

Achilles Club 1995 Annual Report

MIDSUMMER MAGIC

That the Centenary Match and Banquet were an unqualified success has been agreed by all who attended. The only complaint (once the match results had been safely retrieved the next day from the Iffley Road dustbin) was that such occasions are not held more often! The return match against Harvard and Yale had been keenly awaited. It is yet another indication of the Club's revival that Oxford and Cambridge went into the Match as holders of the Naughton Trophy for the first time for 30 years. Our renewed recognition of the competitive aspect of the fixture has restored vigour and focus to the series, and resulted this year in a marvellous afternoon's sport. With the incorporation over the last 15 years of women's events, the Match is now scored in the combined totals of no less than 35 events: Harvard and Yale snatched victory by just one event, 18-17, by winning the very last race of the day, the Men's 4x400m relay. Harvard's Bryan Henry and Cambridge's Afi Amaku won the Pat Liles Outstanding Performer awards, but equally noteworthy was the way in which everyone in the Oxbridge team under Dewi Robert's inspirational management rose to the occasion.

Over 100 former participants had entered a full programme of veteran and open events, and although an outbreak of common sense, (as Philip Morgan put it) significantly reduced the number who actually appeared, it was enormous Fun for the athletes, who included many Americans, and spectators alike.

Tom Blodgett and John Hemery rolled back the years with some particularly athletic performances, while centrepiece of the afternoon was the Mile Handicap, won by Cecil Walkeley. In the 'open' events, Dwavne Heard, who won a record 13 events at 'Varsity Sports' in his day, surprised himself with an impressive comeback in both horizontal jumps.

The Match programme incorporated an extensively researched history of the first 100 years of the series. For those unable to be present last June copies of this splendid volume will in due course be circulated to all members. Meanwhile, Nick Brawn's excellent photographs have captured the day's events for posterity.

The Banquet the next day at Guildhall was one of the most lavish and certainly the largest in the Club's illustrious history. As at the Match every detail had been meticulously planned: the piper playing at the entrance, the pikemen forming a guard of honour, the memorabilia on display during the reception, the beautifully presented dinner programme and menu, the Club silver (including the Kinnaird, Sward and Vancouver Trophies of which we are the holders), even the Achilles Old Gold Mango Coilils, for dessert, were all testament to the efforts of the organising committee. The speeches were of the highest quality. Tommy Macpherson looked forward to the Club's own centenary 25 years hence; Van Ivanovic recalled the worst athletics dinner he had attended, when Paavo Nurmi addressed his British hosts for over half an hour.... in Finnish; Jeremy Knowles, Dean of Harvard (who turned out to be a Brit and an Oxford man to boot) aptly quoted from the Bible that "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased"; Jim Wade presented to Oxford and Cambridge respectively two fine pewter salvers, suitably engraved to mark the occasion in recognition of 'our friendship and competition' (we had earlier presented to Yale an original print framed, mounted and inscribed, of the first match in the series, Oxford v. Yale in 1894, and to Harvard a similar original print of the first joint match in 1899); and Chri Chataway rounded off the evening with a glorious blend of panache and irreverence.

The organising committee were enormously gratified that their efforts to make the celebrations enjoyable and memorable were so much appreciated. Several of those who attended have written reports of their own for their own friends and associations, and some excerpts set out below will give a taste of the occasion to those unable to attend.

John Hartley was up at Cambridge shortly before and during the first years of the Second World War. He has added some useful reminiscences of the old Fenners Track, and remembers being warned by Godfrey Brown of the sharp kink in the bend shortly before the 440y start at the point where the track went round a large tree which stood on the inside of the bend. When ITN was founded in 1955, John was its first Chief Reporter. He was delighted, therefore, to be reunited at the Banquet with Chris

Chataway, who was himself ITN's first Newscaster. John's report to the 'ITN 1955 Club' included the following:

"In the ITN newsroom on that opening night I watched Chris Chataway newscasting ITN's first bulletin and then went to the Guildhall in London to cover the Grand Banquet being held to mark the momentous - and controversial inauguration of Commercial TV in the UK. I interviewed several VIPs and I thus has the distinction of being among the select few, including Chris Chataway, to appear on screen on that first night of Commercial TV.

"The next time I met Chris was also the next time I went to the Guildhall on the 29th June this year. The evening had nothing to do with broadcasting. It was a slap-up banquet given by the Achilles Club - the athletic club comprising athletes who have represented either Oxford or Cambridge in the annual Varsity Sports. The occasion was the celebration of 'The centenary of the first-ever athletics meeting of representative teams from two fully sovereign modern nations' i.e. the 1894 meeting when Oxford beat Yale two years ahead of the modern Olympic Games. The inter-universities 'meeting very quickly became Oxford and Cambridge v. Harvard and Yale, a regular fixture ever since. The banquet was being held on the evening after this year's fixture - which the Americans won by one point - and also marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Achilles Club.

"As a member of the Achilles Club I was invited to attend with my wife even though we live in Australia. It was an opportunity too good to miss, especially as we had planned to visit England anyway - hopefully for ITN's 40th anniversary celebrations.

"I was asked to provide the names of anyone I knew who might be coming. The only two I could think of were Herb Elliot (who did not come) and Chris Chataway. I explained to the organisers that Chris and I were not athletic contemporaries but had worked together in the early days of ITN. To my astonishment and delight I found myself seated next to Chris at the dinner. This was a special honour, for Chris had been knighted only a few days earlier and anyway was one of the main speakers at the banquet.

"During the meal we discussed anniversaries (it is also the 40th anniversary of Roger Bannister's first-ever 4-minute mile, in which Chris and Chris Brasher (seated opposite) had been pacemakers. And, of course, ITN's fortieth. It was 40 years since I had seen Chris bounding up five flights of stairs at Television House in Kingsway, to sit down in the newscaster's chair without even breathing heavily.

"At the age of 64 Chris is still an example of fitness to us all. On the day before the banquet he had run against the Americans in a veterans 'Handicap Mile, in the amazing time of 5-mins 48-secs. It was the first time he had run on the Iffley Road track in Oxford since that famous 4-minute mile. He said that as he stood on the starting line he had made some mental calculations that, since that day forty years ago, he had absorbed some 400 pounds of tobacco and over 7,000 litres of wine - though after the race had started it felt like a great deal more!

"Far days, indeed, since the immortal years when he had beaten the 'invincible' Emil Zatopek and run a heart-stopping 5000-metres under floodlights at the White City against the wonder runner, Valdimir Kuts. The tension in the stands and at home watching it on TV had been unbearable during the final lap when Chris had sprinted home to win in a new world-record time.

"I have always felt a special personal pride in my contribution to Chris's athletic career for I feel I am owed some of the modest credit for having been the, first to launch him into public recognition. In my pre-ITN days I worked on The Times. Although not on the sports staff I was permitted, for some years, to cover the Varsity Sports.

"One year, with what I thought was an inspired moment of journalistic flair and perception (but which Basil Fawley would have described as a 'statement of the bleeding obvious') I picked out a blazing star of the future. In the conservative style of The Times, pre- Murdoch, I drew special attention to 'a promising Oxford Freshman, C. Chataway. 'Not much, but it was enough. Chris's career was assured and he never looked back. "

Further personal accounts of the celebrations are included in the Appendix.

ACHILLES MEDALS

Achilles Medals for 1995 have been awarded to Richard Nerurkar and Sarah Winckless. A full list of medallists since the awards were first made in 1949 is included in the appendix.

ACHILLES ANNUAL ELITE ATHLETES AWARDS

Year by year, through the generosity of contributors to the Achilles Trust, we are able to offer increasingly significant assistance to aspiring internationals in the form of athletics 'scholarships'. Recipients of awards this year are:

Jonathan Parker, an Oxford Freshman who is a Great Britain Junior International at 400m hurdles. Pierre Faber, another Oxford Freshman, a decathlete who is already an established South Africa International, and African Champion in 1993.

Naomi Siddall, a talented former hurdler now in her second year at Cambridge, who is showing great promise in the triple jump.

Beverley Gray, a Cambridge Freshwoman who placed 30th for Great Britain in the 1995 World Cross Country.

Nick Walne, a Cambridge rugby Blue who won the 'Varsity Match long jump in 1995 and has the potential to reach at least international standard in that event.

RELAYS MATCH

A bracing February day at Wilberforce Road saw an enjoyable early season confrontation. The women's match, enlivened by strong Achilles participation, was particularly close fought, the result being in the balance until the home straight of the final event, the 4x400m, when Cambridge President Ruth Irving inched in front.

ACHILLES TRIUMPHANT IN KINNAIRD AND SWORD

In the second year of our return to these historic trophy competitions we ran out easy winners of both matches against moderate opposition. Success was assured through Jon Crews' well tried formula of ensuring we had a second string, usually himself, in every event. Results are appended.

'VARSITY MATCH - AND OFFICIAL OPENING AT WILBERFORCE ROAD

After 131 years of waiting, Cambridge were at last given a second chance to prove that they can run a 'Varsity Match without gambling scandals and without supporters going on the rampage (factors which resulted in the fixture being banished for over a century to London). Chris Thorne managed admirably: a mollified Dean of Churchill was eventually persuaded that OUAC, having

returned the letter 'C', had actually done his college a service in highlighting the defective adhesive on the smart new sign at their gates. The women's match was a nailbiter, with Cambridge having to ensure that they did not drop the baton on the last relay to win by a single point. Sarah Winckless broke her own match record in the discus, and was awarded the Susan Dennler Trophy. The men's events were not of vintage quality, but were contested with the usual intensity and determination which is so characteristic of 'Varsity Matches, whatever the sport. David Reeve's 15.05 Triple Jump won him the Drake Digby Trophy.

Full results are appended.

COMBINED SERVICES MATCH

Achilles were outclassed in many events, and the women could muster no more than a token team. The team managers will have to be more effective if we are to continue to justify our invitation to this key fixture. Robert and Susan Stinson's hospitality was thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended after the match, but again it was disappointing that so much thought and effort could not reach a wider audience... Results are appended.

FRESHMENS MATCH

Neither victory in 4 events by Oxford's international decathlete Pierre Faber of South Africa nor Cambridge's disqualification in both relays could prevent a narrow win for the Light Blue men at Wilberforce Road on 1st November. Their women were even more dominant, with some fine sprinting in cold conditions and a match record at 200m by H. Fuller. Full results are appended.

NATIONAL RANKINGS

Richard Nerurkar was again the Club's leading athlete, recording the year's second fastest time by a Briton in the marathon. Ranked 6th in the 20k Walk in Peter Matthew's Merit Rankings was Chri Cheeseman, who represented the UK in the World Walking Championships in China. Sarah Winckless ranked 7th in the discus, Ruth Irving 9th in the long jump, and Gill Howard =12th in the high jump. Nnena Lynch (USA) recorded the 6th fastest time in the UK over 1500m and 10th fastest over 5000m.

John Moreland stretched his Northern Ireland discus record to 51.76. Mark Rigby (Caius, Cambridge, 1980-83, and a former winner of the Cambridge Boundary Run) placed 3rd in the national Fell-Running rankings.

VETERANS

Sue Bevan (W3S 800m), Chris Melliush (M50 hammer) and Sarah Owen (W40 100m hurdles) ranked first in the UK in their events for the year. Brian Hull bounced out to a close 2nd in the M45 triple jump lists.

Carole Morris, who dominated the javelin at the 'Varsity Sports for 6 years from 1977, has been enjoying continued success and won the W35 title at the 1994 BVAF Championships.

The indefatigable Max Jones reported from the World Vets Championships at Buffalo that he had won silver in the M65 marathon (and another in the team competition); Cecil Walkely took a bronze with the Australian, team in the same category; Steve James won gold in the M55 10k, and a bronze in the 5k, and it is high time his absence from the Club's membership list is rectified!

SIR CHRIS

Our sincere congratulations to Sir Christopher Chataway on his knighthood, announced a few days before the Harvard/Yale match; and our commiserations to the befuddled reporter who referred, during the evening's television news, to the participation in our veterans mile of 'Chris Chataway and Sir Christopher Brasher'.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Sarah Owen (who as Sarah Bull pioneered the establishment of the Women's 'Varsity Match in the mid-70's, and a world class veteran heptathlete) is to be the British Women's Team Manager at the World Junior Championships in Australia in August.

Tony Martin (CUAC President, 1973), in a long letter of apologies for being unable to attend the Centenary Banquet, sends his best wishes to contemporaries and the club, and a welcome to any members visiting Western Australia.

Samantha Aarvold (OUAC 1987-90) is working in Addis Ababa until 1997 for the charity Concern Worldwide as their field accountant, and would welcome visitors.

James Hely-Hutchinson (CUAC Hon. Sec.1987-8) has left Barings to start a four-year course at theological college in Sydney, Australia.

WELCOME BACK

One of the pleasing results of our extensive advertising of the Centenary Banquet is that we have reestablished contact with several members whose names had not been on our mailing list, some of them for many years. There have been periods when the Club's membership administration has been less than foolproof, and there are still many people out there who have competed for the Club, or who are eligible for election, but have never been sent joining papers. If you know of any such 'missing members' please get them to contact us. Meanwhile among those we have recently welcomed back are:

Ian Mann (veteran of the 1929 tour to South Africa)
Steve Briault
Chris Cheesema
Mick Dale
Roger Stennett
Peter English
Roger Dunkley
Gordon Wilson
Simon Brooks
Ramon Alberaa
Tony Gershuny

60 YEARS ON

In 1935 Sandy Duncan was embarking on his career as one of the most distinguished athletics administrators of our time. His election as President of OUAC was a springboard to his achievements as Secretary of variously the Commonwealth Games Federation (1948-82), the British Olympic Association (1948-75), the British Commonwealth Games, Council for England (1948-72), and of course of the Achilles Club (1948-87). Sandy's counterpart that year at Cambridge was J.C. Stothard, and Oxford won the 'Varsity Sports by 7 events to 4

We apologise for omitting from last year's Report the names of two further Gold Medallists at the Empire Games of 1934: 'Tiny' Davis in the 4 x 110y and Dennis Rathbone in the 4 x 440y

25 YEARS ON

Peter de Villiers and a Peter Thompson were Presidents of OUAC and CUAC, presiding over the last 'Varsity Match not to feature the second team match held in tandem. It was also the last match in which an Olympic Champion competed: David Hemery won the high hurdles, but his time of 14.4 seconds was insufficient to break Tom Blodgett's match record of 14.2 seconds which survived until shaved by John Ridgeon to 14.1 in 1988. Phil Lewis set an 800m match record of 1:48.5 and John Rix a steeplechase record of 8:47.4, both of which are as yet unbeaten. Oxford won the match 106-80.

25 YEARS AGO

Following the 1970 Varsity Match, we are now entering the "Dark Ages", in the sense that no Achilles Annual Report was published for the next 15 years. However, we plan to continue with information extracted from the Club Archives and with the benefit of other eye witness accounts. One such account follows!

Freshmen's Field Events and Relays Matches- November 1970

A fine November day saw the Milton Road track in unusually good shape for the Freshmen's Match, which Cambridge won surprisingly easily. Oxford's leading freshman, Steve White had something of an off day, only managing to win his third string event, the Long Jump, with the Dick Saunders / Peter Arbuthnot combination proving effective for Cambridge in the sprints. Other notable confrontations which gave a foretaste of Blues' match battles yet to come included a victory for Paul Temporal over Matt Dixon and Ed Forman in the 400m, and wins for Lawry Daniels over Dave Naylor, and Peter Crawshaw over Andy Reekes in the Shot and 800m respectively. In the Javelin, Roger Barr took a break from Boxing training to beat Charlie Greenfield. Other future Blues to make a mark were Richard Burrige in the High Hurdles, John Sneideris in the Pole Vault and Graham Dugdale in the 3000m.

Cambridge continued the dominance established in the Freshmen's Match with victories in the Field Events and Relays. The former was a comfortable win at a chilly Milton Road for Cambridge, with Oxford only managing to register on the scoreboard in the Discus, where Nick Nops was in a class of his own.

The Relays provided a much closer competition in good conditions at Iffley Road. Cambridge dominated the two hurdles events, with Peter Thompson to the fore, and the 4x1500, and looked set to add to their 4x100 win in the 4x200 until Ben Bolton-Maggs unaccountably allowed the baton to slip from his grasp half way through his leg. Oxford owed their two other wins to the individual brilliance of Phil Lewis, who 'produced a sub-1.50 final leg coming from a long way behind to overtake future CUAC President Tony Martin in the 4x800, and an equally impressive 47.7 clocking to pass David Knight (completing his medical studies in Oxford but running for Cambridge!) in the 4x400.

OUAC tour to Poland

The day after Boxing Day, 1970, a group of athletes, predominantly from OUAC

gathered at Harwich in cold, snowy conditions to begin a journey by ferry and car to Warsaw, for "cold weather" training. This was the second such trip to take place, courtesy of the then OUAC coach, Captain Mack, though the first for several years: it proved to be such a success that it was repeated in each of the following two years. The intrepid drivers were Frank Brown (later OUAC Hon. Senior Treasurer), David Knight (see above) and John Greasley (former AAA National javelin record holder). The passengers included Brian Hull, Richard Gyles, Crispin Heath, Richard O'Brien, Dave Naylor, Peter Crawshaw, Dave Barton, Paul Dennis and Steve Nussey.

Some at least had viewed the recent political events in Poland (the ousting of Gomulka, accompanied by civil unrest in the Baltic ports) with some apprehension, even contemplating cancellation of the trip. Mack, however, sought to reassure all by asserting that our hosts were Gierek supporters. Once all had packed the quota of M&S cardigans (purchased as gifts for our hosts), the party embarked for a ferry crossing which tested the constitutions of many, though whether this was due more to the gale force conditions or to the evil smelling cigars which Mack insisted on smoking was unclear. Having finally reached the Hook of Holland, we drove to Arnhem for the night. The following day we crossed both West and East Germany, eventually arriving at Frankfurt on Oder, only to find that we had left some key documents at the West/East border post at Helmstedt. The East Germans were fortunately sufficiently impressed by the athletic credentials of at least some of our party that they arranged for the papers to be brought across to us. At last we crossed the river into Poland, spending a night (somewhat disturbed by intermittent gunfire!) in the border town of Slubice.

The whole of the next day was taken up by the drive to Warsaw: there was very little other motorised traffic on the roads, as this preceded the building of the Fiat factory in Poland, and our western cars drew a crowd whenever we stopped. However, progress was slow, as there was no dual carriageway and the snow became worse as we got further East. Our Warsaw accommodation was in the Hotel Studencki (i.e. a student hall of residence), close to the Skra stadium, then Warsaw's main athletics facility.

Training mostly took place indoors in the gymnasium at Skra. The work required came as an unpleasant shock to the system for all but the most well conditioned of the party: the others were literally on our knees after what we were horrified to find out was only the warm up to the first session, conducted by coach Jaworski, accompanied by his wife (at the time one of the World's top javelin throwers). The ultimate indignity came when our main host, Roman Korban, decided to demonstrate one of the hurdle drills with which most had been struggling - in his lounge suit and street shoes. Other sessions took place outside in freezing conditions and deep snow. Overall, the training was an eye-opener: a taste of what conditioning needed to be done if the sport was to be taken at all seriously.

The real value of the stay in Warsaw, however, was cultural. Our hosts could not have been more hospitable, not least on New Year's Eve at a party at the Polish Olympic Centre: the strength of the liquor was such that one member of our group collapsed some two hours before the New Year was seen in. Another team member (a native Scot) had chosen to wear a kilt, a garment not seen first hand by, so it seemed, any of the local ladies, some of whom were so impressed that they plied him with the hard stuff all evening: he did not rise from his bed for several days afterwards. Mack, needless to say, was a tremendous guide to the city, and we all found ourselves fascinated by what we saw and heard: one of our number so much so that he returned to Warsaw on a British Council scholarship for a year, during which time he met his future wife. Having seen the predicament in which the Polish people found themselves at that time, I cannot believe that any of us could have expected to see them free of Soviet control in our lifetimes: it is scarcely believable that things could have changed so much in so short a space of time.

IN MEMORIAM

A.G.K. Brown (Peterhouse, Cambridge, 1934-38), on 11th February 1995. Godfrey Brown, Olympic Gold and Silver Medallist, was one of the Club's most distinguished representatives. His funeral and memorial services were fittingly well attended by members led by his elder and younger brothers, Sir Ralph and Roderick, both of whom also represented CUAC. We append a headline obituary which appeared in *The Times*, together with Michael Melford's memorable tribute written a couple of decades ago (from "I was there"; *Daily Telegraph* publications).

A.G. Pilbrow (Queen's, Oxford; 1931-5) on 2nd May 1995. A team-mate of Godfrey Brown at the 1936 Olympics, Ashleigh Pilbrow won the 'Varsity Match 120y hurdles in 1935. He was 3rd in the AAA Championships of 1935 and 1936, and AAA Indoor Champion at 70y hurdles in 1935. His personal bests were 14.7w and 15.0. Uniquely his son and grandson, also high hurdlers, represented OUAC and are Achilles members.

W.E. Hampton (Trinity Hall, Cambridge, 1926-29), in January 1994. C.O. Healey (Brasenose College, Oxford, 1930-34), in October 1993. Colin Healey won the 3 Miles at the 'Varsity Sports of 1934 (defeating 1936 Olympian Peter Ward), having placed third the previous year. He also ran in the cross-country matches of 1932 and 1933. His widow recalls that he was disappointed to have &127; placed only third when competing for Oxford and Cambridge against Princeton and Cornell in 1934.

S.G. Lamont Smith (Jesus College, Cambridge, 1961-65) on 27th March 1995. Simon Lamont Smith enjoyed officiating and meeting old friends at several recent 'Varsity Matches at Iffley Road.

G.G. Cradock-Watson OBE (St. John's College, Oxford, 1927-30) in about 1990. Geoffrey Cradock-Watson competed in the Quarter Mile at the 'Varsity Matches of 1929 and 1930, placing second in the latter. He was part of the small but dedicated Achilles team of 14 athletes which in 1929 toured South Africa, competing with distinction in seven matches in the course of three weeks. He contributed to new South African records for the 4 x 110 yards, 4 x 220 yards and 4 x 440 yards relays.

The Reverend Canon Edward Bradbrooke (The Queen's College, Oxford, 1925- 28), on September 30th 1994. Edward Bradbrooke competed in the high jump at the 'Varsity Sports of 1927, and the following year tied for first place with C.E.S. Gordon of Cambridge. He continued to jump internationally and for Achilles until at least 1934.

The Reverend A.F. Weigall (Christ Church, Oxford, 1931-34), on August 24th 1994. Anthony Weigall competed in the high jump at the 'Varsity Sports of 1934. A.E. Murray (Christ Church, Oxford, 1941-43), also on 24th August 1994. Alexander Murray won the 440 yards in 1942, and 100 yards and 440 yards in 1943, at the Wartime Oxford v. Cambridge Sports.

Major General S.E. Large MBE, MD, FRCP (Caius, Cambridge, 1935-38), in 1991. He competed in the mile at the 'Varsity Sports of 1937.

R.J.C. Goode (St. John's, Cambridge, 1928-31), in Natal, South Africa on 24th February 1995. Robert Goode competed for Cambridge in the 'Varsity Cross-Country matches of 1929 and 1930.

P. Balance (Lincoln, Oxford, 1949-5?), on 15th December 1995 after a long illness with cancer. Peter Balance represented Oxford in the mile against Cambridge in 1952, a race won by Chris Chataway.