



OUABC Alumni Newsletter

Michaelmas 2025

Welcome to the Michaelmas Edition 2025

Chairman of the OUABC Alumni Association, Robin Duggan, kindly asked me to take on the task of writing the OUABCAA Newsletter. We owe particular thanks to Peter Davies, who produced the most recent edition with great care and continuity after Mark Linehan concluded his tenure as editor.

Mark has served as editor since 2021 and has done an excellent job of keeping our alumni community informed and connected with the life of the Club. We are all grateful for his dedication and the steady hand with which he guided the newsletter over the past several years.

In this edition, you will find a welcome from president William Fahie; a photograph of the brand-new Olympic-sized club ring; the names of the OUABC 2025-26 Committee and the OUABC Alumni Association Committee; the *Captain's Corner*, in which Patrick Ashmore reflects on last Michaelmas term; two alumni Q&As with recent alumni Teresa Habib Meriggi and Ade Olugboji; a match report *from the Archives*; the *Alumni Spotlight*, featuring Roberto Lacourt's latest win; a recommended documentary on Robert Nairac; dates for the diary; and, importantly, an invitation to the OUABCAA Reunion Dinner. If you would like to contribute news, memories, or archival material to future editions, please send an email to ouabcaanewsletter@gmail.com.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year from the OUABC Alumni Association Committee,
Camila Bennink

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President's Welcome

Dear Alumni,

It is a privilege to address you as the Oxford University ABC President for the 2025/26 season. This marks my fourth year with the club, and it's a true honour to spend my final year at Oxford in this position. The experiences I've had and the connections I've made will last a lifetime and have deeply informed my vision for the year.

Last year was a fantastic result, for which we can thank our brilliant head coach Adrian, an outstanding committee, and a phenomenal set of fighters. The primary goal of the 2025/26 season is clear: to build on last year's victory and achieve a second consecutive Varsity win. While we may have the momentum, we will be on enemy territory this year and can be certain that Cambridge will do everything they can to prevent us from starting a streak.

We have made various adjustments to ensure our boxers are in peak fighting shape. This includes the introduction of Friday morning Strength & Conditioning sessions which I have been leading and perfectly complement our infamous hill sprints. We are working to integrate a SportsFed S&C coach for some of these sessions.

We are also excited to announce additions to our coaching staff, all under the continued guidance of Adrian. We welcome the highly experienced Jonathan Smith to the team on Thursdays, and we are pleased to have former OUABC member and four-time national champion, Roberto Lacourt, joining some of our Tuesday sessions.

Through much persuasion, I have worked with SportsFed to finally secure dedicated storage space for a new Olympic-size club ring, which will be vital for modernising our training. It arrived at the end of Michaelmas, and the club is very excited to use it throughout next term in the lead-up to Varsity. All our boxers are highly grateful for the alumni's generosity in acquiring this ring, as well as the other equipment you have funded so far, including new gloves, headguards, dumbbells and a ring timer.

We have received numerous bout offers from clubs and universities for upcoming shows, so we are excited to give all our boxers opportunities to get more bouts under their belts throughout the year. Of note, our Vice Captain Tom Wise won by first round stoppage at Exeter University's show on November 18th. We are very excited to announce that two of our boxers, Patrick Ashmore and Henry Field, will be competing on Stanford University's show in January. This will be an incredible opportunity for publicity and building on a relationship with a peer institution across the pond, hopefully planting the seed for future crossovers. We again thank the alumni's support in making this happen, as well as the Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey for her generous donation to support this trip.

My most ambitious objective this year is to transform Town vs Gown 2026 into a standout event on the Oxford sporting calendar. This includes installing a professional lighting and sound system and having private caterers (supplied by our new sponsor Oxford Events Company) to run bars throughout the night, creating an atmosphere that reflects the prestige of the event.

Crucially, we want our alumni to be central to this night. We are hosting a dedicated drinks and canapés reception for alumni and VIPs before the main event begins. We are excited to announce that Ben Amanna, Founder of BOXRAW, will be our guest speaker for this. Full details and tickets will be available shortly. On the booking page, you will find an option to make a voluntary donation; any contributions will go directly towards the production costs of the evening, helping make the event a fantastic night for all.

Your support is the backbone of this club's history and future success, and your presence at our events is a powerful statement of solidarity that deeply motivates our boxers. Please consider this a personal invitation to join us at the Iffley Sports Centre for Town vs Gown 2026.

I genuinely look forward to meeting you throughout the year, and we are excited to have you in our corner as we go for the double.

With thanks and anticipation for the rest of the season ahead,

William Fahie

OUABC President, 2025/26



William Fahie during his bout at Town vs Gown, vs Giles Moon, 2025



The OUABC at the Iffley Road Sports Centre, 2025

New Olympic-size Club Ring



The new Olympic-size club ring at the Iffley Road Sports Centre, 2025

“Through much persuasion, I have worked with SportsFed to finally secure dedicated storage space for a new Olympic-size club ring, which will be vital for modernising our training. It arrived at the end of Michaelmas, and the club is very excited to use it throughout next term in the lead-up to Varsity. All our boxers are highly grateful for the alumni’s generosity in acquiring this ring, as well as the other equipment you have funded so far including new gloves, headguards, dumbbells and a ring timer.”
- William Fahie, OUABC President 2025/26

The OUABC 2025/26 Committee

President: William Fahie, Pembroke College

Vice-President: Giles Moon, Pembroke College

Secretary: Sophie Treacy, Mansfield College

Treasurer: Lincoln Booth, Kellogg College

Women's Captain: Gabriele Lukoseviciute, St Anne's College

Men's Captain: Patrick Ashmore, St John's College

Men's Vice-Captain: Thomas Kennedy Wise, Trinity College

Women's Welfare Officer: Jinseo Kim, Green Templeton College

Men's Welfare Officer: James Somper, New College

The OUABC Alumni Association Committee

Chairman: Robin Duggan, Magdalen College

Camila Bennink, Harris Manchester College

Tim Fell, St Edmund Hall

Mark Linehan, Christ Church

Chris Mack, Pembroke College

Captain's Corner

As we come to the end of Michaelmas Term, it's worth pausing to reflect on an exceptionally strong start to the season for the Oxford University Amateur Boxing Club. We opened the term by welcoming a sizeable group of new members, offering free taster sessions through mid-October and setting the foundations for what has already become one of the most energetic and committed squads in recent years.

Our returning boxers have continued to develop impressively, with valuable inter-club sparring sessions at Buckingham Boxing Club and Bristol Boxing Club. A particular highlight was Vice-Captain Tom Wise competing at Exeter University's home show, securing a dominant first-round stoppage.

We were also delighted to welcome Jonathan Smith, our new assistant coach, whose Thursday technical sessions have strengthened the fundamentals across the squad. He has already made a significant impact, both in refining boxing basics and in organising high-quality inter-club sparring. Meanwhile, strength and conditioning has become more structured than ever: hill sprints remain a staple of Wednesday mornings, and our Friday S&C sessions at Iffley Gym have established a disciplined rhythm that is already showing results.

Looking ahead to Hilary Term, we begin with real momentum. Our annual Oxford Training Camp runs from 7-13 January, an intense week of sprints, strength work, technical drills and sparring led by our Head Coach Adrian Moco. We will be hosting visiting squads including Bristol, Bath and the Army Boxing Team, an invaluable opportunity for tough, varied rounds early in the season.

The competitive calendar follows swiftly. On 17th January, two of our boxers will travel to San Francisco, California with Coach Jonathan to compete in Stanford University's historic Fight Night on the Farm. Two days later, on 19th January, we will head to London for an away show at King's College London. The week after brings the British University Championships, where we will be sending four athletes, including Women's Captain Gabriele and Vice-Captain Tom Wise, as we aim to build on last year's record-breaking achievements.

Hilary Term also brings one of the highlights of the OUABC calendar: our annual Town vs Gown home show at Iffley Road on January 31st. This year promises an action-packed card featuring internal bouts alongside contests against Exeter University, UCL, Oxford Brookes, the British Army Medical Services team and Bristol University.

This momentum drives us towards the biggest night of the year: the 118th Annual Varsity Match, held in Cambridge on 10th March 2026. With Coach Adrian Moco at the helm, we are determined to build on last year's success and bring the True Love Bowl back to Oxford once again.

Wishing all our boxers and alumni a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Hilary Term promises to be a special one.

Yours, in the Blue Corner

Patrick Ashmore

Men's Captain 2025/26

Alumna Q&A: Teresa Habib Meriggi



Teresa Habib Meriggi during her bout in the 117th Varsity boxing match, vs Esme McCarthy

How do you look back at the 2024/2025 season?

I am immensely proud to have been a part of the 2024/2025 season. It was a fantastic season for us, not just because of overturning 6 years of losses with our Varsity win, but also because of the 3 medals we brought back from BUCs, the historic number of women's fights, and the community we managed to build.

What did you set out to accomplish in the 2024/25 season, and do you feel you achieved that?

As a committee, we agreed that our key aims for the 2024/2025 season were to get more bouts for our boxers so they could build up their experience, push women's boxing as much as possible, and to ameliorate our ties with Cambridge. I have a huge appreciation for Spencer, the CUABC President last year, who worked very hard with us to make sure that the Varsity agreement was signed and we were able to host a successful match. Despite some hiccups, we were able to set a solid foundation for collaboration between the two clubs and I hope this continues to build in future years. We were also able to have a joint show with Portsmouth University ABC where we sent 11 boxers to build up novice experience; we sent 4 boxers to BUCs (2 men, 2 women), the most the club has sent since before Covid; once again, we managed to hold Town vs Gown in the Oxford Union. And of course, our Varsity win was the icing on the cake.

This would not have been possible without the tireless work of Coach Adrian, and our captains Ade and Gabi who pushed our boxers to their limits. Both personally and as a committee, I feel we achieved the goals we set for ourselves at the start of the year.



BUCS Squad 2025

As both a boxer and a certified England Boxing coach, did your dual perspective shape the decisions you made for the club?

The training as part of the England Boxing coaching qualification allowed me to appreciate some of the more nuanced elements of what it means to be a boxer and to train - being able to balance the extremes to which we push our bodies with health and safety elements was also something that I wanted to emphasize to make sure that, as a club, we made sure that our members were able to thrive both in the ring and outside. Although I know that some at the club were sick of me talking them to death about health and safety, insurance, and risk assessments (all the fun stuff) when all they wanted to do was get on with their sparring, I hope that I was able to help create an environment where boxers felt both safe and challenged.

You secured memorable wins during your time at Oxford. Which bout stands out the most to you now, and why?

I have been lucky enough to have had 6 bouts during my time at Oxford, but I would have to say the one that sticks out the most to me was at Portsmouth Uni ABC's home show in November 2024. That bout was by far my most technically challenging, firstly because it was my first and only fight against a fellow southpaw, and secondly because my opponent was very aggressive. I like to think of myself as a technical boxer, but in this bout, I was forced to change my style completely, and to be honest it was a bit of a scrap! It is definitely the bout I learned the most from as it really forced me to be adaptive in the ring. It was a close split in my favour, but I am forever grateful at the lessons I was able to learn from my opponent, Jade.

Looking back, what progress are you most pleased to have contributed to in the development of women's boxing at the OUABC?

Last year, the committee agreed that women's boxing should be a priority. After many re-drafts of the Varsity agreement and many, many hours spent in meetings, we were able to match 4 women's bouts on the main card for the first time in Varsity history. I know that for both me and Spencer, this was a huge success. Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without the support of the committee and the team at the Sports Federation, for which we are hugely thankful for. Not only this, but we had 11 women's bouts this year in the name of the OUABC, which is the most by far since the pandemic - when I joined in 2021, we had 3. The community we have built over the past few years after the disruption of Covid has been fantastic, and I am so proud of all of the incredibly inspiring women we have had at the club. I hope that this will continue for years and decades to come!

Now you're an alumna, is boxing still a part of your life?

Of course! Although I have taken a break from training since the 2025 Varsity match, I'm looking forward to coming back to the OUABC in Hilary once I return from my fieldwork in Beijing. I don't think being part of the OUABC ever leaves you, and neither does being a boxer. I know I have applied the kind of ritualistic discipline I have learned from waking up at 6am to sprint up Headington Hill in the pouring winter rain to other facets of my life. I now know what pushing myself to my limits really means, and that's not something that will ever leave me.

In your President's Welcome last season, you wrote about one day passing down your experiences at the club once you became an alumna. What advice would you want to give this year's committee?

Lean on your team around you. Although boxing is often perceived as being an individual sport, the camaraderie I have found at the OUABC has been unmatched. There is always someone willing to help out, whether that be a committee member, someone part for the wider club, or an alumnus - there is no shame in reaching out and asking for help. I am very grateful for the 2024/2025 committee, and I think the support we were able to give each other is what made the year so successful for all of us individually and as a committee. I know that the club will continue to strive under Will's leadership, and I am already in awe of what he has been able to achieve in such a short time - all the best to him and the new committee, and up the dark blue!



Portsmouth team, 2025

Alumnus Q&A: Ade Olugboji

What first got you into boxing?

It was the summer after 1st year and in a period of existential uncertainty, I stumbled upon the "Creed" movie w/ Michael B. Jordan. The struggle, the boldness and the sacrifice were all things I wanted to emulate in my own life, and thought could shape me as a person. On a more cynical note, I also played university-level basketball in my 1st year but hadn't accomplished my desired physique so thought boxing could be worth a shot. I ordered my skipping rope on Amazon that same day, went to my first taster session in the first week of 2nd year and never looked back since.

Which has been your toughest bout?

Undoubtedly, I would say my first bout at BUCS in 2025. I went into the bout wanting to keep it measured and controlled, since it was only the first of potentially three bouts I would face over the three days. However, boxing has taught me that plans can only take you so far. We ended up in an all-out war, trading our most powerful shots with neither fighter being willing to give the other an inch. I remember a moment mid-second round where I had to hold him against the ropes to stop myself from physically collapsing from the physical and mental exertion. By the end of the 3rd round, it felt like my lungs were full of treacle, and in the post-fight picture I looked half dead, but I managed to secure the unanimous decision and would go on to win the tournament.

What did you set out to accomplish as Men's Captain in the 2024/25 season, and do you feel you achieved that?

From my hustings/election's speech, my three stated goals were to compete at BUCS, win varsity, and to bring back a winning, competitive culture that I felt had been somewhat lost. Ending the season, we won 2 gold medals and 1 silver medal at BUCS, defeated Cambridge at varsity for the first time in 7 years, and had a hotly contested varsity squad with many slots being decided by 'box-off'. All the credit goes to coach Adrian, the dedication of the OUABC committee and my wonderful co-captain Gabi.

Is there anything you would have done differently in hindsight?

I think as a club, we can do more to instil more meritocracy. In general, I think we strive to put out our best possible squad for every bout, but sometimes there is also an element of rewarding loyalty to the club by putting forward certain boxers. In my first year at the club, I felt I was somewhat overlooked despite my ability - for bureaucratic reasons, but the entrance of coach Adrian, more bouts being available generally and use of 'box-offs' brought us a long way towards equality and platforming our newer boxers. We still have some work to do on this front, but I am happy with the direction we are heading.

Who or what supported you most during your time at the OUABC?

The community, that is the Club itself, was the biggest supporter I could have asked for. Over my 4 years at Oxford, I spent literally most of my time within the walls of Iffley Sports Centre. The members of OUABC are like none other, in that we can talk about any and every life struggle, and in rain and snow, we still show up. Having this community to fall back on for boxing and non-boxing related queries meant everything to me.

Now that you're an alumnus, is boxing still part of your life? If not, what has replaced it, if anything?

I still go to the occasional sparring class at the Ring Boxing club in Southwark and am looking to get back into competitive amateur bouts, but for the moment, I have been too busy with my new job. To keep me sane, I run a 5k on the treadmill, train calisthenics and do weightlifting every other day.

You mentioned your Christian faith in the text you wrote for the Varsity Booklet. Does your faith play a role in how you approach boxing—and if so, how?

For me, boxing strengthened my faith in a big way. Boxing is the ultimate test of faith - you train as hard as you can and enter the ring to face an opponent with unknown ability but have to have complete and utter confidence that your skills are superior to theirs. This divine confidence is against our nature as humans, and more so, as Brits. We often like to underplay ourselves and then attempt to overdeliver when action time comes. This doesn't work in boxing; you have to win the battle over your own mind before winning the battle over your opponent. And for me, faith was the ultimate way to battle my own mind, and to win. I prayed before every bout I fought, visualised the result in absolute detail and trusted God to see me through - win or lose.

What were some difficulties you faced early on and how have they shaped you as a fighter?

Early on, my biggest difficulty was failure itself. Boxing makes you come face-to-face with your shortcomings repeatedly. I lost my first sparring match very badly and was meant to fight that same sparring partner at Town vs Gown 2 weeks later. I lost my 2nd fight, which was at light heavyweight at Varsity 2023. These losses made my training relentlessly focused on cardio and pushing to, and through, my mental limits. From then on, I stopped relying on my punching power and started being a more mobile and tactical fighter, and one who promises to have a bigger gas tank than my opponent. If it wasn't for those losses, I would not be the fighter I am today.



Ade Olugboji lifts the True Love Bowl after OUABC wins the 117th Varsity Match, ten to four, 2025

Alumni Spotlight

Congratulations to OUABC's alumnus Roberto Lacourt (Univ) on securing another championship belt in London last November, this time representing London Select vs. Dublin.

Roberto dominated every round and earned a thoroughly deserved unanimous decision. This victory follows his recent success at the Warsaw Boxing Cup, adding yet another accolade to an already impressive record. Roberto has just returned from training in Cuba as he prepares for the ABAs in March.

A four-time Boxing Blue, BUCS champion and former Men's Captain, Roberto, is now training at Repton Boxing Club and is currently focusing on the senior ABAs.



Roberto Lacourt (London Select - Repton ABC) outboxed Dublin's Lee McEvoy (Avona BC) to claim a 4-1 split-decision victory in the 65kg bout

From the Archives

Here, we revisit moments from the Club's long and storied history.

COOPER HAS ONE GLORIOUS MOMENT

Ten knockdowns, honest bloodletting, no quarter asked, 2000 spectators yelling encouragement, and the result of the match in doubt until the final blistering punch. That is how they run University boxing, and how Cambridge beat Oxford by five events to four. I swear the ancient bricks of the Cambridge Corn Exchange have seen no more explosive a night in all their history.

True, some of the finer points of ringcraft seemed to have got mislaid, and elbows were often employed on missions the textbook prefers to be carried out by fists.

But none of us was worrying about such niceties when, with scores level, Brian Shaw (Cambridge) and Derek Cooper (Oxford) presented their joint 29st. for our entertainment and each other's destruction.

Dead-centre

Shaw ex-soldier, ex-farmer, and ex-ABA semi-finalist from Yorkshire, stood rigidly to attention for the preliminaries—and then strode forward to annihilate Mr. Cooper.

But Cooper, despite an acquaintance of only six short months with the occupational risks of fisticuffs, has evidently learned enough not to be overawed by reputations.

Shaw offered a left, missed, and walked into a mighty right-hander that Cooper somehow contrived from the direction of the north-east corner. Had he managed to close his glove during this manoeuvre—well, Oxford would have won the match. As it was, Shaw's nose spurted blood as Cooper's open glove landed dead-centre on target.

With this one defiant gesture, however, Cooper's moment of glory was over. Shaw shook his head, wound up his right arm, and let fly. Cooper took the punch on the side of his head, crashed face downwards, and took no more interest in the match until a sympathetic referee led him to his corner.

All these fireworks occupied exactly 1min. 40sec.—and I defy

any professional promoter to stage a livelier climax.

Buccaneering

The immediate prelude to these excitements came from a couple of cruiserweights with the good old buccaneering names of Flint and Morgan. No two pirates could have bludgeoned more lustily.

John Morgan, captain of Cambridge, spat out his gum shield, explored a little with his left, and then sent Flint halfway across the ring with a tremendous right to the mouth. Mr. Flint replied by knocking Morgan over for nine. With honour thus acquitted, the pair settled down to mutual slaughter, until the judges decided that Morgan had won on points.

Having done their best to destroy each other, the young gentlemen of Oxford and Cambridge put on their dinner jackets and partook of food together. Those who still had teeth enjoyed the meal.

RESULTS

(Cambridge names first).—**Bantamweight**: P. H. Cox beat H. W. Thomas 2nd. rd.; **Feather**: R. J. Hunter beat Q. D. Clough 2nd. rd.; **Light**: R. R. Grosch outpointed W. H. Ernest; **Light-welter**: M. J. O'Shea lost to J. R. Ramsay points; **Welter**: W. Young lost to D. P. Hodgson, points; **Light-middle**: A. J. K. Streetly lost to T. A. A. Adams, points; **Middle**: J. M. Hignett lost to D. C. Courtman, 2nd. rd.; **Light-heavy**: J. H. T. Morgan outpointed J. G. R. Flint; **Heavy**: B. R. Shaw beat D. G. W. Cooper 1st rd.

Our thanks to Tal Adams for sending in the following match report, discovered while 'rummaging through boxes.' Tal rightfully thought we might 'enjoy the writing and the atmosphere it evokes (if not the final overall result)' and writes: 'George was a very well-known boxing writer of the day (and Britain's Sports Journalist of the Year the year I was born).'

Recommended Viewing

BBC iPlayer is currently showing a very powerful documentary on the disappearance of OUABC's **Robert (Bob) Nairac GC** (Lincoln College).

Bob Nairac was a highly engaged and memorable member of the OUABC. During his time at the club, he served as Club Captain, and his energy and commitment are writ large in the committee and membership books of the era. He is widely credited with helping to save the OUABC from disbandment, stepping in at a moment when the Club's continuity was far from guaranteed and ensuring that competitive boxing at Oxford survived into the modern era.

After graduating from Lincoln, he was commissioned into the Grenadier Guards, where he was known for his professionalism, intelligence, and deep sense of duty. He later served - unusually - three consecutive tours in Northern Ireland, working in sensitive intelligence roles liaising between the British Army and the RUC at the height of the Troubles.

In May 1977, Nairac was abducted and murdered; he subsequently became one of the "Disappeared," one of those whose bodies were never recovered during the conflict. Despite extensive searches over many years, his remains have not been found.

The new BBC documentary provides a fascinating, measured, and deeply moving insight into Nairac's life, character, and the circumstances of his disappearance. It offers not only a portrait of a courageous man, but also a reflection on one of the conflict's most enduring and unresolved tragedies. For members of the OUABC community, it serves as a poignant reminder of an alumnus whose impact on the Club was significant and whose story continues to resonate.

Find the documentary here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002m8lv/the-disappearance-of-captain-nairac>

OUABCAA Reunion Dinner

Dear Alumnus/a,

On Saturday 14 March 2026 there will be an OUABCAA reunion dinner in Oxford to which all Alumni and their wives/husbands/partners are warmly invited. Places are limited and we have already had lots of interest so please book your tickets early.

Programme

17.15 Drinks reception at Iffley Road to officially unveil the collection of all team photos going back to 1946. We are delighted that Alex Betts, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Sport, will be joining us.

18.30 Drinks reception at St Edmund Hall followed at 19.30 by three course dinner, including 2 glasses of wine. There will also be a bar for those who would like to buy more drinks, either during or after dinner.

Dress is Black tie or Blues Blazers

If anyone will not be able to walk from Iffley Road to St Edmund Hall please get in touch with me to discuss transport.

For those staying over, Saturday is the last day of term, so I suggest booking accommodation now.

As a reminder, on 14 March 40 years ago the 1986 team beat Cambridge and thus began the extraordinary run of 16 consecutive victories, a record in any Varsity sport. So, cause for even more celebration!

Tickets are £100 and can be purchased using this link. Please don't forget to include any dietary requirements.

<https://buytickets.at/ouabcaa/1989498>

Have a great Christmas and I look forward to seeing many of you in March, if not before at the Town v Gown (31/1) or Varsity Match (10/3).

Chris Mack

Dates for Your Diary

- **Saturday 31 January - Town v Gown at Iffley Road**
This year the Club is planning a reception beforehand for Alumni and VIPs, so please show your support. Details to follow.
- **Tuesday 10 March - Varsity Match in Cambridge**
- **Saturday 14 March 2026 - OUABCAA Reunion Dinner at St Edmund Hall**