

BAROSSA MARATHON FESTIVAL – a short history

by Ian Hill

The origins of the Barossa Marathon Festival go back to 1981 when the first Kaiser Stuhl 17km Fun Run was held on 26 April and started at the winery at Nuriootpa and went along an out and back course towards Seppeltsfield and finished at the Nuriootpa Oval. In 1984 the course was extended to a half marathon and turned at Seppeltsfield. In 1992 a new course was established at Tanunda starting at the basketball stadium on Magnolia Road and comprising three laps of a rectangular route along Magnolia, Light Pass, Basedow and Menge roads. Incorporating the State Half Marathon championships for the first time, a safer course was needed. The championships continued until 2012.

Local organisers Trevor Miller and Philip Othams established the Barossa Legends and Almost Legends to recognise the achievements of participants who had finished ten and five half marathons respectively. This became very popular and there are now more than 50 Barossa Legends, led by Adam Zur Eich who has finished the half marathon 27 times, including this year in a time of 1:29:25.

In 2005 the South Australian Road Runners Club became involved and average participation doubled from 112 to 225 per year by 2009. During the next decade a new running boom doubled this to 450 per year. From 2010 various new routes were tried including an extension to Bethany but it became too dangerous to use Light Pass Rd and in 2014 the current compact course was devised.

In 2012 the marathon was introduced and has averaged 200 finishers per year since. Along with the half marathon, the 10km distance has been a regular feature since 1995 and a 5km option was introduced with the marathon. Since then the combined total of all events until 2019 averaged around 1110 finishers per year. Numbers were higher this year with 1154 finishers from over 1300 entrants.

The event records for the half marathon are held by Australian marathon legend Steve Moneghetti with 1:06:44 in 2001 and Lee-Ann Turner who ran 1:18:04 in 2005. In the marathon Paul Mulholland recorded 2:34:39 in 2019 and Noo Bowker finished in 3:02:15 in 2018. The 10km records are held by Rhys Jones with 31:36 in 2011 and Jessica Trengove with 34:32 in 2017.

This year marked the 40th anniversary of the inaugural fun run in 1981. The event was not held in 1985 because the organiser was overseas and last year the SARRC needed to reschedule or cancel most events and took the opportunity to move the Barossa Festival back to its traditional end of May date.

1 June 2021