GRAEME NICHOLLS

Graeme Nicholls was born on 15th May 1948 to a Ballarat family that lived and breathed athletics. His father Stan had competed in the 1938 Empire Games in the 3 Mile Run and was a staunch member of Ballarat Harriers and a keen supporter of Victorian athletics.

Graeme joined Ballarat Youth Athletics in 1958 and then Ballarat Harriers in 1962. When Graeme and his younger sister Alison took up racewalking, Stan joined in enthusiastically and the family regularly made the trip down to Melbourne to compete.

They all joined the Victorian Amateur Walkers Club in 1965 and later the Victorian Marathon Club (they successfully mixed running and walking)

Graeme's progress was quick. He won the Victorian Junior One Mile Walk in 1966 and won the Victorian All-Schools One Mile Walk in 3 successive years 1965-67. He set new Australian Junior Walk Records several times in the 5000m walk, concluding with 22:40.4 (taking the Junior 3 Miles Record along the way). It is fair to say that he blitzed his way through the junior ranks, setting records (Australian, Victorian and Victorian Country) and amassing medals at an amazing rate.

BALLARAT'S BRILLIANT 19 YEAR OLD
GRAHAM NICHOLLS. VICTORIAN

Graeme as a 19 year old in 1967

Both Graeme and Alison went on to become Australian Open racewalking champions, Graeme in 1970 (Australian 3000m Open Track Walk) and Alison in 1972 (Australian Open 5 km Road Walk) and 1973 (Australian Open 3000m Track Walk). For his part, Stan won many Victorian and Australian Veterans titles and competed with distinction in a number of World Veteran Championships.
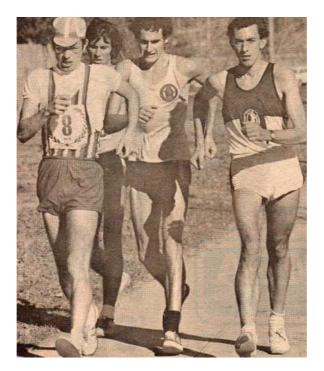
Graeme transitioned from the junior ranks (it was U19 in those days) to Open competition seemingly without effort. In fact, he won a silver medal in the Australian 2 Mile Track walking championship in 1967 while still only 19 years of age. From then on, he was amongst our top walkers until his retirement in 1973. He had many battles with Noel Freeman, Bob Gardiner, Ted Allsopp, Ross Haywood and the other big names of that era and recorded a number of fine victories over these superstars. His medal tally when he retired makes for impressive reading, given the great depth of Australian walking at that time.

1967	AA 2 Mile Track	2nd	13:47.6
1969	AV 10 mile Track	3rd	1.15.52
1969	AV 20 km Road	3rd	1.34.24
1969	AV 2 Mile Track	2nd	14.06.4

1970	AA 3000m Track	1st	12.56.6	
1970	AA 20 km Road	2nd	1:35:20	
1970	AV 10 Mile Track	3rd	1.13.55	
1970	AV 20 km Road	3rd	1.34.12	
1970	AV 10 km Track	2nd	45.55	
1970	AV 2 Mile Track	1st	13.41	
1971	AV 10 km Track	1st	46.32.0	
1972	AV 20 km Road	1st	1.39.04	
1972	AV 30 km Road	1st	2.37.29	
1972	AV 10 km Track	1st	47.17.0	
1973	AV 3000m Track	2nd	13.28	
1973	AV 15 km Road	1st	1:12.50.4	
1973	AV 10 km Track	1st	46.28.4	

Even now, he still holds a number of Victorian Country track records, the oldest dating to 1966 – nearly 50 years ago now!

Victorian U20 Country Record	15000m	1.19.14.0	02.07.66	Melb Uni
Victorian Open Country Record	30000m	2.32.40.2	26.07.69	Melb Uni
Victorian Open Country Record	15000m	1.08.59.8	06.06.70	Melb Uni

1972 LBG Carnival 20 mile - Peter Fullager, Steve Hausfield, Eddie Dawkins and Graeme Nicholls

Retiring from walking in 1973, he turned his attention to life after athletics, became an official and administrator and worked tirelessly in various roles from then on. In 2012, he was honoured for 50 years membership of Athletics Victoria, a feat that few can match.

Some years ago, he forwarded to me a list of highlights from his athletics and post-athletics careers. It makes for fantastic reading

Athletics Career

- Joined Ballarat Youth Athletics 1958, then Ballarat Harriers in 1962 and Victorian Amateur Walkers Club 1965 and later the Victorian Marathon Club.
- Won Victorian Junior One Mile Walk 1966 and won the Victorian All - Schools One Mile Walk 3 successive years 1965-67

- Set new Australian Junior Walk Records several times for 5 km walk, concluding with 22min. 40.4 [incl Junior Record for 3 miles also].
- Was 2nd in 1967 Aust Senior Mens 3km Track Walk Championship.
- Won 1970 Australian 3km track Walk Championship [Adelaide]
- Took 2nd place in Australian 20km Senior Mens Road Walk Championship 1970.
- Won 10 Victorian Senior Mens Track Walk Championships
- Several times broke the official Australian Walk Records for men : over 2 miles [13 min 18.2 secs] in December 1969 and 3 km [12 min 15.2 secs.] January 1970 and 5km [21 min 6.4 secs.] November 1970, and Victorian 1500 metres [6 min 07 secs] and 3 miles records.
- Several times broke the official Australian and Victorian Junior Records [u/19] for 5km Walk [22 min 40.4 secs.] and Victorian 3 mile Walk record.
- Won the 1970 Australian Federation of Race Walking Clubs 20 mile Lake Burley Griffin [Canberra] [32 km] Championship Classic.
- Was selected in Victorian Senior Men's Teams over 9 successive years [1966-1974] - the first selection being in 1966 for the Australian 50km [31 mile] Senior Men's Road Walk Championship and set an Australian Junior Record aged 18, of 5 hours 9 mins. in this event.
- Won the Victorian Country Track Walk 2 miles [later 3km] Championship for 10 successive years 1966-1975 [incl.]
- Held 27 Victorian Country Walk records from 1500 metres, at all distances [English and metric] up to and including 50km. [31 miles]., including one hour and 2 hours distance records.

VAAA/Athletics Victoria and Athletics Australia official

- Was a State Selector of Victorian Track and Field Teams 1974-77
- Member of Athletics Victoria Technical Committee - 1974-1985
- Records Officer for VAAA - Athletics Victoria 1975-1985
- Records Officer for Athletics Australia 10 years 1977-1987
- Was appointed Records Officer at the Brisbane Commonwealth Games 1982
- Records Officer at World Veteran Games 1987
- Was appointed Records Officer at the World Cup athletics meet, Canberra 1985
- Bill Sewart Athletic Track Committee of Management 1993-2010 for 17 years and Committee Chairman for most of those years. Awarded Life Membership of BSAT Association. In fact Graeme remained a Citizen's Representative on BSAT until 2015, coming when he was able to.

2009 – resumed recreational running after 30 years *"lay-off"*

- Finished the 2010 Christchurch [NZ] Marathon [42 KM]
- Finished the 2010 Melbourne Marathon [42 KM]
- Ran the 2011, 2012 and 2013 Melbourne ½ Marathons and the 2015 Run for the Kids 15km

1972 Victorian 20km championship - Robin Wood, Graeme Nicholls and Alan Lucas

Graeme passed away on Tuesday afternoon 6th October 2015 in Cabrini Palliative Care, Melbourne. He had been fighting his personal battle against cancer for many months and, although his passing was expected, it was still a very sad occasion to lose one of our walking comrades from days past.

Aged only 67, he is sadly missed by family, friends and former competitors!

Tim Erickson
Tues 14 October 2015