



History of the St George District Athletic Club

Compiled by Michael Gentle

1923

Seeing the Light

During 1923 club members Harold Taylor and Alleyn Gainsford were successful in getting electric lighting installed at Hurstville Oval. In a year when great progress was made in all areas of the club, the Wednesday evening track events were seen to be the most successful aspect of the club. The competitions at the newly lighted oval attracted new members, and the successful program of events included all distances from 100 yards to 3 miles, as well as walking, jumping, field games and novelty events. The partnership forged with the St George Amateur Cycle Club also saw cycling events conducted in conjunction with the athletic events each week on the grass track.

The 1923 distance road season saw an average of 15 athletes competing in closely handicapped races, with our most successful club runner being R. Medlin. Our club spirit was demonstrated in open handicap competition where the club entered more starters than any other club.

Highlights included Wal Liddle's outright victory in the Harper Cup 5 Mile event at Dulwich Hill; H. Harwin's surprise victory in the East Sydney 2.75 mile open event; and R. Holdsworth's win in the Botany Club's Bob Tuck Memorial Race following his transfer to this club.

The club's most prominent member in the distance races was a youthful Alleyn Gainsford, who ran with distinction throughout the year:

- NSW 5 Mile Cross Country Championship - 6th, 28 min 7 sec;
- Australian 5 Mile Cross Country Championship - 6th, 28 min 13 sec;
- NSW 10 Mile Championship - 5th, 55 min 21 sec; and
- Manly Modified Marathon - 3rd, 1 hr 11 min 16 sec.



Above: 1923 Australasian Cross Country Championship, Randwick Racecourse

Club athletes won a number of open track & field events throughout the season, with outstanding results being George Campling's 100 yards victory in the Highland Gathering Sports meeting, and Ernie Groves 100 yards win at Lidcombe Sports. Other notable results included Bill Tilt's victory over 1,000 yards at the State Championship Sports, and Alleyn Gainsford's third placing at Lidcombe Sports.

On 23 June 1923 Ernie Austen competed in the State 7 Mile Championship at Manly with the stated intention of not only winning the race, but also attempting to break his existing State Records for 4, 5, 6 and 7 miles. Austen took the lead from the start, edging away from his competitors in fine style after only a few laps to record the victory and the State Records he sought.

The Australasian 7 Mile Walk Championship was held for the first and last time in Melbourne during July 1923. Organisation for this event started in late 1921 when the NSW Walking Club and the Victorian Race Walking Club proposed an Interstate match for October 1922 to be the official Australian Championship. An Australian Athletics Union postal vote on the status of the race was lost, however the State clubs decided to proceed by forming The Amateur Walking Union of Australia under whose authority the event was conducted. Walkers from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia competed. Ernie Austen led from the gun and won easily in the time of 55m 44.4s over what was described as a heavy wet track. The event was subsequently to become a bi-annual championship with teams competing for the Glover Shield.

St George again promoted the annual Jolley Open Road Race at Hurstville, with the trophy presented by Mr Bert Jolley. There were 72 nominations, of which 59 competed in ideal conditions. The course was the same as prior years, and the spectators lining Forest Road to watch the race were likened to Martin Place in Sydney during lunch time by a Sydney newspaper. Once again the handicapping was well calculated to produce a close finish, with the experience of St George athletes on the tough course proving to be beneficial.

The results were:

1	J.B. Linane	East Sydney	Allid: 1m 20s	15m 56s
2	V.C. O'Leary	East Sydney	Allid: 2m 10s	16m 47s
3	S. Morton	St George	Allid: 0m 35s	15m 29s
4	A.A. Gainsford	St George	Allid: 0m 20s	15m 17s
5	W. Watters	St George	Allid: 1m 40s	16m 41s

Club Champions

The inaugural Club Championships were conducted at the Sydney Sports Ground on 10th February 1923 and 17th February 1923. The Saturday events at the Sydney Sports Ground were regularly attended by all the Sydney clubs, so that Botany Harriers and Dulwich Hill A.A.C. also conducted their club championship events at these meets. Our first club champions were:

100 yds	Jack Cullen	10.8s
220 yds	Jack Cullen	25.0s
440 yds	Jack Cullen	55.6s
880 yds	Charlie Weeks	2m 10s
1 Mile	Stan Morton	4m 52.2s
3 Miles	Stan Morton	16m 45s
1 Mile Walk	Ernest Austen	
High Jump	Don McKay	5ft 1in
Broad Jump	Don McKay	19ft 11in
Hop, Step & Jump	Ad Horrocks	39ft 0in

Further Reading

The club website has many documents pertaining to the history of the club available for download in pdf format: <http://www.sgdac.org/documents.php>

The club website has detailed results of club events, open handicap events, track & field events, and State, National and International Championship events featuring club athletes from 1921 onwards: <http://www.sgdac.org/results.php>

Please contact the author via webmaster@sgdac.org with feedback, suggestions, additional information, results or resources to help expand and improve these history documents.