

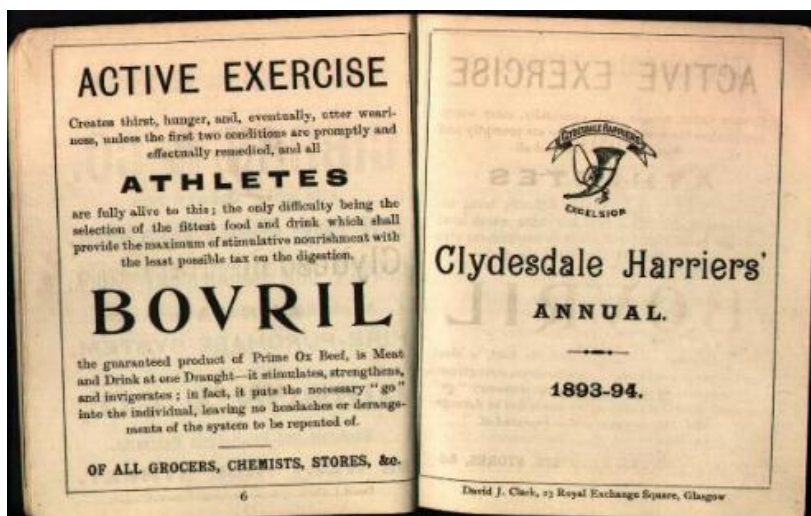
Following a meeting in Glasgow on May 4th 1885, Clydesdale Harriers was formed as Scotland's first amateur open athletics club with the object of promoting amateur athletics generally and cross country running in particular.

The club membership was not confined to Glasgow, but open to the whole west of Scotland as can be seen in the wide spread of noted runners such as AP Findlay from Ayr, Andrew Hannah from Glasgow, James Campbell from Helensburgh, John Clelland from Larkhall, and James Henderson from Chryston. Membership was also open to members of other sports clubs and football, cycling, rowing, and cricket clubs, were all represented in Clydesdale Harriers.

It is very interesting to note that Clydesdale Harriers football team played and beat Celtic in a Scottish Cup tie around 1889. The same season they also beat Third Lanark and Preston North End. Despite this promising debut by spare time amateurs the club committee turned down a proposal to form a permanent regular team on the grounds that their main interest was athletics. A very good relationship prevailed between club officials and both Rangers and Celtic football clubs and many sports events were held in conjunction with these two clubs.

From an organizational point of view, it was easier to split the club into a number of sections (based in Ayrshire, Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Stirlingshire) with the Headquarters Section based in Glasgow. Each section was assiduous in recruiting club members and the numbers grew from 120 (1887) to 650 and then to almost 1000. It had numbers, it had quality officials and it had enthusiasm. These qualities gave the club a level of success up to the 1914-18 war that no club could possibly hope to reach again.

Shortly after the foundation of Clydesdale Harriers, Edinburgh Harriers was founded and in 1886 a breakaway from the club saw West of Scotland Harriers born. Inter club fixtures were arranged between the clubs and these did much to increase the interest in cross country running. An outcome of this was the establishing of cross country championships which eventually led to the foundation of a Scottish Cross Country Association with its first championships in 1887. The club really dominated Scottish athletics at this time and one indication of this is the fourteen cross country championship wins. Among the really outstanding runners in the club then, special mention must be made of Andrew Hannah with five cross country titles to his credit and numerous track championship wins at one, four and ten miles. Clydesdale Harriers during this period clocked up an amazing number of firsts - the first club to run its own regular cross country handicap, to promote its own track sports meeting, to promote two complete sports meetings in one season, to promote a two day sports meeting, to attract top English and Irish stars to Scotland to compete, to use commercial sponsorship, (as in the copy of an old handbook shown below) to arrange discounts on clothes, rail tickets and medical preparations for its members, to send a team to the British National Cross Country Championships and many others.



Members handbook 1893

The key factor was the quality of club officials - men who worked hard for the club and yet were keen to give sections their independence as soon as they were ready for it. Such clubs as Paisley Harriers, Ayr Harriers, Greenock Glenpark all began as branches of Clydesdale. By giving sections their independence, along with financial assistance to start them off, the size of the parent club was reduced and there was more competition for good quality runners. So it was that when the club committee was almost completely wiped out in the 1914-18 war, it was very difficult to start again exactly where they left off.

The twenties were bad for the club, - numbers were low, funds were low and what athletes were produced went elsewhere looking for success - Duncan McPhee (four times winner of the SHAA half mile and mile) and Dunky Wright were only two examples: there were others. Other top men left to look for work - Jock Semple being the outstanding example.

Jock Semple, who won the club junior C.C. Title in 1921, (the same year the late Dunky Wright won the Senior Title) emigrated to the U.S.A. in the early 20's. He became a marathon runner and eventually joined Boston Athletics Association and became one of the leading administrators of the famous Boston Marathon. He became a physiotherapist to Boston Bruins and amongst many other things was trainer to the U.S.A. hockey team for the world games and also to Olympic teams.

"Jock" visited his old club many times, the outstanding visit being the Club Centenary Dinner on May 4th 1985. He was until his death, a great supporter of the club and even now leaves a legacy of trophies and generous regular donations from his trust fund that will help the club into the future.

Nevertheless, the club committee worked hard and by the Thirties the results were starting to improve again. A Ladies section was started in 1932 and it was this section that won Scottish titles at Cross Country - both team and individual via Jean Tait - and 880 yards on the track - via Alison Ritchie. Another Clydesdale man, Hans Noble, was picked to run for Ireland too at this time. Unfortunately for the club, with results picking up and organization showing what could be achieved, war broke out again in 1939.

This time the club kept ticking over during the war and, with casualties at a minimum, they were able to take up where they had left off. The stalwarts of the Twenties and Thirties were now working behind the scenes, there were some excellent new runners in the club such as George White and Bobby Boyd and the Ladies section was restarted by Jean Tait, now Mrs Andrew McMillan.

So well had the wartime committee done their work that the new committee could go immediately into action and the results, compared to the inter-war years, were outstanding. During the 1950's the club reached a higher standard in all departments than at any time in its history with championship titles being won at all levels in both men's and women's sections. The most outstanding performances of this time were by John Wright when he won the National Junior C.C. Championship in 1957 and 58 and Ann Wilson when she won the British intermediate Long Jump. Unfortunately many of the club members on whom further success could be built on left the district, and of course, the club, at the end of the Fifties.

It was not long, however, before the men's section was revitalized by the arrival of Ian Donald at the club in 1964 and by 1971 the club had won the only major Scottish C.C. Title to have eluded it throughout its entire history - the Western District Championship of Scotland. The senior men's middle and long distance runners reached a peak throughout the 70's that was very high indeed, winning this title three times in ten years and being placed in the first three a total of seven times. Individual honours at international level were won by Philip Dolan, Robert McWatt and Gary Miller with a host of runners being chosen by Scottish Select teams. Unfortunately this came to an end with the departure of many able athletes for a variety of reasons and the 80's have seen a gradual re-building of the club. There are several very promising signs on the horizon but in the end it will depend on the committee what the future will be.