



# OUABC

## Alumni Newsletter

Trinity 2024

## Welcome to the Trinity 2024 edition

This edition of the newsletter brings you a report on an eventful Hilary term from OUABC President David Seiferth, a report on the 2024 Varsity Match held in Cambridge (which unfortunately didn't go our way), a Q&A with long-term OUABC supporter and alumnus, David Heathcote-Amory, and another boxing book recommendation.

Please remember, this newsletter is for alumni of OUABC and news from and about former boxers is always welcome. If you have anything you'd like to share with the association, just drop me a line at [marklinehan64@yahoo.com](mailto:marklinehan64@yahoo.com)

Mark Linehan

## The OUABC Committee 2023-2024

President - David Seiferth  
Vice President - Camila Seiferth  
Secretary - Charlie James  
Treasurer - George Garner  
Women's Club Captain - Teresa Habib Meriggi  
Women's Varsity Captain - Kaya Axelsson  
Men's Club Captain - Rory Mitchell  
Men's Varsity Captain - Roberto Lacourt

The Committee is supported by the following:

Social Secretaries - Éilish Farrelly and Yang Xu  
Welfare Officers - Lara Mallin and Fatima El-Faki  
Web-site - Michael Cheng  
Alumni officer - Patrick Ryce

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

### Training camp

Hilary started off strongly with our training camp in early January. Swapping the sunny beach runs from Tenerife for the good old Iffley track in cold temperatures proved an excellent set up for team bonding and a true test of resilience. After sprints, lunch at Vincent's never tasted better. Training camp was also a perfect opportunity to meet our new coaches, a baptism by fire. After a selection process in Michaelmas that involved five trial sessions given by four different applicants, the new coaching contract was signed before Christmas.

Our new head coach Adrian Moco is a Level 2 boxing coach who had a long Amateur boxing career in Romania with more than 270 bouts. From 2004 until 2010, he coached in Romania and had success in the European Championship in Turkey. After having coached at the High Wycombe and Repton Boxing Club, he moved to The Ring Boxing Club in Bracknell. Our Varsity Captain Roberto Lacourt trained with Adrian at Repton boxing club ten years ago. The presence of alumnus Fabio Quaredeghini at training camp added value to the coaching team, bridging the gap between past and present generations of boxers.

Most sessions were held in the Gallie-Lewis-Dean Gym (GLD). The qualification of Women's Captain Teresa Habib Merrigi and Welfare Officer Yang Xu (2023 lightweight) as level 1 coaches further enriched the coaching team, ensuring comprehensive support for the club members. During term times, the Thursday afternoon session for boxing beginners is led by our new level 1 coaches and our Men's Captain Rory Mitchell.

## Town v Gown

On 27<sup>th</sup> January, we hosted our annual Town v Gown show at the Iffley Road sports centre. In previous years, our shows resulted in a loss or just about broke even and hence we cut costs significantly to stabilise the club's finances. The Town vs. Gown event served as a platform for internal and external bouts, fostering friendly competition and sportsmanship. Despite last-minute cancellations from Durham University Amateur Boxing Club, the success of the sold-out show was evident. VP Camila Seiferth arranged matches with Bristol university and UCL. Another thank you to everyone who supported the club and to this year's TvG sponsors Chris Mack, Peter W. Davies and Fabienne Tyler who sponsored a bout in memory of her late father and OUABC honorary life president Terry Adams. The after-party at Vincent's, courtesy of David Butler's hospitality, further highlighted the sense of community within the club. Master of ceremonies Benjamin Alwright (and president 2022-23) wrote an article in the Cherwell newspaper - <https://cherwell.org/2024/02/20/town-vs-gown-2024/> - which gives the reader a more in depth impression of the evening than this reflection.

Preparation for the Varsity Match was rigorous, with our boxers undergoing intense fitness sessions at the Blues performance gym and engaging in gruelling hill sprints sessions to ensure they were in good physical condition. Additionally, team lunches at Vincent's provided an opportunity for bonding, although the challenge of cutting weight meant that many had to make do with minimal food. Unfortunately, the lead-up to the event was not without its setbacks, as last year's light middleweight and this year's treasurer, George Garner, suffered a broken foot, leaving a gap in our line-up. However, despite this setback, our team remained resilient and determined to give their all in the ring.

## Varsity Match

The only women's match kicked off the Varsity Match on 9<sup>th</sup> March with a victorious start for OUABC as Esther Labarraque (CUABC VP) faced off against Lara Mallin from Trinity. After the challenges of matching women's bouts, Lara showcased her skill and determination and won the women's varsity, setting the tone for the evening.

In the featherweight (57kg) bout Yaw Ansong Snr of CUABC faced off against Atithya Maheshwari (St Hilda's). This bout marked the first men's match of the evening, setting the stage for the intense competition that would follow. Ati showed skill and determination, dominating the ring with his precise technique and relentless energy. Despite Yaw's valiant efforts, Ati's performance earned him a split decision victory. Remarkably, this bout was Ati's debut in boxing, making his win all the more impressive.

In the lightweight (60kg) division, Davod Shah faced off against Felix Rolt (Exeter) in a thrilling bout that saw both boxers exchange heavy blows, resulting in a hard-fought victory for the CUABC's man.

CUABC Captain Alby Biju faced tough competition from Patrick Ryce of Sommerville in the light welterweight (63.5kg) bout. Despite a strong start from Paddy, Alby showed resilience, and the referee ultimately decided to stop the bout in the second round after two standing eight counts.

The welterweight bout (67kg) between Edward Xu and OUABC's captain Roberto Lacourt was not sanctioned by England Boxing because of Roberto's impressive fight record of 37 bouts. The win was therefore awarded to Oxford.

In the light middleweight category (71kg), Alan Matthew faced off against OUABC president David Seiferth (Oriental), who was a middleweight in the 2023 squad. In the end, David lost a hard-fought decision.

The first middleweight (75kg) bout between Toro Croft-Senior and Ade Oligboji (Christ Church) was not sanctioned by England boxing due to the 27 bouts the CUABC man had under his belt, the win consequently going to Cambridge. Ade was the light heavyweight in the 2023 squad and moved down in weight without being able to prove how dangerous he could have been at a lower weight class.

The second middleweight bout between Joel Camara and Patrick Ashmore resulted in another CUABC win.

The light heavyweight (81kg) clash saw Franz Pechmann and Henry Gasztowtt (Christ Church) go head-to-head, with the tall southpaw, Henry, making effective use of his reach to challenge the experienced CUABC boxer, ultimately resulting in Franz's victory.

Finally, in the heavyweight division (91kg), Tom Evans and Henry Field (St. John's) engaged in a fierce exchange, with Henry demonstrating resilience and strong chin, ultimately losing the bout after a strong showing in the first round.

While the women's team secured a victory, the men's team suffered a 2-7 loss. However, each bout was characterized by grit and determination, exemplifying the spirit of OUABC.



*The Oxford team with Head Coach, Adrian Moco*

## “Clash at King’s”

After the Varsity Match, the “Clash at King’s” show on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March provided an opportunity for members to gain experience and exposure to different boxing styles. Notably, Gabriele Lukoseviciute (St. Anne’s) faced off against Yurong (Jade) Sun from King’s College and Lodge boxing clubs, while David Seiferth (President, Oriel) took on Peter Addo from Queen Mary University of London. Although both of our boxers faced tough opponents and ultimately lost their bouts, they emerged stronger and more seasoned from the experience.

The Greenwood Theatre provided an atmospheric backdrop for the event, with the ring set up in a lecture theatre, adding to the unique and captivating ambiance of the evening.

Overall, the 2024 boxing season for OUABC was a testament to the club's resilience, unity, and dedication to the sport. From the recruitment of new coaches to the execution of successful events, each aspect contributed to the rich tapestry of experiences that define the club's legacy.

David Seiferth, OUABC President

## Q&A WITH DAVID HEATHCOAT-AMORY

The name David Heathcoat-Amory might be familiar to you, but not necessarily through OUABC. He is perhaps better known as Member of Parliament for Wells (1983-2010), serving in a number of roles, including as a Permanent Private Secretary to the Home Secretary, as an Assistant Government Whip, as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment and at the Department of Energy, and as Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as Paymaster General - and as secretary of the all-party group on boxing!

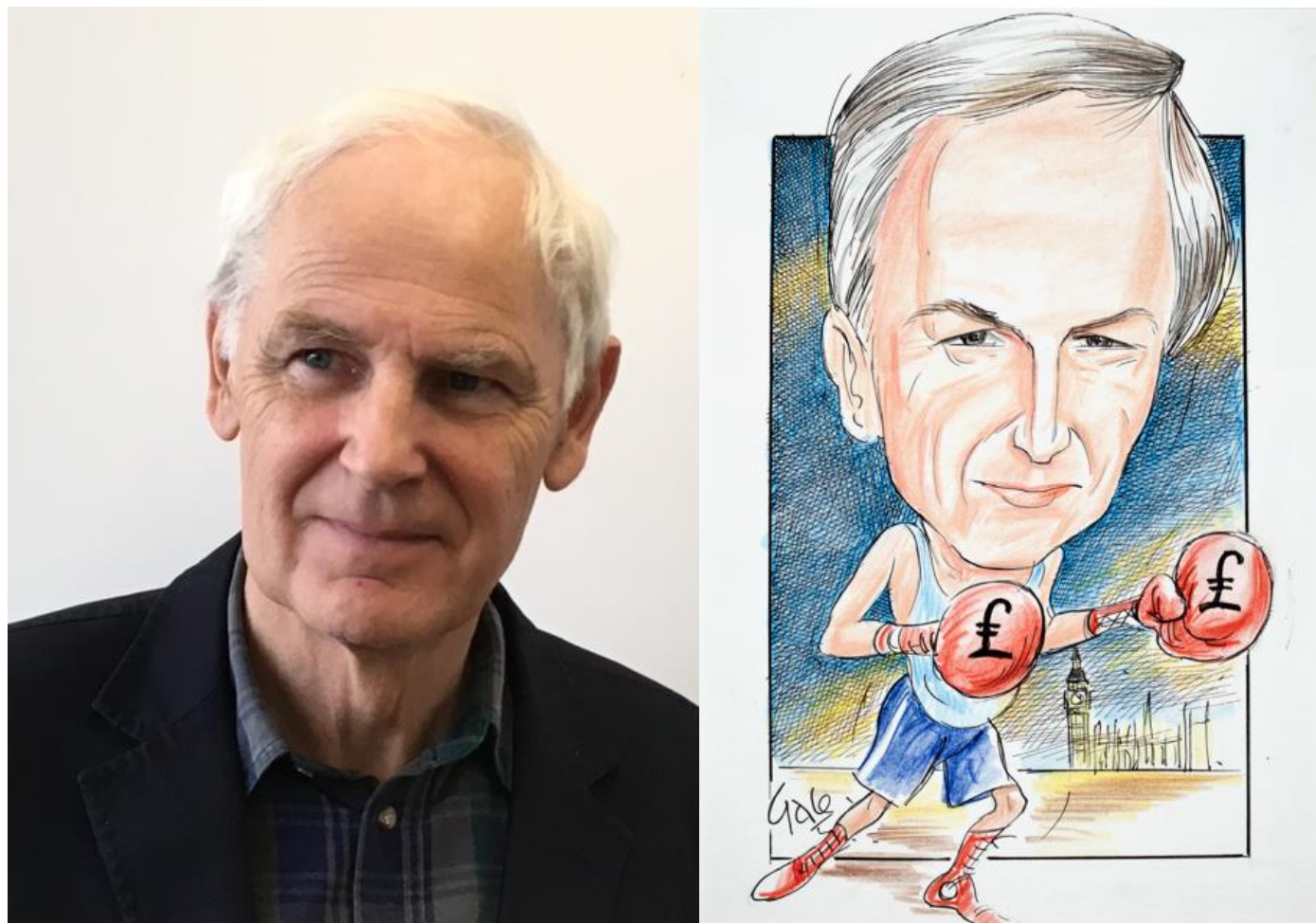
But David also boxed for OUABC, earning his Blues in 1969 and 1970, alongside Bob Nairac, and is a generous supporter of the club.

*What was your boxing experience before going up to Oxford?*

I started boxing aged 10 at my prep school in Kent. For the school boxing competition a ring was made out of wooden benches turned outwards and the boxing gloves were rather threadbare, but the whole school turned out to watch. As I wasn't much good at ball games I got a bit of confidence from boxing. Then at Eton I boxed at bantamweight for the school and later became captain.

*How did you get involved with OUABC?*

Bob Nairac recruited me just a few weeks before the Cambridge match in 1969. He had heard I had done it at school and they needed a welterweight. The club was in some disarray but we drew four-all in the match. Bob later went into army intelligence and was shot by the IRA in a field after interrogation, and his body never found. A tough man, and not just in the ring.



*David today and his position on Europe captured in a boxing cartoon*

*Do you remember your first bout for OUABC?*

It was a scramble to get fit and I hadn't boxed in a match for over two years, but Alf Gallie the trainer gave me confidence. We drove over to Cambridge, took a medical, weighed in, and suddenly I was back in the ring. I lost on points. The press report said it was close but I felt it was fair.

*What did you enjoy most about being part of OUABC?*

I enjoy exercise when it's for a purpose, and there's no better purpose than winning a fight! And I liked doing something a bit out of the ordinary, and removed from the academic side of university life.

*Which was your toughest bout?*

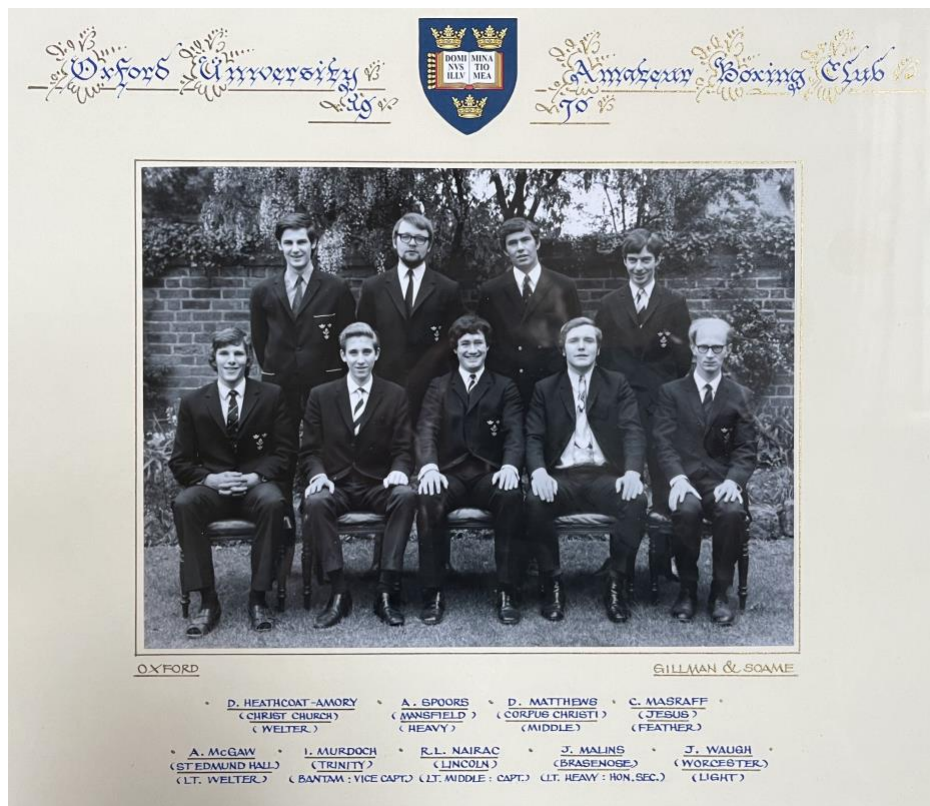
The following year the varsity match was in Oxford town hall. I was pitched against Tony Wright, the Cambridge captain. I had trained harder this time and learnt a bit more technique, but it was a testing three rounds. I won on points, and we won the match 5:4. Years later I went to see a surgeon before an ear operation. As I walked in he said, 'we've met before'. It was Tony Wright and we reminisced about our first meeting in the boxing ring nearly 50 years before.

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

There's no fear like getting into the boxing ring against an unknown opponent. When I became an MP and a minister I sometimes had to make a speech to a large or hostile crowd, but I always felt I had been there before.

*Did you box after you left Oxford?*

I did a bit of sparring at boys' clubs but never seriously. In the House of Commons I was a member of the all-party boxing group and did what I could to promote boxing clubs, particularly in deprived areas. I was once mugged in Brussels by a man with a knife who took my bag and ran off. I think it was my boxing instinct which spurred me into action and I ran after him and got the bag back.



*David in the official photo of the winning 1970 team (courtesy of Gillman and Soame)*

*What are you doing these days?*

I'm chairman of a house building company in Devon. And I try and stay fit: I've done a couple of London marathons, and I do a lot of walking, some skiing, but no boxing!

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

Watch it, do it, and learn. Every bout is a test bed for technique.

*Who is your favourite boxer of any era?*

Muhammad Ali; I think the greatest world champion of all. He showed how speed, mobility and style are more important than force.

### *Any other thoughts?*

With knife crime on the rise and too many youth gangs, boxing is a sport that channels aggression and teaches respect for rules. And you can make friends with your opponent. We need more boxing clubs, and it's great that women are doing it as well as men.

## 2024 VARSITY MATCH

This year was the first year I'd attended a Varsity Match in Cambridge since the early 2000s, so I was delighted to go and to meet up with some very familiar faces - Chris Mack, Robin Duggan, Tim Fell, Same Neaman, Peter Davies - after nearly having my plans scuppered by Great Northern Trains. A couple of pints and a cracking steak sandwich by way of preparation, we soon found ourselves inside the Guildhall (which looked just like the Corn Exchange where I'd boxed in the 1985 Varsity Match). The tickets specified black tie, but we were having none of that and wore blues blazers.

I kept notes on the bouts, which are now surplus to requirements given David Seiferth's excellent reporting, but it has to be said that the 7-2 loss in the men's match does somewhat flatter Cambridge - not in terms of the result, but rather how close some of the bouts were. There were a few conspiracy theorists at ringside claiming one of the judges was in the Lights Blues' pocket, and I was reminded by Chris Mack of Alf Gallie saying "you have to knock them out to get a draw in Cambridge" - mainly as motivation against a hostile crowd.



Ati Maheshwari on his way to victory



By and large, I don't think we can have any argument with the decisions. I do think Ati Maheshwari was unlucky to only win by a split decision, but he got the right result. Otherwise I think the judges got most of the bouts right, allowing for the fact that we all watch through specs tinted with different shades of blue. Special mention should go, however, to Lara Mallin in the only women's bout, which was a competitive affair in which she prevailed by being more aggressive and landing the heavier punches, and to Paddy Ryce who, despite losing, managed to force two standing counts in the opening round.



*Lara Mallin gets the decision in the only women's Varsity bout*

After the turmoil at the end of last year and being without a Head Coach for a period, we should all be proud of the work OUABC put in, not only to fulfil the Varsity Match fixture, but also to make it competitive and entertaining evening. Easy to say from the side-line, but a tighter defence, more aggression, and staying strong in the third round (when Cambridge won four of the bouts), will bring the silverware home in 2025.

## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

### “Dark Trade - Lost in Boxing”, by Donald McRae

I read this book years ago, in the mid-1990s, and was completely absorbed by it. Donald McRae is a South African and a two-time winner of the William Hill Sports Book of the Year, the first time for this book, as well as writing the Guardian’s weekly sports interviews from 2003. He has collaborated with Victoria Pendleton, Steven Gerrard and Eddie Jones on their autobiographies - I haven’t read those, but can’t imagine they would be as good as “Dark Trade”.

The book focuses on boxers such as Oscar De La Hoya, Mike Tyson, James Tony, Roy Jones Jr, Naseem Hamed, Michael Watson and Chris Eubank - fighters from both sides of the proverbial pond, in what many consider to be a golden era for boxing. His ability to get to know his subjects, gain their trust, and present their stories - the good and the bad - makes this possibly my favourite book on our sport.

Available here <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dark-Trade-Boxing-Donald-McRae/dp/1840189568> but why not take a trip to a local book shop?

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](mailto:marklinehan64@yahoo.com)