

RAIN, HAIL OR SHINE RUNNERS RALLY ON **by Rene Antonia**

If you happen to pass through Parramatta Park on a Friday at midday you can expect to see a group of energetic and dedicated runners including a sprightly octogenarian.

Graham Taylor, one of the foundation members of the 'Parramatta Park Runners' who were originally linked with the Parramatta Police Boys Club, said "We started running 5 miles (8km) around the Park on 16th July, 1968 during our lunch breaks".

Founding members of the club who are still participating in club events are: Henry Gorton, Frank Riley and Brian Sharpe. Graham says that nowadays the club members come from all walks of life and they meet every Friday of the year except Good Friday and Christmas Day when it falls on a Friday.

Graham, who is also the official statistician for the "Parramatta Park Runners" recording times and handicapping took over from Ken Cameron who held the position until 1987. He proudly states that "as of June 2000, 1063 runners (120 female and 943 males) have passed through our club".

Vic Townsend, 81 years old, and still running regularly rain, hail or shine, epitomises the spirit of the club. He said "I started off as a race walker in 1956" before taking up running in 1970/1. "I used to come to Parramatta Park on Fridays after work". Since then Vic has recorded over 350 runs with the club. Within minutes of this interview he was back on the scenic river track overtaking much younger runners.

Under all the friendly banter, the sweaty singlets, knee guards, blisters and smelly socks lies a competitive spirit. On the fourth Friday of every month the club holds a handicap race day where the points scored count towards a competition for two perpetual trophies and other prizes. There are regular races with their fierce rivals, the Parramatta Police Boys Runners club. The "Parramatta Park Runners" also support a number of charities including SIDS the Children's Hospital and Leukemia Foundation.

For the dedicated group of runners the Friday run come rain, hail or shine isn't just another stroll in the Park.

Volunteer Responses

Thank you to everyone whom responded to the letter sent out recently regarding the September roster. We appreciate that everyone is busy with work and family, however it is important that responses are received by the due date. Replying promptly ensures that staff are not held back on planning issues whilst Debbie phones around trying to get responses sent in.

Brochures

The new Parramatta Park brochures have arrived! The boxes are in the back room of the VC. Please ensure they are stored against the internal wall – not against the windows where the light and temperature changes will affect them. To save paper and the costs of reproducing the brochure, please just give one brochure to each family or group.