



Welcome to our 50th Celebration Newsletter

Midland Vets Club was founded in October 1971. In 2006 it was renamed Midland Masters Athletics Club to recognise the breadth of activities we undertake.

In this newsletter we look back at some of our history and we recognize the contribution that some of our members have made to Midlands Masters Athletics over these 50 years .

At our celebration event in September at Nuneaton we awarded 6 people life membership of the club and they joined George Phipps who was our only current life member.

In celebration of George Phipps contribution to MMAC we are indebted to some words from Margaret Simpson and Irene Nichols. Then we have some details of each of the other 6 new life members

George Phipps

George was an inaugural member of MVAC, as it was then, being allocated number 25 according to his position in the 10k Road race held at Halesowen 17th October 1971 where a group of `older` men over 40 gathered for the formation of the Club. George was the first Chairman of MVAC from 1971 - 1985.

The second race, a cross country, followed a month later at the Edmondscote Running Track, Leamington, organised by George at his home venue. This became a regular meeting place for many of the early events, track, road and cross country, all promoted and organised by

George including entries, results, medal engraving etc and with his wife Margaret also providing the refreshments.

One of his early initiatives was to compile a statistical list of Club members achievements. He also wrote and distributed the first Newsletters.

George was a successful competitor. In addition to his promotional work and as Chair of the Committee he set a high standard for aspirational over 40 year old athletes to follow. The archived early Newsletters on the website provide fascinating reading and follow the rapid expansion of the Club and individual performances in greater detail.

The Club became more involved with Inter Area Veteran Club and National events and in 1975 joined the newly constituted BVAF. George represented MVAC on that Committee, eventually becoming Chair in 1976 and serving in that capacity for 5 years.

The contribution that George made to MVAC and the development of BVAF as a World wide organisation was extraordinary.

George and Margaret attended a Presidents' Lunch in 2019. The well-remembered twinkle in the eye was still evident and it was great to see our first Honorary Member looking so well.



Margaret Simpson

Back in 1971, there were four founding members and one of these and the number one member was Colin Simpson, Margaret's late husband and not surprisingly our club became a major part of Margaret's life.

Helping Colin at events initially and when the club admitted women in 1978 she took on more official roles as assistant track and field secretary and then when Colin volunteered to be Editor in the late 1980's. she became the typist/dogsbody. They produced electronic stencils which were printed commercially. the newsletter was a vital link between members. There was no club house, headquarters or anything. All information about races, results, news of national and international events, fixtures and comments from readers went out via the only means of communication. The membership was about 750 members and everyone received

a copy in the post. Margaret also took on the minutes secretary role in the 1990s, amazing people with her shorthand skills and for many years the Club Committee met at their home and were the recipients of their generous hospitality.

In 2009, she was promoted, by Colin, from dogsbody to Assistant Editor and was also President in 2009 and 2010. Then in 2011, following the sudden death of Colin, Margaret took over as editor and continued to play a major role in the club until 2020. Not only on these tasks but at cross country races, the t&f championships helping with the administration of the day. Margaret's great experience with Committee work and administration has been a great support and guidance over many years and has been much valued by all who have worked alongside her.

At the 50th celebration at Nuneaton, shortly after Margaret arrived, she saw me trying to hand out the numbers and answer questions. She said do you want me to do that and took over allowing me to deal with other tasks. Later she was working with Irene Nicholls on the results as they had done for many Track & Field championships over many years.



Eric Horwill

Eric was the 77th male member joining in October 1972. He was Track and Field secretary in 1977, when it was 10p to enter an event at the T&F championships. In newsletters I saw Eric running a 10k doing a lot of the throwing events and planning trips to Hanover in 1979 and in 1985 taking over as handicapper which is a role he hasn't been able to lose yet. Eric though is mainly known for his love of walking and his officiating in this area which is still doing as he showed at Nuneaton and he has been very active in the Horwich walks which is an institution. Eric was MMAC President in 2002. Eric was, for a number of years, Walking Secretary to the

BMAF and EAMA promoting the Walking community at home and abroad to great effect. His representation on the EAMA Committee has been most valuable and has proved impossible to follow.

Pam Horwill

Pam is another walk institution and she was allocated the number 6 when she joined in 1979 just after women were allowed to be members. A trail blazer with her first race shortly after she joined. With Eric she has been a stalwart of walk officiating she has worked tirelessly to ensure that there has been equal representation in athletics. Pam was President in 2006. Her contribution to event planning and delivery has been of the highest order and her wide experience of the athletics world has been invaluable. Irene tells me of Pam, it was great to have her alongside in a pressure situation.



Phil Owen

The voice of masters athletics, is undoubtedly. Phil joined in 1983 and in 1985 was Track & Field secretary (that was some year Irene, Margaret and Eric were all on the committee) a position he held for several years but besides that he has organised road relays for the club, he was President in 1990. Phil wasn't a bad athlete himself and he is still commentating on masters events, the track and field vets final , our championships, the BMAF championships, vets league matches – give this man a microphone and he is there, bringing the event alive for spectators with his knowledge of performances and always encouraging the athletes.

Angela Copson

Our club though is not just about the people making the club tick but the athletes as well. Angela joined in 2007 and since then has set the world on fire with her performances, many golds and world records but she still has found time to support MMAC events. The T&F championships, the inter areas and when we had a parkrun before an AGM, Angela came and supported. That is one consistent thing across 50 years, we still cant get people to the AGM. Angela has been an inspiration to many of our members and athletes around the country. I saw her run in Jesolo, Malaga and Perth on her way to many golds. Angela was instrumental in motivating her fellow club ladies to become involved in running, showing through her enthusiasm the benefits to be gained through participation even as a late starter. Her International Cross Country record is extraordinary. She has led her age group on many occasions and is inevitably the first choice on selection day, representing MMAC with honour. Always smiling.



Irene Nicholls contribution to the club covers 42 years, initially Edgar Nicholls had joined the club in the 1970s. Irene was the 17th female member joining in October 1979. Then in 1980 she joined the committee with Edgar as joint road and cross country secretary. It was a sign of her contribution that she was made president in 1985/86, the first woman president. In 1991 Irene was vice chairman before becoming chairman in 1997, again the first woman chairman, a role she held until 2018 when with Edgars declining health she stepped down but agreed to become President that year, 2018, staying on the committee to provide her experience to help.

Being Chairman for 21 years is just part of the role though, during that time she was a key part of the administration of all the events MMAC put on and also most of the

BMAF events. running the scoring at the interareas, the organization of our track and field schedules, cross country events, handicaps, sorting out medals the work was endless

this year alone in her back seat capacity she oversaw the medal award process at our championships, ran the inter areas scoring, did the vets league scoring. At Nuneaton on a day to celebrate her achievements again she was taking on sorting out the results and giving out certificates.

When I retired and said I could get involved in MMAC, Irene was very welcoming and supportive and was very pleased to hand over the membership secretary role another task she had taken over for some years to keep the club functioning

Six people who have made our club successful, thank you all.



MMAC History

The Presidential Chain was presented by the 1994 President Bill Taylor. The first President in 1978 was Jack Selby of Coventry Godiva one of the 4 founding members with George Phipps, Colin Simpson and Ken Westley.

Midland Masters Athletic Club

Newsletter No 1 – Souvenir Edition

It is with great pleasure we have reproduced the first page of the first newsletter followed by a copy of the original first edition. The type face has faded somewhat, hence my attempt at a more readable modern reproduction of the first page. I have corrected some of original typos (!) but please forgive me if there are any errors especially in the names of the original members – the old manuscript is difficult to read!

What a fascinating journey. This was the beginning of master's or "Veterans" athletics, fifty years ago. The first newsletter includes details of the first committee meeting held on 7th October 1971. The inaugural race, in Halesowen, finishing order was used for founder membership numbers for with the late Colin Simpson and then treasurer coming home first and claiming membership No 1.

Unsurprisingly, there were no “ladies” at the first meeting and no women in this first race. At the time athletics for women was thought unseemly and possibly unhealthy for older women. This later be challenged and proved incorrect with the first women joining the club in 1978 - often beating the men!

Athletics, it appears, was largely road and cross country, there is no mention of track and field in the first newsletter. Age grading was in infancy with prizes for two bands: under and over 50 years old. I presume very most vets were under 50 at the time. The first newsletters were produced on a typewriter and duplicated with a black and white photo-copier (Gestetner or similar) before distribution by post. We used a printer at Aston University for many years and the newsletter was then stuffed into envelopes and stamps “licked and sticked” with a small team in Colin and Margaret Simpson’s front room in Solihull. Nowadays, it is all done via a mailing company.

Club event entry fees were just 10p or two “bob” (two shillings or 24 pennies) in old money – it was the year of decimalisation. It was also the year of the invention of the microprocessor, the first hand held calculators, the Morris Marina car and Apollo 14 were launched, Edward Heath was Prime Minister, spaghetti junction opened and the Bay City Rollers topping the charts.

Midland Masters Memories

I recently reviewed the MMAC newsletters 77-79 from the early 1980’s which for me were my early running days having now competed in the London Marathon at least 3 times. Here are a few stories from this period. All old newsletters are held within our archive on MidlandMasters.com

Naughty Northerner’s

In 1982 several North Area athletes were suspended from competition by the AAA for falling foul of rule 5c. They ran in an unregistered race for which the District Committee was unaware thus disqualifying themselves from further AAA competition. N Blackman, the Newsletter Editor commented on this high-handed approach preventing athletes “taking part in social, training or competitive event with their friends and fellow athletes”. Blackman thought it very much against the spirit of athletics “if runners cannot follow their instinctive urge to run cross country, uphill and down dale, battling with all that the elements can throw at them, as well as competing against each other, simply because the fact that they are doing so is not recorded in black and white in documents files away in a cabinet in some dreary office”. The athletes paid a high price for what was the early days of registration

and race licences. Compare that to today with the myriad of fun runs, Parkruns and “tough guy” events. True, events do need to be registered for records and “serious” competition, but it is interesting how my old club (Birchfield) always looked down their noses when I ran in the Sutton Coldfield Fun Run which has always been a great event.

First Lady

Dorothy (Dot) Fellows, Cannock & Staffs, ran her first marathon in 1982, the Barnsley Marathon. Dot was MMAC member 43 and one of the first women to join. She is still competing today and well known to many MMAC members. Her time in 1983 was a very respectable 3h. 6m. 1s which by my calculation, as an F35, was an age graded 76% - not bad for your first marathon. Not surprisingly she was the first lady home. She then beat this time and was the first lady again in 1984 with a time of 3h. 2m. 32s. She is still competing of course at F75.

Too hot to handle

The MVAC Track & Field Championships took place on 3 July 1983 on a very hot day hampered by a lack of tea for officials. K Westley writes “One minor upset occurred in the ladies’ changing rooms when the showers were too hot for our lady members. George (Phipps, chairman), brave soul that he is, promptly volunteered to put the matter right with the aid of a borrowed pair of pliers!! He came out full of smiles having remedied the situation by moving some of our lady members into the men’s’ changing room. There were no men in at the time because I went in and checked!”

Synthetics

One view at the time was that ball games should be played on natural surfaces i.e. grass and the same applies to track and field. Synthetic surfaces for tennis made for a different game and the same applied to athletics. The introduction of the carbon-fibre pole completely changed the pole vault as an event with greater heights being achieved and synthetic tracks having similar effect on race performance. In a general gripe of all this modern technology,

Alf Sparkes complains about new cross country events taking place on closely mown grass

with no muddy ditches, streams, or ploughed fields to negotiate – heaven forbid! Luckily for Alf and most MMAC events of today we still have plenty of water, mud, and hills with the occasional ploughed field in our cross-country championships!

Alf Sparkes approved course – spikes advised! (MMAC Championship 2016)

Birmingham Marathon

In 1983 there were two Birmingham marathons which was unfortunate. It was 50 weeks since the last marathon and now we had two within 6 days of each other. The Peoples Marathon followed by the new Brum Run so close together making it difficult to compete in both events. Entries were, as a result, approximately halved for both marathons. The two organisers, John Walker and Terry Colton were in discussion about merging the two events in to one giant Birmingham Marathon which sadly did not occur for over 30 years.

Isle of Man TT

In 1983 the then Track and Field Secretary, Eric Horwill (MMAC No 77) of Dudley & Stourbridge Harries was a walker of some repute. He regularly competed the Isle of Man TT road walk, a mere 37½ miles! On 29 th August 1983 he completed the event for the 21 st consecutive year gaining 13 th place. He was presented a silver dish to commemorate his “coming of age”. Not to be outdone, his wife, Pam (MMAC No 6) competed in the 10km road walk, on the same island, the previous day in 61m 44s. Pam and Eric have since been awarded life membership of Midland Masters.

Martin Wilkinson



Enjoy the first edition!

MIDLAND MASTERS ATHLETIC CLUB

NEWSLETTER No 1 31st October 1971

DECISIONS 1. Committee elected at Halesowen Sunday 7th October 1971, after 10,000m road race.

Jack Selby, 15 Tamworth Rd, Coventry. Secretary
Colin Simpson, 89 Willow Road, Solihull. Treasurer
Darry McWhirter, 133 Moat Rd, Warley Warcs
George Phipps.164 Millbank Warwick, Warcs. Statistician & Chairman
2. Subscription – 25p a year.

3. Club events – road and cross country events to be arranged at different venues. Some events to be handicaps. In general, the home organiser to be responsible for course, marshals and officials. A charge of 10p to be paid by competitors in club events.

4. Every club member to have a permanent number, for which he is responsible after initial distribution, which should be worn at all club events. (those competitors finishing in the inaugural race at Halesowen on Sunday 17th October, will have numbers the same as their finishing positions – these will, from now on, be marked men.)

5. **2nd Midlands Veterans A.C.Race** – Leamington Sun 21 Nov.. 11.15am

Cross Country race – 3 laps varied course – no road.
Change at the Edmonscote Running Track. The changing rooms are about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the course. Organiser is George Phipps.

Prizes – First three places and first over 50.

6. 3rd Midlands Veterans Race to be held at Coventry on Sun 12 December

Results of 1st Race. 10,000 metres road – Halesowen – 17 October 1971

1.	C. Simpson	Small Heath	33.03
2.	R. Bentley	Tipton	33.23
3.	C. Kemball	Wol & Bil.	34.32
4.	D. Rhodes	"	34.39
5.	H. Lloyds	Cov. God.	35.21
6.	W. Aston	Wol & Bil.	35.31
7.	B. Turney	Cov. & God	36.10
8.	T. Buckingham	Leamington	36.25
9.	W. Motterham	West Brom	36.38
10.	D. McWhirter	Halesowen	36.57
11.	S. Jackson	Bristol	36.58
12.	C. Besston	Derby	38.18
13.	H. Hayden	Dud. & Stour.	38:29
14.	A. Blegg	Sparkhill	40.08
15.	K. Westley	Halesowen	41.10
16.	H. Mail	Derby	41.21
17.	S. Lee	Rugby	41.28
18.	J. Best	Small Heath	42.11
19.	D. Owen	Birchfield	42.19
20.	J. Gibson	Nott City AC	48.37

Future ideas – Food for thought

1. Club champion over 40 – The member with minimum number of points from a number of cross road and cross runs (say 4 or 5?)
Club champion over 50 – similar but 1 or less event?
2. George Phipps is compiling a complete list of road and cross country performances of all Midlands AC members, achieved since becoming a vet. Please help him by completing the enclosed form with as much information you can retrieve from your archives.
3. It is hoped to arrange fixtures against both the Northern and Southern Vets. Instead of the usual 6 to count, why not 12 or even more to count?
4. Any ideas for design of club colours and club badge?

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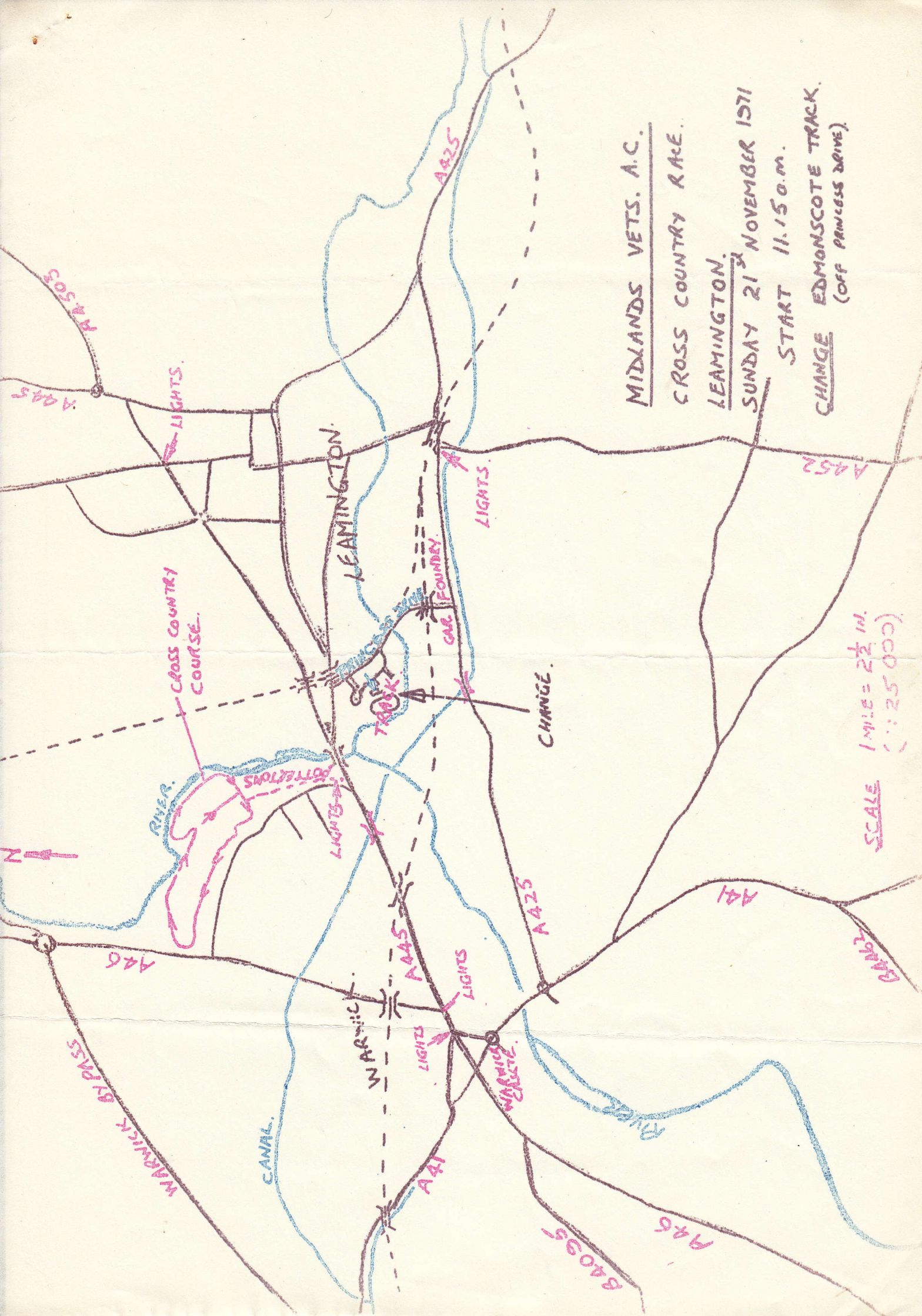
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MIDLANDS VETS. A.C.
 CROSS COUNTRY RACE.

LEAMINGTON.
 SUNDAY 21st NOVEMBER 1971
 START 11.150.m.

CHANGE EDMONSCOTE TRACK.
 (OFF PRINCESS DRIVE).

SCALE 1 MILE = 2 1/2 IN.
 (1:25000)

MIDLANDS VETERANS ATHLETIC CLUB
PERFORMANCES ACHIVED AS A VETERAN (Over 40)

A list of all performances of club members, achieved since becoming a veteran, is being compiled. Please supply me with as much information as you can so that the final booklet will be as complete and as interesting as possible.

Name Date of birth

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>time</u>	<u>position</u>	<u>Veteran position</u>

Please return to :- George Phipps, 164 Millbank, Warwick, Warks.