



Bill Adcocks is a Coventry born Olympic marathon runner. The peak of Bill's running career was the late 60s and early 70's and the following article, written by Bill, gives an insight into the lifestyle and training regimes that helped to produce an Olympic marathon Runner.

If you enjoy the article and wish to read more, Bill Adcock's book "The Road to Athens" is stocked and available at Coventry Runner or direct from Bill (via mail order, details below).

Personal Details

Bill Adcocks
DOB 11-11-1941

Main event: Marathon

Achievements: Pb 2:10:48
Olympic Games 1968 5th
Commonwealth Games 1966 2nd 1970 6th
European Champs. 1969 DNF
AAA marathon 1965 1st, 1968 2nd
British and European best performance 1968 a. 2:12:16 and b. 2:10:48
Winner of Fukuoka - 1968; Karl Marx Stadt - 1968, Marathon to Athens - 1969 and Otsu - 1970, marathons

440 yards	57.3	1963
880 yards	1:59.3	1964
1 mile	4:15.2	1964
2 miles	8:52.6	1965
3 miles	13:45.8	1965
5000m	14:15.4	1969
6 miles	27:51.6	1968

10000m	29:01.4	1969
10 miles (road)	46:24	1968
15 miles (road)	1:12:21	1968
20 miles (road)	1:39:01	1972
Marathon	2:10:48	1968

What comes across from the language and type of the questions being asked is how the sport has changed from the days when I was training and competing. Some of the terminology is quite foreign to me and my way of thinking.

One point that I would make is that invariably when questions are asked of past athletes they seem to centre on what training the individual was doing at the time of their best achievements. Although this is interesting and important, the real questions should centre on how you got to the levels that were achieved.

Pace of runs: Virtually all of my runs, certainly from 1965 onwards were done at a good pace. I never ran slower than 6minute per mile pace and generally it was faster than that, sub 5:30. This was irrespective of the distance e.g. 22 mile - 2hrs:00 to 2hrs:10 (fastest 1:52) ; 11 miles 58 to 54mins; 7 miles 40 to 35 mins. What tended to determine whether a run was easy or steady was the distance. To explain, although the pace was as previously explained, a run would be easier by virtue of its length. The purpose of shorter runs was to fit in with the daily routine as time dictated. The only time that I consistently took my heart rate/pulse was in the weeks prior to leaving for Mexico City in 1968 and this on waking each morning. There of course was not the technology for monitoring during runs as there is today. As a result I ran on feel and I think that this was correct. I feel that with heart rate monitors you are running to criteria that scientists have determined and therefore can land up with too much running being in the comfort zone.

All runs were an important part of my training. I worked on the basis that it was the cumulative effect of all the running which was important and no one run was any more important than another. I didn't have key sessions during my main years. Of say 12 runs in a week I would run with others on average about 4 times.

Between 1960 and 1964 I would do interval work usually twice a week and generally on the track although in the winter they may have been on the road due to not being able to use the cinder track!

The type of session would be repetitions of 220's; 440's; 880's; miles or 2miles. 1965 onwards I did no specific speed sessions but would often after a good paced road run and on returning to the track, run anything up to 16 x 110yds with 110yds between each. The purpose of these was not to sprint but to run at a pace higher than the average pace of the road run. Sessions as above were done on my own.

Throughout the year I ran on road, country/park and track at some time but the main surface was the road. Later in my career I did a bit more on park land and this was to try and mitigate injuries whilst still getting the miles in.

I didn't have any likes or dislikes as to the "sessions" I did. I enjoyed running in whatever form I did it on any particular day or time.

My intention was to run every day and that included high days and holidays which covered Christmas day (up to 15 miles) although in practice there were runs missed most weeks due to oversleeping, coughs and colds, injuries or time constraints

On hill work, in the late 50's early 60's I did hills as a specific session, usually once each week for about 2 months mid November to mid January. As I moved away from specific sessions late in my career and not running on the track, hill work was an integral but not specific part of most of my runs irrespective of distance. This was due to the varied elevation of the areas where I trained.

A typical training week almost didn't exist but so as to make comparisons in presentations on my training that I have delivered I took the week with 4 weeks to go to a major race.

Such examples are:

1963 –National Cross Country Champs (Junior)

	A	B
Sun	2 x (8 x 440)- 2min rec	
Mon	3 ml	10.5 fartlek
Tues	3ml	2 x (8 x 440)- 2min rec
Wed	3ml	6ml steady
Thurs	3ml	10.5 ml sustained run
Fri	3ml	Rest
Sat		B'ham League XC race – 5th 75 miles total

1964 – 1st Marathon – Port Talbot

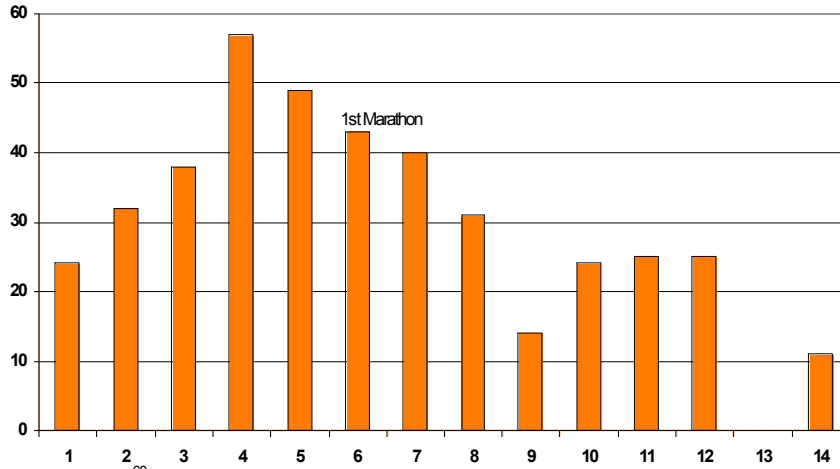
	A	B
Sun	20 ml	
Mon	5ml	10ml sustained run
Tues	5 ml	4 x 1ml reps – 10mile in all
Wed	5 ml	Races 1 ml (pb) & 2 ml
Thurs	5 ml	10ml sustained run
Fri	Cold	Cold
Sat	Cold	Cold
	Total miles 80	

1968 – Fukuoka Marathon

	A	B	C
Sun	22 ml (2hrs 10)		6ml
Mon	6ml steady		10 ml – hard middle 5
Tues	6ml	6ml	8 ml
Wed	-	-	-
Thurs	-	6ml	10 ml sustained run
Fri	-	6ml	10ml
Sat	14ml		6ml
	116 miles total		

Throughout my running career all the training was for one purpose - Racing. I took part in races throughout the year on road, track and country and the number varied as shown below;

Total Races per Year - '59 to '72



My races in 1968, which was my best year, along with the mileage covered in each week are listed below.

1968 Racing Programme

Week	Race	Time	Result
2	96 Mitcham 15	1:18:11	1st
4	101 Blankenberg Cross Country		3rd
6	90 Midland C C Champs		4th
9	82 National C C Champs		6th
11	81 International C C Champs		25th
13	83 Livingstone Road Relay		
14	116 Harborne Road Relay		Fastest
15	127 Warwickshire R R		Fastest
16	101 Midland 12 Stage R R		2nd Fastest
17	116 Hereford 20 (Sunday)	1:41:33	1st
18	National 12 Stage R R (Sat)		1st Team
22	67 Karl Marx Stadt Marathon (Sun)	2:12:17	1st
24	108 Inter-County Champs - 6ml (Mon)	27:51.8	4th
25	Inter Club 2ml	8:58	2nd
26	130 Plessey 15	1:12:21	1st
28	122 Pressed Steel 10	46:24	1st
30	102 Cheltenham 7	34:33	1st
32	87 AAA Marathon	2:15:41	2nd
35	87 Paignton Sports 3ml H'cap		
37	133 Wycombe 5	23:42	1st
38	126 AAA 10ml Road Champs	48:12	1st
44	51 Olympic marathon	2:25:37	5th
51	65 Fukuoka Marathon	2:10:48	1st
53	33 Club Christmas C C Handicap		

Throughout my running career I worked full time.

I left school at 16 and was an apprentice gasfitter. In 1965, up to just before the Empire (Commonwealth) Games in 1966 I worked for an employer but then became self employed. This gave me the ability to have greater flexibility to my day. During the Mexico Olympics which entailed being away for just over 6 weeks, because I was self employed I had no income! This I did till December 1968 after which I took a post as a Technical College lecturer.

My daily routine was:

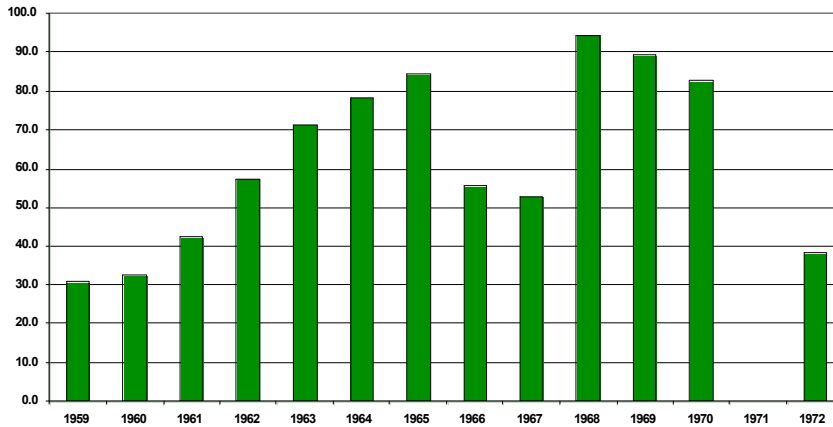
Monday to Friday - up just before 6.00 am on the road by 6.10
Breakfast then out to work by 8.00
Lunch time possibly extended break and a run
Evening run starting by 5.30
Bed by 9.00/9.15

Always enjoyed the cinema and the theatre and so once a week, usually Wednesday evening would be out, so bed by 10.30.

Mileage, although accepting that this is only one measure of the work done, was for the majority of my career an important factor. As I raced all the year there were no recovery, training and racing phases as such although after a major effort there was a short dip in the mileage covered before getting on with the job in hand for the next major race.

As a result my miles can be illustrated by the following:

Bill Adcocks - Average Weekly Mileage 59 to 72



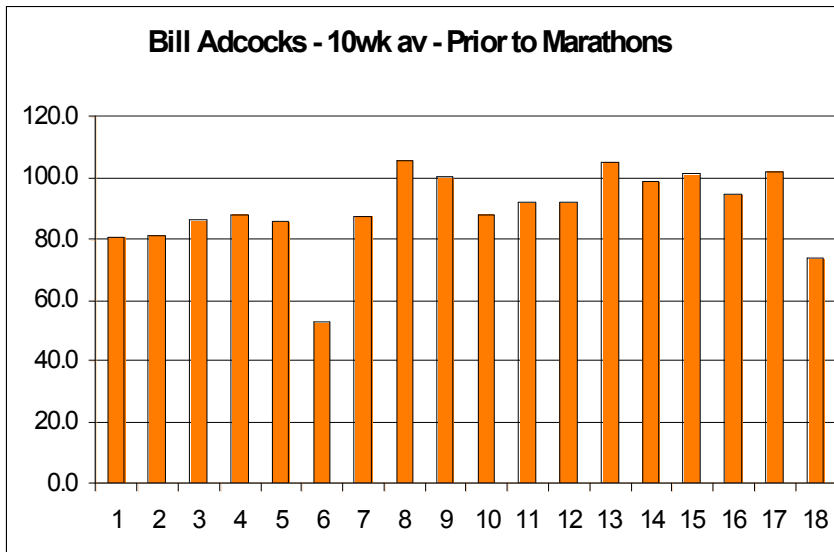
There is no mileage for 1971 as I don't have the training diary for that year.

In the build up to each of the 18 marathons that I started the following gives mileage picture

Weekly mileage – 10 weeks before each marathon

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	8	8	8	5	13	0	6	8	10	8	18	8	18	2	2	14	8	12
2	8	13	2	7	10	0	4	5	10	17	8	5	8	3	15	7	9	18
3	5	15	2	9	2	3	19	3	12	13	5	8	5	2	16	8	12	10
4	9	9	8	9	2	0	11	16	15	16	2	12	2	15	9	5	19	9
5	8	7	9	8	6	2	17	17	12	10	6	16	6	18	13	13	17	13
6	7	9	5	7	8	2	12	11	8	5	15	15	15	11	10	16	12	18
7	8	12	7	8	2	10	13	16	8	11	16	11	16	17	14	18	15	7
8	8	7	9	13	8	9	8	12	5	18	16	18	16	11	19	12	12	
9	7	9	9	10	10	12	9	13	6	8	15	19	15	12	15	15	18	
10	7	12	8	2	6	6	8	7	8	5	6	7	6	6	6	8	6	

and the average is given below:



My longest run of the week was 22 miles on a Sunday morning and this was sometimes followed on Sunday afternoon by another 6 to 8 miles.

I think that a fair amount of mileage is essential for the aspiring good class marathoner. I averaged 80mpw before my first marathon covered in 2:19:28. I do not consider, however, that loads of mileage at a slow pace is the way forward so I think that the balance between distance and speed is essential. At least it was for me. My highest week (one off) was 140 miles but often had weeks of 120 plus, all being at a good pace and without specific sessions. Again I worked on the cumulative effect of all my runs and on the days when I ran 3 times, given the pace that I ran at, this could almost be given as 3 x 7 miles with 4 hours between! This, I considered, was more closely allied to the demands of marathon running than some permutation of track reps.

So the question of quality against quantity has to be answered. For me it was a good but not excessive quantity at a good quality.

I started running doing cross country at secondary school back in 1955, it was what I have my first successes at and I continued to love it throughout my career. Due to injuries I did less and less cross country in the latter

years of my career in an attempt to eliminate possible reasons for injuries. I feel that cross country is important for any aspiring endurance runner. It gives variety in a non pressurised environment compared to track, is good resistance work which helps develop strength and is an outlet during the winter months.. We used to run regularly on the country for our Sunday run up to 15 miles often in very muddy conditions. It was very hard work but we had a great time doing it.

Other strength work was done using both circuits and weights early on in my career, the former once per week at a Club gym session and the latter perhaps twice per week in a variety of locations. This didn't continue into my marathon running phase.

Back in the 1950's and 60's massage was not readily available and tended to be used as treatment not remedial. Also cost was a factor plus access due to transport constraints. When on Games teams massage was available but on my part was usually used to treat ongoing problems as opposed to "the thing to do".

Again during my time I consider that we had wholesome food, well prepared firstly by my Mum and then from 1967 onwards by my wife, Kay. As I was doing physical work on top of the training, quantity was also important to fuel the motor that propelled me onwards. There weren't the fast food outlets that there are today and for the ordinary working class person eating out was in its infancy after the war. A group of us from the Club did eat out a couple of times a week on average at a Chinese restaurant. Sports science was in its infancy and the only time I was "looked at" was 36 hours after returning from Mexico. The results from that were never really communicated to me so it really had no effect.

On this topic I feel that it is quite interesting that today we have more and more people involved in working out how the athlete should train coupled with more and more endurance coaches yet the standards have not improved!

As I have said previously races were what it was all about. They provided the outlet for all training that you had put in, they were a natural extension of it. They were the way of measuring the effect of the training against other runners. It didn't matter what you had done in the week or who you

had beaten, it was about what you did on Saturday and who you beat then (there was virtually no races on Sundays). There were also fewer races available which meant that you invariably had to travel to races and there was a greater possibility of there being good opposition. It wasn't in our nature to try and avoid competition, that's what it is all about. For me each race tended to stand alone. Under distance races were they as competitive speed work whilst longer road races were all part of the build up to the full distance. If you couldn't do a 10 miler in 50 minutes you weren't very likely to go through that distance in a marathon in 51 minutes! There were very few half marathons it was mainly 5 miles, 10 miles, 15 miles and 20 miles all of which gave good building blocks towards the full marathon distance. There were other distances and they all played a part. What didn't tend to happen was to get all excited if someone did a good 10 miler as to their prospects over the marathon. Nowadays runners do a half marathon and it's all plain sailing as to their marathon prospects. Oh, if only it was so simple.

I am a member of Coventry Godiva Harriers, joined in June 1955. I was fortunate in that just in front of me, age wise, in the Club in the late 50' was a string of pathfinders which had a great effect on my development in many ways. These provided excellent groups for the Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday club training sessions. It may well be that some athletes prefer training on there own. It may be that the others in the group do not test you enough but I used the group when young to get extended and later in my career to give me a steadier run. As with all things you have to decide what you want to do and use all the tools in the tool kit to get it.

Over the years at some time in my development or peak I have trained from the Club with Brian Kilby, Basil Heatley, Dick and Juan Taylor, Colin Kirkham and many others not so well known.

Coaching: From the start I was coached. At school this was by the teacher who looked after the cross country team and after I joined Coventry Godiva I came under a number of club coaches. In 1961 after a coaching evening organised by the Club's coaching co-ordinator and delivered by the Midland Area National coach, Lionel Pugh I transferred to his group. The main outcome of this was the amount of work set in the schedules supplied. In early 1964 Lionel decided that we should part company and one of his parting comments was "I think you will be a marathon runner". In

those days there were very few distance coaches so effectively I was on my own. So from then till I retired, I sorted myself out, as did most of the top endurance runners of the day, deciding what training and racing I would do. We gave the problems some thought and came up with some solutions so you had to sort it out yourself and I think, as the records show, that that freedom of thought and action did not hold back performances.

I have the utmost admiration for people who coach but I do think that one of the main things to be trained for is thinking. So many athletes either don't seem to think things through or appear to be so dependant on an individual that they are at sea once the race gets going.

Altitude/Warm weather training

My only experience of altitude running was when I got off the plane in 1968 to prepare for the Olympic Games. I wasn't particularly enamoured by the running experience at altitude but survived to finish in 5th place but 13 minutes outside my best time set earlier in the year in East Germany. It hadn't been possible for me to get to Font Romeu prior to the Games but I don't think that I was at a disadvantage.

As for warm weather training, that wasn't the order of the day back in my time. We sometimes went to warmer climes at the end of the season and called it a holiday. It was our reward the work done, after the event.

I was fortunate to run in some good international marathons, remember this was well before the present day big city marathons. It was the opportunity to travel and see places that an ordinary working class bloke could only dream about.

All my marathons were BIG to me and the 18 I started are given below.

Marathon Record				
	In Year			Pos.
1964		1	2:19:29	2
1964	2	2	dnf	
1965		3	2:19:18	2
1965		4	2:16:50	1
1965	3	5	2:26:35	2
1966		6	2:24:09	4
1966	2	7	2:22:13	2
1967	0			
1968		8	2:12:17	1
1968		9	2:15:41	2
1968		10	2:25:23	5
1968	4	11	2:10:48	1
1969		12	2:11:07	1
1969		13	2:20:13	5
1969	3	14	dnf	
1970		15	2:13:46	1
1970		16	2:15:10	6
1970	3	17	2:13:32	6
1971	0			
1972	1	18	dnf	

I could go into protracted detail on each of the marathons above. I have already done this in my book "The Road to Athens" published in 2004 which is still available at £6.00 including P & P from 90 Frilsham Way, Allesley Park, Coventry CV5 9LR (cheques made payable to W Adcocks.

I am often asked which was your best marathon and 37 years after my last one I would now say Marathon to Athens. This is because of the severity of the course and the fact that I was only 21 seconds outside my best time set on the much easier Fukuoka course.

I think that it is important when you finish your running career to be able to say "no regrets, I did my best" and overall I can say that, so I sleep well on that.

When I retired in 1972 I continued in the sport and between 1980 and 1992 ran to and from work each day and continued regular but not obsessive running till 2000 when after a couple of knee ops I decided that discretion was the better part of valour.

I have been involved with my Club all the way through serving as Chairman and have been secretary for the last 20 years. I officiate at track & field

meetings, have been Club Road & Cross Country team manager. I am on territorial Road and Cross Country Committees and generally try to put something back into the sport which has given me a lifetime of enjoyment. I am the Division 1 secretary for the Birmingham & District Cross Country league and look after the admin and results for their four races each winter.

Being involved with the Club I see many athletes who I have been involved with over the years to varying degrees. I still love to see Jimmy Alder which I do up to 3 times a year at major domestic races. Chris Harvey (SLH) a friend since 1965 is a really good friend and we chew the cud on days gone by when we meet up in the Cotswolds each year. Dick Taylor is the Club's men's T & F team manager so we see each regularly and have a lot of thoughts in common on the state of the nation. On the international scene I do not have regular contact with any of the athletes with whom I competed, although John Farrington (Australia) and I e-mail occasionally.

Endurance running today: This is of course an ongoing topic given the general and specific standard of British distance running. We have not just stood still but have actually gone back and this is illustrated irrespective of whatever measure is used. The only plus is the number of people who don kit and run. The major races, London Marathon and Great North Run are major spectacles but the majority of participants are not competitive athletes. Although their reasons for taking part are laudable they can mask the problem.

It is said that our athletes do not train hard enough but I will not say that because I don't know what they are doing. I read that there are a number who regularly do 120 miles per week. My only comment on that is that if this is the case it can only be down to how they are doing those miles. I think that this comes back to modern coaching and technology and in an attempt to control all the factors, the barriers are not being pushed.

Society has changed out of all recognition since I was running. Most youngsters do not have the introduction into the sport that I had and of course tomorrow never comes and success is wanted at least today and preferably yesterday. The road to success is long but today's youth very often haven't got the time to wait. There are many more distractions and

making the decision to not be part of the norm, which is required to succeed is not thought to be "cool". Many athletes will only continue if there are incentives, they see sport as a way of earning a living. For some and the most successful this will be the case but if this is the reason for starting out then no wonder that numbers are less because the vast majority of athletes will never acquire enough to make the journey worthwhile in a material sense.