

As the island closes in on the 75th anniversary of the Church to Church walk this year its perhaps a good time to look back at some of the early events. A recent request on the <http://churchtochurch.wordpress.com/> website about walker Ralph Le Gallez who competed in 1949, led me to some other Le Gallez "family" members involved in the event.

It was only discovered by the family that Ralph had walked the race when his 1949 certificate turned up.

I often wonder how many other pieces of Church to Church memorabilia are hidden away in attics from those distant days.

The most well known Le Gallez was Otto, a hairdresser by trade and regular Church to Church walker between 1937 and 1949. He competed six times in this period, although in 1939 and between 1941 and 1944 there had been no event held.

In his first walk, Otto finished in second place to Jerseyman Harold G Taylor. Taylor had himself finished in second place in the first event held in 1936. Otto's time of 3 hours 25 minutes was over seven minutes behind that of Taylor, but only 45 seconds up on third man home F W Falla.

At his second attempt Otto again finished in second place behind Guernseyman Stan Smith who took the win in 3.19.00 with Otto thirty seconds behind. Third place went to the experienced Taylor who had competed in the much longer London to Brighton walk in recent times.

The Star newspaper of the day Friday October 7th 1938, had the Church to Church Walk on the front page. Amongst the headlines was "*Stanley Smith First Home But Le Gallez Was at His Heels*"

The report went on:

"After a grim tussle with O Le Gallez, Stanley Smith won the 20 miles Church to Church Walk yesterday".

"After being a minute behind Le Gallez at St Sampsons, Smith sent his cyclist in front to set the pace. Quickening his stride he eventually fought his way past Le Gallez at the Salerie Corner to win by half a minute".

"Thus Le Gallez has again failed by only a few seconds to win the walk. Last year he was second to Taylor"

"At 2.30 pm the walkers were set on there way. Smith led the walkers at St Martins Church from Taylor and Le Gallez. Le Gallez challenged strongly after Forest Church and soon drew level. They reached St Peters Church together well in front of Taylor"

"At St Andrews Church Le Gallez had a lead of quite 100 yards over Smith. Taylor was nearly a quarter of a mile behind."

"At the Bridge, St Sampsons, with two miles to go, Le Gallez led by a minute. Then came a sudden change, Smith spurred and was coming up fast as they turned on to the coast. Only forty yards separated them. Le Gallez took a quick glance over his shoulder at the Fruit Export Sheds to see Smith draw abreast of him. Smith forged ahead but Le Gallez made another great effort

and was level at Salerie Corner. Here however Le Gallez weakened and Smith slowly drew away. He hit the tape 30 seconds ahead of a very tired and game runner up”.

Harold Taylor the defending Champion from Jersey said, “I was well beaten by two good men. Guernsey walkers have certainly improved considerably. They are taking it more seriously”

Note: walkers in those days were required to have a cyclist with them. For their efforts winner Smith received the Joybell Trophy, with Le Gallez taking home a canteen of cutlery, of which more will follow later in this story!

With no event in 1939 there was a wait until 1940 for Le Gallez to have another shot at victory. Indeed in the November 29th issue of the Star, it is reported that Smith has accepted the challenge by Otto Le Gallez. On to the walk itself and they are together until the 16th mile where Le Gallez collapses and retires.

The event resumes in 1945 over a shortened version of the traditional course, around 17 miles, where Otto finishes in third place. He is now in his forties and is beaten by Stan Smith and the young R Le Poidevin. Returning in 1948 he slips to fifth place and a year later finishes in sixth place behind Ralph Le Gallez, his nephew.

Otto also walked in the 1945 15 miles walk organised by the “Island Sports Officer” in July 1945. The Garrison organised an event starting and finishing at the Crown Hotel, via the Val des Terres, Fort Road , Grandes Rue, Paysans, towards L`eree, on to the coast and towards Vazon, then inland at Gele Road, Hougette Hill, St Georges, Varendes , Rohais , Grange and back to the Crown. Norman Froome took the honours from Le Gallez, 2 hours 21 to 2 hours 27. It was in this walk that other Le Gallez walkers appeared, with Misses M and H finishing.

Since my original notes made years ago I have been told of three Le Gallez sisters, twins Hilda and Maud and other sister Jean. Initials of these names appear in results taken from newspapers below.

There is a H Le Gallez taking second place in the 1947 Church to Church walk and a J Le Gallez taking second place to J H Robert in 1950 and 1955. It is reported in the newspaper for the 1950 walk that the second lady home was the cousin of the male winner T Le Cheminant.

Coincidentally the Sarnia Walking Club have just come into possession of the winners “replica” trophies, Story at <http://sarnia.wordpress.com/2011/03/26/mrs-j-h-robert/>

Returning to Otto Le Gallez winning a canteen of cutlery and there is a story in the late George Torode`s 1997 book “Donkeys Ears Apart”, one of a series he did over the years on characters from Guernsey.

He recalls getting a call from a nurse at a private nursing home that Otto sends his regards on a previous article and that he would like to meet George. George was only too happy to visit the then 86 years old Otto. On mentioning the visit to an old work mate, the mate asks George to “Ask him about the year he was so far in front in the church to church that he went into the

Channel Islands Hotel and had a fag and a pint before coming out and finishing the race”

During the afternoon with Otto he was shown a collection of walking race cups and certificates and then asked Otto about the Church to Church story.

Otto said he was in his best form ever and during the race was going like a steam train and leading, when 100 yards from the finish went into the Channel for a fag and a pint. Standing by the door he waited for his nearest rival to go past and then carried on fag in hand to the finish for second place.

When George asked why he threw away the chance to be champion, Otto replied that it was just after the war and there was nothing much in the shops. His wife had her heart set on a set of cutlery and by coincidence that was the second placed prize in the Church to Church walk. If he had won he would only have had the trophy!

Records show that he did indeed win a canteen of cutlery in 1938, but that was before the war. A tall tale or not?

A little later on into the 1960`s and an A Le Gallez appears in the Church walk results with times as below. He also competed in the GIAAC 10 miles walk and finished in 83.55.

1962 A Le Gallez 20th 3.45.00
1963 A Le Gallez 4th 3.21.38
1964 incomplete results
1965 A (Tony) Le Gallez 6th 3.13.50

1937 Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

1st Harold G Taylor (Jersey) 3.17.45
2nd Otto Le Gallez 3.25.00
3rd F W Falla 3.25.45

1938 Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

1st Stan Smith 3.19.00
2nd Otto Le Gallez 3.19.30
3rd Harold G Taylor (Jersey) 3.23.00

1940 Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

Otto Le Gallez retired Vale Church (16 miles)

1945 Church to Church Walk 17 miles apx?

1st Stan Smith 2.40
2nd R Le Poidevin
3rd Otto Le Gallez

1948 Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

5th Otto Le Gallez

1949 Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

5th Ralph Le Gallez

6th Otto Le Gallez

1946 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

Miss Le Gallez retired

1947 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

2nd H Le Gallez

1948 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

5th H Le Gallez

1950 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

1st J H Robert 3.56.32

2nd J Le Gallez 3.58.50

3rd Gladys Leeder 4.00.10

1951 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

D Le Gallez retired

1953 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

Le Gallez retired

1949 Sylvans 6 and a half miles walk

R Le Gallez (15 years old) retired

1955 Church to Church Walk Womens 19.4 miles

1st J H Robert 3.42.00

2nd J Le Gallez 4.05.00

3rd H Le Gallez 4.20.00

1945 15 miles Island Garrison Walk

1 Norman Froome 2.21

2 Le Gallez 2.27

3 Major Clement 2.29.45

10 Misses M and H Le Gallez

1949 Sylvans 6 and a half miles walk

Miss P Le Gallez (could be D, bad handwriting!) 1.21.30

1950 Sylvans 6 and a half miles walk

Miss Le Gallez

Church to Church Walk 19.4 miles

1962 A Le Gallez

1963 A Le Gallez 4th 3.21.38

1965 A Le Gallez 6th 3.13.50

GIAAC 10 miles

1964 A Le Gallez 83.55

By Rob Elliott

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