

Arthur Newton's 100 Mile Road Running Record

by Ian Champion (RRC Chairman of Council)

The 20th July 2009 was the 75th Anniversary of Arthur Newton's 100 mile road running 'Best on record' run from the Bear Inn near Bath to Hyde Park Corner in London. He was 51 years old and it was to be the last record he set before his eventual retirement from competitive road running. The World record 100 mile road record he set of 14 hours 6 mins is still today a 'very respectable time for the distance'.



HIS LAST, AND BEST.—South African, Arthur Newton, 51 yesterday, celebrated event by breaking own record by eleven minutes in last long-distance run of his career. Sped from Box, near Bath, to Hyde Park Corner—100 miles—in 14hrs. 11mins. 30secs. Shown above in Knightsbridge nearing the finishing point.

He first set the 100 mile record of 14h 43 min whilst resident in Rhodesia (now Kenya). He then returned to England in 1927 and set the record of 14 hours 22 min 10sec on the Bath to London route on 7th January 1928. On that occasion a crowd estimated to be 10,000 had greeted him at the finish in London. He achieved the record even though he had physical 'running' problems on route as well as 'the time of the year' adverse weather.

He made two more attempts in fairly quick succession in 1933 but on both occasions ran with 'on going' injuries. Those and again the weather resulted in him giving up the first time 15 miles from the finish the second time at 30 miles into the distance.

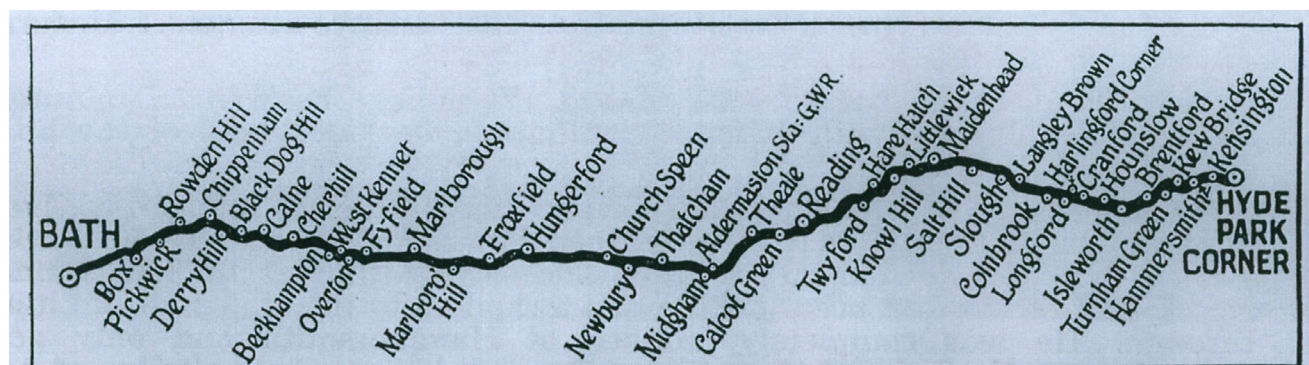
By 1934 he had made a complete recovery. He logged a total of 1918 running miles between January and May and 629 running miles in June (average 20+ miles per day! – an exceptional training mileage 75 years ago) and decided he was ready for another attempt on the record. He again found the heat troublesome and had stomach problems around about 70 miles. His last thirty miles was difficult but he still managed to reach Hyde Park Corner in 14 hours 6 minutes some 16 minutes faster than his 1928 time.



For newer members who might not know, Arthur Newton is a legend in Road Running, particularly ultra-distance, history. He was a self-taught runner who did not start road running until he was 39. He logged every mile and how he found the 'running stride and style' to suit him and his whole training life-style. These are recorded in various books and have very much influenced training theories ever since. His major book titles are 'Running', 'Running in Three Continents', 'Racing and Training' and 'Commonsense Athletics', which are still available in libraries.

In 1928 Arthur was still classified as an amateur. However soon afterwards he twice competed in Transcontinental races across the United States of America. He thus became a 'professional' runner. On both occasions he made no financial gain from his efforts. He just about broke even on his entry fee, travelling expenses and on-going expenses throughout both events. Nevertheless because he had actually competed in the events where there were cash prizes on offer, it made him a professional. For this reason his 1934 record is still classified as a 'professional' rather than an 'amateur' record.

This professional stigma was to stay with him until he died in 1959. Although he did great pioneering work in the revival of the London to Brighton race and the formation of the Road Runners Club, always in the true amateur tradition, he was never allowed any sort of recognition. Once you had had any sort of involvement with any sport for payment, however little and even if only once, you were out of amateur sport for ever. There was just no way back or any possible form of re-instatement to amateurism.



This route map has been reduced from the original which stood on the mantelpiece at Arthur Newton's home in Ruislip Manor, Middlesex.