

History of Western Suburbs Athletic Club

The following is a brief history of Western Suburbs Athletic Club.

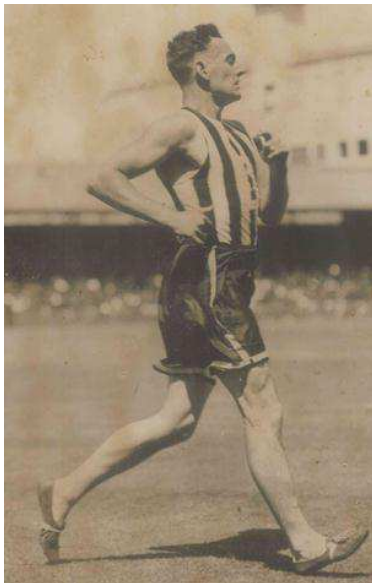
1904 - 1914

On Friday evening 8th July, 1904 a meeting was held at the Federal Hall, Burwood for the purpose of forming the Western Suburbs Amateur Athletic Club. A week later the Club was officially affiliated with the N.S.W.A.A.A. The Club colours of black and white were adopted with the home ground being St Luke's Park at Concord.

Mr Edwin Faris Ings was the Club's first President while John Darvall-Hunt was the first Honorary Secretary. John Darvall-Hunt was also the Club's first State Champion winning the 880 yards Championship of N.S.W. at the R.A.S. Showgrounds on the 1st January, 1906.

On 21st September, 1912 the Governor of N.S.W. opened Pratten Park, Ashfield and this became the track and field home of Western Suburbs A.A.C. until 1932.

1914 - 1924



At the 1920 Olympic Games held in Antwerp a Club member, George Parker competed for Australia in the 3,000m Walk finishing second in 13min. 19.6sec.

George Parker

1924 - 1934

In 1924-25 the N.S.W.A.A.A. commenced the Men's A Grade Inter-Club Competition and Western Suburbs A.A.C. were the premiership winner of the P.E. Thompson Cup.



Winners Thompson Cup, 1924-25

At the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, A.W. Winter competed in the Triple Jump and then at the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Miss Eileen Wearne competed in the 100m.

In 1932 the Women's Section of the Club was disbanded to give effect to a resolution of the N.S.W.A.A.A. The Western Suburbs Women's Amateur Athletic Club was formed and were one of the first Clubs to help form the N.S.W. Women's A.A.A. The men and women would remain separated for almost 50 years.

On 21st September, 1932 the Club transferred track and field activities from Pratten Park, Ashfield to St Luke's Oval, Concord.

The outstanding athletes of the decade were Adrian Button and M.J. (Jeff) McKenzie. Adrian Button won multiple State titles including the Decathlon and was an Australian Champion in the Long Jump. Jeff Mackenzie won numerous State Cross Country titles in the 1920s.

1934 – 1944

The Club's athlete of the decade was ex-Maitland hurdler Sid Stenner. Amongst his achievements were, in 1935-36 the winning of all three State hurdling titles (120 yards, 220 yards and 440 yards) and winning the Australian 120 yards Hurdles title.

1944 – 1954

The Club's athlete of the decade was John Plummer. In 1948 he won both the N.S.W. 5 miles Novice and N.S.W. 10,000m Cross Country Championships and in following years won multiple State titles both Winter and Summer including the State 1 mile Championship from 1949 to 1952. He represented Australia at the 1950 Empire Games.

1954 – 1964

At the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne the Western Suburbs athletes competing were: Dave Power, Keith Ollerenshaw, Graham Thomas, Ray Land, Ron Gray, Neville Gadsden, Betty Cuthbert (3 gold medals), Marlene Mathews, Gloria Cooke and Maureen Wright.



1964 – 1974

At the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Bob Lay made the semi-finals of the Men's 100m.

In 1965 Merv Lee-Archer became President of the Club, a position he held for 25 years until 1990. Merv joined the Club in 1947 and was a talented sprinter in the 1940s and 1950s. He has was Honorary Secretary from 1953 to 1957 and held a number of other positions in the Club at various times over the years including Honorary Treasurer and was a member of the Club Committee until 2010. He also contributed enormously to the State Association, holding many positions.

At the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City the Club was represented by Frank Clark in the 20km Road Walk and the 50km Road Walk.

Frank Clark



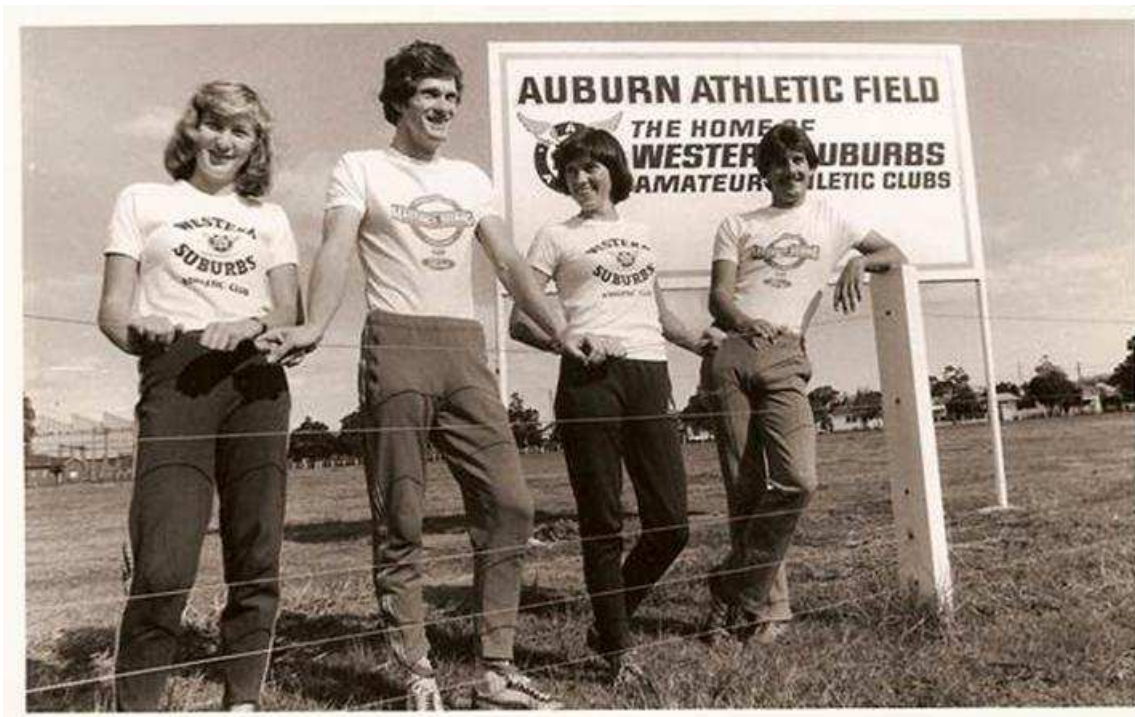
The 17th of March, 1974 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Arthur J. Hodsdon joining the Club on 17th March, 1924. He was a talented middle distance and cross country runner but his most notable achievements were as an official. He was Honorary Secretary of the Club for a dozen seasons after 1929 and was the Club's Treasurer for 40 years from 1934 to 1974. For many years he was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Athletic Union of Australia and member of the I.A.A.F.

Arthur Hodsdon

1974 – 1984

In the 1978-79 Season the Women's Club amalgamated with Western Suburbs A.A.C.

In 1979 the Club secured the Auburn Athletic Field for its headquarters moving from Concord Oval.



Auburn Athletic Field, Wyatt Park

At the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, the Club was represented by Debbie Wells in the 100m.

1984 – 1994

For the 1984 Olympic Games held in Los Angeles, two Club members, Fred Martin and Debbie Wells, were selected to represent Australia. Fred competed in the 100m and 200m but Debbie did not run.

In 1985 a relationship was formed with Asics Tiger with the Club being known as Tiger Wests and then later Asics Wests.

At the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul the Club was represented by Maree Holland who made the Final of the Women's 400m.

During this decade the Club won the Men's Inter-Club A grade premiership on 8 occasions.

1994 – 2004

Jane Jamieson competed in the Heptathlon at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Club members representing Australia at the 2000 Olympics were Jane Jamieson and Matt Shirvington. Matt Shirvington reached the semi-finals of the 100m, being the Club's and Australia's first male athlete to do so since Bob Lay in 1964. Keiran Noonan was also selected in the Olympic squad but did not compete. Other Club members competing at the 2000 Olympics, for Tonga, were Tolutau Koula and Siulolo Liku.

By the end of this decade, of the 80 Seasons from 1924-25 the Club had won the Men's Inter-Club Open A grade premiership on 42 occasions.

2004 –

In 2004 Don Brodie became the Club's President, a position he held until 2013. Don joined the Club in December 1945 and has been continuously involved with the Club since that time. He was an active athlete through to the early 1980s, began coaching while still competing and has provided service in many other capacities. Don and his wife Elvina are both Life Members of the Club.

At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, Joel Milburn competed in the 400m and the 4 x 400m.

In 2011, Jake Stein was the Gold Medal winner in the Octathlon at the World Youth Championships in Lille, France.

For the 2012 Olympic Games held in London, two Club members were selected in the Australian Team. Beki Lee competed in the 20km Road Walk while Joel Milburn was selected for the 4 x 400m but did not run.

There have been many other great athletes from the Club over the years, Junior, Senior and Masters with many State and Australian champions and record holders and representation at Olympics, Commonwealth Games, World Championships and also at the Paralympics.

Michael Doggett

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