

DONCASTER PLANT WORKS A C

A Profile



FOR

CIRCULATION

Thomas H Fox

INTRODUCTION

The following profile, of the Athletic Section of the Doncaster Plant Works Athletic Club, was prepared in response to a request from Chris White, Editor of the 'Northern Runner' magazine.

The intention was to present the feature, complete with early photographs interspersed throughout the text, in the December 1989 issue. Unfortunately on the completion of the profile the Editor decided that the article was over-long and would need to be pared down in order not to take up a disproportionate amount of space.

I considered, therefore, that a shortening of the text and any subsequent omissions could impair its continuity of flow and not fully represent the club's success story.

At the time of writing Chris White's abridged version was not available but the profile, as originally prepared, is hereby presented in full for the members' interest

About the profile

Few people know much about the history of the DPWAC. This is not

surprising because, firstly, most of the current members joined the club within the last decade. Secondly, there is a paucity of records. In seeking primary references on which to base the profile it was discovered that club committee minutes pre-1971 were not available and are, therefore, presumed lost. Consequently it was left to seek out references in the possession of club members and officials of yester-year.

The compilation of the profile relied heavily on information derived from membership cards, annual dinner menus, athletic meetings' programmes, newspaper cuttings and personal accounts of dates and events. As such, some of these sources have to be considered with a degree of apprehension with regards to their accuracy. But it is hoped that the authenticity of the statements made has suffered little because of this.

Some reference sources have yet to be explored, and as more data comes to light it is hoped that the club's history will gradually unfold. Given sufficient financial support, it is possible that a booklet could be prepared in order to celebrate the athletic section's 75 years Jubilee in 1995

Acknowledgements

I wish to offer my grateful thanks to the following who helped me in the preparation of this profile:

George M Adam	Bernard Foster
John Johns	Moirra A Mackland
Carol McGlone	David McGlone
Leslie Pinder	Arthur Thimbleby
Peter Tuffrey	Roy Waite

Front Cover

The picture depicts Tom E Hoyland who joined DPWAC, then Doncaster Great Northern Railway Harriers, in 1920. He became the club's first successful track runner and won the following titles:

Bradford City Police Champion	220yds	1926-27-28
West Riding Police Champion	440yds & half mile	1926-27
National Police Champion	half mile	1928
Yorkshire Amateur Athletic Association Champion		
	440yds & half mile	1927-28

DONCASTER PLANT WORKS ATHLETIC CLUB

A Profile - by Thomas H Fox

Eden Grove is the home of Doncaster Plant Works Athletic Club (DPWAC). It is situated in Hexthorpe, a town suburb, which owes its development to Edmund Beckett Denison M.P. It was Beckett's influence which brought the railway to Doncaster in 1848 and the subsequent establishment of railway workshops, known as the 'Plant Works', in 1853.

Eden Grove, currently resplendant with its newly painted pavilion, was opened in 1923 solely for the use of the Doncaster Plant Works Cricket section. Its focal point today is the recently relaid cinder track, complete with floodlights, and which is complemented by the attendant facilities for bowls, tennis, cricket and football.

Aptly named Eden Grove, the ground's idyllic setting is in complete contrast to the somewhat sombre terraced streets nearby, built for the influx of railway artisans.

Whilst the DPWAC, an open club, is essentially a multi-sport organisation, the athletic section was founded as a cross-country club in 1920, in the wake of the nomadic Doncaster Harriers whose lack of a firm base probably contributed to its early demise.

The DPWAC, under the aegis of the Great Northern Railway Company (G.N.R.) was originally titled Doncaster GNR Harriers, but with the absorption of the GNR Company into the newly-formed London and North Eastern Railway Company (LNER) changed its name to Doncaster LNER Harriers in 1923. A further change ensued in 1933 when the Harriers identified themselves as a section of the all embracing athletic club and became Doncaster LNER AC (Harriers Section), hereafter referred to as the 'club'.

Whilst over the years the club has been affectionately known as the 'Plant', it was not until after nationalisation of the railways in 1948 that the club officially adopted the name Doncaster Plant Works Athletic Club.

In their first season, in 1920, the Doncaster GNR Harriers hosted the National Cross-Country Championship on Doncaster Racecourse. An estimated crowd of 10,000 paid one shilling each to watch the event, with many more crowded on to the free course. They also witnessed the Harriers attain a creditable ninth position against long established and illustrious clubs including Birchfield, Salford and Hallamshire. Coincidentally, in the same year, the club was also ninth in the Yorkshire Cross-Country Association (YCCA) Championship at York and ninth in the Northern Counties Cross-Country (NCCC) Championship at Haydock Park.

Under the captaincy of founder member George Mair Adam the club built up a strong cross-country team and early championship successes followed. The club was NCCC medallists in 1922-23-30-37-47-54-57 and YCCA medallists in 1922-23-24-26-31-32-33-37-39-47-48 & 54.

The club's most famous cross-country runner being English International Arthur Chorlton who was NCCC individual gold medallist in 1957 and YCCA individual gold medallist in 1953, 56 & 57.

By 1925 the club had begun to diversify and Mr Adam, a hurdler himself, introduced track and field events, the latter being somewhat of a novelty in an area normally renowned for its harriers. After much endeavour the Plant produced its first 'star', Tom Hoyland, who became Yorkshire 440 yds. and half mile champion in 1927 and 28. He also triumphed in many Police Championships between 1926 and 1928 along with the club's Cyril Houseman. The Plants's first successful field-eventer was Frank Phillipson, a AAA Pole-vault Champion in 1934 and British Counties Champion in 1936, in the same event.

Forays into regional and national railway championships proved to be invaluable preparation for competitions which were to follow. In the 1930s no less than 15 railway championship successes were attained, along with 10 Yorkshire awards in track and field and 5 Northern Counties Junior Championships. The latter being the first fruits of the club's policy of establishing rapport with local schools and clubs in

order to discover and nurture the available talent. Part of the plan was to set up a comprehensive coaching structure, which introduced new methods of fitness training and schools for specialist techniques. All of these served, through successful competition, to establish the club's reputation and encourage coaches, officials and young athletes to visit or join this emerging centre of excellence.

A notable visitor in 1924 was Eric Liddell of 'Chariots of Fire' fame, shortly after his Olympic gold medal success in Paris. In 1933 Lord Burghley, an LNER director, Member of Parliament, Olympic gold and silver medallist, later to become President of the AAA and Chairman of the Olympic Committee, took time off to view the centre. Armas Valste, the distinguished Finnish Olympic coach demonstrated throwing techniques at the Grove in 1938 and lectured to a 'full house' at Doncaster Technical College. Among a host of national and senior coaches to attend Eden Grove was Wilf Paish in 1950, Ian Ward and John Britten elected to make the tour in 1962. Geoff Dyson, claimed by many to be one of Britain's greatest coaches, on arrival at the ground in 1939 was astounded to find a well-resourced and innovative centre. He described the set-up as an "Oasis in an athletic wilderness".

Many of the facilities were the direct product of the brainwork of George Adam, his penchant for improving athletic equipment led him to invent the pivoting hurdle in 1933. Other innovations were to follow and some ideas were adopted by the Olympic Committee and the AAA for

use in the 1948 Olympic games and international matches at the White City. His most famous innovation was the portable shot-put platform, used to bring the event closer to the spectators. His recent invention is a multi-stranded wire system for throwing hammers. The wire and fittings are produced locally at Bridon's principal subsidiary, British Ropes Ltd., in Doncaster. Its advantages are that it provides improved safety for the event and facilitates easier maintenance of the hammer itself. After stringent tests the wire system, for which a patent has been applied, has gained approval from the Equipment Committee of the AAA and its use has been officially accepted.

The outbreak of war in 1939 brought a temporary halt to organised competition but on the cessation of hostilities in 1945 the club resumed its development programme. Immediately the club attained 37 Regional Championships and 18 National Championships at track and field events along with 13 Cross-Country Championships successes, all these were in Railway Competitions.

In the 1947 Yorkshire Championship, Harold Palmer won the 3 mile event and the most accomplished John Dodd took the javelin, pole-vault and high jump titles. A former Cumbrian games specialist, he followed this by winning the NCAA pole-vault title whilst Norman Drake won the hammer championship. John Dodd added the English Counties pole-vault title to his tally in the same year.

By this time new 'stars' had begun to emerge. In particular Brian Shenton who won the Yorkshire 100 yds. title in 1946 - 47 - 48 - 49 - 50, the 220 yds. title in 1948-49-50, the NCAA 220 yds. title in 1949-50. Whilst he was so often second best to the indomitable E. McDonald Bailey in the AAA Championships, he eventually gained two AAA 220 yds. titles in 1954 and 1956. Shenton's crowning achievement was gaining the gold medal in the 1950 European Championship 200m in Brussels. He was the first Briton to win a major sprint title.

The club was a pioneer in the then 'cinderella' events of Pentathlon and Decathlon and hosted the NCAA Championships between 1951 and 1963, and the AAA Decathlon Championship in 1954. Earlier in 1950,. John Dodd, the former club champion, re-joined the 'Plant' as field events coach and regularly brought a team of students from Carnegie College to assist in specialist coaching courses. It was no surprise, therefore, when Leslie Pinder, one of the club's best all-rounders, won the AAA Decathlon title in 1951. He repeated this success in 1952, 53 and 54. His four consecutive AAA Decathlon titles is a record to this day. Only a recurrent injury prevented this talented athlete from being selected for the 1948 and 1952 Olympic squad.

In 1957 the club's athletes, who were normally accustomed to competing on grass, celebrated the acquisition of a purpose built cinder track designed by George Adam and costing £3,000. At the opening ceremony they marched around the track in true patriotic style behind

the union flag. Lord Burghley who had agreed to attend was indisposed and so Christopher Brasher, the 1956 Olympic gold medallist, stepped into the breach, at his own expense, and proudly took the salute.

In 1956 an ambassadorial role was adopted by the club when a party of athletes, officials and friends made a hectic tour of West Germany with matches arranged against Weiden, Nuremberg and Munich. The club impressed the German people with its sociability and athletic prowess and despite the arduous task of travelling 2,000 miles in 10 days the team acquitted themselves well. The ladies, under the expert coaching of Queenie Lake, were unbeaten in the tour.

The latter half of the decade for the club continued as successfully as it had begun. The club's most famous son, Arthur Rowe, a pocket colossus and master of the shot-put, became the most renowned name in British field events. Under the expert guidance of John Boyce, the club's chief field events coach, Arthur won the AAA shot-put title in 1957 with a put of 16.78m. Each year after this saw a continuous improvement in his performances. In 1958 he achieved a new AAA championship best of 17.29m, a new Commonwealth and UK record of 17.57m in gaining the Commonwealth gold medal. Also a new European and UK record of 17.78m in winning the European Championship.

A year later he had a new AAA championship best of 17.95m and a new Commonwealth, European and British all-comers record of 18.59m in a

match against Poland. Despite his lack of form in the 1960 Rome Olympics he took the AAA titles in 1960 and 1961 with 18.04m and 18.58m, having set a new UK, National and European record of 19.11m in a match against East Germany. His new European, Commonwealth and UK national record of 19.56m which was set in 1961 still ranks him 4th in the UK today. His decision to defect to professional Rugby League in 1962 confounded his club colleagues and officials particularly as he was expected to win the AAA titles for some years ahead.

The sixties provided many highlights for the thriving club and 1964 was arguably the best year in the decade. No less than 50 major titles were attained, along with numerous medal placings. - In that year the club staged the very first Sheffield and District Track and Field League Match, currently known as the South Yorkshire Track and Field League. 'Plant' athletes confirmed their status in South Yorkshire by taking the league title three years in succession.

The club produced its second world-class shot-putter in 10 years when Rowe's former clubmate, Jeffrey Teale, won AAA titles in 1968 and 1969. International appearances followed and he won a silver medal in the 1970 Commonwealth Games with a put of 19.17m.

The club began the seventies with high expectations and its strength in field events continued. This is because the club had found its own 'magnificent seven'. The mighty men were Andrew Dixon, Ian

Muir, George Weetman, Roy Waite, John Allott, Jeff Butterfield and John Johns, a strong team of throwers who took most of the honours in Railway Championships.

The club's success story was not to last however as, inexplicably, less interest in athletics was shown by local youngsters. Further, George Adam, a catalyst for 54 years, retired due to ill health and played no further part in the club's fortunes. The club withdrew from team competitions and rapidly moved into decline. Club trophies were re-designated for use by other sporting sections and the once pristine track became overgrown. The club's nadir was reached in 1975 when the membership was reduced to a mere five. Fortunately its saviours were on hand; a rescue act was performed by the families Pogmore, McGlone and Manns who's timely intervention saved the club from extinction.

After a hiatus of several years the said families' patient re-building programme is now being rewarded. Teams wearing the familiar green and gold bands on white vests are again beginning to grace the athletic tracks of the north and follow the successes of their predecessors. The club is a member of the South Yorkshire Track and Field League and in 1985 joined the former Dunlop Young Athletes League - now Girobank - where youngsters receive their grounding. The results of which, so far, have been most encouraging. Further, in the newly formed HFC Bank Northern Men's League, the club in its first season won

Division 5 (South East) in 1988 and this season has topped the table in Division 4 (South East). The club's sprinkling of successes in South Yorkshire, Yorkshire and Northern Counties competitions is modest but pleasing. This season 20 medals were gained in Yorkshire Championships and 5 in Northern Counties competition.

A highlight of the club's recent comeback was the success achieved by the junior men in 1988. Darran Askew, Jeremy Bailey, Craig Grant and Alex Woolley won the gold medal in the AAA National Indoor 4x400m relay Championship at RAF Cosford. The team then went on to gain the bronze medal in the 4x200m relay competition, being beaten by Wolverhampton and Bilston AC and GEC Avionics.

This newly found impetus in track and field competitions is complemented by a 'healthy' road-running section. Its inception was influenced by the advent of the London Marathon in 1981 and inspired by the exploits of John Johns. He was a medallist in the prestigious Polytechnic Marathon in 1945 and is arguably the club's best marathon runner to date.

Whilst the club has not recaptured the halcyon days of the fifties and sixties, strenuous efforts are being made by officials, coaches and athletes to bring about a revival in its fortunes. The club regularly stages the ever-popular John Smith's Doncaster 10K Road Race, normally in September, and its own 24 Hour Track Race takes place in

May, the latter event a 'must' for ultra-distance aficionados.

With a refurbished pavilion, a spruced-up ground, a membership 200 strong, an encouraging crop of young talent and a prevailing esprit de corps, the time cannot be far away when Doncaster athletes, once again, form one of the North's premier clubs.

October 1989.

CLUB OFFICIALS

SECRETARY: TERRY BAILEY Tel. (0302) 537853

CHAIRMAN: PAUL BROWN

TREASURER: JENNY ASKEW

TRACK & FIELD SECRETARY: TERRY BAILEY

CROSS-COUNTRY SECRETARY: ELSIE BROOKS

ROAD RUNNING SECRETARY: DON GILL

CLUB MAGAZINE EDITORS: IAN HINDLEY & MALCOLM BARRASS

COACHES

TRACK: PHIL ALLEN

TERRY BAILEY

BRYAN DAVY

FIELD: CAROL McGLONE

DAVID McGLONE

MEETING TIMES: Sunday 11.00am - 1.00pm

Tuesday 6.00pm - 8.00pm

Thursday 6.00pm - 8.00pm

CLUB COLOURS: WHITE VESTS WITH GREEN & GOLD BANDS

GREEN SHORTS