

THE TORCHBEARER

NEWSLETTER 65

"56ers Torchbearers Club Inc"

PO Box 2148, CAIRNS Q 4870

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President's Comments

Greetings Torchbearers and Partners

I am sorry to have to report the passing of a long time member of our club Bunny Wilkinson. Bunny was a well-known and highly respected resident of the Tully district who for many years involved himself in both sporting and political activities. Our club would like to send our condolences to Bunny's family and friends.

After competing on the International scene in her chosen event the Steeple Chase, Montanna McAvoy has returned home to take out the gruelling Pyramid race against all female contenders. It is only a matter of time before we see Montanna wearing the green and gold.

For those members who make the journey north each year to attend our AGM, I am happy to inform you that it will fall on Saturday 10th November at 11.30 am at the Cairns RSL Club. I look forward to our annual get-together.

Good health to all.

Regards

Jim Vallely
President



WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THEM

A SPECIAL - 1924 PARIS OLYMPICS GOLD MEDALIST - Missionary in China. Eric Liddell.

Eric was born in Tientsin in China, the son of Scottish parents the Reverend James and Mary Liddell who were carrying out missionary work in China. He won a gold medal in the 400m event in the 1924 Paris Olympics. Prior to the Olympics he was the Scottish National champion in 100, 200 and 400 metre events. Eric was schooled at Eltham College where he really began his interest in sport and in particular, athletics.

Eric spent his childhood years in North Western China at the mission station at Siaochang and then Tientsin. Eric's brother, Robert, was born in China in 1900 at the end of the Boxer revolt. Eric was born in 1902. Both the brothers spent a life time of living in China with their parents with father James often being absent from mother Mary and the boys attending mission stations remote from the family.

Later in life when at school in the green hills of Scotland, the boys experienced a living far away from their parents attending missionary needs in the North China Plain, so unlike the boys' country in Scotland. The parents came home on occasions on furlough.

Eltham College.

Both brothers attended Eltham College, a school set up to teach the sons and daughters of missionaries practicing in India and China. Eric Liddell attended the college where he became proficient in athletics and Rugby Union.

Early Notice Annual General Meeting: This is to advise that the Annual General Meeting of the 1956 Olympic Torch Bearers Club will be held on **Saturday the 10th of November, 2018 at the RSL Club, Esplanade, Cairns, commencing 11:30AM** to be followed by lunch. Wives and partners welcome.

Edinburgh University.

After leaving Eltham, Eric commenced study at Edinburgh University and was quickly recognized for his athletic ability and was invited to train at the University training track. Soon he was taking starts and wind sprints and 100 yard dashes. In this distance, he quickly reached the Eltham College record of 10.2 seconds in the 100-yard sprint. He soon met Tom McKercher and he took Liddell under his wing. Under the strict amateur code, Eric could not hire a trainer but Tommy could volunteer and work for nothing and Eric placed himself figuratively and literally into Tom McKercher's hands.

In June 1921, Liddell ran first and second in the 100 and 220 yard against WW1 veteran at a meet at St Andrews and a week later, won both events at the Scottish Championships in Glasgow. Soon after, Eric competed in eleven meets in Scotland and Ireland raising eyebrows wherever he ran. The Glasgow Herald indicated that he would be a British Champion ere long.

Not only did Eric excel at athletics but Rugby was also a favourite sport and he in four matches played against Wales, France, England and Ireland. He won three caps as he didn't play in the England match through injury. Eric stood 5'9" and weighed 155 pounds, hardly a picture of brute strength with Rugby but what he lacked in brawn he made up in quickness and determination.

In 1922, Eric continued his brilliance in efforts in athletics winning 100, 220 and 400 yard races.

The 1924 Paris Olympics were just over a year away and there was much talk about Eric being selected for the 100 and 200 metre races.

The ROAD TO PARIS.

Eric competed well in all events leading to the Paris Olympics even reaching 9.7 seconds in a 100 yard dash at Stamford Bridge, this made the English selectors believe that they had an Olympic Champion in their grasp. At Stoke on Trent in a Triangular International Event Liddell was knocked off the track in the final of the 440-yard event and stood shocked for a few seconds until a Scots official shouted for him to go. With legs pumping he set off a good 20 yards behind the pack but gradually reduced the distance. Around the final turn Eric was placed fourth. He threw his head back and ran with wild abandon and with the crowds in a frenzy, he broke the tape two yards ahead of the forecast winner Gillis. Eric in line with his strong Christian beliefs, would not engage with sport on a Sunday.

Eric had a very busy time before the Olympics. He completed his final University exams, was best man for his brother Rob's wedding and set his mind on a science teaching position at the Anglo-Chinese College in Tientsin. He was selected to compete in the 200m and 400m events in the Paris Olympics.

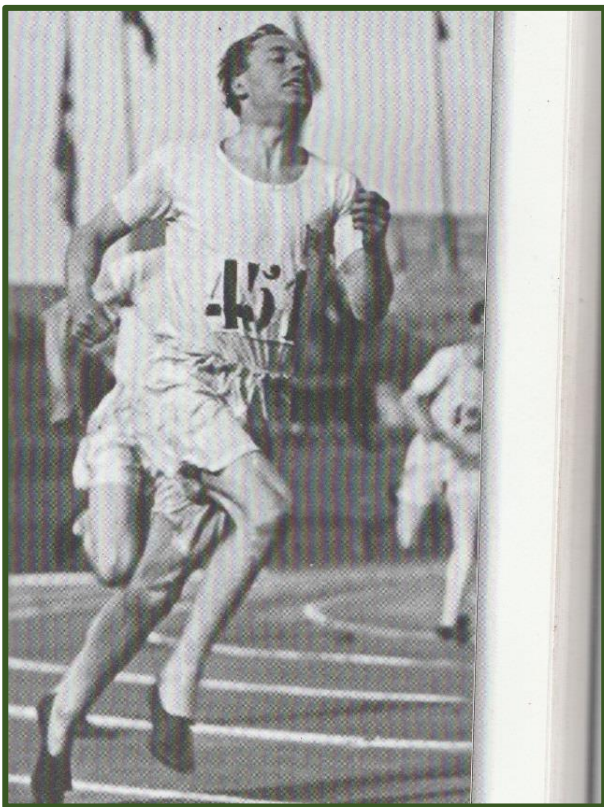
In the 200m, the British team's hopes were high for medals and the wish to beat the American runners. In the 200m, the British hopes soared when the British runner Harold Abrahams defeated Paddock from the USA. Both Abrahams and Liddell reached the second round and a team mate, Douglas Lowe, won the final of the 800m.

The 100m had already been won by Adams and Eric Liddell and Abrahams had reached the final of the 200m. The race commenced and at the 80m stage Abrahams was two steps behind. At the tape, Scholtz broke first and Liddell third. Abrahams was placed last with only a second behind the winner. The British press was full of the loss by Abrahams but very

little was made of Liddell's bronze medal. Abrahams did not win the coveted 100/200 double.

At the 400m event, Eric was listed to run in the 14th out of seventeen heats and cruised to an easy victory.

The summer sun still blazed at 6.30pm, the scheduled start for the 400m final and the Captain of the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders decided to 'give Eric a blow of the pipes' with eight bars of Scotland the Brave before anyone could stop them. Eric ran as if he was running 100m instead of 400m. Those in the stands with stop watches said he can't possibly keep this up and he clocked 22.2 seconds at 200. Down the final stretch the American Fitch strained to narrow the gap, sure that Liddell would slow down and tie up at any second, but Liddell threw back his head and put on a burst of speed that saw him carried to victory by 5 metres.



Eric Liddell winning the Paris Olympics 400m gold medal in world record time of 47.6. Note the Liddell running style of head back and chin forward, quite the obverse to modern running styles.

The crowd went wild as the announcer made the statement that Liddell had set a new world record of 47 3/5 seconds. The Newspapers proclaimed his great victory as a 'WONDERFUL TRIUMPH' and 'An ELECTRIFYING RACE'. Sunday July 13 marked the final day of track and field events. Eric's religious convictions kept him from the final of the 4x100 and 4x400m relays- Britain was placed second and third respectively.

For the next two years Eric served with the Anglo-Chinese College after a 14-day trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway. He arrived in Peitaito, a seaside resort on the east coast of China, to be greeted by his parents and siblings.

Eric occupied many positions in China practicing his athletic ability with his students as well as applying Christian values in his teaching. He met Florence, the daughter of another Anglo minister named MacKenzie. Eric and Flo fell in love and following Flo finishing her nursing training in Toronto, she and Eric married. Eric and Flo remained in China raising their children.

Eric was held in a Japanese camp as a foreign person where he died in February 21st 1945 at Weinstein in China. Florence and the children received the sad news in Toronto and were not able to enjoy the last days with him.

The information in this article has been taken from the book "Pure Gold" by David Mc Casland.

THE LIFE OF CLIVE HARBURG THE DOYEN OF SPORTS BROADCASTERS by Ron Royes

For nearly three decades, *Clive Henry Harburg* was considered the Doyen of Sports Broadcasters in Australia.

With a resonant, dignified voice, often likened to that of former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, Harburg's career in radio began in

Longreach in Central Queensland in 1937 when he was 25 years old.

After service with the RAAF during WWII, he was appointed Sport Editor of ABC radio Brisbane in 1946. He held that position for 24 years until he resigned in 1970.

Harburg became a pioneer in sports broadcasting. The introduction of television in Australia expanded the coverage of sporting events, cricket, tennis and other major events right up to sheep dog trials. Harburg was the principal rugby league announcer of the intercity Bulimba Cup matches between Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba. In that era, thousands of supporters attended matches and many travelled in packed trains to the venues. In 1970, a severe crowd decline saw the discontinuation of the series.

His major forte was cricket. It was his description of the final over of the 1960 TIED cricket test at the Gabba that will be most remembered.



It was Wednesday 14 December 1960, the final day between Richie Benaud's Australians and the enigmatic West Indies led by Frank Worrell. By lunch the match was beginning to unfold. Australia was 6 wickets for 92 runs, chasing 233 runs to win. *Alan Mc Gilvray*, a legendary cricket commentator had been covering the match with Clive Harburg and a bevy of other commentators. He believed the

match was a foregone conclusion and the West Indies would win.

He approached Harburg during the lunch break and suggested it would be advantageous if he took an early flight back to Sydney. Harburg believed that he should have remained until the match was over and engaged in a heated argument. Harburg, "If you think your place is back in Sydney, then go. Go on, leave."

With Australia needing six runs to win, it was the over in which the official scorer Mrs Betty Crouch scored the first five balls with a bye. Ball six two runs, one wicket (Wally Grout brilliantly run out by a Conrad Hunte throw from the boundary. Ball seven score tied Last man in Lindsay Kline pushed towards square leg and set of for the winning run. As Meckiff lunged desperately, Solomon picked up on the run and aimed at the one stump visible. The rest is as they say history.

Although Harburg never admitted it, there was a good deal of confusion and mayhem in the final over. Even to this day anyone who listens to recordings of the final moments will not hear the actual commentary at the time, as it was subsequently *doctored* up to make it audible.

Most broadcasters in their careers suffer from what is known as bloopers (mistakes) that should have been prevented. Harburg was no exception. He was a strong advocate of the Brisbane to Gladstone yacht race, traditionally held at Easter each year. In early times, pre television, he would broadcast the start from Shorncliffe and then with his technician drive to Gladstone preparatory to the arrival of the yachts.

One particular year the yachts had taken much longer than normal. When they did arrive, Harburg interviewed the skipper of the first yacht, Norman Wright, who had sailed in the

Australian crew in the Americas Cup and the Fastnet series off the Isle of Wight in England. Harburg's first question to Wright was about the delay in the yacht's arrival. Wright replied, "Clive, we were becalmed". Harburg obviously not listening closely to the reply directed the next question, "Norman, which way was the wind blowing?"

Wright then replied, "Clive, straight up and down the mast."

Harburg was a tireless worker for ex-servicemen and was awarded the M.B.E. for his support.

He passed away peacefully on the 21st July 2002 aged 90 years after a long INNINGS.

Ron Royes.

VALE Ian (Bunny) WILKINSON

Bunny Wilkinson who ran his torch, 35 miles South of Ingham, has passed away. Bunny is survived by a daughter Fiona and his grandchildren. Bunny was a very proud member of the club and attended many of our early functions on the Cairns Esplanade and at the old Ansett hanger at the Cairns Airport.



Bunny Wilkinson (right) at the Cairns Airport about to receive the Great Cairns to Melbourne Relay Olympic Torch. Others Jim O'Brien, Dennis Stevenson.

Bunny led a very active life in the Tully area. He held a particular interest in the Labor Party.

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The editor received an email from a chap called Ian Cass who was seeking information as to whether his father-in-law Vincent (Vin) Shelly who Ian understood ran the torch in the Wodonga-Wangaratta area. Does anyone know this as fact? Unfortunately, Vin passed away recently. His family is searching through his memorabilia to see if he had a relay medal and I have advised Ian of the Marsden book and the recorded names of runners in the Olympic Museum at the MCG. He may find more information there.

56ers Corner

HISTORICAL STATEMENTS

Sir Edmond Barton

'In the first place, we should insist that the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes Australian and assimilates himself to us, shall be treated on an exact footing as everyone else for it is an outrage to discriminate against such man because of creed or birthplace or origin but this is predicated on the person's being every facet an Australian and only an Australian. There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is Australian but something else, isn't Australian at all. We have room for but one flag, the Australian flag... we have room for one language and that is English... and we have but one sole loyalty and that is to the Australian people'

Sir Edmond Barton 1907

Jokes Corner

PADDY ON THE LAKE

Paddy had long heard stories of a long family tradition. It seems that his father, grandfather and great grandfather had all been able to walk on water on their 18th birthday. On that special day they had all been able to walk across the lake to the pub on the far side for their first legal drink.

So on his 18th birthday, Paddy and his friend Jim took a boat to the middle of the lake where Paddy stepped out and nearly drowned. Jim barely dragged him to safety.

Furiously confused, Paddy visited his grandmother. "Grandmother, it's my 18th birthday so why can't I walk across the lake like my father, grandfather and great grandfather?"

Granny looked deeply into Paddy's troubled eyes and said, "Because ya father, his father and his father were born in December when the lake is frozen. Ye was born in August, ya silly boy!"

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Vick's Friday Bike Ride

I went to the liquor store one Friday and bought a bottle of rye and put it into the bicycle basket.

As I was about to leave, I thought, if I fell off the bicycle the bottle would break, so I drank all the rye before I cycled home. It turned out to be a good decision because I fell off my bike seven times before I got home.



Kind Regards

Dennis M Stevenson
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"The Running Scotsman"