

Achilles Club 1994 Annual Report

BACK TO THE FUTURE - AN HISTORIC YEAR

As we look back on the achievements of 1994, the Club embarks on one of the most significant years in its history. We celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Club's foundation (and the minutes of the first committee meeting are reproduced elsewhere herein). However, the spirit of the Club goes back far earlier than that, and we are just proud of the fact that Oxford hosted the first ever international athletics match, versus Yale in 1894: the Transatlantic series continues to this day, and with Harvard and Yale visiting us in June, a lavish Anniversary Banquet is to be held.

However, our celebration of 1995 is by no means confined to reminiscence. In the very year of another centenary, that of the acquisition from Caius of Fenner's, CUAC will proudly hold the official opening of their new headquarters at Wilberforce Road, a sports complex which is at last worthy of upholding Light Blue traditions into the next millennium.

ALL members and their spouses/partners/guests are warmly invited to join in these celebrations. Another application form for the Guildhall Banquet is set out below, and we must ask that you return this NOW, as numbers must be finalised. Initial bookings have reflected tremendous interest and enthusiasm for the event, and we expect an attendance of close to 500, of which well over one third will be Americans!

However, if you cannot attend the Banquet on 29th June, then come to the 'Varsity Match at the official opening of the new Cambridge track on Saturday 20th May, or visit the Centenary Match v. Harvard and Yale in Oxford on Wednesday June 28th and perhaps even compete in veterans' events.

ACHILLES MEDALS

Achilles Medals for 1994 have been awarded to Danielle Sanderson (Marathon 2:36.29, and first British finisher in tough conditions at the European Championships), and Ruth Irving (Long Jump 6.28m, and Commonwealth Games Finalist). Both athletes ranked 3rd in the UK for the year.

ACHILLES TRUST AWARDS

The following Oxford and Cambridge athletes have received 1995 awards from the Trust to assist them to achieve top international standard in the increasingly competitive environment of modern athletics:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Heidi Moulder | (4th, | European | Junior | 3000m) |
| Ruth Irving | (Commonwealth | Games | Long Jump | Finalist) |
| Sarah Winckless (6th, AAA Discus) | | | | |

These awards would not be possible without the generosity of members who have contributed to the Achilles Trust over the years, enabling the Trustees to build up a substantial capital sum from which annual income is derived. The major part of this income funds the Transatlantic Series. The Trustees and the Club Committee would like to be able to expand the assistance given by the Trust to training and competition especially for undergraduate members, and to athletes of exceptional talent.

A more detailed explanation of the Trust's plans for the future, and how members can help realise them, will be circulated shortly.

KINNAIRD AND SWARD TROPHIES

That heading will make our older members sit up and take notice! For the first time for twenty years the Club competed for what were once the country's premier trophies. Nowadays the competition is not much more than an early season run-out for clubs in the south east, but nevertheless the standards were high, and the Club was proud to have placed third in both matches. Somewhere there is a trophy awarded within Achilles to the member who puts up the best performance at the Sward meeting. If we ever find it (does someone out there have it on their mantelpiece?) it should go to Matt Weaver who won the pole vault at 4.70m. Likewise there is a similar long lost award relating to the Kinnaird, which Andy Robinson's courageous and successful long run for home in the 1500m justified. Other victories were recorded by Chris Cholerton (400h), Chris Martin (400h B and 400 B), and Tony Hatton (javelin).

BANNISTER 4 MINUTE MILE GALA

The 40th Anniversary of Sir Roger's immortal achievement, in which so many Achilles members played supporting roles, was celebrated splendidly by the BAF at a dinner at the Grosvenor House Hotel.

Members were conspicuous among the guests of honour: Roger himself replied eloquently to a fine speech by Chris Chataway; Chris Brasher, Alan Gordon and George Dole were all honoured for their parts in the race; Herb Elliott, who subsequently held the World Record, was there; Jerry Corne, our 1932 Olympic 1500m Silver Medallist, was singled out for special mention.

The Club mustered a remarkable number of members who had participated in other events in the AA v. OUAC match on 6th May 1954: Sandy Duncan who had been match referee; Norris McWhirter the announcer; Derek Johnson who broke through for the first time in winning the 440, and Terry (now Sir Terence) Higgins whom he defeated; Robin Pinnington who won the 100 yards earlier in the evening; Peter Hildret and Paul Vine who sparred over the hurdles (the low hurdles having been run just before the mile, Roger would maintain that Paul finished in front of him that evening!); Michael McKean and Frederick Aldridge who contested the 2 Miles; Tom Carpenter who long jumped; and Nigel Miller who although listed in the programme for the mile to his eternal regret did not run.

It was an occasion for nostalgia and anecdotes. Robin Pinnington recalled how he wandered into the Iffley Road changing rooms later in that afternoon in 1954. The lone figure in the far corner was none other than RGB himself, quietly dressing in untroubled solitude. How times have changed.

The club filled another 7 tables at the dinner, and were treated to a feast of athletics memories. Almost all the subsequent world mile record holders, including another of our members, Herb Elliott, were on parade, and their exploits displayed on film. A most enjoyable and memorable night.

THE 120TH 'VARSITY MATCH

For the second year running the long jumpers took centre stage. Ruth Irving broke her own match record set last year with 6.28 in the women's match, and behind her Eleanor Cave and Halcyon Martin moved to second and third on the all-time list of competitors in the match. Oxford's President Gareth Davies equalled Simon Walker's 1993 record of 7.62 (25 ft exactly), and added the triple jump for good measure. It was Gareth's first taste of victory in Dark Blue colours, having already twice won the long jump for Cambridge in 1991 and 1992.

However, these performance were matched by Matt Weaver's new match record of 4.90 in the pole vault, adding 10 cm to his own mark, and by the throws of Malcolm Croad, achieving a new hammer record of 57.96, and Sarah Winckless, who added almost 8m to Maggie Anderson's discus record, with 46.70m.

Pride of place on the track went to Charlotte Cutler, who set new record in 400m hurdles, won the 400m flat, and turned a substantial deficit into a match-winning lead on the third leg of the deciding 4x400m relay.

The women's match, indeed was a cliff-hanger, Cambridge prevailing by just 91 points to 88. Oxford were clear winners of the men's match and the C.N. Jackson Trophy by 124 points to 98. Positions were reversed in the 2nd Team matches, being won by Alverstone (Cambridge men - The Graham Goddard Trophy) and Millipedes (Oxford women - The Derek Steel Trophy) respectively.

AAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

Andre Lill was perfectly placed coming off the final bend in a slow 800m but was frustrated to finish fourth. Ruth Irving was also a little below her best in the long jump, placing fourth with 6.07. Sarah Winckless however was close to her pb, placing 6th in the discus with 50.90.

Kenny Stirrat placed 10th in the 3000 S/C in a fast 8:48.26. Eleanor Cave, in what may be her farewell season, had a busy fortnight, placing 10th in the high jump and 11th in the triple jump while suffering from 'flu, and the next weekend achieving a satisfying 9th place in the heptathlon.

Other notable Achilles results included Daniell Sanderson, 8th 10000m; Tony Hatton, 14th JT; Matt Weaver, 15th PV; and Mara Myers, 15th 3000m.

PENN/CORNELL VISIT

Oxford and Cambridge thoroughly enjoyed welcoming a very friendly team for Pennsylvania and Cornell. After a memorable dinner in Jesus hall, they were smuggled into Trinity at midnight to attempt the Great Court Run. Someone had convinced them that to be done properly they should run naked: unabashed, men and women alike duly stripped off ... For the record, no one achieved a home run.

The match the following week at Iffley Road was contested in similar amiable spirit, but with none the less determination on both sides. Fired up by the victory against Harvard and Yale last year, team manager Dewi Roberts was determined to record the first win against Penn and Cornell since 1966. Sadly it was not to be, although both results hung in the balance until late on the glorious summer evening which the contest enjoyed.

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

This was the best match in terms of quality in depth that Achilles has competed in for many years. Thus although we fielded strong (and almost complete) teams of both men and women it was no disgrace that we finished 5th out of the 6 competing teams in each match. As it was the men beat Surrey (and would have passed Combined Services, too, if it had not been for no-heights in the pole vault and high jump), and the women beat Combined Services.

The teams decamped for a relaxed evening swim and barbecue, courtesy of the Hon. Sec.'s parents, rounding off what is now firmly established as the centrepiece of the Club's competitive calendar.

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS AND COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The Club's interest at the Europeans was all centred on the marathons. Richard Nerurkar ran a splendid race but will have been disappointed to have been forced in fourth place by the Spanish trio: his time was 2:11.56. Daniell Sanderson also achieved great things, being first Briton home in 11th place with 2:36.29.

Our representation at the Commonwealth Games was more broadly based. Pride of place goes to former OUAC President Tim Berrett, representing Canada, who took the silver medal in 30k Walk after having made much of the pace. The current CUAC President, Ruth Irving, of Scotland, reached the long jump final. Joanna Latimer, of Northern Ireland, was close to winning a place in the 800m finals, coming 5th in her semi. Andrew Lill, however, representing England, was run out of it in the home straight of his first round 800m.

CUAC CUPPERS - FIRST MATCH AT THE NEW CAMBRIDGE TRACK

A new era was ushered in by an entrant in the women's pole vault, who was the first person to participate in competition at the splendid new facility at Wilberforce Road.

CRIMEWATCH

We received an interesting letter from a non-member who had come by a medal inscribed
*Oxford-Cambridge v. Harvard-Yale. Harvard Stadium.
Pole vault. 1965. 3rd.*

and who wondered if we knew its history. Our records quickly showed that it had been won by Nicholas Newton: he was delighted, as it had been stolen with much else of sentimental value from his home no less than 7 years ago. The medal's discovery gives him hope that other items may in the course of time yet come to light.

IDIOT

Marcus Browning, who won the long jump at the 1990 'Varsity Match and has a personal best of 7.52, achieved the dubious distinction of being the first member to be disqualified from competition for drug abuse. He tested positive for amphetamines after placing last in the javelin for team Solent in a GR match. Press reports record that "Browning says he has now retired from athletics".

IN MEMORIAM

This year we mourn the passing of three distinguished knights, and several other friends and former team-mates. However, it is the early death of a younger fellow member, before his career had run its course, that makes us stop and reflect.

R. A. Stone (Emmanuel, Cambridge, 1979-82, and Exeter, Oxford, 1983-86). Both Light Blue and Dark Blue contemporaries will be shocked to hear of the death of Rick Stone, who won the pole vault for Cambridge at the 1982 'Varsity Match, and for Oxford in 1986. Rick was bushwhacking in Australia, but died of cardiac arrest of unknown cause during an extended visit home to the UK, on 15th April 1994.

Sir Jack Longland (Jesus College, Cambridge 1923-27, and Magdalene College 1927-29) on 29th November 1993. Jack achieved distinction in many walks of life, as an academic, pioneering Everest mountaineer, educationist and long time broadcaster on "Any Questions", "Round Britain Quiz" and "My Word". He competed in the Pole Jump in the 'Varsity Sports of 1926, and placed 2nd in 1927.

Sir Henry Phelps Brown, MBE, FBA (Wadham College, Oxford, 1924-28), on 15th December 1994. Henry was a member of the victorious Oxford team in the 1926 Cross Country match. He became one of the foremost economists of his generation, and throughout the 1960's and 1970's was a leading adviser to governments on wages and prices.

Sir Noel Moynihan FACGP CStJ (Downing College, Cambridge, 1938-40 and 1946-49), on 5th October 1994. A miler of rare talent, his athletic career was interrupted by the war. He won the unofficial wartime 'Varsity Match mile of 1940, before entering the RAF, and returned to Cambridge in 1946 at the age of 30 to read medicine. An obituary in The Times reports that he captained several England athletics teams. He devoted his life to disaster relief, and since 1977 had been Chairman of Save the Children Fund.

E.G. Perry (Christ's College, Cambridge, 1929-32), in February 1994. Gordon Perry won the shot put in the 1932 'Varsity Sports. The achievement was remarkable for the fact, related to us by his son, that at the age of 11 he had a section of ox-bone grafted into his right arm, following multiple fractures. The operation was performed without antibiotics or modern bone screws by a Mr E.H. Groves of the Bristol Royal Infirmary, who modelled and boiled pieces of fresh ox bone at home in his kitchen. Gordon first worked as a missionary, and after serving in the army from 1940 to 1955, pursued a career as a schoolmaster.

The Reverend F.M. Argyle (Clare College, Cambridge, 1931-34), in March 1993. His son Ian was also elected to the Club, in about 1960.

J.M. McSwiney DSO MC (Brasenose, Oxford, 1946-47). John McSwiney placed 2nd in the low hurdles at the 1946 'Varsity Match, and the following year competed in the javelin.

Dr H.B. Griffiths (Balliol, Oxford, 1948-52). Hugh Griffiths threw the javelin in the 'varsity Matches of 1951 and 1952.

The Reverend Dr W. S. Andrews (Trinity, Oxford, 1931-34), in January 1994.

J.D. Hall (Christ's, Cambridge, 1944-47), in January 1994. John Hall competed in the 3 miles in the 'varsity Matches of 1946 and 1947.

R.J. Ridout (St Catherine's Society, Oxford, c. 1937). The Times' obituary of the English textbook writer Ronald Ridout reports that he gained a half Blue in athletics, although we have no record of his exploits.

The Times' obituary of Sir Leonard Hooper ('Joe' Hooper - Worcester, Oxford, c.1934) stated that he competed as a distance and cross country runner for the University. Contemporaries believe this to be erroneous, and perhaps a confusion with W.L Hooper (Queen's, Oxford, 1931-34) who ran in the 1932 and 1933 Cross Country Matches, and the 1934 'Varsity Sports 3 Miles. A definitive explanation would be welcomed.

60 YEARS ON

Oxford won the 1934 'Varsity Sports by 7 events to 4 (see appendix for full results) under the leadership of their President, the great Jack Lovelock. 'Tiny' Davis was President of CUAC.

We were hosts to Princeton and Cornell, affording an opportunity for a rematch between Lovelock and Bonthron, following their epic mile in the USA the previous year when Jack set a new World Record.

Many schools were visited (this was a period when Achilles' dedication to development of the sport throughout the country was at its peak), and a four man team of Lovelock, Horsfall, Rathbone and Townend enjoyed a tour of Scandinavia.

Medallists at the British Empire Games were (Gold) J.E. Lovelock, 1 Mile; M.C. Nokes, Hammer; (Silver) R.L. Howland, Weight; D.R. Bell, Discus; (Bronze) J.F. Cornes, 1 Mile; J.C. Stothard, 880y; A.G. Pilbrow, 120y Hurdles; RK. Brown, 440y Hurdles.

25 YEARS ON

I.W. Dawes was OUAC President for 1969, and Martin Winbolt-Lewis President of CUAC. Oxford beat Cambridge at the White City by 105.5 points to 81.5 (see appendix). In the Relays Match, the Cambridge team of Moughtin, Harris, Wilkinson and Green set the current match record for 4 x 800m, averaging an impressive 1.54.4 per leg. In the closest possible Cross Country match, Cambridge won with points tied 40-40. Bob Steele was the individual winner.

GODFREY BROWN WRITES:

"In his letter Bob Tisdall's memory is slightly at fault with regard to my brother Ralph. As Bob correctly described it in his book 'The Young Athlete', my brother, who had run as second string the year before, was hoping to win the 220 y Hurdles for his full blue. Bob expressed his deep appreciation of Ralph's offer to stand down in his favour, but told him to go on and win. At the last hurdle Ralph was in the lead and looked a likely winner, but faltered on the run in to lose by inches.

"What neither Bob Tisdall nor Ted Cawston (first string in the event) knew was that at the last hurdle due to the loose cinders at Stamford Bridge he tore a hamstring and struggled on in agony. That injury indirectly deprived me and the Achilles Club of a world record of a unique kind.

"In the Olympic Year of 1936 my sister Audrey and brother Ralph joined me in the provisional selection for the Berlin Games. Ralph's old injury played up again during training but by the final trials in the AAA Championships he was recovering and coming back to the form that had made him Britain's number one

in the 400 metres hurdles the previous year. In another three weeks he would have been back to peak form with a realistic chance of an Olympic bronze medal. However the selectors never made any enquiries about his fitness and decided against his selection. If two brothers and a sister had represented a country it would have been unique and something which is never likely to occur, nor is it likely that the Achilles Club will ever get the same chance to have two brothers in the same Olympics."

Godfrey Brown won a gold and a silver, and Audrey a silver medal.

Further correspondence is included in the appendix.

UK MERIT RANKINGS

The following members reached the top ten in Peter Matthews' Merit Rankings for 1994:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 st | Richard Nerurkar | Marathon | 2:11:56 |
| 3 rd | Ruth Irving | Long Jump | 6.28 |
| | Danielle Sanderson | Marathon | 2:36.29 |
| 4 th | Chris Cheeseman | 20k Walk | 1:29.11 |
| | Andre Lill | 800 | 1:47.00 |
| 5 th | Richard Nerurkar | 5000 | 13:36.89 |
| 6 th | Joanna Latimer | 800 | 2:03.27 |
| 8 th | Sarah Winckless | Discus | 53.16 |
| 9 th | Richard Nerurkar | 10,000 | 28:53.03 |

These rankings are based in comparative results in head to head competitions, and not simply on the stop watch or tape measure.

Notable omissions include Gareth Davies' 7.62 Long Jump: only 5 athletes jumped further during the season.

- Paul Willcox
January 1995