

## The Birth of the Griffins by Rob Ey

At home that night I had a discussion with my wife Carol (current President of the YMCA of Canberra Runners Club) about the proposal and we started throwing ideas around. It was Carol who came up with the name 'Griffins', although I lay claim to the idea that if you ran 20 Canberra marathons you would be a Burley Griffin and if you reached 30 you would become a Walter Burley Griffin. Thankfully at this stage that is as far as we have to go. As soon as she said it, 'Griffins' just seemed right.

A few days later I dropped by Dave's office and we had a chat about the concept again. Dave accepted pretty much everything I suggested, which despite the ups and downs with various Canberra Marathon issues are still largely in place today. We agreed that Griffins would be offered a discounted entry to future marathons, a T-shirt when they completed their 10<sup>th</sup> marathon and a set of running gear (originally shorts & singlets) when they entered their next Canberra marathon and recognition in the race program.

In 1994 there was no such thing as a website and emails largely only existed in universities. All communication was done via Aussie Post. The marathon did a couple of mail outs to drum up business and in that we included a call to Griffins. I had a small stream of people writing to me claiming to be Griffins. Some people knew their exact times for each year, while others couldn't really remember how many they had done. The best letter came from Nick Blackaby, who hadn't kept track of his marathons but reckoned he must have run 10 Canberras and wanted to be a Griffin, but was sick of running marathons, and hoped he didn't have to run another one. Fortunately after quite a bit of checking the race results I was able to confirm that Nick had already qualified as a Griffin.

Finding the names of the Griffins presented a bit of a problem. No on-line results or sophisticated search mechanisms in 1994. Dave Cundy gave me a list of people he thought might have run the marathon 10 times and a copy of the results booklet for each of the 16 races that had been held and told me to go to it. I then spent a few days laboriously going through the results looking for names. We contacted the local runners and where possible got them to give the years they had run and approximate times. This manual method was pretty straight forward in the early years when there were only 100 runners, but searching through 1984 with over 2,000 finishers was hard work. By the time of race day 1994, I think I had about 30 confirmed Griffins and around 5 like myself who were aiming for their 10<sup>th</sup> in 1994.

The logo that we had printed on the T-shirts, shorts & singlets was produced by a work colleague of mine at the time, a chap called Peter King. He had no interest in running but was doing art classes at the time and was always doodling little pictures. I asked him if he could do a sketch of a Griffin with running shoes. He obliged with a few different versions, one of which I selected and sent it off to the print makers. I paid Peter for his many hours of work with a free Griffin T-shirt. More recently, all the graphics have been re-done by the professional designers we have access to through the YMCA.

I had quite a bit of debate with Dave Cundy over the colours for the Griffins. Dave wanted something that would stand out, such as a pink or purple. I thought that given we were the ACT we should use the ACT colours of blue and gold. I prevailed. The various iterations of the gear do look good, but I

still wonder if we would have been better with something more definitive – there are a lot of blue and white singlets out there.

At the marathon expo on the Saturday afternoon prior to the 1994 marathon I handed out T-shirts to many of those who had qualified already as Griffins and we arranged a brief get together. The photo below was taken that afternoon of a good number (18) of those who had qualified as Griffins. I seem to be in the photo but I would have been an imposter as my 10<sup>th</sup> Canberra finish was still some 18 hours away.



I to r: back: Peter Manning, John Maccarone, Phil Haeney, Rob Ey, Nick Blackaby, Greg Reid, John Diamond, Brad Boyle, Graeme Kerruish, David Pembrey, Kevin Browne, Mark Hunter, Bruce Campbell. front: ?, Bernie Millet, John Casey, Bob Fickel, Rick Hatcher