



Ern Jolly

MARATHON RUNNING  
IN  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
CENTENARY 21 August 1920-2020  
RE-ENACTMENT of the FIRST EVENT



Notice No. 3

Wednesday 8 July 2020

At the time of writing I am still waiting for absolute confirmation that the Adelaide Marathon is going ahead, but I have an uneasy feeling that the new situation in Victoria is going to impact Australia-wide and new restrictions may be put in place here as well. For the time being though, it's on with the preparations for our "historical" event.

On request I prepared a paragraph giving details for the re-enactment which will be included in the SARRC's announcement of the Adelaide Marathon. I have also contacted a couple of life members from Adelaide Harriers and asked them to spread the word.

Pictured at top are Ern Jolly on the left and George Lockwood on the right. Both are featured in this notice's historical section. One of the first people to express interest in the re-enactment was Kirsty Gwynn-Jones who is Ern's great-niece. To have a relative of Ern's take part is exciting and provides a historical link covering almost the entire century as Ern started his running career in 1921. Kirsty is an accomplished runner in her own right, with many marathons and ultras to her credit, including the famous Boston Marathon in 2015 which I understand is her PB of well under four hours.

George Lockwood ran four marathons before the end of World War 2 and finished three of them. He held this achievement of three completed by a South Australian runner until May 1968 when Bill James of Adelaide Harriers finished his fourth at the Australian Championships in Tasmania. Gordon Inwood, also of AH, was the first to finish four marathons *in SA*, later in 1968.

This notice cites small excerpts from "*On Wings – The Adelaide Harriers Athletic Club, 1913-2013*" written by Mark Worthing and *SA Running #15 (March 1986)*, journal of the SARRC. *The Globe* articles can be found at the results page for the 1931 Victorian State Marathon at [ausrunning.net](http://ausrunning.net).

Map of the Course (continued)

Another interested participant is Steve Guy who started running marathons in the late 1970s and won the 1982 State Marathon and others. Steve was as mystified as me about the apparent "Marden Rd" part of the course and sent me an email with a link to a 1920 map of Adelaide produced by Fullers. It turns out that the northern part of O.G. Rd was then described as "Marden or O.G. Rd" which is extraordinary! However it removes the notion that the course went to Marden Rd, Marden! There are many other curiosities about varying road names along the course, including Cross Rd which had seven individual sections using five different names including "Glen Osmond Rd". Full details next week.

### History of the marathon in SA – Ern Jolly

On Saturday 3 October 1931 Ern Jolly won the Victorian State Marathon Championship conducted by the Preston-Northcote AAC, a day which was described as the “worst day ever known for any Victorian event” on the Club’s official result sheet. That was understandable because Jolly was from South Australia and he did to the Vics what they had done to us in SA’s first marathon in 1920! Adelaide’s newspaper *The Mail* ran the story with the headline “**May Gain Olympic Honors**” and subheading “S.A. Runner Wins by Three-Quarters of a Mile”. It was probably more than a mile because his winning time of 3:02:34 was 11½ minutes over second placed Norman Chiverton (3:14:02) who became the Victorian Champion. Third was Stewart McQuie a further two minutes back in 3:16:03.

The result sheet was referring to the weather of course which was described as “shocking conditions, icy cold with thunderstorms and spectators huddled under verandahs in the main street to see runners near finish”. A “high class” track & field meet on the club’s ground was cancelled, but the marathon could not be postponed because interstate entries were received. Stuart Vance from Sydney was the last runner to finish in 4:12:10, placing 14<sup>th</sup> in a field of 29 starters. *The Age* gave a further description of the weather – “over the last six miles from the turning point at Epping the runners had to face a bitterly cold wind that was of almost hurricane force, and so affected many of them that they were forced to retire. They were benumbed with the cold and could not move their limbs”.

*The Age* stated “his victory stamped Jolly as one of the greatest marathon runners seen in this country”. It is fair to say that Jolly, 30, would have run close to two hours and fifty minutes in normal weather conditions for October.

The marathon event in Australia became a casualty of the shocking weather! An article in *The Globe* by H.A. de Lacy titled “MARATHONS – Ban Them – Doctor’s View” stated:

*THE effects of the race were so pronounced on the candidates that Dr. Les Edmunds, medical officer for the promoting club, himself a University and Scotch College athlete of note and winner of an Australian 440 yards hurdle title condemned it in no uncertain terms.*

*Of the 29 runners, 14 completed the course. The winner was so distressed that towards the end of the journey his trainer was forced to flip him with a towel to keep him awake. Most of the men were greatly exhausted and needed medical attention.*

*“It was” said Dr. Edmunds “the most pitiable sight I have witnessed for some years. The men were so reduced by exhaustion that they had to be goaded to fresh efforts to prevent their falling asleep on the road. How can such a race be classed as in the best interests of sport?”*

*“Jolly, the winner, was suffering from a ‘heart block’ when I examined him immediately after the race. His heart beat dropped from 120 to 60 and then jumped to 120 again. His health might not be permanently undermined, but he will suffer the effects of that run for some weeks. Of course, complete rest would hasten his recovery.” Jolly was asleep from exhaustion immediately the race finished, his strength broken by the rigours of the run.*

Ern Jolly had a different opinion about his ability to recover from that marathon. From an interview with him in *The Mail* of Saturday 17 October 1931:

*"When training for the marathon race I used to go for long walks through the hills," said Jolly today. "I would cover from 25 to 30 miles in a day. Plenty of hard work, plenty of sleep, and plenty to eat is the motto for anyone who wishes to tackle a marathon run. As to eating, I believe in plain, wholesome food, especially fruit, vegetables and eggs. Smokes and drinks are banned."*

*"Long distance racing is not harmful provided one trains properly and is of mature age. No one should tackle the long race until he is about 26 years of age. After a long hard race I train off gradually, and do not drop it right away. During the marathon I ate about half a pound of chocolates and half a pound of raisins. This was the most arduous race I had ever been in, and I was proud to bring back the honors to South Australia."*

*"There was a good deal said in the Melbourne papers about the after effects of the race. I soon recovered, as I was able to attend a dinner some two hours later, and then went on to a dance. If the after effects were as serious as stated in Melbourne there would have been no hope of doing this. Since returning to Adelaide I have been examined by a doctor, who declared I was fit and had suffered no ill-effects. I realised the ambition of my career in winning the marathon."*

Dr Edmunds<sup>1</sup> was correct to express concern over what he had witnessed and examined in the aftermath of this particularly gruelling event, but he went so far as to say:

*"I speak firstly as a medico, but also as an athlete when I express the hope that the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association will ban marathon racing for all time. Ten miles is a sufficient test for any man."*

Well they were banned for several years in Victoria but fortunately not for all time; otherwise we would never have heard of the great Victorians Robert de Castella, Steve Moneghetti, Chris Wardlaw and Garry Henry amongst dozens of others, not to mention Benita Willis, Lisa Weightman and Elizabeth Hassall, the first Australian woman to run under 2:40 (in 1979) and of course ultra marathoners extraordinaire George Perdon and Cliff Young! The next marathon in Victoria was not until 1946.

If this was to be Ern Jolly's greatest ever race, his greatest achievement was arguably his selection to represent Australia in the Empire Games to be staged in Sydney in 1938. From 1966 these games were called the Commonwealth Games. As stated in last week's notice Jolly ran a solo marathon trial in Adelaide in December 1937 under three hours to earn selection but was unable to finish the Games marathon because of an injury.

Jolly's running career began in 1921 after trying tennis, swimming and wrestling. He considered becoming a weightlifter but a man named Steve McKee was instrumental in getting him to take an interest in athletics. His main event was three miles where he won the race 13 times from 15 starts and came second twice. He won the State championship 10 mile cross country race five times, the 10000 metres once and the three mile championship five times. He was the first in the state to run under 16 minutes for three miles, under 60 minutes for 10 miles and under three hours for the marathon.

1. A report in the following week's edition of *The Globe* by J.J. Maher suggested that the bad weather had something to do with the distress of the runners and pointed out that only three or four of the entrants appeared to have trained sufficiently.

This background to the Western District AAC annual Ern Jolly Memorial Handicap Run appears on the information sheet for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual event held on 30 April 1983. It gives the unusual circumstances where he returned from service in the Middle East in WW2 and presented his own memorial trophy, presumably for a number of years.

ERN JOLLY MEMORIAL HANDICAP RUN  
(Est. 1941)

Mr. Ern Jolly, an Australian representative in the Marathon event at the Empire Games in Sydney, 1938 (from which he was forced to withdraw due to a toe injury), has been associated with Western District from the date of its incorporation on the 20th February, 1929.

Ern, who commenced his running career with the Adelaide Harriers A.A.C. in 1923, before joining Western District, is unique in "coming back from the dead" to present his own memorial trophy. When serving in the Middle East, during the massive allied push in 1941, Ern was wounded, left in a remote casualty station, and while his mates in the 2nd 27th Infantry Battalion were transferred back to Australia, he was left in the desert and posted as "missing in action".

Two of his mates, Jack Lasscock and Ted Creer organised a trophy to perpetuate Ern's memory, which was subscribed to by club mates, supporters and friends. However, Ern's eventual return to Australia brought subsequent embarrassment and relief. Ern has since been associated with the Club in an administrative/coaching capacity and as an avid supporter.

The original course started from the tree near the bus stop by the railway line on the north side of Henley Beach Road along West Terrace/Port Road/Railway Terrace/West Beach Road and finished by the band stand on West Terrace near Burbridge Road. Due to traffic hazards, the course was temporarily transferred to Lenswood ('75 - '76) and Lobethal ('77 & '78), but with the co-operation of the S.A. Police Force, returned to Westerns in 1979.

The trophy is awarded to the fastest Westerns on a sealed handicap basis so neither the fastest nor the first across the line is necessarily the winner. Trophies are awarded to the fastest open and Club athletes, as well as to the winners of the supporting events.

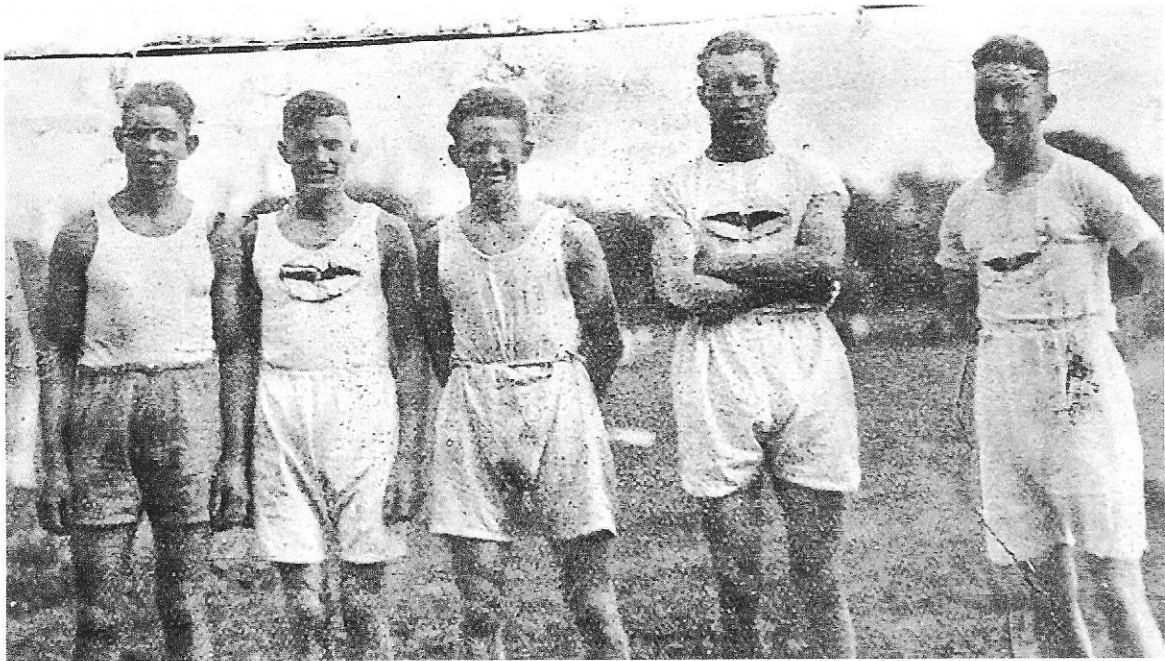
### 1941 State Marathon

The Adelaide Harriers AAC conducted a marathon on Saturday, 11 October 1941 starting at 12:45pm. It was on the "Terraces Course" which started with six laps of the Club's 440 yard cinders track on South Tce and then went west along South Tce, south along Goodwood Rd, east along Park Tce (now part of Greenhill Rd) to Glen Osmond Rd, Beaumont Rd and returning via South Tce. This was the same course Ern Jolly ran four years previously to qualify for the 1938 Empire Games. The five starters needed to run five laps of the road course before returning to finish on the Harriers' track.

The winner was Harry Chesson whose time was 3:46:49. He was four miles ahead of George Lockwood who came home "very tired" in 4:28:00. The three other starters, Jack Webber, Reg Raven and R. McQueen did not finish. According to the Advertiser preview "J. Webber, G. Lockwood and H. Chesson will try to establish a new club record" and "local athletes are hopeful of completing the distance in 3 hrs 30 min". In that context Chesson's time was reasonable, given that Webber and Lockwood (current club record holder with 3:35:32) were clearly fancied ahead of him. Jack Webber went on to run 3:05:55 nineteen years later in the 1960 State Marathon for third place.

In his article in *SA Running* (March 1986) Brian Chapman described George Lockwood as "famed for his ultra-marathon pedestrian feats of endurance as the *Walking Postman*". (Oddly enough, when I was a kid in Mount Gambier in the 1960s my postie was Mr Lockwood – Ian.)

This rather tatty photo was found on the internet in a search for Ern Jolly, but with no further details.



Given that Ern was at Adelaide Harriers before joining the new Western Districts club in 1929, it is from that decade. The Harriers' uniform then displayed the "wings" in honour of the famed aviation pioneer and First World War pilot, Sir Ross Smith, a club member. Ern is at the far right and my guess is that George Lockwood is next to him. I have made enquiries as to the identities of the other athletes.