

The Centenary Marathon

Windsor To White City

by Peter Burns (RRC 12036)

This fascinating article has been sent by Tad Lancucki (RRC 11255). Tad was involved in 2003 when Hugh Jones recreated and remeasured the 1908 course for Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Dr Mike Stroud to run as the European leg of their 7 marathons, 7 continents, 7 days challenge. Tad guided Mike for the second half when Ranulph ran on ahead guided by Hugh. Tad used the course instructions Hugh had prepared for that event, but after driving, cycling and walking the course he expanded the instructions significantly and, as no-one got lost, successfully.

24 July 2008 saw the centenary anniversary of the London Olympic Marathon of 1908 – the event where everyone can visualise the guy who lost, but no one remembers the winner. The loser was, of course, the diminutive moustachioed Chaplin-like Dorando Pietri, the Italian pastry cook who, having been helped over the finishing line, was later disqualified. Was he really wearing plimsolls? The gold medal was subsequently awarded to the American Johnny Hayes. Who remembers him?

Significantly, it was the first time the marathon course was run over the classic distance of 26 miles 385 yards. The original scheduled distance was extended to 26 miles when officials moved the start line so that the Royal infants could see it from their nursery window in Windsor Castle and, similarly, had the finish line moved by 385 yards so that it was in front of the Royal Box at White City Stadium, in Shepherd's Bush. Just think of all those extra miles and extra grief you have had to endure

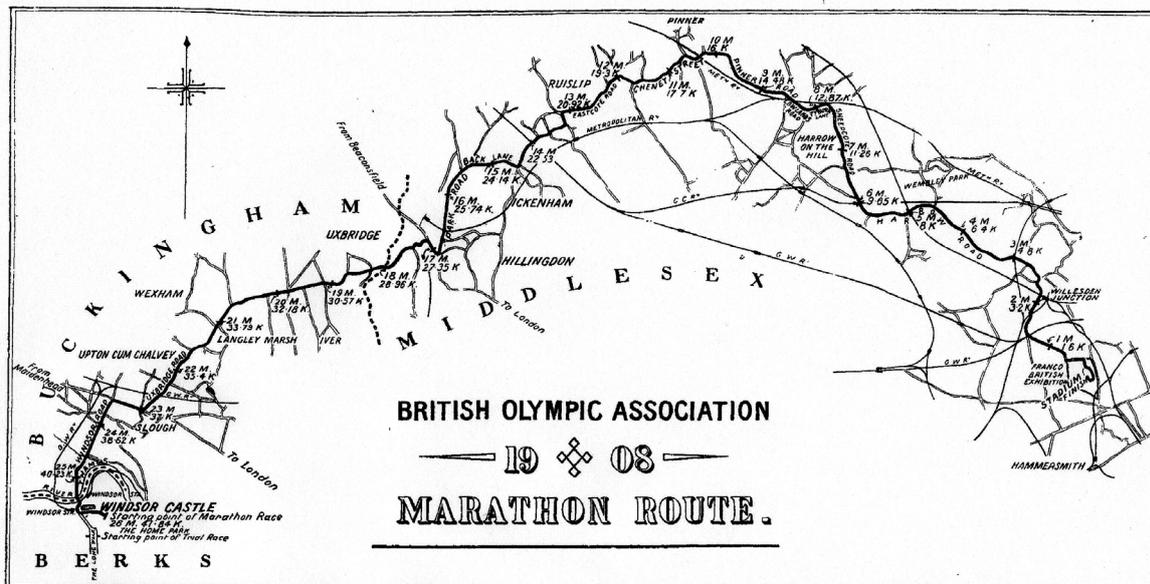
because of those decisions! 20 extra miles, at least, for all 100 Marathoners and we all know the "Point Two" is harder going than the twenty six miles that precede it!

The Club decided to mark this special occasion with a re-run of the original route, or as near as dammit, given the building and road works that have gone on in the intervening years. Tad Lancucki "organised", but perhaps more appropriately described, "masterminded" the event. Tad used the course mapped and measured by Hugh Jones for Ranulph Fiennes' Marathon in London in 2003, which was one of Fiennes' epic Seven Marathons on Seven Continents in Seven Days.

So it was that sixty seven runners, comprising fifty four members and thirteen guests, gathered in the King & Castle pub in Windsor in the early afternoon of 24 July to register, change, and apply all sorts of bandages and liniments in readiness for 'the off' (with grateful thanks to the pub's management for their kindness, hospitality and forbearance).

Goodness only knows what the tourists and visitors made of us all milling round Queen Victoria's statue at Windsor Castle, taking pictures of each other, before posing *en masse* for the group photo. The 24th July 1908 was a very warm day for long-distance running, the temperature eventually reaching 78° F. (26° C.), when 56 athletes lined up at Windsor for the Olympic Marathon. We also had lovely warm sunshine for our run when we all set off (with a wave of the Union Flag), just after 2.30 pm, from Windsor Castle, as the original race had done. Osy Waye and Ray Hoyle had already set off to blaze the trail. Most runners were wearing the distinctive 100 Marathon Club kit and a number wore their own club vests. I wore "unremarkable" vest and shorts in response to a request from Tad that we

shouldn't draw attention to ourselves, as we had no official permission to run the route! Obviously, I was unaware that particular request



had been rescinded since Tad himself was wearing the Club's blue and yellow. John Wallace took to the road in his usual Superman gear. So much for keeping a low profile!

The swarm of runners remained reasonably compact for the first mile with everyone chatting to each other. Soon after the start, Hugh Jones was spotted running on the other side of the road. He, also, was celebrating this historic occasion by running the original course on the day, having flown back from measuring the Olympic marathon course in Beijing. It didn't take long for the field to spread out, but from an early stage many chose to run in small groups, probably concerned about the prospect of getting lost. But they need not have worried; the seven pages of detailed instructions plus maps in a plastic folder we had been given were as good as any Sat.Nav., but trying to move from one page to the next in a crowded shopping street with sweaty hands that were already fully occupied grasping a couple of water bottles, was more like a scenario from "You've Been Framed"!

The course wound its way through Windsor, Eton, Slough, Uxbridge, Ickenham, Ruislip, Eastcote, Harrow, Wembley, Harlesden, Acton and Shepherds Bush to the Finish at the BBC's White City offices. On the way we passed historic landmarks from the 1908 course – the one mile marker at the end of the eye catching pink painted Barnes Pool Bridge, and the 24 mile point that coincides with number 28 Railway Cottages (that was up for sale), in Old Oak Lane before that road crosses the Grand Union Canal. We also passed within spitting distance of the new Wembley Stadium with its magnificent arch, and the quaint Jubilee Clock in Harlesden, erected in 1888 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. There was no shortage of 'natural' scenery en route



such as that provided by Iver Heath and the River Colne at Uxbridge. A varied selection of London life was also there to be seen as we passed along the busy Wembley and Harlesden High Roads with their cosmopolitan populations, busy markets and associated smells. Towards the end of the run my own dose of nostalgia kicked in. As we ran alongside the Wormwood Scrubs football pitches, I recalled my younger days when I had much more energy than now and where I used to score goals regularly. Running along Braybrook Street at the side of the park I couldn't help but think about its gory history and the murder of 3 policemen there in 1966, just before the new football season began.

Two official drinks stations were provided on the course, the first at five miles just before we made our way scarily along a dual carriageway, where there was no path. The other was just after the seventeen mile point outside the Wards Freehouse pub, though the description "drink station" hardly does justice to the varied, extensive and plentiful spread on offer. As it was a hot day we (at least I) had to supplement the official drinks. At around 8 miles I went into a garage and picked up a couple of bottles. The guy in the garage shop, whose English was not the best, and who probably hadn't heard a Scottish accent before, insisted I make full use of the 'three for two' offer. I just couldn't make him understand that I simply couldn't carry a third bottle, and pointing to my running number to explain that I was running in a race made things no clearer to him. Off he went to the freezer to get me the third bottle, thinking I



hadn't understood the generosity of his offer. Eventually, after paying the bill, I fled the shop leaving the third bottle behind on the counter, much to the poor assistant's consternation! Later drinks (and sweets) purchases went a little more smoothly but, invariably, I had to join short queues to be served!

Another feature of the run was the crossing of a number of roads including the extremely busy North Circular Road – but unfortunately no time allowance was given for the inevitable delays incurred. The Finish had its own attraction. In the gathering dusk I came into the precinct of the BBC White City offices and across the line drawn on the paving with the historical inscription “THIS IS THE SITE OF THE FINISHING LINE OF WHITE CITY STADIUM WHICH HOSTED THE 1908 OLYMPICS”. On the wall ahead was the league table of medal-winning nations from the 1908 Olympics with Great Britain at the top with 56 Gold, 51 Silver and 38 Bronze. Those were the days!

I was grateful to come home safely and have my time recorded by Peter and Leo Sargent. I accepted my T Shirt and medal with relief. I will treasure my medal, the face of which replicated the medal presented to all competitors in the 1908 Games. I made a beeline for the Wine Bar in the precinct to quaff a few beers. No matter that it was prohibitively expensive, the amber liquid went back a treat. The end of a perfect day.

First men home in the 2008 event were Dave Ross and Ian Sharman who came over the line together in a time of 3 hours 36 minutes 36 seconds. First lady was Melanie Johnstone in a time of 4 hours 46 minutes 53 seconds . Everyone who started finished and, as far as I am aware, although there were a few tired limbs at the end of the day nobody finished in a distressed state like the unfortunate Signor Pietri all those years ago, or needed to be helped across the line.

Thanks must go to Tad's friends John, Euge and Judy as well as Peter and Leo. It was good to see Brian (Ladder Man) Doherty and his wife Barbara at the Finish. Brian, of course, was responsible for founding the Club in its original form and kindly donated the 100 Marathon Cup. But a big thank you must go to Tad Lancucki himself for all the research and work he put into organising a superb event.

1908 Olympics Centenary Marathon - 24 July 2008

Results

1	David	Ross		3:36:30
2	Ian	Sharman		3:36:30
3	Andrew	Hayward	G	3:51:49
4	Richard	Gurd		3:52:19
5	Peter	Johnson		4:01:15
6=	Glyn	Morris		4:02:15
6=	Mark	Cockbain		4:02:15
6=	Michael	Grehan		4:02:15
6=	Steve	Cooney	G	4:02:15
10	James	Adams	G	4:02:17
11=	Andrew	Stalley		4:14:49
11=	David	Thompson	G	4:14:49
13	Jim	Mundy		4:28:05
14	Jackson	Griffith	G	4:30:21
15=	Rush	Yadave		4:41:29
15=	Fu-Lok	Cheung		4:41:29
15=	Phillip	Howells		4:41:29
15=	David	Bayley	G	4:41:29
19	Roy	Barnes		4:42:10
20=	Allan	Green		4:46:53
20=	Melanie	Johnstone		4:46:53
20=	Allan	Rumbles	G	4:46:53
23	Michael	Haydon		4:47:05
24	Hillary	Carter		4:47:53
25=	Howard	Bailey		4:52:42
25=	Kevin	Day		4:57:42
25=	Dave	King		4:57:42
25=	Gary	Wade		4:57:42
29=	Roger	Biggs		5:02:49
29=	Gina	Little		5:02:49
31=	Danny	Kay		5:05:06
31=	Clark	Kent		5:05:06
33	John	Gibson		5:07:33
34	Les	Pullen		5:22:57
35	Nigel	Bennett	G	5:27:07
36	David	Heron		5:29:03
37=	Richard	Griffin		5:30:30
37=	Dave	Lewis		5:30:30
37=	Tonia	Cook	G	5:30:30
40	David	Toms		5:32:02
41=	Robin	Wilson		5:44:15
41=	Martin	Bush		5:44:15
41=	Peter	Morris		5:44:15
41=	Carol Ann	Plater		5:44:15
41=	Patsy	Baker	G	5:44:15
46=	John	Dawson		5:47:40
46=	Brian	Mills		5:47:40
48	Stephen	New		5:50:19
49	Paul	Allsop		5:51:02
50=	Ruth	Benzimra		5:52:40
50=	Jon	Aston	G	5:52:40
52	Peter	Burns		5:56:55
53	Hideo	Takano		6:01:53
54=	Big Dave	Carter		6:07:13
54=	Gil	John		6:07:13
54=	Dave	Moles		6:07:13
57	Osy	Waye	E	6:08:19
58	Colin	Poole		6:19:43
59=	Tad	Lancucki		6:26:12
59=	Paul	Watts		6:26:12
59=	Syd	Wheeler		6:26:12
59=	Gareth	Creed	G	6:26:12
63=	Liam	Fenelon		6:47:34
63=	Pam	Storey		6:47:34
63=	Elaine	Oddie	G	6:47:34
66	Peter	Graham		6:56:57
67	Ray	Hoyle	E	7:52:50

