



Andy Catton

**Name:** Andy Catton

**Born:** Yes definitely (Ilford)

**Date Joined:**

18th June 1967 – club founder and my Godfather, Edgar Moon, knocked on the door on my 14th birthday membership form in hand.

Oh that's a bit of a give away for the previous question !

**First race for club:**

Had memory failure on this but fortunately I had the foresight at 12 to start a racing diary. My very first proper competitive race was an inter school xc at Buckhurst Hill on 22nd Sept 1965 which I won; but my first race in Ilford AC colours was apparently a Southend AC young athletes 3 x 2.5 miles road relay on 21st October 1967 running 3rd leg starting 20th and finishing 20th. Followed closely by my first Met League xc (youths & boys) on 28th Oct at Cranford finishing 40th.

**Favourite races:**

Having done so many this was really difficult to choose. I loved road relays and 10k and 10 miles road races, an evening floodlit 3,000m or 5,000m track race at a packed Crystal Palace and all xc especially The National and Inter Counties when every top runner in the UK never shirked running them. But as an annual road race event I guess it has to be the Great North Run with a terrific atmosphere, wonderful support and a great weekend away with the lads. And the view from the top of the Offa's Dyke (15 miler trail race) is not bad !

**Personal bests:**

400m	52.0
800m	1:55.1
1500m	3:48.4
Mile	4:07.5
3000m	8:03.0



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3000m s/c 9:02.0  
5000m 13:45.3  
10000m 28:57.4

**Road :-**

Mile 4:02.0  
5 miles 22:52  
10k 29:12  
10 miles 47:35  
Half marathon 65:00  
20 miles 1:46:25  
Marathon 2:19:54

**Notable Performances:**

South of England champion : 10,000m track (x2) and 10 miles road (x3)

Essex County champion : 1500m, 3000m, 5000m (x3), 10000m (x5), 10k road (x2), 10 miles (x5), Half Marathon and 20 miles, plus fastest leg in road relay (x4): Senior xc, M40 xc (x2), M50 xc also 10 miles road M40, M50 & M60.

British Masters champion : M45 Half Marathon

Bruges European Veterans Grand Prix 10k winner M40 (x3)

Winner of London Nike Grand Prix Road Race Series (x2)

**Plus a few of my favourite major road race wins :-**



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Rochester 5m  
Cambridge 10m  
Cambridge Half Marathon  
Roding Valley Half Marathon  
Ilford Town Centre 10k  
Victoria Park 5m  
Harrow 10k  
Thurrock 10m  
Harlow 10m  
Chigwell 10m  
Shaftesbury 10m  
Bernie Hames Rainbow 10m  
Hatfield Broad Oak 10k  
Great North Run (M40)  
Southend 10k (M40)  
Wolverton 5m (M40)

**Best placings :-**

South of England xc 2nd  
Inter Counties xc 14th  
National xc 17th  
Great North Run 19th  
London Marathon 50th  
Dublin Marathon 10th

**Biggest Disappointment:**

I guess has to be the 1981 New York City Marathon when I was super fit but doubled up with stomach cramp around 22 miles and had to jog/walk the last 4 miles having been on course for a sub 2:15 clocking. Although suppose it could have been worse as if I had run 2:15 that year it wouldn't have counted as the course was subsequently re-measured at about 200m short !



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## **Typical Weeks Training at your peak :**

### **Road & xc season :-**

Monday 3.5 miles to gym 1.5 hours circuit training then 3.5 miles home

Tuesday 10 miles

Wednesday 10 miles

Thursday 10 miles (most often a 50 min blast round Tomswood Hill 9 1/4m)

Friday 5 miles easy

Saturday 10 miles xc fartlek (or race)

Sunday 15 miles road/xc

### **Track season**

Monday 5 miles

Tuesday 12 x 400 x 100 recovery at 5000m race pace

Wednesday 10 miles

Thursday Pyramid interval session

Friday 5 miles easy

Saturday 6 x 1200 or 7/8 miles fartlek (or both) or race

Sunday 10 miles



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### **Favourite Sessions:**

On the track probably pyramid sessions of 200, 400, 600, 800, 600, 400, 200 (x 3 sets) or 7 > 8 miles hilly fartlek round Hainault Forest.

**What advice would you give our current crop of youngsters:** Fulfill your potential. Don't wonder what might have been. Keep the training and racing varied over track, road and country and enjoy it.

### **Who is the most Famous Athlete you trained with :**

Back in the 1970's I was lucky enough to gain selection for several GB or England international races in Europe so on one occasion I got to train with Steve Jones (who shortly after went on to break the Marathon world record) and on another trip I trained with a young Steve Cram (who went on to be - well Steve Cram). Maybe not famous as an athlete but I have also enjoyed a few training runs around Hainault Forest with Ronnie O'Sullivan. Plus of course all the Ilford legends from the '70's and '80's - too numerous to name all.

### **How would you improve the sport:**

Pretty much like everyone else; life bans for performance enhancing drug cheats. Also try to get more ex athletes and experienced coaches or officials back into running the sport at the top level rather than career administrators and accountants.

Plus I loved T & F league competition back in its heyday but the format is now too long and outdated and needs major refreshing.

### **Favourite Athlete or Sportsman:**

The two guys I most admired during my "informative" early years of running were John Walker (NZ 1500 / miler) who never failed to give 100% in any race and David Bedford. Plus I was very much an Ovett rather than Coe fan. In other sports - Jimmy Greaves and Jim Clark



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(F1)

**What other sports do you follow:**

Lots !

Football - Am a long suffering Spurs supporter since 1960 (although we do have the best football stadium in the world);

Rugby - England of course plus Saracens (not a good time to admit that); Tennis - I used to play in the same W. Essex team as the Lloyd brothers as a teenager;

Motor racing (F1 before the turn of the century !) a bit of a petrol head and managed a lifelong ambition to speed round Brands Hatch a couple of years ago;

Golf - lethal once I get to the green but takes me 5 or 6 shots to get there !; Cycling - Tour de France etc plus track - I had a go round the Olympic velodrome last year (and didn't fall off).

**Best Country Visited:**

Have to say Australia (especially as my second son, wife and granddaughter live in Melbourne - a wonderful city where we could happily live for half the year). Love Tasmania.

**Favourite Food & Drink :**

Grilled dover sole with a nice cold Cote de Provence Rose or Irish stew washed down with an Aussie (Yarra Valley) Cab Sav. Beer - Ruby red bitter from either Meantime or Marlow brewery.

**Favourite TV Shows:**

Of late Killing Eve and Peaky Blinders, in the past Only Fools and Horses and The Sweeney



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**Last Film Seen :**

Think, at the cinema, it was Frozen 2 with granddaughter (it was 42 degrees in Melbourne that day and the cinema was air conditioned !)

**Last Book Read:**

I get through a book every 2/3 weeks and just finished The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga. But the best book I have read this year has to be Boy Swallows Universe by Trent Dalton (but you would need to have been to Australia quite a few times in order to understand a lot of the language!)

**Favourite Bands / Singers:**

All old school – Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Who, The Byrds, Genesis (Phil Collins) plus Paul Simon, Neil Diamond & Van Morrison.

**Last Concert Attended:**

Mumford & Sons

**What is your aim for next season:**

Sub 20 mins for 5k (well one can dream can't they !!)

**Tell us a joke:**

I was handing out water at the London Marathon one year and a runner came passed dressed as a chicken, closely followed by another guy dressed as an egg. I thought this should be an interesting finish.



They used to indoctrinate you early ! Photo used to be taken annually before the club opening winter season run at Chigwell Row.

Think this is 1955. I'm the one in the middle on my fathers lap - next to the big scary man (club Chairman Bill Cockle).

Founding members Alf Moon top row (far left) and Edgar Moon top row (third from right)





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Young upstart trying to stick with legend Roy Gill in the club road race at Chigwell Row - Feb 1973



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Great friends and rivals ! Gary Webb, Derek Coates and Lewis Dunbar - club 1,500m champs (1975 I think)



With Tony Nixon after his Essex 1,500m win at Newham in 1974. Bronze that year and again in 1976 before finally getting both my hands on the trophy in 1977.



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The art of levitation ! Can barely get one foot off the ground these days.

Last race of the 1983 London road race Grand Prix series. Half marathon at Wembley – finished behind Bernie Ford and Dave Clark (both National xc winners) but won the series.



Leading the 1981 Southern xc at Trent Park after a couple of miles along side Kevin Steere. 7th that year – Kev finished 3rd.



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Leading out the Essex 10 at Thurrock June 1978. Won it in 49.40 after breaking clear at halfway. For you oldies who can spot - Andy Nichol, Derek Coates, Roy Gill, John Mackenzie, Gary Webb & Brian Meadows.



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Winning the Ilford Town Centre 10k in 1990 (race organisers perk !). Martin Clarke by lamppost - purportedly on child minding duty.





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Mrs C in the same race (Ilford Town Centre 10k)



Club 50th anniversary run (1973) at Cricklefields. Far right at the front John Batchelor flying off in to the lead, Ilford's greatest race organiser and administrator Howard Williams (52), my first coach and mentor Alec Tiffin at the back immediately behind me (in grey T shirt lol) and my 1970's coach Phil Postings must be in there somewhere but I cannot see him



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Always nice to beat a local rival (Jim Goldring) on their home patch !



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On way to 2.19.54 in 1985 London Marathon - The Highway at around 22 miles



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Newman Hilly 5 at Hainault Forest sometime in the '90's





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On way to first of three M40 wins at the Brugge European Veterans Grand Prix - about 2 days after 40th birthday  
June 1993.



My Presidential year 1999/2000 I-r John Mackenzie, Ilford Olympic walker and a European medalist Roger Mills, Eamon Martin, Liz Nicholl (then CEO of UK Sport), me and Andy Nicholl.



The boys before the start of a xc race – somewhere sometime. Relying on Messrs Knightly or Muir to identify when and where.

So if people hasn't realised this is why I am such a knackered wreck now  
Andy



## **ANDY'S FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS**

**You have a list of phenomenal performances, but which one are you most proud of?**

What a teaser to start with ! I guess it has to be finishing 18th in the 1980 National xc at Leicester because the depth of the field was of such high quality.



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On the track probably the AAA National champs 5,000m at Crystal Palace (13:45.5) outkicking Samson Kimobwa (the then 10,000m world record holder), Marty Liquori (US 5,000m record holder) and Olympic medallist Rod Dixon on the last lap.

On the road maybe winning the classic Rochester 5 at the 6th attempt in 1983 but also smashing the club champs Chigwell Row road course record in 1982 was a bit special

**You trained a lot when you were in your prime but also had a full-time job and young family. How did you fit it all in?**

A very tolerant and forgiving (mostly) wife ! Looking back I really don't know how I got away with it. Most jobs back then were 9 to 5 so the routine of meeting all the others in a large squad of talented middle / long distance runners at Ilford for quality daily sessions was far easier than it would be now.

**Kipchoge makes no secret of the fact that he sleeps 10 hours a day. How much sleep did you have when you were running 6/7 days a week?**

Think I was around 9 hours, certainly a minimum of 8. When we had 3 kids under 5 it was a bit more difficult but Sheila tells me I slept through most of the feeds !

**What was your best race; your worst ever race; your most bizarre race?**

For best races the ones mentioned in Q1 would all have to rank, but the race which could be the best in terms of being nearly perfect and just absolutely "flying" throughout would be the Cambridge 10 (47:35) in 1978 where I broke clear after a 4.30 first mile and just kept going.

Worst races - erased from my memory ! Anything I ever dropped out of e.g. Southern and National xc races with stomach cramp.

Most bizarre probably the fell race in the 1977 Easter Festival of racing weekend on the Isle of Man. I was really unwell and on antibiotics and tried to finish last (but failed).



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### **Will the moustache ever return?**

Never ever !! Just like the 1970's - you had to be there ☐

### **I once won a joint of ham in a race, what was your best worst prize?**

That's easy re worst prize - in an international xc race in Brussels I finished 6th and won a synthetic hairy yellow rug.

Best ever prize was a £500 holiday voucher for winning the Witney / Southern 10 miles - which paid for our first family trip to Disney World.

On another occasion I won a portable colour TV (Rainbow 10 miles at N Weald airfield) - first prize was a Microwave oven but I didn't want that so let Graham Payne (local Southend rival) out dip me on the line o).

### **Was the 4.02 mile the downhill one at High Beech, was it really an attempt to run first sub 4 mile in Essex?**

Not really, as being a straight downhill road mile it would not be counted. Obviously my aim and that of others in the race was to try and break the 4 mins. It used to be part of the brilliant Tour of Epping Forest series (10k on the Sunday morning, 5 miles hilly road race on the Monday evening, 7.5 miles xc on the Tuesday evening then ending with the 1 mile downhill 20 mins recovery then 1 mile back up on the Wednesday. Overall positions decided on cumulative total times.

### **You have raced overseas a few times, where different rules seem to apply, any stories to share**

To say foreign runners were prone to cheating would be too wide sweeping and churlish but at numerous road races on the continent a small minority never used to bother with the first mile or two but hide in the bushes and join in later. This was of course long before chip



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timing.

Course cutting was fairly rife as well. One race in France I was winding up the sprint finish with half a mile to go battling with former Belgian Olympian and 5,000m world record holder Emile Puttemans when he veered off and cut through a cafe and reappeared 20m up the road.

**I see Your Godfather Edgar Moon was founder of the club - Did you ever find out why he chose the colours and also the design for the Ilford AC vest?**

I'm really not sure. Maybe some of our older (than even me) statesmen or women know. Think it may have been something to do with Ilford Borough (pre Redbridge days) and the roots of the original Valentines Park base who's colours were dark blue and light blue but I was also told that as so much of amateur athletics was University based in the early 1900's the colours were "Oxford blue" and "Cambridge blue". No idea about the way in which the current badge was designed or when (not until the 1940's ?) but does incorporate the Essex shield.

**How did the Chigwell HQ at Hainault Forest come about?**

I'm not that old !! The house at Chigwell Row was owned by Edgar and Betty Moon and had extensive lands (where all the houses and shops on Lambourne Rd are now and also part of the housing estate behind). This included tea rooms and large sheds which as Edgar was a leading member of the new Ilford AC he had converted into male and female changing rooms for winter training in the forest. Full details and pictures in the 75th Anniversary history book (still a few copies available to purchase).

**In your heyday did you follow any nutritional guidelines - in fact what was your racing weight then and now?**

Absolutely none ! Just a balanced healthy diet and best bitter. My racing weight in my 20's was 8st 10lbs I am now normally around 9st 4lbs (if you want that in kgs you will have to



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convert it yourself :) Trouble is that is 6lbs of lost muscle and 6lbs of gained fat !

### **How Many County Medals in your collection?**

To the best of my knowledge is 120 individual medals and about 80 team medals.

### **When 'New Breed' running clubs like 'Dagenham Joggers' and 'Castle Point Joggers' started in the 1980's after the success of the London Marathon what did you think?**

To be honest didn't really give them much thought initially. They met a need for the huge boom in social runners and as their names indicate "joggers". But when clubs like Colchester Joggers, Springfield Striders and Serpentine RC started really expanding, improving and getting huge membership I think it was worrying for long established athletic clubs such as IAC because the majority of the core of club volunteers usually came from endurance athletes. As we know the infrastructure required to run just a senior road running club as against a full road, country, track, field & walking club with young athletes as well is hugely different and more onerous. I don't have a problem with the type of new generation running clubs - just way too many of them !

### **Do you wish Park Run had been around in your heyday? And what is Your opinion of Park Run? Favourite?**

Not really. We had enough quality road races and back then the numbers of runners would not have been around in the sport.

I have come round to thinking they are terrific for the health and well being of a huge number of people and as the catalyst for the odd one or two progressing to club competition. Great also for established athletes who just want a low key hard training run or get a nice run in some super venues with normally a well organised friendly bunch of people. I have only taken part in I think 12 park runs in the last 5 or 6 years and enjoy the trail runs better - favourite would be the really tough Parke park run on the edge of Dartmoor in Devon.



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### **What running shoes did you wear in your best races?**

Wow that's a memory test. Obviously nothing like the massive range of shoes back in the late '70's and 80's that we have now. But I cannot really recall the models. I was fortunate enough to be sponsored by New Balance for quite a few years and then by Nike. So most of my best races would have been in their shoes. NB were great as they do wide fittings and I have broad feet. I seem to recall my 13.45 AAA race would have been in a pair of "state of the art" kangaroo leather (in green) Adidas spikes. Most of the last 30 years since the 90's I would have raced and trained in ASICS DS series shoes, but of late New Balance Fresh Foam shoes have been really good.

### **What was your original ultimate ambitions?**

Olympic gold and a couple of world records.

### **Worst Injury?**

Definitely achilles tendon rupture in 2000. Thought was pretty much career ending at the time. Had been suffering with "sore" achilles off and on for a decade and after it finally went (turned ankle over on a step) the consultant said it had just been hanging on by a thread waiting to go. Took nearly two years to get back to proper competition but never really found form again.

### **How has Ilford AC changed Over the years?**

In so many ways it really hasn't during my 53 years of membership. Same ethos of club camaraderie, all encompassing and welcoming for all ages and athletes wanting to achieve their potential in all disciplines of the sport. Yes people have come and gone, some stalwarts, core coaches and dedicated volunteers passed on, but the spirit lives on. Certainly a roller coaster ride of great decades and poor ones in terms of competition achievements but





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whether it is young athletes on the track, veteran road runners or walkers the club continues to generally punch above its weight and produce or nurture terrific talent. Still very much the local club for local athletes but with a former membership base still following the clubs fortunes from all over the world and still feeling very much part of the family.

### **What do you think of Mo Farah's return to track racing?**

For his phenomenal high standards his Marathons have been a failure so not surprised. I doubt if he can recreate his 2012 form again !

### **Favourite Surface?**

Used to be muddier the better. Certainly the road now bashes up my poor old legs too much.

### **Why the Moustache when you were young?**

1. a) To avoid not getting served in pubs for looking too young
- b) David Bedford had one
- c) it was cool ! ☐

### **Including yourself, name a 4 x 400m Dream Ilford mens team, assuming all the runners are at their peak. What leg would you run?**

Really - I would never have come close to making an Ilford 4 x 400 team ! We had a great 4 x 4 squad in the 70's Southern League including Ivor Emmanuel and Alan Cearns, add in say Pat Jones from the '60's and Karl Hick from the 80's that would probably be a beautiful bunch of athletes to watch getting the baton round.



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**Alive or dead (although for the purpose of the question they are alive at the actual event) you and Mrs C can hold a dinner party that includes 12 guests. 4 from the world of running, 4 from any other sport and 4 musicians. Who would you invite, and who would cook**

OMG – so many different criteria to apply. Ok so 4 legends from running – John Walker, Steve Ovett, Emil Zatopek, Tony Nixon, 4 sports people – Jimmy Greaves (football), Jim Clarke (motor racing), Ken Rosewall (tennis), David Lloyd (cricket – for all the anecdotes !); 4 musicians – John Lennon, Paul Simon, Phil Collins, Frank Sinatra (just to try and find out the truth behind the JFK assassination ! lol). Obviously this is just a boys night !! If pushed, might have to swap Tony for Jessica Ennis-Hill ☐

On cooking would have to be my favourite TV chef James Martin.

**Many runners when they get past their prime drop out of the sport. What is your motivation to keep competing? Are you still looking for age graded prizes or is it simply now the enjoyment of still competing?**

Just too pig headed to give up ! Only the motivation of competition, however much it now hurts, keeps me enthused to keep training. Really it is the Ilford team spirit whether a Southern Vets league or county champs or ELVIS race that keeps me going. Nice to pick up the rare age group prize or medal still but not the be all and end all anymore.

**Today's runners have fancy GPS watches to measure time and distance. When you went out on a Cross country run did you simply guess the distance, or did you run purely on time?**

Never used or had a GPS watch. Only just got the Strava app because of virtual runs during virus lockdown.

Used a stopwatch for track sessions of course but never bothered with times on road and country training or racing.

For the majority of steady endurance training runs at my peak I would just have run 30 mins,



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60 mins or 90 mins then divided by 6 to get the

distance !

**Runners today have ‘energy return’ trainers that apparently make you 4% quicker. Had you had a pair when you ran your 4:07 mile on the track this would have equated to 3:57. If these trainers had been around then would you have used them or would you have always wondered if that sub 4 was down to the trainers rather than yourself?**

**In general what is your opinion of long standing records (I’m thinking of Paula Radcliffe’s marathon time for example) being broken by people wearing spring-loaded trainers. Do you think that is just progress or is there an unfairness to it?**

I really would like to think I would not have worn them. Unlike all the other innovations like all weather tracks or lightweight racers or bespoke trainers or even lifestyle and diet improvements to increase performance these “energy return shoes” are not available to everyone due to cost or Nike having exclusive patents on every aspect of design / technology. So really I believe they do indeed provide an unfair advantage and should be illegal.

**How and when do you think races could safely return in today’s COVID19 world?**

Wish I had a crystal ball. Because of the numbers involved and types of competition and age range from 10 to 90 athletics obviously presents all sorts of issues for “safe” return. As long as we do not get the “second spike” of cases come the winter I would hope limited competition e.g. cross country could commence in November.

**And Finally**

**When did you get your Knighthood?**



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Cannot remember the exact date or why - bestowed upon me by Lord Muir and Dame Knightley around the turn of the century (21st). Still waiting for my coronet and gown ☐



Founded in 1923

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Who said I loved mud !!! 1981 Inter Counties at Leicester



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Discussing the race (probably a Southern xc) with Gary Webb at Parliament Hill



Found one of my early 1970's coach Phil Postings (167) - in start line up for a club road champs. Mike Herring (66), Henry Anderson (71), Roy Gill (185), Tony Nixon (44) in front of Dennis Plater (black vest No 2 on club Marathon list) and John Platt (red vest), Gordon Stewart (155) in front of my Dad Jim and Frank Bontoft.





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As folks were interested in historical ones from Chigwell Row, here is another club group I think in 1957.



In British League action, 5,000m with Nick Rose. Looks like I'm wearing my favourite green kangaroo skin Adidas spikes ☐