

MEMORIES OF CALLIOPE 1948-1958 *R. Wareham*

I joined Calliope in 1948 having had my enthusiasm for distance running whetted by a 2nd placing in a race around Lake Pupuke held in the last year of my time at Takapuna Primary School in 1947, followed by success in several races at Takapuna Grammar School in my first year there in 1948.

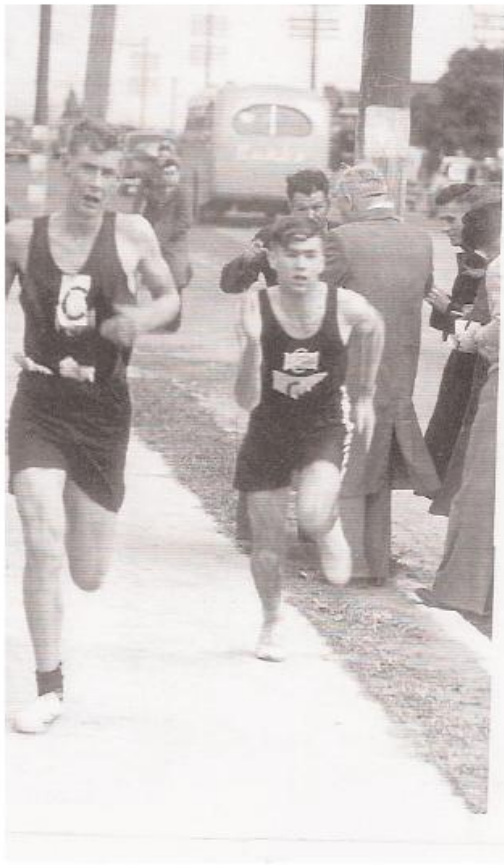
There was only one harrier club on the Shore at the time - that of Calliope at Birkenhead - some distance from where I lived at Milford. There was no convenient interconnecting bus service available to get from Milford to Birkenhead on Saturdays so I had to cycle over if I wanted to run - which I did in all weathers. Between Milford and Birkenhead one had to traverse the notorious "Clay Hill" on Ocean View Road. This was a steep climb over a rough metalled road which at times of wet weather became a rutted sticky mess. Walk up and put the brakes on coming down and hope for the best!

Runs at the time that I joined were held from Alf Clayton's house, in Birkenhead Avenue, approximately opposite today's entrance to Recreation Drive, with his garage serving as our Saturday clubrooms. Off we went on that first chill day up Glenfield Road to just past

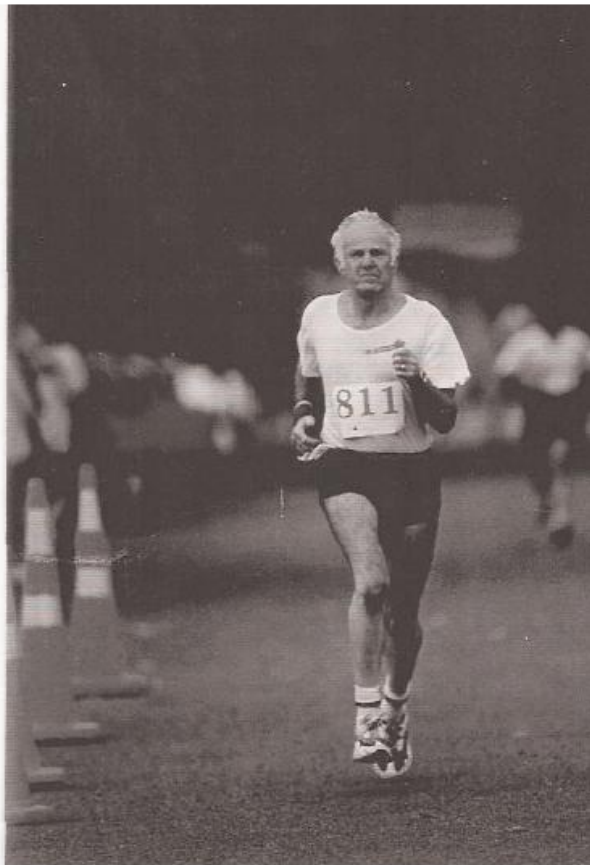
Pupuke Road where there was extensive farmland. We were lucky in this respect. For many years real cross country courses with farm gates, barbed wire fences, swamps and rolling paddocks were available. On that first run I experienced what upon reflection must have been an initiation of sorts for "the new boy" - a not too solid cow pattie landing on the back of the head! There was plenty of this good natured bombardment throughout the years. As we approached the finish of that first run I could only think of a nice hot shower that surely must await us at Alf Clayton's house. Yeah right! This was a private home - not a clubrooms so out came the hose with cold - but cold - water. This then was my introduction to harrier running only made bearable on that first day by Joan Clayton coming out with hot tea and bikkies. Boy did I enjoy that hot drink.

I have no doubt that I have forgotten as much as I remember of my years with Calliope but hopefully much will be recalled by others at the Reunion. Some things that come to mind from my time with the club are as follows.

Running Hamilton Club through Onepoto Basin on one of our annual matches for the Patterson Cup. That mud really sapped the strength from the legs of one and all



Ross Smith to Ron Wareham, Round the Harbour 1952



Ron Wareham
I don't remember which club won that day but Hastings half-marathon 2004

MEMORIES OF CALLIOPE 1948-1958 *R. Wareham cont.*

do recall that Hamilton got their own back the following year with a rough course that included scrubland and deep farm drainage trenches.

At the Cambridge Relay one year after the Saturday night function one of our members (he shall remain nameless) lost his false teeth in the town fountain whilst feeding the goldfish with his dinner. Next morning whilst wading around trying to find them the local constabulary arrived to enquire as to what we were up to. He saw the lighter side of the situation and left us to continue. I think we found the teeth in the end.

We won the Round-the-Harbour Relay (which was run from Highbury to Grey Lynn Park by way of Albany, Coatesville, Riverhead, Henderson, and New Lynn) in 1958 where we finished about 15 minutes ahead of the second team. Later that same year we competed in the Round Lake Rotorua Relay and as a result of our handicap win in the Harbour Relay, became scratch team behind the superior Owairaka and Lynndale Clubs. A payback of some sort I assume. We were last to start and last to finish and I can not recall seeing another runner on my lap (the last one). It was the coldest conditions I have ever run in and during a sudden sleet and hail shower I took refuge in a warm roadside pool for a time. Our accommodation on this trip was Norm Ambler's covered-in truck with mattresses and sleeping bags in the back.

Ray Ambler always seemed to wear sandals that had seen far, far better days. (No fancy road shoes in those days). Glad to see you have updated your shoes now Ray!

In 1952 the Calliope team comprising Ron Wareham, Ross Smith, Paul Penlington and Trevor Cowley won the junior Turakina to Wanganui Relay event. On the trip down some of us got off the train when it was delayed for some time in the Waiouru area, and went for a jog up the track to warm up in the bright moonlight after ensuring that the train driver would warn us with a blast on the train whistle when about to proceed. At least at Wanganui we stayed in a hotel.

The Ambler Shield race was then held over a course that started in Birkenhead Avenue not far from Recreation Drive then down that road and at the end taking a loop through what is now the League Ground (then paddocks) back up towards the main road then down into the gully between the League Ground and the War Memorial Park up onto No 2 Ground, then up Mahara Avenue to Mokoia Road (there was no by-pass then), thence we went back to Highbury shops and the start line for three laps. Having observed my greyhound occasionally slide under fences instead of hurdling them when chasing rabbits I practiced the same system on fences set with the bottom wire approximately 12

inches from the ground until I had perfected it (or so I thought). In 1952 I fronted up as back marker having won in 1950 and 1951 so looking for three in a row.

As the paddock had a fence that seemed to suit my slide system I charged and threw myself flat expecting to slide straight under which would save several vital seconds. Unfortunately for me I hadn't got my bum quite low enough and the barbed wire tore a large patch off the seat of my pants. This did not worry me on the country section but caused some embarrassment when I came onto the road so that I ran with one hand behind me covering my exposed posterior. (Try it some time – it really throws you off balance.) To make matters worse, my Mum and Dad had come to watch me run for the first time. I guess I must have flown over the road section for I achieved my third successive win this day.

In the junior Auckland cross-country championship of 1952 run at Ellerslie racecourse I was up with the leading runners when crossing through a paddock inside the right hand end of the racecourse proper when I was charged down by a very agitated stallion. Fortunately for me I was hit in the back by the horse's shoulder and knocked flat on the soft ground. A couple of runners helped me up and virtually threw me through a fence being held open by a course official just before the stallion charged again. With my adrenalin really pumping I took off after the leaders to finish 8th, just missing out on selection for the Auckland team for the Nationals. Barry Magee who did not run in the race due to illness was selected in the team with myself as non-travelling reserve. I think this was my biggest disappointment as I was about 5th at the time the horse hit me. For a few weeks after I sported extensive bruising to remind me of this race.

By tradition harrier running was mostly cross country with no separate road racing season. There was only one club championship which was run on the country with our relay races such as the Kohn and Osborne Cups competed for on road courses.

Pack runs were controlled by a pack leader who ensured that runners kept as a group by slowing down if the pack became too spread out. These runs finished with a "run in" which was a race, for those who wanted it, over a distance which varied from about 220 yards to one mile.

After many years of running from private homes, church halls and the War Memorial Grounds in Birkenhead the club obtained from James Davern Ltd one of the buildings they had used during the construction of the Auckland Harbour Bridge. This became the clubrooms at Recreation Drive.

The mid 1950s was a turbulent time for the club in general to the extent that due to the lack of support

MEMORIES OF CALLIOPE 1948-1958 *R. Wareham cont.*

from parents during the track season this section of the club was closed down and the club changed to being solely a harrier club. In 1958 it joined with the Takapuna Athletic Club, North Shore Soccer Club and North Shore Cycling Club to form the North Shore Sports Association with the aim of developing a 30,000 seating capacity stadium at Onewa Domain. The concept had the backing of major organizations including one prominent insurance company. Unfortunately due to Takapuna Council's inability to grant title or long term lease to a suitable piece of ground the concept had to be shelved and resulted in the clubs eventually going their own way once again.

Due to my desire to run track events as well as harriers in 1959 I joined the Takapuna Athletic Club where in 1961 a harrier section was formed. At the end of October 1962 whilst in my term as President of the Takapuna Club a 24-Hour Relay around Lake Pupuke was organized (I believe this was the first 24-hour relay in New Zealand). Although this was an event solely for Takapuna teams I arranged for an invitation for a team from Calliope to run but not compete for the major Irvine and Stern Trophy. The Calliope team of J Henderson, L Vincent, B Jones, K Stone and G Allott won the event (judged on greatest distance run) with a great achievement in covering 221 miles 1719

yards. A special award was presented to them.

At the time that the Women's harrier section of Calliope was formed I believe it was only about the 4th or 5th club to have a women's section. Strange that women could now run harrier races of three miles or more but could not compete in races longer than 220 yards on the track, and what a far cry were the uniforms of romper pants and blouses compared to today's skimpy outfits. Catherine Butler was Calliope's most promising women runner gaining Auckland rep honours and consistently being runner-up to outstanding New Zealand champion Millie Sampson.

Running is still part of my life and since shifting to Napier to retire I have won the Hawkes Bay Masters 5 km road event for 65-69 year-olds in 2003 and competed in the Hastings half-marathon of 2003 where I finished third in the 65-69 year age group, whilst in 2004 I won the 70-74 year age section in the same event.

No doubt time has dulled the memory somewhat and Murphy's Law will prevail in that after all our memories have gone to print we will bring to mind others. This being so we will have plenty to reminisce over at the Reunion where I hope to see many old running mates.



*Turakina to Wanganui junior road relay 1952.
Team 1st. Trevor Cowley, Ross Smith, Brian Wright (manager), Paul Penlington, Ron Wareham*