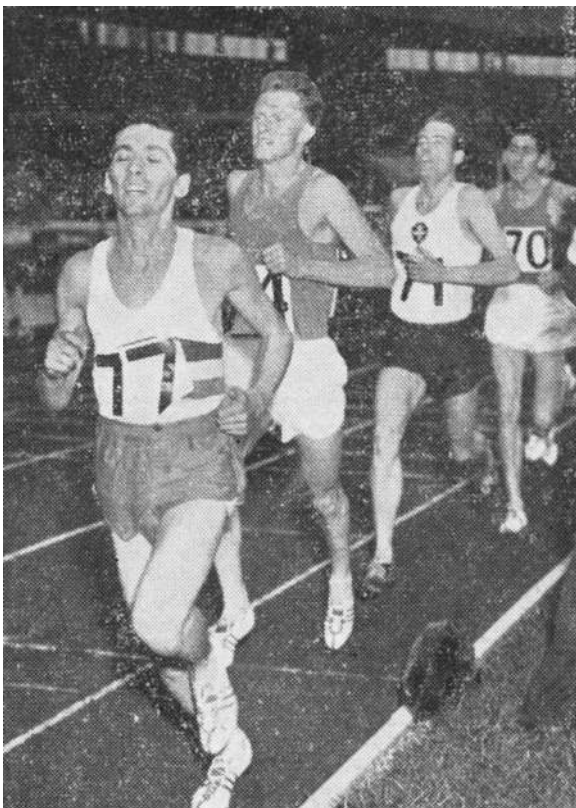


We were there - the athletes speak for themselves

Mike Blagrove, Ealing Harrier who became an international middle distance runner. Contrary to popular belief he beat Roger Bannister in the race to become the first 4 minute-miler.



Mike Blagrove leading in the world record mile in 1957, followed by Stanislav Jungwirth, Derek Ibbotson and Ron Delany.

'At the age of 10 I won a 100 yards race at school and I was really a sprinter until I was 13. Then I ran my first 880 yards and won it in 2 minutes and 13 seconds. I had joined Ealing Harriers the previous year and have stayed with the club all my life (I was made a life member about 15 years ago).'

'Also when I was about 12, my parents took me for a medical with Dr Chris Woodard in Harley Street (he was the Chief Medical Officer for the 1948 Olympic team). He told me that I would run a mile in 4 minutes when I was 23 years of age (*note: Mike did exactly that*). He became my mentor until I retired

from running and a very close friend.'

'I did my National Service in the Army from 1952-1954 and was undefeated during my Army service. From my diaries I see that in my first year back in 'civvy street' I competed in 32 races mainly over 220, 440 and 880 yards and only lost 6 times. (*note: that year Mike became Middlesex 880 yards champion with a winning time of 1:58.0*).

'By 1956 I was training 11 times each week, lunch time in Regents Park and track in the evenings. I did interval training, for instance in segments of 440 yards, fast and slow successively. Winter training consisted of 5-10 miles during the weekends over the country or the roads. I didn't have a coach as such but 'Doc' Woodard was of great help. Also I still trained on the track during the winter.'

'Spending so much time training and competing could be difficult. We were amateurs and had to earn a living. I remember that sometimes when away competing for Great Britain or England I was put on half-pay, which I found very hard. Then it became even more difficult when I got married.'

'The 1957 race at the White City when I set the pace for 2 laps in the one mile when Derek Ibbotson set the world record of 3:57.2 has been well documented. I set a hot pace to give Derek a better chance of winning from the great international field. That was achieved and it so happened that the world record went as well!'

'1958 was a really busy year. I competed for England in the British Empire and Commonwealth Games at Cardiff and for Great Britain on 3 occasions. I set a Scottish all-comers record of 2 minutes 10 seconds for 1000 yards in the Edinburgh Highland Games. I carried the Queen's message from Kensington Gardens to the White City, taking over from Roger Bannister. I was part of the England team which set a world record for 4 x one mile running the first leg in 4:05.4 and coming home in first place. Then in a one mile at the White City both Derek Ibbotson and I recorded 4:00.0 chasing home Herb Elliott (*note: the well-known quiz question when athletics enthusiasts have to explain that Mike and Derek were the first 4-minute milers – Roger Bannister, of course, being the first sub-4-minute miler!*). In all I competed in 50 races in 1958 and won 36.'

'1959 is a year I remember running in Germany several times – twice indoors (1500 metres in Dortmund where I was 2nd in 3:51.4) and Kiel (1st in 1500 metres in 4:00.9). I ran for Great Britain against East Germany - 3rd over 1500 metres in 3:49.6. That year I also ran in Poland and in Scotland where I won an international race at Ibrox Park in Glasgow over 880 yards in 1:51.3. There were also races over longer distances. I recall setting a track record of 8 minutes 57 seconds at Walton-on-Thames.'

'In 1960 it was a big disappointment to miss out of selection for the Olympics in Rome. I was suffering with an achilles tendon injury. But it was a good year as on 10 December 1960 I married the love of my

life!

'In subsequent years it was becoming more difficult to devote the necessary time to training. My priority was supporting my family. I decided to compete only for my club'.

'Today I don't have any involvement with the sport. It's lost its sparkle - the drug scene has been the ruination of the sport I loved. Time over again, I can't think I would have changed much during my running career - perhaps competed in more 2 and 3 mile races'.

David Chapman was a member of Woodford Green AC and represented Great Britain on 8 occasions at the 3000 metres steeplechase between 1959 and 1962



David Chapman No 3 on the left. No 7 on the right in Maurice Herriott

'I ran cross-country when I was at St Barnabas School, Woodford Green, then I took up race cycling. In 1952, when I was 16, I joined Woodford Green AC.'

'My first coach was Ken Bone and by 1954 I was good enough to win the club 3 miles championship, clocking 14:24 which I believe was the fastest-ever by an under 18 British athlete at that time. I began my National Service in 1955. The RAF had some leading distance runners then - for instance John Cameron, Mick Firth and Roger Dunkley - and this encouraged me to try the steeplechase.'

In 1957 David finished 4th in the AAA steeplechase, a position he repeated the following year. In 1959 he was the Inter-Counties steeplechase champion and

gained his first British vest later that year against Poland. 1960 was Olympic year. In June in Prague David recorded a personal best time of 8:50.6 for the steeplechase. He was selected to represent Great Britain in the Rome Olympics in September. As is well known, those Games were a disaster for British distance runners, but David bucked the trend running within 3 seconds of his best time in his heat although not qualifying for the final.

Two years later came the British Empire and Commonwealth Games held in Perth, Western Australia. The extreme length of the journey coupled with searing heat in Perth combined to reduce David to 5th position in 9:05.6 (he had set a personal best of 8:46.4 earlier in the season).

In 1963 David ran for his club in the London-to-Brighton road relay and has good cause to remember his achievement that day. Running Stage 9, a distance of 6 miles 52 yards part of which comprised a steep climb, he recorded 27 minutes 59 seconds, moving his team from 12th to 8th place and recording the fifth fastest time ever on that stage. The same year he won the Essex County 6 miles track championship clocking 29 minutes 15 seconds.

For some years afterwards David Chapman was inactive athletically as professional and domestic responsibilities dominated his life. But he made a comeback in the late 1960s and in 1971, at the age of 35 recorded 8:52.6 in the first AAA Championships held at Crystal Palace.

In his peak years David was training 5/6 times each week which shows a serious commitment but when I asked him 'time over again in athletics, would you change anything you did?' he replied 'in hindsight be much more professional'.

Jill Dudderidge/Lindsay was born in Hendon, north London. As a schoolgirl she showed great promise as a sprinter and jumper. She joined Middlesex Ladies AC and gained 3 British vests in 1957 over 200 metres/220 yards against France, Poland and Germany. After retiring from competitive athletics some years later she remained in the sport as an official. Below she shares her memories of a lifetime in athletics.

'At school I was good at most sports, netball, hockey and tennis in addition to athletics. From my second year at Secondary School I was winning all the events open to me. In autumn 1953, when I was 16, I joined Middlesex Ladies. We trained at Alperton track in Wembley. There was no permanent floodlighting, just trolley lamps in the winter. The following year I began to run against the seniors and I remember going down to Portsmouth to compete in the prestigious Atalanta Trophy meeting. I trained three times a week at Alperton - Tuesdays and Thursdays p.m. and Sundays a.m. During the winter, I played hockey on Saturdays and sometimes on Sundays. I also did circuit training on Wednesdays.'



Jill Dudderidge/Lindsay, No 94 on the left. No 87 is Molly Hiscox

'In 1955 I finished 3rd in the senior 220 yards at the English Schools Championships which were held in Manchester. We ran at Belle Vue on the speedway track. I remember I couldn't get my starting blocks' nails into the ground - it was concrete under an inch or so of cinders! Also in 1955 I passed my driving test so was able to drive to training and competitions. In 1956 I won the Middlesex Schools title and then the English Schools 220 yards in 25.8 at Plymouth. HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was the chief guest, I recall. I was in lane 6 with Pauline Buck (also representing Middlesex Schools) in lane 1. I was given first, she was given 2nd in the same time. Years later an Essex field official told me I hadn't won! (*In 1956 Jill also achieved 18'2" in the Long Jump which ranked her 8th in the British rankings for that year*). I enjoyed long jumping but it was obvious that I had more potential on the track so I concentrated on that.'

'I left school in July 1956 and did three months work experience and then a six-months intensive secretarial course.'

'1957 started with the Middlesex Championships where I beat Molly Hiscox in the 220 yards and was then selected with 6 others to go to the Kusocinski Memorial Games in Warsaw. I placed 4th in the 200 metres, 6th in the 100 metres and the relay team (Heather Armitage, Val Cutting, Pam Wyatt and me) won that event. This was the first time I had flown and I was amazed to be met by armed officers in the shack that was Warsaw airport.'

'It was certainly a whirlwind season and at the end of 1957 I went up to Glasgow and ran in an invitation 440 yards race in the interval of a soccer match. I won my race in 57.2 which was faster than Janet Ruff ran her race at the same meeting (*Ruff led the British rankings that year with 56.4*). Ron Jewkes who had coached me since I left school (John McAuliffe was my school coach) and I decided that in 1958 I would concentrate on the one-lap event. In 1958 the European Championships included a women's 400 metres for the first time.'

'In February 1958 I was advised to have my tonsils removed. I had been having frequent bouts of sore throat and high temperatures. In retrospect this was

not a good idea. I didn't really recover properly for the summer season and, despite improving my 400 metres time, I was not selected for either 200 or 400 for the European Championships or for the 220 yards for the Empire Games in Cardiff. I am certain that 400 metres was my best event.'

'In 1961 I ran some quite good times at 400 metres and was reserve for the autumn internationals. I enjoyed competing for the club and did a couple of 880 yards races in the early 1960's to help the club get points in the various trophy meetings which were held in those days.'

'I suppose I gave up serious running after 1961. I was married in that October. By then I was heavily involved with my father and my husband running a wholesale and retail DIY business. But I ran for the club most weeks (even doing a bit of cross-country) until the end of 1969. My first child was born in March 1969, the second in July 1970. By then I was keen to become an official. I passed my preliminary track and field exams in late 1970 and by 1977 had become a track referee. I had been club captain and treasurer of Middlesex Ladies for some years and in about 1971 started representing the club on the Middlesex committee, progressing to the Southern WAAA and eventually becoming its' secretary in about 1974. I reckon that in the late 1970's and early 1980's I was spending about 40 hours a week, either attending committee meetings, officiating at track, cross-country and road races and doing the administrative work.'

'Looking back at my competitive years, I think I should have trained more and not had my tonsils removed. I never regretted going into officiating, administration and team management.'