



Sensational Return by Double Olympian

Ilford AC sent a strong team to Lee Valley Athletics Centre on a rainy Saturday afternoon, to contest the 90th Enfield Open 7 Miles' Walk around 7 one mile circuits with a climb towards the end of each lap.

Ilford were able to welcome back the Club's only double-Olympian, Life Member Nerina Aidetyte, who was making her first local appearance since 2012. Despite only resuming training a fortnight ago, since suffering injury in the Rio Olympics 20K Walk, and admitting to not being fully fit. It was the Lithuanian International who led Ilford's squad home. In the Women's race Aidetyte was always prominent and secured 2nd place in 57 minutes and 39 seconds, narrowly beaten by Leicester Walking Club youth prospect Emma Achurch.

The men's race saw another promising performance by newcomer Seb Parris, better known as a marathon runner but who's been trying out race walking with success. He was 6th in 64.55 and looked confident throughout. He was well backed-up by Ilford's Coach Stuart Bennett who filled 8th spot in 69.39 and also won a prize for being the race's first Centurion to finish (A Centurion being one who has completed a 100 miles race in under 24 hours). Next home was stalwart Dave Kates, who was himself returned after both injury and illness, and claimed 18th position in 74.55. A word for Captain Steve Uttley who also defied injury to record a finish - 19th, clocking 76.03. Also present was Ilford AC President Robin Davis, who spent a day with the Walking Section giving encouragement, and Ed Shillabeer who was fresh from success in the World Masters' Athletics Championship "down under" in Perth. However it wasn't his day as public transport failings saw him just miss the start!

The team race was worked on positions from both men's and women's races on a 4-to-score format, with Ilford AC coming 2nd behind Sussex-based Steyning AC. However Ilford AC were declared as 1st team winners, but later this was discovered to be in error. Organisers ruled that prizes would remain as awarded, even though the 1st & 2nd teams had been wrongly announced.

The event was the 90th with dignitaries and former great names were present, including 3 former race winners from Ilford AC to wit Olympian Roger Mills, Bob Dobson and Steve Allen. Following racing was a well-attended 90th Reunion Buffet in a function room.

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