

Top Honour for Bernie

Congratulations to Bernie Hercock upon being selected as President of Enfield & Haringey AC at the Club's AGM on 28th September. The Spotlight on Bernie Hercock which appeared in the Christmas issue of 2007 Enfield Walker is reproduced here.

Spotlight on Bernie Hercock *winner of the 2007 Ken Easlea Cup*

Born 29th October 1936, Bernie started running when he was at school and joined Ponders End AC on 13th May 1953 as a sprinter and won the junior 100yards and placed third in the junior 220 and junior discus. In 1965 the club amalgamated with Enfield AC to form Borough of Enfield Harriers and twenty-four years later with Haringey to become Enfield & Haringey AC.

It was during his national service that Bernie switched from sprinting to longer distances representing his battalion at cross country running and track events over 880 yards. Bernie's first road race was the 1959, Westerham 10 miles in which he clocked 58.10 and following a two year apprenticeship at the road running game he bettered two hours, 1.59.30 over twenty miles when tackling Hayes, Kent open in 1962. In the same year he decided to have a go at the marathon, choosing the famous Poly Windsor to Chiswick event to make his debut. He recalls the thrill that the race was started by HM The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh in the private grounds of the castle. His time was 2.56.22.

After his flirt with the longer distances he concentrated on road and country, his real passion being road relays like the Leyton-Southend, London –Brighton and Bristol – Weston. Over the ensuing decade and a half, he got so wrapped up in his running that he found himself training six days a week, clocking up in excess of one hundred miles. All this hard work along with Bernie's obvious talent produced an impressive list of pb's: 5 miles 24.56, 6 miles 28.59, 10 miles 53.08, 20 miles 1.50.50, half marathon 71.21, 25km 1.26.31 and 2.26.31 in the Manchester Maxol marathon. In addition he won club track championships completed several of the Orion 15 miles cross country races where his best performance was third place, did the occasional longer event and even the Woodford – Southend 38 mile ultra-classic in 4.14.11.

In the late seventies and early eighties with work and home commitments increasing and three accidents it was inevitable that his running career would taper off. He was knocked down by a car whilst training and although unconscious for several hours, was fortunate to get away with just severe bruising. Although he made a good recovery, he was never quite the same and gave up marathon running in 1983 when he finished outside 3 hours in the London race. He continued running regularly although the effects of back and hand injuries coupled with the *anno domini* factor, he reached the point where running was painful, even though he had cut down drastically the distances and frequency of his training.

Watching an *Enfield League* fixture reminded him of a four race affair he had had with race walking in his early twenties and after helping at subsequent races, decided on 9th October 2004 to turn out and have a go. The distance was just 5km which he found wasn't too painful and so a month later did the open seven. Since then he has become a regular, this year turning out to represent the club on a staggering forty-five occasions at distances from 2km to 50km. Bernie says that he is grateful to all the *League* people whose encouragement, advice and support has enabled him not only to pick up his athletic career, but look forward to continuing it. However, I know from personal experience that he is also a tireless behind the scenes worker for the club and the *League* and that those same people are grateful to him for his contribution to the *League's* success.

In more recent times, Bernie has had some serious health problems, but has overcome them and the tenacity that has enabled this, is demonstrated by his determination to keep taking part and having his name in the ERWL results lists.