

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP AND ITS MEDALS

With a title like that you could be forgiven that this is a college project or thesis for some obscure degree. Unfortunately, the truth is far less interesting than that, for you maybe. For me, though, it's things like this that get me out of bed. Anyway, if you have persevered to this point you may as well read on.

Before we start, I think it's relevant to take a brief look at the birth of the National Skating Association (NSA). After all, it was under their auspices that the first British roller speed skating championships would take place. Since the mid 1870's there have been roller skating races up and down the country but our story starts in 1879 with the founding father of the NSA, James Drake Digby.

Digby was born in Walsoken, Cambridgeshire, on 7th March 1837. His exposure to (ice) skating began at Cambridge University's Skating Club, but it wasn't until he was sent to write about the fen skating races in Mepal during the Great Frost of 1878 that his passion for the sport really began. Although inspired by the success of George 'Fish' Smart (one of the leading ice speed skaters of the day) he was perturbed by the cheating that went on. It was his belief that speed skaters needed a national governing body to stop betting, standardise race lengths and to determine that "the title of champion skater should be settled by a competent authority". The following year at the Guildhall in Cambridge, he assembled a group of influential Britons and founded the National Skating Association. Named as the Association's first Honorary Secretary under Mayor Neville Goodman, he held that position for nearly twenty years. His dedication to British skating during the Victorian era helped set standards and open doors.

Two years after the National Skating Association was founded, Digby moved to London and here met with Henry Eugene Vandervell, a well-respected English Style ice skater from The Skating Club (yes, that was actually the club's name), to discuss the possibility of developing a Figure Skating Committee. Digby also edited the first editions of the National Skating Association's Metropolitan Skating Handbook, judged roller skating contests in London and served as a timekeeper at speed skating races in the Fens. Perhaps most importantly he used his connections as a journalist and friendship with Member of Parliament, William Hayes Fisher to promote figure skating in the British press.

Whilst the focus of the NSA had always been primarily on ice skating in all its forms, Digby recognised that all skating disciplines, whether ice or roller, would benefit from a single organisation. Some 14 years after founding the NSA, on Christmas Day 1893, he wrote a letter as an appeal to the editor in the "Morning Post" that stated:

"I am intensely anxious to see a greater union of effort on the part of all the skating public, and as one of the hon. secretaries of the parent body I am ready to give every help in my power in the formation of branches or the affiliation of existing skating clubs... The interval between the present time and the realisation of frost might be profitably employed if a number of enthusiastic skaters would do as I did when the National Skating Association was formed, i.e. call a meeting of all those in their

districts known to be lovers of skating, either speed or figure ice or roller, and get a resolution passed as to the desirability of forming a district branch... It is earnestly hoped that members of the Skating Club, Wimbledon, Crystal Palace, Thames Valley, Hampstead, Arctic and other well-known clubs, will co-operate with the National Skating Association in still more popularizing such an excellent sport."

Just days later the first *official* roller speed skating championship took place. I say official in so far as it was the first race declared a championship, albeit a regional championship, under National Skating Association rules with its official title being a City of London Championship. And this is where *our* story really begins.



James Drake Digby



Henry Eugene Vandervell



William Hayes Fisher

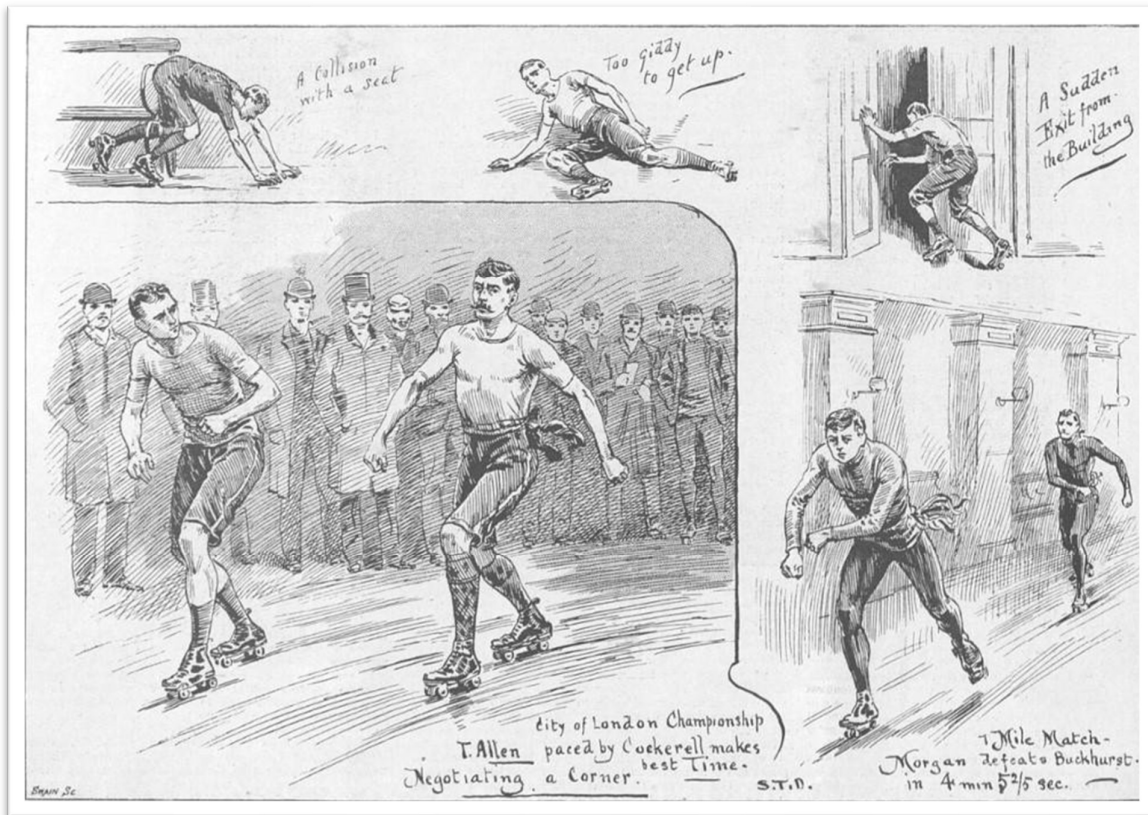
The rules for roller skating had actually been set some 12 months previous in 1892 by the Metropolitan Branch (London) of the NSA as a set of by-laws. A request by the City of London Amateur Athletic Association was later made to the Metropolitan Branch, to which they were affiliated, to hold a City of London Championship. It was agreed and on Friday 29th December 1893 the event was held at the West Brompton Rink over one mile. The rules were that teams of five skaters would enter with skaters running off in pairs to clock their individual times. The fastest three times of the skaters from any one club would then be added together and the club with fastest aggregate time would be declared champion. The winning team would be presented with the Benetfink Challenge Cup, the very same one that is still raced for today, which was originally presented by Benetfink & Co., a store on Cheapside in London that described itself as an "ironmongers and furnishers".

As an aside, the three fastest skaters from any club would be awarded a gold, silver and bronze medal. The results of that event are below.

RAVENSBOURNE.	
T. Allen, 4 min. 40 3-5 sec.	} 14 min. 23 2-5 sec.
J. C. Cockerell, 4 min. 42 4-5 sec.	
W. Thorn, 5 min.	
P. A. Fowler, 5 min. 40 3-5 sec.	
M. G. Jones fell and retired.	
OLYMPIC.	
F. Durant, 5 min. 22 2-5 sec.	} 16 min. 20 4-5 sec.
A. Haird, 5 min. 23 4-5 sec.	
H. Bringeman, 5 min. 34 3-5 sec.	
A. Garrett, 5 min. 42 1-5 sec.	
W. Haird fell and retired.	
FOREST.	
L. Younghusband, 5 min. 15 1-5 sec.	} 16 min. 58 3-5 sec.
T. Young, 5 min. 19 2-5 sec.	
S. Fulford, 6 min. 24 sec.	

Ravensbourne were therefore the winners of the challenge cup, and their men also gained the medals for the three individual fastest times, T. Allen taking a gold medal, J. C. Cockerell a silver, and W. Thorn a bronze.

Results of the City of London Championship – the first ‘official’ championship



An artists impression of the racing that took place at the West Brompton Rink

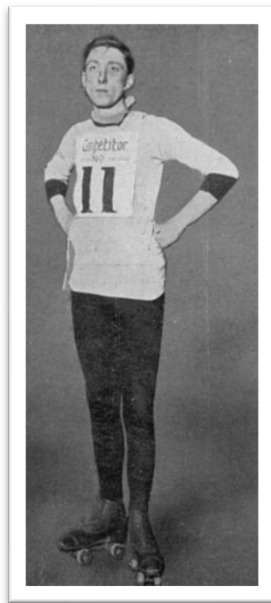
The following day the general committee of the NSA under the presidency of Dr. Cunningham from Cambridge, met at the Knightsbridge Rink. The NSA general rules were revised to include roller skating and the roller skating by-laws formulated by the Metropolitan Branch were adopted as those for the whole Association. The meeting also discussed the introduction of speed tests for roller skating. Using ice as a benchmark and believing that rollers were faster than ice the very first speed test times to achieve were set as follows for a mile distance:

- Gold medal 3 mins. 15 seconds
- Silver medal 3 mins. 45 seconds
- Bronze medal 4 mins. 15 seconds

The running of these speed tests quickly followed with the very first being held on Tuesday 16th January 1894 at the Wandsworth St. George Rink. Further speed tests were then held at the West Brompton Rink on the 20th, 24th and 27th January 1894.

The first set of tests was run in two sessions from 5.30pm to 7.30pm and then from 9pm to 10pm. Skaters did their mile speed tests individually with many complaining that the time standards set were too implausible. In fact, only the three fastest skaters achieved a time that was good enough for a bronze medal, the fastest of which was local lad and member of the Wandsworth St. George club, Charles Wilson. His time being 3 mins. 57.6 seconds.

Wilson went on to win the very first medal for a bona fide individual British Championship when on 6th February 1894 he took on four other opponents in a mile race. As with the speed tests the race was actually an individual time trial and Wilson came home with the fastest time in 3 minutes 55.8 seconds. The time was still only good enough for a bronze medal but as Wilson had put up the fastest time, he was awarded the Benetfink Challenge Cup and was recognised as the very first individual British Champion.



Charles J. Wilson – the first British Champion – 6th February 1894

Whilst we now had an official champion, it would be another 12 years before another official British Championship would be held. Between 1894 and 1906 the roller skating phenomenon had waned somewhat and the NSA was in a state of being reorganised with the headquarters being moved from Cambridge to London.

Despite there being no championship events in these intervening years there were still races abound. Most were either handicap races or individual challenge events, but none were proclaimed as a British Championship. The City of London Championship that was held in 1893 for roller skating teams was still scheduled in the NSA calendar but each year afterwards it was declared as a “no contest” due to the lack of participating clubs. To this end Ravensbourne were continually declared the perpetual holders of the title, despite the Benetfink Cup now resting firmly in the hands of Charles Wilson.



The Benetfink Challenge Cup – The oldest British Championship trophy first awarded 29th December 1893

The Crystal Palace in South London opened its doors to roller skating in 1899. Charles Wilson was amongst those who regularly took to the rink, either as part of a roller hockey team or as an individual skater setting new timed records on the asphalt circuit. The rink was a 9 laps to the mile (about 180m per lap) and on 6th April 1905 Wilson posted a record time of 3 minutes and 25 seconds. In November of the same year and into the new skating season the NSA moved their headquarters to Crystal Palace and again signalled their intentions to hold speed contests under their own regulations.

On 3rd March 1906 the NSA resurrected the British Championships. There were in fact two events, one for amateur skaters and one for professionals. For the purposes of this documented history, I shall remain focused on the amateur championships. Afterall, it is these amateur championships that are still competed for to this very day.

In 1906 the race distance was one and a half miles and this time it was a full blown race between skaters and not an individual speed test as it had been back in 1894. Despite it now being more than a decade since Charles Wilson was crowned the first individual British Champion, now affiliated to the Willesden club he once again took part and astonishingly retained the Benetfink Challenge Cup. It was a remarkable feat and one he would repeat in

1907 and 1908. A year later Wilson decided to turn professional with the aim of making some money from his skating exploits. Roller skating was once more very much on the up with rinks springing up in almost every town and city throughout the country. And so, on 27th March 1909 with Wilson now a professional, a second name was added to the Benetfink Challenge Cup, that of John (Jack) Price of the hugely popular and successful Lava club. Price won the one and a half mile championship just ahead of his club mate Percy Miller who had also placed second the year before to Charles Wilson. British Championships were now firmly part of the NSA calendar and an event that was widely anticipated each year.

Whilst we cannot be certain what the championship medals looked like in 1906 and 1907 (or 1894 for that matter) we do have an example of a medal presented in 1908. The design of the medal, barring a few subtle changes, was a design that would last for over 60 years until 1969. The gold medals were actually silver medals plated gold, the silver medals were just that, i.e. silver (or a degree of silver content), and the bronze medals were just base metal coloured bronze.



1908 medal belonging to Percy Miller – 2nd 1 ½ Mile Championship

It can be clearly seen that the hallmark on the silver medal is shown/stamped at the base. These medals were manufactured by James Andrew Restall, a jeweller, silversmith and medallist whose premises were listed as being 82, Cambridge Street in the centre of Birmingham.

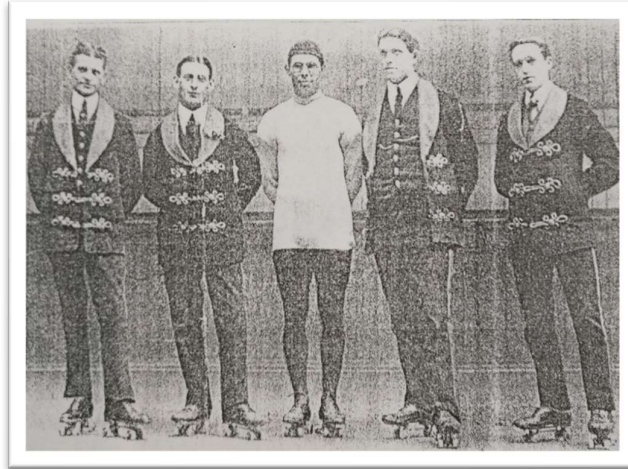
Restall, son of a Gloucestershire timber merchant, was born in Birmingham in 1859 and manufactured the British Championship medals right up until the outbreak of the First World War. He did not become a jeweller until he was into his 20's and records show that he was active between 1879 and 1913. Restall later moved to Pershore where he passed away in 1938.



Cambridge Street, Birmingham - Prince of Wales pub and surrounding buildings

The above picture shows the Restall premises in Cambridge Street. His workshop was two doors away (to the right as you look at the picture) from the Prince of Wales pub, seen in the centre of the picture. To the left of the pub was the Bingley Hall Exhibition Centre. With the exception of the pub, incidentally still called the Prince of Wales, all other buildings in this picture have now been demolished to make way for Birmingham's International Convention Centre (ICC).

As the championships became more established the NSA decided that a second event was needed for those who had more of an affinity to endurance skating than the perceived short mile distance. On 30th March 1910 the first Five Mile Championship was held at the relatively new Maida Vale rink on Delaware Road, London. The rink had opened in 1909 and this was the one and only time the event was held here, the One Mile Championship having been held here a couple of weeks earlier. The winner of the first Five Mile Championship was World Champion and Olympic gold medal cyclist Leon Meredith skating for the Goys club. There was no trophy awarded for the event, just medals. In fact, there would be no trophy until 1925. When the Maida Vale rink closed down it passed to the BBC in 1933 and became one of the broadcaster's sound studios, which it is still used for today.



1910 - Leon Meredith after winning the Five Mile Championship at Maida Vale

The 1911 British Championships were held at London's Olympia for the very first and last time, whilst in 1912 it was the same set of circumstances for the Empress Rink at London's Earl's Court. The Five Mile Championship was won by Arthur Eglington (Ipswich) who became the first non-Londoner to win a title. These were boom years for the sport and it is reported that the finals were witnessed by crowds of up to two thousand spectators.

In 1914 G.S.Clarkson (Alexandra Palace) club became the first person to win the One Mile and Five Mile Championships in the same year. The Five Mile Championship was run on Holland Park on 14th March 1914. Shortly afterwards the First World War would commence and it would be the last British Championship event to be held for another seven years.

On 23rd February 1921 British Championships resumed with the One Mile at Holland Park. In fact, Holland Park would host all championship events between 1913 and 1925. Tom Wilson (Catford) would win the One Mile and also go on to emulate Clarkson's feat of seven years earlier by winning the Five Mile in the same year.

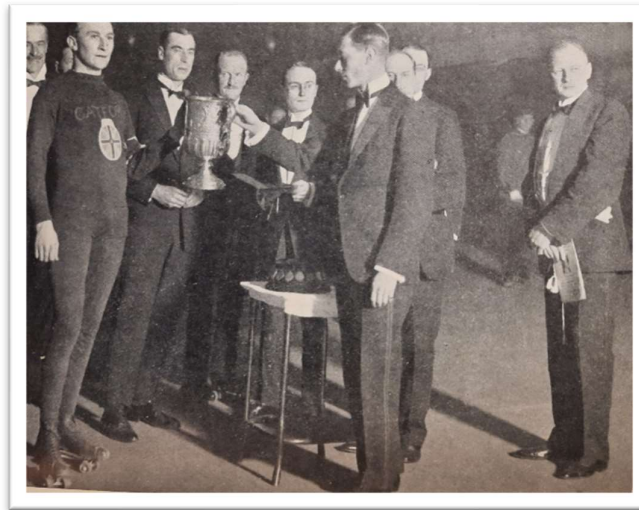
The medals around that time started to depict the year of the championship and the year the very first recognised championship was held (1893), albeit a team event. The specific race distance was also displayed as part of the medal.



1922 medal belonging to Harold Stedeford – 2nd Five Mile Championship

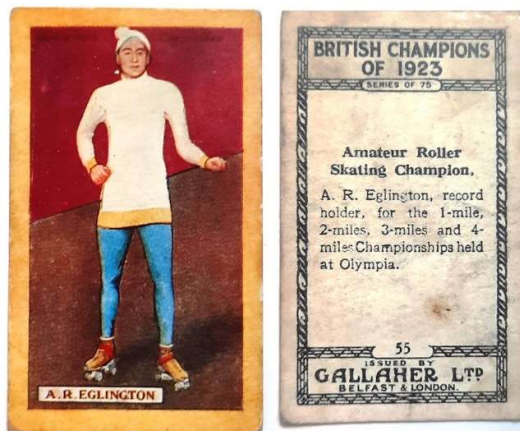
Once racing had resumed British Championship medals were now manufactured by the Alexander Clark Company Ltd., a medallists whose headquarters were in London. Established in 1891 by Clift Alexander Mawer Clark manufacturing commence in London and later Sheffield, but by the time they were supplying medals to the NSA manufacturing had moved to James Street in Birmingham. The design was identical to that of those produced by Restall up until the war. Clark himself died in 1938 but the company would go on supplying the NSA with medals for almost 60 years.

In 1923 Wilson would repeat his double winning year and also had the honour of having the Benetfink Cup presented to him by the Duke of York, later to become King Edward VIII.



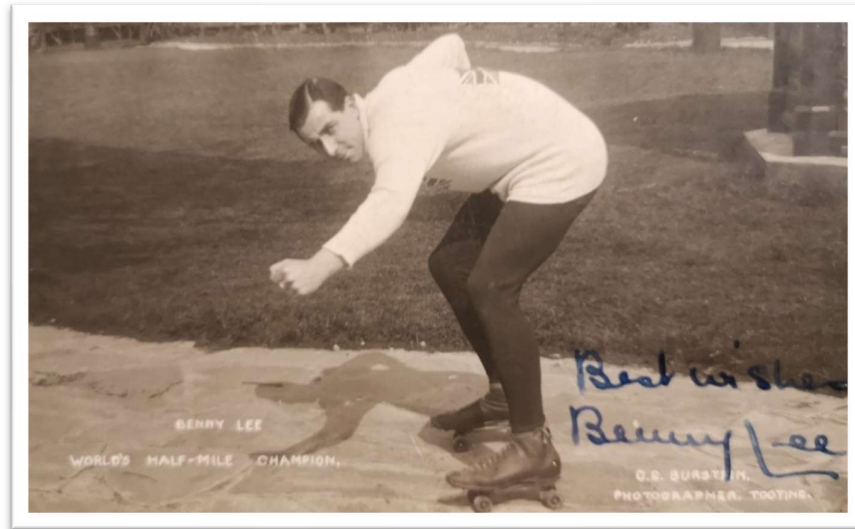
1923 – The Duke of York presents Tom Wilson (Catford) with the Benetfink Cup

Wilson's victory in the Five Mile Championship meant that he now had five individual titles to his name surpassing Charles Wilson's (no relation) four amateur titles set in 1908. It was still a boom period for roller speed skating and some skaters even had their own cigarette cards.



1923 Gallaher cigarette card depicting Arthur Eglinton

On 19th December 1923 (the 1923-24 season) the Half Mile Championship was introduced although there was no trophy initially. The Five Mile was also still trophy-less. The format of three senior men's titles would remain until the 1973-74 season, even after the introduction of metric distances in 1970-71. The winner of the 1923-24 Half Mile was Benny Lee (Crescent). Lee would go on and win the One and Five Mile that year making him the first skater to win all three titles in the same year.



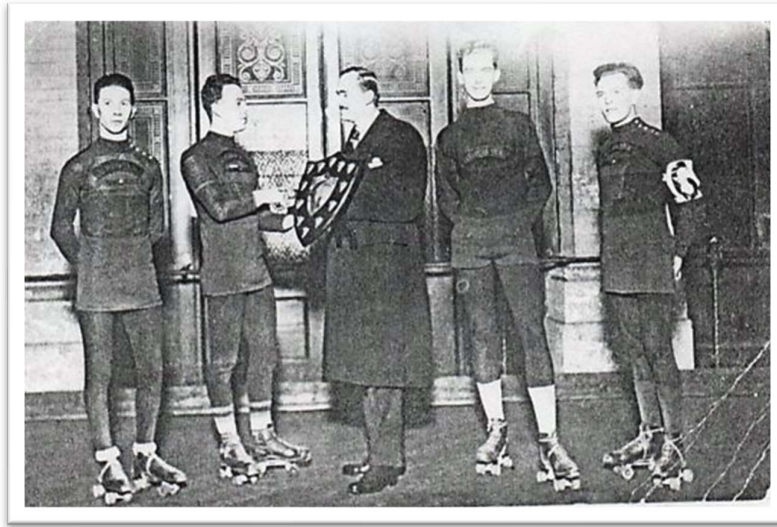
1923-24 – Benny Lee the first winner of all British titles in a single year

In 1924 the Three Mile 4 Man (or 'person' in line with today's political correctness) British Relay Championship was introduced. The Burgoyne Shield had originally been competed for and won by the Catford club in 1921 but such was the interest and success of the competition that the Roller Committee (later to become the Roller Speed Committee) decided to make it an official Inter-Club Championship for 1924-25 season. The first winners of this championship were the Aldwych team with skaters Joe Weatherburn, John Spry, Frank Knowles and John Chambers. Along with the shield the winning team would each receive a bronze championship medal as opposed to the more customary (and more valuable) gold medal awarded for individual Championships, a rule that would remain for the next 30 years.

In February 1925 the Five Mile Championship eventually got its own trophy, the English Sports Cup, a cup donated by the weekly cycling publication 'English Sport & Amateur Wheelman' magazine. Benny Lee, now skating for Cricklewood, had already won the One Mile Championship for the second time a few weeks earlier and after again winning the Five Mile Championship drew level with Tom Wilson's record of five individual titles.

On 29th January 1926 the first championship event was held away from the Holland Park rink since 1913. The relay title was competed for at the Alexandra Palace rink and won for the first time by the Alexandra Palace club consisting of Len Osbaldston, Bill Ross, Billy Brake

and Sealing (first name unknown). Alexandra Palace would go on and win the Burgoyne Shield a record fourteen times, the last being in 1989.



1926 – Alexandra Palace win the Burgoyne Shield for the first time

A few weeks later on 11th February 1926 the Forest Gate rink hosted a British Championship event, the Half Mile, for the very first time. On 24th February Kingston hosted the One Mile, the one and only time the rink would be used for a Championship event and then on 4th March the Cricklewood rink played host to the Five Mile Championship. On all occasions Robert Symondson (Cricklewood) would come away victorious. Symondson may well have been the third skater to win all titles in any one year but he was the first to do so on three different rinks in the same year.

In 1927 normal service resumed to the relay with Aldwych running out as winners, and again in 1928. With three relay titles to their name Aldwych now headed up the league of club champions. In the team on both occasions was Alec McLagan, father of famous Small Faces (and later Faces with Rod Stewart) band member, Ian “Mac” McLagan.

15th February 1927 saw the recognition of a Senior Ladies British Championship. The George French Challenge Shield had been competed for since 1924 and Betty Meakin (Holland Park) had won it on all three prior occasions. Despite newspaper reports on each occasion listing it as a championship event, it wasn't until 1927 did the NSA and Roller Speed Committee recognise it as a bona fide British Championship. Meakin would again come home victorious. It was to be, however, her one and only British title.



1926 – Betty Meakin wins the George French Shield for the third time. It would not become a bona fide British Championship until 1927

We are not sure of the exact year but by 1928 the British Championship medals, whilst still reflecting the year the championship was held, now had the year of the very first individual British Championship (1894) displayed as opposed to '1893', i.e. the year roller skating was introduced to the NSA. The specific reference to the distance had also been removed in favour of it now being engraved into the medal centre and just the words AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP now highlighted making the medals less bespoke.

In 1929 another name appeared on all three individual trophies, that of Jimmy Reed (Alexandra Palace). The relay would be held for the first time on the Brixton rink and won by the home team, the Brixton All Blacks. Bronze medals were still awarded to the winners.

Unlike the pre-war medals, later gold and silver medals had no hallmark (bronze medals never had a hallmark as there was no silver content). Despite having no hallmark, it is believed that there was still some silver content in both the gold and silver medals as we know that Reed sold these during the time of the depression in the early 1930's due to their intrinsic value.



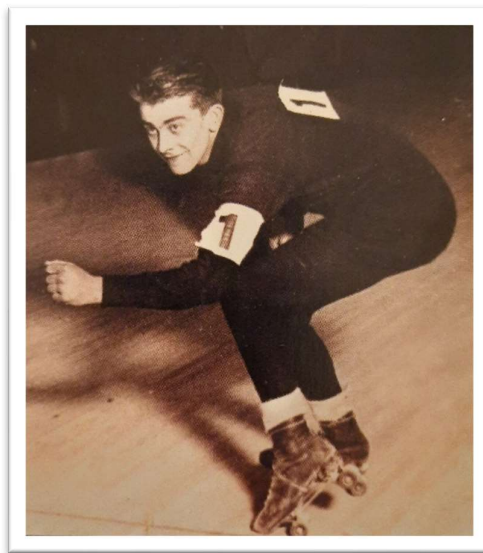
1928 medal belonging to John Spry – 2nd One Mile Championship

1929 also marked the 50th anniversary of the NSA and the medals were again changed slightly to reflect this landmark. The year “1894” was now replaced with the year “1879”, the year the NSA was formed, and that is how medals would remain for the next 40 years.



1930 medal belonging to Jimmy Reed – Winner of Inter-Club Relay Championship with Alexandra Palace

16th January 1930 and the British Championships went outside of the capital for the very first time. The men’s One Mile Championship was held at the Embassy Sportsdrome, Birmingham and won by Alec McLagan (Aldwych). The rink had been opened in 1910 but it would have to wait for 20 years before it would host a championship event.



Alec McLagan – Winner of the first British Championship to be held outside of London

In 1931 the Leicester Boulevard rink also hosted its first championship event the men’s Half Mile. The race was won by Joe Weatherburn (Aldwych) who would become the first recipient of the Allworthy Trophy. Skating was now starting to be seen as a more national sport.

4th February 1932 saw Jimmy Reed (Alexandra Palace) take his sixth national title, the One Mile Championship on his home rink of Alexandra Palace. He would go on to win a further five titles between 1932 and 1937, firmly putting himself top of the leader board in terms of number of titles won with eleven. In fact, his last three titles were won with him being victorious in all three championships once again. He not only became the very first (and only) male skater to win all titles for a second time but he also emulated Robert Symondson's 1926 feat of doing so on three different rinks.



1932 – Jimmy Reed wins the One Mile Championship taking his tally to six

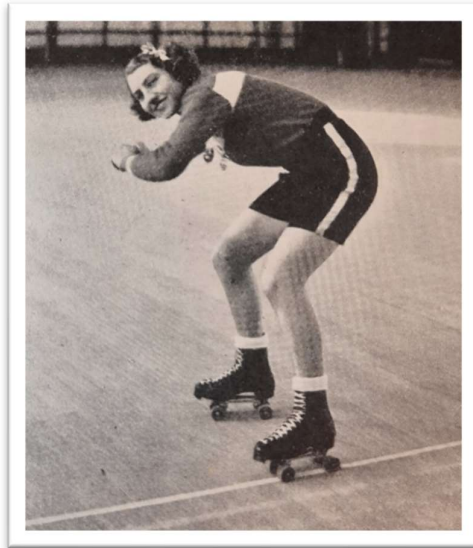
Meanwhile, in the ladies Winifred Davies (Forest Gate) was also setting new records. There was still only one national title recognised for women at this point in time and on 21st February 1934, Davies would win her fourth.

On 14th February 1935 Alexandra Palace would win the British Inter-Club Relay Championship for a record breaking sixth successive time.

As with the First World War, the Second World War would halt proceedings as far as championship skating would be concerned. In 1938 a new star was in the making. Teenager Jackie Robbins (Broadway) had won two titles before the war and was destined for greater things, but sadly he wouldn't see another competition. At the height of the conflict, he was killed in an air crash in Iceland in 1943. He was just 22 years old. The Senior Ladies Half Mile Championship on the Herne Bay Pavilion rink would be the last championship race until 1946.

Racing resumed in March 1946 with the men's Five Mile, won by Stan Hartigan (Alexandra Palace). There were just two skaters who won titles either side of the war, Peter Walters and Violet Kirby, both from the Herne Bay club. Kirby's victory in 1948 meant she had now surpassed Winifred Davies in terms of overall ladies' titles with five.

It was about this time that the reintroduction of the hallmark was once again incorporated into the gold and silver medals.



Vi Kirby – Winner of British Championships either side of WW2

1948 was also a tumultuous year for the sport. The ‘infiltration’ of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (RSROA) that had been set up in America saw an ‘alternative’ British Championships take place. This was quickly shut down by the NSA and those clubs that took part were immediately banned for a twelve month period. This explains why the NSA British Championships (men) of that year were all won by members of the Alexandra Palace club.

On 22nd January 1949 Denis Hill (Broadway) became the youngest senior British Champion when he won the One Mile Championship at the Granby Halls, Leicester, aged just 17. He was hoisted aloft by his teammates and carried around the rink to rapturous applause from the crowd.

It was around this time that the NSA/Roller Speed Committee made the decision to award a silver medal to the winners of the Inter-Club Relay Championship events as opposed to the customary bronze medals. A bronze medal would now be awarded to the team that placed second. The Relay Championship final had generally consisted of just two teams but from 1949 three teams would now contest the final.

In 1950 a second Senior Ladies British Championship was introduced, the Quarter Mile. The then Vice-President of the NSA, Major Ken Beaumont CBE DSO, donated a trophy to be used for this event. Yvonne Brod (Broadway) became the first Quarter Mile Champion when she won it at the Rochester Casino rink on 12th February 1950. On 9th December 1951 she was again victorious in the event, again at Rochester, and in so doing equalled Vi Kirby’s record of five ladies British Championships.



1950 – Yvonne Brod on her way to winning the first Quarter Mile Championship for the Beaumont Cup

In 1952 the NSA introduced a second club championship, this time open to teams of both men and women. The event (and trophy) was the Chambers Trophy. Initially only southern teams were invited to take part and it was not, therefore, recognised as a full championship. Over the years it would be opened up to other clubs, but still only by invite. In later years it would become a male only event and ran like this until 1971 when the event vanished from the annual race programme altogether.



1952 – The Alexandra Palace team – winners of the first Chambers Trophy event

In 1954 the NSA introduced an Inter-Club Relay Championship for women. Alan and Sylvia Tufnell (nee Mason) had been speed skaters in the Alexandra Palace club in the 1940's and '50's. Alan had won the Half Mile County of London Championship a year earlier and Sylvia was part of the Alexandra Palace team that lifted the first Chambers Trophy in 1952. Now both retired from speed skating they donated a trophy, the Tufnell Bowl, to the Senior Ladies Relay Championship event. Whilst they would be known widely only in skating circles their son, Phil "The Cat" Tufnell would go on to be an international cricketing legend with England and, of course, a winner of "I'm A Celebrity"!

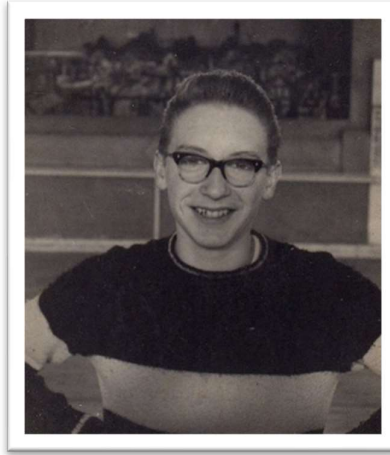


1954 – Pat Kirkham receives the Tufnell Bowl from Alan Tufnell for Birmingham's victory in the first ever Senior Ladies Inter-Club Relay Championship

In 1958, Pat Eason (Birmingham) established a new record when on 6th December at Leicester's Granby Halls she won her sixth title, the Half Mile Championship and a seventh on 3rd December 1960. From that moment on and for the next five years the record would swing between Eason and her great rival Chloe Ronaldson (Broadway). On 20th March 1965 Ronaldson would pull ahead of Eason by taking her tenth individual gold medal. Eason would not surpass nine, whereas Ronaldson would go on to win another twenty-nine, but more on that later.

In 1961 the NSA introduced Junior British Championships for the first time. Initially it was only for Junior Boys aged between 11 and 15 years and the first race was held on 3rd June 1961 at the Birmingham Embassy rink. Phil Holmes (Birmingham) became the first Junior British Champion, winning the Charles Julian Davis Cup in the process. The trophy had been donated by Embassy rink manager Conrad Davis, who had named the trophy after his eldest son.

For many years you could not join the NSA unless you were 16 years old, but the NSA had relented on that rule and now allowed junior members, albeit with no membership voting rights. Skaters were deemed to be senior on their 16th birthday and it was not uncommon to have a skater race junior in one part of the season and then senior for the remainder.



1961 – Phil Holmes – First Junior British Champion

There was also another 'first' in 1961 when on 2nd December at the Embassy rink both Chloe Ronaldson (Broadway) and Barbara Woodley (Midland) dead heated for the victory in the Senior Ladies Half Mile Championship. It was the first time a British Championship had been shared.

In 1964 Les Woodley (Midland) won his then record 12th British title to much acclaim. Jimmy Reed (Alexandra Palace) had held the record at eleven since 1937. It had taken almost 30 years for someone to even get close. As an aside, Woodley also famously had his British Championship silver medals melted down and made into the head of a golf putter...his other passion!



Les Woodley – Winner of 12 Senior British Championships

Back then, of course, Reed and Woodley could only compete for three titles in any one year, and there were regularly upwards of 70 skaters taking part in any one event. Being indoor usually meant that heats of just four skaters would compete, the winners going through to quarter, semi and eventually the final. To be crowned a British Champion was no mean feat back then. To win the One Mile Championship you had to have usually raced and won four times over that distance.

In 1970 the NSA changed the design of their championship medals. They were now to be a 38mm (just over 1 ½ inches) diameter medal depicting the NSA logo on the front and a wreath and description of the event on the back. The silver and gold medals were still hallmarked and Alexander Clark continued to manufacture the medals despite their significant design change.



1973 medal belonging to Pat Eason – 2nd 500m Championship

For reasons unknown, possibly one of numbers, there were no Senior Ladies British Championships held in 1970.

As the 1971 season approached the Roller Speed Committee decided that all British Championship distances should be converted to metric. The men's Half Mile became 800m, the One Mile became 1500m and the Five Mile became 8000m. The ladies Half Mile became an 800m but the Quarter Mile was once again not held, again for reasons unknown, although one suspects that the conversion to a literal metric distance may have proved problematic. Either way, in 1971 there was only one ladies British Championship.

The early 70's saw a period of disruption for British Championships. The Roller Speed Committee were still finding their feet with regards to metric distances as they toyed with what they believed they should be and as mentioned, the running of ladies' events could be somewhat sporadic. That disruption was felt greatest in 1972 when in their wisdom the Roller Speed Committee decided that no British Championships would be held that year. They cited the mass closing of rinks and not being able to find suitable alternative venues as a reason for their decision. It was the first time there had been no British Championships since the Second World War. Understandably, many of the elite skaters were more than a little disgruntled. Without a national championships to contest they felt there was little

point in continuing. It was bad enough that there had been no World Championships since 1969, but to have their own federation cancel major domestic events was just not on. Some threatened legal action suggesting that it was unconstitutional not to be allowed to contest (or in some cases defend) a British title, however, in 1973 all was forgotten and British Championships once again made it onto the race calendar. There were still only three Senior Men's championships but the 800m had now become 1000m. The Senior Ladies got their second Championship back in the form of a 500m and the Junior Boys 800m became a 1000m, plus the addition of their own second championship in the form of a 500m for the Jack Abrey Shield.

The days of the rink were almost over. Almost 80 years on since the running of the first British Championship, all competed for on indoor rinks, 24th February 1973 saw the last real indoor rink championship held on the Palm Court at the Alexandra Palace. That is until the running of specific Indoor British Championships that would feature in later years. The last rink championship would be a year later when the Southsea outdoor rink hosted the event for the first and last time on 25th May 1974.

In 1974 the men's 1000m reverted to an 800m and the 8000m now became a 10000m. In the ladies the 800m now became a 1000m. And so it went on. In early May of that year, we saw Tatem Park used for its inaugural competition when Anglo Daor held a successful international event on the track. On August 24th the NSA held their second round of British Championships on Tatem Park for the very first time. Such was its success and ability to allow mass participation rather than the restricted numbers per heat seen in the rinks, that in 1975 the NSA decided outdoor was now the way to go and went bonkers with their Championship distances.

As stated, there had been no World Championships since 1969, although there were European Championships in 1971, 1973 and 1974. In 1975 FIRS held not one, but two World Championships, the first on the track in Mar del Plata, Argentina in May and the second on the road in Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, in September. The NSA decided that they wanted to embrace the international race programme and so overnight they more than doubled the number of British Championships that could be won in a single year. The men now had a 500m time trial, 1000m 1 v 1 knockout, 1000m scratch, 1500m scratch, 5000m, 10000m and 20000m. The ladies had 500m time trial, 500m scratch, 1000m scratch, 3000m and 5000m. The juniors (still only boys at this time) by contrast remained at just two championships.

Incidentally, the Senior Men's 1000m 1 v 1 knockout was only ever held this once. The winner, Mick McGeough (Alexandra Palace), could legitimately claim that he is *still* the reigning knockout champion almost 50 years on!

In 1976 the NSA reduced the number of distances back to four for men and women. This would be the first time men and women would have an equal number of Championships in the same year, but it would revert to four for men and three for women in 1977. Interestingly, although equality was certainly not a major consideration for senior skaters the Roller Speed Committee did decide to include junior girls for the first time. They also introduced a new British Championship age group, 7 to 10 years (later to extend to 6 year

olds) and gave them a single annual event of 500m. The first Junior Girl 11-15 years British Champion was Lyn Coles (North London) when she won the 500m on 8th May 1977. Likewise, the first Junior 7-10 years winners were Karen Hodder (North London) in the girls 500m and Andrew Perry (Birmingham) in the boys 500m. These races would be held on the Granby Halls exhibition hall and whilst indoors, the venue was not a dedicated arena for roller skating and was therefore not formally recognised as a rink.



Lyn Coles – First Junior Girls 11-15 Years British Champion

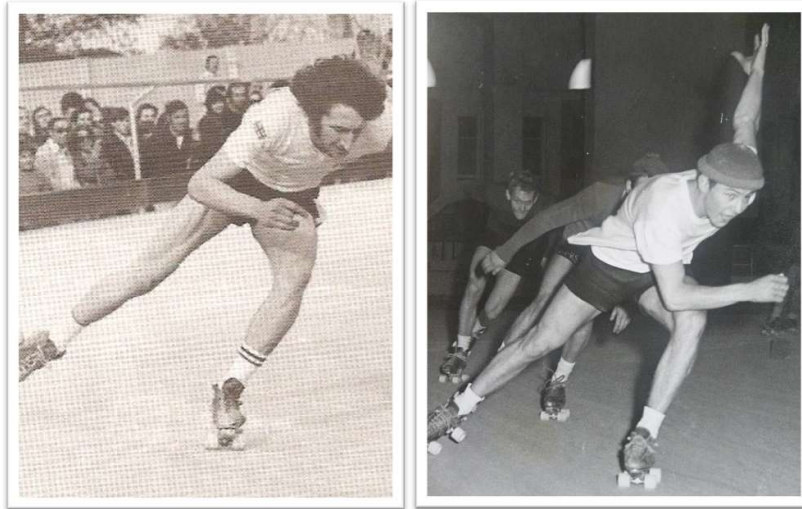
Also in 1977, after more than 50 years, it appeared that the NSA had changed the source of their British Championship medals from Alexander Clark Co. to Mappin & Webb. The reality was that Alexander Clark were now part of the Mappin & Webb company. By now medals were no longer hallmarked suggesting lesser metals were used. One expects that this was done for cost and as time moved on the silver medals would sadly be liable to severe tarnishing.

Mappin & Webb traces its origins to 1775, when Jonathan Mappin opened a silver workshop in Sheffield. The business eventually became Mappin Brothers. One of Jonathan's great-grandsons, John Mappin, started his own business in London, Mappin & Company, in 1860, which became Mappin, Webb and Co. in 1862 when he was joined by his brother-in-law George Webb. Mappin & Webb has created jewellery for royalty and high society, both in the United Kingdom and internationally. Holding royal warrants, they supply the current master jeweller for the crown jewels and works of note are the original Ryder Cup and the trophies for Royal Ascot for more than 75 years.

By the time Mappin & Webb supplied the NSA medals they were part of the Sears conglomerate that was owned by Sir Charles Clore and included such famous retail stores as Lewis's and Selfridges. Clore had once owned the Cricklewood rink until its closure in 1952. As a financier and businessman, he had purchased Mappin & Webb in 1959. In addition, his brother-in-law was Abraham Davis, brother of Birmingham Embassy rink manager, Conrad Davis. Despite all these links it is believed that the NSA's selection of Mappin & Webb was

more likely coincidence than by design. Clore's involvement in skating had long since waned. Clore, himself, would pass away in 1979.

The 1977 British Championships were held over three weekends on three different venues – Granby Halls (May 8th), Tatem Park (June 25th) and Southampton (July 10th). It was at Tatem Park that Michael McGeough (Alexandra Palace) equalled Les Woodley's 33 year old record of twelve British senior men's titles. Over the course of the next 10 years McGeough and John E. Fry (Mercia) would battle it out as to who would hold the outright record of having won the most number of British titles.



John E. Fry and Michael McGeough – fierce domestic rivals for two decades

Such was the toing and froing between the rivals that it became quite a talking point amongst the skating throng. Nobody quite knew how many titles each skater had won.

Throughout the early 1970's NSA records, especially those concerning roller speed skating, had fallen by the wayside. Fortunately, Fry's wife, Ruth, together with Pat Eason, then secretary of the Birmingham club had kept detailed written records of all NSA events and results along with all the race programmes that dated back to the early 1950's. When the question was asked "who has the most?" it was these records that were (initially) used to answer the question.

In 1994 and nearing the end of my own skating career I started to research all things to do with British roller speed skating. Over the course of the next 30 years it has become a near obsession (can you tell?) and it is these records, supported and confirmed by records from NSA Official Handbooks, newspaper articles, written race reports in magazines and countless other sources that have provided a definitive picture of what is now believed to be an accurate database of results.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's the table below shows how the scenario between McGeough and Fry was played out with regards to British Championship victories.

Date	Venue	Distance	Winner	Mick	John
12-Feb-1966	Alexandra Palace - London	5 Miles	McGeough Michael C.	1	
18-Mar-1967	Mecca Olympic - Birmingham	1/2 Mile	Fry John E.		1
12-Apr-1969	Alexandra Palace - London	5 Miles	McGeough Michael C.	2	
26-Apr-1969	Mecca Olympic - Leeds	1/2 Mile	Fry John E.		2
07-Feb-1970	Mecca Olympic - Leeds	5 Miles	Fry John E.		3
21-Mar-1970	Mecca Olympic - Leeds	1 Mile	Fry John E.		4
21-Oct-1972	Mecca Olympic - Leeds	8000m	McGeough Michael C.	3	
20-Jan-1973	Palm Court (Alexandra Palace) - London	1500m	McGeough Michael C.	4	
24-Feb-1973	Palm Court (Alexandra Palace) - London	1000m	McGeough Michael C.	5	
25-May-1974	Southsea Rink	800m	McGeough Michael C.	6	
21-Jun-1975	Tatem Park - London	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	7	
22-Jun-1975	Tatem Park - London	1500m	McGeough Michael C.	8	
22-Jun-1975	Tatem Park - London	5000m	Fry John E.		5
20-Jul-1975	Tatem Park - London	1000m KO	McGeough Michael C.	9	
20-Jul-1975	Tatem Park - London	1000m	Fry John E.		6
24-Jul-1976	Tatem Park - London	1500m	Fry John E.		7
14-Aug-1976	Tatem Park - London	5000m	McGeough Michael C.	10	
08-May-1977	Granby Halls - Leicester	5000m	McGeough Michael C.	11	
08-May-1977	Granby Halls - Leicester	500m TT	Fry John E.		8
25-Jun-1977	Tatem Park - London	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	12	
10-Jul-1977	Southampton	20000m	Fry John E.		9
16-Jul-1978	Southampton	20000m	Fry John E.		10
16-Jul-1978	Southampton	5000m	Fry John E.		11
28-Jul-1979	Southampton	5000m	Fry John E.		12
29-Jul-1979	Southampton	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	13	
16-Aug-1980	Southampton	5000m	Fry John E.		13
24-May-1981	Palmer Park - Reading	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	14	
06-Jun-1982	Palmer Park - Reading	5000m	McGeough Michael C.	15	
20-Jun-1982	Tatem Park - London	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	16	
24-Jul-1983	Tatem Park - London	10000m	McGeough Michael C.	17	
02-Jun-1984	Birmingham Wheels	10000m	Fry John E.		14
02-Jun-1984	Birmingham Wheels	300m TT	Fry John E.		15
14-Jul-1985	Birmingham Wheels	300m TT	Fry John E.		16
19-Jul-1986	Westbrook Lane - Herne Bay	5000m	Fry John E.		17
20-Jul-1986	Westbrook Lane - Herne Bay	1500m	Fry John E.		18

Table showing how John E. Fry and Michael McGeough continually rivalled each other for the record of having won the most number of senior men's British Championships

Note: For the record Michael McGeough disputes this number and believes his tally should be 22 individual gold medals. This is currently under review and if correct the records will be amended accordingly.

On 29th July 1979 Michael McGeough and John Downing would dead heat for the 10000m British Championship on Southampton. Whilst it would only be the second time a senior British title had been declared a dead heat, it was the first and only time to date where this has happened in a senior men's event. The event also achieved two other landmarks. Downing became the youngest senior British Champion aged 16 years and 266 days, beating Denis Hill's record set in 1949 and McGeough won the English Sports Cup for a record sixth time. He would actually go on and win it on another three occasions, his last in 1983. Sutton Atkins would equal McGeough's record of nine in 2014.



1979 – Mick McGeough & John Downing share the English Sports Cup

On the very same day Chloe Ronaldson won her thirty-ninth and last individual British title. Her first had come on 8th March 1958 in the Quarter Mile on the old Herne Bay rink, whilst her last was in the 500m time trial. Fittingly the Beaumont Cup was awarded for both events. As with McGeough, however, Ronaldson disputes the number 'thirty-nine' believing the actual number to be forty individual titles. In fact, it was widely recognised and accepted in skating circles at the time that forty was 'her number' and indeed the NSA presented Ronaldson with a certificate congratulating her on that achievement. However, after painstaking research of records and documents over the last 30 years the actual number is now believed to be thirty-nine. The reason? Well, we can only surmise but the educated theory hinges on the fact that in 1971 there was only one Senior Ladies British Championship raced for as opposed to the customary two. This again is supported by race programs, documented race results and the annual report in the NSA Official Handbook 1971-72. The theory is that it was erroneously assumed that 1971 had run the second Championship (the Beaumont Cup) and that this was added to Ronaldson's total. It was a fair assumption as Ronaldson was unbeaten in any Championship event between 1965 and 1977. All that said, however, as with McGeough, should it of course be proven that there is indeed a fortieth British title for Ronaldson then the official FISS records will be amended to reflect as such.

Between 1977 and 1982 the senior British Championship format would remain unchanged although in 1981 the 1000m Junior Boys 11-15 years would now become a 3000m and the Junior Girls 11-15 years would become a 2000m.

On the 6th June 1982 Rohan Harlow (Herne Bay Flyers) lowered the bar for the youngest senior British Champion to 15 years 234 days when he astonishingly won the 20000m at Palmer Park, Reading.



1982 – Rohan Harlow becomes the youngest senior individual British Champion aged just 15 years

In 1983 the NSA introduced an extra distance, 1500m, for both Senior Men and Women and a time trial event for the Junior Boys and Girls 11-15 years. The traditional 500m time trial was also reduced to 300m to fall in line with international changes. Ian Ashby's (Herne Bay Flyers) winning time of 27.84 seconds for the senior men at Tatem Park on 24th July 1983 would constitute an 'unofficial' World Record for that distance.

1983 would also see Chloe Ronaldson make her final appearance in a British Championship. She had unofficially retired from competing in 1980 after she was not selected for the European Championships on home soil at Southampton, but in 1983 John E. Fry convinced her to have one last roll of the dice. On 10th July she donned a Mercia shirt for the first time and helped her 'new' team secure victory in the Senior Ladies Relay Championship. Alongside her were Sharon Tongue and Alison Hartley, soon to be GB internationals, and Anita Collins (nee Pauwels). Collins was the wife of Steve Collins, the only British skater to have won a Belgian *and* Dutch Championship. Now, his wife Anita, would become the first dual nationality skater to win a British Championship, albeit a relay.

Two weeks later Ronaldson entered the 300m time trial for the Beaumont Cup for the very last time. She had won the trophy no fewer than sixteen times but it was not to be the fairy tale ending she was hoping for. She did, however, come home with a silver medal behind Denize Lipyeat (Herne Bay Flyers) and just ahead of Alison Hartley (Mercia), both almost 30 years her junior! The individual format would now remain unchanged until 1988.



1983 – Mercia win the Senior Ladies Inter-Club Relay Championship – L to R: Chloe Ronaldson, Anita Collins, Alison Hartley and Sharon Tongue

The 1984 Championships would see a father and son compete together in the British Relay Championships for the first time. John E. Fry and son, John C. Fry, were joined by John Mullane and Ronnie Bennett to come home second behind the Herne Bay Flyers team.

On 13th July 1985 aged 15 years and 191 days, Ashley Harlow (Herne Bay Flyers) eclipsed his brothers record of becoming the youngest individual Senior British Champion by 43 days when he won the 5000m title at Birmingham Wheels.



1985 – Ashley Harlow becomes the youngest ever Senior British Champion

Also in 1985 the NSA decided to resurrect the Chambers Trophy British Team Championship. It was still an all-male affair but unlike previous runnings of this event in the 1950's '60's and early '70's, it was now open to any club within Great Britain and deemed a 'proper' British Championship. The winning team members each received gold medals, as would the winning team member for the Inter-club Relay Championship going forwards. The change was made once again to fall in line with international regulations which now recognised relays and team championships as bona fide World and European titles.

In 1988 the Roller Speed Committee piggy backed with the Roller Artistic Committee to hold a British Championships indoors at the Granby Halls in Leicester. For speed it was the first time there was a distinction between indoor and outdoor races as far as British Championships were concerned, although in the late 1960's this distinction was used to determine British Records prior to the recognition of "road and track" records. The event was sponsored by East Midlands Electricity and was known as the Skate Electric British Championships. There were just five events: Senior Men 2000m (won by Mark Tooke – Fenland), Senior Ladies 1000m (won by Lisa Smith – Alexandra Palace), Junior Boys 11-15 years 1000m (won by Jason Macrae – Alexandra Palace), Junior Girls 11-15 years 800m (won by Donna Watts – Birmingham Wheels) and a Senior Men 3000m 2 person relay (won by John C. Fry and Ian Ashby – Birmingham Wheels). The event was televised and Mick McGeough was part of the commentary team, famously referring on air to Paul Turner (Birmingham Wheels) as "Paul The Plodder".

For some reason the medals awarded for this event were not the customary NSA medals. This might suggest that the NSA did not consider this event a bona fide British Championship at the time, especially as it appeared to be a one off. (There wouldn't be another British Indoor Championship until 1996). However, due to the promotion of the event at the time as a 'British Indoor Championship' and the medals were engraved as such, it has always been included in the official FISS records.

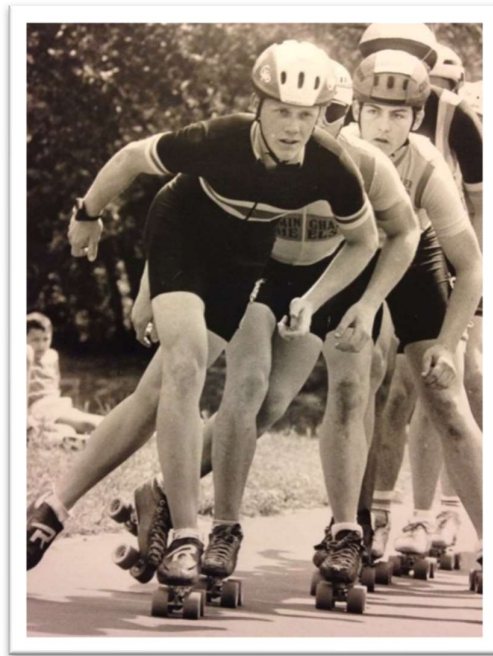


1988 medal belonging to John C. Fry – 3rd 2000m Indoor Championship

In 1989 a further British Championship was added to both the senior men and women, the 500m. The trophies were donated by Jim Lerner, father of junior British international Debbie

Larner, in memory of his wife, Freda. The first winners were Tony Marriott (North London) in the men's and Lisa Smith (Alexandra Palace) in the women's. All other distances remained unchanged.

The 1990 season saw Tony Marriott (North London) win all six Senior Men's British Championships. It was the first time since Mick McGeough (Alexandra Palace) had won all titles in 1973. At that time there were only three titles up for grabs, but with six Marriott had won more titles in a single season than any other skater before him.



1990 – Tony Marriott wins all six British Championships in a single season

1990 also saw one of the biggest upheavals in the history of the sport to date when the NSA decided that the NSA Council would be disbanded and the two skating factions of ice and roller would have two distinct federations. These federations would be known as the Federation of Ice Skating (FIS) and the Federation of Roller Skating (FRS). Although still affiliated to the NSA both would have their own governing bodies and sets of rules and by-laws.

From 1991 the change in structure would also see a change in medal design, the first in 20 years. The medals were reduced in size to 25mm diameter and the NSA logo was replaced with the recently formed FRS logo. On the reverse there was still a nod to the governing body's continued affiliation to the umbrella body of the NSA. As the individual governing bodies were now responsible for sourcing their own medals, the services of Mappin & Webb were dispensed with. A more economical supplier (name unknown) was sourced by the artistic roller skating faction for use in all roller skating British Championships, whether that be artistic or speed.



1992 medal belonging to John C. Fry – Winner Inter-club Relay Championship with Birmingham Wheels

On 31st March 1991 the NSA ceased trading as a limited company but was still seen as an umbrella body for the two skating factions. The FRS thus set itself up as a limited company and was later granted the use of the prefix “British” to denote its standing within the roller skating fraternity. With this came another change in medal design, albeit a more subtle one.

For the 1992 British Championships the FRS logo was replaced with the new BFRS logo and the size of the medals doubled to 50mm diameter. Despite this change, FRS medals were awarded for the team events, i.e. relay and Chambers Trophy, suggesting that there was still stock of FRS medals to dispose of! In fact, the new Marathon Championship event that was inaugurated on 16th May 1993 also saw the FRS medals awarded, however, that would be the last time.

The Marathon Championship was only open to senior skaters and was the very first British Championship to be run as an open event, i.e. skaters could use quads or inlines. The men’s event was won on inlines by Michael McInerney (Fenland) whilst there were no female skaters available to take part. McInerney’s victory meant that he became the first ever skater to win a British Championship on inlines.



Michael McInerney – First British Champion on inlines

Despite the Marathon being declared an open event the track British Championships would remain as a quads only event. The other change to the 1993 British Championship programme was the dispensing of the Chambers Trophy event.

In 1993 Alison Hartley (Birmingham Wheels) was the only female entrant to the Senior Ladies British Championships. Initially the now BFRS refused her entries stating that a lone skater was not in keeping with determining a 'Champion'. Hartley appealed and initially they stated that time standards would need to be met, however, prior to the British Championships it appears that decision was quashed and Hartley was given the go ahead to compete, albeit by herself. The only exception was the 3000m Senior Ladies British Championship. The justification for the BFRS refusal was that the event was for a "Challenge" trophy (The George French Challenge Shield) and there were effectively no challengers.



1992 medal belonging to John C. Fry – Winner 5000m Championship

In 1994 the BFRS introduced a Half Marathon Championship for Senior Women (won by Hayley Mephram – Derby); Junior Boys 13-15 years (won by Robert Kelly – Southend) and Junior Girls 13-15 years (won by Samantha Vayro – Derby Rollerspeed). That year the men's Relay Championship was also declared a none event. Initially there had been two teams entered, Derby Rollerspeed and Birmingham Wheels but Derby pulled out at the last minute due to a skater injury and the BFRS refused to let just one team take part, as per the precedent that had been set a year earlier with Alison Hartley.

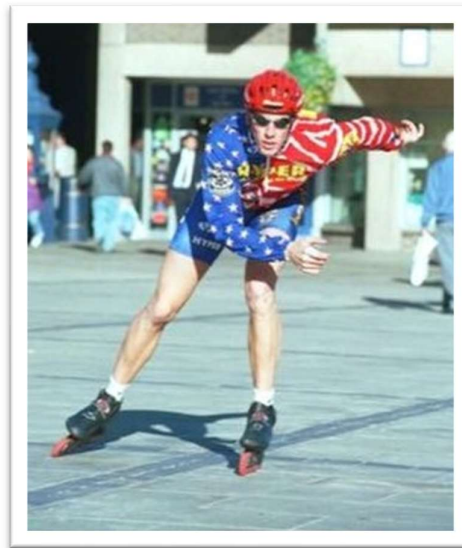
By now all British Championship events were classed as "open". Whilst theoretically quads could still be used, inlines were the only type of skate now on everyone's feet. Exactly 100 years since the first British Championships, the death of quads as a competitive speed skate in Britain had just been witnessed.

1996 saw the introduction proper of the Indoor British Championships. The event was held at the Granby Halls in Leicester (the rink not the exhibition hall) and consisted of just one race per age group. The races included Veterans (Masters) for the very first time with Dave Kelly (Southend) winning the men's and Judy Connor (Chiltern Flyers) winning the ladies. Masters were also included as a separate age group for the first time in the Outdoor British Championships, a 5000m for both men and women plus Half Marathon events. There were

also two subtle changes to some of the Senior Men's events when the 20000m was designated an elimination race and the 10000m a points race, both won by Sutton Atkins (Derby Rollerspeed).

1997 saw the introduction of Indoor British Relay Championships for Senior and Junior 11-15 years. Again, with no female teams available it was an all-male affair with Adrian Wordsworth and Craig Arnold (Team Hyper Wheels) winning the Senior Men's event and Jamie Flanagan and Luke Slater (Derby Rollerspeed) winning the Junior Boys 11-15 years event.

On 13th July 1997 Sutton Atkins reached the milestone of nineteen individual Senior Men's British Championships elevating him to the top of the tree. Of course, there were many more titles to be won in a single year by now, but to obtain this record in just five years was still fantastic achievement.



1997 - Sutton Atkins now has 19 British Championships to his name

In 1998 the focus turned back to junior events. On 5th July a Mini Marathon event was scheduled for skaters aged 6-9 years and a Midi Marathon for those aged 10-12 years. There were no measured distances at that time just a circuit laid out on the Coventry Ring Road (which would be used for the Half Marathon and Marathon events later that day) with a specified number of laps. In the Outdoor Championships the 6-10 year age group would now also be included in the time trial event, albeit a 200m as opposed to the customary 300m.

By 1998 the NSA had ceased to function in any form and the affiliation of the BFRS to that body was no more. To maintain international recognition the BFRS registered with FIRS as the National Governing Body for roller skating, artistic and speed, in Great Britain. However, things were to quickly derail. By August of that year there was a distinct split between members on the BFRS Board as to how roller skating should be administered. An EGM was

called and a vote took place and was carried for the BFRS to split into two further factions, one for artistic and one for speed. And so was born the Federation of Artistic Roller Skating (FARS) Ltd. and the Federation of Inline Speed Skating (FISS) Ltd. And of course, with it would be yet another design change for medals.

28th March 1999 would see the first Indoor British Championships under the FISS banner. The medals now had the FISS skate logo (designed by Vikki Burkitt formerly of the Northampton club) and the words "FEDERATION OF INLINE SPEED SKATING" on them. On the reverse was the words "FISS" and "British Championship". These cast medals were supplied by the company Anglian Awards.



2000 medal belonging to John C. Fry – 2nd Inter-Club Relay Championship with Fila Verducci UK

The British Championship distances and events remained the same for 1999 with the exception that the Senior Men's 10000m points became an elimination and the 20000m elimination became a points.

2000 saw the first major change to the age grouping structure in British Championships for nearly 40 years. Currently there were just three age groups, Senior (16+), Junior 11-15 years and Junior 6-10 years. FISS decided that the difference in abilities between an 11 year old and a 15 year old for example were so vastly different that it was an unfair competition. Recognising that the continent had much closer (and fairer) age groupings FISS adopted these for the 2000 season onwards. The groups would also have their own names – Mini (6-9 years); Pupil (10-12 years); Cadet (13-15 years); Junior (16-17 years); Senior (18+).

These changes required a whole new set of distances to be introduced as well as a significant increase in the number of medals to be awarded, despite there being a reduction from four down to three skaters per team that could take part in the Outdoor Inter-club Relay Championship. A new event, the Team Time Trial, was also introduced for Senior Men.

Since the turn of the century there has been numerous alterations to British Championship events. Some of these changes include:

- Races added and/or removed.

- New age groups added and/or removed.
- Age ranges altered.
- Age groups being allowed to amalgamate for team events.
- Race formats changed – e.g. to a points or elimination.
- Etc.

It would be a laborious exercise to write down and detail these changes so the table at the end of this document will summarise (for anyone remotely interested!).

Historically, the racing year was always from October 1st to September 30th with the skating season really falling between November and May to take into account the British weather. Plus, the World or European Championships would usually fall some time between July and September and invariably be somewhere on the European continent.

By 2000 most of the British racing was conducted outdoors and with major international championships moving further afield you could not now always guarantee the time of year they would be held. FISS decided to change the racing season from 1st January to 31st December and whereas you previously moved up an age group on your birthday, your age group for the whole season was now based on how old you were on January 1st of that particular year.

On 6th June 2004 Chanelle Moore (Team Rollerblade) became the youngest ever individual Senior British Champion when she won the 200m time trial at Birmingham Wheels aged just 14 years and 340 days. A few weeks later on 11th July Bethany Clayden (South Woodham Ferrers) became the 1000th individual British Champion when she won the Mini Girls 1000m event at Tatem Park. Incidentally, the 2000th individual British Champion was Sharon Tongue (Birmingham Wheels) when she won the Masters Ladies 1000m at Tatem Park on 23rd July 2017. Remarkably it had taken 110 years to rack up the first 1000 gold medals but only 13 years to rack up the second 1000.



2004 - Chanelle Moore – Youngest individual Senior British Champion at 14 years & 340 days

Over the years there had always been a debate about allowing single entries to British Championships. On one side it was argued that they simply had to turn up, step onto the track and be crowned British Champion. On the other side it was argued that it wasn't their fault there were no other competitors and they paid their fees just like anyone else.

In 2005 FISS decided to introduce a system whereby a time was needed to be achieved to determine whether a skater was awarded a gold, silver or bronze or no medal at all. The system was based on achieving a percentage of the current British Record for that particular age group with an additional 'track factor' being taken into account depending on where the record was set and where the championships were being held. Lone skaters now know exactly what they have to do to achieve a placing and also have to put in effort to do so. It is fair to say that barring the odd occasion where the sentiment has not been applied fully or correctly, for whatever reason, on the whole the system has been largely successful.

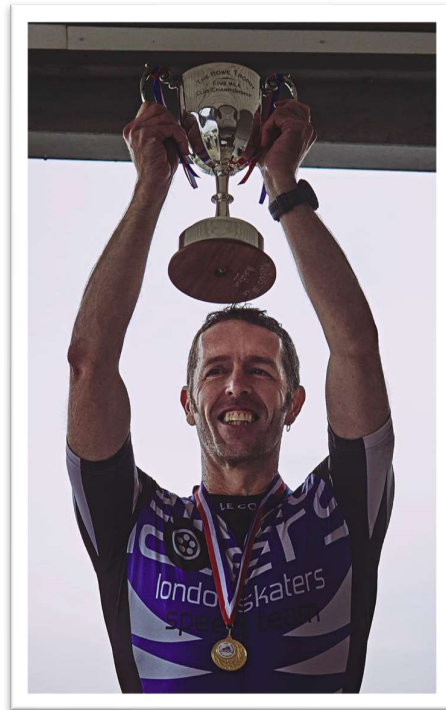
In 2008 there was some controversy when FISS decided that skaters could compete in two different age categories for relay events in a single British Championships. On 30th March 2008 Lydia Bunn (Cadomotus) competed in and won the Pupil Girls 800m Indoor British Championship. Later that day, along with her teammate Chloe Astle, she competed in and won the Pupil-Cadet Inter-club Relay Championship. There was nothing untoward with that of course, however, within the next 30 minutes she was also allowed to compete in the Junior-Senior Inter-club Relay Championship with her other teammate, Sarra Dally, and again came home victorious. Firstly, nothing should be taken away from Bunn who at that time was a shining star amongst Britain's skating fraternity. The controversy ensued as most of the FISS Committee at that time had an association with the Cadomotus team and therefore a vested interest to introduce this suspect ruling. After much understandable complaining by the membership the rule was quickly rescinded but Bunn remains the only skater to have won a British Championship gold medal in two different age categories in the same year.

On 27th March 2011 Sutton Atkins won his 40th Senior British Championship. It would put him at number one in the all time list, male or female, of skaters with the most number of titles. On 11th October 2015 he won his 54th and last confirming his status as one of Britain's greatest speed skating competitors.

2020 saw another change in British Championship medals. The cast medals were deemed too expensive and now, after 20 years these were replaced with a cheaper, and some might say 'less special' substitute. Due to lack of funds and escalating costs the medals made no reference to them being awarded for a national title and were off the shelf as opposed to the dedicated design that had usually befitted a British Champion.



2020 – A set of British Championship medals (photo Stephanie James)



2021 medal – Richard Tillotson winning the Masters Men's Marathon

On 27th November 2021 Michael McInerney (Wisbech) not only became one of the oldest Senior British Champions but he also set an outstanding new record of having the greatest length of elapsed time between his first Senior title and his last (?) Senior title.

Macca, as he is widely known, won his first on 16th May 1993. It was already a landmark as it was the first British Marathon Championship and the first British Championship won on inlines. And here he was, 28 years and 196 days later and he again stood on the top step having just won the Senior Men's 1500m Indoor British Championship. The previous record was set by the legendary Chloe Ronaldson at 21 years and 143 days.



2022 – A set of British Championship medals (photo Stephanie James)

As time has worn on, the membership, especially those who fully understand and appreciate what it means to be crowned a British Champion, aired their grievances about the medals at a recent FISS AGM. The FISS Committee understood these sentiments and communicated that it had always been their intention to revert to a more suitable medal once funds allowed. Thankfully, in 2023 a new design was introduced and a dedicated British Championship medal was once again awarded.



2023 onwards - silver medal (photo Stephanie James)

In 2023 FISS reverted to the “old” skating season of 1st October to 30th September.

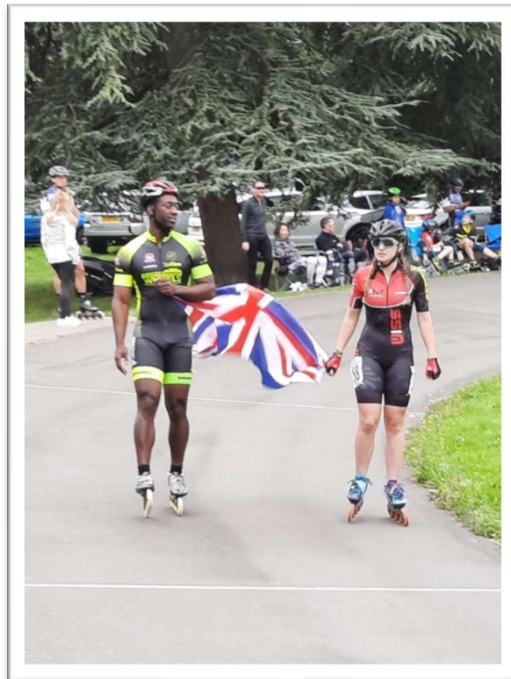
On 24th March 2024 Vincent Henry (Birmingham Wheels) drew level with Sutton Atkins’ magical 54 Senior British Championship titles. It was a number that many did not think could be repeated and with Vinnie still competing time will tell if he can surpass that record.

All in all, the British Championships (and of course its medals) have continued to evolve. In 1894 there was just one individual British Championship, for men. By 1970 that had increased to a total of six British Championships across all age groups and genders. In 1999

that had increased to 43. A year later with the advent of all the new age groups it increased further to 71. Today there are no fewer than a whopping 126 (yes, you read that right) individual British Championships now up for grabs in any one year, plus of course team events. If you include team events that is an eye watering 450 medals to be awarded each year. Astonishingly, and somewhat disappointingly, the number of British titles that can be won currently outnumbers actual skaters that are competing across all age groups.

There is a debate as to whether the number of British Championships now available to a single age group has devalued what it now means. The romantics will tell you that British Champions were once an elite group held in high esteem, but that has since been diluted and medals handed out like confetti. But then you have the flip side of the coin where all members pay their way so why shouldn't there be an equal number of British Championships for each age group that caters for sprinters, middle distance and long distance skaters? It's definitely a conundrum and one that really should be addressed before it gets out of control. Personally, I think there is a middle ground that takes into account both having sensible numbers of British Championships and also considers the economics of supporting these events. After all, I'm sure many would rather see their membership money ploughed into grass roots development rather than fund 450 medals each year. But that debate is for another day. This is about the history.

All that said, the accolade of being crowned a British Champion can still not be underestimated. Whether there be eight or eighty skaters, it is to some at least, as important today as it was in 1894 when Charles J. Wilson lifted aloft the Benetfink Cup and was declared officially the best roller speed skater throughout the entire British Isles. It gets you right there, doesn't it?



2021 – Vincent Henry and Eve McInerney do a well-deserved lap of honour of Tatem Park

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023		
Youth Girls	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint Ind.																			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		
	500m Ind.																				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1500m Ind.																				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint																				◆						
	100m Sprint																							◆	◆	◆	
	200m TT																							◆	◆	◆	
	300m TT																					◆					
	500m																					◆		◆	◆	◆	
	500m Plus																					◆					
	1000m																					◆				◆	◆
	3000m Points																					◆	◆		◆	◆	◆
	5000m Elimination																					◆	◆		◆	◆	◆
Half Marathon (21km)																					◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	
Junior Boys	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint Ind.																				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	100m TT Ind.												◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
	500m Ind.												◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1500m Ind.		◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint																					◆					
	100m Sprint																							◆	◆	◆	
	200m TT																							◆	◆	◆	
	300m TT		◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		◆			◆		◆		◆		◆	◆	◆						
	500m		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	
	500m Plus																					◆					
	1000m																							◆	◆	◆	
	1500m		◆	◆	◆	◆																					
5000m																											
5000m Points		◆																					◆	◆	◆		
5000m Elimination			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
10000m Points		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
10000m Elimination																						◆		◆	◆		
Half Marathon (21km)		◆	◆	◆	◆																						
Marathon (42km)						◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	
Junior Girls	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint Ind.																				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	100m TT Ind.												◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
	500m Ind.												◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1500m Ind.		◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	1 Lap Dobbin Sprint																					◆					
	100m Sprint																							◆	◆	◆	
	200m TT																							◆	◆	◆	
	300m TT		◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		◆			◆		◆		◆		◆	◆	◆						
	500m		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	
	500m Plus																					◆					
	1000m																							◆	◆	◆	
	1500m		◆	◆	◆	◆																					
3000m																									◆		
3000m Points		◆																									
3000m Elimination			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
5000m Points		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆							
5000m Elimination																											
Half Marathon (21km)		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆																					
Marathon (42km)								◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	

