

## THE ACHILLES CLUB IN 1951

Recollections and reminiscences are often the stuff of imagination, especially after 50 years, during which time the heroic efforts of yesteryear have notably improved! Nevertheless, the attempt must be made and the Annual Report for 1951 does bring the reader down to earth, while the statistics of the Varsity Match show clearly the huge difference that the change of date to the summer eventually made. The year in general was highly successful for the Achilles Club, even though the threat of the First Claim membership was at hand, for even the OUAC Secretary, the writer of this article, was himself a South London Harrier.

Beginning with the Varsity Match itself, although the margin of victory (19 pts) seems large today, the horrible weather, combining as it did both cold, sleet and foggy conditions, somehow disguised this margin. The large and vocal crowd witnessed a whole succession of extremely close races, while the Field Events were equally closely fought. The two highlights on the track were the victory of Nick Stacey in the 220 yards in the record time (22.1 secs) and Philip Morgan's win in the 3 Miles also in record time (14.25.4 secs), both for Oxford, and perhaps a triumph for officialdom, since the two men were President and Secretary respectively. This was the year before the Olympic Games and these results raised the hopes of many participants. Who could have possibly guessed that a future Olympic Gold Medallist was only second in the 3 Miles!

The School Tour, though small in numbers, was again a happy and useful occasion during which long lasting friendships were made and still continue to this day. In the Sward Trophy at Chiswick, largely a Field Events meeting, Achilles did well to finish 2nd in an event with very curious methods of scoring, Henry Leader and Peter Hildreth winning their events. However, in the Kinnaird Trophy, intelligent selection by the Team Manager, Norris McWhirter, brought the reward of success, enlivened by an exciting race between Roger Bannister and Gordon Pirie in the Mile, the former winning by half a second. The Ryder Trophy, also with a very eccentric scoring system, brought further success in Southampton and saw the McWhirter twins triumph in the short sprints, with Rod Salmon, Paul Vine, Ossie Burger and Philip Morgan also recording satisfying wins.

In the AAA Championships, Roger Bannister set a new Mile Record in 4.7.8 secs, while Chris Chataway, Peter Hildreth and Angus Scott were all runners up in their events. Several other Achilles athletes played their part in keeping the Club in the forefront of athletic excellence. Two more results successfully rounded off the season when Achilles won the London Athletic Club Relays at the White City by a narrow margin from the Polytechnic Harriers in July, perhaps the triumph of the hurdlers being the most satisfactory with the team of David Dixon, Hugh Lambert, Paul Vine and Ray Barkway putting on a most convincing performance. Four days later, the Club went to Birmingham for the Waddilove Trophy and again beat Polytechnic Harriers, the Holders, this time by only one point, Tony Hignell shining in the Javelin.

Oxford and Cambridge defeated Harvard and Yale by 9 events to 4 at the White City in June, being given a fine start when Robin Pinnington won the 1 00m in 9.9 secs. In the two Hurdles events, Peter Hildreth continued the good work, supported by Nick Stacey, Chris Chataway, Philip Morgan and Ian Walker, all of whom won their events with some ease.

No less than 19 members of Achilles represented British Universities in the International Student Games in Luxembourg. Robin Pinnington won the 200 m and Ossie Burger the Pole Vault but perhaps the most spectacular result was in the 5000m when Chris Brasher, Philip Morgan and John Bryant in that order took all the medals. Silver Medals also were achieved by Robin Pinnington (1 00m), Chris Brasher (1 500m) and Paul Vine (11 0m Hurdles) while Alan Dick and Edward Robinson ran exceptionally fast legs in the 400m and the 800m relays.

The evening matches around the London area will not be forgotten by those who took part, many meeting unusual tactics of a physical kind on the track for the first time. Ian Borland, who inveigled members into competing with a mixture of bonhomie and cunning, was a tower of strength on these occasions and the Master of Ceremonies for all activities, Sandy Duncan, made sure that even in adversity, a rare commodity for Achilles athletes, he continued to take snuff as if to show that no disaster could move him. He possessed the gift of persuasion and in a kind and generous way managed to convince the writer that it was his task to write a booklet outlining the duties of the OUAC Secretary, a copy of which is still extant somewhere.