



British Athletics League Anniversary Booklet

Dear BAL Contact,

I am emailing you as the designated club contact for the BAL. Hopefully you received your club's allocation of the booklet successfully.

We had ordered sufficient copies to allow for demand outside of the club copies and we are now in a position for clubs or individuals to purchase online. We would be extremely grateful if you could disseminate this information within your club.

Copies can be bought for £5, or £8 for two, and £10 for three, which is the maximum order. The cost includes postage and packing, with all money raised going to help young athletes through the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund, which has also supported many BAL athletes on their journey along the athletics pathway.

Can I emphasise that as well as purchasing an interesting history of BAL you will be contributing directly to the Ron Pickering Fund which has no direct fund raising ability at present and every purchase will directly help deserving young athletes.

The publication itself features a range of nostalgic contributions from athletes, committee members, team managers and officials. Olympic champion and President of World Athletics, Sebastian Coe said: "The competition has been of constant high standard and I remember fondly my own competitions as a member of the Haringey team that were not only important for the club and its status but were important stepping stones to championships later in the season."

There are great stories of feats that will impress, surprise and amuse you, from exhausted athletes doubling-up to score points, to guitar sing-alongs on team buses. Liverpool Harriers' Mike Holmes has provided a fascinating series of archive reports that bring the piece to life, as do images by Mark Shearman and Melissa Gresswell. Statistical information has also been compiled by Peter Matthews, with a club-by-club directory of every team to compete over the last five decades put together by Mike Heath.

To order, simply place the details of your order request in [this short contact form](#). The critical details required are, how many copies and both home and email addresses. Purchasers should be able to pay on-line to an account that will be provided once orders have been received.

Please note that orders will be satisfied on a first come first served basis. No booklets will be sent until payments have cleared so allow please allow seven working days between order and delivery.

We hope you will enjoy the read.

Separately you can listen to author Alex Seftel's interviews with former BAL Chairmen Dean Hardman and Jack Walters in the [England Athletics Podcast](#).

Should your club be interested in hosting Alex as a guest speaker – by webinar or in person once possible – to talk about 50 years of British Athletics League history, you can also get in touch using the contact form.

Thanks again for your co-operation. If you are no longer the lead contact please pass this on to a colleague.

Kind regards

Mike Heath former Chairman of BAL



Blackheath and Bromley pose for a team photo after competing in Liverpool in 2018. Photo: Melissa Gresswell

Having joined the League in 1972, Borough of Enfield Harriers joined Blackheath and Bromley on the train journey up to Blackburn for one match. Enfield's Roy Stratton says the late timing of the event meant they "had to more or less come back on the milk train in the middle of the night!" Roy praises organiser George Kirby, who sorted some food and kept the teams occupied. "We all played darts in the Blackburn clubhouse rather than sitting on a platform for four hours."

Ian Byett of Basingstoke remembers long motorway delays leading to a rush for most of his squad to make it onto a Scotland-bound plane at Gatwick Airport minutes before the gates closed. Fortunately, the BAL match ended up being one of their strongest performances.

There was motorway drama of an unexpected nature for Harrow decathlete Saoirse Chinery-Edoo at the start of the 2019 season. Arriving in Wales the night before the match in Swansea, he noticed that his roof rack - complete with poles attached - had disappeared from the top of his car.

Mortified, he drove on, documenting the story as it unfolded on Instagram. Fortunately, the next morning he received welcome news that the poles had been found by the side of the road near Bridgend, enabling him to vault with his favoured equipment, alongside participation in the long jump, discus and javelin.

Sale Harriers' needed their throwers to come to the rescue after one meeting. With the team sat on the bus and raring to go home, the problem they had was that their bus was blocked in by a parked car. The throwers decided to lift the car up and move it out of the way, giving them a clear passage back to Manchester.

There was a waiting game too for Bedford and County's Graeme Packman, who had to stay in Guernsey after a BAL encounter due to a shortage of seats on planes. Graeme says a number of athletes and officials flew back late on Monday evening once the local airport reopened following bad weather.