

My link to the 1908 London Games

MOST people are aware that London hosted the Olympic Games 1948 as well as in 2012, but little mention is ever made of the 1908 Games in London. Recently it has dawned on me that I form a link back to those earlier Games.

In 1908 a three-mile team race was included in the athletics programme for the first and only time. The Great Britain and Ireland team finished first, second and third, led by Joe Deakin of Herne Hill Harriers, and won the team gold medal as well as three personal medals. Joe joined Surrey Athletic Club, which I joined in 1947.

In 1949 Joe, who was then 70, turned up to our annual five-mile handicap cross-country race in Richmond Park. This was run over two laps and Joe was allowed to run just one lap.

As it was a handicap race I, aged 27, was lucky enough to come in first (refusing a prize of 200 cigarettes!) but I had had the honour of racing against an Olympic gold medallist.

I retired from running after my 80th birthday, and from 30 years of organising monthly road races after my 90th.

I wonder whether any of my club mates from those days are still around - Tony Martin, Jacky Butler, Paul Wheeler and others?

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Reflections from