



The Isle of Man sporting community, as well as the wider racewalking community, were shocked to hear of the death of Murray Lambden on Sunday 17th April 2017. Murray, who was aged 60, died suddenly after collapsing whilst walking his dog on the Isle of Man.

Murray came from a racewalking background, which included a number of international representations, including in the 1982 Commonwealth Games, in which I also competed. So my memories of Murray go back a long way.

The following profile was written on his death. It captures the salient points from his athletics career.

Murray Lambden walked for the Isle of Man at the 1982 Games In Brisbane, Australia, and in 1994, was manager of the athletics squad in Victoria, Canada. Murray's passion for athletics continues unabated and he is the man behind the extremely comprehensive <http://www.manxathletics.com> website, on which he was a serial and entertaining blogger.

Murray said he would never forget the life-changing opportunity taking part in the Commonwealth Games gave him.

He achieved the qualifying standard for the 30km walk at the 1978 Games in Edmonton, Canada, and was encouraged by some to try and make the team. However he felt unready for the challenge and thought the qualifying standard was too soft. In any event, three others had the qualifying time and they were all faster than him.

Uncertain for a while of the direction his sporting career was heading after a series of disappointments and the sudden death of his father, Murray, then a student, said he finally got it together while walking alone through the streets of Preston while the Commonwealth Games were taking place in Canada. He recounts:

I decided I needed a purpose - I was going to represent the Isle of Man in the 1982 Commonwealth Games. When I finished my studies and returned to the Isle of Man in late June 1979, the training started. At a silly pace. Although pushing my body to the limit, within a month I had broken 5 hours for 50km for the first time despite doing the "double midnight." That meant taking the midnight sailing to Liverpool, hanging around in the city for several hours and taking the first train to Birmingham and on to Coventry. After walking 31 miles, the reverse journey saw me catch the overnight ferry back to Douglas and hitting my bed for the first time in 48 hours by about 6 am.

I started to win races, set a British record for 30km in February 1981, and represented Great Britain four times in 1981 and 1982 (Brighton, Valencia, Rome and Bielefeld).

1982 was a long hard season with the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in October. I wanted more than the Commonwealth Games and I tried, but failed, to make the GB team for the European Championships too.

Selection for the Commonwealth Games was by that time a formality but there was a time at the end of August when I was so exhausted that I almost withdrew. I am so glad that I didn't. We had more than two weeks between arrival in Australia and my event and I got right back into my stride. literally. Every other day, on my hard day and his easy day, I trained with the man who won the event, Welshman Steve Barry. On a couple of occasions Graham Young joined us and we were photographed by the press with me pretending I was beating Steve for the title! I certainly didn't do everything perfectly. Although I continued to train hard, I ate too much and had a few drinks too. It was the first time I had chips for breakfast! There was so much food. I would have a light breakfast before training and then a full version when J got back. Rob Elliott, the Guernsey walker joined me a few times on those full breakfasts.

For the record, Murray finished 8th in Brisbane in the 30km Commonwealth Games walk with a time of 2:22:18.



Left: Murray circa 1982

Right: Murray Lambden running in the 2007 Syd Quirk race on the Isle of Man

His long association with sport was well and truly rooted in the Isle of Man. He won the Parish Walk in 1978 (16:19:37) and was also a winner of the End to End walk.

He continued to keep fit after his elite walking days were over, regularly racing on the Isle of Man in both running and walking races.

In later years, he set up and maintained the Manx Athletics and Parish walk websites - some of which have been preserved by the British Library - and was regularly at events with his camera.

Her was indeed the face and voice of athletics and racewalking on the sports mad island.

After his death, Murray joined Art Nouveau designer Archibald Knox and the Bee Gees in being honoured with a blue plaque in Douglas. The permanent tribute was unveiled near the finish line of the Parish Walk the day before the 2018 edition was to be held. It was only the third such plaque to be handed out and reflected the serious impact Murray had made in Douglas and the Isle of Man.

Council leader David Christian said at the time of the plaque opening:

Murray Lambden was a remarkable man whose achievements went far beyond sport. He was an influential figure who not only epitomised sport's finest qualities but was also dedicated to encouraging sporting endeavour in others. His wider involvement, with his wife Marie, in the community has left a lasting and tangible legacy, especially his work in helping to transform the lives of those living with autism.

Simply put Murray was an inspiring ambassador - for sport, for Douglas and for the Isle of Man. It is fitting, therefore, that the council pay tribute to his memory with a blue plaque at a site which will, forever, be associated with Murray's success in and abiding passion for the Parish Walk.



I can't think of more fitting final words.

Tim Erickson
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