

CALLIOPE 1952-1962, T. Cowley

The 1950s was one of the greatest eras of athletics in New Zealand. I competed for the East Coast Bays Athletic Club in its inaugural 1951-1952 season and then transferred to Calliope for the harrier season. When I first joined Calliope there were times I could not have the family car, so I ran from Albany to Birkenhead to compete. After the run Brian Earnshaw would bring me home but it was often via the Northcote Hotel where three or four would meet and have an ale. I was only seventeen. I was told, don't move, don't talk to anyone and don't go to the bar. I always arrived home safely.

Calliope and Western Suburbs Clubs combined to run a relay in 1951. The Round-the-Harbour. This started at Highbury Corner and finished at Grey Lynn Park. In the first year there were 22 teams. Alf Clayton and Arnold Darroch from Calliope worked with Eric Fernandez, Jack Dunn and Keith Slatter of Western Suburbs. Prior to the 1952 relay Calliope visited Western Suburbs for a pack run. Eric led the charge up the Bullock Track on our way back to Grey Lynn Park, for our afternoon tea. Alf Clayton was the club and Auckland centre handicapper.

The Patterson Cup between Calliope and Hamilton was always a well-contested event. We changed the course every time trying to out-fox Hamilton. Through the bush, round paddocks, across Onepoto Basin (just after the tide). This was always a good talking point after the event. At Hamilton Te Rapa racecourse was familiar, also the names of Jim Tobin, Laurie Fitzgerald and Paul Tasker in the fifties who led Hamilton home on many occasions.

The main club cross-country course started in Glenfield Road and ran out toward Moore Street and into the country towards Monarch Park, as it is

known today, back to Glenfield Road and a run-in to where we started. Paper trails were laid but children did shift them.

The main meeting places seemed to be Northcote College, Ross Smith's parents' home at the bottom of Zion Hill (nice afternoon teas were served by the Smiths) and the Birkenhead War Memorial Hall.

The Clayworth Cup pairs' race on one occasion was held at Silverdale next to the football grounds. We ran over the surrounding paddocks. Mrs Dennis and Mrs Black provided afternoon tea. A run was held at the Cowleys and surrounding farms in Bush Road, Albany. The new Albany Mega Centre is on the site now.

On the 1952 Auckland calendar the main cross-country events were the Auckland teams races at Cornwall Park. On this occasion the Calliope team excelled and finished 1st equal with Lynndale Harrier Club in the junior event. Paul Penlington led the team home of Ron Wareham, Trevor Cowley and Ross Smith. In the Auckland champs Paul finished in the top six and represented Auckland in the New Zealand cross-country at Hamilton. The same club team travelled by train and bus



Brian Wright from Trevor Cowley, Round the Harbour 1952

to Wanganui to contest the Turakina - Wanganui Relay. They finished 1st defeating Lynndale, Owairaka and Scottish of Wellington and Palmerston North. These members combined with seniors for the Round-the-Harbour and finished with the 5th fastest time and 3rd on handicap. Paul Penlington also won the Harry Holland Memorial Steeplechase at the Auckland Domain on Labour Day. At the Auckland 1953 track and field champs Paul qualified for the New Zealand champs that were held at Eden Park where he won the New Zealand junior 880 yards title.

On the 1953 harrier calendar the Owairaka cross-

CALLIOPE 1952-1962, T. Cowley cont.

country, Auckland teams race and Auckland champs were qualifying events for the New Zealand cross-country champs. The Owairaka race was held in atrocious conditions, hail showers and a stream that was flooded, water above your waist. High placings in all these events gave me a place in the Auckland team. This was the 50th New Zealand championships held. The course was on Trentham racecourse and surrounding hills. Heavy rain flooded the racecourse on Friday night. I finished 20th. R Smith of Otago won, followed by Neville Scott. Murray Halberg won the senior race. Scott and Halberg contested the final of the 1956 Olympic 1500 metres at Melbourne. I finished 3rd in the Auckland road champs on the waterfront. The club returned to Wanganui to defend the relay but finished 5th.

In the mid fifties women's harriers was established in Auckland. The names of G Heaps, S Hendren and N Johnson appeared in results. N Calcott was also a top colt in Auckland.

In 1955 the first Auckland cross-country champs were held for women and in 1956 the first National cross-country champs were held. Carole Johnston represented Auckland.

On the track the 440 yards and 880 yards was included in the programme for women. Carole represented Auckland in both these events and posted a credible time of 2.17 for the 880 yards and

was selected to compete for New Zealand v Australia at a track meeting at Olympic Park, Newmarket in the 440 and 880.

The club ran an open track and field meet at Northcote College. The Reidbuilt marathon was also run by the club. Don Dennis organized the sponsorship in both of these events. He also found time to compete in 3-mile events at outside meetings and represented Auckland in the 3-mile.

In 1957 Auckland hosted the inter-provincial cross-country contest between Auckland, Waikato and Northland. Don Willoughby was captain of Auckland junior team and finished 4th. I represented Auckland B as a senior v Northland and finished 1st. Don also represented Auckland at the New Zealand cross-country. Don Willoughby is now president of Athletics New Zealand. In 1958 we finally defeated Hamilton. Graeme Darroch led the juniors home, Jim Tobin and Laurie Fitzgerald of Hamilton 1st = in the seniors and I was third. Life members E J Osborne and A Clayton were elected at the AGM. Graeme also went on to represent Auckland on the track and finished second in the New Zealand two mile championships.

Ian Studd joined the club and was a very talented athlete representing Auckland. He later transferred to Lynndale and represented New Zealand at the 1966 Empire Games, Kingston, Jamaica, and

finished third in the one mile in 3.58.4 and tenth in the three miles in 13.25.8.

Daphne Johnston and Heather Darroch represented Auckland at harriers in 1959. The major fundraising for clubrooms was led by Don Dennis. We bought 18 tons of agriculture lime and sold this on the North Shore in one day. Don and myself picked up the lime in cut bags; we had a great team of athletes selling this to the public door-to-door. We also bagged hundreds of pinecones from my father's farm



Racing the best. Auckland teams race, Cornwall Park 1957, Cowley beside Magee with Scott, Halberg and Julian just ahead.

CALLIOPE 1952-1962, T. Cowley cont.



At Te Rapa, 1957. Third in Patterson Cup to Laurie Fitzgerald (middle) and Paul Tasker.

in Albany. The club had working bees to pick these up and bag them. These sold like hot cakes. We also found time to have a short pack run after the working bees. The clubrooms were a building situated at Mechanics Bay, 70 feet long and 16 feet wide.

Don Dennis negotiated a deal with James Davern for the building. Don, myself and Rodney Brown, a local farmer (not a club member) cut it in two. Davern shifted it on a transporter to the Birkenhead Memorial Park and sited it on styes. Our job was to dig the block holes, some of us on our stomachs under the building. It was clay and kikuyu grass. This took days. Blocks for the showers were laid at the north end.

It was re-roofed, painted outside and inside, and a motor firm my father-in-law worked for donated the iron, ridging and paint. We supplied the labour. The building was opened debt free. Don Dennis approached Frank Sharp Auckland Centre President to ask Murray Halberg to open the building. Frank Sharp suggested that Calliope help Owairaka lay the paths round Murray's house. Don and myself and others helped lay the concrete paths. Murray showed us his gold medal from Rome.

On 30th April 1961 Murray Halberg opened the clubrooms. F D Sharp, Chairman of the Auckland Centre and Mr C Crocombe, Mayor of Birkenhead also attended. Arnold Darroch was elected a life member.

Over the years the club attended many outside meetings, Southland Centennial Relays, Round the Bridges Hamilton, and Cambridge Relay.

On the track we attended meetings at

Lynndale Club, Kumeu, Waikaraka Park with the greyhounds, East Coast Bays Club at Freyberg Park, Olympic Park Newmarket, Mt Albert Club and Carlaw Park.

There were probably many other outstanding performances over the years that have not been included but these are my recollections.



Keith Bridgard and contemporary of Trevor Cowley, Lloyd Darroch