

PART TWELVE

Starting 1978 the club was now flourishing in many ways. Membership was at a high, around 250, places in all competitions were now hotly contested by all athletes. Also a range of cups and shields were being donated by local business and individuals, and it was not long before there were enough to cover all of our club championships events. It was proposed at a committee meeting we should try and get a top personality from the sporting world to present the awards at our presentation night. For sometime now we had been pressing the council for a permanent headquarters. It so happened at the time the golf club at Walmer Road were moving to a new golf course being built in Carlton Colville, which today is known as Rookery Park. Added to that, the council had been asked to put on the Mini-Olympics by Mencap for July of next year. It meant they would need a vast area of green land to put such an event on. It was Brian Soloman, the council's Sports and Leisure Development Officer, who came up with the suggestion to develop the old golf course for the games, and once the Mini-Olympics were over, ourselves, Kirkly Football Club and Kirkly Cricket Club would share the new premises. The news was met with great enthusiasm by everyone in the club. A place of our own would be the icing on the cake. We were of course very grateful to Roman Hill Middle School for allowing us to use Barnards Meadow for the past few years, but Mr Whitlow, the headmaster, said if we wanted, we could still use Barnards Meadow on a Sunday morning and use of the school's gymnasium once a week during the winter months, His generous offer was gratefully accepted. Unfortunately I could not find any 'Journal' reports for the early part of '78. All I can say is, we once again were well represented in the All-England Schools cross-country this particular year. However, I did have better luck when it came to track and field. In the early part of May athletes from the club took part in the Suffolk AAA championships at Bury St Edmunds on the cinder track. Lowestoft members took no less than 13 of the titles up for grabs and set two new records. Four became double champions. Gary High won the senior mens 800m and 1500m in great style, while Colin Cooper took the 100m title and followed up by winning the long jump in a leap of 6m-69cm. Simon Briggs, the club's most promising and consistent field eventer, took the boys' shot and discus titles with personal best performances and shattered the discus re-

-cord by four metres. CHRIS Dinsdale broke the record he set last year in the junior mens discus and then went on to take the senior mens discus as well. Gary Knights won the 1500m for junior men in 4-09.9 and Colin Hood won the senior mens 400m title. In the 2000 metres steeplechase for junior men, Kevin Gook winning with ease in 6-42.4. Young sprinter Colin Robertson won the boys' 100m in a excellent time of 12.6seconds. To prove it was not a men's only day, Nicola Sutton won the junior ladies 100m in 13.9 seconds. In '78 I decided to take my timekeepers exam. Since the club had joined the leagues, both on track and cross-country, it was down to the club to provide officials, qualified or not. At the same time Fred Farmer became qualified as a field judge. I took my practical exam in the March, followed by the theory a few weeks later, which I am pleased to say I passed both with flying colours. One of our Southern Mens' fixtures took place at Watford in June. Competing clubs were Hertford (hosts), West Suffolk, Luton, Cambridge & Coleridge and ourselves. In the overcast and damp conditions, some very good performances were put in by Colin Hood. He knocked off five seconds from the 400m to finish in second place recording 60.4 secs, and followed with personal bests in the 100m and 200m. Bill Kingaby continued to improve on his 5000m time when he finished in fourth place in a best time of 17-21.0. In the A string of the 800m, Simon McMorran ran a personal best of 2.10.1 and Paul Gee clocked 4.07.9 in the 1500m.

Six members this year from the club were selected to represent Suffolk at Peterborough in the annual Hibbard Trophy event against Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. For the second year in succession, Suffolk retained the trophy in both seniors' and youths' groups. One of the best senior runners in Suffolk over 5000m is undoubtedly Brian Tate and he proved this yet again at Peterborough, when he came in first against a strong field. His time in the very windy but warm weather was no record breaker at 15-57.0, but he was nevertheless well clear of the field. In third place was Robert Cheverton who finished in a time of 16.24.6. Gary High had been selected for the 3000m steeplechase and was up against some fierce opposition with former international runner Roger Bean winning in 9-46.4 with Ray Church second in 9-54.8 and Gary third in a time of 10-12.0. John Neeve, lowestoft's number one over 800m, had to be contented with third place in a race where all first three runners finished in under two minutes, John recording 1-59.7.

Once again Chris Dinsdale upheld his good form to literally walk away with both the shot (15m-23cm) event and the discus, with a record 44m-02cm throw. In the senior ladies Cathy Welsh ran a good 100m hurdles to take first place timed at 17.3secs, and in the long jump equalled her personal best by jumping 5m-33cm for second place.

In the middle of August the annual trophy meeting took place at Yarmouth. Picking out the best performances from our athletes, Ian Parker won the high jump with a jump of 1m-60cm, Cathy Welsh was first in the long jump (5m-17cm) and Chris Dinsdale winning the shot (14-56cm).

The last track events involving the club championships took place at the end of August at Barnards Meadow. There was 200m races for all age groups, 3000m for boys and youths and 5000m for junior and senior men. It was a very dull evening and just as the racing got under way the rain started. The wet weather continued throughout the evening and by the end of the last race all the athletes and spectators alike were a wet and bedraggled lot. However, these conditions did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm and the thrill of competition amongst all the competitors. Here is a list of the winners and their performances.

200m

Girls u/13	Lynne Chipperfield	30.0secs
Boys u/13	Simon Berry	31.5secs
Jun. Ladies	Liz Westgate	29.8secs
Boys u/15	Kevin Peak	28.3secs
Youths	Nick Chumbley	29.5secs
Sen. Ladies	Cathy Welsh	28.7secs
Jun/Sen. Men	Richard Strong	24.5secs

3000m

Boys u/15	Mark Gee	9-31.1
Youths	Colin Quadling	9-11.0

5000m

Sen. Men	Robert Cheverton	15-12.8
----------	------------------	---------

Something I must mention before it goes from my mind. There had been a change to the design of our club vest. Since joining the leagues, we had heard comments about the current design. One comment from a certain quarter was they thought the yellow circle on the back reminded them of a fried egg, which did not go down well with club members. So at the AGM of '77, it was proposed and agreed that we would do away with the yellow circle and replace it instead with two yellow bands (or hoops). At the same time the

club committee organised a competition open to all members to design a club badge. A few designs were put forward, eventually 16-years-old Gary Knights was chosen, winning him a prize. It was a spiked shoe with a yellow background incorporating the words 'LOWESTOFT ATHLETIC CLUB'.

A couple of weeks before Christmas of '78, we held our annual handicap cross-country event at Gunton Park. A total of 61 runners took part representing a complete cross-section of club members. All age groups joined in-colts, boys, girls youths, juniors and seniors-and a very strong contingent of parents, some of whom had never run a cross-country race before. Mothers had a twelve minute start over the 2½ mile course, with other groups leaving at intervals. Last to go were scratch runners Brian Tate and Colin Quadling. First home was parent Brian Jeffries, sadly not with us today, with the rest of the field strung out over several minutes. Most of the competitors arrived back unscathed despite the soft, wet, slimy, treacherous conditions, although one mum took a full-length dip in a puddle of a nameless brown substance and was carefully avoided until she emerged from a hot tub.

Others badly in need of hot, soapy water were the last bunch to finish, mainly youths and juniors, who arrived at the line in a quite unrecognisable state, numbers, face and figures obscured by mud (and worse). The latter part of the race had become a mud-bath for this group, who thoroughly enjoyed ambushing anyone in the vicinity-even the coaches did not escape their attention entirely. In the December 15th edition of the 'Lowestoft Journal' the headline read: GOOD 'CLEAN' FUN FOR MUDLARKS.

To end '78 Kevin Gook (youth) and Julie Grooms (junior ladies) both won their respective races to become Suffolk champions over the country.

.....

PART THIRTEEN

The arrival of '79 herald a busy year ahead for the club in many ways. We had been asked by Mencap and the council to organize the programme for the forthcoming Mini-Olympics. It meant getting as many qualified officials from the area as possible. This task was left to me. Also I would have the job of preparing the programme for the four day event.

There was plenty of work for the present committee in the coming weeks and months regarding our move to Walmer Road after the completion of the games. However, it was met with great enthusiasm knowing we would have our own headquarters for many years to come.

The rest of the winter cross-country season of '79 went well, with many good performances from our athletes. Once again we had a good contingent of both boys and girls representing Suffolk at the All-England schools and at county level over the country. The track season now upon, it would be the year Chris Dinsdale would come to the fore, gaining his international call-up to compete in the discus for Great Britain. I have only two reports to hand from the 'Journal' for this particular year. *HERE IS A* shortened version of the 'Jubilee Trophy' meeting held at Denes High School on Sunday June 22nd.

'There was a record entry of over 300 athletes from far away as Chelmsford, Ipswich, Berkhamsted, Northampton, Charnwood and MEDWAY, as well as local clubs competitors. Clare Watson had a good win in the u/13 girls 100m, clocking 14.5secs. In the u/13 girls 200m, Greer Atkinson won her heat in 30.6secs and although improving her time in the final (30.5secs), she had to be contented with second place. Ray Corley was a decisive winner in the youths 200m in a fast time of 24.8secs. 15 runners lined up for the start of the 5000m, and with the intermittent rain, it proved a real test of endurance over the 12½ laps. Brian Tate and Colin Quadling were the undisputed leading two runners. For the first half of the race Robert Cheverton was content to lay well back, but as the race progressed he began to overhaul several runners. On the last bend from home Quadling seemed to suddenly change gear and accelerated past Tate to finish first in a time of 15-32.0. Tate was well clear in second place at 15-38.6, with Cheverton putting in a strong sprint to take a good third place in 16-03.6. IN the youths 3000m Mark Haylett took third place in a creditable time of 9-43. The intermediate ladies shot and discus events were a battle between Gillian Farmer and UK record holder Susan King of Ipswich.

Gillian produced a magnificent personal best throw of 31m-12cm to win the discus, and Susan with 11m-51cm took the shot competition. Highlights of the mens' field events was the competition attracted by the club's international, Chris Dinsdale. There was some top class putting from Andy Vince of Chelmsford, who has this year moved into the senior age group. Vince has represented Great Britain on many occasions during the past three years, and enjoyed his clash with Dinsdale and also Ian Washington who had travelled from Rotherham to compete. Although Andy Vince won the shot event, he had to be satisfied with second place to Dinsdale in the discus. Chris, still a junior man, improved on his own personal best performance of the day with a throw of 46m-90m. Other winners in the field were: Mark Beatty in the boys' javelin and Andrew Dinsdale who achieved a personal best in the youths' discus event to take the trophy with a throw of 35m-22cm.

At the English Schools championships held in Nottingham in July, Chris Dinsdale was victorious in the senior boys' discus event but missed breaking the record by less than an inch, which was a big disappointment to him and his coach, Fred Farmer. Chris's winning throw of 48m-82cm was still just short of gaining a place in the European Junior Championships in a few weeks time.

Of the other Lowestoft A.C members who competed at the Nationals, Mark Beatty literally rose to the occasion in the junior boys' pole vault and achieved a remarkable personal performance of 3m-20cm and finished in fourth position. Andrew Dinsdale, intermediate boys' javelin, Gillian Farmer, intermediate girls' shot, and Cathy Welsh, senior girls' long jump, completed Lowestoft's contribution to the Suffolk team but did not make their individual finals.

The same week-end of the English Schools saw us hosting a match against our friends from across the border, Norfolk and Norwich A.C. We were depleted in the field events as our best jumpers and throwers were competing at Nottingham. It was good to see the track runners having a go at the highly technical discus and javelin competitions. Sally Jeffries recorded a personal best in the senior ladies' discus. Sally was, however, beaten into second place by Nicola Springall, while the event was won by Lesley Farmer. Lesley also won the shot, which came as no surprise since she was the only experienced thrower in the Lowestoft team. Paul Quested and his younger sister, Sharon, tackled the javelin and discus events, showing with a little more coaching, they would become useful throwing members in

the Eastern Young Athletes League.

It was time now for the Mini-Olympics. Held in early July, we now would see the fruits of our labours leading up to the games. I had managed to get the best officials from both Norfolk and Suffolk, amongst them, Frank Evans, starter and Fred Barwick, timekeeper. The programme had been a bit of a nightmare having to sort out heats in most events, with not much form to go on. The competitors came from all over Britain. Going by memory, I think there were about three hundred in all. I had to take a weeks holiday from work, but it was well worth the SACRIFICE. There was to be an official opening of the new complex by Brian Rix, President of Mencap, well known as a top comedy actor, his farces at the Whitehall THEATRE IN London, renowned all over the world. The first day of competition consisted all of heats lasting well over four hours, events on the track from 100 metres upwards to 1500metres. On the field there was long jump, high jump, discus, javelin and shot. I must say the friendly attitude shown by the competitors was to be admired. It certainly opened our eyes to what these people could achieve despite their disabilities. The whole week turned out a great success, well appreciated by Jim Thomas, head of the Games.

Another achievement of '79 was seventeen-year-old Gary Knights, who travelled to CRYSTAL PALACE to compete in the SOUTHERN Championships youths 1500m. He qualified for the final on the Saturday with a time of 4-06.0 in the heat, and on the Sunday ran a personal best of 4-00.6 to finish fourth in the final. Obviously he was disappointed missing out on a medal and not breaking the four minute barrier, but even so it was a fine performance by the youngster against strong opposition.

We had now moved into Walmer Road and there was an influx of new members. The new premises had male and female changing rooms, a canteen area and a large hall which could seat well over a hundred. Earlier in May at a committee meeting, it was decided to try and get a top athlete to our presentation night in November. A couple of months later we were thrilled to hear that David Bedford, one of our top stars, had accepted our invitation. So on a Friday night in November in front of a packed audience David Bedford presented medals, cups and trophies to the winning athletes, to be followed by a 'Question & Answer' session, finishing up with the many photographs and autographs the youngsters were eager to obtain from our special guest. It was certainly a night to remember. Many old members speak about IT EVEN TO THIS DAY.

The start of the 80's saw Lowestoft A.C at the top of their game. Regrettably I have very limited information at hand for both '80 and '81, so I shall combine both years and the rest will be mainly from my own memory. However, I did manage to find a 'Journal' report from 1980 when the Southern Mens' League team won promotion from division five to four. Here is the full report from the 'Journal' of the 26th September 1980.

'After narrowly missing promotion in 1979, Lowestoft's mens' athletic team were determined to make it this year. Although 18 members took part during the season, it was never possible to field a full team, and the athletes concerned turned their hand to a variety of track and field events in order to score valuable points.

Team captain Gary High has urged his team to success, and after a vital final meeting at Basildon they made sure of promotion to Division 4 of the Southern Mens' League.

GARY HIGH—a popular team captain, he has had considerable success during the track season. He is Suffolk champion over 800m and 1500m, club champion over 400m and 800m, and winner of the Scores race. He has been prepared to tackle just about any event at league meetings and at Chelmsford scored seven firsts (high jump, 400m hurdles, 400m, 800m, 1500m, javelin and the relay).

ROBERT CHEVERTON—club 5000m and 10,000m champion. Robert prefers the longer races, but is willing to fill in with some field events when required. Scored three firsts and two seconds at 5000m, and a first and two seconds at 1500m over the five league matches.

COLIN COOPER—formerly of Cambridge & Colridge, he has made an impression in his first season with the club and proved a great asset in sprints and jumps. He is Suffolk champion at 100m and long jump, and club champion at 100m, triple jump, long jump and javelin. He scored five firsts at Chelmsford.

NICK CHUMBLEY—a sprinter who has made a welcome return to the club after a break.

GARY KNIGHTS—junior man, Suffolk and club champion over 1500 metres, and he had a fine win in the Wade mile race in the Jubilee meeting. He ran 400m, 800m, 1500m and 5000m races at the league meetings.

DAVID WRAITH—is one of the club's sprint coaches. He had a leg injury during the summer, but was willing to do shot and discus when the field eventers were not available. At the final league match he ran 100m, 200m and did the triple jump.

PAUL GEE—supported his team well, and showed great versatility at the meetings, covering 3000m steeplechase, 800m, 400m, 110m hur-

-dles and the pole vault.

DAVID GEE-followed his brother's example in a willingness to tack a variety of events(3000m steeplechase,400m,800m,pole vault and javelin.

COLIN HOOD-Colin ran 800m and 5000m races at league meetings,and has steadily improved his times during the season;a good club competitor. He is Suffolk 400m champion.

NIGEL SAUNDERS-the club's only hurdle specialist,he scored good points over 110m and 400m distance.

TIM BINGHAM-he favours long and triple jump,but ran 100m,200m and 400m,when required.

CHRIS DINSDALE-junior international and Suffolk discus champion, participates in all the throwing events,shot,discus,hammer and javelin. He has been offered a scholarship at University of Nevada and the club wishes him a bright future.

ANDREW DINSDALE-a valuable field eventer,scoring firsts and seconds in his four events(javelin,shot,discus and hammer).

KEVIN GOOK-he has had much success in his first year as a junior man. He won the Suffolk Championship for the 2000m steeplechase, and ran 3000m steeplechase and 5000m at league meetings.

BUTCH HEMBLING-competed in the last meeting in Basildon,and he scored two thirds in the hammer and javelin.

PAUL QUESTED-did well in his first year as a youth,and only missed one meeting. He moved to sprints from the middle-distance group this year,and has made his mark at shorter events. He is club champion at 100m,800m,triple jump,long jump and javelin.

CLIVE HUMPHRIES-club champion in the youths'400m and ran 400m at two league meetings.

SHAUN GOOCH-another youth,new to the club during the season. Shaun ran a 200m for the team at Havering,and gained further track experience with the Eastern Young Athletes League. There were 25 teams in the division and the two promoted teams were Basildon(30pts) and Lowestoft(28pts) with Havant third(25pts).

In the January of '81,John High,our social secretary,suggested the club should have a athletic holiday in the Dolby Forest in Yorkshire. Us on the committee thought it was a good idea,so it was left to John to organize the trip for the coming track season. The response from athletes and parents was favourable, enough to hire a 29 seater coach for the week. In all there were ten adults and eighteen athletes ranging from eleven years upwards. I cannot be sure from memory whether it was June

or July when we left Lowestoft in one of Shreeve's coaches. Our driver for the week was Colin Gayfer, who we all knew very well from our many trips in the past to meetings up and down the country. We already knew we would be staying in log cabins, and it caused much excitement amongst the younger athletes. The cabins could accommodate up to six persons, with a kitchen for self-catering and bunk beds to sleep in.

Once I had known the trip was definitely on, I had made contact with Rowntrees Athletic Club of York to fix a meeting with them. They were only too pleased to accommodate us, and a date and time was agreed.

The first morning I think was a shock to all of us. Waking up to the sound of birds singing their heads off was something us 'town folk' were not used to. However, the scenery and wildlife was out of this world, something I shall never forget.

I must say our young athletes were keen, Each morning before breakfast they would go for a training run through the forest. On the Wednesday, we had a trip into York, visiting places of historical interest and finishing up at the Steam Museum. The meeting between ourselves and Rowntree's was scheduled for the Wednesday evening, but due to heavy rain the whole of the sports field was under water, including the track. However, our hosts made us very welcome entertaining us in their club house. During the course of the evening both clubs exchanged various momentos to mark the occasion.

On the last day of the holiday, we had a meal at a local restaurant being entertained by Colin Gayfer, our coach driver, who surprised us all with his rendering of western classics.

.....