

Blackpool and Fylde Athletic Club seem to have held their first meeting in July at the Athletic Grounds. Some 2,500 spectators were present to watch cycle races and handicap races for boys, open flat handicap running races and cycle races for any clubs who wished to compete. There was an open cross-country race (in summer) which attracted teams from Salford, Blackburn, Crews and Blackpool (this could have been the Harriers). Both Clubs joined forces during that year to host meetings on Wednesday nights each month. As part of these meetings a handicap race was held each time. A 'Grand Theatre Challenge Cup' was the prize for this and anyone winning the race on three successive occasions got to keep the trophy. On Friday evenings the Harriers hosted some athletic festivals.

Trouble began to strike Blackpool and Fylde Athletic Club during 1895. The Athletic Grounds Company asked for an increase in the rent from the Club for the use of their facilities. After a lengthy debate the Club agreed to the Ground's terms and raised its payments to £55 a year. Members now had to pay extra to play tennis and bowls as well as having to pay an increased subscription which now stood at 10s 6d.

Whether this increase in subscription or an increase in hostility between the Athletic Grounds Company, was to blame remains to be seen, but in the same year the Club was wound up. No further accounts from the Club can be found after this date. The life of the Blackpool and Fylde Athletic Club was a brief one of one year.

BLACKPOOL HARRIES CLUB

First Athletics Meeting on Friday

There would be a gathering of about 1,000 persons at the Royal Palace Gardens on Friday afternoon, when the first-athletics festival promoted by the members of the Blackpool Harriers Club, was held. Excellent arrangements had been made, and the competitions in the various events were started without any loss of time, so that the pleasure of the spectators was thereby greatly enhanced. To the energetic honorary secretary, Mr A. E. Taylor much credit is due for the excellent manner in which he organized in order to secure the success of the meeting. Altogether there were 126 entries for the 24 events in the programme, and the majority of these took part in the contests. Results:

One Mile Flat Harriers (included in members of the club) 1. J. J. W. Hartley, 2. J. J. Hartley, 3. J. J. Hartley, 4. J. J. Hartley, 5. J. J. Hartley, 6. J. J. Hartley, 7. J. J. Hartley, 8. J. J. Hartley, 9. J. J. Hartley, 10. J. J. Hartley, 11. J. J. Hartley, 12. J. J. Hartley, 13. J. J. Hartley, 14. J. J. Hartley, 15. J. J. Hartley, 16. J. J. Hartley, 17. J. J. Hartley, 18. J. J. Hartley, 19. J. J. Hartley, 20. J. J. Hartley, 21. J. J. Hartley, 22. J. J. Hartley, 23. J. J. Hartley, 24. J. J. Hartley, 25. J. J. Hartley, 26. J. J. Hartley, 27. J. J. Hartley, 28. J. J. Hartley, 29. J. J. Hartley, 30. J. J. Hartley, 31. J. J. Hartley, 32. J. J. Hartley, 33. J. J. Hartley, 34. J. J. Hartley, 35. J. J. Hartley, 36. J. J. Hartley, 37. J. J. Hartley, 38. J. J. Hartley, 39. J. J. Hartley, 40. J. J. Hartley, 41. J. J. Hartley, 42. J. J. Hartley, 43. J. J. Hartley, 44. J. J. Hartley, 45. J. J. Hartley, 46. J. J. Hartley, 47. J. J. Hartley, 48. J. J. Hartley, 49. J. J. Hartley, 50. J. J. Hartley, 51. J. J. Hartley, 52. J. J. Hartley, 53. J. J. Hartley, 54. J. J. Hartley, 55. J. J. Hartley, 56. J. J. Hartley, 57. J. J. Hartley, 58. J. J. Hartley, 59. J. J. Hartley, 60. J. J. Hartley, 61. J. J. Hartley, 62. J. J. Hartley, 63. J. J. Hartley, 64. J. J. Hartley, 65. J. J. Hartley, 66. J. J. Hartley, 67. J. J. Hartley, 68. J. J. Hartley, 69. J. J. Hartley, 70. J. J. Hartley, 71. J. J. Hartley, 72. J. J. Hartley, 73. J. J. Hartley, 74. J. J. Hartley, 75. J. J. Hartley, 76. J. J. Hartley, 77. J. J. Hartley, 78. J. J. Hartley, 79. J. J. Hartley, 80. J. J. Hartley, 81. J. J. Hartley, 82. J. J. Hartley, 83. J. J. Hartley, 84. J. J. Hartley, 85. J. J. Hartley, 86. J. J. Hartley, 87. J. J. Hartley, 88. J. J. Hartley, 89. J. J. Hartley, 90. J. J. Hartley, 91. J. J. Hartley, 92. J. J. Hartley, 93. J. J. Hartley, 94. J. J. Hartley, 95. J. J. Hartley, 96. J. J. Hartley, 97. J. J. Hartley, 98. J. J. Hartley, 99. J. J. Hartley, 100. J. J. Hartley, 101. J. J. Hartley, 102. J. J. Hartley, 103. J. J. Hartley, 104. J. J. Hartley, 105. J. J. Hartley, 106. J. J. Hartley, 107. J. J. Hartley, 108. J. J. Hartley, 109. J. J. Hartley, 110. J. J. Hartley, 111. J. J. Hartley, 112. J. J. Hartley, 113. J. J. Hartley, 114. J. J. Hartley, 115. J. J. Hartley, 116. J. J. Hartley, 117. J. J. Hartley, 118. J. J. Hartley, 119. J. J. Hartley, 120. J. J. Hartley, 121. J. J. Hartley, 122. J. J. Hartley, 123. J. J. Hartley, 124. J. J. Hartley, 125. J. J. Hartley, 126. J. J. Hartley.

Figure 5.

Blackpool Harriers was the most successful Club in the town and regularly in their first year reported on their activities in the local press. They organised a Club Championships in their first year, which was a five mile cross-country race. The Club was primarily a cross-country club, hence the title Harriers. It took place on Christmas Day at 10.30 in the morning. In a report in the Blackpool Gazette on the 21st December it was noted that the Club had to move the start time back to the 10.30 position due to the taking place of a football match at Raikes Hall. The Club had already found out that runners were easily distracted from Club activities by other sports. In a report also in December, the Club complained of a poor turn out to their weekly club run because members were playing football and some were boxing. This complaint is still heard today, but you won't come across many runners that are boxers in 1995!

The Harriers often complained about poor turn-outs for club runs. The Club would have a Club run in the truest sense. A training run was organised each week and members would meet at various public houses in the Fylde. The Grosvenor Hotel, the Halfway House and the Golden Ball in Poulton are three that are mentioned. The run would be engaged in by all the Club. The Club was not multipartite as the Club is today. Runners needed each other to train with and took up the opportunity when it arose. It was only those who had less commitment to the one sport who the Club used to lose to other sporting activities. These athletes not turning up for the Club run was a main gripe for the Harriers in the early days.

In November of 1894, a normal Club run was interrupted by a woman who was taken aback to see men running over her fields. The Gazette reported that the runners stopped for the woman who thought the runners looked exhausted. She

offered them some tea, which they accepted, commenting in the paper that they wished there was more women like her! (An example of how not everyone knew of this sport called 'cross-country' in 1894).

On one or two occasions the Harriers were possibly joined on some of their runs by boys from Rossall School. It was reported that the "Rossall College Boys" were due to join the Harriers on a run, but no reports confirm that they actually did so.

THE BLACKPOOL HARRIERS

Christmas Handicap.

The Blackpool Harriers ran their annual five mile Christmas Handicap on Saturday, from their headquarters, the Grosvenor Hotel, Crompton-street, under most wretched climatic conditions, a drifting rain prevailing from about 11 o'clock, which, to a great extent, interdicted with the interest which would have been taken in the event.

The start was along Crompton-street, Warbreck-road, via Stephens, to the Coe-vent, along Dickenson-road, and then to headquarters. Fifteen numbers occupied A. E. Tyson, the captain, figured as scratch, whilst the limit men had five minutes' start. The following were the handicaps:—Beckham, 5 min.; S. Cohen, T. Northover, Bellars, J. Harrison, and J. Booth 3 min.; W. Crompton and Toffler, 2 min. 30 sec.; J. Sani and H. Roman, 2 min.; W. Tidewood, 1 min. 45 sec.; A. E. Tyson, scratch.

The winner of the handicap was young Dewhurst, one of the limit men, he having maintained the most of his advantage, and won by about forty yards from Johnson, who came second, whilst Roman was third, Tyson fourth, Best fifth, and W. Crompton sixth.

The president of the club, Mr. Bert Walker, acted as referee and timekeeper. The prizes were generously given by the following:—Messrs. Addison and Co., Mr. W. J. Griffiths (Trove Club), Mr. Messers Holt, Mr. B. Walker, Mr. J. Bell, and Mr. J. Hasted.

At eight o'clock in the evening the members and friends sat down to a very good supper provided by the hostess, Mrs. Walker, and full notice was done to the report. Afterwards songs were accompanied by Messrs. J. Fyfe, A. Evans, E. Howard, W. Messers, J. Linn, W. Cox, and F. Smith. Mr. Albert Youngs ably presided at the piano. A most enjoyable evening was brought to a close by a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs. Walker and Mr. Bert Walker.

Figure 6. A Club activity in 1898.

The Christmas Handicap is still organised today and has a very similar format.