he also became the fastest runner between John o'Groats and Land's End. Just think for a few moments about the best of

these performances: probably the 100k track and the 100 miles track. Work out the average pace per mile. Consider the effort and toughness required. Absolutely amazing!



#### **Donald Ritchie winning the 1985 Lincolnshire 100km**

In 1989 the Aberdeen Marathon doubled as the SAAA Championships, as well as a Home Countries International race. 225 runners took part and for the first time the title went to an English International athlete. On a cold windy day, a small pack stayed together until seven miles, when Ian Bloomfield of England, a 36-year-old local government officer from Chester-Le-Street in County Durham, made a break, accompanied by his team-mate Eric Williams. By half-way, Bloomfield was out on his own and Williams began to fade. Terry Mitchell of Scotland and Mick McGeoch of Wales, making his sixth appearance in the Aberdeen race, shared second place until 22 miles, when Terry got away. Because of cramp, Mick struggled to hold off the fast-finishing Nigel Barlow. Ian Bloomfield made clear that it wasn't the easiest of victories when he gasped afterwards, "It was tough, bloody tough!" after taking a severe buffeting from the strong north wind that battered many competitors into a state of near-submission.

Ian Bloomfield (England) won in 2.22.30; from Terry Mitchell (S – 2.24.53), Mick McGeoch (W – 2.25.57), Nigel Barlow (E – 2.26.09), Rob Hall (S – 2.29.35), Arwell Lewis (W – 2.30.51), Colin Youngson (S – 2.31.29), David Bond (E – 2.32.24) and Eric Williams (E – 2.33.16).

Liz Hughes (Aberystwyth), a 32-year-old university geography research officer from Wales, pocketed the Scottish Women's Championship title in 2.54.24. That knocked twelve minutes off her previous best time, set when winning the Welsh title on her marathon debut at Bridgend in 1987. Aberdeen's Margaret Stafford, third the previous year, clocked a personal best 3.06.36 for second place, while Inverurie's Linda Trahan knocked 20 minutes off her previous best, set just four weeks earlier in Lochaber, to take third place in 3.14.42.





**Cardiff 1980: Mick McGeoch (16) in a 10k race**

Mick McGeoch was the only Welshman to win a medal in the SAAA Marathon. He represented the Principality on many occasions, and raced several times in Aberdeen and Glasgow. Undoubtedly the most cheerful and friendly Welshman ever, Mick's main claim to fame was for a long time his status as the fastest runner to have completed the first nineteen London Marathons. He averaged 2.25.30 in the event, including his 2.17.58 personal best in 1983, and had never been beaten by any of the other forty Trojans who had run nineteen 'Londons'. As he said, the problem was that only death would prevent any of the 41 from starting or finishing future races! (Up to 2015, Mick completed an astounding 30 London Marathons.)

Mick used to run up to 110 miles per week, with 22 miles on Sundays and a weekly session of track repetitions – either shorter efforts in summer or 600m-1000m in winter. This aspect of his training paid off when he won the British Veterans 5000m. However in the eighties he was a successful Ultra runner – winning the Two Bridges (36 miles 365 yards), the Barry Track 40 miles and finishing third in the famous London to Brighton (53 miles 540 yards), as well as representing GB in the World 100km Championships. He helped to organise the Barry 40 and the Welsh Castles Relay. His club, Les Croupiers, was named after a Cardiff casino, and the owner (a former 2.28 man) sponsored them generously for many years. Mick personified the cavalier spirit which can flourish amongst runners; in Scotland we had Robin Thomas and Hunter's Bog Trotters!



**Mick leading a pack in the 1993 London Marathon, Isle of Dogs**

## THE NINETIES

If 1989 had produced the first English winner of the title then the 1990 race, again held in Aberdeen, ended even more dismally for home-based runners. England internationals Chris Tall (2.23.32), Stan Markley (2.24.53) and Brian McEvoy (2.25.46) swept the boards, leaving Fraserburgh's Charlie McIntyre the honour of being first Scot home in fourth place (2.26.50). Liz Hughes from Wales successfully defended the women's title with another personal best time of 2.49.47 while local Aberdeen AAC runners Diana Jermieson (3.25.08) and Joan Molloy (3.33.27) took home the silver and bronze awards.

The championships moved to a new venue in 1991 with the decision to hold the event in association with the Inverclyde marathon at Greenock. The Inverclyde race, backed by IBM, had first been held in 1981 when Bill Stoddart, the 1969 Scottish champion, won. Terry Mitchell travelled to the west coast hopeful of regaining the title he won at Dundee four years earlier - and he was not to be disappointed. The Fifer dominated the race and won comfortably in 2.24.50 from John Stephens (2.27.10) and veteran Charlie MacDougall (2.35.51). Kilbarchan's Eileen Masson was equally commanding when winning the women's title for the second time in four races (2.50.12) with Julie Harvey and Margaret Blaikie claiming the other medal positions.

Terry Mitchell was a versatile, talented and durable athlete who represented Scotland in Cross-Country, Road Racing and Mountain Running. He gained two GB marathon vests – one was for winning the Istanbul Marathon. Terry also won Scottish titles at Half Marathon and 50km (the latter five times!)

Fraser Clyne waited until the latter stages of his career before the national championship grabbed his attention. The Arbroath-born runner made his marathon debut as a 26 year-old at Aberdeen in 1981 on a day ravaged by howling gales and driving rain. It was a sobering experience as, after briefly taking the lead with six miles to go, he faded badly to finish fourth behind Max Coleby, Martin Knapp and Donald Macgregor in 2.23.36. It was to be another eleven years before Clyne entered the Scottish Championship for the first time, at Elgin, but in the intervening period he was to become one of the country's most experienced exponents of the marathon. Between September 1982 and December 1991 he broke the 2 hours 20 minutes barrier on 22 occasions. His best performance was undoubtedly in the 1984 United States Championship race incorporated within the California International Marathon at Sacramento where he finished runner-up to America's Ken Martin in 2.11.50. Clyne competed regularly in America and also performed in Australia, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Africa and Germany. He represented Great Britain in three World Cup Marathons but could finish no higher than 47<sup>th</sup>. He was 10<sup>th</sup> in the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

The Metro Aberdeen member was a couple of weeks short of his 37<sup>th</sup> birthday when he travelled to Elgin for the 1992 Scottish Championship race. The event, held along with a 10km and half marathon as part of the Macallan Moray Festival of Running, was organised by Moray Road Runners. It started and finished in Elgin's Cooper Park and the course followed a series of quiet rural roads past Burghead and Lossiemouth. This was the furthest north the championship had ever been held.

Although Clyne was taking part in the championship for the first time he still wasn't taking the event too seriously. His training diary reveals that 90 miles had been run in the seven days before the Moray race so he was hardly well rested for the challenge.

John Duffy of IBM Spango Valley got the race off to a spritely start on a bright but breezy day. The stiff climb out of Elgin after two miles resulted in a slowing of the

tempo and soon a small group which included Duffy, Clyne, George Reynolds of Forres, Aberdeen-based New Zealander Stuart Mills, Ayr's Alistair Stewart and the Teviotdale pair Nicol Maltman and Andy Fair settled in at the head of the field. Duffy seized the initiative approaching the 12 mile mark by increasing the pace and quickly pulling away from the group which immediately began to break up. Clyne allowed the Spango Valley man to open a lead of 100 metres before setting off in pursuit. The Aberdeen athlete quickly pulled in his rival and swept past to open up a gap which stretched to almost three minutes by the end of the race. Clyne coasted home in 2.25.38. It was the slowest time he had ever run for a marathon but a course record nonetheless. Duffy collected the silver medal in 2.28.25 and Mills was a clear third in 2.30.16.

"I just did enough to win," Clyne said at the time. "I wanted to win the title but I also didn't want to interrupt my training which is aimed at the California International Marathon in December." (Clyne later ran 2.20.5 in the American race).

Trudi Thomson of Babcock Pitreavie AC, who would later become an international class marathon and ultra-distance runner, won the women's race in 3.14.30. Fiona Nicholson and Clare Slatter were well behind in second and third respectively.

The 1992 championship was the last one held under the auspices of the Scottish AAA and the Scottish WAAA. From now on a new single governing body, the Scottish Athletics Federation, would rule the sport.

The 1993 championship returned to Greenock and was again incorporated within the annual Inverclyde race organised by Tom Tracey, Bill Stoddart and their colleagues. Sponsorship was provided by the local IBM factory. On a windy day Fraser Clyne easily retained the title after moving into the lead at nine miles and running solo for the rest of the race. He stopped the clock at 2.26.40 to finish three minutes in front of visiting Englishman Raymond Lees with Falkirk's Denis McAra outsprinting Martin Coyne (Mizuno) for third place in 2.32.09. Again Clyne had done little resting prior to the event. The previous Sunday he had won a half marathon at Dyce and four days later posted a sub-20 minute time to win a four mile race in Aberdeen.

Ultra-distance star Eleanor Robinson of the North-East Veterans Harriers Club travelled north from her home in Brampton to win the women's championship in 2.55.42. 'It was hard going in the early part of the race but there were some beautiful views in the later stages,' she said. Kate Todd and M. Thomas won silver and bronze.

Loch Rannoch hosted the 1994 championship. With the familiar shape of Schiehallion providing a dramatic backdrop to a course which followed a loop around the loch, the scenery was impressive. A warm June day with a strong westerly wind made sure life would be tough for the 150 competitors. Fraser Clyne turned up hoping to emulate Joe McGhee by winning the title three years in a row but the presence in the field of Terry Mitchell, also seeking a third championship win, ensured this would not be easily achieved.

Mitchell set the early pace along with Peterhead AAC's Alan Reid while Clyne was happy to tag alongside. The refreshment stations caused the leaders some concern as the cups were filled with suspiciously discoloured water. Speculation centred upon whether this was the natural peaty colour of the local tap water or, of more concern, had the cups been filled directly from the nearby loch?

Whatever, Reid dropped out shortly before the ten mile mark - but not because of anything he had consumed. A calf injury flared up, leaving the North District man no option but to pull out. Mitchell and Clyne continued onwards through the halfway point together. Suddenly, however, Clyne opened a 100m lead on an uphill stretch at the head of the loch. Any thoughts the Aberdeen man might have entertained that the

race was won were quickly dispelled, as Mitchell came storming back a mile or so later. The rejuvenated Fifer brushed quickly past the defending champion and began to pull away. By 19 miles Terry enjoyed a lead of over 200m and Fraser looked beaten. The race, however, still had another dramatic turn to take. Clyne rallied once again as the course twisted through the grounds of Rannoch School. "I sensed that Terry was no longer going away from me and that I might still have a chance," Clyne said afterwards.

Between 20 and 23 miles Clyne hunted down his rival and with two miles remaining the two men were again locked together in an exciting dogfight. "As soon as I caught Terry I got a terrible attack of stomach cramp and thought I'd blown it," Clyne recalled. "I gained some comfort, however, by looking at Terry and realising he was suffering more than me." Fraser summoned up one final effort which gained him an eventual hard-earned winning margin of 38 seconds. It was a course record and the result meant that he had emulated Joe McGhee's record of three wins in a row. Spectators had to wait over 14 minutes until the bronze medallist came into view when Jim Douglas of FMC Carnegie Harriers edged home, 11 seconds clear of 48 year-old Pitreavie man Archie Duncan.

Janis Gjelseth of Shettleston Ladies took the women's title in 2.58.37 with Jan Thomson of FMC Carnegie Harriers second in 3.07.34 and Diane Harvey of Tipton third.

Fraser Clyne passed up on the chance to go for a fourth straight win in 1995 - the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the championship. He had received an invitation to compete in the famous Two Oceans Marathon, held over a 35 mile course at Cape Town, just one week before the SAF championship race at Fort William. The lure of representing Great Britain in the famous South African ultra event proved too hard to resist.

At Lochaber John Duffy, a powerful runner who had moved to Shettleston Harriers from IBM Spango Valley, seized the opportunity to grab his first national title. Duffy was pressed hard in the first half of the race by Alan Reid, the 29 year-old Banff-based athlete, who was rated one of the best distance runners in the North of Scotland. Reid had made his marathon debut as a teenager in the Easter Ross race many years earlier. His only other attempt at the distance ended in failure at Loch Rannoch when he was forced to drop out with injury - and now he was hoping it would be a case of third time lucky. Duffy, however, proved too strong in the second half of the contest and gradually eased home in 2.31.19. Reid suffered badly in the closing stages and was in danger of failing to get a medal of any description until he rallied to overhaul Richard Davidson and Davie Fairweather - just ten seconds separated these three at the end.

Margaret McLaren became Fife AC's first-ever women's marathon champion when she recorded 3.07.17 to get the better of Susan Low and Corina Cramer.

Clyne returned to the fray in 1996 when the championship was again held in conjunction with the Inverclyde marathon at Greenock. The Metro Aberdeen man was familiar with the route having won this race in 1993. He travelled to the west coast with clubmates Peter Jennings, Jackie Stewart and Charlie Benzies and the North-east squad loaded up with carbohydrates in a Glasgow pizza joint on the eve of the contest.

The race got off to an incredibly casual start with no one prepared to take up the initiative. After five miles the leaders were on schedule for 2.40. It was only a matter of time before someone reacted and Jim Bennett of Greenock Glenpark was the first to lose patience and break away. This burst of defiance didn't stir any of the others into action however and, by the 14 mile point, the local man held a one minute lead over the chasing pack which included Clyne, defending champion John Duffy and marathon debutant Brian Scally. In the subsequent five miles Bennett's lead was gradually whittled away as Clyne began the long push for home, pursued only by Scally as Duffy

began to falter. As Bennett's brave bid evaporated it was Scally who took up the challenge but his hopes also faded at the 21 mile point when he hit a bad patch. Clyne used his experience to surge clear and eventually ran out an easy winner in 2.28.25. Duffy, who had won a silver medal in the European veterans' marathon championship in Malmo earlier in the year, overhauled Scally in the closing stages to take runner-up spot for the second time in five years.

Ultra-distance expert Eleanor Robinson (Border Harriers) was an untroubled winner of the women's title in 2.56.47 with Carol Lisle of FMC Carnegie Harriers taking silver in 3.27.17. Pat Donald of Deeside Runners, competing in her first marathon, took away the bronze in 3.30.35.

Fraser Clyne travelled to Elgin to bid for a fifth title in 1997 at the age of 42. Interest in the championship had dwindled to an all-time low and even some of the people involved with the organisation of the event were unaware it had been given championship status. 'When I handed the trophy over to them before the start of the race an official asked what it was for,' Clyne said.

The race itself was over within the first two miles. On a warm and blustery day Stevie Ogg of FMC Carnegie Harriers kept with Clyne for a little more than ten minutes before dropping well off the pace. Clyne, who had been worried by a foot injury in the preceding weeks, was able to relax and cruised away to win by more than ten minutes in 2.29.39. Ogg achieved his aim of securing a London qualifying time when finishing second in 2.39.39; while Londoner Steven Kovacs seemed bemused at receiving a championship bronze medal after taking third place in 2.45.18 - it was the slowest medal-winning time for more than 30 years.

Kate Jenkins of the Carnethy Hill Running Club was a convincing winner of the women's race when recording 3.18.07 to finish well ahead of Pat Donald of Deeside Runners (3.44.38) and Val Goldie of Milburn Harriers (3.51.48).

The 1998 championship returned again to Greenock. Brian Scally made up for the disappointment of hitting the wall two years earlier to become the sixth Shettleston Harrier to win the title after leading for most of the way. His time of 2.29.32 saw him finish well clear of Anglo-Scot David Thompson, from Portsmouth, who stopped the clock at 2.33.48. Terry Mitchell added to his medal collection (two gold, two silver and now one bronze) by finishing an isolated and weary third in 2.39.06 - "my slowest-ever marathon".

The women's race was won in equally emphatic fashion by Gala veteran Pat Affleck who recorded 3.04.05 for 18<sup>th</sup> place overall in the field of 63 runners. Frances Florence of Shettleston was second in 3.11.29 and Val Goldie of Milburn claimed bronze for the second year in a row with a time of 3.47.46.

Big-time marathon running returned to Scotland in 1999 with Puma's decision to back a new race between Dunfermline and Edinburgh. With a huge budget, the organisers set about attracting a world-class field, and the SAF decided this was just the right sort of showcase event with which their championship should be linked. The route chosen between Scotland's ancient and modern capitals (a hilly one including the Forth Road Bridge) was not the easiest for the huge field of 5000 to negotiate. Not surprisingly any thoughts of British record times were soon thrown out of the window, but Mexico's Andres Espinosa did set a championship best performance when winning the title in 2.14.31 - bettering Jim Dingwall's 22 year-old mark. Wiclaw Mokaya of Poland was runner-up in 2.16.33 and Eliass Chelanga of Kenya took the bronze in 2.16.59. Although English runners had taken the top three places in the 1990 championship race, this was the first time that all three medals had left the British Isles. Glasgow-born Paul Evans, who has lived in Lowestoft for most of his days and has

represented England, was the first 'Scot' to complete the course when finishing fourth in 2.17.35. Evans and the next two Scotsmen - Jamie Reid of Law and District (2.25.39) and Martin Ferguson of City of Edinburgh (2.29.55) - were awarded special medals. The women's medals also went overseas with Kenya's Esther Kiplagat winning in 2.33.09 from Poland's Violetta Kryza (2.33.44) and Kenya's Angelina Kanana (2.34.48). Kiplagat's time was also a championship best, eclipsing Lynda Bain's 1984 effort of 2.41.41.

With the Edinburgh marathon falling by the wayside after just one year, due to the withdrawal of one of its major sponsors, the championship returned to Elgin for a third time in 2000 and was incorporated within the Macallan Moray festival of running.

The 1999 World 100km Champion, Simon Pride (Keith and District AC), gave the event a boost by declaring that he preferred going for a first Scottish title rather than defending his world crown in Holland.

Pride was born in Swansea but moved to Fochabers in the late 1980s and later worked there as a postman. He represented Wales in 800m and 1500m track races as a youngster and was in the same schools international team as World Champion hurdler Colin Jackson.

Simon's promising running career took a back seat after he left school to join the army at 17. Four years later he moved to Moray, where he settled with wife Linda and took a job as a roofer and sheet metal erector. Running remained a casual, but enjoyable, pastime until a frightening and nearly catastrophic industrial accident changed Pride's outlook on life.

He explained, "One day a nail was fired through my thigh bone just above the knee. It was probably the turning point as I thought my running days could well be over. Not only did the incident make me change jobs, it also shook me up into a training frenzy. For too long I had taken my running for granted. Within four months I had won my first GB vest."

Pride found international success in the world of ultra-distance running. His first 100km, in 1996, produced a Scottish championship bronze medal. The following year he was ninth in the European championships and by 1998 he had a top six finish in the world championship to his credit. Simon benefited from the wisdom of World 100 km record holder Don Ritchie, who lived relatively close by in Lossiemouth.

The Keith and District athlete's greatest triumph came in May 1999, in France, where he won the World title with a UK road best of 6 hours 24 minutes 05 seconds. It was a superb performance which took the ultra-marathon world by surprise.

Even more surprising was Simon's decision a year later not to defend the World title. "I need a break from ultras," he said at the time. He decided to concentrate on marathons for a while and, when the opportunity to bid for a Scottish title on his home patch presented itself, Pride was in no mood to miss out.

He was determined to win the Scottish championship - and equally keen to break the Moray course record of 2.25.38 set eight years earlier by Fraser Clyne. He achieved both with plenty to spare. Running on his own for almost the whole way, he took advantage of perfect conditions to stop the clock at 2.21.17. It was the quickest winning performance in the championships since 1984, the biggest winning margin ever, and was just 14 seconds outside his personal best set in London four months earlier.

Martin Ferguson (City of Edinburgh) was more than two and a half miles behind in second place (2.35.49) and Nick Milovsorov (Metro Aberdeen), who was 'training for the Amsterdam marathon later in the year' collected bronze in 2.40.04.

Kate Jenkins (Carnethy), who earlier in the summer had set a women's record for the 95 mile race along the West Highland Way, in which she finished second overall,

added another title to her growing list of endurance achievements, by taking the Scottish women's championship 3.04.21. Carol Cadger (Perth) won silver in 3.12.24 and Averil Dudek (Perth) struck bronze in 3.18.34



## **THE FUTURE (written by Fraser Clyne in 2000)**

Running through the pages of this book have been many varied characters producing a range of gritty performances. No one has ever run a really easy marathon; everyone has had to work hard; many have suffered. What matters is to do the best you can on the day: exploring your potential to the limit. Few experiences can be as satisfying as a really good marathon.

The 'marathon boom' has gone, although London and other big city events still capture the popular imagination. Nowadays adventure or multi-discipline events are fashionable. But there is a tough simplicity in the classic marathon which should ensure its survival for many years as a great personal and competitive challenge. If road-runners find ways of organising 10k and half-marathon races despite the disapproval of the police; if other event organisers can be inspired by the success of the 1999 Puma Edinburgh / SAF marathon; then marathons will continue to be contested, not only in London, on the continent of Europe and around the world but also in Scotland. This will maintain or even enhance the Scottish Marathon Championship's fine tradition.

## 2000 Onwards

*The Scottish Men's Marathon Championship in the 2000s was dominated by two runners; one was Simon Pride (2000, 2001, 2004 and 2006) and the other was Jamie Reid (2002, 2003 and 2007). Amongst the winners of the Women's title, Kate Jenkins, the Champion in 1997 and 2000, won again in 2003 and 2007. However Shona Crombie-Hicks and Ros Alexander (2005), Toni McIntosh (2009) and Trudi Thomson (2001) produced the fastest times during the decade, although Megan Crawford and Jennifer Emsley also ran well during 2013-2015).*



**Simon Pride after winning in Belfast**

Simon Pride's concentration from 2000 onwards on the marathon distance paid dividends. He recorded an excellent personal best of 2:16:27 in the 2001 London event and represented his adopted country, Scotland, in the Manchester Commonwealth Games marathon in 2002, finishing sixteenth.

After a brief return to ultra running when he finished third in the 2004 European 100K Championships in Faenza, Italy, Simon's running reverted once more to shorter distances. Marathon victories include Belfast, Dublin, Lochaber and the Loch Ness event. He was Scottish Marathon Champion four times, in 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2006 (variously representing Keith, Metro Aberdeen and Forres Harriers). In addition he won umpteen 10Ks, 10 milers and half marathons as well as the M35 title in the Scottish Masters Cross Country Championships. Simon Pride was talented, versatile, brave and tough and his finest achievements (all as a Scotsman) were absolutely outstanding.

The 2001 Scottish Marathon Championships, for both Men and Women, started and finished in Elgin, as part of the Moray Marathons series on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Athletics Weekly report by Fraser Clyne was as follows.

“Simon Pride (Metro Aberdeen RC) retained the Scottish marathon title with a comfortable victory over a field of 162 runners, but women's champion Trudi Thomson was in tears at the finish after missing the Commonwealth Games qualifying standards in tough conditions.

Pride, who clocked a Commonwealth qualifying time of 2.16.29 at London earlier this year, eased round the windswept course to finish in 2.28.34, well ahead of Martin Ferguson (City of Edinburgh - 2.32.50), who collected the silver medal for the second year in a row.

Ferguson had bravely tried to hold on to the former World 100km champion for much of the race but Pride proved to be much too strong over the last six miles. Robert Davidson (2.42.55) was third, while fourth placed Terry Coyle (2.43.48) was top M40.

The result virtually guarantees Pride a place in the Scottish team for next year's Commonwealth Games in Manchester. He said, ‘I felt quite comfortable but there was a very strong headwind in the closing four miles which made things difficult. The time was unimportant. I just wanted to win and I've achieved that, so now I can relax. I'm happy.’

Pride also led Metro Aberdeen Running Club to the team title on a day when the North-East outfit also won the half marathon and 10k team trophies.

Trudi Thomson (Pitreavie AAC) came to the Moray race hoping to get the Games qualifying standard of 2.40, but the strong winds ruined any hopes she had of achieving that mark. She said, "I so wanted to get the standard. It was very hard in the first ten miles but, despite that, I was still on schedule at 20. Then it all fell away. I am so disappointed. I cannot believe how tough it was at the finish."

Thomson, who was beaten by only six men, took little consolation from the fact that her 2.49.33 broke the course record of 2.51.09, set by Belgrave's Frances Guy in 1987. Carol Cadger (Perth Strathtay) was second in 3.20.57 and Scarlett Courtney (Milne's) took third spot in 3.21.54."

Carol Cadger was a durable athlete who won the Scottish 50km title four times, in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2002.

Despite the above reverse, near the end of a fine running career, Trudi Thomson had many highlights to look back upon. When she won her first Scottish Marathon title in 1992, she was only starting out. She raced a lot and was known for being a serious athlete who normally trained twice a day. At that time, a well-known former Scottish International steeplechaser and cross-country runner, John Linaker, advised her and was a frequent training companion. Trudi quickly became a good ultra-distance runner and in 1992 she also won the Two Bridges 36 mile classic in 4:48:51 and was to go on and win it in '93 and '94 as well. In 1993 she represented Great Britain in the World 100km Championships in Torhout and her team won silver medals.

In 1994 she won the Scottish veteran cross country and marathon titles, finished third in the UK Inter County 20 miles championship, and fifth in the Two Oceans 35 mile race in Cape Town. All this was merely training for an even more important race.



### **Trudi Thomson front-running a cross-country race**

In the World 100km Championship at Lake Saroma in Japan, Trudi finished second individual in the 100K world championships in the wonderful time of 7:42:17 which was a Scottish and British record for the distance. She went on to win her third Two Bridges 36 Miles in a much faster time than before – 4:06:45 which is still the course record for this famous event which has sadly been discontinued. The Edinburgh

to North Berwick 22.6 miles road race was also won in a course record of 2:15:31. In addition she set a new personal best in the Dublin Marathon, recording 2.43.18. All this in the year when she celebrated her 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.

As a cross-country runner, Trudi Thomson won five titles (three W35 and two W40) as well as, in 1999, achieving W40 victory in the prestigious annual British and Irish Masters International Cross Country.

In 1995 she improved to: 10k in 34.59; Half Marathon in 74.48; and Marathon (Dublin again - in 2.38.23). Subsequently she ran for GB in the World Marathon Championships in Gothenburg, where she finished 22<sup>nd</sup>, three places behind Fatuma Roba who had won the Olympic Marathon in Atlanta.

Trudi Thomson's successes continued for several years. For example, in 2000, the Valladolid Half Marathon was at the World Masters Championships where she won the W40 race in 78.16.



**Trudi (far right) in the Royal Mail Letters team that won the 2003 Corporate Challenge in New York**

In 2002, the Scottish Marathon Championship was held on 28<sup>th</sup> April, at the Lochaber Marathon in Fort William. Female gold medallist was Dawn Scott, twice silver medallist in the Scottish Hill Running Championship, from the local club Lochaber AC. Her time was 3.09.45. Second was Elaine Calder from Strathaven Striders (3.12.04) and third Debbie MacDonald from Hunter's Bog Trotters (3.20.51.)

Jamie Reid (Law and District AC) secured his first Scottish Marathon title, recording the good time of 2.21.46. Some distance behind was silver medallist Brian Fieldsend (Inverness Harriers - 2.35.02) and third-placed Martin Ferguson (EAC - 2.36.20).



**Jamie Reid**

Back in 2000 after finishing a fine ninth in the Scottish Cross Country Championship, Jamie Reid's 10k road best had been reduced to 30:49 and his marathon time (at London) to a lasting personal best of 2:21:16. Four weeks earlier he had taken the very last UK Inter Counties 20 Mile Championship at Spenborough in 1:47:59 running for the West of Scotland.

A very good year for Jamie Reid was 2002 when he ran 5000m in 14:35.43, 10,000m in 30:16.66, 10 miles in 49:46 and a half marathon in 67:07. In Lochaber, he ran right away from the rest of the field to win his first Scottish title in 2:21:46, just outside Simon Pride's course record. During the summer he took his only Scottish track title winning the 10,000m gold at Grangemouth on a Wednesday evening in 31:14.31. He then switched clubs from Law and District AAC to Ronhill Cambuslang Harriers. This resulted in many team successes for Jamie Reid, including a Scottish Cross Country Relay win in 2003; Six-Stage Relay titles in 2005 and 2007; and 2008 National Senior Cross Country victory.

In 2003 Jamie Reid reduced his ten mile time to 48:51. Then on 31<sup>st</sup> August in the Elgin Moray Marathon in Elgin, over a much slower course, he retained his Scottish title in 2:34:08, still three minutes ahead of his closest rival James Snodgrass (Kilbarchan AAC - 2.37.20), with Andreas Merdes (Lothian RC 2.39.58) third.



### **Jamie Reid in the Moray Marathon**

The 2003 Scottish Women's Marathon victor at Lochaber was the indefatigable Kate Jenkins of Carnethy Hill Runners. Despite the marathon not being her best event, Kate won her third title at the classic distance, recording 3.09.18, with Morag Taggart (Dundee Road Runners) second in 3.10.14 and Margaret Anderson (Stonehaven AC) winning bronze in 3.18.04.



Kate Jenkins has had a long and very varied running career. In 2001, *The Independent* wrote an article about extreme hill-running, and especially the previous year's West Highland Way race, including the following.

“More than 45 miles into the race, Kate Jenkins felt euphoric. On a hazy, sunny day she ran through birch-wood glades and over bubbling streams before careering into Glen Orchy in the Grampian Mountains. The formidable Ben Dorain towered over her path as she climbed steeply towards Loch Tulla, where the track headed north to Glen Coe.

Fifteen miles later, she was in desperate trouble. Her stomach was cramping, she felt faint and dizzy. Dehydration was setting in, she was losing her balance and she felt scared. In the middle of the desolate Rannoch Moor – a sombre expanse of peat bog covering 20 square miles – she started to panic. She had 35 miles still to run, and she didn't know if she could manage five.

Kate, 27, who works for Scottish Forest Enterprise, was running the West Highland Way, from the suburbs of Glasgow to Fort William. For most fit people, it is a formidable 95-mile walk. For an elite few, it is an awe-inspiring hill run. In 18 years of races, fewer than 150 runners have finished; the West Highland Way is at the extreme end of a tough sport.”

“Kate Jenkins did eventually finish the 95 punishing miles of the West Highland Way in a record time of 17 hours 37 minutes. Holding off the dehydration, she fought through "a long silent spell of despair where I was convinced I had reached the limit".

“It changed my life,” says Kate, who only began hill running seriously in 1996. “It makes you realise you are something you never knew you were. I wanted to spend more time with people who have experienced the same emotions. It is a high I will never experience again.”

Kate ran an incredible amount of races on all surfaces, for Gala Harriers, Carnethy Hill Runners and HBT. Between 1997 and 2012 she won the Moray Marathon twelve times! In addition she was Scottish Hill Running Champion in 1999 and 2001; and first Woman in the West Highland Way Race five times: 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2006. (She also won the 2004 Lairig Ghru Hill Race, which was 28 miles long, accompanied by Ben, the First Dog!)



### **Kate Jenkins en route to winning the 2006 West Highland Way Race**

Simon Pride (Metro Aberdeen RC) was back to form in 2004, winning his third Scottish Marathon title with considerable ease. The event was held in Fort William once again, on 25<sup>th</sup> April, and Simon ran right away to secure gold in 2.21.21; with Andreas Merdes second in 2.37.50 and John Duffy (Shettleston H) third in 2.44.32.

Scottish Women's Marathon Champion was Janet Laing (Portobello AC - 3.12.09), from Elaine Calder (Strathaven S - 3.3.18.44) and Maggie Creber (Carnethy HRC - 3.19.14).

In 2005, the event shifted to the Edinburgh Marathon. This had received significant sponsorship and was a genuinely Big City Marathon. The route had been changed to eliminate the tougher hills and was now a much faster course. Feedback from some of the competitors was generally positive: it was considered scenic and well-organised if a little expensive. There were 4421 finishers.



## Edinburgh Marathon 2005

Africans filled seven of the first eight places. Zachary Kihara was first man in 2.15.26; and Russian Zinaida Semenova first woman in 2.33.36.

However Scottish Women's Marathon Champion (fourth overall) was Shona Crombie-Hicks (Bourton) in the good time of 2.44.58; silver medallist Ros Alexander (Carnegie H - 2.48.25) was fifth overall); and bronze went to Elka Schmidt (Bellahouston RR - 2.54.16), seventh overall.

Scottish Men's Marathon Champion (ninth overall) was Robert Gilroy (Ronhill Cambuslang H - 2.26.42); in front of his club-mate Jamie Reid (2.30.51); and third was durable former Scottish International Marathon runner Frank Harper (Carnegie H - 2.35.54).

Frank Harper, aged 47, was first M40 in this Edinburgh Marathon. In 1986 he was fourth (first Scot) and set a new best of 2.18.44 while running for his country in the Glasgow Marathon. Then in 1988, Hammy Cox and he were first and second in the Aberdeen Marathon. When Doug Cowie (Forres Harriers) finished fifth, this ensured that Scotland defeated England (as well as Wales) for the only time in the Aberdeen Home International Marathon series.

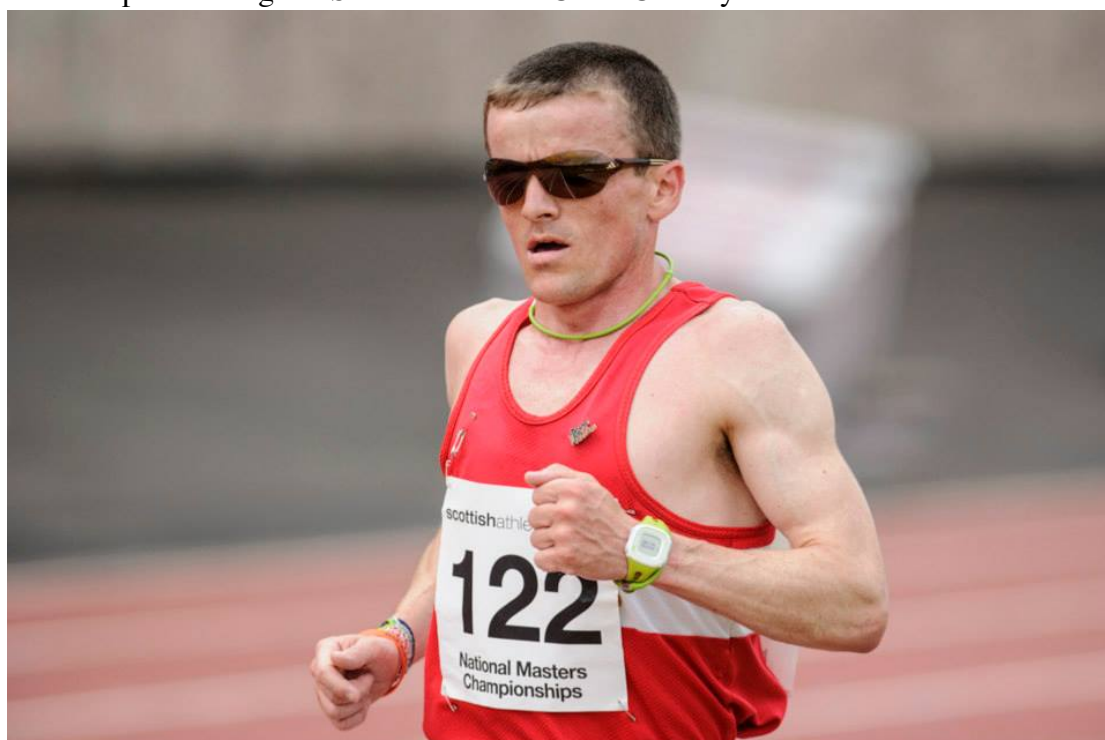


### **Shona Crombie-Hicks**

Shona Crombie-Hicks was a former jockey who took up running to control her weight. She came originally from Aberdeen but moved to Portsmouth when young. Having become a marathon runner, she won her first three races: in Lanzarote,

Manchester and Copenhagen. She was selected for the Scottish Marathon team in the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games but had to withdraw due to injury. Undaunted, once recovered she entered the 2003 Flora 1000-mile challenge, walking one mile every hour for 1000 hours, and finishing by running the London Marathon. The event started on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003. At 8.45 a.m. on April 13<sup>th</sup>, the five remaining competitors completed the 1000 miles together. Then they ran the London Marathon - and Shona Crombie-Hicks was by far the fastest, recording 3 hours 8 minutes! Later on, Shona set records for marathons in Lanzarote, Jersey and Guernsey. Her personal best time was an excellent 2.38.42 in the 2005 Berlin Marathon; and she also competed for Scotland in the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

As late as 2015, Robert Gilroy has continued to improve, due to hard training, involving well over 100 miles per week. He lifted the Scottish 10 miles road title in 2014; and has had many M35 victories including the British Masters Cross Country Championship; as well as many successes with formidable Cambuslang Harriers teams, for example winning the Scottish Masters Cross Country .



**Robert Gilroy**

## **2006**

At the Loch Ness Marathon, near Inverness, Scottish Women's Marathon Champion was Jennifer MacLean (City of Edinburgh - 2.58.57); second Iona Robertson (Bellahouston RR - 3.14.02); and third Erica Christie (Bellahouston H - 3.14.10).

Jennifer MacLean also won the 2007 Scottish Half Marathon Championship; and the Scottish Masters Half Marathon title in 2013. In 2009 and 2010 she was victorious in the W35 Scottish Masters Cross Country Championships.

Simon Pride (Forres Harriers) won his fourth and final Scottish Marathon title in 2.22.25; in front of the consistent Jamie Reid (Cambuslang - 2.24.04); and Stephen Wylie (Cambuslang - 2.30.09).

Stephen Wylie enjoyed considerable success during his running career. For example he won the Scottish 10 miles road title in 1993; was first in the Scottish Half Marathon Championship in 2003 and 2004; and lifted the Scottish M35 Masters Cross



Country crown in 2009. Of course he had shared in many team wins with redoubtable Cambuslang teams.

### **2007**

In Elgin, at the Moray Marathon, the Scottish Women's Marathon title was won, for fourth and final time, by Kate Jenkins (Carnethy HRC - 3.10.43); in front of K. McKinnon (Carnegie H - 3.16.27); and L Schumacher (3.18.09).

Jamie Reid (Cambuslang - 2.33.11) won his third Scottish Marathon title, gaining revenge on Simon Pride (Forres H - 2.33.46). Bronze medallist was David Gardiner (Kirkintilloch - 2.38.07).

Jamie Reid wrote very frankly about this race: “My most recent Scottish title was at Elgin in 2007 where I had my first marathon victory over Simon Pride. The previous day, my girlfriend Roisin and I had driven north as she was competing in a six-a-side shinty tournament near Inverness for her club, Tir Connail Harps from Glasgow. I spent the afternoon watching the tournament, drinking diluting juice and eating large amounts of cake! Afterwards we drove to a B&B in Elgin where we checked in and went out for a meal. We settled for some pizza and relaxed talking about the shinty that afternoon and the race the next day. I wasn't really nervous as I wasn't expecting much as recent races hadn't gone particularly well. I had hit the over-training button again as I had logged a tremendous mileage (maximum of 144 miles per week), switching to this after my best ever fifth place at the National Cross-Country Championships in February. It hadn't improved me, only made me worse. Never mind, I entered the marathon, hoped for a solid run and then I could look forward to the autumn relays – my favourite part of the season. The morning of the race we had coffee in the hall after picking my number up. I saw that Simon Pride was entered, along with Adam Reid from Peterhead and David Gardner from Kirkintilloch whom I knew fairly well.

Early pace was slow as the four of us settled down and let the countryside pass by. The day was warming up and there was little wind. I managed to get some drinks from Roisin as the race progressed, with the pace beginning to pick up as we passed Burghead (c14 miles). Simon and David pulled away and I knew it was too fast for me. In the distance I could see Simon moving ahead of David, but as we neared Lossiemouth, I could see I was gaining some ground. The sun by now was shining fiercely and I could sense a silver medal. I managed to pass David in Lossiemouth offering words of encouragement to each other, and I now looked to see how far ahead Simon was. He was out of sight.

Still, always believe – funny things can happen in the marathon. I finally caught sight of him as we entered the woods around 20 miles and I checked his lead in seconds. I can't remember exactly but it must have been at least a minute. After a mile or so, I checked again – it was now around six or seven seconds less. A quick calculation in my head told me it would be close if we maintained the same pace, so I pushed on. Three miles to go, I could see Simon more clearly now and I calculated I could catch him by the end if we both maintained the same pace. Roisin was at this point in the car and she drove quickly back to the finish.

Every step was taking me closer to Simon now and the Scottish title was back in my head. What will happen when I catch him? How much has he left? Is he tiring or just unaware that I'm coming through? I caught Simon just as we entered the outskirts of Elgin, around a mile to go, and I decided to give it a push on to try to discourage any attempt to try to stay with me. Thankfully for me it worked and I went on to win in 2:33:11 with Simon not far behind and David taking bronze – marathon title Number Three! A slow time for all three of us, and perhaps highlighting the dropping standard,

but it was one of the few marathon races I've run which had been tactical and a real 'race'. I knew that, due to injuries, Simon had been past his best (although he had won the Scottish Masters M35 title in 2006), and neither David nor I had been at our peak, but it remained a very happy day for me. The rest was spent celebrating with ice-creams in Lossiemouth before driving south to Aviemore where we spent the night and I stuffed myself with burger and chips, washed down with chocolate fudge cake and ice cream!"

### **2008**

At the Lochaber Marathon, near Fort William, the Scottish Women's Marathon Champion was Rebecca Johnson (3.05.18); in front of Louise Beveridge (Metro Aberdeen RC - 3.13.38); and Kate Jenkins (Gala Harriers - 3.15.35).

The Scottish Men's Marathon title was won by Stuart Kerr (Kirkintilloch - 2.34.01); in front of Keith Buchan (Fraserburgh AAC - 2.43.12); and Paul Hart (Dumfries RC - 2.45.10).

### **2009**

In the Edinburgh Marathon, Scottish Women's Marathon Champion was Toni McIntosh (Ayr Seaforth AAC - 2.47.18); in front of Jennifer MacLean (EAC - 2.51.37); and Izzy Menzies (3.02.45).

Earlier in 2009, Toni McIntosh had won a silver medal in the Scottish National Cross Country Championship, behind multiple winner Freya Murray (who went on to run for GB in the 2012 London Olympic Marathon). While at Stirling University, Toni was Scottish Half Marathon victor in 2003 and 2004. In 2009 she won not only the Scottish Marathon but also the 10k and Half Marathon titles! In addition Toni was first Briton in the 2009 Great Scottish Run.



**Toni McIntosh (right) on the podium after the 2009 Scottish Cross Country Championship.**

The Scottish Men's Marathon title went to Martin Williams (Ronhill Cambuslang Harriers) in the good time of 2.18.24. Second was his team-mate Chris Wilson (2.26.36); and third Robert Turner (Harmeny AC - 2.33.50)

Martin Williams was based in the Midlands and ran for Tipton Harriers and the Police. In 2011 he won a silver medal in the Scottish Half Marathon Championship. However his peak was in 2010. After a fine 2.17.36 in the Seville Marathon he ran representative marathons for Scotland in the Delhi Commonwealth Games and for GB in the Barcelona European Championships.

In 2010, the Scottish Marathon Championship, for the first time, was held outside Scotland - as part of the London Marathon, which is held on an extremely fast course. One effect of this innovation was that the winning times were much faster than usual. Two of our very best athletes: Susan Partridge and Andrew Lemoncello were worthy gold medallists.

Susan Partridge (VP City of Glasgow) won in 2.35.57, the fastest time set by a Scot in the history of the Scottish Marathon. Second was Shona McIntosh (HBT - 2.48.46) and third Nathalie Christie (EAC - 2.55.52). Shona won four Scottish Cross Country Championship team medals with the Bog Trotters, including gold in 2011. In London 2015 she improved her marathon best to an impressive 2.40.14.

Andrew Lemoncello (Fife AC) finished in 2.13.40, which was also the fastest time set by a Scot in the history of the Scottish Marathon; while Englishman Neil Renault (Edinburgh AC) recorded 2.18.29 for the silver medal; and Ross Houston (Central AC) ran 2.22.49 for bronze. Neil Renault's fastest Half Marathon was an impressive 64.47; and he also won a silver medal in the 2012 Scottish Half Marathon.

For Susan Partridge this was merely one significant mark in a long, successful running career. In 2011 she represented Great Britain in the World Championship marathon in Daegu, Korea. Her international progress before that was impressive. She competed in: the World and also the European cross-country championships (helping Britain to team gold in the latter); the 2006 Commonwealth marathon; the 2010 European Marathon; and she had top-thirty places from the World Road Running and World Half-Marathon Championships.

She made an early impact on the Scottish cross-country scene, winning the National under-17 title in both 1996 and 1997. In 2003, Susan won the Scottish Athletics Federation Cross-Country title and then became Scottish Champion at 5000m.

In the 2005 London Marathon, Susan Partridge progressed to 2.37.50. In October, she ran for GB in the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in Edmonton, Canada, finishing 25<sup>th</sup> in 73.49, only a few seconds slower than her personal best of 73.10, which was set when she won the Bath Half Marathon in March.

2006 was Commonwealth Games year and Susan's preparations included a PB 10k (33.19) and a good half-marathon (73.14) in Spain, before finishing a solid tenth (2.39.54) in Melbourne, Australia on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March.

After some slightly less impressive performances, the 2010 London Marathon showed a return to form. As second British woman home, she was selected as part of the GB team for the European Championships at the end of July. After a couple of weeks rest, she got back into 90 to 100 miles per week training. In the heat and humidity of Barcelona she finished in 2.39.07 and Michelle Ross-Cope (14<sup>th</sup>), Susan (16<sup>th</sup>) and Holly Rush (20<sup>th</sup>) were the three scorers for the six-women GB team which won European Cup bronze medals.

The 2011 London Marathon produced a new PB (2.34.13), 25<sup>th</sup> place (3<sup>rd</sup> British woman) and selection for the World Marathon Championships in Korea at the end of August. There, in stifling conditions, she ran a calm, sensible race and came through strongly to finish a meritorious 24<sup>th</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> GB, 6<sup>th</sup> European), in 3.25.57) from the 54 starters.

London 2013 produced another outstanding run. *The Scotsman* reported: "When eventual winner Priscah Jeptoo pulled away, the Scot maintained a steady pace to cross the line 9<sup>th</sup> in 2.30.46, a time three minutes quicker than her previous best and good enough for fifth in the Scottish all-time rankings, earning a trip to Moscow in August for the World Championships marathon. After being the top British woman and inside

the qualifying standard, the only question was whether Partridge (who also secured the 2014 Commonwealth Games standard) wanted to go to Moscow, and she certainly did.”



### **Susan Partridge moving strongly in the Moscow World Marathon**

The afternoon of the tenth of August 2013 was a very humid afternoon in the Russian capital, when 72 athletes started the Women’s World Championship Marathon. Susan, who by now had a full-time job as a researcher in joint replacement at the University of Leeds, set off very carefully, well down the field. After reaching the finish in the Luzhniki Stadium, Olympic Park, she said, “It was all about places today. I was way back at the start and for a minute wondered if I’d been a little bit cautious, but once I got my rhythm going I started to come back and pick people off.” Live television coverage made clear how well Susan was moving up throughout the entire race. Eventually she crossed the line in 2.36.24 to secure a fine tenth place (third European). In the history of the event, Great Britain previously had only four top-ten finishers: Paula Radcliffe (1<sup>st</sup> in 2005); Joyce Smith (9<sup>th</sup> in 1983); Mara Yamauchi (9<sup>th</sup> in 2007); and Sally Ellis (10<sup>th</sup> in 1991).



**Freya Ross, Susan Partridge and Steph Twell after the 2014 Great Scottish Run Half Marathon.**



Then, in 2014, Susan represented Scotland in the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Marathon. Boldly, she kept up with the fast early pace but eventually, as first Briton, had to settle for sixth place in 2.32.18.

Susan said that she had no regrets and had given herself a real chance - a medal would have been great but “It was an unbelievable experience” in front of the cheering home crowd.



**Susan Partridge in Glasgow**

Andrew Lemoncello was an extremely successful Scottish male distance athlete, although his career was hampered by injury. Andrew grew up in St Andrews and attended Madras College. He joined Fife AC and was coached for several years by Ron Morrison.

Andrew showed immense promise, even before he was thirteen. Then he went on to win the Scottish Junior National CC in both 2002 (when Fife was first team as well) and 2003. In addition he had started running the steeplechase, winning the Scottish 2000m title in the appropriate year – 2000.

Andrew was offered a scholarship to Florida State University in Tallahassee, which let him train and race regularly with top athletes. 2005 was a busy and successful year. After a hectic Spring season in America, producing a number of track bests, in July Andrew triumphed at the AAA Championships, winning the steeplechase in 8.33.93. Subsequently he was selected for the Great Britain team for the Helsinki World Championships. As part of his build-up he won the Scottish 5000m title; but unfortunately did not get past the heats in Finland.

2007 was World Championship year once more and Andrew Lemoncello responded well. He won the Scottish East District CC championship, followed by a demanding series of races in America. A highlight was second place (behind Kenya's Barnabas Kirui) in the NCAA steeplechase championships in June. Shortly after that, he was third in the European Cup. Then in Metz, France, Andrew ran a new steeplechase best of 8.23.74; and then won the GB World Trials and AAA

Championship. Sadly, although he had no trouble retaining his Scottish 5000m title once more, Andrew fell ill, suffered side effects from an unfamiliar energy gel, and really struggled in his World Championship heat in Osaka. When he was interviewed (for The Winning Zone) a couple of months later, Andrew vowed to learn from the experience and also stated that he believed that he could indeed continue to be world class and that his longer term ambition was to become a successful marathon runner.



2008 was Olympic year. In March, having been fourth in the Inter-Counties CC selection race, Andrew Lemoncello ran for Britain in the World CC Championships in Edinburgh. He finished third in the European Cup steeplechase once again, and shortly afterwards came third in the AAA Olympic Trials. At the last moment he qualified for the GB team by running an outstanding new best of 8.22.95 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July in the Paris Golden League. However he did not qualify from his heat in Beijing, despite running a decent time of 8.36.06. In retrospect, he believed he peaked too early. Then he came back to Scotland and, for the fourth year in succession, won the Scottish 5000m title, this time defeating the two Shettleston Eritreans.

Having retired from steeplechasing, Andrew Lemoncello pursued his marathon aspirations by concentrating mainly on the road, although in April 2009 he did run a very good PB for 10,000m (27.57.23) in California. Having run a Texan downhill half-marathon in 61.52, Andrew represented GB yet again, this time in the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in Birmingham, where he finished a respectable 26<sup>th</sup> (First Briton) in 63.03. Then in December he was 29<sup>th</sup> in the European CC Championships in Dublin.

After a hard winter grinding out the miles, Andrew Lemoncello was ready to make his debut in the 2010 London Marathon, and although he had hoped to go a little faster, was quite happy about his eighth place (first Briton) and time of 2.13.40. When he continued to show fitness by being first man in for the UK at the Great North Run Half Marathon in September 2010, and had a number of good runs in 2011, all seemed well for London 2012. Sadly, Andrew Lemoncello tore a hamstring before he had a very bad time in the Fukuoka Marathon in December 2011 and did not have time to prepare for the Olympic Selection race at London (in April 2012). He did finish fifteenth (and second Brit in 2.15.24) but the time was too slow for the team.

Unfortunately, by the time the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games came round, Andrew Lemoncello had not shaken off his injury problems. Nevertheless he acquitted himself well in the 10,000m, finishing twelfth and first Briton.



**Andrew Lemoncello in Glasgow**

(The following section, from 2011 to 2015, is based almost entirely on reports by that former World-Class marathon runner and current eminent sports journalist, Fraser Clyne.)

**2011**

Great Britain international Tomas Abyu (Salford Harriers) defeated a field of more than 3,000 runners to win the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Baxter's Loch Ness marathon yesterday while runner-up Ross Houston (Central AC) turned in a fine performance to collect the Scottish national title.



**Ross Houston in 2012**

Abyu, who also won in 2003 and 2010, recorded 2hr 20min 50secs to finish 15secs ahead of Houston who was rewarded with a personal best time.

Although there was little between the top two at the end of the 26.2 mile race, Abyu felt he was always in control. He said "I had a very good run in the second half of the race. Ross Houston was pushing the pace, but I felt very comfortable."

Houston, who won the Scottish 10Km title a fortnight ago, was also happy with the outcome. He said "We were running together until the 16 mile mark when Tomas made a break. I couldn't stay with him, but after a while the gap he had opened never increased. I finished quite strongly, which was pleasing and I'm delighted to win the Scottish title. I had hoped to get under 2:20 but that will have to wait for another day."



Chris Wilson (Ronhill Cambuslang) clocked 2:25:15 to take third position for the second time in three years. His club-mate Kerry-Liam Wilson won bronze in 2.31.06.

Veteran Lisa Finlay (Dumfries Running Club) set a personal best time of 2:59:14 to win the Scottish Women's Marathon title, as well as the Scottish Masters gold medal. [She went on to win the Scottish 10 miles title in 2014; as well as Scottish Masters titles in 2014 (10 miles); 2013 (Marathon) and 2015 (Half Marathon).]

Shettleston's Carole Setchell (3.02.56) slashed her best time by 15 mins to take the silver medal while ultra distance specialist Gail Murdoch (Carnegie Harriers) took bronze in 3:09:37.

Finlay said "There were a lot of good runners taking part, making for stiff competition. I ran my own race, sticking to my plan and was delighted to win, and even knocked a few seconds of my previous best. It's a lovely course and the spectators along the route were really warm and supportive."

Bellahouston's Erica Christie maintained her remarkable record of consistency when finishing eighth. The Glasgow athlete has been an ever-present since the race was first held in 2002 and has never finished outside the top ten.

## **2012**

Ross Houston destroyed a field of 3,960 competitors to win yesterday's Baxters Loch Ness marathon at Inverness and in doing so the 32 year-old Central AC athlete picked up the Scottish men's title for the second year in a row.

The race got off to a flying start with German athlete Oleg Ranzow setting a hot pace which only Houston tried to match. After five miles, however, Ranzow began to fall back leaving Houston with the unenviable task of running the rest of the route on his own from the front. He battled on bravely to complete the course in 2hours 20 minutes 24 seconds which was just 11 seconds outside the course record set by Kenya's Simon Tonui in 2009.

Houston said "We were doing five minute miling for the first few miles which was probably too fast. I was on my own after about four or five miles, and that was quite hard, but despite that I still thought I could get under 2hr 20mins. From about the 20 mile mark, however, I found it hard and I just wanted it to be over. But it's another step forward for me and it's great to win this race and the national title."

Ranzow paid for his early exuberance and finished 13<sup>th</sup> in 2:50:27.

Aberdeen's Ben Hukins came through to take second position in 2:29:17 after a hard battle with Ronhill Cambuslang's Kerry-Liam Wilson who picked up the bronze medal in 2:30:36.

Hukins said "It was tough. I realised after about 10 miles that I wasn't going to get the time I was hoping for, so I just concentrated on finishing as well as I could. Kerry-Liam caught me at 22 miles so I had to work hard to get away from him again to get second position." Ben Hukins had previously had success on the track, having won four Scottish Championship bronze medals: one for 1500m and three for 10,000m.

Terence Forrest from Grantown on Spey won the Gerald Cooper Memorial Trophy for the first Highland runner to complete the marathon. Forrest recorded 2:48:34 for 10<sup>th</sup> position.

Avril Mason (Shettleston Harriers) ran a well-judged race to win the Scottish Women's Marathon title in 2:54:54 which is a lifetime best by 23secs. She also won the Scottish Masters gold medal.

She said "I'm pleased to win, but to be honest I was hoping for a quicker time. The pace was too fast early on. I ran with Lisa Finlay and Jill Knowles for the first nine miles. I got away from Jill around the halfway mark and I was clear of Lisa after about

17 miles. It's nice to win the Scottish title as it's my first championship medal, and to be quite close to a personal best time is also pleasing." Avril also won Scottish Masters titles in 2014 (Half Marathon) and 2015 (10 miles).

Finlay (Dumfries Running Club), last year's winner, had to settle for the silver medal on this occasion, but took some consolation from running her fastest ever marathon time of 2:57:55. She said "I'm inside my personal best but I don't think I ran too well as I started too fast and I was hanging on towards the end. "Avril ran beautifully and judged it very well."

Jill Knowles (Scottish Prison Service AC) took the bronze medal when recording 3:03:07 on her marathon debut.

Erica Christie (Bellahouston Harriers), who has now competed in all 11 Baxters Loch Ness marathons, maintained her fine record in the race by finishing first in the over-50 age group, 11th overall, in the women's division of the race with a time of 3:12:46.



### **Ross Houston in the 2014 Commonwealth Games Marathon**

Ross Houston has had an excellent running career. As a member of Central AC (and Aberdeen University) he played a big part in Central's team wins in the National Cross-Country Championships - in 2011, 2012 (when he won individual bronze), 2013 and 2015. Ross won the Scottish 10k title in 2011; and the Scottish Half Marathon in 2012. Concentrating on the marathon, in 2013 he ran 2.18.28 in Frankfurt. In 2014 Ross ran for Scotland in the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Marathon, finishing 16<sup>th</sup> in a good time of 2.18.42. His Scottish team-mate, Kilbarchan's Derek Hawkins, was ninth (2.14.15) and first Briton. Then in 2015, Ross Houston tried ultra-distance and was an immediate success: racing to a clear win (6.43.35) in the Anglo-Celtic Plate 100km, which won him not only the Scottish title but also the Home Countries International match.

**2013**

Kenyan Tarus Elly was in commanding form as he cruised to an impressive victory ahead in yesterday's Baxters Loch Ness marathon. The Manchester-based athlete, who comes originally from the western Kenyan village of Eldoret which has produced so many world class distance runners over the years, was making his marathon debut.

The 28 year-old never looked to be in any danger of losing and although his winning time of 2hr 27min 21sec was more than seven minutes outside the course record set by his compatriot Simon Tonui in 2009, Elly looked as though he is capable of running faster in the future.

He said "I was very cautious at the start because it was my first marathon. But after six miles I was feeling good and I thought that the other guys wouldn't be able to stay with me. I began to pull away and ran the rest of the race on my own. Before the start I was looking for a time of between 2:28 and 2:30, so I am very happy to get 2:27. The course is really good and I couldn't believe how perfect the conditions were. It was amazing. Now that I've done my first marathon I know what it's all about and I'd really like to come back next year and hopefully run much quicker."

Edinburgh University's Patryk Gierjatowicz, picked up the Scottish marathon title when finishing runner-up in 2:30:39. The postgraduate maths student becomes the first Polish athlete to win the national title. Although delighted to win the award Gierjatowicz was disappointed with his time.

He said "I'm pleased to be Scottish champion but my time wasn't so good as its about four minutes outside my best. I slowed down quite a lot over the final two miles. It's frustrating because I have been injured recently and wasn't able to do all the training I wanted to do."

Ross Clark (Hunters Bog Trotters - 2.36.05) smashed his previous best time to finish in third position overall and second in the national championship. He said "I can't believe it. I've taken seven minutes off my previous best time which I set at Rotterdam last year. I've trained really hard for this race and I was aiming for a place in the top ten but to finish third and win a national medal is just amazing. I had an added incentive as I was also running to raise funds for Yorkhill children's hospital as my nephew was looked after there and I wanted to support their work." Roger Van Gompel (Dundee Hawkhill Harriers - 2.36.35) won Scottish bronze.

Megan Crawford (Fife AC) enjoyed a marathon debut to savour by setting a new course record of 2hr 46min 37secs to win the Baxters Loch Ness marathon women's title and the Scottish championship gold medal. The Edinburgh-based runner shaved two secs off the previous leading mark for the course set by Ethiopia's Dinknesh Mekash Tefara in 2010. Crawford pulled away from Romanian favourite Alina Nituleasa after the halfway mark and went on to win by more than three minutes.

She was ecstatic about winning the race and collecting her first national title. She said "I had absolutely no expectations as it was my first marathon but it's a nice feeling to win. I knew I was running well in the lead up to the race as I finished third in the Moray half marathon recently. After that I felt I could run a decent marathon time but I had no idea how it might go. I ran with the Romanian runner until around the halfway point when I began to get away and from there on I just kept going."

Nituleasa was well below her best when finishing second in 2:50:21. The Romanian blamed her exhausting travel arrangements for contributing to the result. She said: "I had a three hour train journey from my home to the airport, then a three hour flight to London. Then I was on a bus for 13 hours to get here. In all, it took me 26 hours so I was very tired."

Lisa Finlay (Dumfries), who won in 2011 and was runner-up last year, finished in third position in 2:52:25, but she was delighted with the outcome. She said "I've got to be pleased because it's a personal best time by more than two minutes." Lisa was also first in the over-40 age division of the Scottish championship and second overall.

Carole Setchell (Shettleston Harriers), who was second in 2011, set a personal best time of 2:57:10 to take the Scottish bronze medal when finishing fourth overall.



**Patryk Gierjatowicz (907) racing hard in an Edinburgh University vest.**

#### 2013 RESULTS BAXTERS LOCH NESS MARATHON

Men: 1 T. Elly (Salford) 2hr 27min 21sec; 2 P. Gierjatowicz (Edinburgh University) 2:30:49; 3 R. Clark (Hunters Bog Trotters) 2:36:05; 4 R. Van Gompel (Dundee Hawkhill Harriers, over-40) 2:36:35; 5 R. Smith 2:37:39; 6 A. Simpson 2:41:42; 7 W. Dashper 2:42:22; 8 R. Spooner 2:43:21; 9 C. Hill (Cosmic Hillbashers) 2:43:43; 10 A. Rouse (Edinburgh AC) 2:44:02. Over-40: 2 R. Harrison 2:51:35; 3 A. Howlett 2:52:12.

Over-50: 1 P. Davies 2:48:42; 2 A. Kot 2:58:21; 3 T. Coyle 3:02:46. Over-60: 1 R. Blake 3:19:15; 2 T. Summerscales 3:41:46; 3 G. Arthur 3:43:13.

Women: 1 M. Crawford (Fife AC) 2:46:37; 2 A. Nituleasa (Romania) 2:50:21; 3 L. Finlay (Dumfries, over-40) 2:52:25; 4 C. Setchell (Shettleston) 2:57:10; 5 J. Malko (Corstorphine) 2:58:30; 6 J. Emsley (Central AC) 2:58:40; 7 J. Gordon (Kinross) 3:02:23; 8 C. Black (Shetland) 3:04:31; 9 V. Hunter 3:07:25; 10: K. Morgan 3:08:22. Over-40: 2 G. Beaton 3:10:25; 3 B. Gibson 3:11:13. Over-50: 1 I. Burnett (Carnegie Harriers) 3:17:13; 2 E. Christie (Bellahouston) 3:18:48; 3 C. Catterson (VP Glasgow) 3:20:13. Over-60: 1 J. MacLeod (Metro Aberdeen) 4:04:28; 2 L. Gray (Inverness) 4:20:59; 3 E. Hendry 4:24:19.

#### 2014

Manchester-based Tomas Abyu returned from a lengthy spell of training in Ethiopia to claim his fourth Loch Ness Marathon title in fine style today (Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September)



The African athlete looked composed throughout the 26.2 mile race which started on the high ground between Fort Augustus and Foyers and followed a route along the south shores of Loch Ness before finishing at the Bught Park in Inverness.

Abyu, who is a former Great Britain international, sprinted strongly through the finishing tape in 2hr 22min 41sec to add to his previous victories in 2003, 2010 and 2011.

He said I've been training in Ethiopia for a long time and I only returned last week when I decided to do the race. I felt quite easy for the first 16 miles, then it got tougher, but I had been able to pull away from the others before halfway so I just kept it going.

"I like running here. The countryside is very nice and it's a good course. I certainly want to come back again next year to defend my title. In the meantime I hope to recover quickly so I can do the Yorkshire marathon in a couple of weeks from now."

Edinburgh-based Polish athlete Patryk Gierjatowicz (Hunters Bog Trotters) collected the Scottish title for the second year in a row when finishing in the runner-up position in a personal best 2:24:17, while last year's Loch Ness champion Tarus Elly (Salford) was third in 2:25:37.

With neither Abyu nor Elly being eligible for Scottish medals, the national silver went to Kerry Liam-Wilson (Ron Hill Cambuslang Harriers), who was fourth overall in 2:28:56 and the bronze was collected by John Sharp (Inverclyde AC) who was fifth in 2:31:58. Wilson also won the over-40 age group title.

Kerry-Liam Wilson has been the outstanding M35/M40 Scottish Veteran Harrier for several years. Kerry has won: five BMAF titles (two cross-country, ten miles, 10k and 5k); 24 Scottish Masters championships (including three marathon titles); and nine SVHC. In 2015, he contested the World Masters Marathon in Lyon, France, finishing fourth overall (3<sup>rd</sup> M40) after a truly valiant effort. He was first Briton and helped GB to team silver. He runs huge mileages in training and deserves every success.

As a Senior, Kerry-Liam won bronze medals in the Scottish Marathon championship in 2011 and 2012; before improving to silver with a personal best 2.28.58 in 2014. He also won bronze in the 2013 Scottish Half Marathon Championship.



**Kerry-Liam Wilson in the 2015 World Masters Marathon**

There was a dramatic finish to the women's race in which Jenn Emsley (Central AC) held off a late challenge from title-holder Megan Crawford (Fife C) to take the top prize in a new course record time of 2:46:10, knocking 27secs off the previous standard. Crawford was also inside the old record, which she set twelve months earlier, when finishing just 15 secs behind, while Shona McIntosh took the bronze in 2:53:15.

Emsley was delighted with her day's work which in addition to the record yielded a Scottish title, a personal best time and a winner's cheque for £1,500.

She said: "I am very happy but surprised to have run a quicker time than I did at the London marathon, as I think Loch Ness is a harder course. But my training had been going well and I feel I've finally justified the hard work I've been doing."

"There were four of us for the first 10 miles then the Romanian runner, Alina Nituleasa, dropped back. Megan then seemed to drop back and I eventually pulled away from Shona. Then, near the end, I could see that Megan was beginning to close up on me again so it was just a case of keeping going and not getting caught."

Crawford had mixed feelings about her performance which was admirable given that she suffered from stomach problems throughout the race. She said "I'm a bit annoyed but at the same time I'm really happy for Jenn. I had to stop so many times during the race because of my dodgy tummy and every time I got going I was trying to make up ground. I eventually got past Shona and then began to close on Jenn. I am convinced that if there was another mile I might have caught her."



### **Jenn Emsley and Patryk Gierajowicz: 2014 Scottish Marathon Champions**

Terry Forrest (Cairngorm Runners) won the HSPC Gerald Cooper Memorial Cup, presented to the first Highland runner, for the third year in a row when he completed the course in 2:39:13. This was an impressive performance given that he started at the very back of the field.

Erica Christie (Bellahouston Harriers), who has competed in all 13 Baxters Loch Ness marathons, maintained her fine record of consistency by winning the over-50 women's title in 3:14:20.

### **2015**

Record-breaker Megan Crawford was in exuberant mood after winning the women's title in today's Baxters Loch Ness marathon. The Fife AC runner completed the scenic Highland course in a time of 2hrs 44min 50secs to obliterate the previous

women's record of 2:46:10 set by Central AC's Jenn Wetton last year when Crawford finished 15secs behind in second position.



#### **Megan Crawford celebrates her 2015 victory**

Belgrave's Gatensch Tamirat, the 2014 Jersey marathon champion, finished second in 2:57:44 with Shona McManus (Kelvin Runners - Scottish silver medal) pipping Gillian Sangster (Dundee Road Runners - Scottish bronze medal) by 41secs to take third spot in 3:02:06.

Crawford, who improved her fastest marathon time to 2.40.26 in London this April, pocketed the Scottish title for the second time in three years and was ecstatic with this result. She said "I love this marathon. It's definitely one of my favourites and I was actually having fun out there. One of my main motivations for doing it was to try to win the Scottish title again and I've done that so I'm very happy.

"I ran with Gatensch for the first 17 miles. I was reluctant to go in front before then so I just stayed with her. I'd thought about making my move on the hills after about 19 miles, but then decided to push on a bit earlier than that. When I made my move she didn't stay with me for too long so I kept pushing and decided that if I fell apart it would just be my own fault. But I was fine and I knew I was on track for a good time so I kept it going. I'm hoping to do the half marathon in Glasgow next week so I hope I recover quickly."

Tarus Elly, who returned from visiting family and friends in Kenya four days earlier, won the men's race for the second time in three years. The tall African, who has been living in Hyde for a number of years, was only a few seconds outside his best time when sprinting home in 2:25:19.

Four-time previous champion and title-holder Tomas Abyu, from Salford, had to settle for second position in 2:27:37 while Edinburgh-based Patryk Gierjatowicz (Hunters Bog Trotters) collected the Scottish national title for the third year in a row when finishing a further 10secs behind. Kenyan athlete Benjamin Bartonjo, who was expected to be a strong contender for the top prize, never appeared.





**Patryk and Megan on the podium**

Elly said “I spent a month at my old home at Eldoret in Kenya and only got back on Thursday so I’ve not at much time to get acclimatised to being back here. When I was in Kenya I didn’t train as much as I planned because I spent a lot of time visiting people. But I’m pleased with my run today. This is one of my favourite races so I always like to do it. When I first came her two years ago I won and last year I was third.

“It started at a steady pace and I was with Tomas and Patryk for the first 10 miles. Tomas then opened a gap but I just kept an eye on it and didn’t let it get any bigger. At 22 miles I closed up on him, pushed on a bit and I could tell he wasn’t able to come with me. By 23 miles I was ahead and just kept it going.

“I never realised I was so close to my personal best time. I was just pleased to be winning the race but if I had known the time, I might have pushed on a bit more.”

Fourth-placed John Newsom (Inverness Harriers - 2:32.54) won the Gerald Cooper Memorial Cup which is presented to the first Highland runner to finish the marathon. The sponsors of the award, HSPC, will now make a £1000 donation to a charity of his choice. Newsom also took second position in the national championships while his clubmate Donnie Macdonald collected bronze when finishing fifth overall in 2:33:28.

John Newsom won Scottish Championship medals, not only in the Marathon but also in the 10k road, Half Marathon and Senior National Cross Country.