



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



Notice No. 4

Wednesday 15 July 2020

The Adelaide Marathon is now definitely on 20th September 2020 as stated in the SARRC's recent newsletter. The now vacated weekend of 22-23 August allows people who otherwise would not be able to run the re-enactment on the Friday to do it then as a virtual run and have their time included in the results. One requirement for our event is to adhere to the Club's COVID Safe Plan which means that we keep a list of each participant's name and a contact phone number for any tracing purposes.

Our numbers have now doubled to ten and I am anticipating several more in the next week or so. One couple are doing the event a stage at a time over several days culminating in a finish from 3:30pm on the Friday. I have been receiving suggestions about a post-event get together and having a memento to take away from the run and these will happen. There will be more about this next week.

This week's featured athletes are George Venables on the left who was instrumental in the revival of marathon races in the 1950s and Allan Howland on the right who alone trained for a marathon in Adelaide in the late 1940s and went to Perth to contest the event in 1949, achieving the decade's fastest time for a South Australian resident.

Map of the Course (continued)

To complete the curiosities revealed by the 1920 map of Adelaide mentioned last week, what is now Cross Road was in fact a series of seven differently named roads joined together back then as follows:

(was) Plympton Tce – (now) Anzac Highway to Marion Rd

Glen Osmond Rd – Marion Rd to South Rd

Cross Road – South Rd to Forest Ave East (now East Ave)

South Tce – Forest Ave East to Goodwood Rd

Cross Rd – Goodwood Rd to Victoria Tce (now Belair Rd)/Mitcham Rd (now Unley Rd)

High Tce – Victoria Tce/Mitcham Rd to Fullarton Rd

Cross Rd – Fullarton Rd to Glen Osmond Rd

Glynburn Rd used to be separately Glynde Rd and Burnside Rd, presumably each side of Magill Rd.

Today I began to measure the course with a wheel and will continue whenever the weather is fine. My experience with the wheel is that it will underestimate the length of a course by a small margin because going over small stones or twigs etc impedes its rotation slightly. This is offset a small amount by a bit of wobble as you go along but not enough to cancel the stone "bounce effect". It's important to have a measurement from other than GPS devices at the point where the course enters the Uni Loop.

History of the marathon in SA – post WW2 and the 1950s

According to Brian Chapman in his article in *SA Running No. 15* (March 1986), in reference to the period after the end of the Second World War:

The severity of the race continued to discourage prospective runners and an apathetic attitude on the part of the S.A.A.A. officials ensured that marathoning lay dormant well beyond the war years. Only Allan Howland tackled the distance privately and he contested the Australian Marathon at the start of the 1950s. An S.A. Marathon reappeared in 1956 thanks to the efforts of a 46 year old Englishman George Venables.

In fact Howland ran in the 1949 Australian Championship in Perth over a course which went from Leederville to Fremantle on September 17th. From a field of 11 starters Howland was 7th in a time of 3:21:42, the last to finish and only a minute behind John Dickenson of WA. The winner was Robert Prentice in 2:43:46, from Gordon Stanley 2:45:42 and Merv Harburn 2:58:46. All were from Victoria.

In a race preview the *West Australian* of 15 September 1949 said “The tall South Australian A. Howland is staying at the home of Alan Merrett, the leading distance runner in WA. Merrett will not contest the marathon”. Howland had an early influence on the race, setting out at a fast pace but he was “overhauled at the Causeway” by Prentice, Stanley, Harburn and Rowland Guy from NSW according to the *West Australian* report of the race on Monday 19 September 1949. The report also stated:

A. Howland (S.A.) *Gained a handy lead early but after being overtaken at the Causeway gradually faded and staggered through Cottesloe before he got going again at Claremont. Time: 3.21.42*

This picture was published in *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, Saturday 8 October 1949 and shows Howland (5) at the point where he began to lose his lead.



ON RIVERSIDE DRIVE, near the Swan River, Howland (S.A., No. 5) begins to lose his lead to Prentice (right), Harburn (left), and Stanley and Guy (at rear).

This was a bold performance by Allan Howland and he recorded the fastest marathon time by a South Australian during the 1940s.

1956 State Marathon

The first marathon for fifteen years in South Australia was held on Saturday 29th September 1956. It started at the Adelaide Harriers track on South Tce and went to Port Adelaide and Semaphore via Keswick Bridge, Railway Tce and Port Road. It returned down Military Road through Grange and along Henley Beach Rd to West Tce, Park Tce and Hutt St and returning to the Harriers track along South Tce.



The race was won by 46 year old George Venables, formerly of Birchfield Harriers in England in a time of 2:50:39, a new state record, reducing Ern Jolly's record time set in 1937 by about seven minutes. *The Advertiser* of 1 October 1956 reported "Mr. Jolly, who was an official, said that an excellent start had been made in staging a State marathon championship, and the race had shown what could be done with the right training". Jolly's words were prophetic as the state championship was held every year until 2011. It suffered a slow demise from the mid 1990s in line with the changing demographics¹ of marathon runners.

Second was Brian Wale, also from England now running for Adelaide Harriers and he was 21 minutes behind Venables in a time of 3:11:39. Third was Carl Cedarblad (WD) in 3:38:00 and the final finisher was Lindsay MacGregor in 3:45:00. A report in *The Sunday Mail* said "at one stage MacGregor was handed a 'schooner' by a spectator which he downed smartly. He said it acted like a transfusion". There were seven starters from the twelve entrants.

1. Changing Demographics of Marathon Running in South Australia by Ian Hill, March 2016, p6

Decline of the State marathon

In 1987 the state championship was held in conjunction with the Adelaide Marathon for the first time and attracted only 32 entries. From 1988-91 it was once again held as a separate event with about 40 finishers each year and in 1992 it merged with the Adelaide Marathon for good. However the concept of a state championship seemed increasingly outdated in the 1990s and the number of entries fell to single digits by 1996. Eventually it got to the stage where no-one entered from 2006- 10 even though it was still a category until 2011. The final male state champion was Mark Howard in 2005 with a time of 2:45:10 while Bernice Mutiso was a lone entrant in 2011 and took the female state title with a time of 3:25:11.

1957 and 1958 State Marathons

These were both won by Victorian Frank Tuchener in contrasting weather conditions.

In 1957 the weather was bad, as described by *The Advertiser* of Monday 16th September 1957 "between 11 and 16 miles the rain pelted down, the wind blue (sic) in fierce, cruel gusts that threw the runners off balance and the competitive elements fell out of the race".

Tuchener won in 2:58:16, 22 minutes ahead of George Venables (3:20:22) with Carl Cedarblad third in 3:28:08. There were only five finishers from the twelve starters. *The Advertiser* further reported:

Venables faltered and his stride lost its spring very suddenly at 15 miles. Only Tuchener was unaffected. He slowed to stay with Venables for seven miles, encouraging and helping him, then he moved away for an easy win.

Venables, distressed and almost hobbling took 54 minutes to cover the last four miles but bravely finished and Cedarblad's steady plodding gave him third place.

Venables had the incentive of winning the State championship and was the first to win it twice and in consecutive years.



VICTORIAN runner Frank Tuchener enjoys a shower after winning the SA marathon championship today. The course began from the Adelaide Harriers' track and covered Port Adelaide and Semaphore, returning to Adelaide by way of the Henley Beach road.

Prelim. final in basketball
In a thrill-packed final Forestville today defeated Semaphore by six points in the A Grade Clubhouse. Christ men's basketball preliminary final. With scores 64 points a at the end of time Semaphore during the extra period defeated last on player with five foul

Conditions were ideal in 1958 and Frank Tuchener smashed Venables' state record by fifteen minutes to record 2:35:36 while fellow Victorian Geoff Watt was second in 2:41:46. First South Australian was Les Trigg (AH) in 2:42:39, a new residential record and George Venables, now 48, returned to his best form for 2:52:54 in fourth place. This was easily the highest standard marathon in SA to date. There were ten finishers from the twelve starters, with Rodger Barber (AH) being the last of those in a time of 3:34:02.

Geoff Watt was the father of Kathy Watt who won an Olympic Gold Medal in cycling in the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Frank Tuchener (pictured) retired from marathon running in 1961 but took it up again in 1986 at age 59 with a time of 3:17:08 in the Melbourne Marathon. In 1987 he ran 3:13:52 in the World Masters Marathon in Melbourne which was to be his fastest time since restarting. He went on to qualify as a Spartan in 1997 at age 70 when he ran his tenth Melbourne Marathon in 4:37:33.

Sunday Mail 14 September 1957

1959 State Marathon

Although the 1959 State Marathon was held in early September, on the 5th, the maximum temperature was 81 degrees F (27C) and this affected the record field of 23 starters to the extent that only seven finished. Also, it did not help when about a dozen runners were “mistakenly given a wrong turning direction by a visiting race follower” according to *The Advertiser* report of Monday 7th September 1959.



Rodger Barber crosses the finishing line at the corner of Grote street and West terrace, city, in the 26-miles 385 yards marathon road race on Saturday. He won in 3 hours 2 min. 50 secs.

The winner was 21 year old Rodger Barber of Adelaide Harriers who coped well with the heat and finished in a time of 3:02:50, nearly 23 minutes ahead of Bob Horman, 42, of Victoria (3:25:41) and Joe Poelsma, 54, also of Victoria a further two minutes behind in 3:27:42.

The Advertiser further reported:

Barber, who was coached by the previous SA Marathon winner George Venables, won because he was the runner best trained to see out the gruelling journey in 80-degree heat. For 20 miles Barber stuck steadfastly to his 6-minute miles. Then he had such a long lead that he was able to relax by walking and jogging much of the way from Marion Road.

After the race Barber said he would stop running immediately and after a brief rest began a strengthening programme to prepare for next winter season. He abandoned plans to run in the Victorian Marathon next month.

Rodger Barber finished second in the 1960 State Marathon and retired from them until 1979. Like Frank Tuchener he had a second marathon career where he ran a PB of 2:48:42 at age 42 in the 1980 Adelaide Marathon, which is remarkable. Barber continued running marathons until 1986 and still competes as a Masters walker.