

Bendigo Harriers Life Members

The Bendigo Harriers since its inception in 1922 have had many members contribute to the club. Some of these members have been given the worthy distinction of being awarded Life Membership.

1978 - David Kitt

David joined the club at the age of 16 when asked by his cousin Richard who was President of the Club at that time. He got involved as secretary and President over a number of years, Along with Richard they and the small club membership (there wouldn't have been more than 20 members back in the late 50's early 60's) conducted bottle drives, went rabbiting (editor note - no wonder they were fit in the good old days chasing rabbits like greyhounds) then taking orders from people and selling their catch to raise funds for the club, provided supper at club Presentation nights with the members paying 2 shillings and sixpence (25 cents in today's money). David was also involved with the Bendigo Regional Centre (Now Athletics Bendigo) as Vice President, President. He became a VAAA coach, served as a Board member on Athletics Victoria, Victorian Team Manager, Country Committee member, Technical observer for Australia at Olympic Games, organised a number of club trips, both interstate and to Hong Kong/China. Involved also with the Olympic Dream runs and the around the Bay runs. David along with Ian Bowles, Barry Boxshall and other club members came up with the idea of running a fun run at Easter which is now well known as the Bendigo Bank Dragon Mile securing the sponsorship from the Bendigo Building Society (now Bendigo Bank). He was a life member of Athletics Bendigo and a Merit Holder of Athletics' Victoria. A Trophy was donated in his honour for the best Male club at the Victorian Country Championships for his support and dedication to Country Athletics. He held numerous records and won local Track and Cross Country titles and Country Championships as well as winning the Keith Huddle Memorial in 1965.

1981 - Ian Bowles

I can remember a family friend Tom Tweed who used to manage the YMCA giving my Mum and Dad David Kitt's phone number and them actually making the call.

Started with the Bendigo YMCA Harriers as a 12 year old in 1969 and turned 13 the same year and had to compete in under 15 for the rest of the season. I Started off running in Dunlop Volleys and purchased my first Adidas shoes from Frank Priors sport store in Bath Lane during my first cross country season. Started doing a bit more distance training as a 15 year old and at 16 started to show some promise on the track at the Tom Flood sports centre. During the country championships held in Bendigo that season I competed in the under 17 800m and I think finished 2nd. I improved 12 seconds in that race and David Kitt saw I had some potential and arranged for me to get some coaching by correspondence from Henri Schubert who was a coach to the Australian National team during his career. Henri told me that not to expect to much at first but that over a four year period I should see some major improvement. I trained very hard at the sports centre 4 nights a week and my favourite session was 8 x 200m in 26sec with 3 minutes recovery this was excellent training for the 800m.

My PB's were 400m 50.7 800m 1.53.2 1500m 3.54.2 3000m 8.54 5000m 15.18 10000m 33.43 Marathon 2hr 51m 43sec Only ran one

My pet event was the 800m and would regularly run 1.55. on grass tracks

I won the BRCAV Championships (AV) 800m a number of times as well as the 1500m. Competed for the club in the interclub events each week and would try field and hurdle events. 1st in the Open 800m at the country championships at Benella and also finished 2nd in the 800m a number of times. (To many 2nds unfortunately)

Competed at the Interstate country challenge in Canberra and was vice captain of the team with Steve Monagetti captain. Won the Ern Hammer 3000m handicap and also a (AV Bendigo) Open High Jump. Most of my best times were run at Olympic Park Melbourne as there was no rubber track in Bendigo at the time. I would drive to Melbourne to run for less than two minutes then drive home again. I was fortunate to run interclub with Essendon EMH and ran the interclub finals in the 800m in Melbourne with John Higham (The national 800m champion at the time) Ken Hall

(National 1500m record holder at the time) and myself making up the 3 representatives for Essendon EMH. Bendigo Centre competed against other country centres at Olympic Park in Melbourne as was fortunate enough to captain one of those teams. Did a lot of distance training over the renowned One Tree Hill area and Spring Gully reservoir area. Was fortunate to have some great running mates to train with (Paul Bennett, Leigh Purtill, Barry Boxshall, Keith Macdonald, Bruce Michelson, Graeme Smith) with most of those mentioned also life members of the club.

Enjoyed the cross country season and would regularly compete all over the state in Cross Country team events for the club. Was fortunate to be part of teams that won the over all aggregate in a couple of seasons. Competed in a couple of the round the bay relays (200Km) over two days. Ran a Eaglehawk to Bendigo 6.5km in 20.24 and was part of winning grade teams in this event a number of times. Whilst I enjoyed the competition side of things I was also heavily involved in the administration of the club from a young age. Was appointed secretary of the club at 17 years of age and before I had a licence David Kitt would drop me home to Strathfieldsaye after meetings. These meetings were every second Tuesday night during the cross country season and were held under the stairway at the Bendigo YMCA.

I held the position of Secretary for a number of years and was also Treasurer of the club. I received my Life Membership when I was fairly young in my 20's.

Would attend Bendigo Regional Centre meetings on a regular basis for both cross country and track and field. When the Bendigo Building Society got on board with club sponsorship the club around that time went to Hong Kong and on return David Kitt and myself went and met with the Building Society with the view to sponsor a 1 mile run through the Easter procession parade route. (This is now the Bendigo Bank Dragon Mile) I was involved in the event from day one and continued to participate with the running of the event until I had completed 20 years with the event. With the passing of David Kitt I took on the role of co-ordinator of the event for a while and eventually moved the manual recording of entries and results to computer.

I kept on training 2 days a week with Paul Bennett and Keith MacDonald until I turned 50 and found the body could no longer compete and gave away athletics.

It took me a long time to get over the loss of the close friendships that I had during training sessions but had been involved for 37 years. I met some great people during that time and it did not matter if you were a Doctor, Administration worker, Labourer, Sales person because on the race and training track as we were all equals.

That's what I liked most about my time with the club.

1981 - Barry Boxshall

The club requires a write-up of this Life Member.

1981 - Graeme Smith

Graeme Maxwell Smith is a long-standing loyal contributor of the club, who achieved the positions of Club President and Treasurer; each for two terms. Graeme joined the Bendigo YMCA Harriers in 1964, at the age of 15 and was a competitive athlete for 30 years. He still enjoys attending the occasional cross country meeting, but he only runs warm-up distances with the crew. The gusto of earlier days is now a treasured memory, but he continues to enjoy the company of the members. Smith did not ever consider himself to have the natural ability of some but history shows he had some serious high points. He ran in the Victorian Country Marathon and was placed third on an occasion and completed one marathon PB of 2 hours 47 minutes and 44 seconds. He also enjoyed winning a few places at the Bendigo Championships. Some of the most precious times he spent with the club, was during training sessions on Sunday mornings at One Tree Hill. The training group contained "such high quality people", Graeme recalls. As a self-coached athlete, his fellow runners gave him generous support and advice. The late David Kitt was one of those people, who gave him ongoing encouragement, which he appreciated immensely. Today, he continues to value the company of the Harrier's membership and reflects on the years of enjoyment, that he has experienced with the club. His Life Membership was fittingly presented in 1981.

1981 - Ivan Kitt

Ivan joined the club at the age of 11 and has been a club member for 46 years. In that time Ivan has undertaken various roles within the club, President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Press Correspondent, Club Newsletters, Official and coach also representing the club at Centre level and Athletics Victoria on Summer and Winter Committees. Ivan has been a link between the Harriers and the Bendigo Regional YMCA. In 1977 Ivan officiated at Pan Pacific Games in Canberra and 1982 at the Brisbane Commonwealth Games. For his contribution to the Club and the Sport he has been awarded Life Membership of Athletics Bendigo, Merit Award Athletics Victoria, 40 year service badge from Athletics Australia, Achievement Award Sports Focus. Centenary Award and recently a Life Membership of the Bendigo Regional YMCA.

1993 - Maryan Andrea

Maryan became involved with athletics and the Bendigo YMCA Harriers when her daughter Michelle took up athletics with the YM/YW Little athletics club, where Maryan helped out officiating and the running of the club. When Michelle continued on into senior athletics Maryan followed continuing to help the club officiating and became Secretary of the club for a number of years. Maryan worked at the Hospital (Bendigo Health) and through her support got the club involved with the Hospital Review "Instiches" that resulted in the club being given a donation for our work, This happened every two years which became a club fundraiser but also a great social activity for members. Maryan also played a big role in the clubs Trips to Hong Kong and China. She is still involved with the Club every Easter Monday assisting with the Dragon Mile and Drink van at the Madison Carnival. Maryan was the first female Life member of the club and her life membership was well deserved.

1999 - Paul Bennett

Paul joined the Bendigo Harriers in 1967 at 12 years of age and has competed for the club ever since, bar short stints with Wangaratta Harriers, Williamstown Athletics and Athletics Essendon, while living away from Bendigo. He served a 1 year term as club president, but his main focus has been acting as Winter Co-ordinator over the last 30 years. The Winter Co-ordinator role has involved representing the club at Athletics Bendigo Winter Committee meetings, organising our Winter program as well as finding, measuring and marking many different race courses. This included the now distinct ' Strathmalini' 3km cross country over paddocks and through farm sheds on the Bennett Family property in Strathfieldsaye. Unfortunately the course is now covered by houses.

1999 - Neil Macdonald

Neil commenced running with the Harriers as a 12 year old in 1955 with the Bendigo Harriers Saturday morning runs.

President for a couple of years and also spent a great deal of time contributing to the club committee. Between 1994 and 2014 Neil was the Dragon Mile coordinator for 20 years. In recent times Neil has helped as a coach for the last 12 years.

Neil was also a class runner in his time on the local and world stage.

800m World Vets Championships 1st Brisbane 2001

800m&1500m world indoors championships 1st Germany 2004

800m British indoor championships 1st Scotland 1994

800m American indoor championships 1st 1994,1995,1996.

800m American outdoor championships 1st 1989,1993,

1500m American outdoor championships 1st 1989.

He also represented Victoria in 1991 in the East coast challenge in Canberra over 800 meters.

1999 - Keith Macdonald

Keith joined the Harriers in 1964 then joined the pro ranks in 1967. Returning to the Harriers with the advent of open athletics in 1984 he also took on the position of minute secretary for several years. Keith also spent some time as the clubs delegate at Athletics Bendigo meetings. A stint was

also spent for 2 years as President of the Harriers. With the formation of the Athletics Bendigo board Keith was one of the clubs representatives for a few years. In competing he was lucky enough to be part of the team that competed in the Bicentennial relay around the bay in 1988 and in the same relay for the original Olympic Dream run. In later years he was again lucky enough to be part of a strong Harriers veteran team achieving success in both cross country and road relays in Athletics Victoria competition. Keith was also a driving force with organising the strong representation of the Bendigo Region in the 2009 and 2010 seasons being part of the Division 1 Athletics Victoria XCR competition with several Harriers part of these teams.

2001 - Leon Gilbert

Leon was invited along for a cross-country run with the Bendigo YMCA Harriers in 1985 by Harriers member John Pertzelt and competed in a 7km race off Harley Street, Strathdale that included Anne Buckley (then Anne Hunter), Ken Bruechert, David Kitt, Ivan Kitt and others. It was a great introduction to cross-country running and Leon returned the following year and joined the Club in 1986. After one season of cross-country running Leon took on the role of Club handicapper in 1987 taking over from Graeme Teasdale. In the following years Leon held various roles including Club President (two terms), Media correspondent and Bendigo Bank Dragon Mile co-ordinator. His greatest enjoyment has been competing and the senior handicapping role that Leon has done continuously for 30 years and has allowed him to get to know each family and each runner that has competed over the that 30 year period. Leon's focus has been the cross-country seasons but has occasionally competed during the summer track season both locally and at country championships. He also represented the Club in a 10-man team competing in the Olympic Dream 200km run around Port Phillip Bay. Leon also completed his first and only marathon in the 2015 New York City marathon.

2003 - Garnet Rodda

Garnet Ian Rodda was presented a Life Membership in 2003, by the former Bendigo YMCA Harriers club member and then current AFL player, Ian Pendergast. He was proud to receive it, (even if it was from a Carlton footballer). In earlier times, he served for two years as Club Secretary, followed by six years as Treasurer and then four years as President. He enjoys significant respect and remains active in the Cross Country season and the Track and Field events. Further, he is admired for his years of input into the Club's Little Athletics administration and the kid's athletics education. Today, Garnet continues as a solid all-round contributor to our Club. His athletic interests commenced in 1964 when he joined the Geelong YMCA Club. This developed a diverse range of activities involving youth groups, supervision of teenage trips to the YMCA camp at Queenscliff, qualifying in leadership duties, etc. Further, he was a member of the YMCA Athletics Club and played football in the under 15's and 18's, plus he coached YMCA Little League football teams. In 1992, he was promoted by his employer, the Education Department and moved to Bendigo Paul Bennett introduced him to the Harriers and the rest is history. Garnet is a very worthy life member and has benefited from his membership considerably. It has provided fitness, friendship and comradery with a wonderfully positive group of people.

2003 - Leigh Purtill

The club requires a write-up of this Life Member.

2004 - Anne Buckley

I joined the Harriers in December 1984.

What I have achieved while at the club is:

- twice represent Victoria 1985 & 1986,
- won the dragon mile 1990,
- won Ern Hammer 1995
- won three Eaglehawk half marathons 1988, 1989, 2001,
- won three national titles 2012 5kms, 2013 1500metres, 2015 1500 metres
- won a Victorian Masters title and number of Victorian Country titles over the years.

I have not taken any clubs positions while I have been in the club, as I live too far away (Kyneton) to do any positions properly for the club.

The thing I like most about running is meeting people and achieving goals and watching other runners achieving their goals and cheering them on.

2006 - Jack Davey

Likely the most decorated athlete of the Harriers but also a fine contributor off the track. Jack joined the YMCA Harriers in 1946 and won the 5 miles and 10000m championship in his first season and also setting record times for the events. He also held the fastest time for the Bendigo to Eaglehawk (run opposite direction in the old days) and was the first athlete to break 20 minutes. Jack spent 30 years as a representative of YMCA on the Board of the local centre of VAAL and 10 years as President. He held numerous other roles including; club secretary, club president, cross country captain, track captain, timekeeper, high jump official, coaching athletes, track marker, cross country course marker and designer. Jack back in 1956 proposed the pre Olympics meeting before the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. He was a leader of the Harriers in working of the 2 tracks at Epsom and Pratt Park whether it was organising finance and the building at Epsom in a volunteer capacity. We imagine Jack was one of the few people to carry the Olympic Torch twice when he carried it into Bendigo in 1956 and then 44 years later carried the Olympic Torch for the 2000 Sydney Olympics into Castemaine. More recently in 2006 he carried the Commonwealth Games baton to the Bendigo Railway Station. Back on the track Jack set a new Australian record in 1949 for the 6 miles at Olympic Park Melbourne in the test race before the Empire Games. Jack gained selection for the British Empire Games held in Auckland in 1950, placing 4th and breaking his record by 25 seconds. He then managed and ran in the Australian Cross Country Championships in Perth and again in Sydney in representing Victoria in their winning team. On the track he represented Victoria at the Adelaide Oval at the National Championships. Jack was part of the training squad for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and during this period he ran 2 marathon trials. Placed 2nd in 7 Vic Championships both at track and cross country at a time of the golden period of distance running in this country. Jack loses count of the number of Vic Country Championships he ran but he has won over 200 times on the track or cross country. Placed 2nd in 7 Vic Championships both at track and cross country at a time of the golden period of distance running in this country and th world when you consider his regular competition was tje mile world record holder John Landy, Ron Clarke holder of 17 world records, Les Perry 6th at the 5000m Helsinki Olympics, Iharos of Humgary the 5000/10000m world record holder, Dave Stevens the 5000/10000m Australian record holder and Geoff Warren the 5000m National record holder. These details being recorded in 2016 show even with events 70 years also Jack is as sharp with his memory as ever.

2007 - John Knight

John joined the Bendigo YMCA Harriers in 1975, John won U/17 and two U/19 Victorian High Jump Titles, 1976 Bendigo High Jump Champion. In 1977 John went to Ranger College Texas USA on an Athletics Scholarship, where he was Texas High Jump Champion. John was also a 5 times Victorian High Jump Champion, as well as New South Wales Open Champion, 3 times runner up in the Australian High Jump Championships. On two occasions was flag bearer and carried the Victorian Flag for the Australian Championships. Australian Track and Field representative for the Pacific Conference Games in Canada and USA in 1985. John was Australian Team Flag Bearer for the Opening Ceremony in San Francisco, 1985. Captain of the Victorian Track and Field Captain 1986, representing Victoria in High Jump on 25 occasions whilst being an Olympic Torch Bearer in 2000. John has always been prepared to assist any club member with some coaching in High Jump and promote the club when ever he could. It was nothing for John to catch the train from Quambatook on a Saturday to compete in the High Jump for the Club. In 1984 John set a record of 2.20 metres which still stands as the Bendigo Centre Record years later.

2007 - Ken Bruechert

The club requires a write-up of this Life Member.

2007 - Alan Craven

Alan became involved with the Bendigo Harriers in the early 70's after his son went from Little Athletics to the Seniors. David Kitt encouraged me to help out at the sports centre as they were short of helpers. Alan eventually became registered as a field games official, later being selected as an official at the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane along with Ivan Kitt. He also served as president of the Harriers on one occasion and as treasurer of the regional centre for a few years and also received life membership of the centre.

2009 - Tony Fahy

Tony joined the Harriers, back in 1986. His first race was at Pieper's Hill. He has enjoyed the cross country running side with a best mark on Leon's handicapping system was 227 in 1992. Tony is renowned for understanding his mark. He has been club president for 2 years, (1991/92) and was club's media correspondent for 3 years (1987-90). Tony has represented the club on many occasions. Taking many trips down to Melbourne, where he competed for more than 10 years, from 1986-97. He has also represented the club in 29 consecutive Eaglehawk half marathons. He has also competed in 3 country championships and 1 Oceania Masters.

2010 - Frank Barr

Frank joined the Bendigo Harriers in 2006 when his grandson Phillip Clayton was awarded the junior male athlete of the year through the sports program at Weeroona College Bendigo. Frank travelled to Melbourne for coaching days conducted by National coaches which he passed on valuable hints, drills and technique advice to local athletes. Many of these athletes have gone on to become Victorian Championships and competed at National level with top 8 finalists and grandson, Philip Clayton. Notable athletes include Gayle McNaughton (former Bendigo Advertiser Sports Star monthly winner) and Tim Driesen. (Tim was an under 10 athlete when he started training with Frank and won his first state title in the discus as an under 12. Tim is now at the AIS and was the Australian Champion in the hammer). Other notable athletes to be coached by Frank to state and national medallist and representatives include Roxanne Kellow BH, Carly Mitchell BH, Bree Heiden SB, Chris Browne BH and Olivia Graham EH. Frank has donated many sashes and ribbons to Athletics Bendigo during his time. Frank continues to attend and pass on any valuable knowledge to anyone who is willing to listen.

2010 - Margaret Kitt

Margaret was a very valuable contributor around the Club for over 20 years. During the Cross-Country Season, Margaret set up the BBQ to boil the kettles so there would be hot water for tea, coffee and Milo on those cold winter afternoons. Margaret would also make sure there was milk and biscuits, cans of drinks and the odd lolly. Margaret also kept a watchful eye on some of the young children while mum and dad ran. She again catered for the needs of others when in the tent at the Club's running of the Bendigo Bank Dragon Mile with the kettle boiling and refreshments for the guests and helpers after the event. Margaret also supported the club with Centre runs taking entries, helping with results, and managing the Canteen at the track both at Epsom and the new venue at Flora Hill for over 10 years. Margaret, along with Ivan, produced and printed the club newsletter for approx. 15 years, and also had a stint as club registrar.

2017 - John Watson

I never expected to be awarded Life Membership of the Bendigo Harriers. Whenever I viewed the Honour Board, every name there was a member I admired and joining the list never entered my thoughts.

My athletic journey really started in year 12 at Wesley in 1967 when with a couple of mates I joined the cross country team. I have run at least one cross country race every year since. During the 1968 Cross Country season I joined The Collegians Cross Country Club and ran distances from 4 kilometres to 16 kilometres. At the end of the Cross Country season the secretary rang me and asked if I had considered doing track, he told me that he thought I might be suited to race walking. I accepted his invitation and while I did attempt virtually every event but hurdles I eventually settled on the walk. Apart from 2 seasons spent on the cricket field I have participated in the Track season ever since.

For Collegians I held the positions of Track Vice Captain, Cross Country Captain, Secretary and Treasurer. In 1969/70 I was awarded the most improved award. During 1970 I won a 16 kilometre handicap and in 1994 the Veteran's section of a 10 kilometre handicap.

In 1971 I entered Teacher Training College and competed for Melbourne Teacher's College in Athletics including Australian Tertiary Athletics Championships at Narabeen where in 1973 I achieved 3rd place in the Walk.

Between 1974-1977 (my 1st years of country teaching) I attempted to play football and cricket and my athletics participation was very limited.

During this period Collegians ceased to exist as a Track and Field Club. So in 1977/78 I joined Melbournians where most of Collegian's Athletes had gone. I competed regularly for them until I moved up here. I initially joined South Bendigo and competed occasionally as a second claim athlete for Old Melbournians. After a couple of years I transferred to The Harriers. By 1989 I was doing most of my Cross Country Running with the Harriers.

I have now been with The Harriers for over 30 seasons. It has been a wonderful experience. I have served the Club as Vice President including a few months as Acting President in 2017. I have made many good friends in the club, while I have slowed down considerably, my enjoyment of Cross Country and Track has remained constant. I look forward to competing each Saturday and hope that my legs will enable me to enjoy many more years with the club.

2019 – Rossi Evans

My name is Ross Evans (Rossi is a name used by my parents when I was young so I guess it stuck ever since) and well probably not much to say, but here it goes anyway.....

Yes well anyway it all started about 20 years ago after dragging myself off the couch one Saturday summers day, and heading to the athletics track; this day changed my life considerably!

Whilst at the track watching the races I had a few people 'spruiking-me' to join their club, strange I thought? One guy even asks me to join him and his mates at 7:30 am for a Sunday morning, crazy I thought!

So I did run and this was the best decision I'd made in a long while, and that changed everything for me!

I remember at the end of that long run, and by all accounts longer than planned! Paul Bennet leading the pack kept getting us lost? Paul suggested to me that with long distance running; 'you either love it, or hate it!'

Well with the biggest exhausted smile on my face I replied, well I f#%¥ing loved it!!

My parents, Nancy and Brain play a great influencing roll here: Brain taught me to be hard working and honest in life, Nancy was encouraging of volunteering work and the enjoyment of help other rather than yourself.

For me helping out in drink-vans, selling food and drinks, setting up cross country courses, fun run courses and competing for the club was not only fun and enjoyable, but very rewarding as well.

So I guess it's me that needs to thank the club (Harriers) for giving me that opportunity!!!!

Enough said here; so thanks Harriers and happy 100th in 2022.

2019 – Paul Martin

I started running after giving up squash at the age of 50. My first run with the Harriers was on 5th April 1997 (aged 51) and according to Leon I have had (so far) 325 Cross Country runs since. I run for fitness and health and to try and overcome a poor family history of heart disease.

Handicapping the juniors is a real pleasure. You see youngsters develop from being shy tiny tots to strong confident people with a joy in just pure running.

Best performance? Probably a silver medal in the Victorian State championships 50+ 3km walk.

Toughest run? 2018 Point to Pinnacle in Hobart, Half marathon up Mount Wellington that took me 3 hours, still don't know why I did it!!