

Weekend Wonder: Keep on running (part 1) Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 April 2020

Welcome to Weekend Wonder: Keep on running (part 1) - sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

This weekend, runners would have been getting ready to run and raise money in the [2020 London Marathon](#) on Sunday. But it is not to be - given the current lockdown - and the advice to participants is to keep on running and training until the proposed new date of Sunday 4 October.

In the meantime, some marathon runners are instead getting creative and, maybe inspired by Captain Tom, carrying out 'lockdown' marathons at home – doing laps of their homes, gardens or balconies even, to raise money for charity. How enterprising, how dedicated.

This weekend we thought we would turn the spotlight on another dedicated marathon and long-distance runner – a wonder of the athletic past from Haringey. [Stanley Ernest Walter Cox](#) was a Haringey Olympic competitor and one of the nation's top runners at two Olympic Games. Born in Wood Green on 15 July 1918, he grew up with his brother Harold and parents Ernest and Caroline at 93 Granville Road, N22. Ernest and Caroline had got married in 1912 at St Mark's Church, Noel Park. After marrying in 1944 in Ipswich, Stan and Audrey went to live in the old post-war prefabs at number 4 New River Gardens on White Hart Lane. From 1959 they lived at 62 Bolster Grove, N22.



The prefabs in White Hart Lane during the 1950s, looking west towards Wood Green with Alexandra Palace, high on the hill. © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive & Museum Service)

Although always a Tottenham Hotspur fan, running was his first love. He joined the Southgate Harriers Athletics Club (now Enfield and Haringey Athletics Club) to train. Over a 30 year career he competed in middle and long-distance races and represented Britain at the 1948 London Games and also Helsinki in 1952.

One of his friends at the athletics club was Norris McWhirter of the *Guinness Book of Records* / BBC Children's TV *Record Breakers* fame. Norris advised him to train in heavier shoes, so that when he competed in lighter shoes he would feel a real benefit.

In those days athletics was fully amateur. Stan's day job was as an assistant computer analyst for Standard Telephones & Cables:

"I worked about three miles from home and in the mornings I would put my running gear on and when I got to work I'd have a shower and put a suit on which I'd leave there. Then I'd eat breakfast in the canteen and go to work."

In 1948, Stan was the British Champion at six miles (now the 10,000 metres) and was an automatic choice for the British Olympic squad:

"For the actual games at Wembley - people won't believe me - I had to take a day off work, unpaid, in order to run for Britain! We were accommodated at RAF Uxbridge, but I only stayed there a couple of nights because I had to go back to work."

Wembley only had a greyhound track so the track was put down new – but only a cinder track. The sprinters had to dig holes with a trowel - no starting blocks! I think I ran the Games on the Friday and the next day I was more or less back to work! "

Here's two local newspaper articles that tell Stan's journey to the next Olympic marathon in Helsinki 1952:

Running off to Helsinki



Stan Cox, Olympic runner, who lives at New River Gardens, Wood Green, won the 20 miles Southern Counties Amateur road race at Chislehurst on Saturday.

He completed the course in 1 hour 51 mins. 56 secs., which was 10 seconds outside his own best performance for the course, and is the record. This is the third successive year in which he has won this championship.

On Friday next week Stan Cox is to fly to Helsinki to take part in a 25 km. race on 30th May in which he will be the sole British representative. His own coach, Johnny Johnson, is flying with him as team manager.

In this race the principal opposition will come from the Finnish runner Karvonen who beat Jim Peters in the Boston marathon. It will be a considerable success if Cox is able to defeat this runner.

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Running For Britain



S. E. W. COX

Running for Britain in the Olympics today (Friday) Mr. S. E. W. Cox, 4, New River - gardens, Wood Green, won't grumble if there is a spot of rain.

A slight drizzle would help keep him fresh, and keep the track firmer. Hot weather will favour his competitors in the 10,000 metres, several of whom are accustomed to warmer climates and light tracks.

Mr. Cox took with him the cordial good wishes of his fellow members of Southgate Harriers when, on Tuesday, he was "interned" with other members of the British team at the Uxbridge Olympic camp.

[From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive](#)

Stan Cox retired from competitive running in 1956, but continued to take part as a judge with the British Amateur Athletics Association. Stan and Audrey retired to

Felixstowe in 1980, the town where they had met after he had been posted there briefly during the Second World War.

Stan dreamed of appearing at the 2012 Olympics in his home city of London.

"I shall be 94 in 2012, and, if I feel like I do now then, I'd like to take part in some way. I'd like to carry the torch even if it's just for 100 yards and hand over to the one who lights the flame. That's my ambition and it would be quite a story, wouldn't it?"

In November 2011, we spoke to Stan on the phone and invited him to come to the Museum in May 2012, a while before the start of the London 2012 Olympic Games. He was thrilled to be invited and delighted to take part. Very sadly, though, none of this happened, as he [passed away at 93](#), only a few short weeks before the start of the 2012 Games.

Stan is of course not the only exceptional athlete to hail from Haringey – and we will be returning to some of the amazing stories of other runners, athletes and sports people in future posts.

Although some of you might be contemplating your own ‘stay-at-home’ marathon (and if you are, please do let us know), but if you are not up to running, here’s the link to some more gentle exercising that you might wish to follow on video workouts, from the [council website](#).

Until next week - stay safe, stay healthy and stay at home.

Best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

Deborah Hedgecock
Curator

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