

SIR BARRY CURTIS 10K

The well patronised Pakuranga Half Marathon was last run in 1995. After an enormously successful stint of 17 years it had run its course.

It seemed that Half Marathons had lost popularity amongst the running fraternity and declining entry numbers had made it an unattractive option for prospective major sponsors. 10k events were becoming increasingly popular as there was less input required. A reduced number of marshals and volunteers were needed, course set-up was easier and costs were greatly reduced. As the distance was more achievable for most, in early 1996 the Club made the decision to offer a 10k event in lieu of the Half Marathon.

The event was named the **SIR BARRY CURTIS 10k CLASSIC**, in honour of the then Mayor of Manukau City, who was also a Club Patron.

One obvious benefit was the very attractive point-to-point certified measured course. It started at Musick Point, wended along the Buckland's Beach waterfront, through to Aviemore Drive, up Cascades Rd and finished at the Club athletic track. To minimise course traffic, East Auckland Green Acres lawn-mowing contractors donated their vans and trucks to transport entrants from the clubrooms to the start at Musick Point. During its infancy the 10k race attracted minimal entries, certainly not the big numbers that the Half Marathon had attracted. Up until 2002 the race had attracted up to 300 entrants, many of whom were club members and local casual joggers and walkers.



Green Acres vehicles waiting to transport entrants to Musick Point.

With the introduction of a new energetic committee in 2003, the race took on a different perspective. Improvements were made to the organisation such as the use of buses to ferry entrants. Major Spot prizes were available from long time sponsors Magness Benrow, Macrennie Construction and Panasonic along with overseas travel prizes offered by United Airlines and Air Vanuatu. Added value was provided by Gaming grants and further monetary assistance from the Manukau City Council. This enabled the committee to offer a variety of good sized cash prizes which subsequently attracted great interest amongst elite athletes.



The start of the 2006 Sir Barry Curtis 10k at Musick Point.

The club has always had its share of elite athlete entries and from 2003 the likes of Scott Winton, Seaton Meredith and notably Olympian Dale Warrander were amongst the race's forerunners. Winners in this period included the best of NZ's runners and Warrander was the most prolific, accounting for 5 wins and breaking the race record several times along the way.

Women's winners included Melissa Moon, the club's Nina Rillstone and Commonwealth Games' Steeplechaser, and later triathlete, Kate McIlroy who holds the race record.

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Throughout the 2000s the race included junior relays and subsequently the Junior 5K individual race which has been won by many of today's senior runners. A highlight of the junior races must have been the race start exercises performed by Olympian Nick Willis.

The Race Walking component of the event was introduced in 2006 with Olympian Tony Sargisson the quickest amongst the winners during this period.

Left: Awaiting the 2004 prize giving ceremony held on the northern verandah of the clubhouse. Standing behind the array of cups, are Maurice Turley, Sir Barry Curtis and MC Mike Murray.

Two photos illustrate improvements made to the 10k event over the years.

The photo on the right, taken in 1995, shows the finish line on the field to the north of the clubhouse. Waiting for the runners to finish is the recording team:

Standing from left: Cris Malcomson, Emrys Jones, Kaye Rudman, John Connally, Terry Mitchell, and Graeme Wicks.

Seated is Rosalea Dun and Vicki Heywood.



This photo on the right, taken in 2006, shows the finish chute on the (then) grass track with the entrants' drink station and race number drop-off area to the right. It is typical of the finish set-up during the latter years of the 10k.

Sadly, due to the lack of resources and funding, and the rising costs of traffic and safety compliance, the event has not been competed for since 2011.

It is hoped, that with an enterprising committee, the club can resurrect the event in some form in the near future. If not a 10k, then perhaps back to a Half Marathon which seems to be back in vogue.

