



OUABC

Alumni Newsletter

Hilary/Trinity
2023

Welcome to the Hilary/Trinity 2023 edition

Apologies for the slightly later appearance of this edition of the newsletter. I had intended to get a Hilary newsletter out previewing the Varsity Match but, rather than tempt fate after last year's last minute cancellation of the fixture, I decided to wait until the match had actually taken place. A number of people emailed me to ask for the result as there was no news anywhere online. I have contacted the current President to see whether the club's website can be promptly updated with important news.

Anyway, great that the Varsity Match is back on, not so great that the result didn't go our way this year - please see Robin Duggan's report. Also included in this newsletter is a Q&A with former heavyweight and captain, Graham Ward, further reflections on Henry Dean, and another book recommendation.

There was to have been a Trinity term fixture with RMA Sandhurst, but this is now looking unlikely as all extra-curricular activities have been placed on hold whilst efforts at Sandhurst are focused on Ukraine. If anything changes, I will let you know.

Mark Linehan

The OUABC Committee 2022-2023

President - Benjamin Allwright
Vice-President - George Carver
Secretary - Val Vulkanovski
Treasurer - Henry Portwood
Women's Captain - Daisy Pollene
Men's Captain - David Seiferth
Women's Vice-Captain - Amelia Jeffery
Men's Vice-Captain - Roberto Lacourt
Social Secretary - Eimar Marian, Paddy Ryce
Welfare Officer - Lucy Temple
IT Officer - Jasmin Patel

2023 VARSITY MATCH

Following the last minute cancellation of the 2022 fixture, there were great sighs of relief all round when the 2023 Varsity Match went ahead at Oxford Town Hall on 10th March. A lot of hard work had been put in by a lot of people to ensure the fixture that is so dear to our hearts could continue for current and future boxers. Whilst I won't thank them by name, they know who they are and both clubs owe them a debt of gratitude. Robin Duggan, President of the Alumni Association, provided the following report on proceedings...

The evening kicked off with some women's bouts, the first being between two OUABC boxers, with southpaw Teresa Meriggi beating Freya Leland by a unanimous decision after forcing a standing count in the third round.

Next up, at 56kg, Rosie Berkin who trains with OUABC fought Fiorella Gallardo of CUABC and got off to a storming start, dominating with left hooks and right crosses. Both stood toe to toe trading punches in the first round, with neither a block or duck to be seen. The second round continued in a similar vein, with Berkin typically going forward and throwing the heavier punches against her taller opponent but also taking plenty in return. In the third, Berkin stayed on the front foot and tried to get inside her opponent's longer reach, but Gallardo landed the cleaner punches from distance and, after a grandstand finish, Berkin won a popular split decision.

The final women's bout saw Stacey Brown of Lucky Star ABC take on Imogen Stanford of Cambridge. After an interesting contrast of styles, with Stanford boxing from range and throwing jabs and crosses using her longer reach, and Brown throwing heavier hooks and body shots and getting through with more combinations, Brown won on a split decision.

After these initial bouts the men's Varsity Match returned:

Featherweight

Singaporean Daniel Goh, from Keble, was matched against Will Tan from Cambridge. Despite similar tall slim builds, the boxers showed contrasting styles, with Goh coming forward and boxing from range behind his jab, and Tan looking to slip under the jab and throw hooks. After a furious start, the first round settled down to an even contest until, right at the end of the round, Tan slipped inside the jab

and forced a standing count with a big right hook. That changed the fight and, although Goh did well to come back into the fight by landing more clean punches at the start of the second, he was caught by a big swing and took another standing count at the end of the second round. From there it was only a matter of time and the ref stopped the contest in the third round after another standing count following a big right from Tan. **OUABC 0 - CUABC 1**

Lightweight

Yang Xu of Nuffield fought Adam Lonie of Trinity, who looked an accomplished boxer. After a fast milling start from both boxers, Lonie trapped Xu against the ropes and forced a standing count mid-way through the first round. Xu continued to throw punches and maintain a high work rate, but by the start of the second round he was forced to stand and trade punches with Lonie which, while brave, was only going to have one outcome and, after two more standing counts, the referee correctly stopped the contest in the second round as a victory for Lonie. **OUABC 0 - CUABC 2**

Light-welterweight

The experienced Oxford boxer Roberto Fidel Lacout, who won gold at this year's BUCS Championship, was awarded a walkover against his less experienced opponent, Emil Ares of Homerton, in order to avoid a mismatch. **OUABC 1 - CUABC 2**

Welterweight

Ali Nasiri of St Anne's, winner of silver at the BUCS Championship, fought Alby Biju of Jesus. With superficially similar builds and looks, the fight initially looked very evenly matched, with both boxers looking skilful, until Nasiri changed things dramatically in the middle of the first round. He slipped inside and caught Biju with a great short hook, the punch of the night, and then quickly forced a second standing count, forcing the referee to stop the contest at the end of the first round, leaving the Varsity Match all square at the interval. **OUABC 2 - CUABC 2**



Ali Nasiri winning at welterweight

Light-middleweight

In the first fight after the interval, George Garner of Christ Church, a southpaw from Thame, fought Sam Tarr of Magdalene. The crowd had clearly rehydrated and lubricated their vocal cords during the interval as the atmosphere became increasingly raucous. Garner started strongly, landing left crosses, but Tarr tried to disrupt his work, turning the first round into more of a scrappy brawl and keeping the scoring close. Garner boxed more tidily than his opponent once the fight settled down, jabbing accurately throughout the second to draw blood from his opponents nose. From the start of the third Garner stepped up the pace, forcing two standing counts, and eventually forcing the referee to stop the contest. **OUABC 3 - CUABC 2**



George Garner putting Oxford 3-2 up

Middleweight 1

In the first middleweight bout, the Oxford captain David Seiferth, a German from Oriel, fought Daniel Cossey, a tall southpaw from Trinity College. Cossey used his long reach and accurate right jab to box from range, landing clean punches as Seiferth struggled to get inside, and winning the first round. In the second Seiferth managed to turn the fight into more of a scrap but still struggled to land combinations against an elusive opponent, and in the third Cossey again managed to box from range land the cleaner punches, winning a unanimous points decision and bringing the match back to all square. **OUABC 3 - CUABC 3**

Middleweight 2

The second middleweight bout turned out to be the fight of the night, and one of the best varsity bouts in recent memory. Former Oxford president Max Jenkins, of Corpus Christi, fought the powerfully built Kiran Kang of Jesus in a boxer versus puncher matchup. Max appeared to edge the first round after avoiding a number of big swings from Kang, whilst landing short hooks and body punches of his own. Jenkins looked on top mid-way through the second round, but Kang anticipated when Jenkins dropped to throw a body punch and caught him flush on the temple, forcing a standing count as Jenkins

slipped to the floor. With the whole crowd on its feet, Jenkins forced the pace in the third round, getting through with increasing numbers of hooks and body punches. By the end of the round, with both fighters exhausted, the crowd thought he had done enough, only for Kang to be awarded the result on a split decision. It was a cracking fight that neither boxer deserved to lose. **OUABC 3 - CUABC 4**

Light-heavyweight

Nigerian Ade Olugboji of Christ Church took on Elliot Tebboth of Hughes Hall. The shorter, stocky Olugboji took the initiative, forcing his opponent back, but neither was able to land many clean punches in a scrappy fight. After three even rounds, Olugboji looked like he might have done enough by forcing the pace, but Tebboth was awarded the result on a split decision. **OUABC 3 - CUABC 5**

Heavyweight

Former Cambridge blue Teddy Andrews of Balliol fought against Chike Pilgrim of Darwin College, and went down within the first 30 seconds after what looked like a flash knockdown, following a short right to the head. Andrews looked composed behind his southpaw jab for the rest of the first round but then, at the start of the second, Chike landed two more heavy punches to force counts and bring the night to a disappointing end for Oxford. **OUABC 3 - CUABC 6**

Q&A WITH GRAHAM WARD

I'm pretty sure that every in-take of aspiring boxers who join OUABC hear stories of characters who have gone before them, who have helped to move the club forward and ensure it is there for subsequent generations. One of the names I used to hear when I came up in 1984 was that of Graham Ward. Graham, a heavyweight blue in 1972, 1973 and 1974, was supporting the club a decade later and is too modest to mention here the ways in which he helped former boxers after they graduated. The 1974 7-2 win over Cambridge under his captaincy, that he mentions below, was somewhat legendary and something to aspire to, something we were delighted to repeat in 1988.

Graham remains interested in and committed to OUABC and it is always great to meet up with him at Varsity Matches and functions, even if those opportunities have been limited in recent years. Here he reflects on his involvement with the club.

What was your boxing experience before going up to Oxford?

Rather limited. When I went to Dulwich College in 1963 every boy had to box as part of the PE curriculum. Also, I took part in inter-house bouts and won a few medals (as well as losing a few!). As a result of safety concerns, however, both inter and intra school boxing was soon severely limited and virtually non-existent by the time I came up to Oxford in 1970.

How did you get involved with OUABC?

Len Goff: the landlord of The White Horse in The Broad, was a great fan of boxing and, in particular, of OUABC. One evening at the beginning of Trinity Term 1971, he mentioned that Julian Malins was going down, thereby creating a vacancy for a new Oxford heavyweight. Len challenged me to have the courage to have a go and I could not resist the dare. On arriving in the gym, I was made to feel really welcome by Alf Gallie, Bob Nairac and Shane Fane-Hervey and very much enjoyed the training and spirit of the Club. I was hooked.

Do you remember your first bout for OUABC?

It was against a huge Irish Guardsman. Having touched gloves, I thought that something special was needed to survive. After the bell rang, I moved to the centre of the ring and hit him with a left right combination. He went down like a stone and was counted out. The bout had lasted 13 seconds, including the count. Much relieved, I thought "I could get to like this!".

What did you enjoy most about being part of OUABC?

Being chosen to box against Cambridge in the 1972 Varsity Match was a very, very special moment. The wonderful team spirit of OUABC is, however, my most abiding, positive memory. Non-boxers see only the bouts: one against one. What they often do not see is the huge mutual support which boxers and coaches give to each other in training and Club life. There is nothing else like it.

What did you enjoy least about being part of OUABC?

Losing the bouts in my Varsity matches.

Which was your toughest bout?

On a mixed card, I came up against a very tough opponent who seemed to feel no pain and never stopped coming forward. I was relieved to beat him on points. It was only after the bout that Bob Nairac told me that my opponent had just come out of Wandsworth Prison following a ten year stretch for GBH!

Who was your most difficult sparring partner?

David Holmes. He was a first class boxer and a very foxy mover in the ring. We were very fortunate to have him as Coach after Percy Lewis retired from the role.



Graham Ward

Graham (left) sparring at Iffley Road - please email me if you know the identity of his sparring partner

Apart from the above, what is your abiding memory of boxing at Oxford?

The camaraderie of life with fellow boxers and the respect in which we were held.

Did you box at all after you left Oxford?

No. I joined Price Waterhouse and had to put in a great deal of overtime, work away from home and study for professional exams. There was simply no time for serious sport.

What are you doing these days?

Having qualified as a chartered accountant, I became a Partner and then World Utilities Leader in Price Waterhouse (now PwC). Subsequently, I was blessed by being able to serve in leadership positions in a number of fields. For example: the Crown, as Auditor of The Duchy of Cornwall; my profession, as President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales and as President of the International Federation of Accountants; the energy sector, as Vice Chair of the World Energy Council; Parliament, as founding Chief Commissioner of The Independent Commission for Aid Impact; the aviation sector and its customers, as a Director of the Civil Aviation Authority. At present, I am a Fellow of Dulwich College and of Goodenough College. Also, in 2004, I was blessed by being appointed CBE and being invested by Her late Majesty.

If you could give one piece of advice to boxers at OUABC today, what would it be?

May I offer three?

- Support your team mates and respect your coaches
- Work hard
- Think, focus and give your all in the ring.

Who is your favourite boxer of any era?

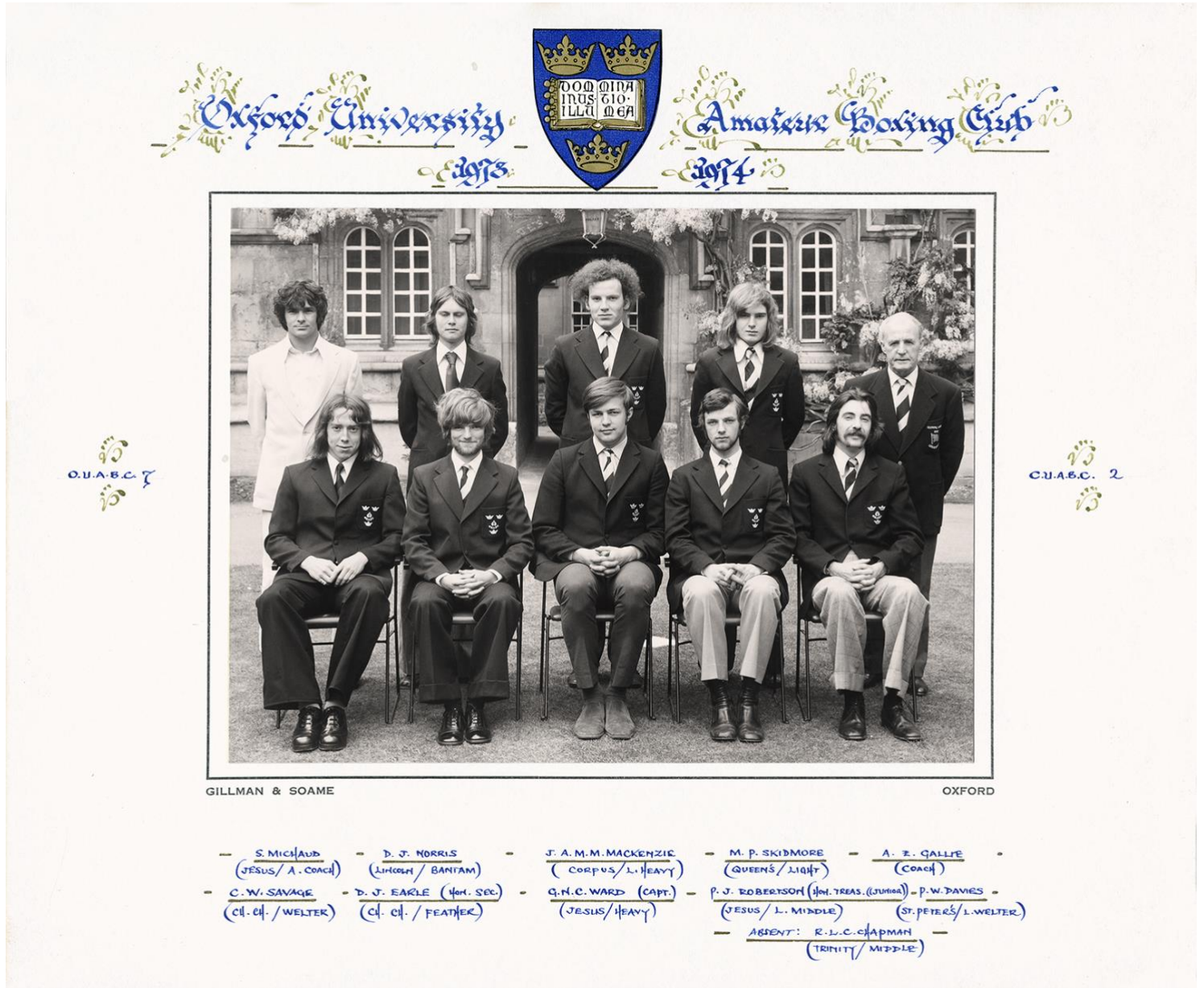
Henry Cooper. He was an excellent boxer with bottomless heart in and out of the ring. Perhaps most important of all, he understood and lived the responsibility of a champion to be a role model.

Any other thoughts?

Being elected Captain in the summer of 1973 was a huge honour. It also was a daunting one. In the 1973 Varsity Match, under Peter Davies' Captaincy, we had beaten Cambridge 5-4 in Cambridge. The first time that we had won in Cambridge since before the Second World War. Our challenge was to achieve the first Oxford hat trick since 1901. The coaches Alf Gallie, Percy Lewis, David Holmes and Steve Michaud (an outstanding boxer - Golden Gloves Champion, US Fifth Army Champion, Blue in 1972 and 1973, who stood down from the ring in 1974 to help with coaching us) and the team were magnificent and, in March 1974, we beat Cambridge 7-2. This was the greatest winning margin since 1954 and it was not equalled until 1988.

Being a Boxing Blue makes one a very attractive proposition for a business which is looking to recruit. The following characteristics are particularly attractive:

- Knowing how to take responsibility for one's own actions. There is nowhere to hide and no-one else to blame in the ring.
- Being a great team player, through the mutual support amongst the team members in training.
- Understanding how to take and improve from constructive criticism, through the experience of being coached.



The team that won the 1974 Varsity Match 7-2, with Graham as captain. Picture courtesy of Gillman and Soame.

MEMORIES OF HENRY DEAN

It is unlikely to come as a surprise to many of you that the passing of Henry Dean last year prompted a number of members of the Alumni Association to get in touch with their thoughts and personal reflections on the man. It's not possible to include them all, but I thought this contribution from Chris Tooley (light-heavyweight blue in 1987) was worth sharing...

“Henry Dean, Percy Lewis, Alf Gallie, Robert Nairac, Terry Adams, the Duggan brothers and 16 straight Varsity triumphs - these are the men and tales of Oxford boxing legends. They could be collectively grouped as being of “the right stuff”, a phrase rekindled in 1983 by the release of the eponymous film about the NASA astronauts, neatly coinciding with my more grounded arrival at Magdalen College (sports not approved of). “The Right Stuff” is a quality difficult to describe, but one which you recognise the moment you encounter it - and these men and teams had it (as many still do) in spades. Many words have been written about many of the above, but Henry's recent passing gave us the right moment to focus on him alone for this tribute.

In Michaelmas 1986, having watched 3 years of Oxford boxing as an enthusiastic fan, attended a few eye-poppingly horrible training sessions but generally keeping myself out of harm's way, without the requisite ducking and weaving of a proper pugilist, I found myself cornered on a bus in London with Simon Duggan, that year's light-heavyweight, narrowly defeated in the Varsity Match by a Tab who appeared to be auditioned for a wrestling blue, and spontaneously declaring that I would avenge his wrong, regain the honour of the dark blue light-heavy division and keep his gloves warm until he returned to Oxford the following year to study for his PGCE. There was no turning back and I duly appeared for the January training camp a few weeks later. My first “proper” encounter with Henry Dean...

After the usual gut-wrenching, lung-bursting, rubber-legged training sessions I faced my first 1-2-1 on the pads with Henry. The purpose was to assess my boxing suitability, aptitude, teachability etc - but rather than confirming to him that I was made of the “right stuff” I duly demonstrated I was on track for a right stuffing. Henry, ever the optimist, inquired what my “main” sport was. When cricket was mentioned, the rolling of his eyeballs was practically audible. Both I, and it turned out, Henry, had a lot of work to do. Henry was up for it and had the skill set to impart and I wasn't backing out, so I put the cricket firmly to one side, it wasn't mentioned by either of us again, and Henry set about converting me into a boxer.

But this was the genius of the man, then the assistant coach, to literally “adopt” a novice university boxer and work to convert them into something serviceable within a few short months. Henry never taught by revealing his past (he'd boxed 4 times for England as an amateur) - he taught through a relentless focus on developing boxing skills and honing them through excruciatingly long sessions on the pads and in sparring where he would spend hours each week drilling the combinations into me until I could literally perform them blindfold and in my sleep. He never let you out of his sight unless he was satisfied that you'd moved ahead in that session, taking it as a personal failure if you hadn't.

During one session not long before the Varsity match I carelessly swung a punch when Henry wasn't ready and caught his hand only half ready to catch the blow in his pad. He winced in obvious pain, but carried on. He only told me after the Varsity match that I'd broken his finger that night - yet incredibly he didn't miss a single session with any other fighter in the run up to the contest, and carried on as normal. That for me was the measure of the man, then only in his 2nd year as a coach at OUABC, that by completely committing to the team whatever the circumstances, he thereby ensured that the team

were committed back, as we knew that here was a man made of the right stuff, something he proved over and over again for generations of Oxford boxers.

It was always special to see Henry in the years after Oxford at Varsity Matches, at Vincent's Club and at the London Vincent's Dinners especially in the occasion when he and Percy were there to soak up the applause from the crowd for their incredible achievement in guiding OUABC to the Blues varsity record-breaking 16 consecutive victories over the Tabs, unmatched in any sport.

Farewell Henry, my first boxing coach."

OBITUARY - SIMON OFFEN

Simon Offen passed away aged 60 on 4th February 2023. He wasn't a boxer, he was a double Blue at hockey, but was a big supporter of OUABC. Many will have known Simon through his role as Vincent's Bursar where he was incredibly helpful to the Club. For example, when Chris Mack was tracing old boxers Simon would frequently contact them using Vincent's records, and he also ensured Vincent's boxing members had reciprocal membership of the Oxford and Cambridge Club for the 2020 OUABC lunch there organised by Charles Masraff (1970). Simon was unerring in his help and support for OUABC and will be sadly missed.

After attending St Edward's School in Oxford, Simon read History at Cambridge, before returning to Oxford to study for a PGCE at Christ Church. After a career in hospitality, including a stint as chef de parti at Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, he eventually joined the Christ Church Development Office in 2009, where he looked after alumni relations.

Simon's love of sport was evident from his support of Vincent's as Bursar for 11 years and tireless fund raising for the Christ Church Boat Club

BOOK RECOMMENDATION - "ROPE BURNS" BY F.X. TOOLE

I'm sure many of you will have seen the Oscar-winning film "Million Dollar Baby" starring Hilary Swank, Morgan Freeman and Clint Eastwood (who was also the producer and director). The title of the movie is taken from one of the short stories in F.X. Toole's collection "Rope Burns" and, whilst that story is central to the film, many of the other tales included in the collection make up the sub-plots and cameos that, in my view, made it so compelling.

F.X. Toole is the pen name of the boxing coach and cut man Jerry Boyd, who died in 2002, and his first-hand experience of the world of professional boxing runs through the stories. A good read for your commute or the beach this summer.

This newsletter is for you, the alumni of OUABC. If there are any stories, news or updates on past boxers that you would like to share, please drop me an email at marklinehan64@yahoo.com