# 1956 OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY THROUGH GYMPIE

Unlike the torchbearers for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, who represented a cross section of the Australian community, the Gympie runners of 1956 were all fit young males, descendants of European settlers.

John Landy and Roger Bannister had recently broken world records, running a mile in less than four minutes. To be accepted as a 1956 torch bearer, young men had to run a mile in less than six minutes, a real test of fitness. Trials to guarantee this standard were held at Albert Park by the Gympie Amateur Athletics Association, and a practice run was held a few weeks before the torch arrived. On this run, I ran the last mile into Pomona, which was then on the Bruce Highway.

The 1956 flame was carried from Cairns to Melbourne, twenty-four hours a day.

On the night the torch reached us, Gympie Rotarians drove the runners to change-over points along the Bruce Highway. In my white T-shirt, shorts and sandshoes, I was delivered to the turn-off to the Mary Valley near Traveston Crossing at 2am.

Australian soldiers in an Army transport handed me my torch.

I saw the Olympic flame bobbing down the Highway towards me.

In a minute or two, there was a touching of torches, a 'fizz', and I was on my way.

At the end of my mile, my flame lit the next torch, and I handed my torch back to another soldier.

As a Rotarian drove our group of runners back to Gympie, my thoughts turned to the rest of the day. Youthful exuberance convinced me I would be able to carry out my responsibilities as a first-year teacher after only three hours' sleep.

Geoff Brown

GC Brown
6/9/16