

# CALLIOPE 1930-32 *J. Silvester*

---



*John Silvester receiving a medal from Mrs J.P. McPhail, Mayoress of Birkenhead Borough Council, for winning the run-in on Calliope opening day, July 12, 1930.*

*Early in June, 1930, an advertisement appeared in the "Herald" stating that a harrier club was being formed at Birkenhead. It gave the date, place and time of the first run, and invited any interested to come along. I was one of three from the Otahuhu workshops who saw the ad and decided to go. The three were Stan Andrews, Peter Eyre and myself. Jack Wengdal, Bill McCombie and Ernie Richardson joined later. On the day of the first run we had very little idea how to get to Birkenhead, except that we had to catch a ferry. We got off the ferry at Northcote by mistake, caught a bus, and then disembarked at the Northcote shopping centre. As a result we had to walk along Queen Street and Onewa Road to Zion Hill Methodist Hall. We arrived just in time for the run which was over a course Glenfield Road - Pupuke Road - Lake Road - Onewa Road to starting point. We received a great welcome from those who had organized the run and the establishment*

*The Calliope Harrier Club was founded in early June, 1930. I had been transferred from Wellington to the Otahuhu Railway workshops at Easter of that year. I had previously run with the Hamilton Harrier Club and the Scottish Harrier Club, Wellington. There was no harrier club in Auckland when I came here in 1930. I tried running with the Auckland Athletic Club which held a "winter meeting" on the Auckland Domain every Saturday. This included a steeplechase of 2-3 miles. I took part in this for two or three Saturdays, and then turned it in; there was not much fun racing around the Domain every Saturday.*

*of the club was never in doubt.*

*The people mainly responsible for the foundation of the club, without any question, were Mr & Mrs Frank Taylor, of Calliope Avenue (off Onewa Road - the name has been changed). Their son Bill had been active in the Olympic Club, Wellington, and it was his idea to start a harrier club in Auckland. For the first three seasons while I was a member their home was the headquarters of the club. They were exceedingly hospitable and generous. At that time the social life of the club was tremendous. A lot of the attraction was the three Taylor girls. Others*



# ROLL OF HONOUR

*L J Lanigan has supplied this list of members who lost their lives in World War Two.*

Owen Gatman . . . . . Army  
Frank Hardman . . . . . Air Force  
Malcolm Steel . . . . . Air Force  
Eric Turner. . . . . Army

*Many other club members served overseas. It is a matter of pride that Calliope had to go into recess between 1942 and 1944. So many members had gone into the armed forces there were not enough left to form a viable club.*



*active at the start were Bill Patterson (who became the first president) and Jim Osborne (who could not run because of a disability, but who became the first secretary). Support was given by the then Mayor and Mayoress of Birkenhead, Mr & Mrs McPhail.*

*I have no doubt in my mind that Calliope was the first straightout harrier club in Auckland. There were athletic clubs, e.g. Tech Old Boys and Varsity who existed before Calliope, but formed harrier sections later. I recall a meeting in the Taylor home at which two reps from Tech O.B. (Les Barker and Alwyn Moon, the organizer of the 1951 Empire Games in Auckland) came to get some of the gen about harriers from us. In the second season I think it was we had the first combined run with Tech O.B. At this time two Mt Albert Grammar boys (Bill Briggs and Eric Horan) ran with us. They later had a lot to do with the foundation of the Lynndale Club. Briggs was a top-class harrier.*

*The badge of the Calliope Club (the gate enclosed in the letter C) was suggested by Bill Taylor and was taken from the Olympic (Wellington) badge, which can be seen on Bill's singlet in the photo of the first official opening.*

*The first interclub activity I recall was a visit from the Hamilton Club in 1930. We reciprocated the same year. These were most enjoyable social occasions. In 1931 we inaugurated a relay race from the Ferry Buildings to Papakura.*

*The club's best cross-country runner in the first*

*three seasons was, undoubtedly, Stan Andrews, who was amongst the first six or so Auckland runners at that time. I wonder what he would have done with today's training methods and competition. I am sure his potential was nowhere near realized. In those days we attached a lot of importance to runs of from 220-880 yds after a training run of 5-6 miles. This was my forte, and I won the points trophy for these races each season I was with the club. I was pretty fit in those days, and gave away some big handicaps. Alf Clayton was our handicapper, and I can remember him saying to me after I had won from scratch on one occasion, "Silvester, you bugger, I could give them half the distance again start and you'd still bloody well win!"*

*In those days, when Arthur Lydiard was still a small boy, running was a very relaxed business. None of us took it very seriously. It was in the thick of the depression, and we were all stony broke. There was no fancy gear. I used to buy a pair of sandshoes for 3/- and run in them without socks. The club had a fortnightly dance held in a hall at Highbury - admission 1/6 (I think). We enjoyed ourselves. I have very pleasant memories indeed of my three seasons with Calliope.*

*Compiler's note: John Silvester was also a foundation member of both Hamilton and Wesley Harrier Clubs. Barry Magee said he was held in high esteem at Wesley. He ran all his life even after having a pacemaker installed.*