

Achilles Club 1996 Annual Report

ACHILLES MEDALS

Achilles Medals for the year were awarded to Richard Nerurkar, who placed fifth in the Olympic marathon in 2:13.39, and to Pierre Faber (South Africa) who scored 7584 points during the Gotzis international decathlon competition. Jon Ridgeon ranked first in the UK over 400m hurdles, and Nerurkar and Chris Cheeseman (50k walk) ranked second. Other members ranked in the UK top 10 were Daniell Sanderson (marathon - 6th), Ruth Irving (long jump - 9th) and Mara Myers (10,000m - 10th).

THE THIRD ACHILLES TOUR TO SOUTH AFRICA

A group of about 40 members, led by John Moreland and Sue Bevan, and supported by Robert Stinson and Keith Marsden and their wives, enjoyed 10 days of competition and training in and around Stellenbosch. It was a far cry from the pioneering days of 1929, when an intrepid team of only 12, including Bob Tisdall, Reg Revans and Ian Mann, traveled south by steamer and set a dozen new South African Records. Full results from 1929, Dick Webster's reminiscences from 1935, and John Moreland's report on the 1996 tour are all appended. Unfortunately we are still waiting for our hosts to forward us official results: could those members who participated therefore please forward to Paul Willcox their own performances, and the performances of any team-mates which they are able to recall, and we will attempt to recreate listings for publication here next year.

This was the Club's second major overseas tour in five years, apart from the universities' regular four-yearly visits to the USA. Further regular tours, accessible to members of varying standards and age, and interspersed with annual Achilles warm-weather training camps, will restore the focus for the club's competitive aspirations which has been lacking since our withdrawal from league events. The camaraderie engendered overseas will create renewed enthusiasm for domestic matches, and a sense of identity with Achilles will be instilled in new generations of athletes.

RELAYS MATCH AND FIELD EVENTS MATCH

For the first time in the history of the events (a history which dates back to 1920 in the case of the Relays), the 'Varsity Relays and Field Events Matches were held concurrently, at Oxford on 3rd March. Oxford won both the mens' and the womens' Relays; the mens' Field Events was tied (although Oxford would have won had they but found a fourth competitor with the strength to hurl a discus 5m/16 ft), and the womens' Field Events was won by Cambridge. Achilles teams gusted with enthusiasm. The combined format was a great success, as was the staging of the events on a Sunday, and will be continued.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Nnenna Lynch, having become the first Member to win the women's English National Cross Country, joining some distinguished members who have won the men's event in the past (Richard Nerurkar has won three years in succession recently, while Julian Goater still holds the record for the greatest winning margin in the race's long history, set at a time when it was still the trial race for the World Cross Country and all the major contenders were competing), had the frustration of being subsequently disqualified on technicality: OUAC were mortified to discover that they had not registered any of their foreign members for competition in the UK.

Having placed third in the USA championships, Nnenna was selected to represent her country at the World Championships; and Beverley Gray was a late selection for the U.K. Junior team: unfortunately neither was able to compete. At the AAA Championships, Jon Ridgeon's miraculous return continued: his win in the 400m Hurdles came 9 years after his previous AAA title over the high hurdles. Chris Cheeseman placed second in the 10k walk (and later in the season won the BAF 20 miles and 50k titles).

ATLANTA

1996 Club members had the most successful Olympics for 30 years. Richard Nerurkar ran magnificently to achieve 5th place in the marathon. Tim Berrett placed 10th in the 50k walk. Jon Ridgeon continued his welcome comeback in the 400m hurdles. And Matthew Juniper placed 4th in the Paralympic 200m, barely 18 months after losing a leg in a rugby accident, the first time that a Club member has competed in this section of the Games.

VETERAN NEWS

The insatiable Max Jones set World age 65-69 records for 30 miles, 50k and 50 miles in difficult conditions on a shale track. He was first over-65 in the London Marathon (where he is one of only 42 who have run all 16 races since 1981), and continues to seek new worlds to conquer. Chris Melliush competed in the World Championships. Richard Healey, who has recently taken up a new Professorship in Geography at the University of Portsmouth, won the British M40 Shot title in 1995, and placed second in the discus. Hampered by injury in 1996 he is planning to be back in competition in 1997.

KINNAIRD AND SWARD

Conflicting fixtures on the same day for both universities forced Achilles' depleted but enthusiastic team to relinquish their grip on both trophies. Matt Weaver showed impressive early season form, winning the pole vault at 4.50, recorded a pb in the 100, and picked up points in many other events. Steve Booth was another athlete busy throughout the afternoon, while Jon Rushman, after disappointing runs in both 800m and steeplechase, delighted himself with victory over 1500m. Evergreen Chris Melliush placed third in the hammer; Simon Hall doubled in the 400/800; Tom Richardson ran a well-judged 3000m; Andy Robinson did his duty over 1500 and 3000m; Andy Morrod won the high jump; Mike Cole pulled on his spikes for the first time in 6 years to run a brave 400m; and our Chairman generously noted from the stands that your Hon. Sec. was 'not last' at either 100 or 200m.

VARSITY MATCH

In the worst weather for many a year, cold and wet, Oxford were victorious in both Blues matches and both second team events. In the men ' match they won all but four events: Pierre Faber scored 4 individual victories (high jump, pole vault, shot and discus, plus second in the javelin), a feat only surpassed by Jon Ridgeon or equaled by 3 others in the history of the match, while Anders Lustgarten (moving down in distance), Chas McCaw (moving up) and Seb Rosato all scored significant doubles. The Drake Digby Trophy was won for the second time by Gareth Davies. The womens' match was closer, but double wins from Afi Amaku, Becky Spies and Carolyn May laid the foundation for a solid dark blue victory. Talking point of the afternoon was the discus cage, which was declared unsafe by the Referee. After some hasty and frantic deliberations, the discus competitors were transported to Abingdon, where each took two throws. History was also made in the (mens') 3000m walk: Fiona Rose, Cambridge's first string but indeed a woman, placed second. After the rigours of the weather it was a relief to repair for dinner, the teams to the Randolph Hotel, where Dewi Roberts took the chair, and about 90 members of the Club to Trinity, where Tommy Macpherson, introducing speeches from Paul Willcox and Norris McWhirter, launched the major new appeal on behalf of the Achilles Trust.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE V. DARTMOUTH AND BROWN

Following our recent strong performances against other American universities, confidence ran high, and we hoped to avenge the last meeting against Dartmouth and Brown in the USA, when Oxford and Cambridge were robbed of victory by dubious judging on the final relay. Dewi Roberts mustered another keen and focused team, kitted out in fine new tracksuits sponsored by View From, who had also so generously supported our South Africa team.

However, opinion in America is that Dartmouth and Brown are currently the strongest pairing in the Ivy League, and this was borne out in the course of the afternoon, as more and more of the events which we had expected to win went the way of the opposition. Their womens' team was especially successful, setting five new match records, although mens' match records from Matt Weaver (4.80 pole vault) and Ander Lustgarten (an unpressed 48.2 400m) lifted home spirits. Nevertheless this was a fine and enjoyable afternoon's athletics, hosted admirably by Chris Thorne and CUAC, whose arrangements were impeccable. In a brief ceremony after the match, Sir Arthur Marshall declared open the room named after him in the new Cambridge pavilion, and regaled us with anecdotes of the Paris Olympics of 1924, when he was a member of the British team. Robert Stinson took the chair at the teams' dinner at St. Catharine's the same evening. The warmth and sincerity of our guests responses demonstrated the success of the tour from their point of view, and Oxford and Cambridge now look forward to their 1997 trip to the USA.

ALVERSTONE OUTING

The Alverstone Club of CUAC had been asked to send a team to celebrations at the village of Alverstone on the Isle of Wight commemorating the life and works of Lor Alverstone. A lusty deputation of Achilles members, including not a few Oxonians granted honorary membership of Alverstone for the day, duly appeared. Full details of proceedings have not yet emerged, but it is known that Chris Chollerton won a flat race of about 300 yards, and that Chris McGrady won an event which involved throwing a weight.

ACHILLES V. BANK OF ENGLAND AND OTHERS

An immaculately manicured grass track in Roehampton on a balmy July evening stirred memories of school sports days for a handful of members who thoroughly enjoyed a low key mid-week outing.

Achilles results:

100m A: 2, M Weaver 11.8. B: 3, P Willcox 12.7.

200m A: 1, S Booth 24.0 (3, G Clifford, B of E, no time taken). B: 1, Crosthwaite 24.6.

400m A: 1, T Stewart 55.5. B: 1, Willcox 60.0.

800m A: 1, S Hall 2:08.0.

1500m A: (1, Clifford 4:12.9) 4, J Herries 4:32.1.

3000m A: 2, Herries 9:27.1.

HJ A: A Hodge 1.75. B: 3, M.Weaver 1.40.

SP A: 4, Booth 10.17. B: 3, Hunt 8.07.

JT A: 2, Hodge 44.58. B: 3, Booth 37.00.

4 x 400m 1, Achilles (Stewart, Crosthwaite, Booth, Hall) 3:44.8.

Match: 1, Achilles 85; 2, Hercules Wimbledon 81; 3, Twickenham 77; 4, Bank of England, 40; 5, Kingston Poly, 10.

ACHILLES V. COMBINED SERVICES V. KENT V. SURREY V. HAMPSHIRE

Although this fixture moved from Aldershot to Portsmouth, it saw the best Achilles mens' team turnout for many years. The opposition was as always very strong, and fourth place, comfortably ahead of Surrey, was no mean achievement. Matt Weaver (winner of the Jon Crews Mars Bar for most points in individual events), Anders Lustgarten, Marc Poulin, Chas McCaw and John Moreland all finished close seconds. However, we relied heavily on our decathletes Dave Gardiner (a welcome return), Steve Garland and Steve Booth to fill in the gaps, and with just a few more specialists we could even have won. Our womens' turnout, in contrast, was the worst for many seasons.

Results (winners and Achilles):

Men:

100 A: 1, Lashore, 10.8 ...5, Alan Dunwoodie, 11.5. B: ...5, Matt Weaver, 12.9.

200 A: 1, Nolan, 21.6 ...5, Matt Weaver, 23.8. B: ...4, Simon Hall, 23.7.

400 A: 1, Fairclough, 47.3, 2, Anders Lustgarten, 47.3. B: ... 4, Robert Trezona, 53.9.

800 A: 1, Dupuy, 1:52.4, 2, Chas McCaw, 1:53.4. B: ...3, Donald Naylor, 2:00.4.

1500 A: 1, Fieder, 3:49.4, ...4, Dan Leggate, 4:00.4. B: ...2, Dave Benton 4:03.0.

5000 A: 1, Hamilton, 14:20.7, ...5, John Herries, 16:31.1. B: ...5, Donal Naylor, 17:17.7.

3000 S/C: 1, Sunner, 9:09.4, 2, Marc Poulin, 9:12.1.

110H A: 1, Dunson 14.7, ...5, Steve Booth, 15.8. B: ...3, Steve Garland, 16.7.

400H A: 1, Barch, 52.6 ...5, Steve Booth, 61.1. B: ...4. Simon Hall, 62.3

HJ A: 1, Turner, 1.95 ... 4, Steve Garland, 1.80. B: ...3, Dave Gardiner, 1.75.

LJ A: 1, Castel Branca 7.11, ...5, Dominic Tilley, 6.31. B: ...4, Steve Garland, 6.02.

TJ A: 1, Ralph, 15.67, ...4, Dominic Tilley, 13.21. B: ...3, Dave Gardiner 12.32.

HT A: 1, Sammutt 54.14, ... 5, John Moreland, 38.78. B: ...3, Dave Gardiner, 22.48.

PV A: 1, McDermott 4.60, 2, Matt Weaver 4.60. B: ...4, Nick Woodmansey 3.40.

DT A: 1, Newman 47.32, 2, John Moreland, 47.10. B: ...3, James Kindon, 36.82.

SP A: 1, Newman 16.89, ...5, Dave Gardiner, 11.08. B: ... 5, James

JT A: 1, Brown 54.32.

4 x 100: 1, Combined Services, 42.4, ...3, Achilles 45.9. **4 x 400:** 1, Hampshire, 3:16.2, ...4, Achilles, 3:25.3.

Result: Kent 273, Combined Services 259, Hampshire 249, Achilles 210 Surrey 154.

Women:

400H: ...5, Suzanne Barrington, 64.2.

200 A: ...5, Jo Cripps, 29.2. B: ...4, Suzanne Barrington 27.8.

JT A: ...5, Karen Thacker, 30.28. B: ...4, Ruth Wyndow, 29.94.

Result: Surrey 228, Kent 212, Hampshire 211, Combined Services 196, Achilles 30.

FRESHMENS' MATCH

(Michael Charlesworth corrected our omission last year of the apostrophe. In time we will get used to the unisex term Freshers', which is now common usage at the Universities. While on the subject, we would be interested to hear opinions on the initial apostrophe in 'Varsity, which according to some dictionaries is no longer required: how strongly do members feel about it?).

ACHILLES TRAINING

A party of 28 members, almost all of them still students at the Universities, spent a week or more training in Lanzarote in mid December. It is intended to make this a regular Achilles winter activity, and although in most years it would take place in the spring, as preparation for the summer season, this year it was held early in anticipation of the tour of the USA which starts in March. Andy Hodge and others are also planning regular training sessions at the Battersea Park track in London and at Crystal Palace. All will be welcome.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Ian Mann celebrated his 90th birthday on 4th May in Australia in the company of fellow Cambridge hurdler Bob Tisdall, his team mate on the 1929 tours to South Africa and the USA, and Ian's nephew John Malcolm, who toured the USA in 1957, and who has kindly sent us a photograph of the gathering for our archives. All are reported to be fit and well. Ian still gets about his sheep station in Western Victoria, Bob, who is now the world's senior Olympic Gold Medallist, plays tennis and still runs (and a few years ago made his first parachute jump at the age of 85!), and John participates in road races. Samantha Aarvold is still based in Ethiopia if anyone is interested in altitude training with a difference! George Brown, retired from his distinguished career teaching at Eton, has continued to exploit the literary talents which made his chemistry text books the standards against which others were judged, and has just published his Guinness History of Inventions.

ELITE ATHLETES BURSARIES

The Trustees of the Achilles Trust, which funds these awards, have decided make them towards the end of each academic year (rather than towards the beginning as has been the case in the past), in order to be able to take into account performances at the 'Varsity Match and other early season events. Minor awards may also be made on the strength of performances in the Freshmen's Match.