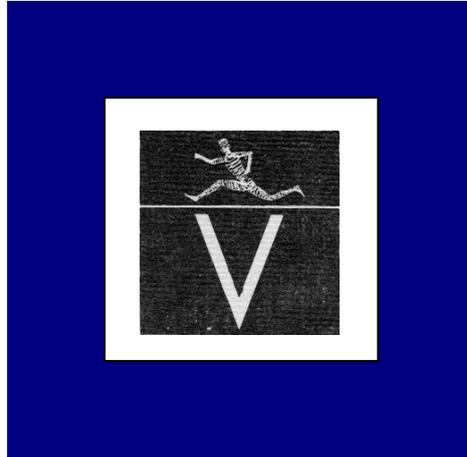


Little Athletics - an Australian Social Phenomenon

The early history



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Foreword

Little Athletics started during an era where organised "out of school" sport generally didn't exist for children attending Primary School. In the early days, there were tremendous hurdles to overcome ranging from the view that "it would be harmful for young children", suitable equipment/implements did not exist and lack of experience of available parents to help run competitions in track and field events.

The success of the Little Athletics movement in those early years encouraged many other sporting organisations to devise junior programs for primary school aged children.

Back in September 2006 in conjunction with the Knox Historical Society, a joint application was made for a "Local History Grant" from the Public Records Office Victoria for the "Bayswater Bullets Little Athletics Club 40th Anniversary History Project" to be produced on CD/DVD. Bayswater Bullets is one of eleven clubs within the Knox Little Athletics Centre.

To broaden the audience to help increase the chances of success, the submission also included researching the Knox Little Athletics Centre and Victorian Little Athletics Association early history, stating the latter had very little information published to date.

The official "Letter of Offer" from the Public Record Office for the grant approval in November 2006 by the Assessment Panel stated that they were impressed with the scope of the proposed project with the comment "*Good links to local historical groups and other community resources are demonstrated in this proposal for the history of a grass-roots sporting organisation*".

This document forms part of the project and is published here in draft form in the hope of encouraging additional comment and new information to be forwarded for inclusion. All contributions will be acknowledged.

This would not have been possible if it were not for the following people;

The Bayswater Bullets Little Athletics Club Committee.

Kerry Semfel: Bayswater Bullets and Knox Centre Life Member who initially researched our club's first 25 year history, which inspired me to keep our club history up to date when I took over as Secretary some five years ago.

Dean Barton-Smith: Former Bayswater Bullets club President and Decathlete Olympian who initiated the club's 40th anniversary plans.

Steve Flemming: Local sports expert from the Knox Historical Society for his advice and research as well as submitting the grant application – Steve is the brother of Olympian Jane Flemming, a former Knox Centre athlete.

Peter Lockwood: Former State MP who added his support and a letter with the project application.

John Guerra: VLAA Life Governor and former VLAA and ALAU Chairperson who's advice, contacts, contribution to this article and hand written notes by Trevor Billingham of the Little Athletics early history launched my VLAA history research. John is also a Bayswater and Knox Centre Life Member and on our Knox Centre 40th Anniversary sub-committee.

Andrew Edney: Diamond Valley LAC Life Member who provided many historical items for research from his collection and is the organiser of their own Centre's 40th Anniversary this season.

Phil Matthews, the Wantirna Club President, in initiating the Knox Centre's celebration plans and the Knox Centre 40th Anniversary sub-committee members for being part of the planning for our celebrations in 2008.

Most of all to both Christine Billingham and Alan Triscott who have generously provided the first hand memories and the many documents from those early days to enable this to be presented. I cannot speak highly enough of the appreciation, support and the time provided by the two pioneers of our sport as well as time spent proof reading, updating and corrections to give an accurate account of the early history of Little Athletics for the benefit for all those associated with our sport.

I was a "Little Athlete" myself starting as an Under 10 for the Fairpark Little Athletics Club when the Knox Centre first started in 1968/69 and left in Under 12's in 1970/71. My Father was the Club President and also on the Knox Executive Committee as its Registrar. 30 years later, I took my older daughter to "Bring a Friend" day as an Under 7 in season 2001/02 and joined the team associated with her local school – Bayswater Bullets Little Athletics Club. She has since gone onto other activities but my younger daughter is still a keen Little Athlete.

Australia Little Athletics has also commissioned Robyn Newton from Western Australia to research the ALA history so if you have any historical information at the national level, could you please contact Robyn as she would love to hear from you at robnewton@inet.net.au

Stephen Egan

January 2008



Trevor Billingham



Christine Billingham

OCTOBER 1st 1964.

New Season Starts In Amateur Athletics Here

(By Trevor Billingham)

The 1964-65 Geelong amateur athletics season will start at Landy Field on Saturday with an open meeting to grade athletes.

Between 100 and 200 athletes are expected to take part in the two and a half hour programme, which will be the first of a series of regular Saturday afternoon meetings, extending until March of next year.

The coming season will exceed by far, the previous efforts in Geelong and will probably come very close to the numbers and standards of some of the Melbourne competition venues.

The eight clubs competing under the control of the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association's Geelong Centre, are all recruiting and most are expecting to double their membership.

A large number of top class school boys and girls have taken up the sport over the past few weeks and they are expected to raise the standards of most grades and provide interesting competitions between the clubs.

Saturday's meetings will be devoted to grading and points for inter-club competition will not be allotted.

The aim will be to assess the ability of all competing athletes in the events in which they intend competing throughout the season, so that they can be placed in grades.

The grading of athletes on ability alone, is peculiar to the Geelong Centre.

It proved such a success last season that it is being retained and improved for this summer, with a view to introducing the method to the parent organisation.

In this method the age of a competitor is not taken into account when deciding who he will compete against. Instead only his actual performance is considered and this used to place him against competitors of similar ability.

Athletes were extremely pleased with the system in the past because it gave all the opportunity to win a heat with little fear of being made ridiculous if the athlete's ability was poor.

The first event will commence at 2 p.m. and all athletes should be changed in advance of this time.

The events to be conducted for men will be: 100 yards, 440 yards, 220 yards hurdles, 1 mile run, 1500 metres steeplechase, 1 mile walk, high jump, javelin, shot put, and long jump.

For women there will be: 75 yards, 220 yards, 80 metres hurdles, long jump and discus.

All competitors are advised to obtain the season's programme either from their secretary or at Landy Field on Saturday.

This will give all of the necessary information for the season, including the time table of events for each Saturday and the planned fixtures and dates for the season.

Competition

Also starting this Saturday, will be the special morning meetings for boys and girls.

These will commence at 10:30 a.m. each Saturday and will be open to any school age competitor.

It is intended that boys and girls not old enough to compete in the afternoon will take part in these special meetings.

Anyone interested in the sport may attend, including parents, while the one-hour of athletics is conducted.

All of the standard athletic events will be conducted and boys and girls will be graded in each event.

CRICKET

Madras, Wednesday. — The Australian cricketers who arrived in Madras on Monday, had three hours net practice this morning at Nehru Stadium, venue of the First Test against India.

A good crowd watched the tourists and cheered a display of strokes by the visiting batsmen, particularly captain Bobby Simpson, Norman O'Neill and Peter Burge. — A.A.P. Reporter.

APPENDIX 1
Geelong Advertiser
October 1st 1964

BEA OWEN CROW
£120
On non bolt down A PLU OWEN CROW Famous After-S

£100
On twin tub PLU OWEN CROW Famous After-S

£80
On wringer Was PLU OWEN CROW Famous After S



Alan Triscott

Competition

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The Geelong Advertiser 1st October 1964

The announcement for the first ever competition of "out of school" junior athletics which would lead to the formation of Little Athletics

Little Athletics - an Australian Social Phenomenon

Little Athletics didn't just happen. A sequence of situations and events took place in the many years preceding that led to that first wet and windy Saturday morning of October 1964 when children first came down to Landy Field to compete.

1953 – Football or athletics?

At age 17, Trevor Billingham was at his sporting crossroads after performing equally well in both football and athletics throughout his schooling days.

Trevor was playing for the East Geelong Football Club, where he had won the Best & Fairest award and was sent an invitation from the Geelong Football Club to try out in the pre-season. His Uncle, Joe Sellwood had played 180 games for them from 1930 to 1945, including the 1937 Premiership win.

But in late 1952, the influence of John Landy from the Geelong Guild Amateur Athletic Club running times in the mile just outside the world record influenced Trevor to follow the path of an athlete as a long distance runner.



This was during the golden era of athletics and destiny would see him joining Geelong Guild for the 1953/54 season during the period where the mile world record was inching closer to that magic four minute mark. John Landy would be the second to run under the 4 minute barrier with a world record time of 3 minutes 58.0 seconds on 21st June 1954 to disprove the experts who were saying it was physically unachievable.

If it was not for John Landy's influence on Trevor, Little Athletics may never have been introduced, or at least not in its current form. (John is shown to the left leading the in a mile distance race)

1956 – John Landy Field



Two memorable events would occur in Trevor Billingham's life during the Olympic year of 1956. One was when he was selected to run the Olympic Torch for a one-mile leg. (shown to the left) This was on the Midland Highway on its way to Melbourne from Ballarat between the towns of Meredith and Lethbridge. Only a few cows and an army truck were witnesses for his moment of pride.

The other was when he took Christine Orr, his future wife, out on their first date to the pre-Olympic trials at Olympic Park.

After the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, John Landy, who had just won a bronze medal in the 1500m, was invited to a Geelong Council dinner in his honour. There he made a speech, on behalf of the Geelong Guild athletes "outlining the importance of establishing a running track in Geelong", as at that time the only cinder track to compete on was at Olympic Park in Melbourne.

Earlier, prior to the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956, a special event was held at Kardinia Park, Geelong. The Olympic athletes were invited to a warm up meeting before the Games began, which allowed many who could not obtain a ticket to the Olympic Games a chance to see the Australian Olympic athletes in action. It was held under lights and 27,000 people attended. One of the athletes competing was Trevor Billingham.

With the money raised, a new scoria 400 yards athletics track was built in John Landy's honour. A Geelong Guild member, who had a road contracting business, organised the construction of the cinder track and the scoria was brought in from Mount Duneed, south of Geelong.

This was built on Barwon Terrace, South Geelong and became known as the "John Landy Field". It then enabled the Geelong Guild Athletics Club to compete locally as until this time, they had to travel to Melbourne for competition.

This track would also be the birthplace of Little Athletics.

1961 – An Athletics Administrator



Trevor continued to compete in athletics with his best season being 1956/57 where he achieved his goal in qualifying for the Geelong Guild "A" team for the half-mile and mile events together with John Landy and Don McMillan. His personal best (PB's) were 1 minute 55.9 seconds for the half mile (805m) and 4 minutes 16.0 seconds for the mile (1,609m).

Trevor retired at age 21 due to insufficient success but resumed for one more season in 1960 to come second in the Victorian Country Mile Championships.

With the establishment of Landy Field, other local senior amateur clubs were formed. The Lara Amateur Athletic Club was founded in 1961 by Trevor Billingham with members of his bible class where he was a Sunday School Teacher. Trevor was co-founder of the Geelong Centre of the Victorian Amateur Athletics Association (VAAA) and was Secretary from its formation in 1962 to April 1968, when he became President. It was during this period where Trevor also took up coaching.

The Administrative experience in setting up both the Geelong Centre of the VAAA and the new senior Amateur clubs within the Geelong district provided the necessary experience, which would aid Trevor later in the rapid growth of Little Athletics in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

1963 - In the beginning

During the September 1963 school holidays, the first attempts at conducting coaching clinics were made at Landy Field to attract boys from secondary schools to join senior athletics, which was a male only club. There were no women's senior clubs in Geelong at that time. It was noticed that the majority of children were of primary school age boys and girls.

In October 1963 three young (primary school age) boys, attempted to compete at Landy Field on the opening day of the 1963/64 season of the Geelong Centre of the VAAA.

On approaching the Arena Manager, Trevor Billingham, they were told that being under 12, they were too young to take part.

The look of disappointment upon the boys faces would come back to haunt him a year later.

1964/65 – A simple Saturday morning competition

In September 1964, two Saturday morning clinics were again held during the school holidays and the same thing happened as in the previous year. The bulk of those attending were boys and girls of primary school age.

Up until this time, there was very little opportunity for "out of school" organised sports available for primary school aged children, so an idea came to Trevor Billingham.

Remembering those young boys from last season's opening day, he suggested to many of the younger children attending that they continue to come on a Saturday morning to take part in a morning competition, as the senior meet didn't start until the afternoon.

At a subsequent meeting of the Geelong Centre of the VAAA in September 1964, where Trevor Billingham was Secretary, he proposed that a morning competition of school age children be commenced on 3rd October 1964. The idea was adopted enthusiastically together with an indication that at least some would come down to the track early to assist.

Trevor wrote an article in the Geelong Advertiser on 1st October 1964 (see page 4) on the opening of the 1964/65 Geelong and District amateur seniors athletics season for that coming Saturday afternoon. At the end of the article, five small paragraphs announced a special meeting for boys and girls starting at 10:30am on Saturday morning for one hour of athletics and that they would be graded for each event.

On this first Saturday morning of October 1964, despite the weather being extremely wet and windy, eighty children turned up at Landy Field. At 10:30am they were ready to compete.

This was the beginning of an Australian social phenomenon. A junior sport was born unique to Australia, and would involve the whole family. The concept of a simple Saturday morning competition was devised, but like bringing in most new concepts to fruition, the journey would not be easy.

Trevor waited for a short while, using the time to setup age groups before coming to the realisation that no other person connected with the senior athletics organisation was coming down to help. He had not asked the few parents on the sideline for assistance as they had come down expecting an organised event, and their body language indicated they were unlikely or unwilling to help.

Trevor walked over to his wife Christine, who was looking after their twin two year old girls and three year old boy, and asked if she could park their Toyota Corona on the finish line to judge, time and record the placegetters while still looking after the toddlers.

Despite this, Trevor and Christine persevered with their first experiment. The children ranged from 8 to 15 years competing in the 100 and 220 yard track events with the boys doing discus and the girls Triple Jump for the field events, with the results measured in feet and inches.

The article written by Trevor in the Geelong Advertiser on 5th Oct 1964 indicated it was a huge success with no mention of the problems encountered. He had a way of writing his stories to make the event sound better, even stating the morning was conducted by the Geelong Centre of the Victorian Amateur Athletics Association and that "there is a considerable need for such junior athletic competitions".

Christine continued to be judge, timekeeper and recorder for another two weeks before a young athlete, Russell Heath, from the Corio Senior club volunteered to start the events allowing Trevor to take over the timing, placing and recording from his wife.

Trevor and Christine worked very hard to keep these junior competitions alive during these early formative times. As Trevor was an Official for the Senior Centre, he would still be at the track until late in the afternoon when it was time to help pack up.

The Billingham's would then go to Trevor's Grandparents for dinner. Afterwards, Christine and the children would watch the black and white television, like most families at that time, Trevor & Christine did not own a television set, while Trevor wrote articles for the Geelong Advertiser on the prescribed paper for the line typesetters. Then it was home after a long day and was typical of every Saturday throughout the track & field season.

It was around this time that June Triscott drove past Landy Field on the way to the shops with her 11 year old daughter Pam and saw young children competing on the track. When they got home and spoke about this, Alan Triscott took Pam down to Landy Field. It was obvious that Trevor and Christine were having difficulties in coping with the large number of children and Alan offered to help out, then raced home to get his new two-way radios, which was equipment just provided to him for his job as an Engineering Surveyor at the Geelong Water Works and Sewerage Trust.

Alan organised the finish while Trevor and Christine set up the races and started them, using the radios as a communication system between the starter and the timekeeper.

So began the association between the Billingham and Triscott families with the wives being very supportive, it was the start of the most interesting time of their lives.

In contrast to Trevor, Alan was denied any organised sporting activities throughout his schooling days during the World War II where German bombers raided London where he grew up. All the younger teachers were engaged in warfare and the school children not evacuated were left with elderly teachers who did not have the energy for sport.

Alan, immigrated to Australia in 1950, where he ensured sport would not be an activity his own children would miss out on. Alan's attention to detail would be an asset during the formative stages of growth in Little Athletics, firstly as an Arena Manager and also as an administrator at the local, state and national levels. Alan's occupation as a Surveyor helped with the layout of athletic tracks for grounds of all types of sizes. He could also provide the advice and help needed for those new Centres being developed.

A quality Trevor & Alan both had in common was that they were both "perfectionists".

As the season continued, other parents such as Don Richardson, Jack Clarke and Jack Frewin came forward to help in conducting events.

As the numbers grew, more track events were introduced and using the senior equipment field events such as High Jump were introduced.

Trevor's experience as a middle and long distance runner when competing in Melbourne at Olympic Park for the Geelong Guild club was that only the first three to finish were timed. He seldom finished in the first three, when running against top athletes such as John Landy, Don McMillan, John Murray or Geoff Warren, so he usually went home without a record of his progress. (Geoff Warren shown running 3rd in the John Landy photo on page 5 would later become a Knox Little Athletics Centre foundation and Life member)

Trevor was determined that the children would not be treated this way, so every athlete in Little Athletics has always received a ticket recording the time or distance achieved in each event.

At Geelong, all children were graded by age, gender and then ability to make each race a truly competitive event. This was the key to them returning each week and bringing their friends with them. Word of mouth, articles written by Trevor Billingham in the Geelong Advertiser as well as his spot on Radio 3GL on Friday nights were the only advertisements used.

The more children that came down to compete, the more time it took to discuss and formulate solutions to the problems that arose, in particular, not having enough parents acting as officials to cover the events being run.

This was how it was to continue for the rest of the summer, and by the end of this first season, around 120 "regulars" were turning up weekly with up to 300 athletes competing irregularly.

Little would the people at that time have realised, from these early events, that junior athletics would become so enormously popular and eventually sweep the nation.

1965/66 – Involving the family

A year later, after much soul searching on his part, with the frustration of not having enough people to help conduct events, Trevor decided to continue with the children's competition on Saturday mornings. He proposed this again to the Geelong Centre of the VAAA Committee.

Thinking back to the Olympic event in 1956, Trevor had wondered what had become of the lights which were erected at Kardinia Park. He found them under the Old Players Stand and the Geelong Football Club offered them to him if they were of any use to Geelong Athletics. He accepted the offer and took them back to Landy Field.

In January 1965, strings of shades with 500 watt globes were suspended at Landy Field in two 168m spans, yet to be officially connected by an electrician. A world record would be broken using these lights, which indirectly would be the spark for Little Athletics to become independent from the senior organisation and to start leading themselves.

Two remarkable things would happen in October 1965. Trevor, in the senior athletics capacity wrote to Ron Clarke inviting him to attempt the world record for the 20,000 metres and the One Hour Run, an offer which he accepted. It was also at this time that Trevor first thought up the name "Little Athletics" as the competition had been termed as "Junior Athletics".

Both the invitation and the name "Little Athletics" to be adopted were taken to the Senior Amateur Executive Meeting for approval.

Trevor's article in the Geelong Advertiser on 7th October 1965 mentioned the name "Little Athletics" for the very first time. This was for the opening day of the 1965/66 Geelong Little Athletics competition. The article stated that it would be starting on Saturday 9th October 1965 at 10:00am for boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 13. Track events were now being conducted in metric measures and during the middle of the program; coaching and demonstrations were being run with a view on the athletes improving their performance. To help cover the expenses, a fee of three shillings (30 cents) was charged for the 14 competition days.

They continued the competition in the same manner, spending the first 15 minutes recruiting parents as officials and teaching them what was required.

The combination of not getting sufficient assistance from parents on Saturday mornings, and still being the only person involved from the Geelong Centre of the VAAA, the burden of getting the lights connected and working plus organising the one hour race started to take its toll on Trevor. He was starting to feel very disgruntled with his workload.

A succession of late nights and early mornings preparing for the single most important event in Trevor's administrative career to date had left him both very tired and impatient. It was all worth it in the end when Ron Clarke went on to shatter both the one-hour and 20,000m world records bringing worldwide recognition to the Geelong Centre of the VAAA at Landy Field.

After all the work he had done, Trevor appealed to the senior meeting of club delegates for help on Saturday mornings but received no sympathy, only the suggestion that he should drop the children's competition and concentrate on his duties with the senior operation, which was expanding rapidly.

At the time, the athletic establishment did not think there was a place for children within their sport. Trevor's feeling of defeat turned to anger. He was determined to ignore their attitude and with or without their support, develop an independent organisation called the Geelong Little Athletics Centre.

One of the delegates, Jack Frewin, encouraged him to take action so accompanying the senior results article in the Geelong Advertiser on 17th November 1965, he announced the need for the formation of Little Athletics clubs and a meeting to be held at Landy Field for parents and interested persons on Thursday 25th November.

Still extremely annoyed, he resolved to take no part in the following Saturday morning competition for children on 19th November 1965. Instead, he ignored what was happening on the track and made parents have a taste of trying to run the show, but more importantly to approach every adult he could find around the track and in cars (and in one case, hiding under a car) and made them take a notice of a meeting that he had called.

Eighteen people turned up to that 25th November 1965 meeting. Trevor outlined how he thought an organisation should be set up based on his experience from the Seniors and he advised the meeting that he was prepared to continue as Organiser, Secretary and Publicity Officer for the competition but needed more help to run it.

He proposed that clubs should be formed from the existing adults and children so that responsibilities could be delegated to each club to provide officials and organisation. Involving the family was the key for obtaining enough adults as officials to effectively run the competition.

This also gave the benefit of having an activity to be closely involved with the children and forming friendships with other local families, unlike other children sports where the majority of parents are only in the spectator role. As a community orientated activity, this had benefits in relationships with their children that go far beyond the years spent at Little Athletics.

So by Saturday 27th November 1965, six embryonic clubs were formed by individuals, who were prepared to designate a name and a manager, with a further two under consideration. These clubs were mainly based on the local Geelong schools.

A short meeting was held during the middle of the competition to determine the number of clubs formed and those likely to be named. Trevor now felt that the concept was going to work and told the small group that what they were involved in was the beginning of a Little Athletics Association.

At this meeting, Trevor proposed inter-club competition, whereby the athletes' performances scored points for their respective clubs. Club point scoring did not eventuate at this time.

Trevor's article in the Monday edition of the Geelong Advertiser of 29th November 1965 announced six clubs had been formed, and for the first time, 20 parents were needed each morning and the competition was now under the control of the Interim Committee of the Little Athletics Association.

This interim committee was led by Brother Houstan, from the St Augustine club as President, Trevor Billingham as Secretary and the committee consisting of Jack Frewin, Alan Triscott, John McGlynn, Stan McDonald, Bill Wood, Jack Clarke and Mr & Mrs Graeme Matheson.

Interclub competition got under way the following week on 4th December 1965, now with seven clubs formed.

The majority of parents did not have any experience in the conduct of athletic events, but most were willing to learn and teach others when they volunteered. The important thing was the help needed was now being provided.

By the end of the 1965/66 season, more than 200 boys and girls were competing regularly in interclub competition and nine clubs were now involved with enough help being provided by the parents to run the events. In all, over 500 children had tried out over the season.

The first Geelong Championships held in March 1966 over the long weekend was a huge success.

After the completion of this season, the enthusiasm was running on a high and a meeting was held soon after to discuss plans for the following season.

1966/67 – Beyond Geelong

In March 1966, John McGlynn, an executive from the Ford Motor Company, suggested that there was a need to encourage other Centres to develop so Geelong would obtain competition.

After he proposed the idea, it was also suggested by John McGlynn that an Association should be created and proposed to form a Little Athletics Association but Trevor, a loyal member of the VAAA, a Vice President by then and the State Team Manager felt they should work under the umbrella of the Men's and Women's Associations and should seek their approval.

It was also decided to stop the competition at Under 12 years of age so that it virtually became based on Primary School aged children. The Under 13 and 14's that were competing would be absorbed into the intermediate competition being set up in the Geelong Centre of the VAAA. Another decision was to start using metric tapes and to go metric for all events.

This early decision to use the metric system for measurement for all Little Athletics competition was ahead of its time. The senior associations queried this decision on the basis that the children and parents would be confused. At the time they were using the imperial system. With the 1970 Commonwealth Games choosing the metric system for all events plus Government recommendation that all businesses and organisations adopt it at an early date, proved to be real confirmation that this was a wise decision. This was the first introduction of the metric system to most children and parents at the time, so it would have made it easier for all those involved when the metric system was eventually adopted in Australia in 1972.

In July 1966, Trevor Billingham proposed to the Geelong Senior Centre Executive Committee, which was still taking responsibility for the children's competition, that the name "Little Athletics" should be officially adopted.

With this name, he made a presentation to the VAAA council asking for approval and support. The delegates were enthusiastic and adopted the plan, which came in the donation of \$200 towards the creation of an Association and establishing a Centre. The mover of the motion, Ken Taggart then donated a further \$50. To put this into perspective, the average wage at that time was around \$41 per week.

Before the VAAA delegates would make constitution changes to include children, they wanted to see how successful it would first become but they could only affiliate the boy's section.

In August 1966, a similar proposal was presented to the Victorian Womens Amateur Athletics Association for the girls. With this Trevor enlisted the help of Alan Triscott, whose daughter Pam was an outstanding competitor in Little Athletics, to have someone on side who has some experience from the girls perspective. Endorsement was then received from that association. Pam would go on and be the first Little Athlete to win a VWAAA sub-junior Championship in the High Jump.

In September 1966, Alan Triscott and Trevor Billingham proposed a campaign to approach every Primary School in Geelong and district suggested that each form a club with a Manager, if they had not already done so in the previous season. Alan continued contact with each school showing interest. Uniforms and names were selected and organised, together with registration fees.

While Alan contacted the Geelong, Belmont, Newtown and West Geelong schools, Trevor, a Maths and Science Teacher followed up the Corio schools that showed interest, suggesting that a Little Athletics competition be formed in Corio. Three clubs, Lara, Corio YMCA and St Thomas were formed and commenced competition at Windsor Park, Corio.

Also in September 1966, Trevor was invited by the Development Committee of the VAAA to travel to Bendigo and meet the senior centre to help reform senior athletics in that city. Alan Stuchberry and Brother Owen were the only people to attend from Bendigo. Trevor suggested that they forget the senior competition and build a Little Athletics competition instead.



The opening day of Little Athletics at Geelong in October 1966 saw 900 athletes march past under the colours of 11 clubs. The competition that followed broke new ground in athletics organisation and influenced the start of the Sandringham Centre. Shown to the left is the girl's team from the Tate Street (school) club, which was started by Alan & June Triscott.

The formation of clubs within a Centre was without doubt, one of the greatest reasons why the Little Athletics movement would flourish as it had. Although the competition would have been successful with individuals competing for their own satisfaction, it has been the club aspect, which has given the competition character and strength in its administration. Each club had Team Managers providing guidance and encouragement and the opportunity for athletes to score points for their respective clubs, in uniforms which were designed from the beginning to be simple but colourful.

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It has also been through the clubs that has made it possible to obtain the large number of interested parents to act as officials, in order that the efficiency of the meeting can be maintained, with each supplying officials according to club size to cover a particular event so that expertise would be built up for major events.



An "Inter Club Points Scoring Table" was first devised by Jack Frewin in 1966 to score the athletic performances of boys and girls for their respective clubs. The event scores for the top 3 athletes of each club would be added, so that club size would not have any effect on the outcome to make it a fair inter club competition. A total club score could then be worked out each week. At the end of the season, the weekly points would be added up to determine the Champion Club overall as well as the Champion Girl and Boy Clubs.

In the period leading up to Christmas 1966, a very efficient meet was being developed each Saturday morning with between 600 and 750 children competing. Shown to the left is Landy Field from the 1965/66 season. Before the start of competition, the scoria track had to be swept, then the lanes marked. This was achieved by an invention created by Jack Darcy, a Toolmaker from Lara who worked at International Harvester in North Shore, and consisted of a cross beam with bike wheels and guided by a plinth on the end that rested on the edge of the track. At the rear, it had six white

pots filled with lime to mark the lanes. This would be re-used again at the end of the junior competition to have the track ready for the seniors in the afternoon.



Sprint events were conducted at the average rate of one every 46 seconds. This was achieved by having a timekeeper stand at each side of the track at the finish line. The 15 seconds it took to run the 100m was the time for the judges to hand the all important tickets from the timekeepers to each of the six competitors. The second set of timekeepers were timing the next race. With the 200m races, when the first heat was started, the second heat was prepared and started when the first heat reached the half way mark. This continued through the age groups. Experienced marshals and timekeepers were vital to this operation because three events were on the track at the same time. Communication at this time was by Radio Microphones, which the Geelong City Council had paid for. The photo on the left is Russell Heath, the Corio Senior athlete and a regular starter at Little Athletics. Notice the sophisticated platform.

While this was happening, other regions began to show interest and during the period October to December 1966, Little Athletics commenced at Bendigo, Sandringham, Coburg, Traralgon, Warrnambool and Corio. Trevor, with the aid of Alan Triscott, Jack Frewin and Jack Clarke travelled to these areas.

They contacted the head of the Primary Schools within the local areas and requested that information on Little Athletics be passed on to the children to give to their parents. From this, for schools showing interest, a meeting was called so that a club could be formed. Then interested parents were requested to attend a further meeting to form a Centre for those clubs.

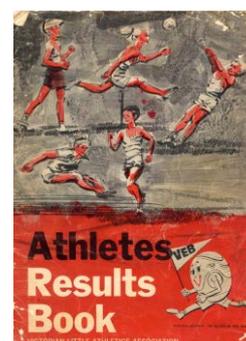
In November 1966, plans were put together to inaugurate the Geelong Centre of the Victorian Little Athletics Association and also to form the state association.

In December 1966, the Victorian Egg Board came forward to sponsor the interim Victorian Little Athletics Association after seeing Little Athletics being conducted in Bendigo. Someone had written to the Board and suggested they go to the track to watch the competition and that it was something worthwhile they should consider supporting. They were very enthusiastic and the General Manager Don Bain asked Trevor to put in a submission of how best to sponsor the fledging association.

Until this time, result tickets were first produced on a Roneo Duplicating Machine by the Sacred Heart Convent, which formed one of the clubs at Geelong. This was before the Xerox or photocopiers were invented. It consisted of the metal drum, driven by a handle and a stencil of a page of tickets was wrapped on the drum. They would then be cut into single tickets by hand.

They did not realise how popular these tickets were until a mother came up to Trevor, and said "I wish you would do something about these tickets as I have drawers full of them".

So the first item asked for was colourful result tickets, which they printed. Don Bain also suggested a result book to put them in, so they could be kept in some sort of order and the children could track their improved progress throughout the season. Don's CEO Alf Brooks arranged their graphic artist to design the cover and Trevor did the sketches on the inside, along with designing the tickets, which have been the best result tickets ever produced. These were given to all the Centres without cost.



On 10th March 1967, six Centres were invited by Geelong to form the Association with two representatives from the Geelong, Bendigo, Traralgon, Sandringham, Coburg, Warrnambool and

Corio Centres, together with the interim Committee, at the Victorian Egg Board, to form the Victorian Little Athletics Association under the Chairmanship of Alan Triscott.

By this time, 1750 children were now competing in Little Athletics.

On 2nd April 1967, the very first Victorian State Little Athletics Championships were held at the Sandringham Track in a day/night meet with the seven Centres competing.

On the way to the track, Trevor and Christine Billingham were running late as they were up most of the night typing and duplicating the Championship program and making copies for the athletes. Christine didn't have time to start collating and stapling them until they were on their way in the car. They made it from Lara to Sandringham in one hour flat. The rest of the programs were then spread out on a table to finish at the track with others helping to finish them off.

At these Championships, the Mayor of Sandringham, was accidentally knocked out by a scaled down metal discus when he was being photographed by the local paper measuring a throw. Before the start of the following season, the discus would be designed as a rubber one.

From these simple beginnings, many other organised junior sports would start to follow up the Little Athletics lead such as Little League – the forerunner to AusKick, which also had its origins in Geelong. Other senior sporting organisations then devised modified programs aimed at primary school aged children. This would ultimately pull numbers away from Little Athletics as it moved into its maturity stage by the mid 1970's.

1967/68 – An association is born

In May 1967, the Geelong Centre of the Victorian Little Athletics Association was inaugurated and the first constitution adopted. The first Executive Committee was under the Presidency of Bill Wood with Alan Triscott as Secretary. This took over from the original parents and interested persons committee. The same group of parents, although down to eight, continued in the role of formation committee of the new association.



During the winter of 1967, Alan Triscott, as the Geelong Arena Manager, who had found it difficult to maintain three events per athlete, investigated new events for the children. Athletic equipment designed for juniors did not exist at that time, so improvisations were tested.

One of the problems was that there were so many things they did not know about athletics at the child level and could not find another place in the world that was conducting children's athletics to get any experience or feedback.. With everything they did, they had to invent.

The "age group patch" idea was an essential item to quickly identify the ages of children assembling for an event as a tall 9 year old would be hard to distinguish from a small 11 year old. The answer was a small patch around 4cm square, sewn on the upper left chest. See the Under 9 South Barwon club uniform above. The South Barwon club was established for the children who lived south of the Barwon River who were not with a school that had a club in the Geelong Centre. Most of the members for this club at the time came from Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove.

Another problem to solve was when to start the age group. The first week of October was used as it is in the first week of competition and unlike the seniors at the time, it did not change part way through the season when they had a birthday. They would stay in that same age group for the whole season, which helped eliminate paperwork and confusion on keeping track of birthdays.

Jumping bags for High Jump was another problem. The senior bags stuffed with hay or foam rubber off cuts were not suitable, as some children would fall in between the bags and injure themselves. Appropriate denser bags were ordered which were quite expensive.

The Geelong Centre officials made experiments, to determine a suitable design for the hurdles event for boys and girls in various age groups. Jack Roberts had made up a set of hurdles that could be adjusted in height by pegs. Since the local knowledge of hurdling requirements was limited, it was decided the results of the trials were inconclusive and that the advice of a specialist be sought.

Ex Australian Olympic Hurdler Ray Weinberg was invited to attend a similar set of trials in order to resolve the issue. After watching a series of combinations of hurdles heights, length of race and distance between hurdles, he recommended that the race should be over 60 metres, the distance between hurdles should be 8 metres for all age groups and the height should be 45cm for Under 9 and 10 boys and girls and 60cm for Under 11 and 12 boys and girls.

This proved very successful and was ultimately adopted as a Victorian Championship event.

Experiments were also conducted for the Discus and Shot Put. Trevor & Alan had approached manufacturers and sporting stores who made or sold adult athletic equipment but they were not interested in helping, as they could not see themselves making any profit from it.

Trevor had a Toolmaker friend, a Lara senior athlete, Jack Darcy who scaled down a women's 1.5Kg discus with similar materials. This was used briefly but was found at the Championships to be too dangerous and too difficult to reproduce. Many years later, this prototype was presented to the VLAA after a speech Alan Triscott had made and the association promised to have it mounted. Alan also tried one rubber discus to suit all ages but this was found to be impractical as well.

Experiments were then held in conjunction with Australian Discus and Shot Put champion Jean Roberts, and her coach John Cheffers, in order to design suitable equipment for these events. Two rubber discus sizes were produced, by Jack Roberts who made rubber moulding dies with one weighing 500g for Under 9 and 10 boys and girls, and the other 750g for under 11 and 12 boys and girls respectively. Jack went to a relative of his, a chemist to recommend a suitable rubber compound.

Alan Triscott travelled to Heidelberg, Melbourne each week so that his daughter Pam could train for high Jump. While there at the track, he had Jean and John both check proportions for flight characteristics, as the shape of each was the crucial factor, in order that the discus, when thrown correctly, had an even smooth flight.

The weights of shots were only altered to bring them into line with the metric system. Jack Roberts would have patterns of the shots made to cast various sized metric weights. After testing, the 2Kg shot was chosen for all girl age groups and Under 9 and 10 boys. The 3kg shot was used for under 11 and 12 boys increasing the weights 0.4lb and 0.6 lb respectively.

These tests were quite expensive and money was recouped by forming a company to make the athletic equipment and sell them to the Centres. As the men were working, the wives set up a company called "Chauné". The name was made up of a combination of 2 letters from each wife. CH came from Christine Billingham, AU came from Audrey Roberts and NE came from June Triscott.



Trials were also done with relay batons with tests on suitable sizes. Circular relays were chosen rather than shuttle relay, which was used in school sports, as that was the way it was done in seniors. The Geelong Centre still has a relay trophy named after Alan Triscott.

Another problem at the time was the thought that competition was only possible for adults and there were fears physiological harm could come to boys and girls who compete. With the support of thousands of parents and their children, they were proved wrong, pushing those old conservative thoughts right out the window.

There was also concern by some, especially from the Senior Womens Amateur Association that girls could harm themselves in jumping events. After consultation with the Sports Medical Association, an assurance was given that no danger was involved. At some Centres, parents were cautious in

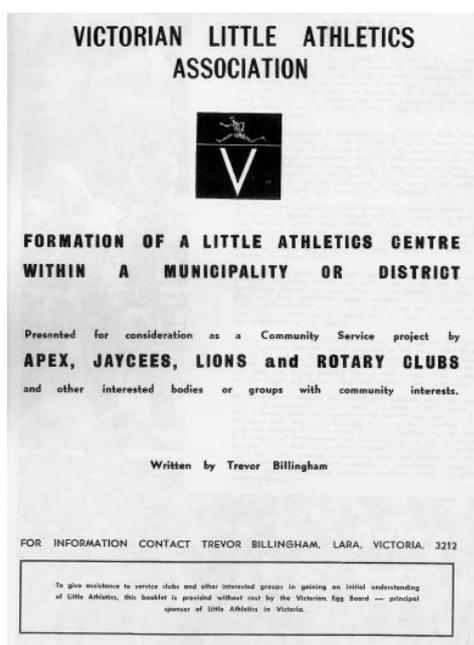
allowing children to run too far but this assumption was based on State School sports, which mainly consisted of sprint events, and novelty races such as the three legged or the egg and spoon race.

In order to dispel any doubts, a doctor was invited to make a series of tests on boys running the 400m and 800m regularly and comparing respiratory and cardiac reactions with boys who were not involved in these events. Only beneficial results were discovered.

There were also some opposition for girls competing in the 200m event, as this had been considered by some to be too far, but when it was listed as an event for the State Championships, the Association had a flood of entries.

The Traralgon Little Athletics Centre had ran the 400m successfully in the 1967/68 season for the Under 12 Girls who could run it in 70 seconds without showing any signs of stress but it was not introduced for the VLAA State Championships until 1970.

The Primary Schools approach for starting new Centres was used until the Diamond Valley Centre was started. In addition to contacting local schools, they also successfully used saturation advertising, which enabled them to be to be the largest Centre for this season with 1331 athletes in the Under 8 to 12's. This method was also used to start the Williamstown, then the Collingwood Centres, which their success confirmed that this was the way to start new Centres from then on. After this, the Victorian Egg Board assisted in initial formation meetings with Trevor Billingham and Alan Triscott, and later, guest speakers such as Olympian, Ron Clarke, were used.



With Williamstown, the local Apex Club firstly requested advice from the newly formed VLAA on how to introduce Little Athletics into their area. This gave Trevor the idea there was an opportunity for service clubs to initiate a community operation without being responsible for its continuity.

Service clubs such as Apex, Jaycees, Lions, Rotary and YMCA assisted many Centres during its formation phase. Trevor would contact the Secretaries of these local community groups in areas where they had targeted Centres to form. After explaining the Little Athletics concept, he would ask them to obtain local school enrolment numbers and book a hall for them at a later date. An information package with pamphlets would be posted to them to be distributed beforehand. On average, 5% of the pamphlet numbers would turn up for a formation meeting.

Trevor being a school teacher himself insisted that they physically go into each class to personally hand a pamphlet to each child so that at least one would get to each family and wouldn't end up in the staff office.

One meeting that stood out was when they asked the Jaycees to help start up the Sunshine Centre. They had booked the town hall with around 500 people attending, which overflowed out onto the street, but they did get a special guest in Ted Whitten. Ted sat next to Alan Triscott while a film of Landy Field was being shown. He had never seen Little Athletics before and he listened intently to Alan explain as the film went on. When it was finished, Ted got up and made a brilliant speech and had captured everything he had just heard as he explained the Little Athletics concept to the audience.

One thing they did learn from this meeting was to, in future, register the people on the way into formation meetings so they had a list of interested families, as they did not do this at Sunshine.

Around this time, the formula for formation meetings was devised so clubs and a Centre could be started on the one night. Trevor would explain the Little Athletics concept while Alan ran the film of Landy Field. They would then show the junior implements developed. After this, they would get the people to move into small groups from where their children went to school or the area where they came from and have them talk amongst themselves to start a club and elect a committee. Trevor, Alan and others, including special guests would circulate to answer any questions. Elections would be

held for each group for club representatives to gather for a further group meeting to form the Centre. This allowed them to conduct future meetings by themselves to get it off the ground.

The setting up of new Centres was not without its problems, which had to be overcome by hard work by a great number of people. Difficulties were common at this stage such as shortage of technical knowledge, lack of experienced people to teach the children and not to mention the fact that the majority of people involved with the new Centres had not had experience in athletics, prior to the decision to develop a Centre in their area.

Most of the information was in Trevor and Alan's head from what they had learned at Geelong. It was around this time they made a start on writing a technical handbook for Centres.

The allocation of athletic fields was another problem for the newly formed Centres. Those Councils that were reluctant to provide a field were reminded that cricket, which provides only 22 children with exercise, could be used by 300 to 900 children on the same size area. This argument easily influenced the decision for council approval. Some Centres were already presenting cases to their Municipal Councils for the establishment of proper athletic facilities, including full-scale synthetic Olympic tracks.

From this period onwards, the pace to start up new Centres started to become frantic.

Some of these recently formed Centres had exerted pressure to control the embryonic Association, which was quite hurtful to those who had put in years of hard work to get it this far.

In 1967, Trevor travelled Victoria encouraging new Centres to form. This was designed to dilute the influence of those Centres who were creating great strain on the Association, and was threatening to break it up into fragments.

Alan remembers the time the Billingham and Triscott families would gather around on the lounge room floor eating fish and chips with a large map of Victoria in the middle. Trevor obtained a listing of all Victorian school numbers to work out the Melbourne suburbs and country towns to target to form a Centre.

Trips were made during the winter months on weekday evenings to conduct formation meetings around the State. They would average two to four times per week, firstly at their own expense, in Alan Triscott's Morris Minor, which did not have heating so they had some pretty cold trips.

Then, through John McGynn from the Ford Motor Company in Geelong, a brand new pool car had been arranged for them to attend formation meetings. They would drive Alan's Morris Minor and Trevor's brand new Toyota Corona to the Ford car park, pick up the pool car with a full tank and return it in the early hours of the morning before getting a few hours sleep and be back to work on time in the morning.

Alan remembers at the Oakleigh Centre formation meeting, after Trevor's speech, people were still coming in when he started the Landy Field film. A short while later, he heard a sound like walking on cornflakes, then realised the film had come off the reel and he was surrounded up to his knees in film. It took half an hour to untangle it carefully as not to spoil it.

On 25th August 1967 the first VLAA Annual General Meeting was held at the Victorian Egg Board & Egg Pulp Marketing Offices.

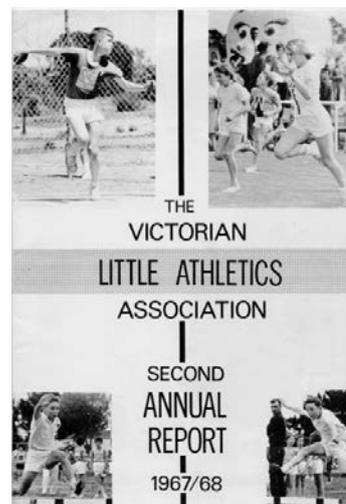
In November 1967, Trevor and Alan saw a small article in the evening Herald with just a few lines calling a meeting to help stop the Coburg Little Athletics Centre from closing down. This was mainly due to the new Diamond Valley Centre starting up where many of their athletes had come from, including the club Bundoora. They both went up to Coburg to address that meeting held on 15th November 1967 to allay their fears of abandonment and to give encouragement to keep going. The turnout was huge with 300 people in attendance, so they continued and ended up being a very prosperous Centre.

The first constitution to govern the Victorian Little Athletics Association was passed in November 1967 and by February 1968, the Board of Management had been filled to be the administrative body and their first meeting was held on 7th March 1968. The constitution was designed to never reach complete finality as the document can be amended to cover new ideas and systems on various facets of the Associations development.

During 1967, another thirteen Little Athletics Centres were to form for season 1967/68 which were Beaumaris, Colac, Collingwood, Diamond Valley, Frankston, Kew, Morwell, Oakleigh, Sunshine, Wangaratta, Williamstown, Wonthaggi and Yarra Park. Around 10,272 children were now competing in Little Athletics.



The second VLAA State Championships were held at Royal Park West on 6th April 1968 with 20 Centres competing for the Under 9 to 12's. Because of the sheer number of athletes now involved in Little Athletics, only the best athletes from each Centre were entered. It was quite a major event with the Victorian Egg Board hiring 22 tents so that each Centre had a headquarters and the Melbourne City Council allocated a foreman and 10 men to truck equipment from Olympic Park as this venue was not available for this day. The program preparation involved the Geelong and Corio Centres. Two



teams of timekeepers were used in tandem at the finish line using time keeper stands built by the Corio Centre for the athletic stadium the Corio Shire Council had promised to build.

The Corio track was the first Little Athletics Centre to get a rubberised bitumen track, which Trevor had requested when he was Chairman for their first season. He had relinquished his position once Corio was in full swing.

1968/69 – The movement expands interstate and overseas

Little Athletics had started overseas with a Centre that was established in Port Moresby in New Guinea by YMCA member Bruce McKenzie and sponsored by the Nestlé Company. 390 children including many indigenous competed there on Wednesday afternoons. Other approaches had also been made by Nauru, Rhodesia and New Zealand.

Olympic Hurdler Shirley Strickland was over in Victoria from Western Australia on a weekend coaching course being conducted by the world famous coach Franz Stamfl with Trevor Billingham also in attendance. Shirley spoke to Trevor about Little Athletics as news had spread to her state, and wanted information to take back so he provided her with it.

Trevor travelled to Perth in August 1968 for a formation meeting as Guest of honour, which was held in the Applecross Hall, Applecross, in the inner southern suburbs of Perth. Little Athletics then commenced in WA when approximately 200 children competed at the Perry Lakes warm up track.

A number of people interested in athletics in New South Wales heard of the new activity in Victoria. Relatives of the Geelong athletes had been sending up copies of the results and reports from the Geelong Advertiser. The senior Randwick/Botany Athletics Club invited Trevor Billingham and Alan Triscott to address an evening meeting at the club in December 1968 to introduce Little Athletics to New South Wales. The club offered to pay their expenses, so they accepted, of course.

They left their place of work in mid-afternoon, drove to Melbourne and flew to Sydney, where they were driven to the club for a hasty meal with a full view out onto the 200m synthetic straight track with a 400m track coming off it. Trevor and Alan opened the meeting at 7.30pm with about 50 people in attendance. The poker machines were turned off so that everyone could concentrate on the two speakers.

After the presentation, eight clubs were formed, which would become the Randwick/Botany Little Athletics Centre and the beginning of Little Athletics in New South Wales. The next morning, Trevor and Alan left their hotel at 6am to catch an early flight back to Melbourne so that they could resume

their jobs on time. New centres were soon formed up there by following the Randwick/Botany lead, and a New South Wales Association was formed on 8th December 1970. The first NSW Little Athletics State finals were held on 6th & 7th March 1971 at Hensley athletic field. In 2005 the one millionth athlete was registered in that Association!"

The Portland Centre was first initiated by Trevor's Uncle, Joe Sellwood, who was an Inspector of Police in that town. When Joe had arranged the formation meeting, Trevor organised with his friend Billy Miller, who was always looking to build up his flying hours, a flight in a Victor aeroplane from the Geelong airport in Grovedale. This aircraft had no instruments; no radio and no radar and flights were by the recognition of landmarks and following roads and railway lines. Billy just asked his passengers to pay for the cost of fuel. On this flight, Billy was tapping on the fuel gauge and Trevor asked how far could the aircraft glide if it needed to. They had enough fuel, but the landing involved heading for a cliff before turning into the airfield for landing. The meeting was successful with Joe becoming the Portland Centre's first President and Joe's daughter, Joan Richardson was the first Secretary. They stayed overnight before flying back in time for work the next morning.

Another trip by plane was to Robinvale, near Mildura. On the first trip, half way up, a thick fog set in. A few times they had lost their bearings and had to find small towns to fly over as there usually was a tin roof with the town name painted on it. They eventually had to fly back to Grovedale as it was getting too dangerous. As they did not have a radio, the airport near Robinvale could not be contacted and an alert had gone out for the aircraft, unknown to Christine Billingham at the time, when they did not make their scheduled landing time. The authorities were contacted once they arrived back safely. The next trip was successful.

In January 1969, the Lara bushfires disrupted the administration of the VLAA when telephone communications in the area were destroyed and the infrastructure not repaired until the end of April 1969. Trevor had to use public phone boxes throughout this time as calls to and from school for private reasons were forbidden.

The continued success of Little Athletics was causing resentment amongst the senior ranks. When Trevor, Alan and others attended meetings with the senior bodies, they would be constantly criticised, particularly by the women's senior athletic organisation. They tried to persuade the Womens organisations to start up new Senior Women's Centres apart from Royal Park West. They did not and had no plans to develop any new Centres, apart from the Geelong Seniors, which had both men and women, so unless the girls lived nearby, it was no wonder the girls were lost to the sport at the time.

Back then, senior men and women competed at separate locations. When the women seniors first competed at Geelong at the same time as the men, there were threats that the Geelong senior women would be banned from competing in any outside competitions including the State and National championships for the simple reason that they considered women do not compete at the same time as men.



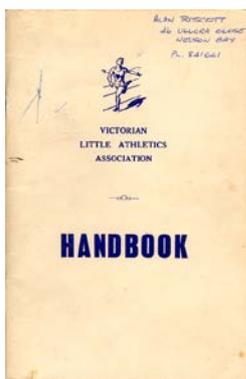
Little Athletics has never joined the state or national senior athletic organisations as they have always refused to let Little Athletics govern themselves under their umbrella, despite having athlete numbers that far out number the senior ranks. There is a difference in philosophy in that Little Athletics is for the masses.

Trevor, as Secretary of the Geelong Centre of the VAAA as well a Vice President of the VAAA was giving enthusiastic reports on the progress of Little Athletics for the meeting minutes. He was quietly advised by the Chairman, Alan McDonald "that the tail is starting to wag the dog" and to stop the reports as it

was causing many questions of concern and criticism from the delegates, jealous of the increasing success of the movement.

Just before the season start, the first VLAA technical Handbook, compiled by Trevor Billingham and Alan Triscott was printed in October 1968 for the Centres not yet fortunate enough to have an

established track. It had the technical information with details of track layouts, equipment and various useful information, so that standard throwing rings and jumping pits etc could be made the same sizes as those used in the VLAA State Championships.



Alan Triscott remembers on a trip going down to the Warragul Centre formation meeting, with the following morning being the Handbook absolute deadline for the printers. They still had not completed one chapter on the walks, so this was finalised in the car in the pouring rain, with interior lights on, all the way through the city, Dandenong and then out down the Princes Highway when it was still one lane each way.

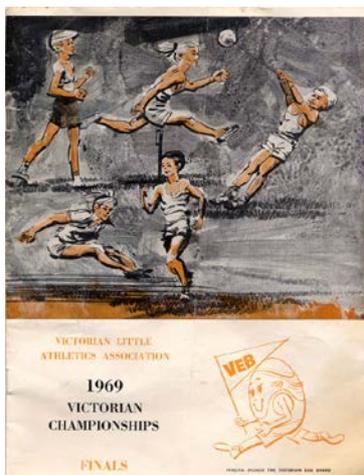
A further 19 Centres were formed in Victoria for season 1968/69 with 20,448 children now competing. The new Centres were Bairnsdale, Box Hill, Dandenong, Doncaster, Knox, Moe, Nunawading, Portland, Preston, Robinvale, Sale, Seymour, Springvale, Sunraysia, Swan Hill, Timboon, Warragul, Waverley and Wodonga. 14 of these Centres were started with the assistance of Service Clubs.

Alan Triscott sent congratulatory telegrams to Raelene Boyle and Peter Norman in Mexico after they both won silver medals in the 200m at the 1968 Olympics, inviting them to the Geelong Centre. They both accepted and were driven a lap around Landy Field in an open sports car and showed their medals to the officials and children.

Trevor Billingham was awarded the "1968 Geelong Sportsman of the Year" for services to athletics and children. This ahead of other nominees including Ian Redpath (Test Cricketer), Doug Wade (kicked 100 goals for Geelong) and Billy Goggin (outstanding Geelong footballer).

The sudden growth from one to 39 Centres added new pressures, with over 20,000 children now competing in Little Athletics. The formation of twelve Zones was used for the first time this season to regulate the numbers to compete at the VLAA State Championship. The aim of the Zone Championship heats was to conduct elimination finals, while still allowing thousands to participate, with the winners to progress to the State Championships. The successful Centre in each Zone (Region) was awarded the "Victorian Egg Board" Rose Bowl trophy.

The Centres within a Zone pooled resources, equipment, officials and finance and it allowed inter-Centre competition.



The third VLAA State Championships was held at Olympic Park for the first time on Easter Monday, 7th April 1969. An opening ceremony of a march past of finalists in Centre order was conducted before the official opening of the Championships, carrying Centre Banners, donated by the Victorian Egg Board. These were navy blue, white tassels and white lettering with only the Centre names different.

The events of 70m, 100m, 200m and 60 Hurdles started with quarterfinals and the 400m and 800m started with semi-finals. The 800m Walk and field events were straight finals.

During these championships, Christine Billingham and two office staff would type and duplicate all the heats to determine the finalists. These and the results of the finals were typed and duplicated for each Centre to take back to their respective Centres by the completion of the day, which was a mammoth task. These were on typewriters, as computer did not exist back then. This was repeated for at least for the next three State VLAA Championships.

After the completion of events, the Victorian Egg Board Trophy designed by artist/sculptor Charles Billich went to the Centre winning the most gold medals of the day.

The distances for the Cross Country for this season were 800m for Under 9 & 10 Girls; 1600m for Under 9 & 10 Boys and Girls U/11 & 12; 2000m for the Boys Under 11 & 12.

The 1969 VLAA State Cross Country Championships were held on 2nd August 1969 at McLeod where 392 athletes competed.

1969/70 – The momentum continues

In the 1969/70 season another 24 new Centres were to be formed which were Altona, Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Benalla, Berwick, Brighton, Camberwell, Camperdown, Castlemaine, Caulfield, Chelsea, Corner Inlet, Cranbourne, Croydon, Echuca, Fawkner, Hamilton, Keilor, Lilydale, Mallee, Oak Park, Ringwood, Shepparton and Terang. 17 of these Centres were started with the assistance of Service Clubs.

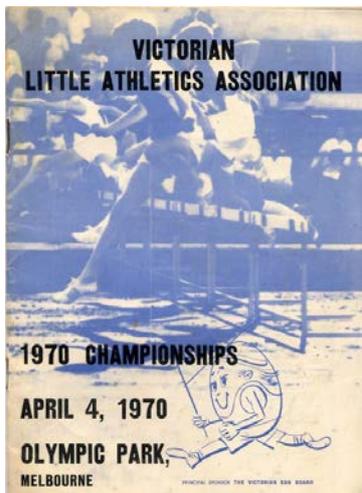
In the space of just three years, Little Athletics had grown from one to 63 Centres and season 1969/70 commenced with 29,257 children competing.

During these three years, the administration of the Association was handled by Trevor Billingham, on a honorary basis working from his home in Lara supported greatly by his wife, Christine. At the same time, he was still on the Geelong Centre of the VAAA Committee.

Trevor was also coach to about 20 junior athletes in various events who went on to become Victorian and Australian Champions while all this was achieved while he was teaching at the Corio Technical School with classes of 30 plus students.

In the last few months of 1969, Ralph Doubell, who won the 800m in world record time at the Mexico Olympics, wrote a series of articles in the News Day sports section of "Do's and Don't – Ralph Doubell's guide for Little Athletics" with weekly hints and tips for each event.

It was around this time that sporting manufacturers and shops were jumping on the bandwagon due to the Little Athletics popularity to start making junior equipment for profit, without any of that going back to the sport, despite making direct copies from the implements the VLAA had devised. Eventually, the Thorold Merrett sporting stores had taken over from the small operation of Chauné as quantity requests were getting quite large by this time.



The fourth VLAA State Championships were held at Olympic Park on 4th April 1970. It was opened by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Rohan Delacombe in one of the most impressive opening ceremonies since the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. All track events started with semi finals apart from the 800m Walk and the new event of 1500m for the Under 11 and 12's was introduced, which were straight finals. All results again presented to each Centre by the end of the day's competition.

Trevor proposed and organised the very first interstate Little Athletics competition which was held on Wednesday, 25th March 1970 at Olympic Park for Under 12 athletes with each State selecting 20 athletes. This was known as the "Interstate Challenge" and involved Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia but NSW was one Centre in Botany-Randwick and WA was also one Centre in Perry Lakes. This began the process of an Australian Little Athletics Union. Victoria's uniform at this meet was a navy blue t-shirt.

Little Athletics started in the Northern Territory in Darwin on June 25th 1970, instigated by Bruce McKenzie who was by then the Darwin YMCA Secretary. The winter season was chosen for Track & Field up there as the summer wet season would not be suitable due to the tropical rains flooding the track.

The very first VLAA office was built by Eric Bew in 1970 on the property of the Billingham's at 48 Patullos Road, Lara. This was made of second hand building materials from two old houses which were the original change rooms at Landy Field, Geelong.

Distances were increased for the Cross Country for this season. 1000m for Under 9 & 10 Girls; 2000m for Under 9 & 10 Boys and Girls for U/11 & 12; 3000m Boys Under 11 & 12. The first eight athletes in each Region Championships progressed to the 1970 State Cross Country Final held at Yarra Bend Park on Sunday 9th August 1970 where 1047 athletes competed.

1970/71 Geelong Centre disaffiliation

After the close of the 1969/70 season, a proposal to disaffiliate from the VLAA was put by the members of the Geelong Little Athletics Centre Executive Committee to its club delegates at an extraordinary meeting over irregularities with its 1969/70 State Championship entries.

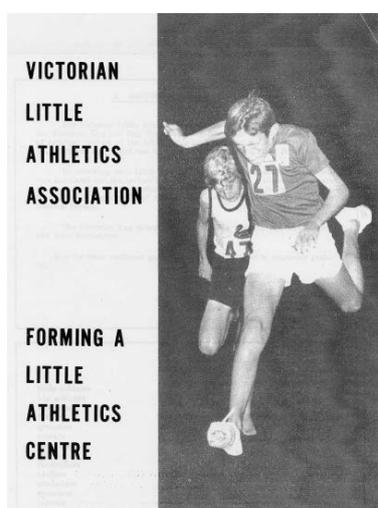
The VLAA Board of Management heard of the intended motion and requested permission to have representative's address the meeting. Those three people were Trevor Billingham, John Brake and Don Farrell who were allowed time to oppose the proposal. The vote was history as it was carried. The isolation of the Geelong Centre continued until the mid 1980's when re-affiliation was sought by both the VLAA, and Geelong Centre.

Trevor suffered one of the low stages of his life when he realised that Geelong, where it all started, was no longer a part of the association.

In August 1970, Trevor resigned from his position at the Corio Technical School. Without any paid work and much negotiating, he managed to convince Brian Dixon, the then minister for Youth, Sport & Recreation to apply for a Grant from the State Government to become the very first paid administrator for any amateur sport in Victoria. Trevor was appointed as the full time Secretary/Manager of the VLAA by the Board of Management which had allowed him to start leading a normal life for the first time in many years by no longer needing to work through the night, and relieving his wife Christine from the multitude of enquiries taken from his small office during the day.

Around this time, Alan Triscott announced his retirement from Little Athletics brought about by the workload required from the shop June Triscott had taken over. He would come out of retirement at the end of the following season to help set up the Australian Little Athletics Union.

A series of Coaching Camps were conducted this season to increase the number of experienced adults in Little Athletics. These were sponsored by the Bank of New South Wales



A booklet was published "Forming a Little Athletics Centre" written by Trevor Billingham. It gave a brief description and aims of Little Athletics, the role and assistance received from the Service Clubs, methods of promotion and the steps in organising a formation meeting. Then it gave a brief description of the administration of a Centre and a map of Centres formed so far.

The Premier of Victoria, Sir Henry Bolte had set aside \$30,000 to assist Centres with equipment costs and for the administration needs of the Association Headquarters. "in recognising that the movement is filling a very definite need in our community" and "is in recognition of the hours of honorary work put in by thousands of adults all over Victoria". The money was distributed in the form of subsidies with more being available for new Centres starting. They also insisted on self-help in that the funds had to be matched by the Centre. They ranged by \$2 for every \$1 put in by the Centre for competition items and \$1 for every \$1 put in for administrative items to a certain amount.

Little Aths was still expanding with a further 14 Centres joining in season 1970/71 for a total of 77. The new Centres to form were Essendon, Heidelberg, Kerang, Kyneton, Leongatha, Maffra, Moorabbin, Nhill, Orbost, Pakenham, Sherbrooke, Warracknabeal, Werribee and Cavindish. 35,586 children were registered for this season.



This season, the first country Centre started in NSW with the formation of the Deniliquin Centre by Trevor Billingham and the Treasurer John Robertson.

The VLAA also produced its first edition newspaper publication "Kalori", an aboriginal name meaning message stick, to be issued quarterly and was first published in May 1970. This was to pass on the current news from the Board of Management, State results and news from around the Centres. Founder and editor of this newspaper was Bill Vincent, (shown on left) who was a Professional Journalist for the Herald Sun & Weekly Times. He played a vital role in the public

relations and publicity while on the Board of Management of the VLAA during these times and was later awarded a VLAA Life Governor for services to Little Athletics.

After being the major sponsors of the VLAA since its inception, economic changes ended the Victorian Egg Board's involvement at the end of this season. Many Centres would not have been established without their assistance.

The second Interstate Meet was held at Hensley Athletics Field in Pagewood, NSW with 20 Under 12 athletes from each state. Apart from Victoria, NSW and WA, a team from Northern Territory also competed. The Team Managers were Audrey Roberts (Corio) and Keith Maughan (Morwell). Centres and Regions were to meet the cost of flights and Team Track Suit.

The first Centre to conduct a Relaython was Traralgon in May 1970. Then 15 Centres conducted a Relaython on 3rd October 1970, the opening day of the season, to aid the Royal Childrens Hospital. The event went for 12 hours and was conducted during the normal Saturday morning competition. The Relaython was won by the Sunshine Centre with 241.363Km. The success of the day was due to Radio 3DB who had a state-wide hook up and had spot broadcast's during the day.

Later, Frankston had their own Relaython to aid the Frankston Hospital and ran 264.044Km to be the target to beat.

During this season, the initial VLAA office was transferred by truck to 34 Forest Road, Lara, where it still remains today.

1971/72 Queens Birthday Honours

In the 1971/72 season, four new Centres were formed, Broadmeadows, Cohuna, Healesville and Myrtleford bringing the total to 81. The registered athlete numbers dropped to 30,628 for this season.



The registration numbers on the back of uniforms was replaced this season due to its high cost with a material based patch and was placed on the front of the uniform. Also, the age group number had changed to be a different colour each season so that it could be identified that registrations were paid.

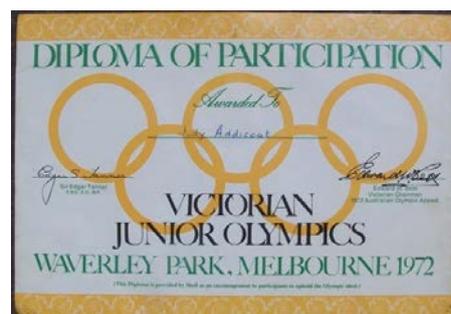
Due to Little Athletics popularity, Adidas created a specially designed shoe for athletes. The running all-purpose shoe came only in navy blue with white stripes. It had rubber sole and light rubber heel, designed like a spiked shoe but without spikes and retailed through the VLAA for a special price of \$5.00 for which they retained a small commission. [this shoe although popular caused many problems to athletes – heel soreness due to the extension of the achilles tendon – at school most children wore shoes with a heel – the little athlete shoe had no heel!

The 1971/72 season start would be remembered as the worst due to bad weather over the first six weeks. There were many cancellations with some Centres missing out on all six.

Reports this season from South Australia were that the fifth Centre had been formed at Elizabeth with 500 athletes after, Munno Para, Port Adelaide, Para Hills and the Le Fevre Centres.

In November 1971, to commemorate 15 years since the opening of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, over 100 Waverley Centre athletes took part in a relay marathon with a Melbourne Olympic torch and a message of goodwill from the Melbourne Lord Mayor. It started Melbourne Town hall and ended with a lap around the Waverley athletic track where it was passed to the Mayor of Waverley. He then passed the torch to Ron Clarke where he lit the Olympic flame for an International athletes meeting.

A major event was organised at VFL Park in Waverley on the 26th and 27th February 1972 known as "The Victorian Junior Olympics". The aim was for as many children as possible to participate in an effort to raise funds for the Victorian squad for the Munich Olympics. The idea was conceived by the President of the Victorian Junior Hockey Association, Keith Thornton, a former international Hockey player, and apart from



athletics, around 25 other sports were being conducted. Each participant was presented with an Olympic type certificate shown to the right.

Trevor had approached Alan Triscott to enlist his help and on 31st March 1972, the Australian Little Athletics Union (ALAU) was formed in Perth, to unify development, sponsorship and Government recognition. The founding members Victoria, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Western Australia. The first President was Bruce McKenzie and Secretary/Treasurer was Alan Triscott. The function of the Union was to co-ordinate mutual activities between the states without affecting the autonomy of the Association. The duties entailed organising the Interstate meetings, liaise with sponsors, government, and the various State Associations for the benefit of Little Athletics in Australia.

This was followed by the third Interstate challenge on 2nd April 1972 at Perth. One of the problems at this event for the Victorian side is that Western Australia, like New South Wales still used the imperial system and one of the first recommendations by the ALAU was that all states adopt the metric system.



On 3rd June 1972 in the Queens Birthday Honour List, Trevor Archie Billingham was awarded "The order of the British Empire Medal (Civil)" with the citation "In recognition of his valuable service to the Little Athletics movement which has benefited many school children in participating in organised athletics". The BEM medal presented to Trevor is shown to the left.

Trevor was also presented a special medal by the Victorian Olympic Council for his efforts in planning the athletics side of the Junior Olympics at Waverley Park.

The Herald and 3DB officially backed the six hour Little Athletics Relaython this season held on 20th Nov 1971 with funds going to the Good Friday Royal Childrens Hospital Appeal. They provided printing material for this event such as score cards.

The Board of Management during this season decided they wanted the VLAA office to be moved to Melbourne. The cost of trunk calls which was very expensive in those days costing around \$2000 per quarter, plus being central to be more accessible to the Board Members influenced the decision. Jim Jamieson arranged with the owner of Lanes Motors that Little Athletics could take over a disused two-storey building at 54 Little Bourke Street.

The building was uninhabitable, so began weekends by Trevor and his family, sweeping years of dirt and grime from the downstairs to make it into some form of habitable office. He scrounged curtain material from a friend, in the fabric industry, to cover the massive, horrible walls downstairs and divide upstairs into some sort of office for himself.

Throughout the ensuing weeks he managed to scrounge carpet for all the floors. Trevor would leave early each morning with his trusty spade and chip off the lino tiles off the concrete floor, so the carpet could be laid. No thought of asbestos in those days! The upstairs was then made into boardroom, as well as Trevor's office.

Always trying to save money for the Association, Trevor transported most of the files and equipment up to the office in the Associations Ford Falcon, and on one such trip while carrying an old heavy teacher's wooden desk (scrounged from the school) when approaching the West Gate Bridge, a gust of wind ripped the pack rack and desk off the top of the car and glided gracefully to the median strip in the middle of the new dual highway. Luckily no other cars were coming along at that early hour of the morning. After that, a carrier was booked to pick up the desk and then collect the other desks and equipment from Lara.

The new office opened after six months of hard work. Some of the fitment was through the State Government Equipment Fund which included the work benches, storage shelves and some floor coverings. Trevor was also assisted by Barry Hicks (Lilydale Centre) building the cupboards and renovations, Alan Ellis (Box Hill Centre), Gordon Murphy and Les Webb (both Preston) painting the front of the building as well as John Tracey (Kew)

It took several weeks for the telephones to be connected, and then it was only one downstairs that was connected for the first two weeks.

Trevor went from having three senior part-time staff (during school times) to two junior staff that knew NOTHING about Little Athletics.

Because the new office staff could not answer any questions about Little Athletics, they would naturally put all calls through to Trevor, so cutting down his organisational time immensely resulting in working long hours to catch up on his normal duties. As Centres were administered by volunteer people they would ring home any time up to midnight to get the answers.

With the office now in Melbourne, Trevor was now more accessible to the Board members, but they didn't think that their popping in took up more of his precious time. Some pressure was taken off though, when two Board member's wives came to help in the office.

1972/73 Divisional Championships

A new major sponsor worth about \$18,000 was found in HJ Heinz and Co through their sports drink Vigorade.

The first woman President of a Little Athletics Centre was School Teacher Sue Dooley for Williamstown. She also became the youngest President to this time and is the daughter of well-known bookmaker W.G. Dooley.

The Sunday Melbourne Observer ran a full coverage of Little Athletics held in and around Melbourne every week.

Little Athletics was introduced in South Africa by a former member of the Darwin Little Athletics Centre, when he moved there.

On the Australia Day weekend, over 100 athletes from the Elizabeth Centre in South Australia came over to compete against the Coburg and Oak Park Centres at the Coburg Little Athletic track.

An ABC film crew went to the Camberwell Centre on 7th Nov 1972 for their children's affairs program "Switched On Set" to portray the real little athletics scene to their viewers. Negotiations were also taking place to use the film for a launching platform for Little Athletics in Canada.

In the 1972/73 seasons, 14 new Centres were formed to make a total of 95 Centres. These were Charlton, Denby's Park, Heywood, Horsham, Laverton, Mansfield, Mornington, Mt Beauty, Numurkah, Ouyen, Sunbury, Yarram, Yarrawonga and Hamilton. The number of athletes registered was 35,059.

The expanded nature of Little Athletics, with so many children now involved also put pressure on the numbers competing at some Regional Championships. Divisional Championships were introduced, usually involving around three Centres. This allowed more children to compete at a Championship level with the winners progressing to the Regional Championships. Regions were reduced from twelve to eight with the twenty-four divisions introduced.

Alan Triscott was invited by a government official in Canberra to start Little Athletics up there. Alan remembers going into an office with this official where he put some punch cards into the computer reader. This scenario looked pretty funny as the hardware was the size of a house and after reading the cards, the hardware started up and produced just a single page agenda from the printer – a lot of effort for a simple task. Personal Computers were not invented until 1981.

Alan tried to convince those attending the meeting to have clubs within a Centre but refused due to the influence of the Seniors, who only knew of running as a single Club. That didn't matter, as what was important was to have Little Athletics being run under the Federal Government's domain.

This enabled Alan Triscott and Bruce McKenzie to have discussions with Mr Brown, the Federal Minister of Sport but it didn't progress as the Whitlam government was voted in and contact was lost.

Consultations also took place from October to December 1972 between the YMCA of Brisbane, the Little Athletics Association of NSW and the Australian Little Athletics Union to start up Little Athletics in Queensland.

Mr N.T.J Williams operating for the YMCA in Brisbane was invited down to Melbourne for a meeting with Alan Triscott on 12th December 1972 and then gave the go-ahead to start up in south east Queensland, as that was where most of the population was in the State. In March 1973, the constitution of YMCA Brisbane was amended to allow the introduction of Little Athletics.

The VLAA along with other junior sports were invited to participate in the 1973 Moomba Parade.

On 12th March 1973 a similar event to the Junior Olympics held at Waverley Park the previous year was held at the MCG as a Pentathlon event.

The 1973 State VLAA Cross Country Championships were held at the Watsonia Army Camp on Sunday July 15th.

In August 1973, a motion was proposed and passed by the Australian Little Athletics Union "That the body known as the South-East Region of the Queensland Little Athletics Association formed under the auspices of the YMCA of Brisbane, be granted affiliation with the Union as the body controlling Little Athletics for both boys and girls in Queensland"

The inaugural meeting of the Little Athletics Association of South-East Queensland was held on 9th August 1973 where it proposed that only two Centres would be formed in 1973.

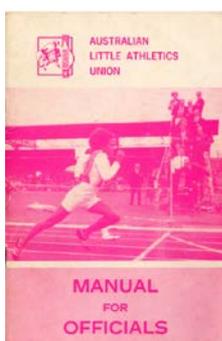
1973/74 100th VLAA Centre

The 100th Centre was formed in Victoria during this season.

Two formation meetings were arranged in Brisbane and Alan Triscott flew up to conduct them. The first night was to form a Centre in the Brisbane suburb of Mitchelton where the Principle of Mitchelton High School had given approval for his schools oval to be used as a Little Athletics site. Although Mitchelton no longer exists today, they did produce an Olympian in Decathlete Dean (Barton) Smith who represented Australia in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics as well as the 1990 Auckland and 1994 Victoria, Canada Commonwealth Games. Dean was also the first deaf person to represent Australia in an "able bodied" Olympics.

The second night was up in Redcliffe. Negotiations were being conducted with the parents and committee of Clontarf High School to use their oval for Little Athletics. When Alan arrived there, the Council Chambers in Redcliffe only had 13 chairs laid out. Alan advised them that there would probably be several hundred arriving and was told the chamber could only hold about a hundred. So a PA system for outside was quickly arranged. By time the meeting started, there were more people outside than inside with around 300 in total.

Again, Queensland were influenced by the Seniors and wanted to operate on a Centre only basis without clubs, despite being advised that in having clubs they could double their numbers. So in October 1973, the first Centre to form was Redcliffe followed by the Mitchelton, as the number two Centre for Queensland. The latter, no longer exists today.



A "Manual for Officials" was produced by the Australian Little Athletics Union in 1973. This was compiled by Alan Triscott, edited by Alan and Trevor Billingham and illustrated by June Triscott and photographs by Bill Pilgrim. This booklet lay out the duties and methods of procedure for officials conducting Little Athletics in all parts of Australia.

The Heidelberg Centre trailed twilight events this season with a great deal of success.

The 1973 State Relay Championships were held at VFL Park, Waverley this season.

Towards the end of 1973, due to the frustrations of the heavy workload and lack of support Trevor Billingham handed in his notice to the Board of Management. After talks for him to reconsider, they requested that he put in writing the conditions for him to stay on. As the season went into 1974, Trevor assumed that these conditions would be acted upon and continued working to the best of his

ability right up to organising the 1974 VLAA State Championships. On the night of these Championships, he was invited out for dinner by the Board of Management and was given the news that came as a shock that they decided to accept his resignation – but they had kept the news from him and had waited until he had organised these Championships first.

This was another low point in his life but rather than undo ten years of hard work, and for the good of the movement he had started, he just walked away. In the ensuing months, Trevor was contacted by a number of the media but refused to say or elaborate on any questions as he didn't want any bad publicity to be attributed to the organisation.

Little Athletics was no longer part of Trevor Billingham's life.

Trevor would go back to teaching at the Corio Technical School and put all his energy in the next phase of his life in the performing arts where his students would contest Rock Eisteddfods. His motivation and artistic talent would enable his students to win a number of awards and later they were invited to perform at Moomba Parades and Grand Final pre match entertainments. Trevor would later appear occasionally at State conferences and some VLAA events as well as opening the VLAA Headquarters – Trevor Billingham House in Port Melbourne.

South Australia, Queensland and Australia Capital Territory joined the ALAU during this season.



The opening of the 1974 Australian Team Championships in Sydney. Seated in the light suits are ALAU President Bruce McKenzie on the left and ALAU Secretary Alan Triscott on the right.

1974/75 Family, Fun and Fitness

A select committee from the VLAA Board of Management commenced an intensive study into the philosophical aspects of Little Athletics. The objective was to interpret the Associations role in a changing society. At the end of the first 12 months, the philosophy was summed up with the slogan: "Little Athletics for family, fun and fitness" and the objective "To promote recreational, social and community activities with emphasis on family involvement".

With the help of the State Government, the first full time Education Officer was appointed in July 1974 whose job it was to travel the state assisting with the development of programs, conduct coaching clinics, seminars, a range of family interest camps and visiting up to 100 Primary Schools to help set up clinics and physical education programs.

The Government Official who was in Canberra was relocated to Launceston, Tasmania and he again contacted Alan Triscott to help start up Little Athletics down in that State. He organised a hall to conduct the formation meeting and as Alan was walking in, a note was passed to him by a lady who said "I was told to pass this onto you" which was just a small piece of paper torn off a sheet that said "I do not agree with this" and signed by the local senior athletics lady. He just ignored it and continued with another successful meeting. In time, Little Athletics went to Hobart and then around Tasmania.

Tasmania joined the ALAU during this season.

Trevor Billingham was granted the first "Life Governor" award for outstanding service to the VLAA..

1975/76 First Male Little Athlete Olympian

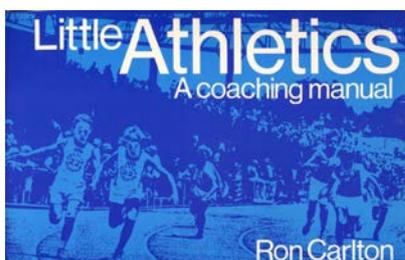
The first male Little Athlete to be selected for the Australian Olympic Team was Peter Larkins in the Steeplechase and he also competed in the Commonwealth and World Games. Today, Dr Peter Larkins is a sports physician and is a regular medical commentator for the media, particularly in AFL Football. Peter also served as the VLAA medical advisor for a number of years.

The 1976 State VLAA Cross Country Championships were held in Sunbury.

Alan Triscott was granted the second "Life Governor" award for outstanding service to the VLAA

1976/77 Little Athletics Coaching Manual

A family fun day was organised as part of the "Life – be in it" campaign at Albert Park on 19 Oct 1976 which included a run/jog around the lake.



A coaching manual especially designed for children's athletics was devised by the VLAA. Written by the VLAA Education Officer Ron Carlton, the book titled "Little Athletics – A coaching manual" was first published in 1976. This was the first comprehensive guide in coaching Little Athletics with a full chapter devoted to each event with recommended training and illustrated with line drawings by Hilary Jackman and photographs by Ian McKenzie. The design of the book was by Alison Forbes.

Max McLennan and George Nevitt (dec) were granted Life Governor awards for outstanding service to the VLAA

Geelong Legends Plaza

Fourteen inaugural Geelong and district sporting legends etched on glass shards were unveiled on 14th September 2007 at the new Legends Plaza at Kardinia Park.

The plaza forms the central axis for Geelong's main sporting hub and was designed as an opportunity for the community to acknowledge the deeds of elite sports persons and administrators from the Geelong area.

These were selected from set criteria from around 90 entries. One of these legends is Trevor Billingham in recognising his deeds in starting the Little Athletics movement from Geelong.

Cr John Mitchell invited Christine Billingham and family as well as VLAA President Don Baker to be present at the unveiling of Trevor's shard as the names were kept under tight secrecy until this day. Also amongst the legends was John Landy.

At the Legends Plaza, Don Baker presented Christine Billingham with a Lifetime Guardianship of the Life Governor Award bestowed upon the late Trevor Billingham in recognition of her contribution to the VLAA.

Stephen Egan

President - Bayswater Bullets Little Athletics Club
Executive Committee - Knox Little Athletics Centre
Chairperson – Knox Little Athletics Centre 40th Anniversary Sub-Committee 1968-2008

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No content of this article to be reproduced without the acknowledgment of the contributions of the people mentioned below.

Acknowledgments

Christine Billingham (Little Athletics Co-Founder, VLAA Lifetime Guardianship)

Alan Triscott (Geelong, VLAA and ALAU Co-Founder, VLAA Life Governor & ALA Life Member)

John Guerra (Bayswater and Knox Centre Life Member, VLAA Life Governor, VLAA Chairman 1987/88, ALAU Chairman 1988/89 & 1989/90)

Andrew Edney (Diamond Valley Little Athletics Centre Life Member)

Frank McMahon (a professional proof reader who was also a mentor to Ron Clarke at the peak of his running career)

Reference Documents

Interviews between Christine Billingham and Stephen Egan

Various letters, emails and interviews between Alan Triscott and Stephen Egan

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Book: “Little Athletics – A coaching manual” by Ron Carlton (1976)

Book: “Athletics – The Australian Way” Edited by Ron Clarke (1971)

Booklet: Geelong Centre “Souvenir for Season 1966-67”

Booklet: 1968 VLAA Handbook

Booklet: 1973 ALAU Manual for Officials

Booklet: 1970 edition Inter Club Points Scoring Tables

Booklet: 1970 Forming a Little Athletics Centre

Booklet: 1967/68 Geelong Centre Handbook:

Magazines: Numerous copies of VLAA Little Athlete

Manuscript: “Sequence of events in the development of Little Athletics” by Trevor Billingham (Founder and instigator of Little Athletics, BEM, VLAA and ALA Life Governor) written around the mid 1980's

Manuscript: “Citation” by Trevor Billingham in June 1999

Manuscript: “A Little Recollection” by Trevor Billingham in August 2002

Manuscript: “The Origins of Little Athletics “ notes used by Alan Triscott in the 1994 NSW and QLD AGM's

Manuscript: "The Beginnings of Little Athletics" by Alan Triscott

Minutes: Inaugural meeting for the formation of the Little Athletics Association of New South Wales (Dec 1970)

Minutes: Inaugural meeting of Little Athletics Association of South East Queensland (9th August 1973)

Newspaper: Kalori: Vol 1 to 15, 17, 23, 25

Program: VLAA State Championships 1968, 1969, 1970

Report: Listing of Centre athlete numbers 1967/68 to 1971/72 and school numbers 1971/72

Report: 1985/86 VLAA "Survey of hand size of U/6 to U/15 boys and girls" (for discus and Shot Put) by John Guerra

Website: Geelong Guild Athletic Club

Also thanks to:

Bruce Beaton for loan of Athlete Results Book and VLAA Championship programs

Judy Blizzard (nee Addicoat) for the 1972/72 Bayswater club top and the Victorian Junior Olympic Certificate

Malcolm Duncan (ex Waverley Centre athlete (and Shepparton LAC Secretary) for the 1971 Waverley Relay Marathon details.

Leanne Smith (nee Hines), an ex South Barwon club athlete (and Qld Runaway Bay Centre Team Manager) for the photo of her 1966 club uniform



Christine Billingham – Sep 2007



Alan & Kate Triscott– Aug 2007



Trevor Billingham 1935-2005