



*(Photo: W. S. Bateson)*

**Mandale Harriers and Athletic Club (Cleveland)  
Committee - 1998/99**

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**Contributions Invited!!!**Copy date for Autumn 1999 issue - **23 September 1999**

AGM TIME

With this issue you should have notice of our AGM on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September at Acklam Steelworks Club (opp. Clairville). It is well known in the committee that the treasurer wishes to raise subscription charges and the AGM notice authorises the meeting to do so. Note, therefore, that early payers for next year (before the meeting) will continue an extra year at the current rate.

The notice about amending the constitution is a formality and should not concern the membership. In asking authorisation I have built in a safeguard that no rule will be substantially altered - only to be rewritten from the current governing body point of view.

There are no amalgamation proposals and I feel that regrettedly the time is still not quite right. It may be that the majority of our membership no longer see two clubs on the same track with the same purpose as being useful in the longer term. It may be that a large proportion of M & C membership feel the same. However there is believed to be determined and powerful opposition that would make constructive proposals difficult. The only practical thing that can be done at present is for Mandale to sample opinion and publish it - thus inviting other club(s) to follow suit.

I am tempted to say take a democratic sample of opinion. The problem is, as the European Elections showed, that if a club of say 300 has only 25 at the AGM then anything can happen. If only the people who strongly oppose a motion vote then that is defeated regardless of how otherwise popular it is.

When Mandale was a new club for a few individually motivated people, it was a dictatorship. Although actions were published there was a trust, "and lets get on with it" approach. The Amateur Athletics Association constitution for clubs did not allow dictatorships and democracy along with popularity has led the club to be the shape it is today.

At this years AGM democracy will again be to the fore. You should note that some of the older committee have not fared well on a personal basis this year. In order to support me Dave Parry jumped in, but was himself deflected by outside circumstances. Great credit to Pat for holding things together and "Ministers without portfolio" like Christine Baines for oiling the wheels of production. The brief(?) reappearance of Roy Bradley has been a bonus and this has made the August Forez trip feasible..

My year as secretary has been eased by the people mentioned above. Next year my athletics effort is limited and unpredictable. If I can get at least once a week to Clairville and distribute mail and generally communicate (as present) then this is what is offered. If you want a budding newcomer, this will not offend me. Alternatively, anyone wanting experience by assisting the secretary in dealing with secondary distribution of ail at Clairville and notice board maintenance will be invaluable.

One of the changes in the club to look out for is the decline in our Senior men's distance running reputation. We have come round from being a distance club to a Young Track and Field Club. Not sure what the answer is, but we are not replacing the older" generation of Seniors with younger distance runners. The best hope is present groups like Les' Youths group staying on.

Mike Starford,  
General Secretary.

P.S. I attach an article from the Northern Counties newsletter. Does this sound anything like two local clubs?

## Club Mergers – The Way Forward for Development?

A number of significant amalgamations of athletics clubs in the North have occurred in recent years. The article that follows has been written by Charles Gains to illustrate the reasons behind bringing together of Liverpool Pembroke AC and Sefton Harriers, and the benefits that have resulted.

The NoEAA Development Committee is keen to encourage clubs to share resources – both facilities and personnel, to give increased benefits to athletes. This does not necessarily mean amalgamation, but it does mean working together and a new attitude of co-operation. We encourage everyone to review their operation, examine examples of good practice in other areas and see how you can improve provision for your members.

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Both Sefton Harriers (1889) and Liverpool Pembroke AC (1890) had long and honourable traditions with the Sefton club drawing much of its strength from its centrally situated West Derby base, whilst Pembroke straddled the Northern end of the city. Their mutual rival, Liverpool Harriers remained solidly entrenched in the south end. The strains of modern athletics began to be felt during the 1980's and briefly the Harriers and Pembroke flirted with a merger, however deep suspicions within both clubs dominated the thinking and the idea came to naught. Sefton were experiencing similar difficulties which came to something of a head when several key athletes defected to Liverpool Harriers in 1992. Their strong 'family' style was severely dented and the modest success that they were enjoying was cut cruelly short. Pembroke's problems were of a different nature, less in terms of success but more in relation to administration. The club was being run by a handful of enthusiasts, but the cracks were beginning to show.

A chance meeting of the respective secretaries whilst strolling around a cross-country course, led very quickly to a decision to place the idea of amalgamation before both club committees. To general astonishment this was largely well received. There had never been any animosity between the clubs, and members had competed on the most courteous of terms and even socialised together for over half a century. Within three months the matter was in the hands of the respective AGMs, which had been deliberately convened on the same night to avoid any influence being cast over the other members. Over 90% of the Pembroke gathering in Bootle voted Yes, and there were some tense moments as the result was phoned through from West Derby. The outcome from Sefton was less overwhelming but still substantial and within three weeks on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1995, the clubs competed for the last time as separate entities in the Northern 6 Stage Relays at Sheffield. There were few dry eyes, but the sense of expectation was enormous.

Sunday the 1<sup>st</sup> October dawned and Martin McLoughlin led home the British Team in the World Half Marathon Championships. The significance was not lost on the

members and only a handful of non active athletes chose the moment to seek another club. Twelve months later with numerous successes to celebrate, including five international vests, there was no looking back.

### CONCLUSIONS

What lessons can be drawn from our experience?

It really is quite simple; the proliferation of athletic clubs must end. Multiple clubs in small geographical areas damage the sport. Too many clubs chasing too few talented individuals is a bad enough situation, but the problem goes much deeper than that. The demands on officials and coaches have escalated phenomenally over the last two decades and it is not uncommon for individuals to be putting in 20 or more hours a week on a voluntary basis. Added to that is the cost in financial terms which can be as high as £1500 per year to coaches in phone bills, transporting themselves and their charges all over the map, and countless other little incidentals. It is not surmising that the sport is largely being run by the retired and relatively affluent. Small clubs frequently rely entirely on such individuals whose demise usually heralds that of the club as well.

The larger club enjoys the following benefits:

- It increases its catchment area and thus the possibility of recruiting athletes.
- It provides a structure for a comprehensive programme of competition.
- It is likely to be more attractive to coaches and officials who can share the responsibility.
- It enables a club to secure a better and more efficient administrative and financial structure.
- It creates a climate of confidence and success.

With such apparent benefits why is it then that there is still a reluctance to merge? Basically this is because of 'tradition'. It is extremely difficult to shift thinking that is buried in past glories. Try a merger and the two biggest problems to be faced have nothing to do with the concept itself but the name of the new club and the colour of its vest! While this is to some degree understandable, given the long and honourable traditions of club activity, it is hardly the basis for taking the sport into the next millennium.

Modern competitive club athletics has to 'professionalise' itself to survive. There are so many attractive alternatives to a younger generation that the local club has not only to recruit but maintain a very high level of coaching and administration. Fragmentation into unsustainable units is, quite simply, not the way to proceed. Almost every week there are examples of successful mergers. The sport is getting the message, albeit slowly. Athletics is reorganising itself from the bottom up, and over the next decade some very successful clubs and partnership projects will emerge. Sadly the top echelons of the sport is still struggling to put its own house in order and we can expect little help from that direction. I am convinced that it will be at regional level that the reorganisation and resurgence will take place. Perhaps the North will take the lead in promoting more rational club structures? (cont. page 5)

Although we operate with a somewhat clumsy title, LPS (it's easier to say it that way!) has made remarkable progress in a very short time. In particular we have been able to maximise our presence at the new Ormskirk track, invade the local schools and recruit at a healthy rate. We are able to share out responsibilities. It is significant that those who feared a Pembroke take-over of the Sefton club now have to eat their words as the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the latter now occupy those posts. Above all else we have grown in confidence as success is achieved at all levels. Parents of new members occasionally ask questions about our title and history and it is gratifying to explain to them the traditions of both former clubs which, I believe, still permeates the new set up. However, for most, it is irrelevant. What counts is the joy and enthusiasm of their offspring. Quite rightly they have little time for reminiscences.

It would be easy to congratulate ourselves on a highly successful venture but the impetus must be sustained. There are a great many other things we must do if we are to transform ourselves into a contemporary club. Perhaps the two former secretaries should take another walk around Croxteth Park during a cross country race on a bitter winter day!

Charles Gains is the Development Officer of Liverpool Pembroke & Sefton H & AC

**Mandale Harriers Niterace Series '98/99**

Pos	Name	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Pts. Total
1	B.Roberts	49	45	44	10	45	0	177
2	M.Garratt	45	42	42	45	40	39	174
3	R.Bailey	44	41	45	0	39	38	169
=4	R.Mitchell	32	44	0	44	49	37	168
=4	B.McDonald	0	40	41	42	0	45	168
6	M.Edwards	42	0	43	38	41	35	164
7	I.Hodgson	0	39	0	43	44	36	162
8	A.Parry	40	43	0	38	37	0	158
9	A.Laing	0	39	0	41	42	34	156
10	T.Ellerton	0	34	37	14	36	32	153
11	S.Hutchinson	39	36	40	0	0	32	147
12	T.Symonds	0	37	40	0	9	32	118
13	P.Garton	42	0	0	24	0	33	99
14	R.Clark	0	0	0	41	38	0	79
15	N.Dyson	31	0	38	0	0	0	69
16	B.O'Rourke	0	0	0	23	35	0	58
17	P.Conner	39	0	0	0	0	0	39
18	S.Jarret	0	0	0	39	0	0	39
19	S.Steele	0	35	0	0	0	0	35
20	R.Stevenson	0	0	0	23	0	0	23
21	C.Woodall	0	0	0	21	0	0	21
22	Larry	0	0	0	21	0	0	21
23	A.Leon	20	0	0	0	0	0	20
<b>Rules: Best 4 results of 6 Races to count</b>								

## Mandale Harriers Niterace Series winter '98/99

Winter '98/99 proved to be one of the worst for several year's but still failed to discourage Mandale's fell/orienteering section from competing in another successful winter Niterace series. Despite some harsh weather conditions there were several good turn outs during the series, in fact it seemed the worse the weather was the more people turned out! Once again I'd like to thank all those who helped organise races, put out or collected in controls and of course all who took part in the races.

Brian Roberts was this winter's series Champion with 177 points out of a possible 180 in his four best races. Well done Brian!

Second, a further three points behind with 174 points was last year's Champ Mick Garratt.

Third, six points behind Mick with 169 points was Rob Bailey, one point ahead of Bob Mitchell and Barry McDonald who tied for fourth place.

Again we tried to go for a different course designer for each event and once again it brought fresh ideas to course planning.

One noticeable change was that all events used coloured map prints with controls pre-marked to help minimise location errors. I hope no-one from the O.S. is reading this!

The first two races were set by myself based at Gulsborough Rugby club and in general went quite smoothly for a change.

Andy Laing set the third race, which was also set on Gulsborough moors and again went well.

By race four the weather started to play it's part with heavy snowfalls on Carlton moor top for Rob Bailey's event.

Despite the weather the extra challenge of trying to navigate away from Gulsborough attracted the largest field of the series.

Rob set out three short courses, which were randomly distributed among competitors minimising people just following each other using their snow prints.

This novel idea proved very popular and is worth doing more often.

Race five back at Gulsborough was Barry McDonald's turn but again it was hijacked by the weather, snowing heavily after Barry had put all the controls out.

Most people went to where the controls should have been but may not have actually found them all. The benefit of doubt was generously handed out that night!

Because of weekend commitments at the "Ozzy Oik" race, my plan of setting the course out for the final event had to wait till the race night. Only for me to come down with the flu.

So it was left to Dave Parry with the help of Lenny Small to belatedly set out the course only hours before the start.

Heavy rainfalls during the days prior left dangerously high levels of water on the moor tops. With this in mind the course was set out away from "known" streams

Unfortunately in the rush to set out the course one control was incorrectly placed by at least 200 metres to the east of the map position.

Despite this two people still stumbled onto it! So no change there then. But for once it wasn't my fault, honest!

So to next winter's "Millenium" Niterace series. Again I'd like to ask for volunteer course designers to contact me as soon as possible.

The provisional dates, venues and course designers are:-

1. 2nd Nov, at Gulsborough Rugby Club  
(B.O'Rourke)

2. 23rd Nov, at Sheepwash car park  
Grid ref: 469 993 (B.McDonald)

3. 7th Dec, at Gribdale car park  
Grid ref: 594 110 (R.Balley)

4. 11th Jan, at Gulsborough Rugby Club

5. 8th Feb, at Gulsborough Rugby Club

6. 9-Mar, at Gulsborough Rugby Club

Usual rules & format. Any changes to be announced at the first event.

Bref O'Rourke Tel: 01642 278577

ARMCHAIR ATHLETICS - by Mike Starford.

Why armchair athletics? Well those who know me know that I am frustrated at not being able to sit on and working off a few calories, but at present it is not advisable.

I do not want to write about the reasons since my report would be of an interim nature, but parts of my nervous system to behave the rest of me is in reasonable "nick". In the meantime to discover a change in fortune career wise and dormant interests of a non-athletics nature to be exercised.

When I watch athletics now it is with a slight detachment, but having been involved for many years I can see how we get into difficulties and why we don't often get out of them. If you look at other clubs magazines from the late 60's early 70's you would realise that the frustrations of club managers were invented with the "ark"

In this first article I will point out that by default I have become the child protection officer for the club. This is a subject moving through the whole of sport, starting with swimming, and second.

There are many unanswered questions which it is instructive to contemplate. For instance:

- Should a club licence its coaches?
- Should new applicants consent to third party references?
- When does exhorting an athlete to higher effort become abuse?
- How does an official spot a young person abused away from athletics?
- We tend to think of abuse in terms of gender and drugs, but how many other forms are there?

In a club like Mandale it is heartening when people call us the friendly club. In general there is a light hearted trust that exists between most of the members such that it would seem almost inappropriate to look for child abuse issues. Yet, if anyone wishes to discuss an individual case a bush telegraph is the last thing you want.

I would, therefore, offer an in confidence open minded hearing to anyone who needs it.

One of the interesting points that arose on the second Child Protection awareness course was whether the exploitation of very young athletes in competition is a form of abuse. It could be in extreme cases if the young person is the instrument of unfulfilled ambition by another party. It is cited that in another sport the question was seriously asked as to why Bunny's never made great seniors. Swimming has apparently banned all competition for the under 11's.

Next issue I will try and be less serious and return to my tongue in cheek style. For instance shouldn't we ban certain countries like Kenya from international competition. It is clearly seen when they use international races as group runs and do not allow all but a few other athletes to compete. They should only return to competition when they undertake to drop all their children at school, make sure every family has a television and every child eats at least 3000 calories a day. Then sort them out a bit. The only other way I can see is to send across a few BAF officials to organise every village into a club then inaugurate inter club leagues in every age group so that they have something to run in what they want to.

But maybe they would produce shot putters and discus throwers!

*Opening of new athletics track at Forez*

Mike Starford

April 1999 saw a new honour for Mandale HAC. They were to be guests of honour at the opening ceremony of the new track at Andrezieux-Boutheon. Our intrepid party were Chris Tomlinson, Elaine Smith, Dan Angus and Caroline Gray. Accompanying the party were Mike and Marilyn Starford and Roy Bradley.

The highlight of the trip must be the hospitality of Forez and the party for our athletes went well into the final night. Although it was very cold that week, the sun shone on the opening ceremony. This was a typical French affair with young people around the track and hundreds of balloons. There followed a very full athletics programme with the crowds wandering around the arena (inside and outside) to follow the events - and the javelins!

Chris and Elaine were made celebrities, much to their embarrassment at first, but then they relaxed and revelled in the part. Chris did exhibition triple jumps which created gasps from the crowds around the runway and it looked like he would jump beyond the pit and into the crowd. Elaine performed similar exhibition long jumps and particularly captured the hearts of the male spectators.

Both Dan and Caroline opened their seasons accounts with fine performances albeit at their less preferred 200m distance. A novelty for them would be to satisfy the hordes of autograph hunters. Meanwhile in the sports hall, Mike bravely made a short speech on behalf of the guests in the formal ceremony - 'petit mots' the programme said. Even if it was not in textbook French it meant a day of high excitement.

Roy was no less prominent by being pragmatic and organising the exhibition jump areas. He exercised his French to the public address system at the 'let's interview the guests' interlude.

Ann Bouquin is perhaps Forez's best athlete. She won an event not seen in Britain which might be called 'devil take the hindmost'. It consists of 300m runs with a walk across and at every finish the last runner drops out. Ann outkicked more fancied opposition on the final straight when there was only the two athletes left. This is a good event for learning pace judgement and tactics.

The general impression as that the French had a more relaxed way of organising things. Mike's host Pierre was voted character of the event for his sense of humour. Where else would you be photographed and featured in the press for visiting an Art Exhibition?

The four days went far too quickly and all that was visible on the TGV trains was the tops of heads laid out asleep on the tables.

## STADE D'ATHLÉTISME

10 04 99

**Inauguration au pas de course**

La délégation anglaise a été accueillie par le président Grange

Le parc des sports des Bul-lieux sera en effervescence au-jour d'hui avec l'inauguration du stade d'athlétisme. Quelque 200 participants pour le trophée Oran-gina lanceront les débats. Plus d'une centaine d'athlètes parti-ciperont ensuite aux différentes épreuves et il y aura du beau monde.

L'ASPTT Grenoble présentera ses sauteurs à la perche alors que le club lyonnais du Lou dépê-chera ses spécialistes du sprint. Il est à noter également la pré-sence d'Olivia Abderhaman, championne de France du 400 m haies et qui a terminé sixième aux championnats du monde. Une délégation anglaise sera la grande curiosité de cette mani-festation.

Le Mandale Harriers Athlè-tic Club, jumelé avec le FAC, pré-sentera des athlètes en deveni-ant avec notamment Christophe Tomlinson, champion de Grande Bretagne de saut en longueur et salle avec 7,44 m. Le magnifi-que stade méritait une belle affi-che pour sa mise en service officielle c'est chose faite.

**Le programme.**- De 14 heures à 17 h 30, challenge Orangina réservé aux benjamini-ets et minimes ; de 17 h 30 à 18 h 30 inauguration du stade en pré-sence de nombreux officiels du monde politique, du sport et de l'athlétisme et lâcher de ballons ; de 18 h 30 à 20 h 30, meeting d'inauguration réservé aux caté-gories de cadets à seniors, mas-culins et féminins.