

THE MANLY TRIUMPH OF 1924

By Kevin Berry

One of the greatest accomplishments in modern Olympic History must surely be the achievement of the gold medallists from Australia at the Paris 1924 'Chariots of Fire' Games.

At those Games, Australia sent a team of 37 athletes and from such a small contingent came three gold medals. No mean feat from such small representation!

But what makes this achievement so special was that all three victors came from the Sydney village community of Manly And they all lived within a radius of one mile of each other. The three Olympic champions were Andrew "Boy" Charlton, Nick Winter and Dick Eve.

Of the three, Charlton is perhaps the most famous. He was a handsome youth of 17 at the time of the Games and because of his 'boyish' looks, he was nicknamed "Boy", a name that stuck with him for the rest of his life.

Charlton burst onto the international swimming scene in the summer of 1923-24 when he defeated the legendary Australian Olympian, Frank Beaurepaire over 440 yards. Later that same season he took on the best swimmer Europe had to offer - Sweden's Arne Borg - and defeated him at the old Domain Baths.

At the Paris Games, The Boy came away with a whole set of Olympic medals. He received a bronze medal for his third placing in the 400 metres freestyle. Then, as a member of the 4 X 200 metres relay, he picked up a silver. But it was his gold in the 1500 metres that gave him folk hero status, the likes of which were not to be seen until the great Don Bradman came along in the 1930's. Charlton took on the best the world had to offer and won by over 40 metres from his great rival, Borg. His time of 20 mins. 6.6secs. seems very slow when compared to Kieren Perkins times of today, but in 1924, this was a world record.

Charlton's victory was perhaps the most popular at the Games. He received rapturous applause and at

home, his name was shouted from every street corner by local newspaper vendors. Flags were raised and The Boy etched his name into Australian history.

Australia had another world record achievement at those Games and it came in the form of Nick Winter's performance in winning the hop, step and jump, or as it is known today, the triple jump.

Winter was a fireman, stationed in Sydney Road, close to The Corso and the famous Manly beach. At 29 years of age, he was a veteran of World War One and prior to Paris, had very little experience with this event. In fact, he had made a name for himself by competing in odd events. The great Olympic historian David Wallechinsky, states he was a specialist in backward cycling and individual tug-of-war. It should be noted that in the 1920's the triple jump was not even on the program at the Australian Championships.

Winter's great rival in Paris was the Argentinean, Luis Brenetto. In the early rounds, the South American created a new Olympic mark while the fireman from Manly barely scraped into the final.

Brenetto's first-round distance of 15.42 metres stood through the final and Winter was clearly having his troubles. He had fouled three of his five jumps and his heels were badly bruised. He made the decision that for his sixth and final leap, he would take off some centimetres before the board thus eliminating the possibility of a foul.

With a head of steam, the Australian thundered down the approach runway, went through the disciplines of the hop, the step, and the jump, and when the officials measured the distance, it was found to be 15.52 metres, not only a winning jump, but a new world record.

Australia had its first "field" gold medallist in Olympic history and Manly had its second gold from the '24 Games.

Dick Eve, or to give him his correct name, Richmond Eve, is the lesser known of the Manly heroes.



1924 Australian Olympians of their way to Paris. Australia's three gold medallists are in the back row: R. Eve (second from left), A. Charlton (fourth from left), A. Winter (far right). Seated in the centre was the team manager Ossie Merrert (ES Marks Collection, Mitchell Library)

However, he is quite unique in his own right. He had impeccable aquatic credentials as his mother, Fredda, had been a member of the famous 'first family' of Australian swimming, the Cavill family, and his father was the curator of the Manly baths.

Eve became Australia's first diving champion in 1921 and by the time Paris had rolled around, had set himself to compete in three events. He was entered in the springboard event, the fancy highboard and the plain highboard. It was in the latter that he became Australia's first, and only, Olympic diving gold medallist.

He won the title with his last dive, a swallow or plain dive. Many onlookers believed it was a flawless performance and the judges agreed. They gave him maximum points and this was enough to snatch victory from the Swede John Jansson with Britain's Harold Clarke coming in third.

And so Australia - and Manly - had secured its third gold medal.

When the trio eventually arrived back in Australia they were wined and dined all over the place. Their welcome to Sydney might be described as tumultuous, only to be out done by the reception they received

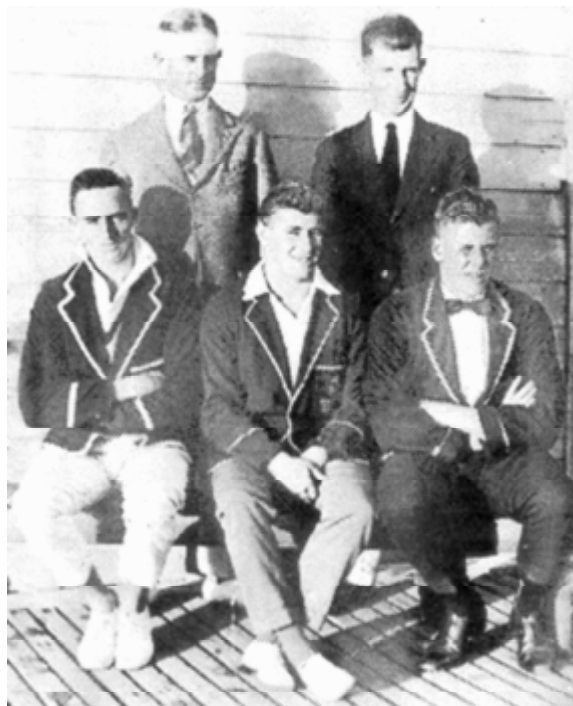
upon returning to Manly. The celebrations there lasted for a week and each of the champions had a street named after them. Sadly, these streets seem to have had a name change and today there is no Charlton, Winter or Eve streets in the local directory,

Prominent local resident and Manly Councillor, Jean Hay says, "The issue of the re-naming of the streets is clouded with mystery. All our best efforts to find out why and how this happened here drawn a blank".

Mrs. Hay is a strong supporter for honouring the local heroes. "A couple of years back Manly Council changed the name of our swimming pool to 'The Boy Charlton Manly Swimming Pool' and later this year it is hoped to have a special Pathway of Manly Olympians. This 'pathway' or 'walk' will pay homage to all our local residents who have represented their country in Olympic competition".

Following Paris our three champions had mixed fortunes. Charlton went to the next two Olympics, in 1928 and 1932, but never reached the golden heights of his performance at his first Games. In Amsterdam (1928) he picked up silvers in the 400 and 1500 and at Los Angeles (1932) he could only manage to make the finals in these same two events.

Manly Swimming Club
contingent at the 1924
Paris Olympic Games.
Standing from left: Oswald
(O"Ossie") Merrett
(manager), Tom Adrian
(trainer), front from left:
Ernest Henry, Dick Eve,
Andrew Charlton. (Ernest
Henry)



The Boy became a pharmacist, following his swimming career but in 1937 he settled on a 12,000 acre property near Goulburn where he became a successful grazier. He passed away on 10 December, 1975.

The fireman, Nick Winter, competed again at Amsterdam but unfortunately, could only finish sixth in his beat. In 1955 he moved to Pagewood, a suburb of Sydney, to live with his son and daughter. Later that same year he died of asphyxiation caused by a faulty pipe. He was 60 years of age.

Dick Eve, went on to work for Manly Council as their baths manager and by a strange quirk of fate, taking this position caused him to lose his amateur status. Thus he was deprived from any future national or international competition.

Eve became very active in the surf lifesaving movement. He was a member of the Manly club and figured in many rescues on that famous beach. While he had a magnificent physique and never drank alcohol or smoked, in latter life he had three heart attacks. Richmond Cavill Eve died of heart failure on 13 March, 1969.

But our three Olympic 'gods' are not entirely forgotten by their local community.

Should you ever visit Manly and walk The Corso between the ferry wharf and the surfing beach, make sure you take a slight diversion along Sydney Road, and cast your eyes skyward. There, atop the old Britannia Theatre and close by Nick Winter's former fire station, is a statue of a Greek goddess. It commemorates the feats of these three legendary Manly heroes and attests to an accomplishment which will probably be never repeated in the annals of Olympic history - three gold medals from one small community.

Kevin Berry, Olympic gold medallist (200m butterfly 1964), is author of *2000 Things You Didn't Know About The Olympic Games*. He resides in Manly.