



History of the St George District Athletic Club

Compiled by Michael Gentle

Alleyn Gainsford O.A.M.

Life Member (Deceased)



Alleyn Gainsford was considered the father of Athletics in the St. George District.

Alleyn was the first to arrive at Colvin's Hall, Hurstville on Monday, 7th March 1921 for the inaugural meeting to form the St. George District Amateur Athletic Club and won its first event, a 2½ mile race along Forest Rd, Bexley on 2nd April 1921 and was St. George's first Life Member.

Alleyn built up a momentous history of service to St. George and athletics in Australia and his memorabilia of our club's progress and achievements by our athletes was unbelievable. He was a champion athlete in his heyday (1920's-1930's) winning many State distance running Championships, set in record times and was a true clubman.

Alleyn was a Life Member & Vice President of the State Athletics Association (now ANSW) and was also an Olympic Committee Chairman and 1956 Olympic Games Official and Selector. From his records he attended some 7,800 meetings relating to Athletics.

For 55 consecutive years he was Club President and became the first Emeritus President. These accomplishments will probably never be equalled or surpassed by anyone in any club or organisation.

In 1980 Alleyn was awarded the Order of Australia for his service to our sport and the community.

Alleyn possessed a wonderful memory and would often relate instances of our club's early history. His memorabilia included exercise books up to two inches thick with media stories, photos and athletic results.

His main love in athletics was Cross Country running and he seldom missed a Saturday at Scarborough Park.

He chatted to club members and their families, liked a joke and a scotch and water, and over the years became a well known identity in the St. George District. Alleyn had a pride and admiration for the red and white striped athletic singlet worn by club athletes since our inception. He saw many brilliant St. George Club athletes become Olympians, World and Commonwealth Games representatives, World Record Holders, State and Australian

Champions. He was also instrumental in our club's many Premiership winning teams and relays successes.

Sadly Alleyn passed away just one week prior to our 75th Anniversary Dinner on 13 August 1996 but as his health had been deteriorating during the months prior to his passing it was unlikely that Alleyn would have been able to attend.

Alleyn was a gentle, proud man, proud of his family, proud of what he had achieved in life and proud of our club and its members. He was our last remaining foundation member.

We will all miss Alleyn's presence for a long time to come, in fact we will always remember this wonderful man.

On behalf of all club members both past and present I close this tribute with my deepest sympathy to Alleyn's daughters Marjorie and Lynnette and their families.

Written by Ron Gribble

As printed in:

St. George District Amateur Athletic Club's 76th Annual Report, March 1997; and
Athletics Australia's 1996/97 Annual Report

Right: 1946-47 Interclub Walk.

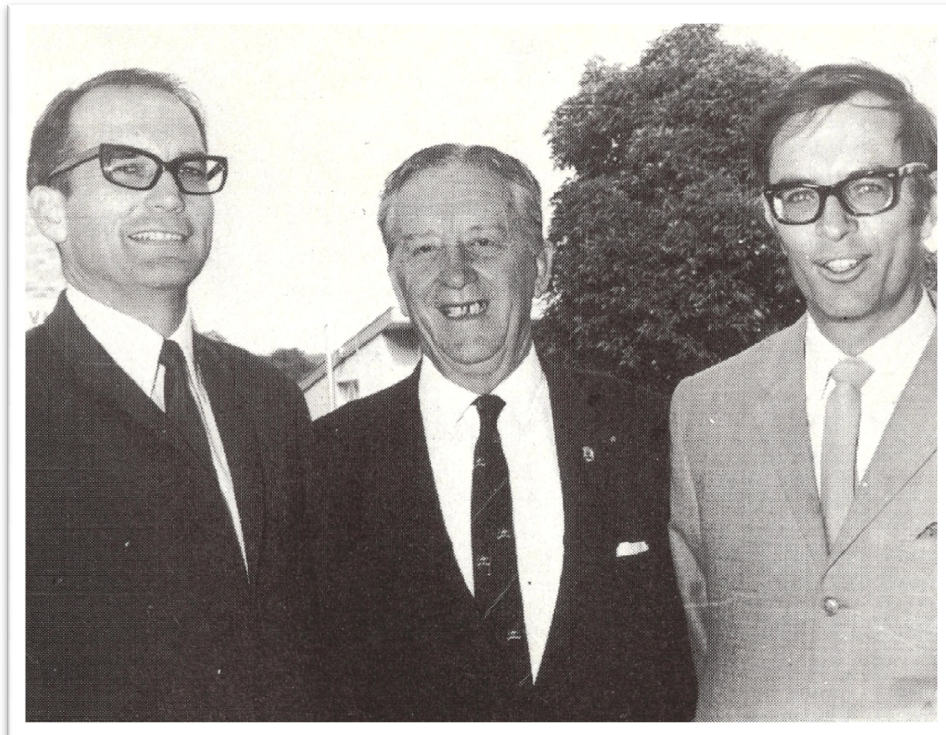


Awards

- 1980 – Order of Australia Award
- 1968 – St George District Women's Amateur Athletic Club Honorary Life Membership
- 1923 - St George District Amateur Athletic Club Life Membership

Committee Positions

- Emeritus President 1991-1995
- President 1936-1990
- Chairman 1933-1938
- Hon. Secretary 1922-1923
- Executive Committee 1963-1990
- Senior Vice President 1934-1935
- Vice President 1926-1933
- Club Captain 1923-1931
- Club Vice Captain 1933-1934
- Manager 1951-1956; 1964-1977
- Handicapper 1926-1929
- Time Keeper 1926-1927
- Point Scorer 1926-1928
- Judge 1927-1928; 1933; 1935-1937; 1958-1967
- Starter 1929-1931; 1938-1957; 1962-1963; 1972-1977
- Distance Coach 1965-1967
- Delegate to Athletics NSW Meetings 1922-1923; 1927; 1949-1954; 1974
- Delegate to Harrier Board of NSW 1938-1941; 1945-1964
- Delegate to Management Council 1982-1990
- Delegate to Interclub 1983-1989
- Publicity Officer 1982-1994



Above: 1970's Executive Members Denis Wilson, Alleyn Gainsford, Dennis Jolliffe

Our President

The President of our Club is one of the outstanding personalities in the St George district and it is appropriate at this time to briefly record his achievements in sporting and honorary community service.

- Foundation member (7th March 1921), Life Member (1929), and President since 1936 of the Club.
- Life Member, Official, Vice President (since 1940) and acting president on numerous occasions of the Amateur Athletic Association of New South Wales.
- Organiser of numerous local and State Athletic Meetings and Community celebrations.
- Member of committees of 1938 Empire Games – Sydney and 1956 Olympics – Melbourne and an official on both occasions.
- Ten years chairman of N.S.W. Athletic Management Council and also of the State Harrier Board.
- Over twenty years member of the N.S.W. Olympic Council and the Commonwealth British Empire Games Association.
- Fourteen years a member of – Australian Olympic Federation, N.S.W. National Fitness Council Sports and Recreation Committee.
- Chairman of St George Scouts Association and a member of the State executive.
- Represented N.S.W. at Australasian distance championships in 1923 and 1925. Five time 10 mile champion of N.S.W., six times winner of 15 miles Modified Marathon.
- In 1928 established State Records for 6-15 miles and including Australian records for some of these distances.
- Organised the establishment of St. George Women's Amateur Athletic Club and was appointed an honorary Life Member at the 1968 Annual Meeting.
- Members of the Club provided a new perpetual trophy to the A.A.A. of N.S.W. for the ten miles team championship to be known as the "Alleyn Gainsford" Trophy.

Yes, that's a sketch of our president, who, despite an extreme physical setback, did not retire from public life as most others would but, set an example in business accomplishments, and family life, that will be hard for others to emulate. A TRUE SPORTSMAN AND A GENTLEMAN.

Written by George Carruthers

As printed in: St. George District Amateur Athletic Club's 48th Annual Report, March 1969

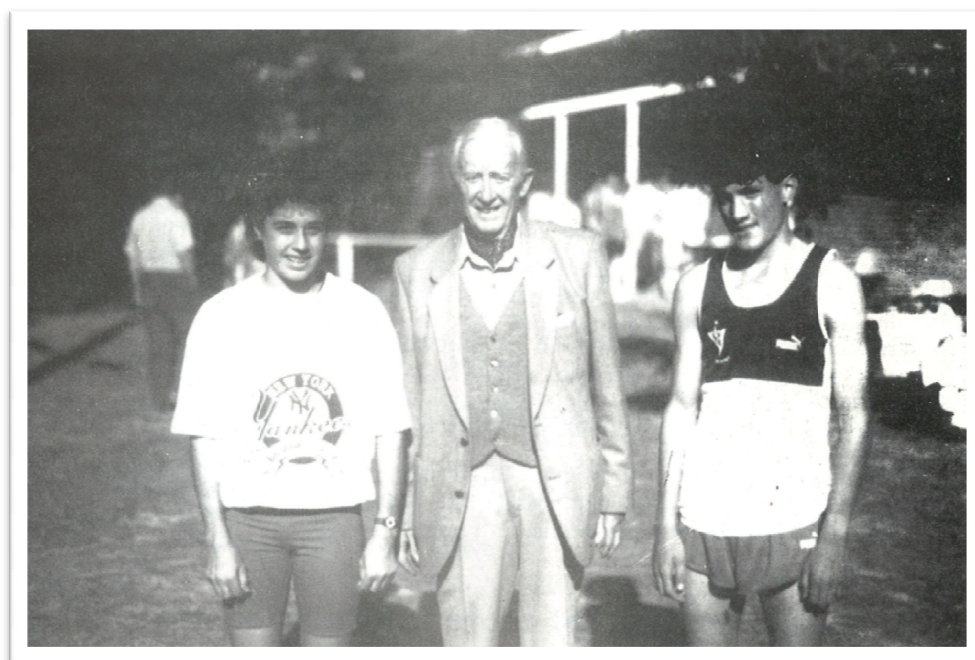
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In 1996 our Club lost its Emeritus President, Alleyn Gainsford, whose health had deteriorated over the past year leading up to his death. But right to his last days, his interest in "his club" had not waned and any visitor was always asked for the latest athletic happenings. He has set a longevity record as our President that is never likely to be repeated.

Albert Thomas, President

As printed in:

St. George District Amateur Athletic Club's 76th Annual Report, March 1997



Above: Alleyn Gainsford with young champions Lisa Zammarelli & Tony Auciello, 1991

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/?p=Archives>

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/?p=Event&page=1>

Summary of Alleyn Gainsford's results: <http://www.sgdac.org/?at=741&page=1>

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