The club started life in 1901 as the Priory Harriers, the name taken from a former Priory located in the centre of the Borough. Runs were started from the "Bell" Public House on the corner of Forest Road and Chingford Road. (Still in existence). It was then possible to run over fields and open country towards Chingford Mount, now of course mainly occupied by housing and factory development.

The club enjoyed some success in local club competitions and competed regularly in the North of Thames Cross-country events as evidenced by programmes of the period.

Activities were curtailed during the Great War and when recommenced, the club was without a home for the first time. Facilities were found at the Walthamstow YMCA, not far from the "Bell" pub! In deference to the support given by the YMCA the club was renamed the Walthamstow YMCA Harriers. For the period from 1919 to 1931 the club enjoyed some considerable success in YMCA events winning several championships and achieving many individual victories. The most momentous event for the club occurred in 1921 when Samuel James Waller was accepted as a member. Sam had a distinguished career as a runner but is best remembered as secretary, an office he held from 1931 to his untimely death in 1962. One of the first tasks given to him after his appointment as secretary was to seek a new home. Fire, which looms large in the club's history, had destroyed the YMCA and with it the facilities used by the members. Fortunately another saviour arrived in the form of Lt. Col Sir Stuart S. Mallinson who could perhaps be described as the local squire. His patronage had purchased land at nearby Wadham Lodge for use by the Shernhall Methodist Church. Learning of the club's plight he offered use of the ground and clubhouse, which was gratefully accepted. The club's minute book at the time (15 February 1932) noted" We (sic Shernhall Institute) are willing to allow (the club) to use the Pavilion for the Harriers at a fee of 5/= per week. This will include use of the showers etc." It was shortly after this meeting that the name was changed to Wadham Harriers.
The club continued its activities mainly on road and cross-country fixtures throughout the period, including the promotion of a Road Relay Race first held in 1938. This race continues today but at another venue as part of the Chingford League programme. Due to the Second World War activities were once again curtailed but Sam Waller was in place to ensure that the club continued in existence and able to resume normal activities in 1945. Shortly after the war ended, Ron Lambert joined the club and figured prominently in Essex cross-country for a number of years. The road relay continued to be held from Wadham Lodge (see picture above) with Hampstead Harriers the dominant team. So dominant that Sam gave them the "sack" much to the annoyance of Harry Hicks! (Later SC CC Secretary). Membership fluctuated but during the late 50s the club recruited several talented young athletes who went on to win county and area titles. While such success helped, the club committee accepted reluctantly that the name Wadham Harriers whilst known amongst the athletic fraternity, had no wider appeal and the decision was taken in 1962 to make a further name change to Walthamstow Athletic Club. Following this the activities of the club also changed with an equal emphasis being given to track and field as well as the more traditional cross-country. 1962 also saw the club amalgamating with the Chingford Athletic Club, which had been formed in 1953. This club had achieved early success, winning the Chingford League competition in 1955 only two years after its formation. Membership declined, however and when the clubs joined together only three members made the change. The new combined club however achieved some success during the period from 1962 to 1970. Ron Howe won the North Thames Inter team race in 1962 followed by the Southern Counties Junior Cross-Country title. On the track, Dane Joseph won the UK Championships 800 metre title as well as gaining an international vest. The club has had a yoyo existence in the Southern League achieving Division two status on two occasions. The best season was 1988 when it won all six matches.

Surrounded as it is by clubs with higher profiles, it nevertheless has had its share of successes but above all has provided athletics for a wide variety of members who must have enjoyed the way the clubs has been organised for it to have lasted 100 years.

Road Relays.

The Wadham Road Relay was inaugurated in 1938. The course consisted of 10 legs over a course from Brookscroft Road via Forest road to waterworks corner down Wadham Road (to become North circular) back to Brookscroft. Two races were held prior to World War II. The second race was notable as the Woodford Green team were disqualified due to the final leg runner collapsing just before the finish line a la Jim Peters was assisted over the line. Lessons are never learned!

It resumed after the war in 1946 and became an invitation event held over six legs. Following the growth in traffic it moved to Highams Park. A notable occasion arose in the 1970s when teams from Shaftesbury Harriers (including Dave Bedford and Julian Goater) attempted to finish 1st and second teams. They failed, the B could only finish third. The race continues today as part of the Chingford and district League.

In 1955 the Chingford club started a road relay in North Chingford. In 1963 this was taken up by Walthamstow following the amalgamation of the clubs, and held each year up to 1999 when lack of entries in 2000 saw its demise. The club also promoted a successful Youth Relay for a number of years.
Veterans Road Race.
The club first promoted this annual event in 1972 to celebrate Brian Hart's 40th birthday. Held over a murderous course it perhaps has never captured a large contingent of runners but continues to attract some tough competitors. The course record of 21m40secods was set in 1978 by Robin Campbell of Essex Beagles and has been approached once only by James Goldring (21.45) but then he was a mere youngster of 35 years.

People.
Foremost is Sam Waller who was club secretary for 31 years and saw it through the War period as well as crisis in changing quarters and membership. He had some considerable success in the YMCA competitions during the 1920s. He instigated the formation of the Chingford League in 1955 and introduced the concept of mixed road and cross-country races for the league competition which still remains today. He served on the Essex committee for a number of years.

Col. Sir Stuart S. Mallinson became our patron in 1927 and was instrumental in providing a home base at Wadham lodge but also provided facilities in the grounds of the White House for use as cross-country training quarters. The club possesses several trophies presented by Sir Stuart.

Athletes.
Ron Lambert was a regular member of the Essex Inter counties team in the 1950s and was a winner of the North Thames Inter Team Race. As was Ron Howe who in the course of one year won not only the North Thames race but also the Southern Junior Cross country Championship and the Essex six miles track championships and only just failed to make the England Junior international cross-country team. Dane Joseph became UK 800m champion in 1979 and gained an international vest against West Germany.

A notable occasion occurred in 1982 when James Goldring, Alan Rich and Steve Surridge took the individual and team medals in the Essex and Southern 20miles road championships held within the Finchley 20 and just failed to win the open race. Alan Rich won the Liverpool marathon.

Trevor Sloman gained an England vest in a Combined events match.

The advent of the Waltham forest Track, long fought for by Sam Waller, came in 1987. For a time the club’s membership took on age groups from 11 upwards and some success was achieved in young athletes competition. Unfortunately with the fall off of coaches and administrators the young athletes section declined and has now ceased. The attempt to promote a women's section also fell by the wayside. As did, incidentally, a section formed in the 1920s in the YMCA Harriers time of the club.