

A small green portacabin in Carysfort Park is the modest base for Blackrock Athletic Club. Founded 74 years ago, this thriving club plays a key role in the promotion and development of athletics in the greater Blackrock area. Starting with 20 members in 1944, growing to 400+ in 2016 with over 30 volunteer coaches. The lack of an onsite running track has not deterred the young and those that bit older getting out to run and compete.

With a vibrant 300+ juvenile group, the club also caters for adults of all abilities in the Senior, Masters and Fit4Life sections. In many instances, parents coaching or training beside their children. It is about much more than one person or one winner – a true community club.

Born as a byproduct of the 2nd World War, the club evolved from the local volunteer force. It was the Blackrock unit's participation in army athletic competitions that led to its establishment.

It was initially supported by patrons donating the princely sum of £62.7.6. Little did one of those donors, Joe Allen, know that 3 of his great grandchildren would be part of the club he once so generously supported. A true example of how the club continues to pass on the baton.

This sense of community continues. Past members are remembered through events like the annual Rory Byrne Senior Men's Award and memorial 10K and the Mary O'Connor perpetual trophy for Club Spirit. Run4Mark raised funds for a juvenile member who regularly travels abroad for specialist treatment. Bringing the local school and community together, the goal was to run 977km, the distance from Dublin to Brussels. Over 600 people participated and together covered 3000km.

Originally catering for male athletes, Joe Hodgins claimed a National Title for the club in 1950. Ladies joined from 1969, making a significant contribution to the club silverware. The juvenile section is flourishing with numerous individual and team medals at Schools, County, Leinster and National competitions. Amy Rose Farrell and Sarah Healy won all three National Cross Country titles across the U15/16/17 age categories in 2015/2016 with Emma O'Brien and Denis Gilevskiy securing National Track Titles. Sarah also won the prestigious Home Countries 2016 XC title in Falkirk.

The Fit4Life adult section started in 2013 and continues to grow, with many now competing alongside Senior and Masters club runners. Members, some who never ran before, regularly take part in Parkruns, Cross Country events, 10km, half, full and ultra Marathons.

This club is about turning up and taking part in whatever way you can. It's

about aspiring to be better whether for a medal or personal best. Fellow athletes and coaches believing in you when you think you can't do it. A shared experience, a community coming together - much more than its small green portacabin base in the park.

As Sonia O'Sullivan put in the club's history foreward, "May the recycling of athlete to coach to administrator continue infinitely into the future. Just like a track there is no finishing line."