



## Tony Nixon 1947 - 2024 RIP



We are all devastated at the sad news of the passing of Tony Nixon.  
Andy's tribute to his friend follows:-

Quite simply Tony was the nicest, kindest, most continually cheerful person I have ever met. A hugely warranted life member of Ilford AC and immensely popular club President in 2003/04.

I pretty much spoke to Tony every couple of weeks for the last 50 years and not once did he ever fail to grill me on how everything at the club was going, who was racing well and and doing what and wanting to support whenever possible.

He didn't get off to the best start in life being a premature, small and rather sickly child. But he always had huge determination and despite periods in a special open air school to improve his well being he excelled at sports. Being too small to compete at his first love of



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football he turned to running. Tony joined Ilford AC in 1962 and under the guidance of his lifelong coach and friend, Alec Tiffin, he had early successes and was part of the club youth team winning the Essex xc in 1965.

I first met Tony when I joined Ilford in 1966 but he was way out of my league to train with at that time plus he was then away at University.

Unfortunately during what should have been his peak years in his 20's Tony was unable to train at the intensity or put in the miles needed to fulfill his immense running potential, with periods of unexplained tiredness. Unquestionably if his physical condition had allowed he would have achieved international selection. It was not until 1979 he was diagnosed with Coeliac disease (severe gluten intolerance) and with a change of diet he was transformed. He still didn't do much mileage though !

Despite the health issues Tony still performed to distinction, albeit infrequently, winning the prestigious Reynolds Garrett "continental cross country" event in Southampton in 1973 (where he and Pat moved to that year). Typical of Tony he thought it was a 3 lap race only to discover once he had sprinted over the line to win there was another lap to go and he had to do it all over again !

Then in 1974 he won the coveted Essex Senior 1500m (3:53.0). He always said his proudest moments were winning this title, then mentoring me to win the same event two years later and then again coaching his son Robert to the win in 2008.

Tony was a consummate race competitor but his personal best times really do not reflect his enormous talent. He was a beautifully fluid steeplechaser and had great success as junior, winning the inter counties 2,000m s/c champs in 1966 and posting a time of 5:54.2 - which still stands as a club record today ! 3:51.0 for 1500m whilst running 4:09 for a mile as a senior.

He raced "sparingly" on the road (his least favourite surface), but really enjoyed cross country, winning the club 10m xc champs three times in a row and achieved his best placing of 5th in the Essex xc in 1974 (14th in '75, 14th in '76, 11th in '77, 28th in '78).

Tony was away from Ilford for 9 years from 1973 and competed for Southampton & Eastleigh, where of course he was hugely popular, but still remained second claim to his beloved Ilford and returned regularly to compete for us in many Essex road relays and county xc champs. Returning to Essex (well actually 100m across the border in Stratford St Mary, Suffolk) in 1984 Tony continued to enjoy scenic training runs around the local Stour river Countryside, of which I was fortunate enough to join him on many occasions. Tony instigated and organised the "legendary" Constable Country 5 mile fun run. Believe me it was no fun as due to Tony's status in the running community he assembled some terrifically talented athletes and the first hill was a killer.

He continued running and racing as a veteran and had some excellent races and County Champs wins as a 60 year old. But what happened once he turned 70 was amazing. A purple



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patch of outstanding performances with a series of 5k road times that were not just the fastest in the UK but in the world plus a 1500m track time of 5:10 which put him 2nd in the world rankings. He put it down to 40 lengths of swimming two or three times a week as his running mileage was still only 20 a week at best !

As he did in his 20's and 30's Tony was an awesome gutsy competitor, with the ability to go through the pain barrier and often racing himself to complete exhaustion. Then regularly not being able to run for days and sometimes weeks after.

I remember doing a 5 mile Stratford St Mary training run with Tony about 10 years ago and having to stop and jog back for him every mile or so. Then just a couple of weeks later we were racing the Essex 10k at Wix and he serenely sailed past me after a couple of miles and disappeared off into the distance !

A remarkable athlete.

A wonderful friend.

And a truly lovely human being.

Although being a lifelong West Ham fan he did have the odd eccentricity.

Will be massively missed by me, all at Ilford AC and it goes without saying his beloved wife of 51 years Pat (whom he met at the club in the mid '60's) boys Robert and Paul, the grandchildren and surviving brothers.

Please leave your own tribute to Tony below and it will appear on this page shortly or if you refresh:-

Name (required)

Your Email (required)

Your Tribute



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# Tributes to Tony

From	Tribute
Denise Morley	<p>I had the pleasure of being coached by Tony at Colchester Harriers when his son Rob was running. Always with with a positive enthusiastic attitude. Over the years it was always lovely to regularly catch up with him, usually at a XC race, for a chat and a hug. He was far more interested in hearing about my athletic exploits that talking about himself. I saw him and Pat only recently at the Essex road relays, when his pleasure and enthusiasm for local athletics still shone through. As everyone has said, a lovely gentlemen always ready with a smile. Thanks Tony for all the enthusiastic support over the years...and the hugs!!</p>
Scott Sterling	<p>Wow - My heart sunk when I saw this. Tony was simply one of the kindest people I have ever met. I always cherished our conversations and his knowledge, but what I will always remember most fondly was his ability to see the best in people - although I was always a broken athlete, after speaking to Tony, I wanted to get out and train again. Thank you Tony!</p> <p>Thinking of Tony's family and friends at right now, such a sad time. A wonderful man, Ilford AC to the core, but appreciated, liked and respected by everyone. I will miss hoping to bump into you at events, but I am truly thankful that I ever had that privilege in the first place.</p> <p>I will haul my broken body out tonight for an attempted run and i'll be thinking of you Tony! RIP x</p>
Chris Akehurst	<p>I knew Tony for more than thirty years initially as second claim athlete for Colchester Joggers/Harriers then as race organiser for the Constable Country Friday 5. One of the best Friday 5's with part of the course being off road. Tony inspired me to organise the Royal London Friday Five in Colchester in the early 1990's.</p> <p>Over the years I regularly bumped into Tony and had many interesting chats about running and athletics. He was always very enthusiastic about the way I had moved the Essex Cross Country League on since becoming League Secretary more than 10 years ago. I know Tony especially loved cross country running and it was great to see him winning the 70+ age group with some fine performances in County and League races. If I had to sum Tony up, I would say "he was a great athlete, loyal to his club Ilford AC and a gentleman". Rest in Peace Tony.</p> <p>Chris Akehurst, Colchester Harriers AC President, Essex County Athletic Association</p>
Richard Charleston (Charlie)	<p>Small in stature, but huge of heart. A gentle man, but the fiercest of competitors.</p> <p>I first ran against Tony over the barriers, and he was the most elegant of steeplechasers. So light on his feet and barely made a splash at the water jump. I too ran at the Stratford St Mary 5 mile course that Andy describes, a tough course but a fabulous event organised by Tony.</p> <p>I didn't know Tony as well as I would have liked too, but whenever I did see him he was just a kind, nice bloke. Rest peacefully Tony.</p>
Neil and Dianne Crisp	<p>Tony was such a shining light and a great Athlete. We will miss you encouraging us all and your positivity. Our deepest sympathy to pat and all of the family.</p>



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Sally Gillam	<p>I first met Tony during the 2003/04 cross country season. I was a new member of Ilford and it was my first season doing cross country. Tony was president that year and he was at every race - always encouraging and for me, he made a real difference. Years later, he ran in the Harwich 5km handicap series. We had some real battles as I fought to avoid being caught by him. We had some great chats over the years and I discovered that we both had lived in Barkingside. Tony was an exceptional runner who had time for everyone. I held him in the highest respect. I was shocked and saddened to hear of his passing. RIP Tony.</p>
Martin Clarke	<p>Don't be fooled by Tony's "I only did 20 miles a week" tag. He probably got quite near that mark on a single Saturday afternoon alone by just running around supporting an xc event. With separate junior, ladies and mens races going on and the ubiquitous Tony popping up here there and everywhere booming out your name as he ran 10 metres behind you, his voice finally fading until 2 minutes later he pops up in front of you again and again to repeat the cycle. I even thought there must be more than one of him.</p> <p>Although I raced against him a few times with limited success, yet my abiding memory was the time he insisted he accompany me on leg 9 of the Essex Way. I was officially part of the team whereas Tony just wanted a recreational run by the river as a non scorer. Now I wasn't overly happy about that thinking he would either be super fit and force me to run too quickly or the opposite and he would slow me down. Either way I didn't want to have Tony dictating the pace. I therefore concluded that if the former proved to be true I would just let him go but with the latter I could use my local knowledge to hatch a cunning plan to drop him. I knew of the many hazards we were likely to encounter which would afford a great opportunity to put some space between us:- whether it be the slippery swathes of stinking kelp on the River Stour foreshore, the gut wrenching climbs up to the old church, the concealed way markers, the metal kissing gates I could slam into tired limbs, the odd rusty nail on a broken stile ready to cause some mischief, the route through fields of frightened horses and angry owners and finally the narrow windmill path full of giant stinging nettles. Anyway we set off at a fair but sustainable lick. Near the start of the leg we soon hit the seaweed of the river foreshore. I picked my way through my chosen route hoping Tony would not be able to follow in my footsteps and find the slippery going too much but no by the time we got back on terra firma Tony was still there next to me chatting away unconcerned. It was clear to me that he intended to be there for the duration.</p> <p>Then through the Wrabness nature reserve there's a tricky complicated section before you get back on the elevated river bank and I grabbed at my second chance. I made sure I was in front as I approached a wooden bridge which led to the way through knowing that there was a sharp 90 degree turn just beyond. Miss the turn and go straight on and you're a goner. Past the bridge I accelerated and Tony was that goner and out of sight. Or so I thought. Next thing I hear "Martin Martin where are you?". "Over here" I responded thinking I could at least later claim I tried to call you back but my whisper proved a touch too audible. Within seconds Tony comes crashing through some thick gorse to my right obviously having swam through a drainage ditch and sporting a crown of thorns on top of a severely punctured body yet still grinning and beaming with good humour and ready to carry on an unfinished conversation. At once my heart opened to him as any competitive spirit in me drained away with laughter and causing me to abandon any further attempt at separation. Oh how we reminisced over a beer in the Castle pub afterwards.</p> <p>Unlike his US counterpart Ilford's President Nixon's tenure in the office during 2003 and 2004 was unimpeachable. He approached the position with gusto, his omnipresence and enthusiasm setting new records for the appearance of the presidential chain and making it such a hard act for anybody to follow.</p> <p>Tony's alleged super human powers were confirmed when Sally and myself invited him to have a go at the Harwich 5K series as a 70yr old between 2017-2019. Tony turned up sporting what had now become his trademark long white compression socks and posted 3 or 4 times sub 20 minutes with his fastest being 19.50 and easily took the the age graded prize offered on each occasion. He made no 2 in the uk 5k rankings during this period and won the admiration of the Harwich running community.</p> <p>A great ambassador for Ilford and a lovely man who graced and enriched the lives of everybody that knew him. RIP Tony</p>



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Billy Green	<p>Tony truly was one of life's nice guys. Always so enthusiastic and cheerful whatever the occasion. We met at many races for Ilford AC and he would always be the one cheering loudest and the first to congratulate each athlete as they finished.</p> <p>Mostly though I will remember Tony for the times we spent chatting about West Ham, and more importantly the times we were able to attend matches together and share a pint or two afterwards. Tony absolutely loved the Hammers and had many stories to share about his years supporting the team and was very eager to here my stories and experiences. I lost my own father, another West Ham fanatic, in February last year just months before West Ham won their first European trophy in 58 years and their first trophy of any kind in 43 years. I'm so pleased Tony was able to be around for this and can only imagine him shouting at the TV his encouragement in the final minutes.</p> <p>R.I.P Tony - Truly one of the nicest men I've met</p>
Gordon Crouch	<p>I am so sad to hear of Tony's passing.We first met in about 1965/66 and found an instant companionship. He was so kind and gentle and full of good humour.Time and events meant that our paths crossed and recrossed but about 1971 we both decided to tackle long slow distance together for the winter's training. I seem to remember that at one point we did manage 80 miles per week....but the adventures and fun we had far outweighed the distance.</p> <p>He was a superb athlete and a wonderful lifelong friend.I shall miss him deeply. My sincere condolences go to Pat and the boys and families. Gordon.</p>
Danny Holeyman	<p>I first met Tony when he was enthusiastically encouraging the IAC XC participants on a cold winters day at Writtle. I wondered who this guy with a great booming voice was. I later learnt that it was Tony and got to know him and his impressive back story. He was a warm, approachable, modest and kind man. Generous with his praise and encouragement as well as a good sense of humour. All the hallmarks of a fantastic person - the tributes made from within the running community since his sad, and all too early passing, are testament of the personality of the man. He was an IAC legend and will be missed.</p>
Steve Parker	<p>Tony was such a gifted athlete. A modest man who had time for everybody. Always a smile on his face. On many occasions I would be deep in concentration during a race, running my hardest and suddenly I would hear his most welcome words of encouragement. Tony will be so sadly missed. RIP Tony</p>



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Stephen Wilkinson	<p>This is so sad . Tony was one of the nicest people you could ever wish to meet. Always greeted you with a smile and warm welcome. I had the pleasure of first meeting him around 30 years ago when my son Neil and I joined Colchester Harriers A/C where his son Robert was training. We forged a great bond with him and his lovely family. We travelled thousands of miles over the years together going around quite a few roundabouts several times on the way when I was driving!. Tony's knowledge of the athletics tracks around London was masterful as we had no Sat Nav's In those days. The roundabout situation was 100% my fault?. He had a wonderful insight into athletics and you could only learn from his experience. Away from athletics, we had several entries in the "Sudbury to the Sea" competition over two days in his canoe ? on the river Stour and in the Nixon tradition he guided me to victory : having many laughs along the route. One in particular was when two lads, just after the start, went flying past us. We worked out their age which was around 36 yrs in their boat whereas our boat combined total of 128! So in their eagerness to go too early too soon, we said to each other, let them burn themselves out and we will catch them in time. Halfway on the final leg we put the pedal down and flew past these two lads who couldn't get back to us and we went onto win the race. These two old boys (us) did it and it's a memory that we spoke about many times after that. He was so supportive of my son Neil as as he was a rival of Robert's in the early years and also my daughter Gemma who also enjoyed coming to the track and throw javelin and discus for the club. He also loved our son Harry who is autistic and the love and support he gave to him was wonderful. In the later years he would come over to Hadleigh, where we live, to have a swim. Every time we met up, there was laughter, fun times all the way and never a dull moment. A truly special man who has sadly left us far too early, and we are all better off for knowing him. Rest easy in peace now Tony. Put your running shoes back on mate up there ..... very few will catch you. ♥</p>
John Mackenzie	<p>Another of Ilford AC's finest has left this mortal coil. So sad to learn of Tony's passing. Tony was not around at the club when I joined in 1978 ( he worked in Southampton for several years) and my first feeling towards him was one of resentment. I worked really hard to establish myself in the top six distance runners at Ilford, training with the squad and racing every single week. I was not best pleased therefore to be relegated to the B team at the Essex County Road relay because this Nixon fellow had declared himself available. Needless to say, Catton's selection was justified as this pocket rocket scorched around the first leg in a much faster time than I managed on the day. It took no time at all to appreciate what a thoroughly decent and humble human being I came to know as a dear friend as well as something of a nemesis, always returning from illness or injury to beat me in hard fought races. RIP Tony</p>
Alan Pearl	<p>I was shocked and saddened to hear of the very sad new of Tony's passing.</p> <p>Tony was always engaging and supportive when you met him and I enjoyed our chats, not only at the races, but at West Ham too.</p> <p>Before retirement, Tony was an exceptional athlete for Ilford.</p> <p>Condolences to all Tony's family.</p> <p>Rest Peacefully Tony Alan Pearl</p>
Satha Alaganandasundaram	<p>I met Tony few times during couple races and few Ilford AC get together events. Lovely person. RIP Tony</p>



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Alun and Mel Jones	We are both very sad to hear about the passing of Tony. He was such a gentleman and always gave amazing support during races. He will be sorely missed.
Peter Clinch	Such sad news. Truly one of the most positive and decent people you could ever hope to meet. RIP Tony
Ernie	<p>I can honestly say hand on broken heart that Tony was one of the nicest people that I have ever had the privilege to meet. Tony was one of those people that you are always happy to meet and spend time with.</p> <p>A tremendously talented, gifted athlete and tremendously fierce competitor. Like Andy I have such fond memories of his Constable Country 5 miler which took place on a Friday night in Stratford St Mary. A very well run event, as you would expect from Tony, but very competitive. Having a few beers after the race with our generous host and his wife Pat made this a memorable date in the calendar and it was a sad day when it ceased to be held.</p> <p>My most endearing and abiding memory of Tony goes back to the 1996 Essex Veterans road relays when our team Andy, John MacKenzie, Tony and myself won the Silver medal, I ran last leg and despite being given a big lead by Andy I managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Needless to say I was devastated by losing the gold for our team but Tony took me to one side and told me my time which turned out to be a big PB and Tony pointed out that I deserved my place in the team and our silver medal.</p> <p>I shall always remember Tony's kind words and his support but that was the measure of the man.</p> <p>Always supportive of ALL our athletes, always smiling</p> <p>Tony will always remain a true Ilford AC legend who will be greatly missed by all. A true gentleman.</p> <p>R.I.P Tony you have more than earned it. We will not see your like again. Such a sad day for all who knew and loved you. Deepest Condolences</p> <p>Ernie</p>
Alun Jones	<p>Tony was such a talented athlete and a true gentleman. He will be missed by all who knew him. My thoughts and prayers to all his family.</p> <p>Alun Jones</p>
Sam Malekout	<p>Dear Tony,</p> <p>Your kindness, smile and personality always made me feel welcome at Ilford AC. At competitions</p> <p>You were always there for every athlete whether in a race or doing a field event. You will be very missed.</p> <p>Rest Well Tony ?</p>