



## NATIONAL 6-STAGE ROAD RELAY CHAMPIONS – 2007

Yes, we've brought you pictures like this before – but while our lads are able to notch up such great victories, we'll have no hesitation in bringing you further such images. Left to right: James Kelly (stage 2), Phil Wicks (6), Stephen Sharp (1), Mark Miles (5), Jonathan Blackledge (3) and Simon Jones (4)

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### Belgrave H Yacht Handicap, Wimbledon, 6 October 2007.

		H'cap time	Allow	Actual time	M	F
1	C Jennings	M	27:23	1:30	25:53	=9
2	M Halman	M	27:34	11:20	16:14	1
3	C Taplin	M	27:43	3:45	23:58	5
4	S Maddock	F	27:50	7:00	20:50	1
5	F Ward	M	28:01	9:45	18:16	2
6	M Evans	F	28:05	7:00	21:05	2
7	D McMillan	M	28:19	7:00	21:19	4
8	R Norville	M	28:20	9:45	18:35	3
9	J Beecroft	F	28:21	5:30	22:51	3
10	M Lesley	M	28:37	4:30	24:07	6
11	L McLean	M	28:58	3:45	25:13	8
12	G Collins	M	29:39	4:30	25:09	7
13	C Henn	M	30:10	3:15	26:55	11
14	T Stone	M	30:23	4:30	25:53	=9
15	K Duckett	M	30:57	3:15	27:42	12
16	S Jennings	F	31:41	0:00	31:41	4
17	T Lawton	M	32:05	3:15	28:50	13
18	R Fevzi	M	36:17	5:30	30:47	14

UK, AAA, SEAA & CAU Inter-Counties 10km Championships, Chichester, 7 October 2007.

### Oooh! Them Beagles

What a shambles was the start of this race. A change in the starting arrangements meant that the elite runners (UK, AAA and Inter-county men and women) started out on the road, with the masses starting in the car park. Barriers were erected to initially keep the two fields apart. But the two streams met after only fifty metres, by which time elite athletes were running into the barriers while those starting conservatively found themselves having to thread through a wall of club runners who had gone out hard. In the melee Winchester's Louise Damen crashed into the obstruction and was out of the race with a damaged wrist before the event was 10 seconds old!

There was much confusion also as club runners were commandeered by County team managers for the Inter-county event resulting in them being given alternative race numbers which didn't necessarily reflect the fact that they were entered under their old numbers in the various club championships.

But it was a great race for all that, with 10 men going sub-30 including our own Simon Jones and Stephen Sharp. It was a huge advance for Simon who'd been threatening to do this for months. It was Stephen's best clocking since 2003. Jonathan Blackledge closed in our scoring three with a time 1 second better than he achieved at the beginning of the year, and James Kelly took over a minute off his best to give us a great scoring four in the SEAA race.

But Oooh! Them Beagles did it on us, reversing the result of the SEAA 6-Stage Relay and setting the scene nicely for a Road Running showdown at the National 6-Stage Relay in Sutton Coldfield two weeks later.

Birhan Dagne ran a sprightly 33:24 to get into the prizes and with Sarah Murphy and Catherine Eastham making it three, the Belles were not far away from the team medals.

Men. 1 W Chinha (Poole R) 29:18; 2 J Mays (Kent AC) 29:26; 3 G Thompson (Crawley AC) 29:29; ... 7 S Jones 29:46; 10 S Sharp 29:51; 17 J Blackledge 30:15; 34 J Kelly 30:53; 113 L Greatorex 34:42; D Mason 35:02; 277 P Cross M50 41:04.

Teams: UK & AAA 1 Newham & Essex Beagles (29:32, 29:45, 29:45) 1:29:02; 2 Belgrave H (29:46, 29:51, 30:15) 1:29:52; 3 Bedford & County AC (29:48, 30:32, 31:21) 1:31:41.

SEAA 1 Newham & Essex Beagles (as above + 30:42) 1:59:44; 2 Belgrave H (as above + 30:53) 2:00:45; 3 City of Norwich AC (30:28, 31:10, 32:36, 33:28) 2:07:42.

Women. 1 K Reed (Bristol & West) 32:07; 2 H Yelling (Windsor SE&H) 33:19; 4 B Dagne (Belgrave) 33:24; 39 S Murphy 38:20; 68 C Eastham 45:16.

Teams: UK & AAA 1 Winchester & Dist (33:59, 35:16, 36:44) 1:45:59; 2 Bristol & West (32:07, 36:13, 38:33) 1:46:53; 3 Aldershot F&D AC (34:43, 35:03, 37:48) 1:47:34; 4 Belgrave H (33:24, 38:20, 45:16) 1:57:00. SEAA as above but 5 Belgrave H.

Photo by Jeremy Hemming



Surrey Women's CC League, West End, Esher, 13 October 2007.

### Catherine the Great!

With the Harriers of Ranelagh and Belgrave trading Surrey League titles over the last few seasons, it would appear to be our Richmond Park rivals' turn to head the table again. But although short on numbers, the Belles had a great start to their campaign, placing second and only 14 points off the win.

Catherine Bryson sat behind the leading pack for most of the way but produced a powerful finish to surge away and take the individual laurels. Sarah Murphy started fast and was also active in the leading group, eventually placing 8th,

while Tilly Heaton and Erica Fogg battled it out together with Tilly eventually pulling clear on the second lap. Catherine Eastham closed in our scorers and with three races to go, it's all to play for.

In the younger age groups Megan Evans had a top 10 finish in the U15 race, backed up by Jo Foxley, and in the U17 competition Nina Anderson was pleased with her first ever outing for the Belles.

1 C Bryson (Belgrave) 27:15; 2 C Elms (Dulwich) 27:31; 3 L Watson (Stragglers) 27:44; ... 8 S Murphy 27:56; 13 M Heaton 29:11; 14 E Fogg 29:15; 57 C Eastham 33:00; 156 finished.

Teams: 1 Ranelagh H 79; 2 Belgrave H 93; 3 Herne Hill H 116; 4 Stragglers AC 119; 5 Reigate Priory AC 122; 6 West 4 117; 30 teams closed in.

U15/U17. 1 G Peez (Woking) 17:12; 13 M Evans (10-U15) 19:02; 27 N Anderson (12-U17) 20:12; 41 J Foxley (28-U15) 21:58.

Teams: U17. 1 Guildford & Godalming AC 22; 9 Belgrave H 93; 10 teams closed in. U15. 1 Guildford & Godalming AC 37; 7 Belgrave H 134; 17 teams closed in.

"Sweatshop" Men's Surrey CC League, Wimbledon Common, 13 October 2007.

### James Kelly - making a name for himself

With Brockwell Park unavailable for a while, the opening league fixture switched to our own course on Wimbledon Common. Only those "long in the tooth" will remember that this exact course was regularly used for the opening race way back in the early '60s. It turned out to be a popular switch with the runners, for we had a large turn out of over 170; and no wonder, for four of the clubs now contesting Division One are based on the Common: Belgrave H, Thames H&H, Hercules Wimbledon AC and Wimbledon Windmilers.

Our own team was a little depleted with most of the top guns taking a break from racing in the middle of a run of high powered events. So it was left to James Kelly, making his league debut, to tackle the sharp end of a Thames squad strengthened by the appearance of Huw Lobb. James pushed on hard from the start, knowing that he was likely to be in for a hiding. It was a courageous move that had him in oxygen debt towards the end.

The Skipper was in good form, benefiting from hard training for the Istanbul marathon, but he found World Aquathlon Champ Richard Stannard snapping at his heels ... and we had three men home in the first ten; not a bad start at all. Knut Hegvold and Pete Willis occupied 20th and 21st with our next pair, in the 30s, including James Fairbourn - three minutes faster and 47 placers higher than in January on the same course - impressive improvement eh!

And if such heroics weren't enough, we had Sharky Speaight close behind, back in action after some severe surgery. Lee Greatorex and Tim Weeks closed in the ten inside 50.

Sixty points cover the top three teams and with Ranelagh also within striking distance of the top three it looks as if we may have a tighter competition on our hands this winter.

1 H Lobb (Thames H&H) 26:33; 2 J McFarlane (Thames H&H) 26:42; 3 J Kelly (Belgrave) 27:01; ... 9 W Cockerell 27:45; 10 R Stannard 27:52; 21 P Willis 28:33; 22 K Hegvold M45 28:34; 37 J Fairbourn 29:28; 38 M Trees M45 29:40; 40 N Speaight 29:45; 42 L Greatorex 29:52; 50 T Weeks 30:33; 74 W Lynch 31:30; 75 J Webb 31:35; 82 S Zealey M40; 84 F Ward 32:02; 114 C Hobbs 34:08; 119 A Neale 34:50; 131 P Cross M50 35:43; 138 M Taylor M45 36:10; 150 L Rehn M40 37:02; 151 H Corbett M45 37:20; 154 M Humphrey 37:33; 165 D McMillan M55 42:03; 169 T Stone M60 49:14; ...170 finished.

Teams: 1 Thames H&H 203; 2 Herne Hill H 220; 3 Belgrave H 263; 4 Ranelagh H 306; 5 Hercules Wimbledon AC 529; 6 South London H 580; 7 Reigate Priory AC 619; 8 Guildford & Godalming AC 663; 9 Wimbledon Windmilers 712.

### Awards 2007

The top Belgrave awards are the *Tommy Green Cup* and the *Centenary Cup*, awarded to the man and woman who have turned in what the Belgrave Committee believe to be the best performances of the year.

This year the *Tommy Green Cup* has been awarded jointly to Phillips Idowu, for his triple jump win in the European Indoor Championships, and Phil Wicks, for his win in the ERRA and UKA Half Marathon Championship.

Outstanding among the women's performances was Goldie Sayers' javelin throw at the Loughborough International where she broke the British Record and set a World leading performance of 65.05m. Goldie wins the *Centenary Cup*.

The *Bill Merryman Young Belgravian of the Year* cup goes to Alex Bodin - and well deserved it was too. At the age of 18 Alex won the Welsh U20 5km Road Championship, took last stage under extreme pressure in the SEAA 12-Stage Road Relay and then in the Summer stepped into the British League team to run 1500m.

ERRA Men's National 6-Stage Road Relay,  
Sutton Park, 20 October 2007.

## Belgrave back on top at Sutton Park

What a race! The conditions were great, fast times were turned in right down the line and no team dominated, even though the final gap between first and second seemed decisive.

Favourites Newham & Essex Beagles had a couple of guys wiped out at the last minute by illness and the rumoured appearance of Mo Farah proved to be no more than a myth. As expected, Leeds City were powerful – and their B team made front page of the results sheet as well – but all along, in the week before the race and during the event itself, the Belgrave camp were quietly confident. David Anderson ruled himself out of the squad, his Achilles tendon problems flaring up yet again, but James Kelly eagerly grasped the opportunity to go into the six and we still had Mark Pollard lined up should some other setback arise.

We felt that we could, possibly, take the Beagles to the wire even if they were at their very best and planned to put Phil Wicks out on the road with 30-40 seconds lead over Farah – now wouldn't that have been a sight. Thus, there was a slight feeling of disappointment when news of the weakened Beagles' team became common knowledge.

Stephen Sharp was a happy man on stage one and when the huge leading pack faced the hill together, our man was comfortably in the first half dozen. So heavy was the traffic at the jostling front end that the spotters out on the course had difficulty relaying meaningful information back to the announcer who simply resorted to proclaiming that, "the lead pack is over 20 strong." Always busy in the front rank it was Elswick's Ryan McLeod who eventually proved strongest and he prised open a four second gap before the next half dozen poured through the takeover zone within five seconds. Unfortunately for McLeod he had no second man to send away. Stephen had given us a great start in 4th and after seven runs in this race set a personal record of 17:18. With the exception of Bedford & County, 5th, and Bristol & West in 8th, the main players were some way off the pace in the late twenties – where Mark Pollard was setting up our B team.

The second stage saw some huge risers. As the teams ahead of us came back, Altrincham shot up 17 places to claim 2nd thanks to Matt Barnes, Birchfield's Ndayisenga took 23 scalps to bring the Stags into 3rd and was chased by Wells City's Ben Tickner who moved up 26 spots. In the midst of this turmoil James Kelly, in his first national relay, calmly kept the Bels a stable 5th with "front-loaded" Severn AC 10 seconds clear in the lead. Leeds City were still 42 seconds down the field in 14th and the Beagles were 21st.

What could Jonathan Blackledge do for us? It was our hope that he'd take the Bels into the lead and sure enough our supporters on the course fed back the information that he had indeed gone ahead, clearing the front-runners before the hill was reached. But there were big moves going on behind. Steve Hepples had the Beagles baying as he overtook 16 men to move into 5th and more significantly the blue and yellow colours of Leeds were coming forward ... coming forward ... until Dave Webb and JB were slugging it out shoulder to shoulder. Webb eventually gained the advantage. There were only three seconds in it but the Northern Champions were now feeling confident that by the end of the day they'd be able to take home the 6-Stage cup and put it on the shelf along with the 12-stage "pot".

As the Leeds and Belgrave fourth staggers went out with little between them, any thoughts that this might now be a two horse race were quickly dispelled as Well's City's Frank Tickner was seen limbering up. While our own Simon Jones

and Leeds' James Walsh were locked together, Tickner's progress was relentless; but against all expectations, he didn't quite catch the lead pair who were knocking spots off each other in their effort to establish a break. It was another cracker of a run from Sim who never seems to give us a dud. He just lost out on the final sprint having spent seventeen and a half minutes gaining – 1 second! And then, thundering across the line a pace behind, came Tickner.

The redoubtable Simon Deakin shot away for Leeds and was soon pulling away from our own Mark Miles. Deakin's advantage grew as the hill was climbed and back at the takeover area we were informed that Leeds had broken clear; the gap became 30-40 metres at one point but Mark knew exactly what he was doing. "I was playing it careful," he later told us. On the run out to the far end of the lap the break was closed down again. Coming back towards the Jamboree Stone the Belgravian and the Leeds City man were side by side and, urged on by our supporters, Mark pushed his foot to the floor and daylight opened up between them at an ever-increasing rate. The decisive blow had been struck.

With the strains of Queen's "We Will Rock You" belting out over the loudspeakers, Phil Wicks was brought out onto the start line a full 28 seconds ahead of his last leg rival Darran Bilton – and there was going to be no slip up now. Later admitting to feeling far more nervous than normal, Phil nevertheless looked totally relaxed as he powered around the last lap to reduce his best time by over 40 seconds. And, barring accidents, with the title back in Belgrave hands, there was still a target – the possibility of beating our own course record. That mark was set in 2002 by a six that included battle hardened "veterans" Spencer Barden, Allen Graffin – and, yes, Mark Miles and Stephen Sharp, the latter two still in the team today. This time the record was missed by just six seconds but with four of today's team being aged 23 and 24 the odds are that they'll improve that mark in the next few years.

So, gold and silver were sorted, but the battle for the bronze was far from over. Just a few heartbeats had separated Wells City, Notts, Bristol & West and the Beagles as that last stage was begun. Billy Farquharson was on a storming 17:10 run in his quest to get his blue and green Notts colours into the frame. But the Beagles had unleashed Moumin Geele who ran the day's third best to get his team into the medals at the last gasp. With a makeshift team they'd made the podium – and the pundits had got the first three correct (albeit in the wrong order).

Times have changed. We're running as fast as ever with a team that seems to have a lower average age each season but can no longer ever count ourselves as out and out favourites. Some eight or nine clubs now have an excellent chance of medalling – just as it should be.

A word too about our second team. It was the first time we've actually managed to finish a 'B' squad and highly satisfying it was too. Taking over from Mark Pollard, who was gamely attending as our 'A' team reserve, was our Skipper Will Cockerell – who couldn't have kept away from watching the titanic 'A' battle if he'd tried. Neil Speaight has a long way to go to get back to top form but to see such a high level competitor fitting into the Bs and making himself an integral part of the overall squad was terrific. James Fairbourn was rewarded for his upsurge in form with a place on the Sutton Park roadway while Mal Byansi had been pleading with the TM to let him into the six. Dave Mason didn't get the call until late in the week but was as eager as anyone to make sure that we finished a second team. Well done to you all – and to see both teams out on the course after their runs, supporting each and every man, made one feel proud to be a Belgravian.

1 Belgrave H 1:44:30; 2 Leeds City AC 1:45:20; 3 Newham & Essex Beagles 1:45:55; 4 Notts AC 1:45:58; 5 Bristol & West AC 1:46:14; 6

Tipton H 1:47:08; ... 38 Belgrave H 'B' 1:55:14; 83 teams started and 79 teams finished.

A – S Sharp (team position 4, ranking on stage 4) 17:18; J Kelly (5, 14) 17:46; J Blackledge (2, 6) 17:30; S Jones (2, 6) 17:33; M Miles (1, 1) 17:14; P Wicks (1, 2) 17:09.

B – M Pollard (28, 28) 17:56; W Cockerell (35, 40) 18:44; N Speaight (36, 41) 19:09; J Fairbourn (39, 47) 19:31; M Byansi (39, 44) 19:49; D Mason (38, 44) 20:05.

Fastest: 1 C Davies (Telford AC) 16:42; 2 F Tickner (Wells City) 16:59; 3 M Geele (Newham &EB) 17:03; =4 P Nicholls (Tipton H), D Webb (Leeds City), J Ndayisenga (Birchfield) 17:04; ... 9 P Wicks 17:09; 15 M Miles 17:14.

ERRA Women's 4-Stage Road Relay,  
Sutton Park, 20 October 2007.

## Another top 20 spot for the Belles

Hopes were high for a team place of around 10th but the standard of this competition is so high that it really would have taken four clockings of around 15 minutes apiece to hit such a target. A final position inside the top twenty was an excellent piece of work.

1 Aldershot F&DAC 57:15; 2 Charnwood AC 57:56; 3 Havering Mayesbrook AC 58:57; 4 Bedford & County AC 59:00; 5 Chester le Street & D AC 59:34; 6 Bristol & West AC 59:39; ... 18 Belgrave H 1:02:11; 93 teams started, 78 teams finished.

Belgrave - B Dagne (7) 14:27; S Murphy (22) 15:47; M Heaton (22) 16:50; C Bryson (18) 15:07.

Fastest: 1 S Twell (Aldershot F&DAC) 13:41; 2 S Morris (Windsor SE&H) 13:57; =3 H Yelling (Windsor SE&H), V Gill (Aldershot F&DAC) 14:05; =5 M Ross-Cope (Stoke), R Townend (Winchester) 14:06, ... 14 B Dagne 14:27.

## Results Roundup

### Road & Country

#### October 2007

- 7 **Geoff Moulden Wimbledon 10 miles.** Men. 1 H Lobb (Bedford &C) 51:58; 9 W Cockerell 57:08.
- 13 **Scottish West 4 x 4 km Relay Champs., Irvine, Ayrshire.** Men. 2nd fastest M Pollard 11:47.
- 14 **Brooks Westward League, Redruth.** Men. 1 K Toher (Newquay &P) 26:10; 6 T Watson 27:06.
- 14 **Cabbage Patch 10 miles, Twickenham.** Women. 1 B Dagne 56:20; 18 H Smethurst 4-W40 1:07:09.
- 20 **Bushy Park 5 km Time Trial.** Men. 1 O Laws (Newham &EB) 15:39; 2 R Stannard 15:51; 3 M Trees 16:52.
- 20 **Surrey County Veterans Cross Country Champs., Petersham.** Men. 6.19 miles. 1 P Doyle (Ranelagh) 34:24; 16 C Dickinson 1-M55 37:38; 57 P Cross 12-M50 41:52; 83 Don Anderson 20-M50 45:41; 106 G Collins 6-M65 53:25; 108 C Henn 1-M75 54:45; 112 T Stone 8-M65 57:26; 113 A Lane 4-M70 58:20.  
Teams: M50. 1 South London H 11; 4 Belgrave 37. M60. 1 Hercules Wimb. 13; 5 Belgrave 69.
- 21 **Stroud Half Marathon.** Men. 1 W Chinhanhu (Poole R) 1:06:52; 5 K Tadesse 1:12:09.
- 21 **Wimbledon 10 km.** Men. 1 T Kingsnorth (Thames H&H) 33:11; 2 L Greatorex 34:01; 14 S Zealey M40 37:22; 27 G Reid 38:58; 35 P Cross M50 39:50; 73 L Rehn M40 42:47.  
Women. 1 C Farley 40:13; 3 G Marek 41:21; 11 C Eastham 43:58.
- 21 **Croydon 10 km.** Men. 1 M Skinner (Blackheath &B) 30:51; 6 M Byansi 33:50; 7 J Wolf 33:54.
- 27 **Wimbledon Common 5 km Time Trial.** Men. 1 A Weir (Thames H&H) 16:29; 5 A Wright U17 17:05.
- 27 **Bushy Park 5 km Time Trial.** Men. 1 P Adams (unatt) 16:01; 3 M Trees M45 16:09.
- 27 **Scottish 4 x 4 km Relays, Cumbernauld.** Fastest: 1 R Russell (Central) 13:03; 3 M Pollard 13:14.
- 28 **Dublin Marathon.** Women. 1 A Ivanova (Russia) 2:29:20; 17 V Knight 2:54:16.
- 28 **BUPA Great South Run, Portsmouth.** Men. 1 L Kibet (Kenya) 47:31; 9 P Wicks 49:06; 15 J Blackledge 50:58; 538 L Rehn M45 1:12:25.
- 28 **Barnes Green Half Marathon.** Men. 1 J Baker (Chichester) 1:10:17; 3 T Ellacott 1:14:46; 189 J Pritchard 1:35:25.
- 28 **Ron Hill Surrey Classic 10 km, Oxshott.** Men. 1 T Doran (Elmbridge) 33:39; 9 M Webb M40 36:23; 200 D Davies M65 54:39.

## Obituaries

### JIM MOTE 1923 – 2007

James Harold Mote – known to most simply as Jim Mote – died on the 20th June, 2007.

Born in a less than salubrious section of Tottenham in North London, the last of 10 children, Jim Mote moved south of the Thames lost his Tottenham accent and ultimately joined Belgrave Harriers when the club amalgamated with Surrey AC in 1982.

Although fairly light on his feet he was never an active athlete but excelled at both cricket (as an outstanding teenager he was presented with a special edition Jack Hobbs cricket bat) and football. Unfortunately the war dashed any opportunity of turning professional or playing at County level. Whilst serving in Italy he was injured playing for the regimental football team, sustaining in a serious back injury and earning a medal for 'being wounded in action'.

The injury stopped his playing at a professional level but he did continue to play cricket into the '50s and was a qualified football referee until the mid 1960s.

The arrival of his first son, David in 1960 marked the end of his club cricket career although he was still playing for his office team into his sixties. A dodgy knee stopped him running between wickets so he made do hitting fours and sixes, until asked to leave the field.

His introduction to athletics came when David joined Surrey AC in 1975 and he was soon drawn into organising the young athletes team – something he continued after joining Belgrave Harriers.

His support of the Surrey AC Southern League team included acting as chauffeur for the club's successful sprint group, acting as a timekeeper and eventually becoming a club Vice President.

In 1982 Jim was part of the movement within the men's section of the club which encouraged the amalgamation of Surrey AC with Belgrave Harriers. This resulted in the infamous but extremely successful combined team that dominated the National League qualification match that year and marked the beginning of Belgrave's last two decades of track and field success.

On joining Belgrave his Surrey AC Vice President status was converted into a Life Membership and he continued to run the Young Athletes section until the late eighties.

Sadly, following the death of his youngest son, Peter in 1994 he was plagued by a series of minor strokes that culminated in the final stroke that drew his story to an end in Kingston Hospital.

We are sure that many not so young ex-Surrey AC and Belgrave Harriers athletes will remember him and the essential roles he played in both clubs.

### GEOFF PEARSON 1918 – 2007

After a short illness, Geoff Pearson, a Life Member of Belgrave Harriers, passed away on 10th July, 2007.

Many of our more senior members will have fond memories of running with Geoff across Wimbledon Common and into Richmond Park on Saturday afternoons, not to mention mid week training runs on the hills of Banstead and Epsom Downs.

Geoff was one of that rare breed of Belgravian who had sampled team success at the highest level, being fourth scorer, in 21st position, in our winning National Cross Country team at Leamington Spa in 1946. The others in the winning team that day were Len Herbert (5th), Dave Main (11th), Tom Carter (13th), 21 T.G. Clinton (22nd) and Dick Tobin (24th).

He was enormously proud of running for Belgrave Harriers but also had a great love of the mountains and was an active member of the Austrian Alpine Club - in fact the President of that body for many years.

Geoff is survived by his wife Marjorie, who is 91 and in good health, and his son Richard, still running after being introduced to the sport by his father. Our condolences go to them.

#### **WILLIAM E. "BILL" WELLER 1946 – 2007**

Born 6th October, 1946, Bill's interest in running stemmed from a very young age. Among his earliest recollections were 2 mile runs, at the age of 8, along the coast road near Goring, Sussex, having arranged for his father to drive two miles up the road in the car and wait for him. The main awakening came, however, when he changed from primary to secondary school at the age of 11 and found that running was a compulsory sport. To his surprise he found that he could keep going long after his contemporaries had been forced to stop and drop out; from then on he was 'hooked.' Running seemed a good excuse for not playing football or hockey and having satisfied the master that he would be participating in some such game Bill would quietly slide off for a one and a half hour run over the Downs from his school in Epsom.

Unfortunately games periods lasted just 1 hour so by the time Bill arrived back, search parties were being organised to look for him. These early runs of 9-10 miles over the Downs to Headley and back laid the basis for his stamina in later years, augmented by daily runs from his school into Epsom to catch the early bus home at 4 pm; those less fleet of foot were forced to wait another half-hour.

Bill's early club days were with Redhill and Reigate A.C., from 1961 to 1965, and he later recalled how, at the age of 15, he raced and trained over 9 miles or more with their senior team members in Reigate Priory Park. Anyone who has ever run in the Reigate Relays will know what that involves. Originally Bill had illusions about becoming a track star at 880 yards but after a considerable amount of track training in 1963 found himself unable to win races. "I soon gave that up," he later reminisced.

In 1965 he joined Walton A.C. and it was while he was with them, having tried his hand at track, road and country without any great success that he developed primarily into a long distance roadrunner.

Coinciding with the time he joined Belgrave from Walton in 1970, Bill, a Civil Servant, moved with his job from Kingston to Redhill and being thus nearer to his home in Reigate was able to devote more time to training. From then on a steady improvement was recorded, resulting in rather an impressive tally of victories. These included, in 1972, winning the Belgrave Open and Surrey 20 miles Championship, the Worthing 11 miles (breaking his own record) and the Wimbledon 10 miles. He was also prominent in the Bracknell 10 miles (2nd), Walton 10 miles (2nd), Epsom 11 miles (4th) and Mitcham 25 km (4th). Most of these races were against very tough opposition.

Bill often anchored the Belgrave team to similar successes. He had to serve the statutory waiting period of nine months after moving from Walton but once eligible and settled into our teams, he stayed there, producing many sterling performances. He was no lover of cross country running and, being subject to injury when running over rough ground, tended to 'disappear' in the winter months. But when a league race or the Surrey Championships came along and we happened to be under pressure teamwise, he'd answer the call, ready to do battle to, as he put it, to "help keep that other lot at bay," (the 'other lot' being anyone not Belgrave).

When Bill turned out in races he brought with him his own supporters club – his mother and father – who enthusiastically accompanied him in all weathers, supporting not only Bill but also all of the Belgrave team. Having managed to avoid the marriage stakes, his main interest outside athletics was horse racing; and he once recalled putting his training to good purpose while still at school, racing across to Epsom Downs on Derby day to place a bet! Prior to a race, the way he fitted in his warm up in between the checking of the latest results from Kempton or Newmarket, etc. on the car radio, was an exercise in precision timing.

Bill Weller was a great clubman – quiet and unassuming with a professional no-nonsense approach. From a team manager's point of view his reliability was refreshing and his attitude rubbed off onto the younger lads in his teams, for whom he always had words of advice and encouragement.

Bill's job eventually took him away from London to the west of the country. He continued with his running, competing for Gloucester and then Worcester Athletic Clubs; his love of horse racing also continued unabated.

In late August 2007, one of Bill's neighbours became concerned that he had not been seen for a few days and reported their fears to the police. Investigations revealed that Bill had died, at home, from a heart attack. He was aged 60 and left no known relations, his parents having died some time ago.

## **Flashback - 1899**



Above: The start of the first heat of the second round of the Boxing Day 120 yard sprint handicap is watched by a policeman, a handful of spectators, a couple of children – and a dog. The race was held along Grosvenor Road Embankment, adjacent to Chelsea Bridge and the runners are Messrs. Middleton, Arnold, Cox and Berridge.

Below: In what may well be the final, the runners approach the finish outside the *King William IV* – the headquarters of Belgrave Harriers at that time.

