



SALTWELL HARRIERS AC:
Its founding and some of its prominent characters
by Walter Fraser



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Walter Fraser 31st July, 2015

The founding of Saltwell Harriers

Gateshead was without a running club until 1890 when Newcastle Harriers, then the Region's leading club, arranged a run to promote harrier running in Gateshead (Newcastle Daily Journal, 1890a). The introductory run, just under 7 miles, took place on Thursday 20th February 1890, starting 7.30pm from the Prince Consort Hotel, 25 Prince Consort Road (Newcastle Daily Journal, 1890b). The run certainly sparked enthusiasm for the sport in Gateshead as, subsequently, two harrier clubs were founded in Gateshead that year: Gateshead Congregational Harriers (Congers) in March and Saltwell Harriers in September.

The formal founding of Saltwell Harriers took place at what was effectively the Club's first AGM. The meeting, to elect the first officials of Saltwell Harriers, was held on Monday 15th September, 1890 at Thomson's Café, 25 High Street, Gateshead (Newcastle Daily Journal, 1890c). W Neil was elected as Club Captain, N Wilson as Vice-Captain, J Johnston as Secretary and Treasurer and F Smith, R Graham, H Newbiggen and E Trotter as Committee Members (ibid).



*The site of Thomson and Sons Cocoa Rooms
(Dickson's Café, left of Albion House in this 1900 photograph)*

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The exact date of Saltwell's first club run is not recorded but it was probably on Wednesday 1st October 1890 from the Club's chosen headquarters, the Prince Consort Hotel. A week later, 36 members took part in the second weekly run, which was effectively a three mile race featuring a fast pack and a slow pack, the latter having a two minutes start (Newcastle Daily Journal, 1890d). The slow pack, headed by Charles Lyall, finished first but the fact that fast pack had, through some misunderstanding, taken a different route no doubt affected the outcome. Whatever the case, The Newcastle Daily Journal (ibid, p.7) reported that "the run was a thoroughly enjoyable one and, seeing the number that took part in it, this promising young club looks like being one of the best in the district".

Saltwell Harriers soon began fulfilling their promise with team victories in the Temperance Festival Race 1894 and 1895, the Talkin Tarn Cross-Country Race 1885 and the Sunderland Dispensary Sports "Clark Cup" 1895 and 1896. Many more Saltwell team and individual victories followed over the years but, according to Club Life President, Ronnie Walker, the one they always talked about was the 1927 Sunderland to South Shields Road Race. Spectators waiting at the Westside finish were puzzled when Saltwell runners did not feature in the first ten across the line. However, then they came: 11th, 12th, 13th 14th, 15th and 16th to win the team prize. That performance was topped in 1966, when Saltwell had their six counters in the first nine places in what was one of Saltwell's five team victories in the Gateshead Road Race during the 1960s.

The Club's most successful era was during the 1950s and 1960s, when Saltwell was the leading distance running club in the region. For example, in the 1965-66 season, Saltwell Seniors team won the Gateshead Harriers, the Heaton, North Shields, South Shields, Bedlington, Gateshead Congers and Jarrow road races, the Elswick and Gosforth relays and the Harrier League. The Saltwell

team's dominance was no more emphatic than in their 13 victories in the Congers Road Race from 1956 to 1970.

One prestigious victory that Saltwell can be most proud of was that in the Northern Senior 6 stage Road Relay in 1969. This ranks as one of the Club's biggest team victories at Senior level along with the 1983 Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race team win.

Successes in other sections of the Club, helped underpin the predominance of the Club at Senior level. Major wins included those by Saltwell Youths in the North East, Northern and National Cross-Country Championship in 1959 and by the Boys in the Northumberland and Durham Harrier League in 1961 and 1962. In 1971, the Youths Team won the North East and Northern Championships but fell short of emulating the 1959 team in the National. However, Saltwell Seniors' successes in the golden era did not rely solely on the development of the Club's younger members. There was also some astute recruitment by Billy Noble, who was a real force at the Club, along with Nichol Hunter.

Saltwell Ladies, initially run as a club in its own right, was, without doubt, the most outstanding ladies club in the North-East, according to the Chairman and founder, Jim Maggs, speaking at the September 1952 AGM. In the 1951-52 season, Saltwell Ladies, captained by Club Secretary, Mary Joyce, won a total of 15 medals. Unfortunately, the pre-eminence of the Ladies Club did not last and it was integrated as a section of Saltwell Harriers AC. Nevertheless, with a recent increase in numbers, Saltwell Ladies are turning out in force at races and are soon likely to be picking up team prizes as well as the individual prizes some are starting to collect already.

Many of the members of successful Saltwell teams and their individual successes are discussed in the profiles of prominent characters in the section below.

When the Congers club was disbanded in 1970, it left Saltwell Harriers as Gateshead's oldest running club. At the same time, Saltwell took over the ownership of the Congers Annual Boxing Day Road Race, with Ronnie Walker playing a key role as Saltwell's Race Secretary. The race, now the oldest road race in England, was renamed the Ronnie Walker Saltwell Road Race in 2010 in appreciation of the Club's long-serving President.

Ironically, since Saltwell took over as race organiser, the Club's success stories have been few and far between. Nevertheless, positive actions are underway to revive this "friendly club" as a competitive force and the recent surge in membership should ensure regular successes ensue. The Saltwell Ladies section looks most likely to lead the way in that respect but, hopefully, the nostalgia of this year's 125th Anniversary will raise the spirits of all Club members to fulfil their greatest potential and contribute in some way to the Club's efforts to once again become a force to be reckoned with.



Start of the Congers Road Race, 1963

A Brief History of Saltwell Harriers' HQs



41/43 Denmark Street

Since the Club's founding in 1890, Saltwell's headquarters remained at the Prince Consort Hotel until 1923. Subsequently, Saltwell became what might be referred to as a nomad club, moving first to Christ Church Mission Hall in nearby Albert Street then to Trades Union Hall, Shipcote Lane in 1927 then to Trades Union Hall and Social Club, "Ravenshill", The Drive, Durham Road in 1932 then to "Mosscroft", Bensham in 1936 and back to what had become "Ravenshill Social Club" in 1945 before settling, in 1964, at their own premises at 41/43 Denmark Street.

Ronnie Walker recalls that Saltwell used the bottom part of the Denmark Street property as their HQ and rented out the upper part initially to a Club member and then to newly-weds until they could save enough money to move into their own accommodation. Unfortunately, one couple who shared the

property turned out to be unwanted tenants. Ronnie has described them as a "woman of ill repute" and a "man of dubious character". The woman eventually left but the man remained as a squatter, causing all sorts of problems that resulted in Saltwell moving to North Durham Cricket and Rugby Club in 1983. The Club made Gateshead Leisure Centre its base in 1989 and remains there today. Prior to its refurbishment in 2010, meetings were held at the Leisure Centre but they are now held at Gateshead Fell Cricket Club. Training during the refurbishment, which took more than a year, was based at Gateshead International Stadium.

In addition to using its HQs as training bases, the Club has made use of different training grounds or bases over the years, including Heworth Hall and Grounds (1921), Rooms below the Rector of Gateshead's house (1927), BBC House, Gladstone Terrace (1946), Elders Walker, Wrekenton (1949), Blaydon Harriers, Stella (1950), North Durham Cricket and Rugby Club and, for cross country training, Marshall's Farm, Low Fell (1960), Gateshead Youth Stadium (1963).

In the 1930s, it is also well known that Jack Potts, featured in the profiles below, trained regularly at the Cooperative Sports Field, Lobley Hill, running four miles every day and ten miles at weekends (Lamb, 2011). During the 1960s, '70s and early '80s, Winter training started from the Denmark Street HQ and Summer training was at Gateshead Stadium.

Saltwell Harriers Characters

The following is an account of just some of the characters in the history of Saltwell Harriers. Hopefully, it provides a base on which more can be built regarding other Saltwell characters, such as R W Hill, Frank Melville, Bill Irving, Frank Milligan, Charlie Wright, Bill Apedaile, John McShane, Miles Atkinson, Jim Milton, Dennis Cox, Ray Collier, Barney Corrigan and Brian Clark to name but a few, whose profiles are not included but which would enhance our appreciation of the part they played in making this Club what it is today. After all, we are shaped by our history.



Davy Mole

D.A. (Davy) Mole was an accomplished runner who also took on Club roles as Captain (1922), Secretary (1928) and President (1934). He was Club Junior Champion in 1921 and Senior Champion 1923, 24 and 25, a feat for which he was awarded a replica of the Ridley Cup to keep. In that era, the race was held over a one mile course, having been originally 3 miles and subsequently various distances, usually of more than 6 miles, including the current 6.2 miles.

Davy's training evidently comprised a run around Saltwell Park followed by a

few pints of beer. Nevertheless, he clearly played his part in the Club's athletics achievements from around 1921 to 1927, as his name appears in Saltwell's teams that won prizes in road and cross-country races over that period. For example, he was 3rd

counter when Saltwell won the Berwick Two Miles "Ladies Cup" in 1922 and 1st counter in Saltwell's 3rd placed team in the NECCA Junior Championship, 1923. He was 4th Saltwell runner home and 15th overall in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race, 1927 when Saltwell were 2nd team.

Davy was first employed by Brims, civil engineer contractors, but left to join British Railways to take advantage of the free travel to attend distant athletic meetings. That's devotion to your sport for you!

Despite his prowess, Davy was one of the many who thought a 4 minute mile was impossible, as his son Bryan recalls and, pertinently, poses the question "What would he think of this year's Elmsley Carr Mile in London, where the first 15 were sub-4 minutes?". Bryan also recalls his



1924 Senior Championship medal

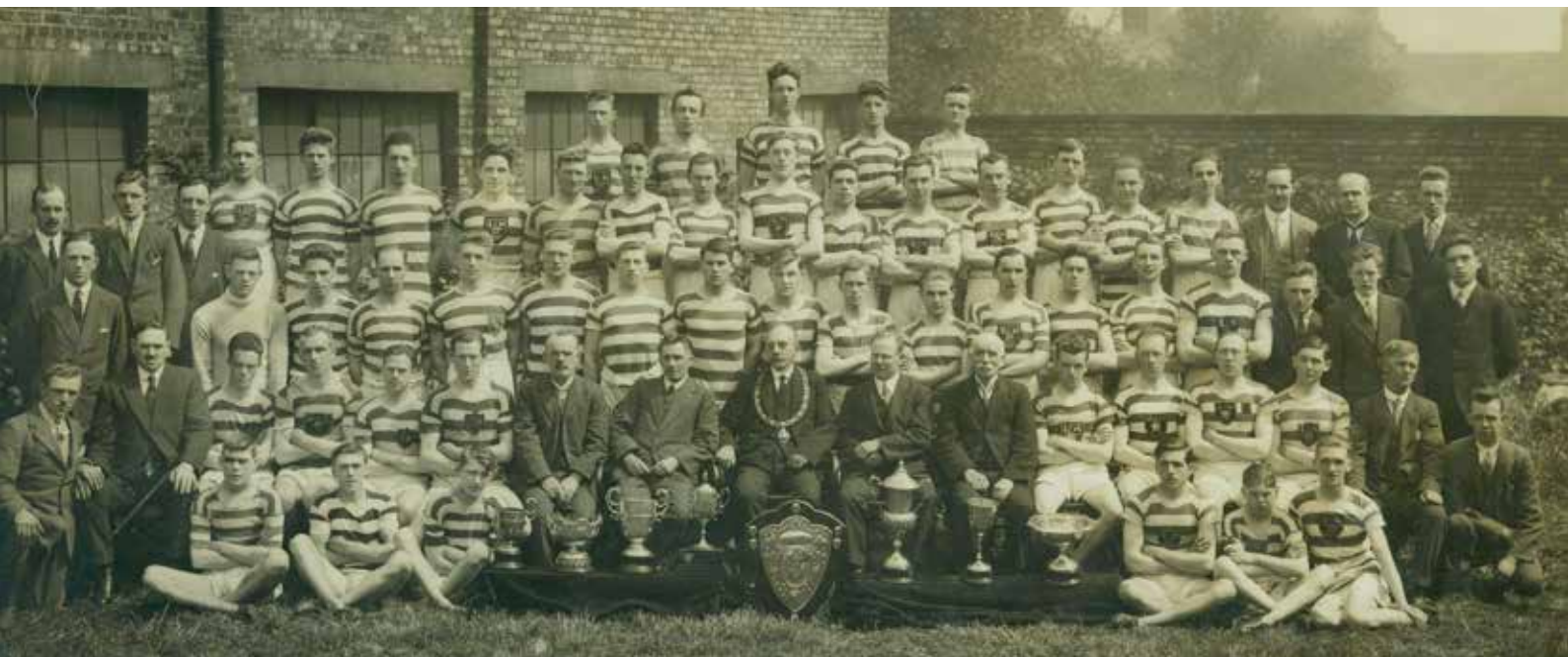
father winning prizes of fish and carving knives.

The importance of food as a prize during the 1920s, especially during the 1926 General Strike, is further evidenced in the profile of Jack Potts below.



Coincidentally, Ronnie Walker, profiled later, was given Davy Mole's Saltwell top when he joined the Club in 1938. Getting a hooped vest in those days wasn't as simple as ticking a box on one of Davey Candlish's Facebook posts.

The Viscount Ridley Cup (replica)



Saltwell Harriers 1925 - 1926 season



Robert Parker c. 1929



Original Club badge



Jack Potts (left) in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race 1935

Jack Potts: In anticipation of Saltwell Harriers' Jubilee celebrations of 1950, one journalist (Nomad, 1949, p.11) wrote that, "among Saltwell notabilities on the track, the roads and in the country, none stands out so prominently as Jack Potts. England, maybe, has not had a stronger, fleeter man over country; certainly no country ever had an athlete with a bigger heart. He was a model club member."

John Henry Soulsby Potts, to give him his full name, was born the son of a miner in Kyo, a pit village near Stanley, in 1906. Jack, as he came to be known, started running during the 1926 General Strike, when races were organised for prizes of boxes of food (Lamb, 2011). On one occasion, after accepting a couple of bags of potatoes as a prize, he was threatened with losing his amateur status, which he fortunately managed to maintain. When he decided to join a harrier club, he regarded himself no longer as just a "runner" but an "athlete" and he trained with dedication and determination accordingly. He joined West Stanley Harriers in 1926 before moving to Saltwell Harriers in 1928 amid allegations of poaching by the bigger Club (ibid).

In his first season with Saltwell, Jack won the North East Cross-Country Championship. He was somewhat surprised to find himself leading the field, which included two internationals, from start to finish (ibid). He went on to establish an impressive record of achievements during his 13 years in athletics, including two National Cross-Country Championships in 1931 and 1936, the Amateur Athletics Association's Six Mile Championship



Jack receives North Mail cup after 1935 Morpeth victory

and Two Mile Steeplechase Championship in 1932 and 1938 respectively, and the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race in 1935. His PB for 6 miles was 29:47 in 1936 (<http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/po/jack-potts-1.html>, no date).

Jack represented his country in the International Cross-

Country Championship in 1930, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39, the 1934 British Empire (Commonwealth) Games 6 miles and the 1936 Berlin Olympics 10,000 metres. His friend and local rival, Elswick's Alex Burns lined up alongside him in front Adolf Hitler and 100,000 spectators. Much to the displeasure of the Fuhrer, Jack led the field in the first lap. Unfortunately the British athletes faced extremely strong competition, especially from the Finns, who eventually took over the race to claim the first three places with Alex Burns finishing 5th. The official record states that Jack did not finish the race but some believe he actually came in 7th (Amos, 2012). Despite the disappointment with his performance, Jack was elated at having fulfilled the ambition he'd trained and competed so hard for: to represent Great Britain in the greatest show on earth, the Olympics (ibid).

Jack had actually been selected for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics along with Alec Burns but his dream was dashed on that occasion when he was excluded from the final team at the last moment. On finally making it in 1936, he said he'd had a number of thrills in his lifetime but none equalled the thrill of that race and of being a member of that team (ibid). A video of the 10,000 metres race can be found on YouTube:

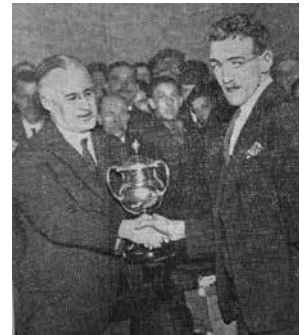
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D_CHIZuckE.

Jack was a clean living, dedicated athlete who was modest about his successes. His daughter, Ann only knew he'd been in the Olympics because her uncle told her (ibid).

Within the Club, Jack was Junior Champion 1930 and Senior Champion 1930, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38 and 39. He was five times Club Captain, President in 1937, twice Club Secretary and Chairman in 1946.

An ambulance driver when he joined the Club, Jack served in the RAF during WWII and subsequently worked as a technical mining representative.

Jack passed away in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire in 1987 at the age of 80. To commemorate his life, The Jack Potts Walk, near his County Durham birthplace, was established by the Ramblers. The 5.44 Km/3.38 miles walk was officially opened on 3rd June 2012 and starts at the Old School House, Annfield Plain. Unfortunately, the route is not signposted and there is no plaque to the local modest Olympian. Nor are all parts of it as scenic as the off road sections. However, there are some inviting pubs along the way and there is a map and set of instructions on the Ramblers website that Club members might find challenging to follow but worth trying in tribute to Jack: <http://ramblersroutes.org/PreviewRouteCard.aspx?routeUID=2285>



Jack Potts in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race 1931



John Anderson

John Anderson: John Paul Anderson joined Saltwell as a youth in 1952 and quickly showed his potential with top three placings in road and cross-country races. In his second season, he was first youth in four major local road races, breaking the course record in two of them, and finishing second in the NE Cross-Country Championship and Sherman Cup. He then went on to win the NE Cross-Country Championship, North Shields Road Race and One Mile Northumberland & Durham Junior Championship before moving to senior level.

At senior level, John built up a phenomenal record in local races, including eight successive victories in the Gateshead Congers Boxing Day Road Race (now the Ronnie Walker Saltwell Harriers Road Race) 1956-63, breaking the course record on four occasions and ensuring the Saltwell Team's dominance of the competition over that period. His talent and ability soon gained recognition at international level and he represented England and Great Britain in cross-country and track events from 1958 to 1964. John was captain of the successful England Team at the International Cross-Country event in Sheffield in 1962, was 6th in the European Games 5,000 metres in Belgrade that year and 8th in the Empire (now Commonwealth) Games 5,000 metres in Perth, 1963. Also in 1963, he was victorious for England in 5,000 metres races against Norway, Italy, the Russian Federation and Hungary plus the 3,000 metres against West Germany.

John has been known to re-call how, on receiving his first full International Track invitation to run in Russia and Finland, he rushed to phone his then fiancé, Jane (now wife), with the good news only to find that the line went dead when he explained that their marriage arrangements would have to be postponed.

It was for that same trip that he was sent an England badge by the British Amateur Athletic Board (BAAB) to sew to his blazer. What the powers that be didn't realise was that John hadn't a blazer and neither did he have the wherewithal to purchase such an extravagant item. There must have been some consternation among the officials when he turned up to board the plane to Russia decked out in a home-knitted woolly jumper with the badge firmly secured to his kitbag.

Then there was the time when on winning an international road race in Barcelona his gestures of elation and euphoria were mistaken, by an over-zealous medic, for distress and he was unceremoniously wrestled to the ground for treatment, missing out on the adulation of the crowd in which he had so earnestly hoped to bask.

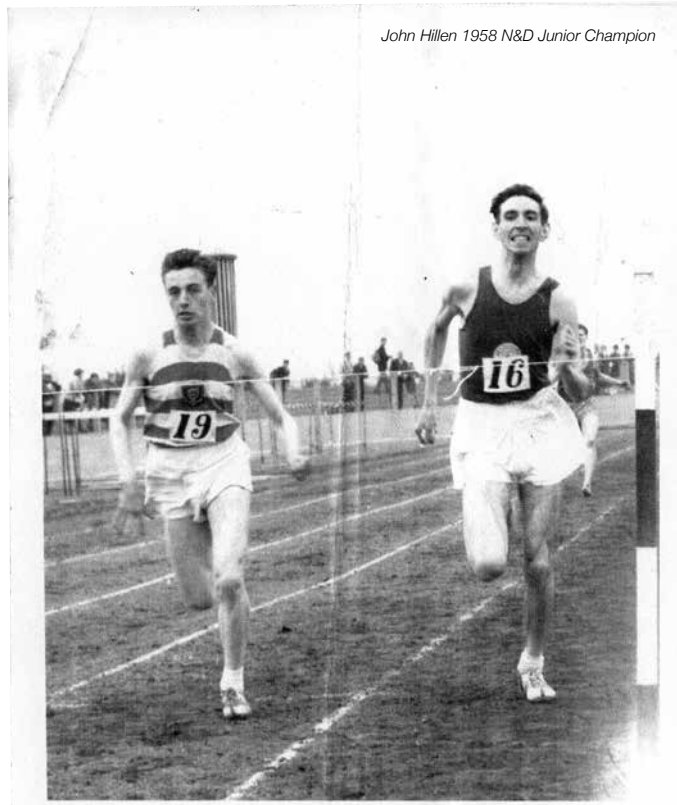
When John travelled to Australia in 1962 for the Commonwealth Games the plane was crammed with fellow athletes and officials with not a spare seat aboard. The flight took twenty-four hours with five refuelling stops. John recalls the turbulence being akin to being at sea in a sailing boat during a Force 9 gale. The athletes then had about ten days to become acclimatised to their new surroundings before competing in the games.

A lot has changed in athletics since those early gung-ho days but nothing has changed John's view that they were some of the best times of his life.

Ronnie Walker describes John Anderson as "the perfect runner and perfect gentleman". John now lives outside the North East but was present as guest of honour at the centenary of the Saltwell Road Race. He is one of the true international legends in the history of Saltwell Harriers.



*John Anderson
wearing his GB vest*



John Hillen 1958 N&D Junior Champion

John Hillen: Junior Champion in 1958, John Hillen quickly showed his potential to eventually take over the mantle of John Anderson as Saltwell's top athlete. Between 1960 and 1975 John Hillen won the Senior Championship a record nine times and was seven times Club Captain during the years 1965 to 1974. He ran cross-country for England and held many best times in local races during his era including a course record in the Annual Boxing Day Road Race only bettered subsequently by Mike McLeod.

From 1958 to 1972 John won 16 individual Northumberland and Durham Championship Titles, ranging from 880 yards to 10K plus 4 Medley Relay Titles. He also held Northern Track and Cross



John Hillen –
part of Team GB 1967

Country individual titles and won individual National and Inter-County track and cross country medals. John was a member of the winning England Team in World/International Cross Country Championships on two occasions and actually the last North East runner to be on a winning UK world cross-country championship team. He won the Italian Grand Prix 5K gold and went on 29 trips abroad with Great Britain and England Teams.

Above all those achievements, John says that, arguably, his fondest memory is when, after retiring from athletics (he never competed as a Veteran) and working as an engineer on the Brent Bravo Oil Platform (20 days on and 10 days off, including travelling time, so not training at all), he was asked to make up the North East Counties Team for the Inter-Counties 20 miles Championship. Initially, he resisted the “offer” but then gave in, took his 10 days off the rig (effectively 8 days with travel) and ran 6 miles each day for the 8 days prior to the race at Derby. His team mates, Martin Craven and Dave Cannon finished 2nd and 3rd and John hung on to finish 12th ahead of John Lunn (Yorkshire) and North East Counties won the Title. If Lunn had beaten John, Yorkshire would have won the title, so ending with

a team gold was really something for John when he looks back on it now. He says “It was the hardest race I ever did in 25 years, believe me. I could hardly walk for 2 days and had to be assisted off the helicopter on the heli-deck of the rig in case I toppled off.”

Since those heady days John was not involved again in “athletics” until Tony Maxwell (Woodford Green AC and ex-Durham University 880 yards star in the 1960s) contacted him and invited him to attend Athletes Reunited in London in April 2012. The event attracted world record holders, Olympians, athletes who had run in the Europeans and Commonwealth (Empires) Games and men and women who had distinguished themselves in the National and International/World Cross-Country Championships as well as Coaches, NUTS officers, and journalists. John said it was great meet the old guys and most still involved in some way in our sport. Tony Maxwell’s reference to John Hillen as “a certain Geordie Cross-Country International trying to outdo the Essex group by consuming more than two halves of shandy” reflects the camaraderie shared at the reunion.

Although born and bred in Gateshead, John lived and worked abroad – Egypt, Kuwait and Malaysia, among other places – for a number of years before returning to the UK with his wife Dolores and settling in Sandhurst, where he took to golf. John and Dolores are members of their local club and have attended, as spectators, the last 17 Open Championships. Their only visits to the North East are now en route to St Andrews, Muirfield or Carnoustie.



John Hillen in training

Whilst saying earlier that he was not involved in athletics since retiring in the '70s John has actually ran for fun/good causes in 2 London Marathons with impressive times of 3hrs 3mins at 62 years old and 3hrs 20mins at 65 years. However, after those endeavours, John needed both knees repaired and decided never to run again. His advice is worth heeding: You cannot run a marathon on 30 miles per week for 3-4 months prior to the event without self inflicting pain and disaster to mind & body! Nevertheless, looking back on everything, John says it has been a great journey.

John's efforts for charitable causes went way beyond marathon distance when, at the age of 33, he "jogged", as he refers to it, about 50 miles a day from Newcastle to London to raise money for underprivileged children on Tyneside. It was supposed to be a walk in which he covered the greatest distance to meet up at the final stage with other celebrity walkers, including footballer Wilf Mannion, but you can't expect a runner to walk when they can run. In fact, John moved so quickly that he still holds the Newcastle to London record.

Ronnie Walker: Ronald Saxon Walker (Saxon being a popular name in Ronnie's Lancashire birthplace) joined Saltwell Harriers in 1938, which means this is his 77th year with the Club. That surely must be one for the record books!

Ronnie, Head Estimator and Draughtsman at Clarke Chapman before he retired, has been President of Saltwell Harriers for the past 30 years. Previously, he was Club Captain three times, Secretary twice and Assistant Secretary for 22 years as well as Race Handicapper and Club Historian. You name the role, he's done it. So devoted to the Club, he even sacrificed his competitive running to immerse himself in the role of Secretary when he took it on in 1952. Fittingly, the Club's annual road race was renamed the Ronnie Walker Saltwell Harriers Road Race in 2010, the year before it reached its centenary.

Ronnie is the perfect example of a dedicated runner. Since he



Ronnie Walker 1940s

took up running, Ronnie has meticulously kept a record of each of his runs, whether training run or race. His running diaries are a treasure trove of information, recording not only distances and times but also weather conditions, how he was feeling, who he was running against, mile by mile, etc. By 1990, he had clocked up 100,000 miles and a celebratory event was held at Gateshead Civic Centre to mark the occasion.

A perfect gentleman himself, Ronnie is rather unassuming about his achievements. He has been placed in all local road races but of Ronnie's many successes, one the most prestigious was his third place finish in the 1947 Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race, a truly big event until it sadly came to an end after its centenary year in 2004. In the 1944-46 season, he was second in the Heaton Road Race and second to Saltwell's own Charlie Wright in the first post-war Annual Boxing Day Road Race, which is now the Ronnie Walker Saltwell Harriers Road Race. He was also second in the Darlington Road Race in 1948.

Ronnie ran the 54 miles London to Brighton ultra-run, competed in a total of 38 Morpeth to Newcastle races and ran all of the first 21 Great North Runs before winding down on racing while continuing to enjoy his daily training runs.



Ronnie Walker in the "Morpeth"



Ronnie Walker 2015

This year being the year of his 94th birthday, Ronnie no longer pounds the roads but he has a wealth of memories of the times when he clocked up all those miles and they are all written down in his diaries for posterity. Highly respected and loved by all who know him, with particularly high regard among the running fraternity, there is no more befitting father figure for Saltwell Harriers than Ronnie Walker.

Saltwell has had a number of athletes given international recognition. In addition to Jack Potts, John Anderson and John Hillen, these include **Frank Milligan** (1924 Irish Games), **George Harrison** (1940 International Junior Cross-Country), **Bill Robinson** (1966 International Junior Cross-Country – Reserve), **Bill Wilkinson** (1965, GB Teams vs. East Germany and vs. Hungary, England vs. Czechoslovakia in 5K events; 1966 Commonwealth Games, Jamaica, 3 miles event), **Billy Cain** (GB Marathon and Half Marathon teams 1982 & 83) and **Daniel Henderson** (1992 World Cross Cup, Under-21s, Belgium).

George Harrison: was “discovered” by Saltwell’s Jack Potts, who had been impressed by George’s performances, especially in cross-country races, for Ouston Boys Club. In February 1938, in only his third race, George won the 3 miles Durham County Association of Boys Clubs Cross-Country Race in 16:07. He joined Saltwell Harriers as a Junior in October 1938 but turned out for Ouston to win the Durham event again in 1939, in a record time of 15:30. One week later he was dubbed by the press as “Saltwell’s Dark Horse”¹ after coming second in 35:02 in the North Eastern Counties Cross-Country 6 miles Junior Championship, having involved winner, George Gaskin of Blaydon, in “a rare tussle”.

Still a Junior, George competed for Saltwell Senior Men’s team and was 7th, 8th and 5th overall in the first three Northumberland and Durham Paper Chase League races in the 1939-40 Winter Season. After finishing 5th overall and 1st Junior in the 1940 North Eastern Cross-Country Championship, he was selected for the England team and finished 17th overall in the Junior International Cross-Country event in Paris in March 1940.

Back with Saltwell, between 15th November 1938 and 7th March 1939 George won the Novices Race, the Anniversary Shield, the Junior Championship and was second to Jack Potts in the Senior Championship and in the Captain vs. Vice-Captain’s Race.

George ran the fastest time in the third lap of the North Eastern Cross-Country Association Road Race, at Elswick in April 1940. In July, he finished third in 15:43 behind Olympian Alex Burns and Matt Smith in a “Sports at Cowgate” 3 miles race in aid of Red Cross funds. Also in support of the War Needs Fund, George competed in a 1 mile Invitation handicap in aid of the ARP at Gateshead. He came 2nd in the handicap, Jack Potts finishing 5th from scratch.

As a boy, George started keeping a record of his races in what he labelled as “My Athletics Scrapbook”. It begins in February 1937 with “My First Race” and exudes the enthusiasm he had for the sport, the joy he derived from it, like taking home his prize of a sugar bowl for his fastest lap in a relay, and the respect and admiration he had for fellow athletes, especially the senior athletes of the era like his mentor, Jack Potts and rival Alex Burns.



George Harrison

¹ Coincidentally, former Beattie and namesake, George Harrison named his 5th Album “Dark Horse”

Sadly, the last entry to George's scrapbook is his account of the Gateshead ARP event on 4th September, 1940. Duty called and off to war he went, never to return to those country fields he loved to scamper across. Who knows what he might have gone on to achieve if those empty pages in his scrapbook had been filled but it is evident that he could have become one of the all time greats in his sport.

Bill Wilkinson: was one of the fastest runners at the 3 miles distance even by today's standards. He won the 1966 AAA Championship in 13:17 and clocked 13:15 in the 1966 Jamaica Commonwealth Games. His 7th position in that race was no mean feat, considering that the competitors included the great Kenyan, Kip Keino and Australian, Ron Clarke. His PB for 2 miles was 8:40 and for 5K, 13:39 (ARRS, 2015).

In the 5K event, in 1965, representing GB vs. East Germany in Berlin, vs. Hungary in London and England vs. Czechoslovakia in London, Bill finished 2nd, 3rd, and 3rd respectively (ibid).

Walter Pickles recalls how Bill, no airs or graces, preferred to train with the ordinary Club members rather than the elite athletes. He always conserved some energy for the actual races rather than exhaust himself in the gruelling elite interval sessions. His philosophy was "Don't leave your racing behind on the Team Valley roads"² (a frequently used training circuit).

Bill's advice was worth heeding and not lost on others, not least Allan Rushmer, an up and coming young Tipton Harrier, who Bill befriended when both were in Jamaica preparing for the same race. Rushmer, who had never been coached, said he found Bill's relatively slow grass track sessions, which they did together,



Bill Wilkinson on his way to winning a 3 Mile Inter-Counties race at Cochrane Park

enjoyable and amazing in the confidence they gave him (Highgate Harriers, 2011). In the race, when they hit the final lap with Clarke and Keino away from the rest and Naftali Temu ahead of the chasing pack, Bill looked across to Allan and urged "Go on you idiot, you can get a medal here, you can!" (ibid). Spurred on by Bill's encouragement, Rushmer went after Temu and passed him in the final straight to take the bronze medal (ibid). Yes, Bill was an elite athlete but he was also a down-to-earth, friendly, helpful and inspirational individual.

Other top-class Saltwell athletes in the glory years included **Miles Atkinson** and **Pat Hollywood** along with the squad of **Billy Anderson, Winston Churchill, Reg Dixon, Brian Carrick, Danny Heron** and **Bill McGuirk** which won the North East, Northern and National Youths titles in 1959.

² Intervals were regularly run on a road circuit around what used to be the Sigmund Pumps/Ingersoll Rand factory site.

Pat Hollywood: was Club Captain 1956 to 61 and was a life member of Saltwell. He joined as a youngster and soon showed his prowess by coming 5th in the Northern Junior Cross-Country Championship at Gosforth Park. When he was barely past the Junior age, and had not even raced over a distance as long as 9 miles, he finished 17th in the Senior Men's race in the 1951 National Cross-Country Championship at Richmond, Yorkshire. He followed that up a couple of years later with 17th place in the Inter-Counties Senior Cross-Country Championship. Pat was also Club Junior Champion in 1950 and Senior Champion in 1956.

In addition to his many accomplishments with Saltwell Harriers, Pat was a member of Gateshead and Whickham Amateur Swimming Club and was involved for over 35 years in roles including club coach, competition secretary and general volunteer. He was also a key figure within the development of disability

swimming within the club and the development of Gateshead Kestrels (disability sports club) swimmers (Gateshead Council, 2010). In 2008, Pat took a team of young swimmers to the Beijing Paralympics. In 2010, at the inaugural Gateshead Sport Awards, he was honoured with The Lifetime Achievement Award for his voluntary work with the Swimming Club (ibid). Sadly, he passed away shortly after receiving his award at the age of 80.

David Kelly recalls Pat from his early days at Saltwell: "He used to ferry us about to races in his VW campervan. Never had any idea at the time that he had been such a quality runner in his day!"

Pictured: Pat Hollywood being presented with the Junior Championship trophy by Bob Cleghorn DCM. Also pictured are Miles Atkinson, holding the Senior Championship trophy, John Gill, far right, holding the Novices Trophy, and Alan Todd, second from left, who won the Youth's Championship.



Presentation of Club Awards, 1950-51 Season



Bill McGuirk

You are likely to see **Bill McGuirk** around at Harrier League and other athletics events and also at Low Fell Cricket Club, his local. A printer by trade, he has been Athletics columnist for the Journal and Chronicle since the 1980s and Chairman of the North East Counties

Athletic Association for well over a decade. In 2011, Bill was elected President of the North of England Athletics Association, one of the most prestigious roles in British Athletics (O’Gara, 2015).

Club Junior Champion in 1960, Bill won an array of championships and clocked some impressive track times, racing against athletes of the highest calibre, like Derek Ibbotson and Peter Snell until injury cruelly ended his short but impressive running career in his early twenties. He went on to found Wallsend Harriers and to coach its athletes to local, regional and national successes, including international selection for some of his protégés (ibid).

Walter Pickles: Saltwell stalwart and good friend of Ronnie Walker, joined the Club in 1949 aged 18. Previously, while at Pelton Junior school, he had been Area Champion at the 80 yards sprint. He left school at 14 to serve a seven year apprenticeship to become a sculptor and played football for Pelton Fell Juniors when a work colleague, impressed by his fleetness of foot, suggested he should join the Harriers. He wasn’t sure exactly what being a “harrier” would involve but recalls vividly travelling from his parents’ home in Pelton and turning up at the Ravenshill Club, then Saltwell’s HQ and training base, with a kit consisting of blue and white football socks, black shorts, a green polo-neck top and a pair of white plimsolls.

When asked by the Saltwell coaches, Billy Noble and Nichol Hunter, what running he had done and he replied “sprinting”,



Walter Pickles

they suggested he come back at the start of the track season. However, a senior member of the Club at the time, Tommy Bone, suggested he took Walter for a run around the novices’ course to see how he would fare over the distance. When they returned, the coaches asked Tommy “What was he like?” to which Tommy replied “He did alright but he talked all the way round!”.

Walter might indeed be called loquacious but in the nicest and most positive sense. He has a fantastic memory and enthuses about his running years and the characters he met during that time. Without him, some of those characters might have gone undocumented in this account.

When Walter turned up for his second training evening with Saltwell, he was surprised to find it was actually a race, the Club 3 mile Yacht Handicap. Yet again wearing his football kit and plimsolls, he put in a sterling performance to finish second to Alfie Haggleton in 18:10. An impressive start to being a Saltwell Harrier.



Walter Pickles in Sunderland Road Race 1979

Once he finished his apprenticeship, Walter was conscripted for two years of national service in Germany with the 2nd Battalion Durham Light Infantry followed by the three years of Territorial Army (TA) duties that were mandatory in those days.

Although, Walter's forte was running over the shorter distances up to two miles, he competed in an amazingly diverse range of events in the Battalion Championships. He won the 200 metres and the long jump, was second in the 400 metres and in the 110 metres high hurdles, all in one day!! His achievements earned him the Victor Ludorum badge. Moreover, he boxed at welterweight and was runner up in the Battalion Championship, played centre forward for the Battalion football team and, last but not least, he was a member of the Battalion team that won the Army Cross-Country Championship in Germany.

Walter, with his Chester-le-Street TA Team, won the British TA Cross-Country Championship and his amazing talent as an all-rounder were once again demonstrated when he became the 1955 TA Triple Jump Champion with a TA record distance. That feat saw him shortlisted for a Great Britain vest in the event. Back with Saltwell, Walter came first in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race handicap in 1970 as Saltwell also took the handicap team prize thanks to the performances of Walter, Ronnie Walker and Alan Morgan, who ran a first class time in that event. Despite his preference for shorter distances, Walter also won the 20 miles

Northumberland and Durham Counties Championship, VM45 category.

Walter and his wife Jean regularly played hosts and provided refreshments to groups of Saltwell runners using their home as a Sunday morning training base. The most regular "guests" at these training sessions were Ronnie Walker and Ted Joynson (Gateshead Harriers). Walter, Ronnie and Ted trained together for 40 years and were affectionately known to many as The Three Musketeers. Walter reminisces that when he lived in Ingleside, Whickham, Ronnie and Ted would run 6 miles to his place then the three of them would run 12 miles on the Derwent Walk before Ronnie and Ted took their refreshments at Walter's house and ran the 6 miles back home.

Club Captain in 1966 and 1972 and President 1974, Walter wound down his own high mileage training after setting up his own business in 1968 making and selling memorial sculptures. He worked at home initially before eventually opening his own workshop and showroom in 1985. Despite his business



L to R: Bill McGuirk, Jim Hall, Nichol Hunter (Coach), John Anderson and John Hillen



Saltwell Harriers 1955/56 Season

Left to Right Back Row: Tommy Gray, Miles Atkinson, Jackie Lawrie, Billy Anderson

Fourth Row: Walter Pickles, Winston Churchill, Unknown³

Third Row: Pat Hollywood, Bernard Hughes, John (Sam) Gale, Bill Burge, Don Archbold, John Hughes, Denny Jenkins, Ronnie Burns, Brian Carrick

Second Row: Peter Jackson, Reg Dixon, Unknown, Barney Hughes, Pat Murray, Ken Carter, Henry Elliott, John Hillen, John Anderson, Michael Bushell, Danny Heron

Front Row: Ronnie Walker, Jimmy Dinsley, Nichol Hunter, Bob Cleghorn DCM, Billy Noble, Jack Laidlaw

commitments, he continued to compete in races and, in 1977, ran for England in the World Veterans' Championships in Gothenberg along with Ronnie Walker, Ted Joynson and (ex-Saltwell) Blydon Harrier, Bill Robison. At 60, he sold his business and retired and would have continued to run for many years longer but for an operation to relieve sciatica, which restricted his ability to do so at the age of 64. Now aged 84 and as bright as a button, he lives in Sunnyside and keeps active enjoying a different sport at Gateshead Indoor Bowling Centre.

On the coaching side, **Billy Noble** and **Nichol Hunter** were the prime motivators in Saltwell's achievements after the Club was resurrected at the end of WWII. Both were ever present at training sessions. Billy, a solicitor by profession, also took on the role of Club Secretary 19 times during the years 1948 to 1968 and, in the opinion of one top athlete of the era, deserves to be given the greater credit for the Club's success in those golden years.

Nichol concentrated on coaching his Saltwell athletes until 1966, from which time he served as both President and Chairman of

³ Unknown hails from Lobley Hill and went to Whitehall Road Technical School, according to John Hillen

the Club for 3 years. Along with Alan Nicholson, Leon (Ronnie) Burns and John Gale, he was responsible for the current "Nil Desperandum" Club badge. Alan recalls that he and John were tasked with the design but adding the motto was Leon's idea. Unfortunately, as a result of what one long-serving Club member recalls as "the great schism" of 1970-71, Nichol moved to Blaydon Harriers and most of the senior team left the Club.

Billy Robinson: had a natural talent for running as a schoolboy at Blaydon East Modern School, as was recognised by his teacher, former Doncaster and Gateshead centre-forward, Don Robson, who guided Billy into specializing in the sport. School Champion, Billy knew he was better than average but his inspiration for joining Saltwell Harriers came after leaving school in 1962, when he was watching, on his gran's black and white TV, the 5,000 Metres race at the European Games, Belgrade. The race winner was Bruce Tulloh but Saltwell's John Anderson figured prominently in the race and that sparked Billy's desire to become a Saltwell Harrier and train and compete with the best.

It was a fortuitous coincidence that Billy's aunt worked at Osram's, TVTE, where Saltwell's Pat Hollywood worked and where Nichol Hunter's son-in-law was a manager. Soon 15 year old Billy, by then an apprentice painter and decorator, was making the not so convenient, two-bus journey from Blaydon to Ravenshill to be coached by Nichol Hunter.

Billy soon began to shine as a young club athlete, winning the North East Junior Cross-Country Championship twice in succession (1965 & '66), beating Gateshead's junior international, John Caine on the second occasion and subsequently being selected as first reserve for the 1966 Junior International Cross-Country event in Rabat, Morocco. He came 7th in the 1967 National Cross-Country Championships Junior Race and would have had an England vest that year if his birthday had been one month later than it was.

Billy was Saltwell Junior Champion in 1965 and Senior Champion in 1970 and set records for the Joicey Road (14:49) and Belle Vue



Billy racing his "pacemaker" 138 bus

(19:19) courses. He was regularly among the prize-winners at local road races, including wins at Heaton, North Shields, South Shields and Jarrow, beating Jim Alder and Ernie Pomfret in the latter.

A remarkable run by Billy in the 5th leg of the Northern Senior 6 stage Road Relay in 1969 helped clinch victory for Saltwell in this prestigious event. Closest rivals, Gateshead had taken a 65 seconds lead before Billy wiped it away and left Jim Milton with a 25 second lead to complete the win in the final leg. Later that year, Billy became the last winner of the Congers Road Race, before Saltwell took over its administration, storming around the Chowdene course in 30:31.

On the track, Billy recorded 4:10 for the mile in 1968, 8:59 for 2 miles and 13:58 for 3 miles in 1969 and clocked 3:54 for 1,500 metres and 30:16 for 10,000 metres in 1970.

If John Anderson inspired Billy to join Saltwell, it was John Hillen who inspired him within the Club and spurred him on to international recognition. "John Hillen took a shine to me for some reason", Billy says. "He must have recognised my potential". In

fact, according to Billy, John always used to say “Internationals breed internationals”. In training sessions, John would say to Billy “Follow me up Chowdene Bank. If you keep up with me, you’ve got the England top. If you beat me, you get the bottoms.”

Racing John Hillen up Chowdene was not the only hill work Billy was known to do. His 90 miles a week training schedule included a daily 5 miles of lunch hour “races” against the Northern buses up Blaydon’s Shibdon Bank. The familiar sight of Billy running up the half-mile hill conditioned the bus drivers to act as his pace makers and give him the challenge he relished. He usually beat the 138 up the hill and kept pace with the 117 from the bottom of the hill to the Winlaton terminus. Not surprising, the passengers gave him some curious looks and Billy’s man against machine duels soon attracted the attention of the local and national press (Blaydon and Tyneside Courier, 1969; Northern Bus Company Magazine, 1969).

Unfortunately, Billy, along with several other senior athletes and coach, Nichol Hunter, left Saltwell when divisions in 1970-71 took their toll. Nichol went to Blaydon but advised Billy that his prospects would be best served at Gateshead Harriers. Nevertheless, despite Billy joining Gateshead, Nichol continued to coach him for his 5 year stay there. During that time, Billy was 2nd in the 1972 National Cross Country Championship at Cambridge and won the 1973 Northern Championship, beating Ron Hill in the process. Such performances finally earned him the full international honours he had strived for since seeing John Anderson on his gran’s TV as a 15 year old. He even got to appear on an Irish postal stamp to commemorate the 1979



Billy Robinson in 1963 Congers

International Cross-Country Championship at Limerick. It featured Billy and two Irish runners competing in the 1972 event.



Billy pictured on a stamp

Billy did take some licking.

Billy left his job as a painter and decorator and served several years in the Fire Service before returning to his trade. Saltwell did benefit from his skills when it moved its HQ to Denmark Street and the premises needed refurbishment. Billy now also offers a physiotherapy/massage service, another string to his bow that he picked up courtesy of the expertise of his mentor, Nichol Hunter.

Ron Rielley: was a decent runner and a coach with key positions in Saltwell in the 1970s and ‘80s. He helped talented runners such as Billy Cain, David Kelly and Terry Dawson reach their potential and was President in 1977 and Chairman for 10 years, 1977-86. During his era as coach, the committee introduced a change of Cub colours, subsequent to a proposal by Michael Fenwick at the 1970 AGM. The red and white hoops and white “knickers” were replaced by a red vest with two diagonal white stripes and red shorts.

Subsequently the red and white hoops have been reinstated but the Rielley era was not the only time when the hoops were not the



David Kelly (left), 1st in Rotherham Marathon 1978, with Coach, Ron Rielley

official colours. There is evidence that, in the early days, the Club vest was light blue (Newcastle Daily Journal, 1891). Exactly when the red and white hoops were adopted is uncertain but there are Club photos of the hoops that go back a long way, though clearly not 124 years.

David Kelly: joined Saltwell Harriers as a 12 year old in the 1966-67 season. Like many of our younger members at the time David attended St Cuthbert's Grammar School in Newcastle and was coached throughout his time at Saltwell by Ron Rielley. It was only when David left school in the summer of 1970 did he start to make an impression as he was unable to break into the boys team as a scorer. This quickly changed as he finished 6th as a

first year Youth in the Northern XC Championships in 1971, 21st in the Inter Counties and 19th in the National.

The following year David led Saltwell's Youths Team to victory in the North Eastern and Northern XC Championships but they failed to lift the National Team title where they were a disappointing 12th.

David ran cross country for North Eastern Counties as a Youth, Junior and Senior winning medals for 2nd team at Youth and Junior levels in 1972 and 1973.

David was perhaps best known for exploits on the road especially over the longer distances, breaking 50 minutes for 10 miles in the Tynemouth Boundary 10 at the age of 19 in 1973. Over 10 miles David had a best of 47:09, in November 1977, when finishing 2nd to John Calvert of Blackburn Harriers in the Brampton to Carlisle Road Race; his slowest 10 miles being 54:15 in March 1975 over the Billingham to Hartlepool course. Over a looped 10 mile course, David recorded 48:03 in March 1981 in the Chas Kendall Road Race in Barrow, beating Charlie Spedding and a number of star runners in the process.

Whilst half marathons were not so popular back in David's day, he nevertheless, recorded 66:38 to finish 9th in the second Great North Run, in 1982.

In the Morpeth to Newcastle, David finished 3rd in 1979 but his best run was probably 1981 when he was 5th in 67:01 behind Elswick Express, Mike McLeod, who won in 65:45. David finished in the top 10 in this iconic race four times. David's best over the longer 13 miles 990 yard course was 66:55 in 1977.

Over 15 miles David has a best of 77:02. Over 20 miles David won the South Tyneside 20 twice, in 1978 and 1982, with a best of 1:45:07 and represented North Eastern Counties in the Inter Counties 20 in March 1979, finishing 12th in 1:47:05.

Source: Bradshaw (1983) *Supercharged Superchamp*, The Journal, Monday January 3rd, 1983, p.13.



1983 Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race winners presented with their trophy by Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor Tom Yellowley and Philip Crawley, Editor of The Journal (2nd left). Saltwell Harriers left to right: David Kelly, Ron Rielley (Coach), Billy Cain and Kevin Forster

At the marathon distance David started relatively young, running his first shortly after reaching age 20 in September 1974 when he was 4th in the Rotherham Marathon in 2:30:21. David would return to Rotherham in 1978, when he won the race, which incorporated the Northern Championship, in 2:23:10. In his career, David completed 9 marathons his fastest being 2:21:40 and his slowest, 2:40:48. With 7 marathons under 2:30, his record is solid.

On the track David has bests of

1,500m	3:59:40
3,000m	8:34
5,000m	14:44:60
10,000m	31:10

Regarding the Club courses, David still holds the record for the Saltwell Road Youth's course from 1971, when he won the Youths race during the Boxing Day event in 17:55. David's best over the 3 mile Joicey Road course is 14:33 and the 4 mile Belle Vue, Junior Championship course, 19:30.

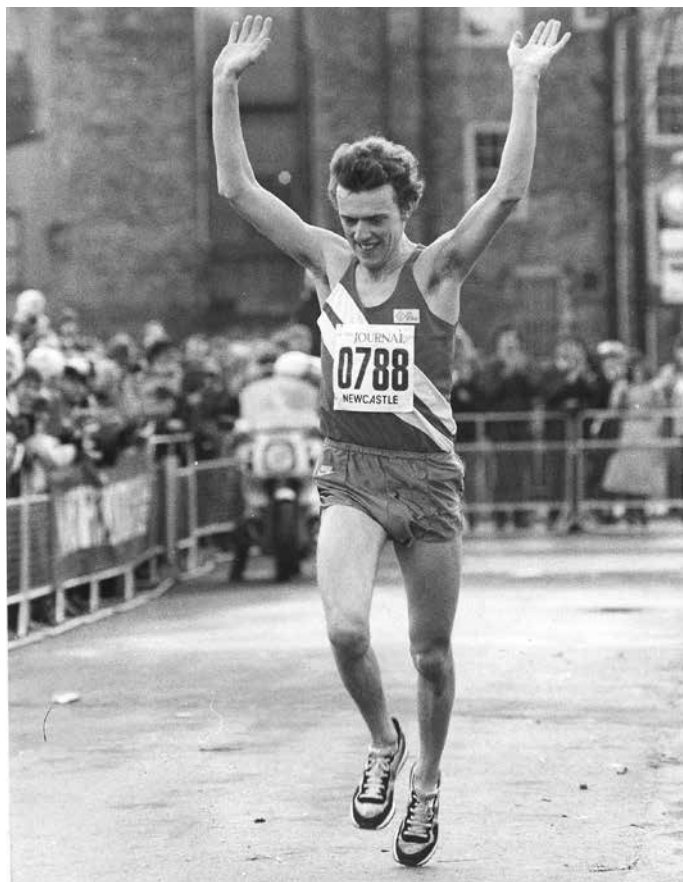
After helping Saltwell win the Morpeth to Newcastle team title in 1983 David stopped racing, disillusioned by his failure to win a representative vest, to concentrate on building his financial services business. David retained an interest in running and returned to the sport in 2009 with Low Fell Running Club. Despite recently reaching age 61, David can still be seen running most days, putting in 50 miles a week, on the roads and paths around Gateshead.

Kevin Forster: joined the club in 1974 as a 15 year old who had been inspired by the achievements of Brendan Foster. His father worked with club legend Ronnie Walker at Clarke Chapman Ltd in Gateshead and it was through this connection that he became a club member.

Kevin clearly remembers that his first training session at the club took place at Gateshead Stadium because that was when he



Kevin Forster 82 GNR



Kevin Forster winning the Morpeth 1983

first met his wife, Jackie. Since Jackie was already a NE Counties Champion in the junior age group champion at 800m for Saltwell, he remembers feeling that he may have been a bit out of his depth! His other memory of that first evening was that he was clearly the “new boy” in the running shoe department, his Dunlop “Green Flash” sandshoes looking distinctly amateur against the multi-coloured footwear of the others.

In time he managed to improve and develop and eventually went

on to win 5,000m and 10,000m NE County titles as well as the NE Cross-Country title on five occasions. As a Saltwell Harrier there were a number of cross-country performances that are particularly memorable to him: Winning a silver team medal for England in the 1982 World Championship in Rome, finishing 3rd in the 1983 National at Luton and then three weeks later coming home as 2nd English counter when the World Championships came to Gateshead. Kevin and Jackie's first child Kristian had been born two days before the race, so this was a busy time for him and even more so for Jackie!

On the roads, Kevin's time with Saltwell included two races that he shall always remember. The first was the 1982 Great North Run when he battled with Mike McLeod all the way to South Shields in what was quite a race. “Mick the Kick” as he was fondly known, used his formidable turn of pace to get away from Kevin in the last 800m, finishing in 62:44, a new British record, whilst Kevin finished runner up in 62:58. Kevin says “We remain very close friends to this day and he often tells me (very often actually) that he thought I was dying at 10 miles on account of the noises I was making!” I like to point out that the pain was genuine and indeed I felt like I was about to die! Although I went on to improve my half marathon time to 62.07 (I like to mention that to Mike), that race in 1982 remains a stand out for me.” The second memorable race was when Kevin won the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race, New Years Day, 1983. Winning the “Morpeth,” as it was commonly known, was the dream of every North East athlete and the icing on the cake that day was the 2nd placing of Bill Cain and close packing of Dave Kelly to give Saltwell the team prize as well as the individual winner. Like so many of the classic local races, the demise of the “Morpeth” is a source of regret to many.

After moving on to Gateshead, Kevin finished 2nd in the London Marathon in 1984 and 1988, being the reserve for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games and then competing in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, finishing in 33rd position after fading in the later stages of the race. He won three international marathons:

Enschede (1983), Toronto (1984) and Stockholm (1987). He ran several more times for England in the World Cross Country Championships, picking up another silver team medal in 1987 (Warsaw) and an individual 2nd place in the European Clubs Cross Country Championship of 1987 (Milan).

When injury forced his retirement from international competition in 1991, Kevin had the following personal best times:

800m	1m 55s
1,500m	3m 46s
10,000m	28m 19s
10 miles	47m 20s
½ Marathon	62m 7s (Reading course record 1987)
Marathon	2h 10m 52s (London 1988)

After leaving Newcastle University in 1983 with a PhD in Chemical Engineering, Kevin enjoyed great employment support from Alan

Christison of Christison Scientific Equipment Ltd., a laboratory and process equipment supplier in Gateshead. Upon retirement from international competition Kevin embarked on a career in academia, progressing to become Senior Lecturer and Head of Chemical Engineering at the University of Paisley near Glasgow. During this time he enjoyed veterans athletics as a member of Victoria Park Athletics Club (“even managing to win the odd race!” he quips). He has supported his children, Nicola and Kristian, in their athletics; Nicola in the sprints and Kristian middle distance and schoolboy international cross country.

In 2006, with their family grown up, Kevin and Jackie returned to the North East, where they are now kept busy as owners of a holiday chalet park in Tynedale and holiday cottages in the Scottish Borders. However, Kevin still loves running and says, “When time (and body) allow, I continue to try and run twice weekly as I have always enjoyed the experience that running gives over that of other sports”.

Billy Cain: joined Saltwell Harriers in 1969 after meeting with coach Ron Rielley. As a colt, he won the Sherman Cup and the Newcastle Schools Cross Country races in early 1971 but drifted out of the sport soon afterwards. After a gap of seven years he started running again while in the Army in Germany. Improvement came fairly quickly and he eventually went on to win the Army Cross Country Championship and represented the Army and the Combined Services on the road, track and cross-country. Being in the Army limited Billy’s appearances for Saltwell but whenever he could, he turned out for the Club especially in the Saltwell Road Race and the New Year’s Day “Morpeth to Newcastle”.

Billy’s career highlight was the Morpeth to Newcastle on January 1st 1983 over the extended course of 14.25 miles, finishing second to team mate, Kevin Forster in 69.20 (63.45 half marathon pace) but holding off Charlie Spedding in a sprint finish. With Saltwell runners in first and second and David Kelly finishing 24th, Saltwell won the team race for the first and only time in their history.



Kevin Forster (left) and Billy Cain (Right) on way to 1st and 2nd in “Morpeth”, 1983



Billy Cain in GNR 1984



Billy Cain in London Marathon 1983

In the 1983 London Marathon, although he ran a new Personal Best, Billy was very disappointed with just shaving under 2:15. His aim was for 2:13:30 and he was on course until the 23 mile mark but slowed badly over the last few miles.

Billy's biggest win was the Inter Counties 20 mile championship on a scorching day in July 83. This run combined with his run in London gained him selection for the Great Britain team for a Nations' Cup tournament held within the Montreal Marathon in September 1983. There he ran a solid 2:16 to finish 13th, helping the GB team to second place behind Ethiopia. Billy's best memory of this race is catching the then double Olympic Champion "Yifter the Shifter" at the 19 mile mark.

Billy's first GB Vest was the 1982 Paris "Essone" Marathon where he finished 5th in 2:18. Later in 1982, he ran for England in an international match held within the Edinburgh Marathon, finishing second in 2:21 in appalling weather conditions. In 1983, he represented GB in the San Blas Half Marathon finishing 7th and the Montreal Marathon mentioned earlier. He won the N&D 10 mile championship in 1983 and 1984, the N&D 20 mile title in

1985 and represented the NE Counties twice in the Inter Counties CC Championships ('83 & '84).

Billy considered 10 miles his best race distance and won quite a few, including the Brampton to Carlisle in 47:10, the Tynemouth Boundary 10 in a course record time, the Croxdale 10 (twice) and the Hartlepool 10 in 47:55. In all he ran twelve sub-50 minute 10 mile races and a further six 'en route' in longer races.

On leaving the army in 1984 Billy's focus changed to building a career and bringing up a young family so although he continued to place highly and even win some road races (still running 30 minute 10Ks, 49/50 minutes for 10 miles, 65/66 minute half marathons and sub 2.20 marathons) he didn't set any PBs after 1983 and stopped competing in 1990. Billy now lives in Texas, USA.

Billy Cain was the last Saltwell Harrier to win the Inter-Counties Championship at any distance. The fastest Saltwell athletes since Billy have been **David Robertson**, **Darrin Adamson**, **Daniel Henderson** and **Scott Anderson**.

Between 1988 and 1998, **David Robertson** was unbeatable in the Club 4 Mile race, won the Senior Championship 8 times and was first finisher 8 times in the Club 3 mile race. He was regularly in the top placings in local road races but, unfortunately for Saltwell, left the Club for Sunderland Harriers, for whom he still competes as a VM50.

A number of Saltwell Harriers have been with the Club since



Billy Cain in GB vest



David Robertson in the leading pack at the "Morpeth" – mid 1990s



Scott Anderson (916) with Walter Fraser (515) in GNR

before the Centenary year; long before in the case of Ronnie Walker, who joined before the 50th Anniversary, as his profile above testifies. Some of the other loyal Club members are profiled below.

Simon Murray: life member, first attended the club on Tuesday 5th of September 1967, having been taken along to the Denmark Street HQ by his elder brother, Nick, who had been a member for over a year. He officially joined on 19/9/68 due to his age. They both followed in the footsteps of their uncle Patrick, who was a Saltwell member in the 1950s, and their father, who was a member of Gateshead Congers and a decent 400m athlete.

The Murrays lived less than a mile from the club headquarters and the eldest four Murray brothers represented Saltwell Harriers over the next ten year period at Colt, Boy, Youth, Junior and Senior levels. All four brothers also ran for the school XC and Athletics team as well as the City team as they all had passed their 11+ exam and went to Grammar School in Newcastle. Three of them represented the County and Simon and Nick were also County Champions.

Up until 1969 the minimum age to compete in any Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) accredited race on the road, track or cross country was 14 years of age. So for the first 2 years of club membership Simon's racing was confined to running in school athletic events at city and county levels.

Between 1969 and 1976 Simon was club champion at Colt, Boy, Youth and Junior categories and Saltwell Harriers had one of the strongest junior sections in the area, region and country and were regular winners and contenders for most events.

Simon was City and County Schools Champion and Captain for a number of years at XC and at Athletics at a number of middle and long distance track events and regularly ran in national schools competitions and won numerous schools athletics and KC events and titles over a number of years. Between the ages of 16 to 19 he was ranked in the top few dozen junior middle distance track



Simon Murray winning the NE Grammar and Public Schools XC Championships

athletes in the UK and ran 15:32 for 5K as a 16 year old. He ran under 4 minutes for 1,500m, less than 15 minutes for 5K and below 2 hours for 20M on or before his 19th birthday and was also selected to represent N&D for the youth and junior teams.

Simon first damaged his Achilles tendon when 16 and was unable to compete in the regional championships when he was favourite for the 1,500m title. The same injury happened when he was 19 whilst at college in the NW in the mid/late 1970s resulting in complete disruption to training and competition. Whilst at Polytechnic, Simon married and started a family which had even more impact upon his now dwindling Athletics and running career.

Simon and family returned to the NE in the early '80s after about 6 years studying and working in Manchester and Lancashire and started to run again. He returned to training with the club in 1984. In his early career Simon had been prevented from competing in other sports that he had shown some talent for in order to concentrate on running, which involved training up to 10 sessions per week plus competitions.

When he started to compete for Saltwell again his late 20s, Simon decided that he wanted to enjoy his sport activity time and not just concentrate on running and so started to play football and cricket again in the local leagues. When he had been previously

competing in the 1970s, there had been a distinct XC and road races season from September to April and then people competed 'on the track' until mid-September with a few local 10 mile events and championship 20M and Marathon events. The 1980s brought the advent of the 'Fun Run' and events such as the GNR, Geordie Run, various marathons, half marathons, etc., which blurred the formerly clear distinct XC and tracks seasons. This was the start of mass participation events and an increase in the number of athletic clubs and the running community.

Over the next 20 plus years Simon ran in local road and XC races and regularly ran sub 1:20 half marathons, sub 60 min 10 miles and 32 – 36 minute 10K's but felt that he would no longer challenge the times, training or effort of his teen years as he had other sporting interests and a busy family and working life. He reflects that many of his 1970s club compatriots went on to become great athletes and gain international vests and recognition, up to and including Olympic representation.

In 2003, Simon damaged the same Achilles for a third time effectively ending his running career; resulting in him becoming a goalkeeper to continue playing NE40+ league football and stopping bowling as a cricketer, ending up behind the stumps as a wicketkeeper. Simon eventually hung up his football boots in October 2014 and ended his league cricket days in 2013 but still plays Sunday 'friendlies'.

During his years as a Saltwell Harrier, Simon has been Club Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, Handicapper, Auditor, Press Secretary, Course measurer and a member of the committee in various decades. He was made a life member of the club in 1997 and still feels honoured to hold that position. His time with the club has dwindled over the last 5/6 years as he is no longer competing but believes that if he can sort out his back problems he would love to don the hooped vest again and start competing on the roads, country and possibly even the track again.



Saltwell Harriers Senior Men and Youths, 1990 Centenary Year

Left to right

Back Row: Bob Robson, Paul Milnes, Malcolm Pearce, Paul Fraser (Youth), Gary Richardson (Youth)

Third row: Keith Wood, Phil James, David Moore, Fintan Clarke, Rob Robson, Bob Waugh

Second row: Dave Howells, Mel Brady, Alan Vicarage, Barney Corrigan, Fred Smith, Fred Wood, Mark McNally

Front row: Dave Robertson, John Coulter, Simon Murray, Ronnie Walker, John Garvey, Ian Little, Walter Fraser

Frederick (Fred) Smith: joined Saltwell on leaving Her Majesty's Armed Forces in 1984, having served as a Royal Marine Commando with active service in the Falklands Islands with 45 Commando RM. Like his brother Jimmy, who served in the Royal Navy in the Falklands, Fred is a life member of the Club.

On leaving the forces Fred returned to his trade as a Carpenter and Joiner working for a number of construction companies both in Britain and abroad, working his way through the various supervisory roles to his current position of Senior Project Manager. He has worked as far afield as North Africa (for over 2 years) and spent a memorable 2 years in Dublin Ireland, where he became a member of Lucan Harriers (second claim), organising an exchange visit when the Dubliners stayed with Saltwell members and competed in the Great North Run and Simonside Fell Race. He has also worked much closer to home where he built two of the most iconic buildings situated on the Tyne: Newcastle Crown Court and The Sage Gateshead (he doesn't take all the credit for these as he did have some help).

Fred has been a runner for as long as he can remember, with competitive running starting at school, where he represented Gateshead both on the track, with the mile being his favourite distance, and also in the country. However, it wasn't until he joined Saltwell that he started training specifically to compete as opposed to just running because he enjoyed it.

Over the years he has competed in all the local road races and some further afield such as The Windsor Half Marathon (formally the building industry half marathon) where he regularly recorded times of under 80 minutes for the distance, with his best just under 75 minutes.



Fred Smith, always smiling

Running and competing on the fells and mountains of Britain and the Alps has provided Fred with the most pleasure and success. He has regularly appeared in the prize list of those races he has entered, even being interviewed by local Television when he won The 25 mile, Allendale Challenge at the tender age of 32.

He has been lucky enough to have had (and continues to have) a long career as a runner competing in the OMM (original mountain marathon) since 1979, with over 30 completed, and more than 40 mountain marathons in total. Running highlights include being a member of The Bob Graham Round 24 Hour Club, a bench mark for fell runners in the UK, and doing The High Level Haute Route from Chamonix in France to Zermatt in Switzerland, a distance of over 180 kilometres with more than 12,000 meters of climb. Fred



Fred Smith, proudly carrying the 2012 Olympic Torch through Gateshead

also had the great honour of being chosen to carry The Olympic Torch as the Olympic Flame passed through Gateshead on its route to the 2012 London Olympics.

Fred has held most of the official positions within the club over the years: Club Captain, Social and Honorary Secretary, Club Coach and now Club Chairman, a position he considers to be an honour and a privilege. His links with Saltwell go back to when the club was a mere 50 year old in 1940. Fred's great uncle George Harrison, (his grandfather's brother) ran for Saltwell and for his country but was not able to fulfil his hopes and ambitions as he paid the ultimate sacrifice for his country during the 2nd World War. His name is read out by Fred at every Annual General Meeting when Club members remember all who lost their lives serving our country.

His hopes are that he can pass on the joy and benefits of being a runner and especially a runner within the Saltwell Harrier family.

Jimmy Smith: joined Saltwell Harriers in the early eighties while serving in the Royal Navy and remained a member after leaving the Navy and settling in the Manchester area. He has been a regular face at various running events – road, cross-country and, in particular, fell races – and can boast of having more “Saltwell firsts” than any other club member, due solely to the fact that on the majority of Jimmy's races, he was the only Saltwell runner!

Jimmy's first real taste of fell racing came when he decided to run the Simonside fell race on a Saturday and drive to the Lake District to run the Dalehead race on the Sunday, the latter being an ‘A short’ race in the FRA calendar and a real eye opener. Since then Jimmy has been a regular competitor in fell races, especially those held in the Peak District. Among his memorable achievements are his first class times in the Borrowdale Fell Race, with a PB of 3:35, and the Yorkshire Three Peaks. In team competitions, such as the Ian Hodgson Mountain Relay and the Karrimor International Mountain Marathon (now the Original Mountain Marathon), he has partnered other Saltwell Harriers, including his brother, Fred, Tim Forster and Graham Harrison.



Jimmy Smith

Jimmy considers himself very fortunate to have served his country and even managed to run and compete in the some of the hostile/challenging areas in which he served: the Belfast marathon in 1983 (1st Saltwell), Basra Half Marathon 2003 (1st Saltwell) and Lashkar Gar Afghanistan 2006 (1st Saltwell). It was due to his service that, in 2005, he was made an Honorary Life Member, an honour that he is very proud of.

Jimmy has, unfortunately, undergone numerous operations on both knees and now his involvement is restricted to the occasional short fell race and supporting other club members on long fell races. He can be regularly seen on top of Great Gable offering both moral support and refreshments. His hopes for the future is to manage his training to enable him to return to running and continue to represent his club in some capacity.

Keith Wood: Introduced to the mountains and fells of Britain as a member of the 3rd Gateshead Boys' Brigade, Keith began competing as a youth in 2 day orienteering type competitions. In 1979, as a 17 year old, he partnered fellow Saltwell Harrier, Tim Forster in his first KIMM. Running with a variety of partners in over-21s KIMM/OMMs has produced a mixed bag of results: 21st Elite, 5th A class and a win in the 1992 B class. As Keith says, with hindsight, "the Elite class should have been targeted during the 1980s. Those of us doing the KIMM at that time were capable of competing at that level."

Encouraged by fellow BB member Graham Harrison, Keith joined Saltwell Harriers in 1982 and he entered the first Newcastle City

Marathon in the September of that year. Training and preparation consisted of Wednesday football training and a 3 mile run home to Wrekenton from Clarke Chapman, where he was an engineering apprentice. Consequently, he struggled round his only ever road marathon in 3hrs 40minutes.

A serious ankle injury resulting in surgery took him out of all sport for over a year. He returned to Saltwell in mid-1984 to finish his only ever GNR in 1hr 19min. A slightly faster 1hr 15min would come in the Tynedale Half Marathon a few years later.

Compared to his more illustrious fellow Saltwell Harriers, Keith says he would only consider himself an average club runner. However, his modesty should not obscure the fact an average club runner is something most runners can only aspire to be and can play an important part in winning team prizes. Besides he is certainly better than average off-road, especially on the fells.

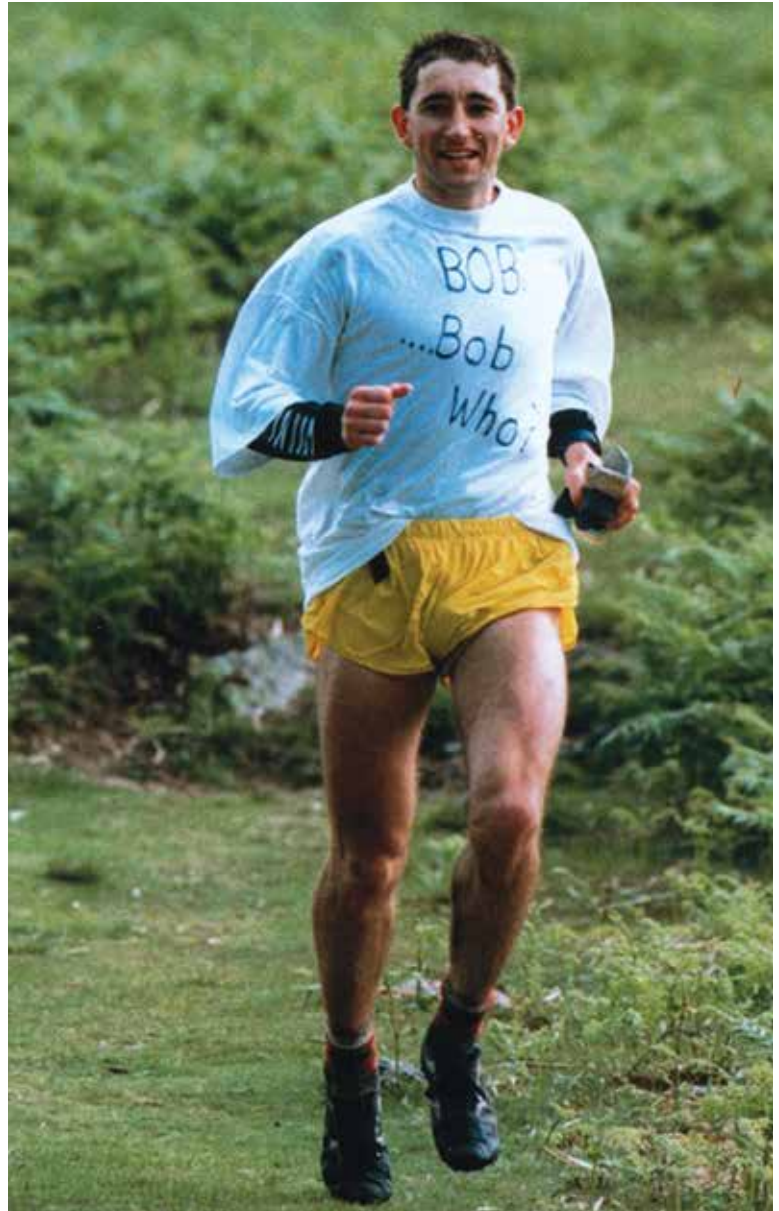
A time of 56:24 in the 1990 Brampton to Carlisle 10 mile only produced an 87th position for Keith. A faster 55 minutes for the Tynedale 10 was only good enough to finish 3rd counter for Saltwell, but enough to win 1st team, with Dave Robertson and Daniel Henderson. The 1990 14.2 mile Morpeth to Newcastle in 1hr 22min and the Phoenix 14 (Coastal Run) in 1hr 20min, position 48th (same time in 1993 position 23rd) and the fact he has never won any of the internal Saltwell road races confirms, in Keith's unassuming view, his mid-standard road runner status. Nevertheless, most newcomers to the Club would be delighted to achieve those sort of times and, for most of his years with Saltwell, Keith has been a regular in the Harrier League medium pack with a couple of seasons in the fast pack and a reliable counter in Saltwell's first team. Not so much an "average" runner but, more aptly, a "stalwart".

His performance on the Fells has more highlights, completing all the Lakeland long classic races with a 3rd place at Ennerdale Horseshoe and some decent performances at Borrowdale, with a

PB of 3hr 7min to finish 8th. His 1994 Langdale Horseshoe time of 2hr 14min would have won by 2 minutes in 2014. Two appearances at the Ben Nevis race were both under 2 hours, the fastest in 1997 with a time of 1hr 46 min and 25th position. In 1992, he claimed the bronze medal in the North East Fell Running Championships. During the 1990s, Keith was rarely outside the top 5 at the Chevy Chase, with a PB of 2hrs 50 min though only good enough for 2nd place. Victory in the 1995 Chevy Chase in a time of 2hrs 53min, 11 minutes ahead of 2nd place was followed a week later by being the first Saltwell Harrier to complete the Bob Graham Round with an impressive time of 19hrs 5minutes; a day which Keith describes as, “one of the most enjoyable days one could experience, running across England's highest mountains with like minded friends”.

Keith continues as a member of The Boys' Brigade and is an active member of Wrekenton Methodist Church where he recently qualified as a Methodist Lay Preacher. For the past 14 years he has served as a Labour councillor on Gateshead Council. A varied career which has included engineering and financial sales, but his decision to improve on his one 'O' level in geography led him to gain a BA (Hons) in Politics from Durham University in his early thirties; one of the best decisions he says he has made. After spell in the corporate sector with BT, Keith found himself back at school in 2007, this time as a secondary school teacher. His contribution to education was recognised in 2014 by Oxford University with an Inspirational Teacher award.

A committed member of Saltwell, Keith served as Chairman for 15 years, is currently race director of the Saltwell Road Race and instigated the Saltwell Harrier Fell race. A qualified coach and event adjudicator for UKA, Keith continues to compete with a “Nil Desperandum” spirit.



Keith Wood approaching Dunmail Raise on completion of his Bob Graham Round, 24th June 1994

Graham (Harra) Harrison: joined Saltwell in 1980 as a 17 year old, who had no road running experience, entered the Newcastle City Marathon, finished in 3hrs 19 minutes and got the running bug straight away. In 1981, he ran for Saltwell in the Morpeth to Newcastle Road Race on New Year's Day, completing the 14miles in 1hr 28minutes and gaining a silver medal. He then went on to finish the Blaydon Race in 30:01, Tynedale Half Marathon in 1hr 16min and the York 10 miler in 54mins. He has done 21 Great North Runs in total, with a PB of 76:11.

Graham started his working career as an apprentice sheet metalworker/welder. After finishing his apprenticeship he had a career change and went in to the financial sector and worked his way up to National Manager. Graham was an active member of the Territorial Army and soon rose to the rank of Sergeant. In 2003, he was called up for a tour of war-torn Iraq, from which he safely returned home. He then transferred his management skills in to the care sector, and those who know him realise he had met his vocation. He even introduced some of his Saltwell Harrier friends in to the industry and they have gone on to raise thousands of pounds for different charities.

Graham has performed almost every club official role, starting as the Race Director for the annual 10K Road Race, then as secretary/treasurer until the role was split in 1990. After a spell as Entertainments officer, he took on the role of treasurer and has done this for over 25 years, successfully making sure that Saltwell Harriers remain in a very healthy and viable financial position.

Graham really embraces training nights with the Club and has gone down in the Club's history



'Harra' running in the NEHL 2015



Graham (Harra) Harrison with Phil James, "The Dynamic Duo"

by introducing his legendary "Harra Hugs", finished off with a motivational quote. He even managed to form a hug right round the Angel of the north and has gone on record to complete a hug in Saltwell Park with 62 members. He can be remembered at many a club presentation evening, blasting out the Drifters number "Saturday night at the movies".

Graham is now one of the clubs longest serving members. He has won the Club Yacht Handicap on 3 occasions, the Junior Championship and continues to act as the Club's official Treasurer.

Phil James: has been a Saltwell Harrier for over 30 years. You'll soon understand by this account that, unlike many of his running peers, Phil doesn't take himself too seriously and definitely doesn't keep detailed records of dates and times of any races he's competed in. These days you'd be lucky to see him running with a watch on his wrist, let alone a snazzy GPS device!

Phil's sporting passion was Rugby and some may say he was quite good. He played for Washington RUFC, where he was first team captain, and also had a spell at Gateshead Fell. He was even picked to play for the county! Rumour has it that his wife was instrumental in the birth of Phil's running career though. She felt that, with a young family and the fact he was always injured, he should be spending more time at home so she persuaded him to ease off the rugby and take up something less time demanding like running to ensure he would be around more. Phil agreed and after about a 4 month period into his 'new' sport, he could be found in the Lake District most weekends either training or competing on the fells. In the mid 1980s, after participating in the annual Saltwell Harriers 10km Road Race, Phil was invited to run with the club by the 'Saltwell' committee. He joined, so that was Tuesday evenings sorted for the next 25 years too!

In typical tongue in cheek humour, Phil says he was never going to set the world on fire with his running but can boast of competing against many famous runners such as Steve Cram, Mike McLeod, Haile Gebrselassi and Graham Harrison and has run in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, France and New Zealand, to name but a few.

Phil has completed over 35 marathons with times spanning from just under 3 hours to a lot over 4 1/2 hours. In the 1980s he averaged two marathons a year collecting a bunch of London Marathon medals and 9 framed Nottingham lace pictures depicting Robin Hood running 26 odd miles away from the Sheriff. Phil always managed to get a number for the London marathon. Back in the day running marathons wasn't that popular in the club so if he didn't get in through the ballot, he always seemed to be picked out of the hat for one of the two club numbers!



Phil James at the Tynedale 10K, 2015

Present day, he restricts himself to one marathon a year but still completes them in around three and three quarter hours. As a running all-rounder, no distance is too short or too long for Phil. In his rugby playing days he was known as a sprinter but now he feels more at home running silly mile races such as the Wuthering Hike at 31 miles and 'The Fellsman' at a total distance of 62 miles. His best times completing these two events are 5 hours 30 minutes and 14 hours 30 minutes respectively but he admits both were achieved over 2 stones ago! He's never run under 60 minutes for 10 miles but has achieved that distance in 62 minutes; he's never run 10km in less than 36 minutes but has achieved 38 minutes and his best half marathon time is 85 minutes.

Phil is rarely missing from the limelight in the Club's social activities, writing the odd sketch and producing/editing the occasional video. He has also served as Club auditor for more years than he can remember.

Like the vast majority of members, Phil is passionate about the club. He loves it for its history and past and present achievements but, much more than that, he loves it for the people who make it what it is today and is proud to be known as a Saltwell Harrier.

David Gilthorpe: spent much of his childhood walking on the hills of Northern England and Scotland. He started running on the roads in the boom of the early 1980s, completing several Great North Runs (including the first one), Morpeth to Newcastle Road Races and full marathons, including the second London Marathon after queuing outside the Blackett Street Post Office for 20 hours to gain entry. He joined Saltwell in 1987.

For the last 25 years or so he has focused on running off road, competing in numerous fell races, mountain marathons and trail races. Training comprises either walking or running on the fells often in the company of Peter Wilkinson and at least one dog. He tries to complete over 10 fell races of varying distances every year. He is attracted to races where food is available. David is normally

found at the back of the field. Success is competing and completing. However, he has won an over 40s class in an Irish Mountain Marathon (with Peter) and a prize for the first runner with dog at Alwinton in 2014 (only runner with dog). He has also run the Lakeland Three Thousanders and the Lyke Wake Walk as well as supported club members on several Bob Graham Rounds.



David Gilthorpe

David is an accountant by profession.

Walter Fraser: joined Saltwell in 1983 as a 35 year old newcomer to the sport. As an unattached runner, he had finished the Great North Run in 1hr 23min and the North Tyneside Marathon in 2hr 54min. He went on to do 24 GNRs in total with a PB of 76:21. He's also ran 5 sub-3 hours marathons with a PB of



Walter Fraser winning V65 NEMMA XC Championship 2015

2 hours 46 minutes. Like Keith Wood, Walter has regarded himself as a typical mid-standard club runner and was a regular in the medium pack in Harrier League competitions until his late 50s. He has, however, done relatively well at masters level in his age group.

Shortly after joining the Club, Walter left his factory floor engineering job and went to study at Oxford, spending two years at Ruskin College and three years at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. In the 1988 Teddy Hall Relays, 40 years old Walter put in the fastest leg performance (3.2 miles in 16.44) for his college which was a wake-up call for his much younger team mates to start training harder and together they won all competitions, road, track and cross-country, held in Oxford until Walter graduated in 1989. Walter was also 4th in a University 10 mile race in 55:10 and was second counter in 56:46 for the Saltwell Team that came third in the 1990 Hebburn Boundary 10 mile race, David Robertson and Ian Little being the other counters.

Much travelled in his international role as Principal Lecturer and Director for International Partnerships with Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Walter has kept his training going wherever he's been, whether that might be through Chinese city streets, parks and up nearby mountains, across Red Square and Gorky Park in Moscow, amid huge snow drifts in Northern Russia and along Table Mountain, Cape Town. When training back home with the Hoops, he is probably most renowned for his terrible jokes, rivalled only by John Stephenson. Now the oldest Club member still competing, his main running objectives are just to keep injuries at bay, win more prizes at masters level to add to his victories in the 2010 and 2011 NEVAC V60 and 2015 NEMAA V65 Cross-Country Championships, and maybe teach some of the younger Hoops a thing or two when it comes to competing.

Twice Club Captain and Junior Champion at the age of ripe old age of 42, Walter now acts unofficially as Club Historian.



Walter Fraser at Silksworth XC 1994



Bob with his eldest son, Joe

The last time Saltwell had a burgeoning Junior section, during the 1980s, **Bob Waugh** was the man behind its success. Bob sacrificed his own running to look after the youngsters in the Club. Dedicated family man, Bob was proud to see each of his own children, Joe, Collette, Peter and Martin wear the Saltwell vest. His life took a new, exciting turn in the mid-1990s when he decided, much to the amazement of his family and friends, to take his love of singing more seriously and became “Bobby Rush”,



Bob singing as Bobby Rush

a professional singer around the North East entertainment circuit as well as a member of a Sage choir. Bob enjoyed immensely his new way of life until, unfortunately, illness overcame him and he passed away aged 61 in 2006.

Another recent sad loss was that of **Dennis Lawther**, in 2014. In his heyday, Dennis competed with the best in local and national races. Keith Wood's (2014) excellent eulogy to Dennis pays fitting tribute to the man with the maxim “Saltwell till I die”:

“Dennis was a loyal member of Saltwell Harriers for 40 years. He was a character; there is no disputing this fact and he knew he was too. Dennis did not hold any official positions in Saltwell Harriers that I am aware of, but Dennis was the self appointed unofficial agitator of Saltwell. It would appear that he put as much effort into challenging the decisions of the club officers as he did trying to run faster.

Without doubt Dennis was a decent runner during his time with Saltwell; completing the 14.25 miles from Morpeth to Newcastle on New Year's Day, 1979 in a time of 1 hour 13 minutes, testimony to his athletic prowess. Over the years he wore the Red and White diagonal strips then the Red and White hoops (the members reverting back to the original design of the club vest after flirting with modernity during the late seventies and early eighties) of Saltwell in many races across the North East and further afield. When I was asked by Dennis why Saltwell had not entered a team into the Elswick Good Friday relays, I told him there was not enough interest from club members. Dennis, unperturbed, decided to make the entry himself and ran as a team of one. This was typical of his dedication to running races.

As the years go by and we get older we tend to get a little bit slower too. This did not deter Dennis. He had completed a number of London marathons and was entered again just a few years ago, this last one being probably his fastest time, though there is some dispute as to whether or not he completed the full course. When challenged he just gave one of the mischievous smiles he was known for.

Look at any photo of the start to the Blaydon Race, Great North Run or other big North East race and you will spot Dennis on the front line. He always exaggerated his estimated finishing

time to ensure he got an elite number. Olympic athletes would find themselves rubbing shoulders with this bloke in a Saltwell vest until one of them would say 'Alright Dennis?'. These antics resulted in a letter from UK Athletics to the Saltwell Harriers Honorary Secretary, not with a complaint but congratulating the club on having a member with one of the top 20 marathon times in the UK at that time.

Dennis loved the camaraderie of the Harriers and local athletics. Often he would come up to you on some wind-swept cross-country course and say with his mischievous smile, 'Did I ever tell you about....?'. More often than not his story would include a well know athlete such as Jim Alder of Morpeth Harriers.

Dennis will be remembered in many ways by Saltwell Harriers. Firstly, by his insistence on challenging officialdom. He knew how to play standing orders. 'Excuse me Mister Chairman', 'Point of order Mister Chairman'. These challenges were always raised in a soft, quiet, unaggressive tone of voice. His letters to the Club Secretary are legendary, nearly always written on the back of a previous letter or gas bill (he was always keen to recycle!!) and he would make a point of highlighting the fact that he had used a second class stamp as he could not afford the expense of a first class stamp. He successfully utilised this hardship to convince the club officials that his residency in Cramlington should be classed as out of the area, thereby entitling him to reduced subscriptions. I myself have a copy of a letter I wrote to Dennis which is dated 21st February 2002 but which took almost two weeks to construct, just to ensure that I dealt with all the unfounded allegations that he had made about certain club officials.

The picture that I might be painting of Dennis's character is one that you may describe as eccentric. There was much more to Dennis than that though. He was extremely loyal to Saltwell Harriers for 40 years, attending many monthly meetings, always in attendance at the AGM offering to collect Club President Ronnie Walker on the way. He never missed the annual presentation,

always dressed smart, in what I now know to be the same and only suit he has worn for 30 years. He loved to flirt with the ladies and the attention he received in return. Not one to sit by and watch, at last year's presentation and despite his current health issues he was still game for 'Stripping the Willow' when the ceilidh band struck up a tune.



Dennis Lawther

Even during the onset of his Parkinson's disease he never missed a local cross country, the club road race or fell race; offering to don a marshal's bib to do his bit to help the club he loved. Last year at a Harrier League cross-country event held at Tanfield, near Beamish I saw him standing in the middle of the field. I was perplexed as to how he had got to this venue, due to its remote location. When I asked him, his response was, 'This bus pass can get me anywhere'.

Dennis had a very caring nature. Without fail he would ask about the well-being of Saltwell members, and my own family, in particular my two daughters whom he had watched run on a number of occasions. Walter Fraser recalls how Dennis showed genuine concern for his grandchildren after the untimely death of his daughter Julia.

A few years ago, the very officials that Dennis had given such a hard time, decided to grant him life membership of Saltwell Harriers. 'Why?' you may ask. The reason is that we had an attachment to Dennis, a unique attachment, which the best philosophers in the world would not be able to define. When asked about how he felt about being made a life member his reply was, 'It took them long enough didn't it'.

‘Saltwell till I Die’ was Dennis’s signature tune. He would use this term when signing off Christmas cards and ironically those letters to the Club Secretary. Despite some of the frustrations he gave us, we at Saltwell Harriers all liked Dennis. He knew that we knew the game he was playing and we all played the game with a smile, though Dennis’s was by far the biggest. From a personal point of view, I found Dennis to be a gentleman and a caring man with a passion for local athletics. I was last with Dennis at the Saltwell Harriers AGM on Tuesday 9th, 2014. His parting words as Walter Fraser and I helped him into his taxi were the words he said many times, ‘Saltwell till I Die’. He was right”.

(Dennis Lawther eulogy: <http://www.saltwellharriers.org.uk/2014/10/>)

In the records of Saltwell Harriers Officers since 1920, it is striking how many times the surname Cleghorn appears. **Bob Cleghorn** DCM was elected as Chairman in 1920 and both as President and Chairman in 1922. He held the position of President no less than 31 times and Chairman 29 times between 1920 and 1965. Prior to his roles with Saltwell, Bob was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, an extremely high level military award, for bravery in WW1 at Paschendale. He was also the Headmaster of Rose Street School. His nephew, **Bill Cleghorn**, became a Saltwell Harrier in 1923, was Club Captain in 1934 and 1935 and served his first period as President in 1938 and 1939. He took the initiative in bringing the Club back together after the Second World War, acting in the role of Secretary for the first 3 years. As a runner, Bill could be relied on as a counter in the Saltwell team even into his veteran years. A night shift worker at Vickers, Bill was also President nine further times between 1973 and 1983 and Chairman 3 further times during that period.

Another remarkable fact about Bill Cleghorn is that from the start of the 1932-33 season till the end of the 1935-36 season, he never missed a Club run. It is highly unlikely that anyone has ever matched or ever will match that achievement. Anyone up for the challenge?

Other extraordinarily long-serving officers, include, **Billy Noble**, **Ronnie Walker**, **Fred Smith** and **Keith Wood**, whose roles can be found in their profiles above.

Saltwell Ladies Section is now probably the largest it has been in the Club’s history. However, back in the 1950s, Saltwell’s Ladies Club was the top ladies club in the North-East. Records of its successes are not as prevalent as those for its male counterpart but it is known that Saltwell Ladies won 15 medals in the 1951-52 season and that Club Captain **Mary Joyce** was 7th in the Women’s National Cross-Country Championship with N. Scurfield 24th and E. McIlroy 26th. Thanks to considerable growth in numbers in recent years, Saltwell has a burgeoning Ladies Section, full of vibrant characters and showing potential to take Saltwell back to winning ways.

Finally, there are no more prominent Saltwell Harriers or greater characters than those who gave their lives in the two World Wars, 1914-1918 and 1939-45. Their names are inscribed on the Memorial Shield⁴, which is displayed at every Saltwell Harriers AGM:

James Campbell Batie	John Turnbull
Fred Dunn	Wallace Travers
Robert Elliott	William Booth Watson
Sydney Goldthorpe	George Wood
George Arthur Grey	John Warden
George Headlam	George Harrison
George Melville	Richard Armstrong
Thomas Oliver	
Percy Proud	
Harry Harrod Raven	

Humble in Life, Exalted in Death

⁴The decision to have a shield in memoriam of Saltwell’s lost warriors was made at a Club Committee meeting, 11th November, 1920.



Saltwell discovered Potts, Anderson and

HILL

Here's a health to
Tyne's side's
newest international
runner, 21-year-old
Saltwell Harrier John
Hillen.

As a result of his sensational performance in the mile at the 1966 Commonwealth Games, Hillen was awarded an invitation to represent his country in Belgium on February 1.

It was the day when he
was a great Hillen has
been rated as an excellent
 prospect.

Now favourite

Being most seen at a recent
meeting in "the home"
of the British and
Commonwealth
championships
in the North,
Hillen has been
the only one to win
the 1000 yards race.

His performance
was outstanding in the
1000 yards race.

By WHIPPER-IN

King of the British 1000 yards
race, Hillen's triumph at the
1966 Commonwealth Games
was a great success. He
was the only one to win
the 1000 yards race.

Anderson, Potts, and Hillen
were the only ones to win
the 1000 yards race.

Assentees

The 1000 yards race
was the only one to win
the 1000 yards race.



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Much of the data was obtained from the Club's own archives, *Saltwell Harriers*, *Gateshead*, which are kept in Tyne and Wear Archives, Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA.

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