



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



**Notice No. 2**

**Wednesday 1 July 2020**

So far five people have expressed an interest in taking part in the re-enactment and given that the original event had only seven entrants, six starters and three finishers it is already shaping up to be a success. I have had discussions with Greg Marsh, the President of the South Australian Road Runners Club about the possibility of including this event as part of the lead up to the Adelaide Marathon which now looks likely to be going ahead, probably on 23 August. Greg agreed to put the idea to the Race Director Piet Crosby and the Board as there are mutual benefits for both marathons.

Map of the Course

The 1920 course started from the Kingston Statue in Victoria Square and proceeded along Grote Street to West Tce and down Bay Road (later renamed Anzac Highway) to St. Leonards Inn at Glenelg. From there it returned along Bay Road to Cross Road where it went to the "big tree at Glen Osmond". It then proceeded along Portrush Rd, Greenhill Rd and Glynburn Road until it reached Payneham Rd where it turned left. It apparently went to Marden Rd and back to Felixstow Rd (now O.G. Rd) to cross the River Torrens. At the O.G. Hotel it turned left and headed back to the city via North East Rd, Northcote Tce, Park Tce, Mackinnon Parade and Finniss St. It turned left on to Avenue Rd (now Frome Rd) and finished on University Oval.

Minor deviations are needed to safely negotiate the equivalent route today. The course will turn around at Tapleys Hill Road to avoid the need to wait at the same lights twice in a few minutes. It will turn right at O.G. Road instead of Marden Rd and at the end it will finish at the Uni Loop.

A map of the course, taken from my bicycle ride around it in March this year, appears below. My ride finished at the archery field in order to reach 42.2 km on my GPS watch. The actual finish line will be at the Graduates Oval and will require the completion of much of the Uni Loop to cover the required marathon distance.

### **History of the marathon in SA – 1920s and 30s**

For the winner of the first marathon in 1920, Percy Collins of Victoria it was his only successful attempt at the distance. However third placed Thomas Byrnes of Queensland had finished much faster on two other occasions. In 1909 he ran 3:56:52 to place 28<sup>th</sup> in the Victorian Championship and in 1923 he improved to 3:33:40 for 7<sup>th</sup> place, again in Victoria. Second placed Hugh Wolter, the inaugural SA state champion defended his title in the next marathon which was not held until 1925.

#### **1925 State Marathon**

This was conducted by Adelaide Harriers on 19 September 1925 on the same course used in 1920 with the exception that the marathon finished on Adelaide Oval. There were four entrants; Charley Kerr, George Lockwood, C. Summerhayes and Hugh Wolter. *The Advertiser* reported “the object of the event was to try to lower figures set by Collins”, which was 3:18:23 in 1920.

Kerr, Lockwood and Wolter started the race and they had to run through rain for four miles. Kerr ran steadily in third place while Lockwood opened up a big lead on Wolter at the St. Leonard’s turnaround. At 11½ miles on Cross Rd Wolter retired, “feeling the strain”, after being passed by Kerr. At the halfway point at the top of Glen Osmond Rd Lockwood had a three quarter mile lead on Kerr and was 10 minutes inside the record. On turning into Greenhill Rd (15 ½ miles) Lockwood twisted his knee and was forced to walk. Kerr was steadily gaining on Lockwood who tried to run again but by 18½ miles he had to give up the race, still 8 minutes inside record time.

Kerr also had to start walking and at the O.G. Hotel with five miles to go he had 27 minutes to break the record. He began running again and became very tired but managed to finish in 3:24:04. *The Advertiser* reported “Kerr is a member of Adelaide Harriers, and was warmly congratulated on all sides for his brilliant performance under adverse conditions”. Apparently Kerr did very little training in preparation for the marathon.

A write up in the *Register* of 16 October 1925 gave an extended profile of Charley Kerr who was aged 30. He won many shorter races and lowered his mile time to 4:40. Kerr’s trainer was C. Summerhayes who preferred to “look after (his athlete) during the race” than take part and received much praise from him. A photo of Kerr in the profile is unfortunately of too poor quality to use here.

#### **1932 State Marathon**

There were high expectations for a fast time in the 1932 State Marathon held on 17 September. A field of five had entered including the South Australian winner of the 1931 Victorian State Marathon Championship, Ern Jolly who recorded a time of 3:04:03 in atrocious weather conditions. Other entrants were George Lockwood of Adelaide Harriers, Malcolm Prince of Western Districts and two from Victoria, R. Cooper from the Melbourne Catholic Young Men’s Society and F. Egan of Melbourne Harriers. Unfortunately Ern Jolly was not allowed to start by his doctor because of a heavy cold and another possible entrant, C. Gibbons was injured in a recent 10 mile race.

*The Advertiser* reported that the absence of wind made weather conditions perfect for the race and “the course was a typical marathon run”. This time it started in North Terrace and went to Glenelg and further south to Brighton before returning via South Road to Edwardstown and back to the city via Anzac Highway. The race finished where it started at the National War Memorial in North Tce.

Malcolm Prince, 22, started strongly and led all the way to win by 45 minutes in a time of 3:08:07. George Lockwood and R. Cooper had a good tussle, exchanging positions a couple of times before Lockwood prevailed when it mattered to finish second in 3:52:43. Cooper and Egan had run together for 15 miles before Cooper challenged Lockwood. Cooper finished in 4:01:43 and while Egan is reported to have finished, his time is unknown.



*This photo in The Mail, Saturday 17 September 1932, shows the four starters who all finished.*

The Adelaide Harriers singlet worn by George Lockwood (far left) was a design which lasted for over fifty years until it was “modernised” in 1984. I joined the Harriers in 1981 and still have my singlet of the same design which I plan to wear. I will need to find some baggy white shorts to go with it! – Ian

The 1932 marathon was the last one in Australia for five years because the medical authorities thought they were too dangerous! However the Empire Games were to be held in Sydney in 1938 and of course included the marathon and therefore a state championship was held in NSW on 20 November 1937 which served as a selection trial. The winner was John Wood in 2:58:32 and second was James Patterson in 3:06:53. Another trial was held in Adelaide on 11 December for Ern Jolly who was confident of going under three hours. Running alone along the “five terraces” course with a gusty westerly wind Jolly completed the five laps in 2:57:06 and was selected to represent Australia in the Empire Games along with Wood and Patterson. This was the first sub three-hour marathon run in South Australia.

Meanwhile a time trial was organised for George Lockwood who became the first South Australian to finish a second marathon when he ran 3:35:32 on 23 November 1937. His object was to lower his time and also beat the 3 hours and 8 minutes set by Malcolm Prince in 1932. Lockwood achieved his personal best time by 15 minutes but could not maintain the required pace to better Prince’s time.

Next week the career of Ern Jolly, South Australia’s first international class marathon runner, is examined in detail, including a remarkable story where he returned home after his service in the Second World War to present his own *memorial* trophy! A marathon was also held in Adelaide in 1941 and this was to be the last one for fifteen years.

#### Footnotes:

An article by Brian Chapman, himself an accomplished marathon runner from South Australia, in issue #15 of *South Australia Running* (March 1986), adds the following points of interest:

- The temperature during the 1920 marathon was 74 degrees Fahrenheit (23C),
- Charley Kerr was denied his scheduled finish lap around Adelaide Oval because a league football match had just resumed,
- The pre-race medical check which put Ern Jolly out of the 1932 State Marathon was mandatory until the early 1970s,
- Marathons disappeared from the running calendar during the 1930s because of apathy and public/press opposition on medical grounds and they were actually banned in Victoria.

*SA Running* was the journal of the SARRC during the 1980s.

