

Mike Rowbottom

This album has been compiled in recognition of Mike Rowbottom retiring from his role as President of Tonbridge Athletic Club, in November 2011.

The contents have been gathered from friends, colleagues and athletes that Mike has coached and helped, all of whom wished to express their gratitude for the support he has given them.

The messages, articles and photographs represent just a very small part of Mike's career in athletics.

Mike has helped hundreds, if not thousands of people over the years, through the various roles that he has held at Skinners School, within the Kent Athletics Association, Kent Schools Athletics Association, Tonbridge Athletic Club and in other roles.

Mike, we would all just like to say a big Thank You for all you have done for us !

‘Mike’

This drawing was completed by Chris Lloyd in November 2011. Mike coached Chris as both a member of Judd School and Tonbridge Athletic Club teams



Mike Rowbottom

Extract From The Puffer (Tonbridge Athletic Club newsletter)

Issue 15 – April 1974

Like almost all athletes, Mike Rowbottom first became involved in athletics at school enjoying mostly cross country while at Kingston-upon-Thames G.S. His best achievements however, were on the track, winning both the L.A.C. schools and Surrey G.S. 880yds championships and representing London schools against Paris schools at the same distance. His p.b. at 880yds during school life was 2m 0.4s.

National Service interrupted Mike's athletics from 1952 – 1954, where his duties as a pilot diverted his interests and kept him busy. However, he did reach the R.A.F. National Championship finals at 880yds and 1 mile on almost no training.

In 1954 Mike Rowbottom entered Cambridge University and this gave him the opportunity to take athletics seriously to learn the art of running and more particularly, to train regularly. As a result he represented Cambridge v Oxford for the four years he was there, either at 1 mile or 880yds and also the combined Oxford and Cambridge teams versus the USA Universities combined team. Mike set his best ever times during this period of 4m 10.3s for 1 mile and 1m 53.3s for 880yds. However his most cherished performance was in the Cambridge 4 x 880yds relay team which averaged 1m 54.6s per man in the middle of November to better the U.K. club record. Acknowledgement of Mike's athletics was given when he gained his A.A.A. vest in a representative 1 mile race in Dublin.

At cross country Mike was always in the Cambridge team, being captain for one year and winning the U.K. Universities team title for that year.

On leaving university in 1958, Mike Rowbottom came to Tunbridge Wells to teach and joined T.A.C. almost immediately. Owing to the lack of track facilities he turned his attention to cross country, where he was consistently in the first 20 of the Kent Championships. Still, however, managing to win the Kent 880yds title three times, until injury forced a temporary retirement in 1960.

A year later he made a come-back and ran some fast track times out of the blue on no training. This encouraged him and things started to go well again, as the following year – 1962 – he made the Kent cross country team, won the 880yds title and represented the county in other matches. 1963 was just as impressive, making the Kent cross country team again with 3rd place and being first Kent man home in the inter-counties and recording a 4m 12.0s mile in second place behind Bruce Tulloh.

Achilles tendon trouble brought Mike Rowbottom's competitive athletics to a halt in 1963 and since then he has had to be content with coaching, which he enjoys very much, and just playing around in the occasional race. His statistical record concluded as follows: 100yds – 10.6s, 220yds – 23.2s, 440yds – 51.0s, 880yds – 1m 53.3s, 1 mile – 4m 10.3s, 2 miles – 9m 0.20s, 3 miles – 15m 10s.

Administratively Mike has played a significant part in club life being on the committee, Hon. Sec., Fixtures Sec., and Chairman between 1962-66 and then again Chairman from 1970-74. Looking back, Mike says he feels a little cheated to have his career cut short by injury, but has enjoyed it immensely and still gets a lot out of athletics. Again in retrospect he wished that he could have concentrated more on 880yds at university, but team commitments kept him to the mile. Nevertheless, Mike Rowbottom has established himself as a respected top class athlete, an example to any young athlete with whom his profession brings him into such close contact.

Courier Newspaper Winter 1959

Ray Curtis donated these newspaper cuttings from 1959, all of which mention the competitive cross country success that Mike was having at this time.

ATHLETICS 5.12.59.

LOST SENIOR BUT WON JUNIOR

FOR the first time for several years, Tonbridge Athletic Club organised a senior and junior cross-country match on Saturday. The home club lost the senior match to Hove A.C. by 13 points to 9, but won the junior match against Skinners' School by 35 points to 43.

Even though Mike Rowbottom, of Tonbridge, was the individual winner of the senior match, in a fine time of 32 mins. 25 secs., Hove A.C. bunched well to gain second, third and fourth places, thus depriving Tonbridge of any chance of winning.

Dave Johnson, the individual winner of the junior match, in a time of 18 mins. 30 secs., was well supported by the remainder of the team to give the home club a win.

Tonbridge placings were—Seniors: M. Rowbottom (1st), R. Curtis (5th), C. Mills (7th), M. Rayner (8th) and S. Twort. Juniors: D. Johnson (1st), D. Wills (3rd), D. Nutley (5th), R. Ashwin (7th), D. Green (9th), and N. Twort (10th).

ATHLETICS 17.10.59.

TONBRIDGE BEAT THE BANK

ON Saturday at Warlingham, Surrey, Tonbridge Athletic Club defeated a strong Bank of England team by 35 points to 43 over 4½ miles cross country. Mike Rowbottom, of Tonbridge, took the lead soon after the start and strode away from his nearest rival, Page of the Bank, to win in 25 mins. 16 secs. with a lead of 45 seconds.

Close behind were Terry Kinchen and Clyde Mills, of Tonbridge A.C. (3rd and 4th places), and only three more Bank of England runners were allowed to finish before the remainder of the Tonbridge scoring team of six, Ray Curtis, Dave Johnson and Derek Nutley (8th, 9th and 10th places), packed in. Robert Jarvis following closely finished 12th, the remaining Tonbridge runners, Mike Rayner and Robert Ashwin finishing 16th and 21st.

Surrey Beagles, the hosts, were unable to field a complete scoring team.

Next Saturday Tonbridge A.C. entertain Maidstone A.C. in a Kent League match on their home course, and fielding the strongest team they have had for several years, Tonbridge stand every chance of defeating a club much fancied for the league championships. Tonbridge Athletic Club lost their last league match against Orpington by 9 points to 11, the race having resulted in a draw. Orpington won by their last man finishing before Tonbridge's last.



24.10.59
ATHLETICS
**CLUB AND COURSE
RECORDS BROKEN**

TONBRIDGE A.C. were heavily defeated in a Kent League match on Saturday by an exceptionally strong Maidstone A.C. team.

Both clubs were at full strength; although the Tonbridge team packed well together the six scoring members of the Maidstone team finished in the first eight places.

The race was an outstanding individual win for Mike Rowbottom who broke both the club and course records in 31 mins. 33 secs. Rowbottom had a hard struggle with Mike Chapman and R. Gibson of Maidstone, the latter was dropped about 2 miles from home, but Chapman, running strongly, still had a four yards lead a mile from the finish.

Finishing strongly Mike Rowbottom passed Chapman in the last half-mile and won by a clear six seconds.

Mike Rowbottom, a former Cambridge blue and a member of the well-known Achilles Club, was Kent County half-mile champion in 1958, this year although finishing in a faster time he was only placed 4th; he was reserve for the Kent Cross Country team earlier this year but on his present performance he should be sure of winning a County vest next January.

Clyde Mills was the second Tonbridge man to finish, placed 7th in 33 mins. 9 secs.

The remainder of the Tonbridge scoring team packed in well together, Frank Hughes 12th, Ray Curtis 13th, Ken Lancaster 14th, Dave Johnson 16th, and Terry Kincher 17th, all finishing within 14 minutes. Derek Nutting, Mike Rayner, Dave Green and Stan Twort, the remaining Tonbridge runners, all finished strongly in 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 25th places.

Maidstone won the match by 58 points to 63 points and gained 13 league points to Tonbridge A.C.'s 5 points (for the individual winner). Tonbridge meet Kent A.C. in their next league match at Bromley on Saturday and hope to regain some of their lost points.

7.11.59
ATHLETICS
**PIRIE WAS A
SPECTATOR**

THOUGH Tonbridge Athletic Club finished in 22nd position in the Redhill and Reigate A.C. annual cross country relay on Saturday, it can be considered a good performance. It was an improvement of six places on the previous year.

The strength of the competition was such that the victors, from Surrey A.C. set up a new course record of 62 min. 10 sec. South London Harriers and Brighton A.C. also fielded strong teams.

Brighton were placed second, thanks to a notable performance by international Hugh Ford, who returned the fastest individual time with a lap of 9 min. 56 sec. South London Harriers felt the absence of Gordon Pirie, who, however, was among the spectators.

Tonbridge, not at full strength, returned the following times in six laps of 2½ miles each: Gerry Loveday, 11 min. 59 sec.; Mike Rowbottom, 10-50; Ray Curtis, 11-42; Clyde Mills, 11-12; Len Lancaster, 11-51; Terry Kinchen, 11-25; total 66 min. 59 sec.

Tonbridge owed much to Mike Rowbottom's effort for he brought them up from 45rd to 23rd, while Ken Lancaster, in his best form, pulled up three places during his lap.

Tonbridge also ran in the youth race, but one member failed to turn out and there was insufficient time to produce a replacement. The three kept their team in 20th place after three laps of 1½ miles each. They were: Derek Nutting, 9 min. 48 sec.; Colin Penrose, 9-41; Dave Johnson, 9-41.

On Saturday, Tonbridge entertain newly-formed East Grinstead in a friendly match over the home course.

1960s

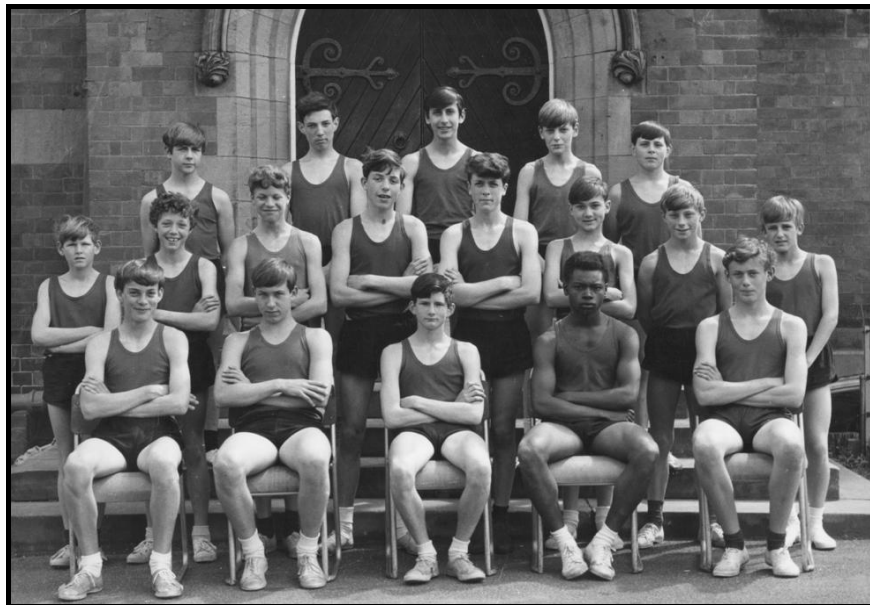
During the 1960s Mike was Chairman of Tonbridge Athletic Club between 1963 and 1965

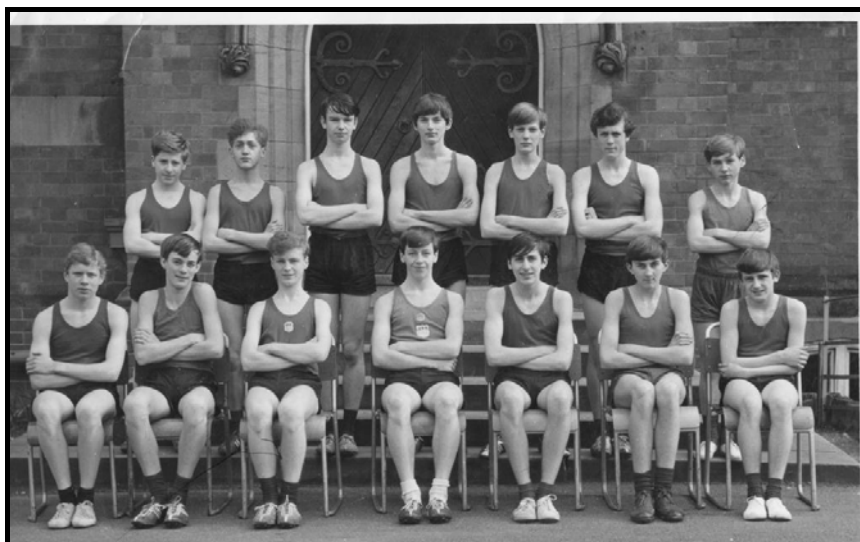
He was also fixtures secretary in 1963 and at Skinners School was building the strong reputation they had in cross country and athletics

Skinners School Cross Country Teams from the 1960s

The two photographs were supplied by Tim Hanford, who appears in both of them. Tim was a member of Skinners' teams and also a member of Tonbridge Athletic Club, who he continued with as a senior.

Tim is pictured on the front row, far right of the bottom photograph, sitting next to Andy Sharp, who also developed into a very good senior athlete.





Newspaper articles from 1967

The newspaper articles are from The Courier and The Advertiser and were supplied by Tim Hanford.

(Sorry could not copy)

1970s

During the 1970s Mike was Chairman of Tonbridge Athletic Club between 1971 and 1973 and Coaching Secretary between 1977 and 1983

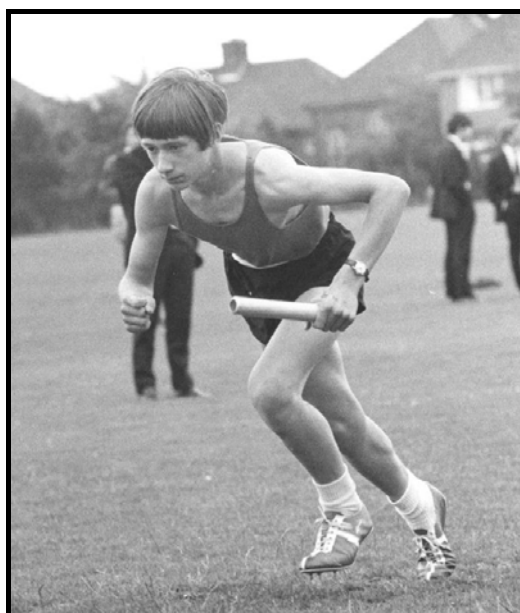
Amongst various team manager roles he oversaw a strong club team in the National Young Athletes League

These photographs were supplied by Dave Reece, who now lives in Germany, but who was a member of Skinners' School teams and competed for Tonbridge Athletic Club

Photographs of Dave Reece Skinners Vs Judd School athletics match 1970

Sprint start – John Rogers in lane 1, Dave Reece in lane 2

Relay – Dave Reece with baton in 4 x 200 metres relay



Skinners School Cross Country Teams from the 1973/4

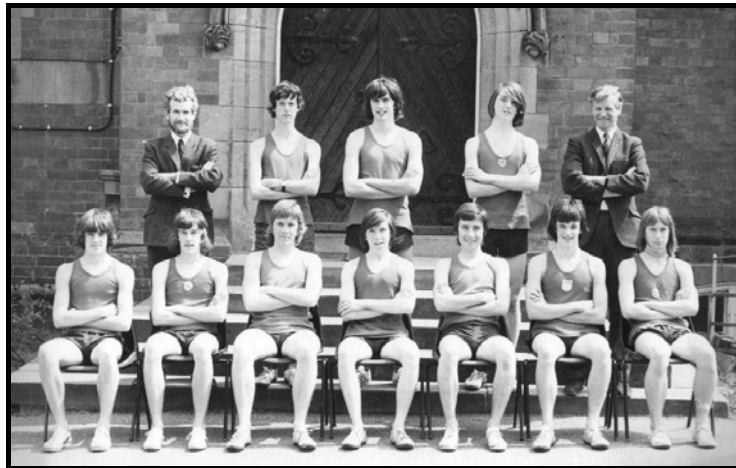
Skinners School Senior Cross Country Team 1973/4

Back Row

**Mr Colin Craven, Kevin Ashby, Paul Glenister, Steve Maynard,
Mr Mike Rowbottom**

Front Row

**Stuart Paterson, Nigel Sayer, Steve Kemp, Julian Haynes (captain),
Roger Delves, Nevill Brown, Dave Reece**



Skinners School Senior District Cross Country Team 1974

**Kemp, Sayer, Maynard, Haynes, Ashby, Paterson, Brown
(Delves missing)**



Skidders Vs Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School at Cross Country 1974
Junior Boys Race
Paul Johnson (C&S), Nick Young, Chris Rose

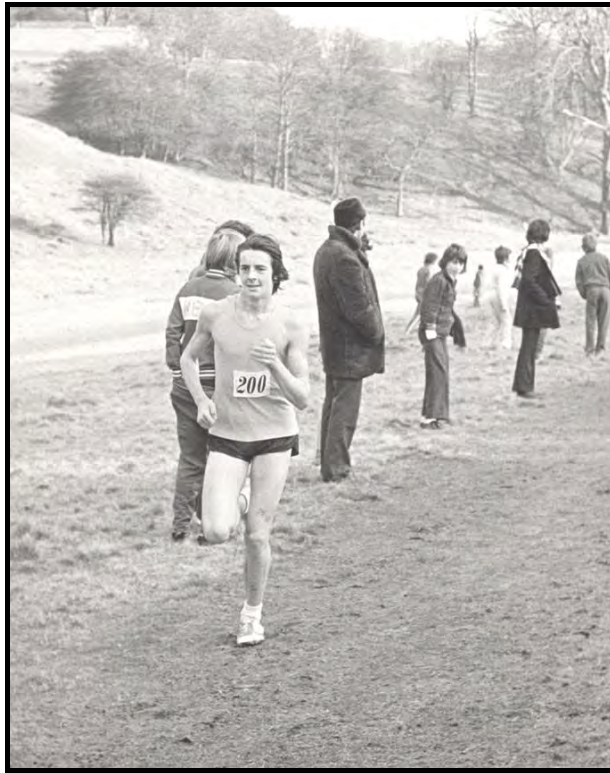


South West Kent District Cross Country Championships 1974
Cain Bradley (Junior Boys)
Jeremy Sands (Junior Boys)
James Miller (Sevenoaks) and Chris Rose (Junior Boys)

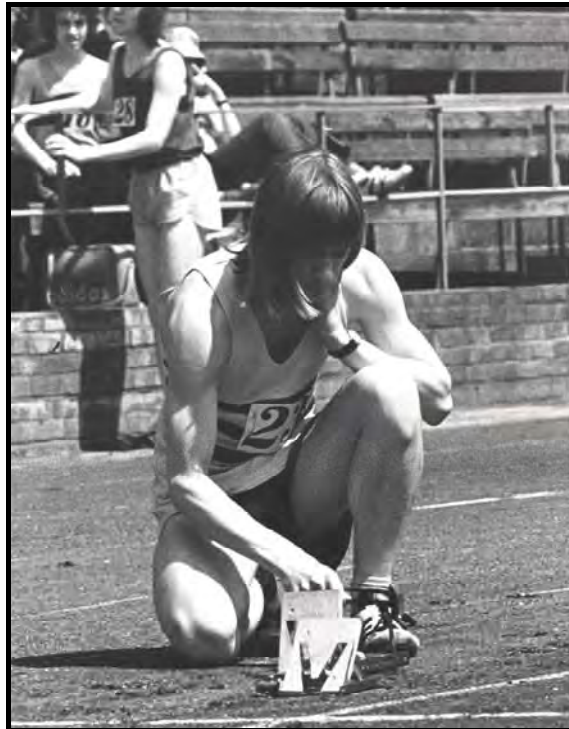




Kent Schools Cross Country Championships 1974
Stuart Paterson 9th



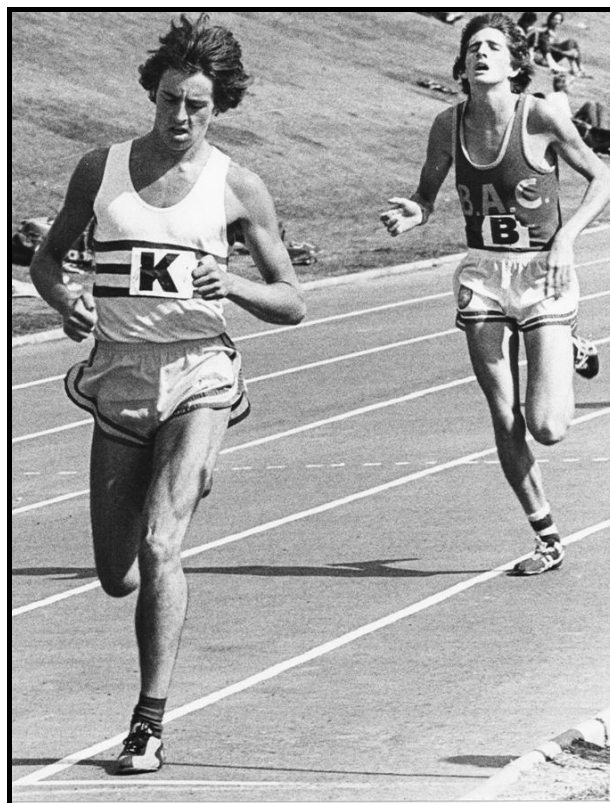
Sussex Athletics Championships 1974
Dave Reece prepares for 400 metres



Kent Schools Walks Championships 1975
Inter Boys 5000 metres
Bob Waudaugh, Paul Thornby, Mark Wordsworth equal 1st

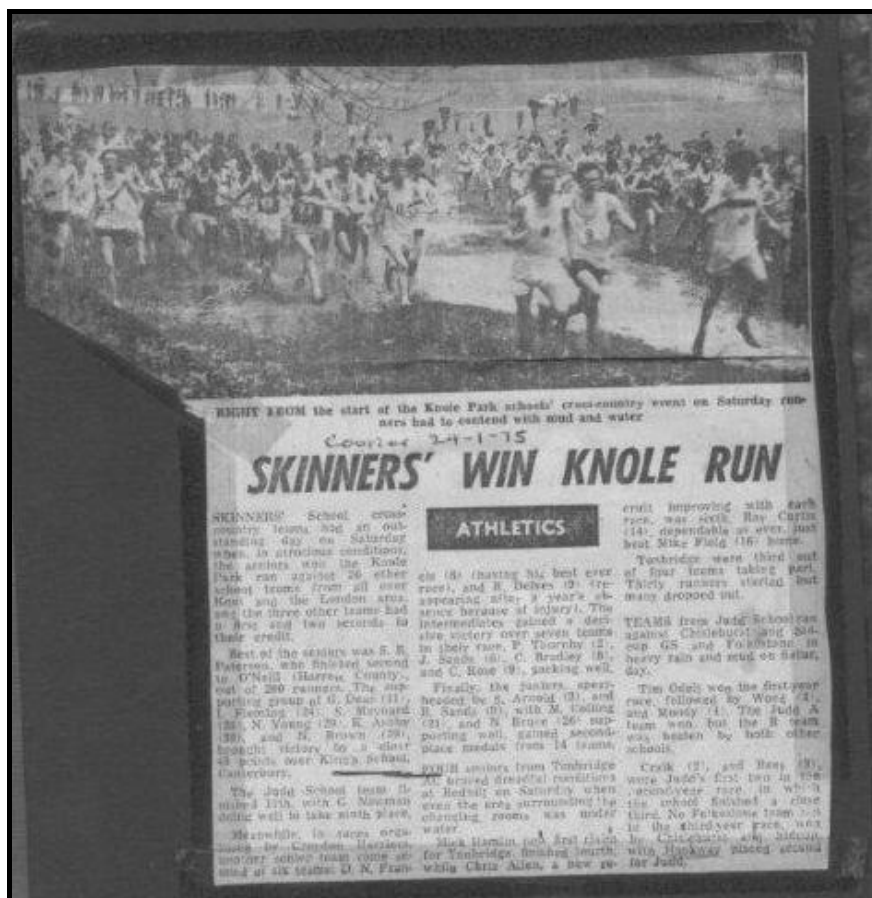


Southern Mens League, Division 2 match at Tonbridge School 1975
800 metres Stuart Paterson
5000 metres Tim Hanford





Courier newspaper 24th January 1975



South West Kent District Cross Country Championships 1975

Stuart Kirk and Mark Hookway



Stuart Kirk, Steve Arnold, Mark Hookway



South West Kent District Cross Country Team 1976
Back Row – Neil Townson, Jeremy Sands, Mark Scrutton, Mark Hookway,
Cain Bradley
Front Row – Emmett Power, Nick Young, Stuart Kirk



Summer 1976 Tonbridge Athletic Club Team
At Swanmead Sports Ground
Back Row – Ray Curtis, Duncan Francis, Mark Hookway, Chris Goff, Andy Lees,
Steve Taylor, Steve Biddlecombe, Andy Craik, Mike Field
Middle – Trevor Pearce
Front Row – Steve Burton, Karen Bailey, Ann Hitch, ?, ?, ?, Clare Wright,
Sharon Arnold, Val Walsh, Diane Walsh, Sue Powell, Julie Smith



Dave Cross and Mike Parks, both introduced to athletics by Mike Rowbottom at Skinners School and who have remained life long friends



1980s

Mike took over from Bill Collins as President of Tonbridge Athletic Club in 1988

Also in the 1980s Mike organised the Skinners School cross country team tour to Canada

**16th February 1983 – Kent Schools Senior Boys Cross Country Championships
And a briefing from Mike**



Skidders School Cross Country Team tour to Vancouver, Canada

8th April 1983 – Mike briefs the team on the flight to Canada



11th April 1983 – Training at Magee Secondary School, Vancouver, Canada



Tim Berrett was one of Mike's many athletics discoveries, which were developed at Skinners School and Tonbridge Athletic Club.

Tim was a very capable cross country runner and track athlete, including steeplechase. He is seen here in 1986 in a Southern League steeplechase for Tonbridge AC.



Tim went on to become an international race walker and perhaps the most successful athlete to rise from Mike's time at Skinners School.

Tim Berrett

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia


Timothy ("Tim") B. Berrett (born January 23, 1965) is a male race walker. A resident of Edmonton, Alberta, he represented Canada in five consecutive Summer Olympics starting in 1992 (Barcelona, Spain). He competed in the 2008 Beijing Olympics at the 50km walk event, finishing in 38th place with a time of 4:08:08. He was born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, United Kingdom.

Berrett completed his Ph.D. degree at the University of Alberta, and did his undergraduate studies at the University of Oxford.

In 2007 at Osaka, he competed in his ninth IAAF Athletics World Championships, a world record for a male track and field athlete^[1], equaled by Spanish race-walker

Jesús Ángel García and Jamaican hurdler Danny McFarlane in the 2009 World Championships in Athletics (Berlin).^[2]

Berrett is married to former field hockey international Tara Croxford, who also competed at the Barcelona Games for her native country.

Year	Competition	Venue	Position	Event	Notes
Representing  Canada					
1991	World Race Walking Cup	San Jose, United States	22nd	20 km	
			—	50 km	DNF
1992	Olympic Games	Barcelona, Spain	14th	20 km	1:28:25
			—	50 km	DSQ
1993	World Indoor Championships	Toronto, Canada	4th	5,000 m	
	World Race Walking Cup	Monterrey, Mexico	5th	50 km	
1995	World Race Walking Cup	Beijing, PR China	—	50 km	DSQ
1997	World Race Walking Cup	Poděbrady, Czech Republic	—	20 km	DSQ
1999	World Race Walking Cup	Mézidon-Canon, France	47th	20 km	
2000	Olympic Games	Sydney, Australia	26th	20 km	
			—	50 km	DSQ
2002	Commonwealth Games	Manchester, United Kingdom	3rd	50 km	4:04:25
2003	World Championships	Paris, France	19th	50 km	
2004	World Race Walking Cup	Naumburg, Germany	64th	20 km	
	Olympic Games	Athens, Greece	31st	50 km	
2006	World Race Walking Cup	A Coruña, Spain	39th	50 km	
2007	World Championships	Osaka, Japan	19th	50 km	4:06:47

Mark Scrutton was another athlete who developed to full international honours. Mark was coached for much of his career by Brian Mitchell, but ran under Mike's management at English Schools cross country and track championships.

**1976 – Close finish to Inter Boys 3000 metres, at Tunbridge Wells
Mark Scrutton Vs Colin White, both running 8-51.0**



1986 – Tonbridge 10 miles road race, won by Mark Scrutton in 47-01



**Bill Collins, from who Mike took over as President of Tonbridge Athletic Club,
seen here with Val Walsh (international heptathlete) in 1988**



1990s

**In the 1990s Mike managed perhaps the strongest Tonbridge Athletic Club senior distance running teams in its history.
He retired from teaching at Skinners School**

**Amongst the athletes he coached were the Graffin twins, Andy and Allen.
Andy went on to represent Great Britain at the Sydney Olympics in 2000,
whilst one of Allen's main achievements was winning the silver medal in the
2002 English National Cross Country Championships.
Andrew still holds the Tonbridge Athletic Club 1500 metres record at 3-36.18
(as at December 2011)**

In the 1990s Mike coached athletes to international level, including Dave Robertson and Matt Skelton. Dave still holds the Tonbridge Athletic Club under 20 men's 1500 metres record at 3-40.9 and the outright mile record at 4-03.9 (as at December 2011)

Ryan Laughton-Zimmerman



David Robertson



Matt Skelton



Some of the other athletes that Mike helped coach in the 1990s

Andrew Bennett



David Castle



Will Levett and Paul Martin



Julian Rendall and Adrian Whitwam



Allen and Andrew Graffin



**Also see separate pdf of British Milers Club magazine article about the
Graffins**

2000 onwards

**Mike continued into the 21st century as President of Tonbridge Athletic Club, working with the Kent Schools Athletics Association and the Kent Athletics Association
He was President of the Kent Athletics Association in 2005/6
In November 2011 Mike retired as President of Tonbridge Athletic Club**

April 2003 – Presentation to Mike from Dave Cross, who he coached at Skinners School. The award was from the South of England Athletics Association to commemorate 40 years of service to athletics.



2004 – Phil Coleman a new Tonbridge Athletic Club record holder for the over 40 men's 1500 metres shakes hands with Mike, a past holder of the record.



From The Guardian newspaper 20th August 2005

Holmes passes on the baton

Holmes legacy intact despite crisis

- [Michael Phillips](#)
- [The Guardian](#), Saturday 20 August 2005

It is six o'clock on Thursday evening in Tonbridge, a small town that cultivated a superstar athlete. In four days' time it will be a year since Kelly Holmes won the first of her two Olympic gold medals but, 12 months on, the sport that led to her becoming a dame is facing crisis.

Last weekend Britain was saved from its worst world championships by Paula Radcliffe's gold in the marathon and two bronzes in the relays. There was no holding back the criticism. Dave Collins, the national performance director, hinted that some lottery funding might be cut, and Sebastian Coe called for the introduction of foreign coaches to develop potential champions for the London Olympics in 2012.

At first glance, you might suspect that the Holmes legacy has meant nothing, because Britain had only one finalist - Helen Pattinson - in the middle-distance events in

Helsinki. But when you arrive at Tonbridge Athletics Club, where Holmes began her career, you realise the picture may not be quite that gloomy.

Work on track refurbishment is almost complete. A new, red surface has been laid and early next month they hope to be running on it. It belongs to Tonbridge School, a boys' boarding establishment from whom the athletics club hire the facilities. So for now, they use the school fields.

Training takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and there are some 80 runners because of the summer holidays. Normally there can be up to 200.

The handful of coaches are typical of those you might find at any athletics club around Britain: among them is a teacher, a private businessman, a managing director. They are among the 15,000 people who give up their spare time for their love of a sport facing change.

They will happily welcome the new initiatives planned by UK Athletics, the national governing body, but what sign is there of the champions of tomorrow?

Since Holmes's 800m and 1500m golds in Athens membership has increased, and despite her absence from Helsinki, interest has grown.

"When the world championships were on, we had a call from the parents of a nine-year-old boy," said Mark Hookway, a distance running coach. "He had been watching the men's 10,000m on the television with the Ethiopians and he said he would really like to do that. They asked whether at nine years old, he could come down. We said it was a bit young to run the 10,000m, but of course come down. He did. That was last week and he is here again tonight. The sport seems to still have that impact."

It may not be the same throughout Britain, but UKA are not ignoring the future. There are 1,400 clubs with an average of 150 members. Among the bigger ones Birchfield Harriers in Birmingham attracts around 800, but in Tonbridge, even with the likes of Blackheath Harriers not too far away, the membership is above the norm.

Now UKA wants to increase the participation level. Since the Foster report into the running of the sport, the changes that will happen within the next 18 months will see the arrival of more regional development offices to link with clubs and the continual increase in synthetic surfaces being put down on tracks to provide better facilities.

But would foreign coaches make a difference? **Mike Rowbottom**, 72, and Jonathan Welbon, 45, coach the older distance Tonbridge runners. They have a group of around 15 athletes, from which Steve Fennell, 19, finished third at last month's European junior championships in Lithuania.

Forty years ago, when Rowbottom first started coaching at Tonbridge, the number of athletes at this level was twice as large. "People today want quick returns for not much effort," he said. "Lifestyle is against them for one thing: they come down here on Tuesday and Thursday, and what are they doing in between? The 14-17-year-olds want jobs for the weekend."

Welbon, who runs his own office supplies business, adds: "We get the kids in but retaining them through to the senior level is quite difficult. It is not easy to keep them going. They get to university, they work and things hit the buffers.

"I can understand where Seb Coe is coming from. There is a massive gap between the grassroots and elite level, and there has to be some form of interlinking. It is no good putting senior national coaches in and dealing with the likes of Steve [Fennell] when the person who deals with him on a regular basis down at the track is not told what is going on or is not able to deal with what they demand of you. I work 48 hours-plus a week. I cannot just drop things and run away."

But Iain Presnell, 46, a sprint coach and manager of the young athletes league team, has a different theory about the level of expectation. A PE and junior science teacher by day, he said: "People are achieving success. The European juniors this year were a fantastic success. If that is the level that we can compete at very successfully, then so be it. We would give our right arm to win the European football championships, even if we never won the World Cup."

In 12 months' time, the next British answer will be found at the European championships in Gothenburg. Fail there and the crisis will start again.

2007 Tonbridge Athletic Club celebrates it's 60th anniversary

See separate pdf

2008 Mike wins the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Lifetime Achievement Award

Sports Coach of the Year Award 2008

Due to the high calibre of the coaches nominated in 2008 it was decided to award a Lifetime Achievement Award and a Special Commendation for Coaching award.

The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Mike Rowbottom for almost 60 years involvement in Tonbridge Athletics Club and Kent Athletics. Mike has occupied just about every role in the sport of athletics, from performer to official to coach to administrator and throughout his long career as a coach has coached every age and ability, from complete beginners to elite performers.



From The Courier newspaper 30th May 2008

See separate pdf

Mike continues to be active within athletics, attending many track and cross country meetings and continuing to inspire many more athletes and administrators







Mike Rowbottom

**Many thanks for all you have done to encourage and inspire us
over the years.**

From all your athletes, colleagues and friends

The following articles were also included within the album

British Milers Club magazine article about the Graffins

2007 Tonbridge Athletic Club celebrates it's 60th anniversary

From The Courier newspaper 30th May 2008
Mike wins the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Lifetime

See below

BMC



NEWS

*Official Journal of the
British Milers' Club*

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 8

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Allen and Andrew Graffin

The Graffin Twins

by Jason Henderson

THE twin towers of the BMC circuit, Andrew and Allen Graffin, recently graduated from university. Now, as full-time athletes, they hope to graduate on the track under the guidance of rookie coach Tim Hutchings.

The 21-year-old twin brothers hope to follow in the footsteps of Hutchings who, in 1989, became the last British man to win a medal (silver) in the World Cross Country Championships. The 40-year-old Hutchings, who also placed fourth in the 1984 Olympic 5000m final, has been coaching the brothers since the beginning of the year and said: "They're training hard now for probably the first time in their lives."

Allen and Andrew agree. For when the first major cross country race of this winter was being run, at Birmingham's Senneley's Park, the Graffins were busy running 15x1min hill repetitions in the morning, followed by a five miler in the afternoon near their Kent home. And this was despite Hutchings' close ties with the sponsor of the meeting.

"We would love to see ourselves following Tim," said Andrew. "He was a bit heavier than us, in build, but had a great base in cross country and was good on the track too."

Allen added: "The last time we were running well was when we were juniors. Tim said he has been amazed how we've managed to get by on so little training."

The Graffins first met Hutchings when they finished one-two in the under-17 race at the 1995 Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships at Luton. On New Year's Eve last year they approached Hutchings, asking for guidance.

Personal best times, November 99

Allen

800m	1:52.28 (99)
1500m	3:43.67 (99)
Mile	4:04.0 (98)
3000m	8:03.22 (98)
5000m	14:16.4 (95)

Andrew

800m	1:50.0 (99)
1500m	3:42.00 (99)
Mile	3:59.64 (99)
3000m	8:07.58 (99)
5000m	14:06.73 (98)

"We knew he was has a young family and is very, very busy (working for Eurosport, Reebok and the London Marathon)," said Allen. But Hutchings schedule began on the following day, January 1.

"We weren't able to train properly for the first few months, as we had our finals coming up," said Andrew. "But now we're touching 90 miles a week." Compared the 40-50 they survived on before.

Allen studied sports science at Loughborough and Andrew computer science at Nottingham, but they have moved back home to live with their parents. "It would have cost maybe £5000 a year to stay at Loughborough," said Allen. "Now we've gone back to what we know works, with Tim thrown in. We're very lucky having parents who are willing to finance us."

The brothers were previously coached by Mike Rowbottom, who they still see regularly at their local track. "Mike is still a great friend and it was not that he was doing anything wrong, just that we had to start doing more right."

The brothers see Hutchings whenever they can, although usually no more than once a week, but keep in regular contact on the phone and

through email. "There are two of us after all," said Allen of his brother, "and with all the people at the club (Tonbridge AC), plus Mike, we don't need to see Tim every day."

Hutchings has never coached any other athletes. "They're my first ... and could be my last!" he joked. But getting serious, added: "I'm not a typical coach. Many coaches would wait a lifetime for talented athletes to arrive. I've had this talent virtually fall into my lap. I'm very privileged and feel an obligation to respect this relationship even more."

The Graffins are certainly impressed so far. "Tim never says 'do this' or 'do that'," said Andrew. "He says to us, 'perhaps this might work for you?' or 'that's what I did, you might want to give it a go too'."

Hutchings is surprised to learn that the Graffins' idea to approach him was borne in the winter of 1997-8 when they read 'The Hutchings Diaries' in *Athletics Weekly*.

"I didn't think anyone had bothered reading it," said Hutchings, of the series that reproduced Hutchings' training prior to him winning a silver medal in Stavanger, Norway, in 1989. But someone obviously did.

"I didn't have much feedback from the diaries at the start," said Hutchings, who was coached by Frank Horwill and also advised by Dave Bedford during the latter years of his career. "But there have gradually been a few more comments. People have said it resembled a summer schedule, but I think there doesn't have to be that much difference between summer and winter training."

"The fact is you're not going to run well in the World Cross unless you are in bloody good nick. And that's something that Keith Cullen seems to have taken on board recently."

"I've got the lads running a lot more miles lately, but not too many. I found that between 75-90 was about the optimum – a zone where all the different types of training sessions could be incorporated into one portfolio."

"When they ran the two trials meetings last summer their lack of strength showed. At the AAA Under-23 Championships they got through the heat but didn't run well in the final;



Scotstoun M Mile: Andrew Graffin 3:59:64, Gareth Turnbull 4:00:16



The Graffin Twins



Scotstoun M Mile: the Graffin Twins lead Gareth Turnbull (53) Glen Stewart (54) and Iain Murdoch U20 (65)

and then at the AAA seniors they ran well to get through the heats but looked spent in the final. That extra layer of strength should put that right."

ALLEN AND ANDREW GRAFFIN'S TRAINING, NOVEMBER 1999

Monday

am: weights
pm: easy/steady 6 miles

Tuesday

am: easy 10 miles
pm: Circuits

Wednesday

am: easy 3-5 miles
pm: one hour run, with some form of intervals on grass (eg. 6x3min (2min rest))

Thursday

am: weights
pm: easy 5-6 miles

Friday

am: easy 3-5 miles
pm: one hour run, with a fast part in the middle of about 15-30 mins

Saturday

am: easy 4-6 miles
pm: steady 5-7 miles

Sunday

am: 12-14 miles easy
pm: 2-3 miles easy & stretching

Hutchings is excited about the Graffins' potential however. "Allen has been doing some incredible sessions in flats this summer," said Hutchings. "While Andrew's sessions this summer suggested he could run 3:37 – but didn't because of a lack of strength.

"Their best distance will probably be 5km – certainly for Allen," Hutchings continued. "While Andrew has the better speed – and Allen better endurance – Andrew could turn out to be a John Mayock-ey type of character, with superb speed endurance and a 1500m PB in the low 3:30s."

Hutchings might be better known for his cross country exploits, but with a mile best of 3:54 he knows a thing or two about preparing to run fast too. His only problem with the Graffins is the lack of time he spends with them.

"I try to keep it informal," Hutchings added.

"I expect them to use their initiative. If they wake up and their legs are shattered then they know to run an easy three miler instead of a hard five. Both are bright kids. Very sensible."

One other problem has been the injuries that have curtailed Allen's training over the past few years. He has been struggling with a problem in his left calf – it is the reason his track sessions are run in flats – and recently had tests for compartment syndrome.

The tests proved negative, which was frustrating for Allen, especially as he deliberately inflamed his calf the day before the test when he attempted 10x400m in spikes which he would never usually dare to wear. (He reached nine, by the way, before he limped off the track).

Now he consoles himself with advice that George Gandy gave him at Loughborough. "He told me that you don't always find solutions to problems, but you might find ways to cope."

Andrew has been luckier and said: "I haven't had any injuries worth speaking about. And I'm not as diligent as Andrew when it comes to stretching. I asked Richard Nerurkar what advice he could give us and he said to simply spend time getting in as much good, uninterrupted training as possible. Geoff Wightman has told us the same thing."

This winter the Graffins' aim is not to do well in races – although they'd like to reach the World Cross Country Championships – but moreso to build a base for next summer. Over 1500m they believe a place in the Olympic team is possible.

On the track last summer Andrew ran his first sub-four-minute mile at the Nike BMC Grand Prix final at Glasgow. And the brothers' unselfish attitude toward each other's running was evident when Allen, realising Andrew was in better shape, forced the pace on the crucial third lap. In the Graffin family there is sibling rivalry, but only of a friendly nature.

"We don't compete with each other," said Allen. "In the past I've usually won over longer distances and Andrew over shorter. The Kenyans have always worked together, why shouldn't we?"

ACHIEVEMENTS: ALLEN GRAFFIN

1994	AAA 3000m - Bedford -	1st
1994	British Schools	1st
1995	UK Inter Counties CC	1st
1995	World CC Champs	67th
1995	AAA U20 5000m	2nd
1996	World CC Champs	37th
1996	English Schools 3000m	1st
1996	SEAA U23 CC	1st
1997	AAA (senior) 3000m	2nd
1998	National CC	2nd
1998	GB U23 International 5000m	1st
1998	AAA (Senior) 3000m	2nd
1998	SEAA U23 CC	1st
1999	AAA 3000m	3rd

ACHIEVEMENTS: ANDREW GRAFFIN

1994	English Schools 3000m	2nd
1994	GB Schools 3000m	2nd
1994	AAA U17 1500m	1st
1995	National U17 CC	1st
1995	UK Inter Counties U17 CC	2nd
1997	UK Inter Counties U20 CC	2nd
1998	National U20 CC	1st
1999	BUSA 1500m	2nd
1999	AAA 3000m	1st



The Graffin Twins

TIM HUTCHINGS' TRAINING - NOVEMBER 1988

Monday

am: rest (raced yesterday at Mike Sully Cross Country and won)
pm: 12.5 miles steady

Tuesday

am: 5 miles steady
pm: track - 2x(1000, 600, 300, 300, 600, 1000) with recovery jogs of 300 after the 1000s, 200 after the 600s and 100 after the 300s

Wednesday

am: 9.5 miles steady
pm: 5.5 miles steady

Thursday

am: 7 miles steady
pm: rest

Friday

am: track - 14x400 (200 jog rec) averaging 61 seconds; then 4x200 (200 jog rec) averaging 27.9 seconds
pm: rest

Saturday

am: 8.5 miles steady
pm: rest

Sunday

am: 13 miles steady
pm: rest

Total week's mileage: 81.5

Monday

am: 8 miles steady
pm: six miles steady

Tuesday

am: 5 miles steady
pm: track - 5x1000 (400 jog rec) averaging 2:37

Wednesday

am: 11 miles steady
pm: rest

Thursday

am: 5 miles fast
pm: track - 2x(600, 300, 100, 100, 300, 600) 200 jog after 600s, 100 jog after 200s and 100s, averaging 93 and 43 seconds

Friday

am: 7 miles steady
pm: 6.5 miles steady

Saturday

am: 8 miles steady
pm: 5.5 miles steady

Sunday

am: 13 miles steady
pm: rest

Total week's mileage: 92.5

** The Hutchings Diaries were originally printed in Athletics Weekly in 1997*

Next year the Graffins plan to team up with the Mayo brothers – Tom and James – and Ireland's Gareth Turnbull, as runners sworn into a pact which will see one or more of them push the pace on the third lap in BMC 1500m races.

"In the past we have reached 800m at a good pace," said Andrew. "But then the pacemakers have dropped out and we have all slowed, too worried about winning the race rather than running a good time."

Unlike during the past three years the Graffins will be able to prepare for their races free of the distractions that accompany a student's life. "We didn't have a year out after our A-levels like many people do," said Allen. "So we have a couple of years to play with ... if our finances can hold together."

"There's no point moaning about how hard it is," he continued. "We've just got to get out there and make it happen. We don't want it to be half-hearted. We're not going to try for 10 years. If

it doesn't work out in one, two, maybe three years at the most then we'll go and get ourselves a career.

"I just think it's a shame when you look at students who go straight into work and then don't make it as runners until they're 28 years old. Look at Dave Heath, for example. I know he's had injury problems, but if he'd done what he did last winter 10 years ago then what a future he'd have in front of him."

With time on their side the Graffins hope to build a bright future for themselves. And with 24 hours in the day to eat, sleep and train, they have more than enough time.

"What do we do now when we're not training?"



Tim Hutchings, BMC Vice President

asked Allen. "We rest and maybe help dad with the painting. And then there's always grass to cut!" Maybe the Graffin twins, for so long green shoots themselves, might now begin to flower under the supervision of Tim Hutchings.

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For more stories see

Tonbridge celebrate 60 years of sporting success

BY ED PEARSON

TONBRIDGE Athletics Club held a special dinner to commemorate their 60th anniversary at The High Rocks on Saturday.

The club, which now has more than 450 athletes on their books and is home to some tremendously talented juniors, is a far cry from the small outfit which was formed at the Social Centre in January 1947.

The idea to set up an athletics club in Tonbridge can be traced back to 1946, when two policemen from Kent, both with a

prestigious background in sprinting, came up with the idea to form an athletics club while sitting in their car on the outskirts of the town.

After a committee was formed and the club was officially created, 1,500 onlookers gathered in 1948 on a gloriously sunny day to witness Tonbridge hold their first home match at the restored Angel Ground – previously derelict since the second world war.

Athletes were allowed to train at both Tonbridge School and Judd School, owing to the fact that their headmasters

were vice presidents of the club, and matches were held at the Angel Ground before moving to the School Ground on Shipbourne Road.

The Tonbridge School athletics track became a permanent base some 15 years ago, following a stint at Swanmead in between.

Club president Mike Rowbottom, who joined in 1959 and has held nearly every position possible in his time there, recalls competing on a grass track on Martin's Field and using the old Drill Hall on Hadlow Road as a winter headquarters.

"There were very few youngsters and not many women in those days," he said. "The powers that be said women couldn't run longer than 400 metres! Now, however, we have thriving sections for both juniors and women and the only difficulty we have is keeping promising juniors at the club after they have left to go to university."

With such a diverse history, it is impossible to name all of the successful athletes that Tonbridge has produced, but the most famous has to be double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes.

Under the tutorage of Dave Arnold, Holmes was a highly successful junior before leaving the club when she decided to join the army.

Her links with Tonbridge stayed strong, however, and many members can recall seeing her train throughout the winter on the track or out on Tonbridge School's playing fields.

Less well known, but equally impressive the list of stars fostered at the club is wide ranging and while they cannot all



GRASS TRACK RACING: Tonbridge athletes from the 1950s racing around Martin's Field

be named among the best were Andrew and Alan Graffin and Tim Berrett.

The Graffin twins have competed at the highest level, with Alan taking part in the World Championships and Andrew making the semi final of the 1500m in the Sydney Olympics, as well as the Edmonton World Championships in 2001.

Berrett is something of a seasoned professional in terms of race walking and in one of the disciplines in which Tonbridge has always excelled, the former Tonbridge athlete has benefited from the coaching of Bill Collins so much so that he has made six separate World Championship appearances. Now living in Canada, he is still competing at the highest level.

Tonbridge has seen three of

its female athletes perform well in international events – Val Hookway competed in the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in the heptathlon, Avril Bowring took part in the 1970 Commonwealth Games and Lorna Lee, a member of the club since its inception, represented Great Britain at the London Olympic Games in 1948 doing the long jump.

Former Tonbridge athlete Mark Scrutton made the news recently when 5,000m star Mo Farah was thought to have set a new record for the 10,000m. When historians looked into it, Scrutton's record time of 27mins 55secs was still yet to be beaten.

While Tonbridge struggles to hold onto its talented juniors, there is no doubt that they keep

producing a fantastic crop of potential sports stars.

Club vice president Dave Cross said: "With the quality of athletes we have got and the juniors we are able to produce, we would expect them to be more than capable of reaching the highest level."

Stars of the future to watch include Steve Fennel, who finished third in the Junior European Championships over 800m, Dominic Sadowski, who is ranked fifth in the country at the javelin, and Ben Wiffen, who excels over 800m and 1500m and has just graduated from St Andrew's.

Tonbridge Athletics Club train on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 6.30pm and 8pm and are always willing to take on new members.



TRAINING DAYS: Kelly Holmes at the Tonbridge track in 1987

Your nominations are still needed

STOP PRESS. Can anybody who has nominated someone for the Courier Media Group's Sports Awards 2007 via our website in the past two weeks please put forward their entries once again.

It appears we have had a major problem with the website concerning Sports Awards which has stopped us receiving nominations.

It only came to our attention on Thursday morning when a reader who had emailed asking for confirmation that his nomination had been received via the website, had in fact not come through.

Courier promotions assistant Louisa Clarke said: "It would appear this problem has prevented any online entries for the last two weeks, and we cannot confirm that any nominations made during that time can be retrieved."

We have therefore extended our nomination period until Friday, December 7. Courier Media Group apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused but urge you to nominate your sporting heroes once again.



VENUE: Salomons will play host to the awards ceremony

HOW TO ENTER

1. Obtain an official entry form by ringing 01892 686894, collect an entry form from our offices – Kent and Sussex Courier, Longfield Road, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks Chronicle, High Street, Sevenoaks, East Grinstead Courier, High Street, East Grinstead or visit our website www.thisiscourier.co.uk/sports and complete the entry form online.

2. Send your form to us by Friday, December 7, 2007 to Sports Awards, Courier Media Group, Longfield Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. TN2 3HL

Nomination Categories:

Young Sports Person of the Year (under 18)

Young Team of the Year (under 18)

Team of the Year (over 18)

Unsung Hero (those that have contributed to sport but not necessarily participated)

All entries will be acknowledged. The panel of judges will select a short list from the entries the week ending December 14, 2007. The panel will consist of members of the Sports Team for Courier Media and our sponsors, Salomons. All short-listed nominations will feature within a supplement to appear in all publications the week ending Friday, January 11, 2008 which will summarise each entry from each category for all publications. If you have any queries regarding this campaign please call Promotions on 01892 686954.

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Rowbottom honoured at awards

A SPECIAL awards evening was held at the Angel Centre on Thursday last week, when several presentations were made in celebration of local achievements and sporting and artistic talent.

Guest of honour Ian Wynne, Olympic bronze medallist for kayaking, presented two special awards for sports coaching. Local athletics coach Mike Rowbottom received a lifetime achievement award.

He has been involved in local athletics for 60 years. Initially an athlete himself, he has coached at Tonbridge Athletic Club for 50 years, mentoring athletes of all abilities from beginners to elite.

On receiving his award, Mike Rowbottom said: "I am lucky to be in a position where I can continue to be involved in athletics and pass on my knowledge to other athletes, helping them to develop their skills. From helping beginners to training more experienced athletes for competitions - coaching is something I get great enjoyment out of, and I feel extremely honoured to receive this award."

Cabinet member for leisure, youth and arts, Cllr Martin Coffin, said: "This award recognises Mike's many years of service to the development of athletics for young people in Tonbridge and illustrates the importance of local sports development.

"On behalf of the borough council, I would like to thank

him for his significant contribution to athletics and for helping to generate more interest and opportunities in athletics at a local level."

A special commendation was also presented to Joshua Sloane for his work in coaching young footballers with special needs. At just 17, he has already been coaching football for four years. He also holds a Level 1 coaching qualification and is now working towards his Level 2 certificate.

Sloane approaches his role as a coach very seriously, taking his team to tournaments and representing his club at county football association meetings, seeking sponsorship where he can.

The borough council has awarded grants totalling £12,000 to local clubs, groups and individuals to encourage sporting and artistic development and excellence.

Grants were awarded in four categories: sports development, arts development, sporting excellence, artistic excellence. There were also grants awarded to twinning groups and to parish councils for community festivals.

The Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, Cllr Chris Smith, presented cheques to all the successful applicants.

While the presentations were made, entertainment was provided by local violinist Lucia D'Avanzo, herself a recipient of an artistic excellence grant.

Mike Rowbottam

Mike Rowbottam or Mr Schools Athletics Tunbridge Wells. He came, for me, on to the horizon when at a District Schools Athletic meeting he proposed that Tunbridge Wells schools should break away from Tonbridge & Sevenoaks and form their own association. Reason? The athletes – always the athletes. Two associations, therefore twice as many could take part at county level and twice as many would represent the county at the English Schools. All very true for many years until his retirement when athletics in the Tunbridge Wells District took a nosedive.

On the occasion of Kent Schools staging the English Schools Track and Field meeting at the Crystal Palace in 1972 he and I had the privilege of being ~~of being~~ the Kent County stewards. The host team always brings up the rear at the march past and I remember us having supreme difficulty marching proudly, as a valiant school band played a waltz!

When Race Walking as an ESAA activity appeared Mike immediately produced race walkers of quality. What he did not know he brought in experts who did. Tim Berrett went on to represent Canada at the Olympics and the Skinners group provided the majority of the Kent Schools team.

One particular memory of Mike springs to mind when driving with him to a committee meeting for the first time in Maidstone. I thought that at any moment he would pull back the steering wheel and we would be up up and away! I discovered later that he had flown meteors or some such when on national service!! Hair raising!

As far as I can remember I never heard Mike raise his voice to any athlete and I was amazed at the amount of time and energy and distances he travelled to give his advice. If he is really retiring, athletics will be the poorer but I am sure he will be on the side lines cheering and encouraging. He won't be able to stop!

It has been a pleasure and privilege to know him.

Bridget Dodd

Mike Rowbottom tribute

During my time in Mike's group I was lucky enough to run with a great bunch of people. The group was always slowly changing as people left the Tonbridge area, with Mike the only constant. He has an understated skill of establishing and managing a group of competitors and enabling the group to evolve and get immense enjoyment from what is in the most part a wonderfully painful and repetitive sport of placing one foot in front of the other.

Mike gains your respect instantly, what he has to say is always worth listening to. His psychological skills are spot on, he would offer his opinion, but never pressurise or over influence. When you finished a race or hard training session no matter how you had performed his response was always the same smile and well done, the only thing that differed was the slightest change in the tone of his voice. He was never disappointed or overly excited. This quickly taught me to run for the right reason: For yourself and for the enjoyment and reward of putting yourself outside your comfort zone and measuring yourself up against your own expectations.

Mike worked as hard as all of us in his group without even running a step. His dedication to his athletes and to the sport of athletics is incredible and unquestionable, and Tonbridge AC has been incredibly lucky to benefit from this; his ethos is now present in other many people involved in the club. I learnt when I left Mike's group to train at university that care and commitment for athletes are by far the most important qualities a coach can have and Mike is truly world class at this.

Mike has influenced me greatly, in running but also beyond it. I'm grateful for the patients he showed in putting up with me as a teenager, he got the most out of me and my lazy attitude at the time and he enabled me to enjoy success as an athlete, something I would never have experienced without his coaching. Mike is a great coach and an amazing person. The more you learn about Mike the more you respect him. He is a person I am incredibly lucky to know and even luckier to have been coached by.

(Thanks for everything Mike)

Steve Fennell

Anthony Bennett (coached by Mike in 1980s and 90s)

Mike,

Your encouragement, enthusiasm and support for me from the moment when I first came down to the track in the late 1980s, was inspirational. I may not be a regular runner now but many of the qualities that you taught me have been of great benefit throughout my life. Many thanks for your time and effort. Tonbridge AC, Judd (and Skinners!) are lucky to have had such a superb coach.

Anthony Bennett

Dave Reece – At Skinners School 1968 to 1975, now living in Germany

Just to show how far-reaching Mike's influence has been, I owe him for everything I've got out of athletics over the years.

Without him, like many, I'm sure I would never have got involved. Which would mean that my wife also would never have taken up running - if she achieves (as she should) the automatic qualifying standard for the London marathon in 2013, Mike can take at least part of the credit!

There are also a lot of children here in the small German town where we live that are enjoying athletics in the club I run that also would have never got the chance if it hadn't been for Mike!

Best wishes
Dave

Dave Rosier-Skinners 1965-1972/Tonbridge Athletic Club 1968-

Quite simply Mike was the most important influence in my becoming involved with athletics and migrating from being a competitor into coaching and Team Management.

At Skinners Mike was an inspirational figure championing athletics and cross-country running in the face of stiff resistance from the 'traditional' sports of rugby/hockey in winter and cricket during the summer.

Mike nurtured anyone who wanted to progress their running irrespective of the specific event and the ability of the individual. He led by example and successfully demonstrated that despite natural ability there was no substitute for structured training in order to reach your full potential. Those years laid down a solid foundation in terms of preparing for both competition and then as a coach.

It was Mike that encouraged a few of us to join Tonbridge Athletic Club in order to access more competition and a larger training group in our particular events. This proved a most important step as it created a 'year-round' sport and allowed us to compete beyond the rather limited School Fixture List.

As my competitive career came to an abrupt end due to injury Mike encouraged me to become involved in coaching and Team Management at the club.

My efforts however pale into insignificance compared to Mike's contribution at school, club and county level. There are so many runners that owe their success, and enjoyment of the sport, due to Mike's infectious enthusiasm and wise council.

I am in awe of the years of service Mike has given to the club and school athletics. I am sure that there is no such word as 'retirement' in Mike's vocabulary and he will provide many more years of support and council to the club and its athletes.

Thank you, Mike.

Mark Hookway – Judd School and Tonbridge AC (known Mike since 1975)

I first knew of Mike around 1975, when he coached and managed teams from Skinners School, rivals to those of us at Judd. He was also a team manager for Tonbridge AC, especially for the Young Athletes League team, to which I belonged. Even then apart from holding down a full time teaching job, he was fully involved with the Kent Schools and district teams, so I can't imagine he had much time to himself or with his family.

Mike would organise 'Skinners' holiday training, but would always welcome us 'outsiders' and through this we got to know many others, some of which are still friends more than 30 years later.

Mike has been an ever present through almost 40 years for me at TAC, even after his health worsened a few years ago. I see him as an incredible diplomat, managing his way around a large number of characters who are definitely not !

I am always amazed at Mike's knowledge of individual athletes and their performances, especially as he has never embraced the internet, web, email, mobile phones or Twitter. I can recall very few occasions where he has been criticised for a selection or not giving full consideration to all the athletes.

Perhaps most of all I admire his quick thinking and wit. I have seen this displayed at many committee meetings, AGMs and on other occasions, when he is able to twist someone's tail just enough to make the audience laugh, but without offending the recipient, who always values Mike's words.

Mike has recently decided to retire from the post of TAC President, but has vowed to be around regularly. I hope he will be for a long time, as athletics and athletes need people with Mike's passion and enthusiasm.

Finally, I would just like to thank Mike's family for giving him up to the athletics community for so much time over the years. He has left a huge impression on many of us and without Mike our memories would not be as full.

Ryan Laughton-Zimmerman (Tonbridge AC, 1980s and 90s)

Mike, thanks for taking Kellie and I under your wing when we left Mick Hamlin's training group.

I particularly enjoyed the competitive relays that you incorporated into training during the festive period, and my personal high under your tutelage was winning individual bronze and the team gold in the 1989 Knole Run. Oh, and apologies for letting you down and failing to join the rest of the team on the podium at the X-Country Championships the following year ... I needed to get back to the minibus to listen to the Arsenal match on the radio!!

All the best.

Regards,
Ryan

Mike Parks – Skinners School (1970s) and Tonbridge AC

Just a few words about Mike for the album....I find it difficult to find the rights words that do him justice.

Like many others I owe a huge debt to Mike in my athletics career. Mike spotted I had a little talent as a sprinter and took me out of the winter school games sessions (mainly consisting of Rugby) and allowed me to join the cross-country runners to get me fit for the summer season. I went from 4th best in my age group at Skinners' to representing the district in the county champs in less than 9 months. Mike's enthusiasm and dedication to the sport and to his athletes is second to none. He treated you with respect and took great pride in your accomplishments. Mike's influence will stretch long into the future as those of us that knew Mike pass on his knowledge, attitude, dedication and enthusiasm to the next generation and beyond.

Let me know if I can help with anything.

Mike

Martin Davies – Colleague at Skinners School, who helped Mike with cross country, particularly in the 1980s and 90s

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Mike's tireless efforts made Skinners' one of the top cross-country running schools in Britain. At the same time, he remained a devoted teacher, Head of RE and House, and a leader of the local Crusaders.

The annual haul of trophies grew ever larger and teams travelled all over the country, with School athletes also representing Kent Schools, English Schools and even Great Britain Juniors in events including field events, steeplechase, and race walking as well as middle distance and cross-country.

Training was at all times and in all weathers; training camps included North Wales in dead of winter (!). Our most prestigious event was probably as guests at the annual Northern Schools Championships (there was no southern) where we came second more than once. This involved a long day's journey to Stockport.

Our most ambitious event was, however, the Easter 1983 week in Vancouver, a trip which had far-reaching results for many of those who went. Literally hundreds of boys at Skinners' benefited from Mike's dedication, gaining self-discipline, physical fitness, and the glow of success. In particular, the slower, less gifted athletes, were no less his concern and the object of his encouragement and warm praise.

**Tim Hanford-Skinners School 1964-1970
and Tonbridge Athletic Club Life member.**

I live in Hailsham and still work as a gardener. Sports wise I play table tennis in the Eastbourne League for Hailsham in the winter and bowls for Hellingly in the summer.

My four grandchildren keep me busy.

Below are a few words about Mike and my time at Skinners.

Tim Hanford-Skinners School 1964-1970 and TAC Life member.

I started running in my second year at Skinners and Mike (MJR) coached me throughout my school years.

Mike made training interesting and competitive. I remember running two 800 metres with Mike on the grass track at Skinners and going on to win a county 1500 metres the following weekend-Mike provided the encouragement and inspired that will to succeed.

Mike helped me following my fathers death, when I was 14 by putting me up at his house.

RegardsTim.

Bev Keech (Tonbridge Athletic Club membership secretary)

Mike Rowbottom has been my sons coach for many years, guiding him from youth to senior level.

Mike has always been available to all his athletes either at training or by phone, always knowing their training times and personal bests.

My memory of Mike at one of the Kent races talking about each and every athlete in the Kent team, knowing each ones strengths and weakness, how they had run the previous year and whether they were improving or not. His knowledge of their statistics and thus each ones needs for various training drills is immense and I am in awe.

Allen Graffin – Tonbridge Athletic Club (from 1991, I think!!)

I first met Mike around 1991, one early autumn evening when I joined Tonbridge Athletics Club after doing a little athletics at school (St Gregory's). Right from those initial Tuesday and Thursday night training sessions, when Mike would instruct us all of the route around Tonbridge and Hildenborough (and provide hand-drawn maps if he thought it necessary!!), what stands out to me is the friendly atmosphere at the club – and once you get to know Mike, it is obvious he was a major influence on all good things at Tonbridge AC.

However, it was in fact Mike's wife Angela who I met first, as she was a teacher when my brother Andrew and I attended St John's Infants School, all the way back in 1984. I always wondered if, across the breakfast table, maybe she would claim to Mike that she sowed the seeds for our athletics career, long before Mike was involved??!!

After joining the Club, Athletics quickly became a big part of my life. After a couple of years, Mike was collecting a few of us for training after school on Mondays and Fridays, as well as seeing us on Club nights and then obviously at races at the weekends, so Mike was not only well and truly my Coach, but also became a great mentor and friend as the years went on.

My fondest memories are of cross country races on short, cold, winter days, all over the country. From Durham to Truro (where I gained my first international vest) and, of course, the regular venues such as Parliament Hill in London and Sutton Coldfield in Birmingham, Mike was always there and knew exactly where to go and what time it took to get there!! If he had a pound for all the miles he's done, Mike would be a very wealthy man!

The highlight of my career was without doubt when Mike guided me to representing the GB Team at the World Cross Country Championships in South Africa, back in 1996. I remember when the team left London, it was about 4 degrees and when we raced in Stellenbosch a week later it was about 26 degrees. Seasoned athletes struggled that day, but thanks to Mike I was in the shape of my life and finished in the top 40. I am glad to say that Mike even managed to make that trip and I clearly remember climbing up into the shade of the stands to have my usual 'debrief' with him shortly after the race. I managed to be the first GB athlete to finish that day and I hope he was as proud as I was of what the little team from Tonbridge had achieved.

I could write pages of the memories I have of all the races we attended, with some notable success, as Tonbridge always seemed to punch above its weight. Led by Mike, we had teams and individuals winning medals from County level all the way through to National level, in the middle and long distances – a trend that continues to this day. Mike is surely to Tonbridge AC what Sir Alex Ferguson is to Manchester United – truly irreplaceable.

Matt Skelton (Tonbridge AC in 1980s and 90s)

It was in 1987 that I first came to know Mike as I returned to running following a year or so of relative inactivity. Though I was at Judd school and Mike was a teacher at Skinners – great rivals to us on the running front – he encouraged me to get back to training regularly with Tonbridge AC, his middle distance group at that time including many of the Skinners lads. His philosophy to encourage all was evident by his willingness to include both myself and David Robertson - another TAC member and also a Juddian - in his holiday training for the Skinners group over the winter months.

I remember these sessions in particular as being both great fun, and very effective. Mike would have us turn up at a variety of venues – Grosvenor Park, Pembury Woods, Hayesden – where we'd take part in relays. Not only were these a good way of maintaining our interval training, but he'd keep a tally of how individuals had performed within a variety of teams to produce a little league table...a simple tactic to ensure nobody slacked! When it came to the summer months, he had an uncanny knack of setting sessions that suited perfectly, with the emphasis always on quality rather than volume.

It was an approach that paid dividends for many of us by keeping fitness levels high without the need for undue mileage. His selflessness was always much appreciated too; Mike continued to coach me to the end of my school years and I can't remember a single occasion when he wasn't present on a club evening. It was that dedication on his part that was then mirrored in so many athletes to have benefited from his knowledge and support.

Thanks Mike.

Michael Mason (Tonbridge AC in 2000s)

I hear Mike has decided to retire and I heard you were doing something for him so I've got a few words that I'd like to share,

'Mike you have done a lot for me during my running career, you have given me great advice when it comes to racing as well as cricket, you have provided me with my greatest moment when I came 5th in Nottingham and I thank you dearly for all this and I wish you all the best'

Thanks
Michael

Pete Mason (Tonbridge AC 1974 – to present day)

Mike,

Looking back at my athletics career, which started in 1974 as a colt for TAC, you are the one person who has been there at every stage, from coaching and managing the Young Athletes Teams to managing the English Schools and County teams also as Senior coach / manager. To cap it all you were a very good runner yourself.

Thanks for all your support and enthusiasm, for me and hundreds of others over the years. It has been an absolute pleasure, for me, to have been a very small part of it.

Peter Mason

Alan Bennett (Tonbridge AC colleague and committee member)

"Mr Tonbridge AC" sums up the contribution you have made to your beloved Club,

Mike,

Ever since Anthony first joined (c1987 I suspect), you have been in the forefront of the coaching and team management - and in those days you were still fit enough to run in the annual Christmas Pudding Races, although heavily handicapped, I recall.

However, what a lot of people don't know about are your other involvements in athletics with Kent Schools AA, Kent County AA and Skinners School - and of course more recently with Judd School.

Many remember, some not so fondly, wind-swept runs at Camber Sands or the dreaded corkscrew up to Bidborough, through flooded fields at Hayesden or unpleasant conditions at Knole, but all have appreciated that, no matter what the weather, you were - and are - always there.

Thousands have benefited from your advice and guidance and TAC would not be the Club it is now without your calm and balanced stewardship.

You may have given up the formality of the Presidency of TAC (what an act to have to follow!) but there is no way that we can wish you 'happy retirement' as no doubt you will still be out and about cajoling and guiding athletes in their endeavours.

All the best, Mike, - and thanks.

AJGB

Iain Presnell (Tonbridge AC 1972 to present day)

I first joined Tonbridge AC in 1972 as a 13 year old district long jump champion. It was Brian Fagg who first introduced me to the club but Mike who first started coaching me in 1974.

Since that time he has almost been the one constant in my life – as a coach, team manager, colleague, fellow committee member, fellow selector and above all a friend. In fact such was his influence over my early athletics 'career' that the courier often reported me as a Skinners' pupil when in fact I attended The Tech. This confusion arose because by 1974 I was nipping out of school to train with the Skinners squad at Yew Tree Road and I well remember my first puke-inducing session on the sloping track.

Since those early days I later joined Mike on the KSAA Committee and although we often disagreed over selection matters it was Mike's knowledge of schools athletics and athletes that usually won the day.

It was a sad day not only for Tonbridge AC but also for Kent athletics and the athletics community as a whole when Mike decided to hang up his presidential spikes, but I am sure we will see him around the county's tracks next summer and beyond.

Thanks for all the advice, coaching, mentoring and knowledge. I still use some of your old sessions to coach my lot (yes I still have many of the old hand written schedules - and I can actually read them!)

Iain Presnell

Tonbridge Athletic Club
Chairman's Report for the Year ending 30 September 2011
By Alan Bennett

I start this Report with the news that our President, Mike Rowbottom, has decided to step down from the role for personal and family reasons after many, many years - even he cannot recall when he took over!

Mike joined Tonbridge AC as a middle-distance athlete in the late 1950's and, as a teacher at Skinners School, almost immediately started a conveyor belt of athletes into the Club. He has coached probably thousands of athletes and worked tirelessly for the sport, not only for TAC but also for the Kent County Athletics Association and Kent Schools Athletics Association. He has been honoured by the South-East Athletics Association for his commitment and contribution, whilst Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council presented a Lifetime Achievement Award - never has an award been so justly made.

We will all miss Mike but no doubt the lure of and his love for the sport will see him at events in the future. The position of President is for life, and so Mike becomes our second Life Past President. We wish him and his family well and thank him for his amazing contribution to TAC and to the world of athletics as a whole.

Paul Robertson – Tonbridge AC Chairman 1989 to 1996

From my time as Chairman I remember Mike as the wisest Counsellor with a deep love for Athletics and everything to do with TAC - a rock with encyclopaedic knowledge. As the father of a very talented athlete, I remember David's very early development stages under Mike's careful coaching. I could not believe Mike's assessment of David's potential right from the start - my son running in National Championships ? Mike's ability to identify and nurture talent was already well established, is a credit to him and has been a major contributor to TAC becoming the force in Athletics it is today. Thanks to Mike a door was opened to many years of major enjoyment for David and his parents - an experience enjoyed by many others over the years I'm sure.

Thank you Mike for a lifetime's devotion to TAC and Athletics.

Paul Robertson
Chairman goodness knows when1989-96

Dawn Hookway – Tonbridge AC Coach and Committee member 2002 onwards

My first memory of you Mike , is when I agreed to help out at a Tonbridge AC open meeting. I was doing the refreshments and you were helping out with the results, so we shared the old canteen with you on the right and me on the left. I hope that I am still plugging away and last as long as you! I feel a real passion for the sport now partly due to Mark but some of it is down to you, quite an example to follow. Mike you were always there, no matter what and I could rely on you to give me an honest point of view even if it was not the one I wanted to hear. You have always been very loyal to Tonbridge AC and we thank you for that. You have a wonderful sense of humour, which I appreciate and I wish you all the very best. I will miss you.

Dawn Hookway

Sam Bradley – Tonbridge AC athlete 2002 onwards

So many thanks for everything you have done not just for me as an athlete, but for the athletics club and community. You were able to progress me through my school years athletically and brought me on leaps and bounds as an athlete.

Looking back , I actually miss the Monday evening runs with the Judd team, the manic circuit sessions on a Tuesday night and the track sessions with no lighting following the white lines with Kurt Wolfe !

You have done such a fantastic job leading the club into a progressive and successful stage and it is from your work that you invested that everything is due. I hope you have enjoyed your time at the club and you will be missed as a coach, chairman and member of the club. Thank you for everything.

Thanks
Sam

Andy Graffin (Tonbridge Athletic Club and Sydney Olympics 1500 metres in 2000)

I followed my brother Allen into the sport of running. Having competed in the Kent Schools Cross Country Championships I went along to Tonbridge Athletic Club the following Tuesday evening to meet Mike for the first time.

From that point Mike was a central figure in my running career, as he was for so many others. Mike's approach to coaching was spot on – he'd give as much attention to the athlete as they gave to their athletics. Never being too pushy, but always being available to guide and support young endurance runners. There is no doubt in my mind that Mike has been the key figure in the hot-bed of endurance running that has existed in and around Tonbridge for many years.

Mike's knowledge and skills in all aspects of coaching have enabled me, and many athletes to achieve great success under his guidance. Key to this is not just Mike's experience in developing appropriate training schedules, but also the motivational, supportive and other psychological skills he put into action, ensuring his athletes nearly always performed to the best of their ability when it counted most in championship events. He always had the right words for me whether my performance had been good or bad.

I don't know if it would even be possible to total the number of medals, trophies, championships and the like won – at any level – by those athletes lucky enough to have been able to call Mike their coach. I do know that it would be a mighty long list. For those who moved away and no longer trained under Mike's experienced eye, I'm sure all would agree that he can rightly take a big share of the credit for any subsequent success they have had. The principles, disciplines and building blocks Mike laid were undoubtedly a rock-solid foundation for future success.

But most importantly, for me at least, was that I enjoyed it. Simple as that.

Thank you Mike.

Dave Cross (coached by Mike 1968 – 72, Tonbridge AC 1971 -)

Mike,

It's difficult to know where to start! My life would have been considerably different without your contribution. People will talk about you as an outstanding middle-distance coach. Very few will talk about you as a high jump coach! But a high jump coach you became on my behalf. I'd expressed an interest, and a modicum of ability. You gave up a significant amount of your time to learn the event and to coach me from raw beginner to somebody who could compete at national level – no mean feat with the material you had to work with! As with many other contemporaries of mine, you introduced me to Tonbridge AC. I clearly enjoyed it, because I've spent more than 40 years as a member and have enjoyed watching your contribution, both as an outstanding coach and in your various administrative roles. In my memory of the club, nobody even comes close to the level of contribution that you have made.

I said that my life would have been considerably different without your contribution. It was at Tonbridge AC that I met my wife, Adele!

Mike, you have so much to answer for!!

Thank you so much.

Regards

Dave Cross