THE VRWC CLASSICS

Nowadays, we restrict our racing to the Middle Park area because of Public Liability considerations. Although I realise the reason for this, it does disappoint me when I consider all the Classics the club used to hold in years last. The following brief list of these events illustrates the point well.

- **Ian McDougal Memorial Handicap (15 miles)**

    This event was started when the club reformed after the Second World War. The event was initially held at Albert Park but from 1951 onwards, it moved to become the **St Kilda to Chelsea 15 Miler**. It started at St Kilda Town hall and went down Beach Road, finishing at Frank McGuire's gym in Chelsea. It was held on a Saturday afternoon, starting at 1:30PM. The last edition was held in 1970.

- **Melbourne to Frankston and return (50 miles)**

    As well as the annual Melbourne to Frankston 25 Mile event, there were various schedulings of a Melbourne to Frankston and Return event over 50 miles. It was held in the following years: 1929, 1930, 1932, 1946-1951.

- **Melbourne to Frankston (25 miles)**

    This handicap event was actually slightly less than 25 miles. It started at the corner of Alexandra Avenue and St Kilda Rd (opposite where the Victorian Arts Complex now stands) and travelled via St Kilda Road and the Nepean Highway to finish at Frankston Post Office. This was a handicap event with the first outmarker starting at 10:30AM on a Saturday morning. The scratch walkers gave anything up to 90 minutes start but in many cases they still won. The event started in the 1930's and was last held in 1970.

- **R. J. Blackley Memorial Handicap (20 miles Club Championship)**

    R. J. Blackley was a former club president and life member who died in the Second World War. The first editions of this club championship were held at Albert Park but in 1955, it was changed to a course from **Albert Park to Oakleigh and Return** (walking in part along the Olympic 50 km course). In 1962 it returned to Albert Park and then in 1963, it was held from **Geelong to Queenscliff**. In 1967 it was held from **Queenscliff to Geelong.** It continued into the 1970's.

- **Coldstream to Healesville (10 miles)**

    This event first held in 1955 and was initially held as a weekend away in Healesville but eventually it became a single day event. It started at 2:30PM on the Saturday afternoon. The last Coldstream was in 1964. I think Clarrie Jack won it.

- **Victorian 50 km - starting and finishing at Showgrounds during Show Week**

    The Victorian 50km championship used to start on the Showgrounds main arena on the Saturday of the last weekend of the Melbourne Royal Show before going out on Ballarat Road to Rockbank and then returning to finish on the arena. Competitors had to keep one eye on the two way traffic on the busy highway for most of the race and there was little in the way of traffic control. This was the regular course for the Victorian 50 km Championship from the late 1920's to 1966.

- **Melbourne to Healesville Relay (38 miles in 2 mile legs)**

    This 38 miles relay was staged with legs of 2 miles. It was first held in July 1936. After the Second World War, the timing was changed to the Queens Birthday weekend in June. The event started in Alexandra Avenue at 11:30AM on the Saturday and was a major organisational feat. The last scheduling was held in 1954. An old furniture van, owned by Mr Proud who lived in Sunshine, was used to pickup and drop off the walkers along the route. You can see a photo of the van , dated 1958, on a Social Club day trip to Warrandyte.

Apart from this relay, other relays were sometimes held as once-off. Amongst them was a **Melbourne to Geelong Relay (46 miles in 2 mile legs)** held in 1949 and 1950.

Most were all still going in the 1960's when I started walking with the club. I was lucky enough to walk the St Kilda to Chelsea (15 miles) and the Melbourne to Frankston (25 miles) and I watched the Queenscliff to Geelong (20 miles) in a car. They were great races.

Tim Erickson