

# Knox Little Athletics Centre History

by KLAC Life Member George Dyer

Knox Council called a meeting at the old Shire Hall for all interested parties in September 1968. In the main it was made up of school representatives, Cr Earlholm chaired that meeting, and called upon Trevor Billingham, the founder of Little Athletics in Geelong 1964 to give a run down on how to form a Little Athletic Centre. Tentatively that night, 12 clubs were formed and following meetings produced the Knox Little Athletics Centre No 23.

An Executive was formed, Brian Fowler President and Don Brown Secretary. Our first Little Athletics meeting was at Boronia High School, Tormore Road in November 1968. We had a 200m circular track and a separate 70m track. We were all new to stop watches and measures but we learnt very quickly.

The grass had to be cut by ourselves and track marked. With Council assistance, we moved in 1969 to Chandler Park, Boronia, a much larger venue.

The grass at Chandler Park was cut for us every week, but we had 4.5 Km of track to mark with a line marker every Friday night. If you were back there now, you would see a faint outline. Our Long Jump, Triple Jump and High Jump were on the Netball counts.

It's important to remember that even in those early days, fund raising for an all weather track was in full swing, and Knox Park was the target. That money we raised was channelled to the Knox Council to earn interest on our behalf when the time came.

There was a Committee of Management at Chandler Park, and was representing Little Athletics and at that same time Don Brown & myself were on a Committee of Management at Knox Park, which just had a old house where the Obedience Dog Club is now.

It was important to have a finger in the pie as soccer and cricket were also vying for that area. Before I go on, at this stage, I would like to state that it was the magnificent work of Don and Kath Brown, that were so competent in organising Centre affairs, that set the ground work for what you see today.

1975/76 saw us pushing hard for an all "weather track" and Council came up with a plan to be adopted with monetary input from the potential users. As we sat down with Soccer, Cricket, Senior Athletics and Little Athletics, it came down to Little Athletics as we had a credit of \$15,000 with the Council.

The proposal from Council was an eight lane straight and a six lane circular "resilite track" \$128,000 and a pavilion \$98,000. Council would pay for the track, our \$16,000 to the Pavilion, and the rest on a 20/40/40 basis.

One thing we did was lobby very hard to get assistance from Council, State and Federal elections. Our other strong point if we wanted something, we always offered to put into the project and believe me "athletics" over the years in monetary and labour would be in excess of \$600,000.

By 1977 the track was in progress. In November 1978 I convinced the Executive to move to Knox Park. My reasons for that move was to put pressure on everyone to get the track finished, as works were dawdling, the asphalt was down so we made the move and in no time at all the top surface was on and marked. But this was the start. We had no jump, discus or shot put areas.

Once again, we dipped into the kitty and with volunteer labour, we got the job done for \$4,500. We started to settle in but we needed an equipment shed, which we built ourselves for \$10,000.

By this time Senior Athletics with bingo were raising serious funds, a great effort by Hazel Vaughan, Betty DeCoite, Marlene and Geoff Warren, Joy & Dianne Styles.

1982 saw the possibility of becoming a VAA senior venue but with a six lane circular track, a major update was needed. Council were in agreement and rapidly set about creating the track we have now.

Also a separate Pole Vault run-up area (near Area 3), we did that ourselves \$8,000 and also the long and triple jump area \$22,000 to us and the Council paid for the surface on the run-up pits which were done to Olympic standards. Council re-done the Discus Cages, Javelin and High Jump area. Pole Vault bags and other equipment cost \$45,000. We passed VAA requirements and 1984 we became a senior venue.

It was always stressed to Executive that when in office we would continue to update our amenities for future generations and I am pleased to say that is still happening today.

Bringing the Hammer Throw inside was a bonus.

Probably our greatest effort was getting the track updated to a "type one" Olympic standard surface. We had great support from Council. Noel Rasti and myself put quite a bit of lobbying into that one. Cost of surface \$538,000, of which athletics put in \$100,000 and also lights \$32,000.

A phone call one day, told me \$300,000 may become available towards our present day Grandstand if we could come up with \$100,000. We did and the result is there. Designed to seat 800 and basically meant to be storage area underneath.

But once it was up, we transformed the inside into a gym, kitchen, committee room and recreation area. Under the guidance of Richard Huggins, we brought the power down from the pavilion. That cable will also cater for any future development – cost \$70,000. Development is still going on, look what Noel Rasti has accomplished.

Keeping the Board of Management is very important for the future, we should never relinquish what so many people have worked so hard for. We must keep the school bookings and canteens. We must continue to look forward. Its great satisfaction knowing so many are enjoying Knox Park.

Committees need to ensure all councillors and politicians are aware of Knox Park and the need it fills.

It would be remiss of me not to mention a few names.

Don & Kath Brown - they put us on the right path with their management skills.

John Prendergast - a fine Secretary.

Doreen Layfield – one again a capable Secretary

Betty Jamonts – a great executive member

David Tracey – a thoughtful Secretary and worker

John Guerra – a highly skilled President who went on to be Victorian and Australian President of Little Athletics

Ron Papst – A man who put his heart and soul into Little Athletics

Alan Johnson – Respected Coach and member

Kathy Hale – A marvellous worker, a cheery smile, always very thorough

Phil Bateman – Has been a rock in Little Athletics. His reasoned arguments on affairs brought good outcomes.

Richard Huggins – Coach, fine Executive Member and got the job done

Noel Rasti – I remember the first executive meeting he attended. He must have thought what the hell's going on. Noel has been a hard working member, a far sighted President, a good listener, always prepared to have a go and has pointed Little Aths in the right direction.

There are a lot more profile names that should be mentioned. The two Mikes for one. Steve Cowburn – a great effort by him and looked after the Centre well and I can still see the amiable Kevin Egan doing the Registrar rounds.

Yours in Sport

George Dyer

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**PROFILE**



*GEORGE DYER at the athletics centre he worked so hard to establish.*

## By George—its eight lanes

**George Dyer is full of energy. He runs 15-20 km. every night, works as a carpenter, and finds time to be a member of a number of community groups.**

His energy is responsible for developing Knox Park into a first-class athletic venue.

Originally only six circular running lanes were constructed at the park but late this year work will start on adding two more. The lanes will cost \$110,000 and enable major athletic events to be staged. The lanes will be completed by next March.

Developing ovals is not new to George who migrated to Australia from England in 1949. Eventually settling in the Boronia area with his children attending St. Joseph's, he became involved in constructing the school oval which involved moving some 30,000 metres of soil.

Knox Little Athletics Club was formed 16 years ago — and once again George was on hand. With other helpers, he marked lanes at Boronia High School.

By 1972 the Little Athletics venue was moved to Chandler Park. George began a campaign to have a permanent facility at Knox Park.

After persistent lobbying and fund raising by George's eager group, Council granted an area at the park for develop-

ment of an athletics complex with six all-weather running lanes.

Now the necessary other two are about to be added. And there is a chance that the high jump area will shortly be constructed!

**Council officers praise George who has the ability to get things done without upsetting too many people.**

And what else does George do? He is involved in football, chairman of both Chandler Park and Knox Park committees of management, coaches walkers and judges athletics — Little Aths. and senior grades, and plays cricket.

And he still finds time for his family. He says his wife, Betty, is very understanding. Incidentally, George is tracing his family history.

Leave it to George — he has some energy!

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