

HOW OLD IS CALLIOPE ?

"Just how old is Calliope Club?" Every time Calliope Harrier Club has an anniversary year of note, this headline or a variation on it appears in the local paper. On the back of a photograph titled First Pack Run the date 1929 appears, and a one-page Notice of Annual Meeting dated 14 March 1930 refers to events the previous year. However, the photograph includes in it John Silvester who was at the club between 1930 and 1932. He attended the first run on June 21 1930 and was again present at the second run on July 12 1930 (the official opening run) at which there was an attendance of ten. In the three years that Silvester was with the club there was only one occasion when there were ten runners. The photograph's date is almost certainly July 12 1930. The date at the top of the Notice of Annual Meeting should read 14 March 1931. On the Notice it says that Hamilton visited Calliope on August 23rd and that on September 13th a return visit was made to Hamilton. This is exactly what happened in 1930. Also in 1930 the club championship was won by S Andrews and the Darlow Handicap by A E Clayton, again as stated on the Notice. Also there were four races in 1930 as recorded on the Notice, and the twenty officers for 1930 were (apart from two) as listed on the Notice. Remember this was a Notice of Meeting – the officers for 1931 had yet to be elected. Two officers were different but nine months had elapsed between June 1930 and March 1931, and minor changes are understandable, particularly with a new club. Furthermore the first public announcement that a harrier club was to become established in Birkenhead appeared in the New Zealand Herald for Wednesday June 18th 1930. The compiler has seen the notice in a copy of the original New Zealand Herald. Here it is, complete with spelling mistakes:

"NEW HARRIERS CLUB. FORMATION AT BIRKENHEAD

With a view to encouraging amateur athletics generally, and cross-country running in particular, a Harrier Club has been formed for the Birkenhead and Northcote districts. The new club has been named the Calliope Harrier Club. Active members must be amateurs according to the definition of the New Zealand Amateur Athletic Association. Mr A. E. Greenslade, Mayor of Northcote, presided at the meeting held in the Methodist Hall, Birkenhead, last evening.

The following officers were elected. – Patron, Mr E. Le Roy; president, Mr W. E. Paterson; vice-presidents, the Rev. W. W. Avery, Messrs A. E. Greenslade, J. P. McPhail, W. B. Darlow, J. W. Cocks, J. W. Court, A. G. Jasper,

W. Copeland, I. A. Cape, and J. Atherton: secretary, Mr W. S. Taylor, of Northcote; treasurer, Mr C. M. Jewell; captain, Mr W. S. Taylor; deputy- captain, Mr A. E. Clayton; members of general committee, in addition to the above officers, Messrs R. Drummond, R. Hoggard and J. Male; handicappers, Messrs F. Taylor and I. A. Cape.

A preliminary club run is to be take place on Saturday, starting from the Birkenhead Methodist Hall at 3 p.m., over a course of about three miles."

Furthermore all the Calliope records start in 1930. There were informal runs earlier over a period of a year or two. Without question though the Calliope Harrier Club officially began in 1930, the official opening day occurring on July 12 1930.

This makes Calliope Harrier Club the oldest surviving harrier club in the greater Auckland region. Calliope's example was soon followed. University and Technical Old Boys formed harrier sections in 1931; Lynndale, Presbyterian and Wesley followed in quick succession. Then came Baptist. By 1936, over 300 harriers were turning out weekly. It is of interest however that Calliope was not the first harrier club established in Auckland. In March 1909 a club known as the Auckland Harriers Club was formed. The rules of the Wellington Club were adopted and the first run was from Onehunga across country to Mt Albert. No further records of this club have surfaced. Three years later the first annual meeting of the Pioneer Harriers Club was held. It had run the previous year. The club's name was changed to Auckland Harriers and a run was to take place from the Domain in mid-April 1912. The club's colours were "black knickers and a red singlet with a badge A.H." This club also did not survive. It is likely that the First World War and its aftermath had a large bearing on this.



Frank and Flora Taylor at Calliope Avenue