



## BENNELONG OCCASIONAL ORIENTEERS

The following article is the first of a regular series on Australian orienteering clubs and their members. The club featured in this issue, Bennelong Occasional Orienteers (or BOO) was the first club formed in Australia specifically for orienteering, being formed a few months before the vintage Victorian clubs such as Red Kangaroos, Yarra Valley, Bayside and Tuckonie. While some orienteers in Victoria ran under club names as early as 1969, these were bushwalking, mountaineering or athletics clubs in which orienteering was a minor (and in some cases unofficial) activity.

Regular orienteering in Sydney resulted from the visit of a New Zealand team to this country for the first Australia-New Zealand Orienteering Challenge, held in Victoria in December 1971. While the team was in Sydney a practice event was organised at Mt Hay in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, with the course set by Ake Persson, an experienced Swedish orienteer living at the time in Wollongong and competing with the ACT Orienteering Association. This event attracted the attention of two people prominent in athletics, Dave Lotty and Rod Dominish, who saw the possibility of the sport developing in Sydney.

A couple of weeks later a trial event was organised, utilising the same course on which the New Zealanders had run, and orienteering in NSW had begun. This event was won by Ian Bradley, a prominent cross country skier in the time of 2 hours 48 minutes. At the event Australia's first specialist orienteering club, Bennelong Occasional Orienteers, was formed with Rod as President and Dave as Secretary.

The foundation members of Bennelong came from three main groups: athletics (chiefly from the Randwick-Botany Athletic Club), the Hash House Harriers (a less competitive but very sociable running group) and cross country skiers. There were also a few from bushwalking ranks.

The name Bennelong had been chosen as being representative of Sydney as the Opera House on Bennelong Point was nearing completion at this time. Since all the members were active in other sports it was decided to include the word Occasional, suggested by a British club called the Occasional Orienteers. A distinctive club T-shirt was designed in the colours Wallaby Grey and Black Stump Black with the Opera House as emblem. These T-shirts are now a collector's item but can still infrequently be seen worn by long standing BOO members.

Bennelong's first event in Sydney was organised by Dave Lotty in January 1972 at Garie Beach in the Royal National Park and attracted 35 entries. The event was won by Ian Hassall who is a leading competitor in the M50 class today and now a Kareelah member. Of those 35 starters at Garie twelve are still competing regularly in orienteering.

Bennelong has the distinction of participating in the first interstate challenge match held in Australia in a competition against the ACTOA in Penrose Forest in February 1972, the event being narrowly won by the ACT team.

Once Bennelong was on a firm footing the Orienteering Association of NSW was formed in March 1972 and orienteering was formally established at the State level.

It soon became necessary to form more clubs to cater for a wider area of Sydney. So Bennelong split with the formation of

### Bennelong members



A youthful Dave Lotty finishing in the 1972 Australian Championships. Dave helped Rod Dominish found the club and was its first Secretary. At the time of this photo Dave had recently left the club to form Kareelah Orienteers.



Ian Rannard, longest serving President of Bennelong.



Dick Mountstephens and Toy Martin discuss routes among the first members of Bennelong. Dick was subformed.

Kareelah Orienteers which represented the southern suburbs of Sydney, while Bennelong remained the province of orienteers north of the Harbour. A further split resulted in the formation of a second northside club, Garingal Orienteers, which is concentrated further north of Bennelong. Some of the early members changed to these new clubs and for a while Bennelong's ranks were depleted from the original large membership.

Kareelah also split subsequently to form Uringa Orienteers. Former BOO President Rod Dominish moved to Wagga Wagga, where he was instrumental in forming the Waggaroos and enthusing and guiding them through their early years. Members of other clubs which descended from Bennelong were responsible for forming several other NSW clubs including Bigfoot Orienteers, Illawarra Orienteers and Scrubrunners Orienteering Club. Thus Bennelong can claim a position in club genealogy unmatched by any other club in Australia!

Bennelong members have always been active in Association and Federation affairs and from its current members can claim two OFA Treasurers, two OANSW Presidents and Treasurers, plus a number of other committee

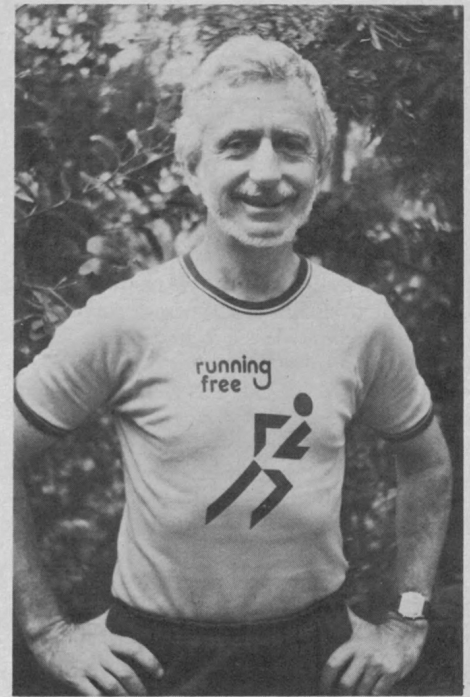
positions. The club was largely responsible for organising the 1976 Australian Championships at Belanglo (officially an OANSW event) and organised the NSW Championships at Lidsdale in 1981. A Bennelong team won the first Budkavle held at Loftus in 1976.

Bennelong's membership has steadied at approximately 40 in recent years, many of whom are happy to maintain the concept of 'occasional' in their approach to orienteering. However, there are many members who take a keen interest in the sport, and the club's committee retains an active commitment to orienteering.

In its 14-year history the club has had five Presidents. Rod Dominish was foundation President, followed by Dick Mountstephens, Ian Rannard for eight years, Andrew Sillar and currently Alison Wright.

The club colours were changed some years ago to blue and white. The future for the club is bright with the acquisition of some new junior members and it is hoped that Bennelong will continue to contribute to orienteering in NSW for many years to come.

*Based on material prepared by Dick Mountstephens.*



*Frank Assenza, a 'relatively recent' BOO member.*

## — past and present



*After the 1973 Australian Championships. Both were subsequently President while Toy left when Garingal was*



*Bennelong members scooped the pool at the 1973 N.S.W. Championships. L to R: Phil Butt (2nd), leading bushwalker with many successes in the Paddy Pallin Orienteering contest (see story page 18), Rod Dominish (1st), co-founder and first President of BOO, Dick Mountstephens (3rd).*



*Bennelong won the Mini-Budkavle in 1983. L to R: Colin Rannard, Bruce Dawkins, Dick Mountstephens, Richard Mountstephens Jnr, Robert Spry.*