

THE TORCHBEARER

NEWSLETTER 37.

"56er's Torchbearers Club Inc"

PO Box 2148, CAIRNS Q 4870

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PRESIDENTS COMMENTS

Hi Members and Partners,

I am happy to report our sponsored 1500 metre event at the Nth Qld Games in Mackay was well contested and won by Cameron Clayton in smart time. Vice President Dennis Stevenson was on hand to present the winning spoils.

On a sad note, we express our deepest sympathy to Con Verevis our past President for the sad loss of his partner of many years, Joyce.

I recently had the pleasure of a chat over coffee with 56's torchbearer Ralph Schubert and his good wife Lillian now residing in Sydney. Ralph ran his mile in the Gladstone area and like most former torchbearers had an interesting story to tell.

Should out of town members be contemplating a holiday to Cairns, I would suggest early June to coincide with the international Iron Man Triathlon which is a great spectacle and draws athletes from across the globe.

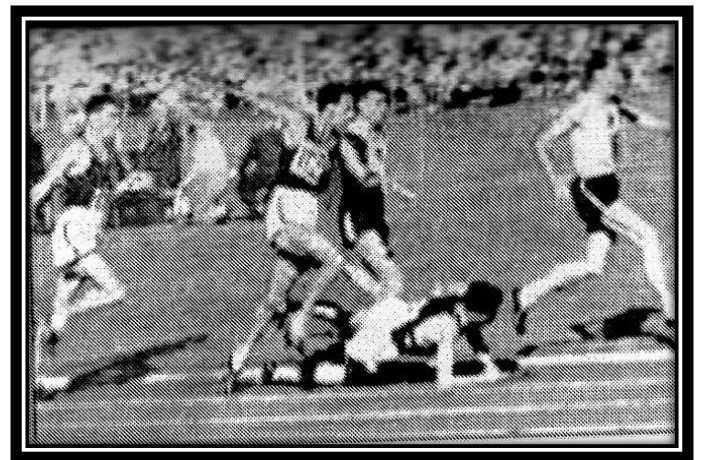


Visiting 56's Torchbearer Ralph Schubert & wife Lillian from Sydney at Cairns Esplanade monument with president Jim Vallely.

Jim Vallely
President

JOHN LANDY'S VALEROUS ACTION.

In the final of the 1956 Australian championship 1500 metre race Ron Clarke the then junior 1500 metre world champion was leading the race when another runner clipped his heel causing him to fall early in the third lap. Landy stopped doubled back to check on Clarke, helped him back to his feet and he started running again; Landy followed and incredibly during the last laps made up the deficit to win the race. This was considered as one of the greatest moments in Australian sporting history. It was one of the greatest spontaneous gestures of sportsmanship and it will never be forgotten. A statue of the action is located on the lawns adjacent to Olympic Park on Olympic Boulevard Melbourne.



The World Junior Champion Ron Clarke on the ground having been clipped by some one else in the 1956 Australian Championships. The runner preparing to hurdle Clarke looks to be Landy himself.

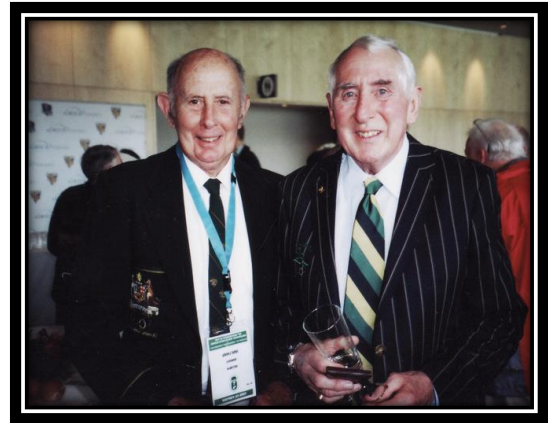
Accomplishments of John Landy.

John Landy is well known to 56'ers in regard to his running ability but little is probably known about his other champion pursuits in the Australian context. I hope the following bridges that gap and brings a better understanding of this great Australian.

During his school years Landy enjoyed watching 1500 track events and became a serious runner during his college years when he joined the Geelong Guild Athletics Club.

- He was a member of the Australian Olympic team at both the 1952 Helsinki and 1956 Melbourne Olympics.
- He was the second man to achieve a sub four minute mile. A record that held for more than three years.
- Landy was placed second to Bannister in the 'The Miracle Mile' at the Vancouver Empire Games.
- An avid naturalist Landy is the author of two books on natural history
- He was Commissioner-General for the Australian exhibit at Expo 92.
- He was appointed the chairman of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal fund Advisory Panel for seven months.
- He was made Member of the Order of British Empire in 1955 for services to sport.
- In 2000 and 2001 he was awarded the Australian sports medal and the Centenary medals.
- Also in 2001 he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia.
- He was appointed a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.
- He has been awarded a number of honorary degrees such as Doctor of Laws from the University of Victoria, Melbourne and Deakin Universities and a Doctor of Rural Science from New England University.
- He is a life member of the Geelong Guild Athletics Club.
- Landy married his wife Lynne in 1971 and they have two children Matthew and Alison.
- Landy was appointed the 26th Governor of Victoria on the 1ST January 2001 and held the position until 7th April 2006.

A truly wonderful Australian.



John Landy with Ron Delaney the winner of the 1500 metre event in Melbourne in 1956 pictured in 2006 at the MCG. (picture taken by Bill O'Neill)

56'ers CORNER

We 56'ers are a bunch of rugged individualists. No doubt there are hundreds of wonderful experiences waiting to be told. One experience that involves one of us relates to a missing goat. My wife Lyn's family owned a large piece of Bramston Beach on the coast between Innisfail and Babinda in FNQ. The family journeyed down to Bramston just about every week-end. Lyn's dad had a large herd of goats and goat meat was on the menu every week - end.

At one of the 56'ers functions held at Cazalys in 1999, each member in turn was asked to stand up, introduce them selves and present a short life history. One member Bill Schafer who ran the torch thirteen miles South of Tully presented his story mentioning his father Les Schafer. I said to my wife I knew a Les Schafer as a man who was involved with athletics promotion in Tully. My wife said yes I knew Schafers at Bramston. Following the dinner we both approached Bill to clarify his history. Sure enough he was the son of Les and recognized my wife as a one -time co-inhabitant of Bramston Beach. Tales were exchanged and we then all departed for our homes. Some considerable time later Lyn received this rather large envelope from the Daintree containing a collection of poems, some cassowary photos and a letter from Bill. The letter contained a huge apology from Bill for shooting and eating one of the

Mcdonald goats on one occasion when the Schafers were flood bound and had run out of food. The occasion was 55 to 60 years ago. The Mcdonalds I think never missed that goat. Who said 56'ers were not honest? *Albeit* a little late.

As well as his former athletic ability Bill is an accomplished bush poet.

VERN'S PHOTO REFLECTIONS.

Ballarat.

56'ers will probably recall the rowing events at the Melbourne Olympics and Lake Wendourie the beautiful body of water with glorious single sculls and eights being fleetingly sculled on its surface.



The eights lined up for a start on Lake Wendourie for the Melbourne Olympics rowing events (*picture borrowed from the book 'The Olympic Games-Melbourne 1956'*)

During the fiftieth anniversary of the games we all visited Ballarat during the celebrations and were amazed that the lake was empty of water because of drought in Victoria.



Lake Wendourie in November 2006.

The lake is full once again at the time of this newsletter following significant rainfall and extensive rearrangement of the lake bottom during the drought. The emptiness of the lake did not deter the magnificence of the on site ceremony during which members of the USA winning eights were introduced.

A photo of some attending 56'ers was also captured fronting the Olympic medal we all know so well. The Olympic symbols are positioned on the shores of Lake Wendourie.

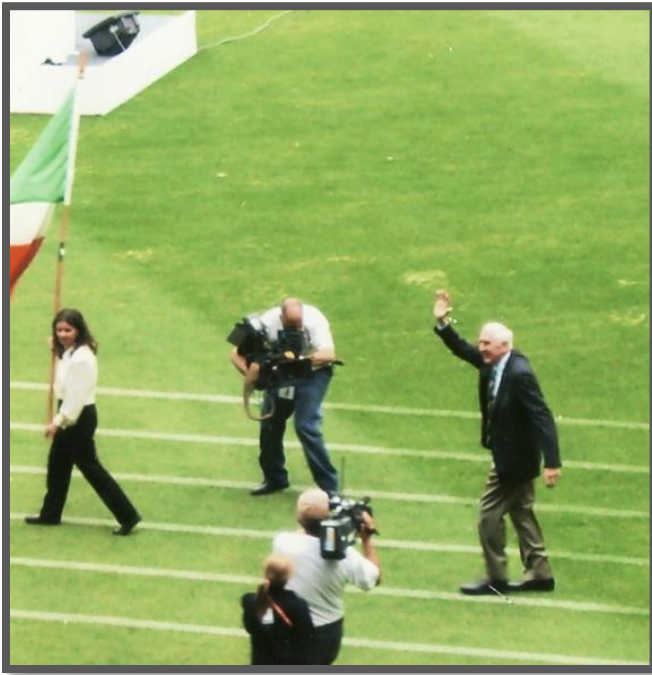


Bill O'Neill (Mirriwinni), John Shepherd (25 miles South of Tully), Bob Chester (sixteen miles south of Cairns) .Keith Barrett (Giru), Dennis Stevenson (Calen).

BACK AT THE MCG in 2006.

Some photos of the ceremony at the MCG have been shown in previous issues but one is quite memorable. The winner of the 1500 metre event was Ron Delaney in the time of 3 minutes 41.2 seconds, (W Richtzenhain, Germany second 3minutes 42 seconds and of course John Landy third 3 minutes 42 seconds). [ever so close to second].

The photo following captures Ron Delaney the sole representative of Ireland waving to the MCG crowd.



(photo taken by Mrs. Tomasich)

A TOUCHING STORY FROM THE NQ GAMES.

My wife and I attended the Townsville NQ Games in 2008 along with other 56'ers to principally assist in the presentation of the prizes to the winners of the 1500 metre event. On the following day we sat in the grand stand and watched the track and field athletic events. The participation by young athletes in what hitherto I thought of as aged events was mind boggling. However one sprint event was very touching. The sprint event was an 80 metre boys event and one competitor was clearly brilliantly winning as the runners grew level with the grandstand. The crowd was applauding the lad loudly and as he passed the grandstand he stopped faced the crowd bowed his thanks and waved. The other runners of course swiftly went passed him and completed the race. The lad started up again and belatedly went through the finishing posts but alas placed last. The crowd erupted into loud clapping for the lad but not as winner of the event. No doubt the lads parents and coach informed him of the need to win the race before applauding the appreciative crowd.

WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THEM.

I would like to present to 56'ers a series on the achievements of past Australian athletes who were prominent at the time of the 1956 Olympics. I would invite 56'ers to suggest participants in this series. Firstly I would start with Tony Blue, Chilla Porter and Norma Fleming-all Queensland athletes.

Dr. Tony Blue.

Tony was a Queensland athlete who competed at the St Lucia athletics track and was the Australian Universities Team half- mile champion for 1958-59. The editor took part in a metric meet at St Lucia in a 100 metre event in 1958 against Bruce Barnett, Ken Donald and Bernie Jacks. Tony Blue took part in the 800 metre event that day. My placing in the 100 metre event is another story but I vividly recall Tony Blue's characteristic running style.

Tony's athletic record is listed below,

- He was a member of the Australian Universities team tour of New Zealand in 1958 and was undefeated
- He was Australian half- mile champion in 1959,1962,1963, and 1964.
- Tony was a semi finalist in the 800 metre events at Rome and Tokyo Olympics in 1960 and 1964.
- He was a bronze medallist in the 880 yard and was placed fourth in the mile events at the Perth Commonwealth Games in 1962.
- He was the Australian record holder for 800 metre and 880 yards for the period 1959 to 1965.
- Tony was captain of the British Empire in the Nigerian Independence Games in 1960 and captain of the Australian Athletics team on a tour of Indonesia in 1962.
- He was vice captain of the Athletic teams for Rome 1960,Perth 1962 and Tokyo 1964
- He was a member of the British Empire 4x 880 yard relay team in White City 1962 with a world record being created.
- Tony was placed first in world record time in the 1977 World Seniors Championships in Gothenberg for the 800 metre event.

A truly champion record.

Charles (Chilla)Porter.

Chilla Porter was a high jumper of world class who made his name as a Queensland (St Lucia) athlete. He was always closely followed by another Queensland high -jumper and hurdler Bill Tree.

Porter was a six- time winner of the Australian high jump championship and won silver medals in the Empire and Commonwealth games in Cardiff in 1958 and Perth in 1962. He was unplaced in the Rome Olympics in 1960.

However Porter is remembered most for his efforts in gaining a silver medal in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, competing against Charles Dumas an athlete from the United States. Dumas was the first man to clear 7 feet.

The Melbourne competition concluded in the gathering gloom in the pre floodlighting of the MCG. Porter and Dumas were the only jumpers to clear 2.10 metres - 6ft 10.75 inches. Dumas won the gold medal by clearing 2.12 metres –6 ft 11.25 inches.



Charles Porter (far left) with Colin Ridgway and John Vernon qualifying for the high jump.



Charles Dumas leaping 6 feet 11.25 inches on his third attempt to win the gold medal. Charles Porter failed by a touch in the vital effort.

Pictures borrowed from the book 'The Olympic Games Melbourne 1956'

Norma Fleming(Croker).

Norma was a member of the winning women's 4x 100 metre relay (along with Betty Cuthbert, Fleur Mellor and Shirley Strickland) in a world record time of 44.5 seconds. Norma also finished fourth in the 200 metres behind Betty Cuthbert, Christa Stubnick (Germany), and Marlene Matthews.

Norma won her gold medal a week before David Thiele won his gold medal in the 100 metre backstroke thus she was the first Queenslander to win an Olympic gold medal.

Norma was a member of the Australian athletics team in the Rome Olympics but unfortunately was eliminated in the preliminary rounds of the 200 metre and the relay and finished fifteenth in the long jump.



Four gold medal champions Fleur Mellor, Norma Croker. Betty Cuthbert, Shirley Strickland. (4x100 metre relay). The picture borrowed from the book 'The Olympic Games Melbourne 1956'

Norma attended a Torchbearers reunion held on the 9th November 1999 where there was a celebration of the anniversary of the arrival of the Olympic flame in November 1956 by air at the old Ansett hanger at the Cairns airport. She proudly displayed her Olympic gold medal. She was present for the launch of the 56'ers Torchbearers Club.

THE 2012 RACQ Insurance GAMES.

President Jim has advised the winner of the 1500 metre event at these games. But there were many highlights that are worthy of mention. Firstly the Club advanced \$ 1250 for prize money and it was a great delight to be present for the presentation of the trophies for the men's and women's 1500 events. The presentation was led by Margaret Cochrane with presentation of medals and the club's monetary contributions. This was followed by the perpetual shield and a copy of Marcus Marsden's book Carrying the Torch.

The Men's place getters were Cameron Clayton (4:23.42) Mount Isa, Liam Mumford,(4:27.31) Mackay Road Runners, Jamie Stead (4:31.47) Mackay Road Runners. Cameron ran the mile at the Stawell gift but his handicap saw him placed 3rd.

The Women's place getters were Ashlee Scott (5:19.57) Mackay Road Runners, Skye Rettke,(5:45.70) Mackay Road runners, Carmen Moran, (5:58.85), Mackay Road Runners.

The remarkable thing about Ashlee Scotts contribution is that she also won the Women's 3000 metre event some 4 hours following the 1500 event. What a wonderful performance.

Of particular interest was the graded age events over 80 metres between 4 years and under and open. What wonderful sportsmanship was displayed by the young sprinters and high jumpers.

My wife and I enjoyed the opening ceremony with the march past and the fireworks giving particular pleasure.

The games were well run and organized with events being started at the programmed times. Special congratulations are due to the board of management and local officials. Tim Marouff has been elected as the next CEO of the North Queensland Games to replace Stewart Gibson who has retired. The next games will be held in Townsville in 2014.

JOKERS CORNER.

It's the London Olympics 2012.

A Scotsman, an Englishman and an Australian want to gain entry but don't have any tickets so they try to trick their way in.

The Scotsman picks up a manhole cover, tucks it under his arm and walks up to the gate.

'MacTavish Scotland, discus' he says to the gatekeeper and walks in.

The Englishman picks up a length of scaffolding and slings it over his shoulder 'Waddington-Smythe England-pole-vault,'he says and walks in.

The Australian looks around and finds a roll of barbed wire tucks it under his arm and walks towards the gate. 'Bluey Johnstone Australia mate' he says, 'Fencing.'

I couldn't locate any more *suitable* jokes.

29 June 2012

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