

## **A brief history of the Johnsonville 8km Road Race and 6.4km Road Walk**

I was on the Wellington Masters Committee from 1980 to 1985. We were always looking for interested participants and venues for racing from. We had a 10km race which we ran annually in November, and we thought about running an 8km road race. The committee looked at different suburbs, Tawa, Lower Hutt etc. I found a block in Johnsonville of 1.6km - thus 5 laps equals 8K.

This block had no road crossings, and in those days there was very little traffic and we also had the Olympic Harrier Club rooms in Bannister Avenue, to use as race headquarters where we had toilets, showers, and after the race, a venue for a very nice lunch. The same format is still used to this day. The start and finish used to be in Broderick Road, but due to more traffic over the past few years, the start and finish has been shifted to Kipling Street.

The first race was run on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1985, and was won by Neville Martin, (University) in a time from memory 27 min 20 sec. This was a race record until Steve Hunt (Scottish) did 26.15 in 1994, only Grant McLean (Scottish) in the last couple of years has approached these times. The record for women is 31.56 achieved in 1989 by Judith Stewart, also from Scottish.

In 1987 we started a team's race with four to count and with at least one woman participant to make it more equable. This has resulted in 11 wins for Olympic; seven for Scottish and two for Trentham. This is now a popular and interesting team event which is well supported by all clubs.

The race from 1986 onwards has been run at the end of July or beginning of August. This also gives you an idea how fit you are for the road running part of the season. In 1998 the first walking race was held as part of the proceedings and this was won by David Humphries in a time of 52.26, the next year 1999 it was run as 4 laps - 6.4km. The record is held by Peter Baillie (Scottish), set in 2008 in a time of 34 min 06 secs.

I find this race a good test of fitness, though a lot of people complain about the course but they seem to come back and run it year after year. It must be the nice lunch, made over the past few years by Caroline Gratton. It is an easy race to organise, and I have had a good team to assist year after year. I think we had about 50 runners in the first few years, and it has been down as low as 18 runners some time. The last few years it has been steady at 35 to 40 competitors with about 10 of them being walkers.

In 1999 Ray Wallis presented the Jim Lockhart and Mariette Hewitson Memorial Baton, (this is a memorial to two very active members who are no longer with us) and is presented to the person who sets a new age record, or gets the closest to it.

Diane Rogers won this trophy the first time, and has since won it on three more occasions, the last time was this year; getting an over 70 record. Well done Diane.

I hope to organise this 8km race as long as I can, which is hopefully, for many more years.

Brian Watson  
President Wellington Masters