

Barnsley 6 1977

IT'S KENYON AT THE DOUBLE

Steve Kenyon, the 25-years-old fitting engineer from Bolton, lived up to his reputation as the Red Rum of Barnsley when he romped away with the classic Six on Sunday, for the second successive year.

And so the record of this fleet-footed England international over the four years that the race has been run, reads third, second, first and first again.

Once again it was up Old Mill Lane that the 'Lancashire Flash' sorted them out. He decided to use the same tactics as last year, and they worked a treat.

As they came round Burton's corner for the first time Trevor Wright, Graham Ellis, Les Romaine, Keith Darlow, Dave Cannon and Alwyn Dewhirst were all on Kenyon's shoulder.

They stuck with him until Old Mill Lane. Then Kenyon struck. He made his break with such decisive effect that he was well clear at the top of the climb and from there on had really only to keep going to win.

The Bolton United Harrier was clocked at 15-25 for the first lap, which means that there was a difference of only three seconds on both laps!

Although the winning time of this extremely likeable and modest athlete was at 30 mins 53 secs; some 39 seconds outside the record he set up last year, it still compares very favourably with that earlier time when one considers that this year's race was about 300 yards longer.

The start, in fact, was switched from Shambles Street to the new traffic lights outside the old College of Technology to give the crowd a better view of the cavalry-charge at the start, and it certainly made an impressive sight to remember as the huge field of around 550 sprinted down Church Street.

By the time they had successfully negotiated the right hand turn into Shambles Street and were making their way down to the Town End traffic lights Kenyon was already in the leading group, and there he stayed.

It was great to watch his beautifully economical action, and the way he tackled Old Mill Lane was incredible.

"It's Kenyon", roared the crowd as he made his first ascent. "Look at him go. He's too good for 'em".



So it proved. And that's really saying something when one considers the international quality of the field, with athletes like Trevor Wright, Vince Regan and Ron Hill trailing in his wake.

Wright, in fact, battled on to take second place in 31.17 – 24 seconds behind Kenyon. The Sheffield-born international, now running in the colours of Wolverhampton and Bilston, was also second two years ago...with Kenyon third!

Alwyn Dewhirst, of Airedale and Spen Valley, once again gave notice that he could be a future winner of the race as he continued his spectacular improvement since his first attempt in 1974, when he finished 52nd. He was 11th in 1974, fourth last year, and here he took third place in a time of 31.23.

Fourth up Old Mill Lane he produced a tremendous sprint finish to overhaul Holbeach's Les Romaine and eventually leaves him trailing by seven seconds.

Dewhirst, in fact, led Airedale and Spen Valley to victory in the team event, with John Temperton (9th) and Jim Fox (12th) packing well to beat off the challenge of Bolton United's top threesome of Kenyon, Keith Darlow and R.S. Ranicar.

Darlow, however, had the consolation of carrying off the New York and Lancaster Regiment Trophy as the first local runner across the line. The Penistone-based youth officer finished 10th – four places down on last year – in a time of 32.36.

Winner of the Barnsley Road Runners' Championship was Jim Hinchey, who was 60th in 35.25. Second was Eddie McKenzie and third Dave Bennett.

The winning local team was Barclays Bank, with Van Der Merwe, Pass and Colley their first three counters.

SECOND CAN'T BE BAD, SAYS TREVOR

Trevor Wright is in danger of becoming the Barnsley Six bridesmaid, but never the bride if he'll pardon the analogy.

For the second time in three years, the Wolverhampton and Bilston runner had to content himself with second place, behind Kenyon, whom he had pipped into third place in 1975, when Mike Tagg took the title.

"I was happy how the race went. I've been having a lot of injury problems recently, so second place can't be bad", he said afterwards.

"I was out of action from February until May and for five weeks now, I have been building up my fitness with competitive racing".

Trevor admitted that when Kenyon broke away up Old Mill Lane, he knew that there was no chance of his catching him.

“At the top, on the first lap, I was on my own in second place so I decided to let the third and fourth placed runners catch me up. It’s a lot easier running with someone than running on your own.

“However, there was no way anyone would move past me into second place. I made my effort up that hill on the second lap and moved away.

“It was great running in Barnsley. I look forward to it every year and, injuries apart; I’ll be back next year. There’s something about running in Yorkshire I like”.

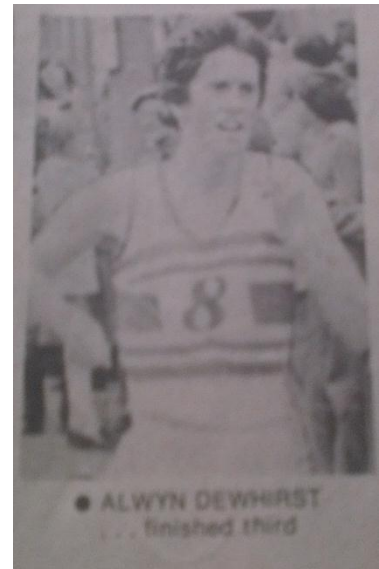
Not surprising, he was born just down the road – in Sheffield.

ALWYN JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER

It was nice to see Alwyn Dewhurst of Airedale and Spenn Valley in the first three. He has been a regular in the Six since the first race in 1974 and he has improved each time.

In fact, he has improved so much that he must surely now be fancied as a future winner of the event.

Three years ago he was 52nd, in 1975 he was 11th, last year he was fourth, and this year he took third place. When asked about next year he replied: “I’ll be back, don’t worry. It’s a great race with a great crowd. I don’t think I’ll win it. But I’ll certainly be disappointed if I’m not second!”

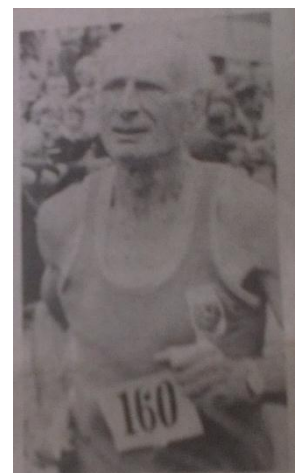


WHAT THE FANS DID NOT KNOW ABOUT 'OLD' BILL

Bill Fellows, the oldest competitor in the race, amazed spectators by completing the punishing course – including two ascents of the notorious Old Mill Lane – just three weeks before his 77th birthday.

But those same spectators will be even more astounded to learn that Bill suffers from osteo-arthritis and has to wear a corset. As he gets changed for the race he takes his corset off; then put it back on again immediately after the race is over!

“I’ve suffered with it for some time”, he said just before going up to receive an ornamental sword as this Over 70s Veterans’ prize, “but you learn to live with these things. It doesn’t affect my running.”



In fact, only the previous week Bill had competed in the International Veterans' 10,000 metres championships in Belgium and had taken second place in the Over 75s section with a time of 53 mins, 50 seconds.

"Sometimes I ask myself what the hell I'm doing running about like this at my age. And I'm sure most people must think I'm daft. But I still get a great sense of achievement in completing a race like this.

"I can't compete with these youngsters of 50 or 60, you know, but I can still complete the course. And that's the thing."

Bill was given a particularly warm reception both before and after the race and he was full of enthusiasm for the Six. "Oh, it's grand, isn't it, to have support like this. I'd give anything if we could have something like this in our area, but you can't get the same interest."

He would dearly love to return again next year – he also ran the inaugural race in 1974 – but says, "It all depends on my health."

Bill, who lives in Stalybridge, goes out training two or three times a week, doing between five and eight miles on the roads.

Asked what he thought about Old Mill Lane he replied: "It was a bit tough, but it didn't bother me all that much. When I was younger the bigger the hills, the better I used to like it!

Bill has been a member of the same club, East Cheshire Harriers, for 55 years and has "enjoyed every minute of it."

He commented: "My wife says I've been married more to the Harriers than to her. And I suppose she could be right."

Well, at least he could remember when he joined the club. When asked how long he'd been married he said: "Oh, it was somewhere around 1928 or 1929."

RECORD SHATTERED ON LONGER COURSE!

It would have been a marvellous achievement in normal circumstances for Carol Gould to shatter the Ladies' Six record by a staggering 64 seconds.

So what words are there left to describe her performance on Sunday doing exactly that over a course that was about 300 yards longer than the one on which Alison Blake set up the previous best of 38 minutes 59 seconds last year!

The admiration for the magnificent run was summed up by the reaction of the massed crowd in front of the Town Hall who gave her a tremendous reception.

Even race commentator Dave Haywood, a Northern Counties A.A.A. official, had heard nothing like it in his many years in athletics. “No wonder these athletes want to come to run in Barnsley”, he yelled excitedly as Carol raced home, “they don’t get this sort of support anywhere else in the country.”

Second behind Christine Readdy in the inaugural race two years ago, Carol stamped her authority on this year’s event from the outset and was obviously determined to go one better this time.

By Burton’s corner on the first lap she had already opened up a 20-yards gap over Suzan Hassan, a regular rival from Birchfield Harriers, as she pounded up Old Mill Lane that lead stretched even further.

In fact, it became a procession, with Gould continuing to increase her lead almost with every stride, and by the end she was 52 seconds ahead of Hassan, who also broke the previous race record with a splendid run of 38 mins 37 secs. Carol’s time was a remarkable 37 mins 55 secs.

In third place, where she stayed throughout the race, was Sue Dean of Longwood Harriers, who was second last year, but she was nearly two minutes behind Hassan in 40.35.

First local competitor was Pat Greasby, of Rockingham, who finished 11th in 47.26, and she was closely followed by club mates Kath Leathers, 12th in 48.52, and Angela Leathers, 13th in 50.17.

There was a heart-warming reception, too, for another Rockingham girl, Shirley Pickering.

Last year she seemed set to become the first Barnsley runner home when she collapsed just after tackling Old Mill Lane for the second time, and with the finishing line in sight.

She was taken to hospital, where it was discovered that her blood stream had become dehydrated of sugar content and she spent the night in Kendray hospital.

She said then that she would be back. And she made her return in style by taking the award for the Veterans.

The South Yorkshire County Council-sponsored race proved a triumph for the Rockingham Club, for they also took the team award.

CAROL DIDN’T BANK ON IT THIS TIME!

The flying feet of Carol Gould took her to the finish in record time, but because of superstitions, the Ipswich mum did not know what she had won.

When she entered the 1975 Barnsley 6, Carol, a member of Barnet Ladies A.C., though she had a good chance of winning and both she and her husband like the look of the first prize – a coffee table.

But she was beaten by Stoke's Christine Readdy. This year, Carol vowed not to look at the prize, or to find out what it was, and this year she won.

Carol's win meant a fine end to a holiday week for the Suffolk family and just rewards for the sheer hard work and dedication shown by the new champion.

As well as being a housewife and mother of two young children, the 33-years-old Yorkshire Cross Country Champion works as a part-time bank clerk yet manages to run between 50 and 60 miles a week in training, and take part in national and international races.

Three weeks ago, she and second place girl, Suzan Hassan of Birchfield Harriers, ran against each other in the Great Britain v France meeting at Nice over 3,000 metres.

On that occasion the roles were almost reversed, Suzan was first and Carol third, but over a shorter course.

Five feet 10 inches tall Carol was delighted with her win on Sunday, but not all that surprised.

"I was determined to have a real good go at it this year", she said. "I have been in quite good form recently and the weather was much cooler than last time.

"I went off quickly and Suzan stayed with me for the first two miles, but then, for some reason, she dropped back and it was just a question of keeping going and maintaining that lead".

"I was leading for quite a time back in the 1975 race, then somebody passed me. I was very disappointed that I didn't win then – I didn't intend to let it happen again".



IT'S STILL THE BEST

The Barnsley Six is still the biggest. Still the best. Of that there can be no doubt.

Not even the drizzle which started to fall during the finish of the main race could put a damper on the proceedings. The warmth of the welcome from the people of Barnsley to visitors from the length and breadth of the country shone through the gathering gloom, and watchers and participants alike went home content in the knowledge that they had spent another day to remember.

The rapport between athletes and spectators on the day of the now famous Six is something which has to be experienced to be believed. It exists in few other areas of athletics. And nowhere that we can think of in road running.

Even race commentator Dave Haywood, a Northern Counties A.A.A. official from Rotherham, was moved to exclaim at one stage: "What a reception she's getting. I've never

known anything like it in all my years in athletics. No wonder these athletes want to come to run in Barnsley!”

Not only the well-known athletes came in for the star treatment. The hundreds of local club competitors and ‘run for funners’ were cheered every inch of the way round the course – and how they revelled in it.

