



OUABC

Alumni Newsletter

Michaelmas
2022

Welcome to the Michaelmas 2022 edition

As you will no doubt know by now, former OUABC Head Coach Henry Dean sadly passed away in October. Henry was the most successful coach, in terms of results, in the history of the boxing club, overseeing 12 of a record 16 consecutive wins, which was also the most successful winning Varsity Match streak of any Oxford sport.

I knew Henry as assistant coach to both Percy Lewis and David Holmes, benefitting from his advice, encouragement and wise words. But I didn't know him as well as the many boxers for whom he was their Head Coach - "Henry's Boys" - and the eulogy that Fabio Quaradeghini read at Henry's funeral is included in this newsletter as a fitting tribute to Henry.

The newsletter also includes thoughts on the season ahead from new President, Ben Allwright; a report on the recent fixture with RAM Sandhurst; a Q&A with Tim Fell, someone whose commitment to OUABC and hard work has been instrumental in creating a thriving Alumni Association; a poem with a link to Oxford boxing; and my latest book recommendation, "Muhammad Ali - His Life and Times" by Thomas Hauser.

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

OUABC PRESIDENT'S SEASON PREVIEW

Over my past three years at OUABC, I have grown to understand why this club is so widely loved. This club offers a community of people who are desperate to push themselves past their limits, and help their fellow boxers do the same. Never before have I been part of a club that offers this level of fulfilment, accountability, and warmth. OUABC has enriched my university experience immeasurably, and it is for that reason that I feel immensely proud and privileged to represent my club members, and the wider OUABC community, as club president this year.

It has been a pleasure to meet many members of the OUABCAA over the years - some meetings more memorable than others due to my love of a post-show drink (or two). It was also great to send current club members to the Vincent's Club Annual Dinner. Our attendees came to training the following day, keen to share the tips that were offered up by OUABC alumni. My personal favourite was a punch that has now been named the 'Terry Adams Hook'.

There is a great buzz around the gym at this time. We are glad that most boxers that helped us achieve an exciting victory over Sandhurst Military Academy ABC have returned for another season. Sparring is also now underway with the usual accompanying bloodied noses and bruised cheeks. The take up of OUABC memberships is also higher than recent years, which is an encouraging indicator of the health of our club.

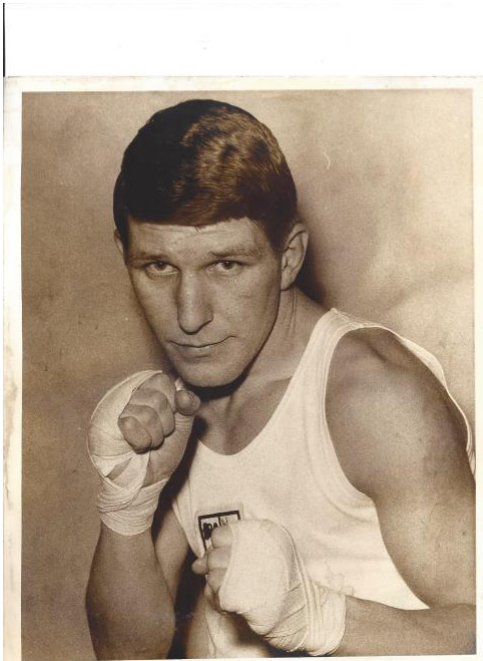
Our club currently has two shows booked for this academic year. Firstly, Town vs Gown will take place at the Acer Nethercott Hall at the Iffley Sports Centre on **28th January 2023**. Our decision to trail this fixture at Iffley was brought about by the limited capacity on offer at the Oxford Union. Last year, tickets sold out in 30 minutes, meaning many that wanted to attend could not. With double the capacity this season, we hope this will be the best attended Town vs Gown in many years. We have also made arrangements for Varsity 2023 to take place at the Oxford Town Hall on **10th March 2023**.

Finally, our club were incredibly saddened to hear about the recent passing of Henry Dean. Although I never got the opportunity to meet him, it was clear how much he meant to the members of this club - both past and present. I was incredibly moved by the eulogies read at his funeral, and hearing stories about his time as head coach of our club. Henry leaves a great legacy which will be honoured at Varsity this year with a fitting tribute.

Yours in the dark blue corner,

Benjamin Allwright
OUABC President 2022/23

HENRY DEAN - 1938-2022



No one who stepped into the gym at Iffley Road during Henry Dean's tenure as Head Coach will ever forget him. His success in the role is unrivalled, bringing Varsity Match win after win and putting boxing at the forefront of Dark Blue sports. But it is the loyalty he inspired in his charges and the fondness they hold him in to this day that says more about the kind of man Henry was.

I knew Henry as an assistant in the coaching set up and was fortunate to do so, but it is those who boxed under him as Head Coach who are best placed to pay tribute to him. And so I am delighted that Fabio Quaradeghini has agreed for the eulogy he gave at Henry's funeral to be used in this newsletter:

"Born on the eve of war within earshot of Bow Bells, the eldest of two sons outnumbered by no less than seven sisters, the young Henry Dean came to Oxford as a refugee of the wartime bombing of the East End in 1943. His parents made do with a boarded-up house with no heating and a leaking roof and the children, bar one, slept four to a bed. From such Spartan conditions it probably seemed natural for Henry to take up boxing at eleven years old and he was mentored by a certain Alf Gallie at the YMCA boxing club. Alf was also Head coach at Oxford University ABC from 1946-76 and Olympic boxing coach in Helsinki in 1952 where Percy Lewis (another OUABC coach) and someone called Henry Cooper competed... With such excellent tutelage, Henry soon won the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and

Oxfordshire Schoolboy title and claimed his first National Title at sixteen. During national service with the RAF, he went on to win the Service title twice in 1957 and 1958. In 1962 he won the North West London Welterweight Title and lost only in the final of the National ABA championships. He represented his country four times. Henry was a good fighter.

Now, a 17th century poet once wrote the following: *“Iron, till it be thoroughly heated is incapable to be wrought; so God sees good to cast some men into the furnace, and then beats them on his anvil into what frame he pleases”*.

So God wrought Henry from such hardship and Henry in turn fired his own furnace and worked his hammer on the anvil of boxing and it pleased him to fashion men from boys. Henry had already been a coach for decades when in 1986 he was invited to assist Percy Lewis coaching OUABC, soon becoming Head coach in 1989 in time for the 1990 Varsity match. There followed the longest unbeaten Varsity record of any coach in any sport. Ever. Henry totted-up 12 Varsity wins against Cambridge in succession taking the club tally to 16 in a row. Such was the scale of his dominance that the entire future of Cambridge boxing was called into question. I was fortunate enough to play a part in that success as a light-middleweight in 1992 and 1993 and it is from that time and that personal perspective in the gym or in Vincent’s, where Henry was then steward (always an impeccably dressed gentleman, cheerful and with an eye on his boxer’s alcohol consumption in the season), that I offer my two pennies worth.

So what made Henry so special? Why did hundreds of boys flock to Iffley Road to be beaten into shape in the ring, the running track, the early morning mist of Headington Hill, the weights room and the wooden floor of the basketball court that served as a harsh canvas for sparring practice? Why, when easier alternatives in sport, leisure, study and all the other aspects of student life were so easy to indulge? Why stay on past the harshest trials, the setbacks, the knockdowns, the vomit on the hill runs, the battles to make weight?

Because of Henry Dean. We were his boys. We wanted to make him proud of us. This other father in loco parentis with his yellow windbreaker on his bike at 6am pushing us up the hill. He gave us his time, his wisdom, his knowledge and his encouragement and we offered our blood and sweat in return. And it made us better men.

But Henry spared us some of the hardships he endured when he boxed and his methods went beyond the orthodoxy of the “old days”. Hobnail boots did not survive the age of Nike and Adidas so we suffered fewer shin splints than he no doubt did. And in a time when old school coaches still thought too much muscle made a boxer slow and muscle bound, Henry would often take a boxer aside and say “lift some weights eh?”. Practically a heresy 25 years ago in many boxing gyms. Henry had Percy Lewis, British Empire Champion, assisting him: Jerzy Kulej, double Olympic, European and World Champion would come and help out in the season; Peter Coughlin was his trusty pad man of whom Henry said: ‘Peter never once missed a training session. I couldn’t have done it without him’. They all gave their time for Henry and we were better off for it.

Henry coached boys that became captains of industry, Ministers of State, scientists, teachers, doctors, army officers, lawyers, bankers, fathers, husbands. Boys that became better men. Each varsity team in every year he coached was bonded with a martial esprit de corps unknown outside a theatre of war and many of us remain close to this day and were happy to support the Gym in Oxford that bears Henry’s name alongside Alf and Percy. And many of us are here, today, to honour him.

After all, he forged us. We are Henry’s Boys.”

OUABC V RMA SANDHURST, 1st JUNE 2022

On 1st June at the Oxford Catholic Chaplaincy, thanks to the coordination and hard work of OUABC Vice President and Sandhurst alumnus Jody Bragger and the rest of the OUABC committee, the Club successfully revived the historic fixture against Sandhurst. The evening was hosted by new OUABC senior member and Principal of Hertford College, Tom Fletcher, and Commandant of RMA Sandhurst, Major-General Duncan Capps, and was a resounding success, with a series of highly competitive bouts ending in a 5-4 match victory for Oxford in addition to a number of excellent supporting bouts between OUABC, local clubs and RMAS boxers.

Highlights included Rosie Berkin of OUABC winning a unanimous points decision, outboxing the strongly built OCdt Dunnington of RMAS, with good use of her jab and longer reach, and in the final bout of the evening Oxford Heavyweight Teddy Andrews deservedly winning a points decision in a raucous atmosphere, outboxing OCdt Foulton of Sandhurst with good technique and aggression after a very even first round.

In between, Paddy Ryce of OUABC lost a split decision to OCdt McMahon of Sandhurst in a tough lightweight bout. Joshua Fozard brought home a win for OUABC in an excellent bout with former OUABC Men's Captain, OCdt Brindle. David Seiferth (current Men's Captain) of OUABC lost a majority decision to OCdt Flint in a very close fight. Henry Portwood of Queens College made light work of his opponent, OCdt Ruston, winning within the first minute by RSC after cutting Ruston's brow with a strong right hand. George Carver of OUABC suffered a loss against the stronger OCdt Merriman in a tough bout. Matthew Lai of Lincoln lost a split decision to Whittaker despite a fast start in the first round. Luke Ramsdale of Oxford ABC brought home a win on behalf of OUABC against OCdt Gaye of RMAS, using good head movement to get on the inside of his much taller opponent.

There were also a series of excellent supporting bouts, including Nicholas Johnson of OUABC losing a split decision to G Singh of Treasure ABC, and Freddie Barr-Smith stealing a win from Tariq Yasin in a well fought bout (both OUABC).

It is great to see a fixture, in which so many alumni boxed in previous years, being revived and it bodes well for future years that boxers will have more opportunities to get experience ahead of the Varsity Match. A full programmes of matches and shows is a prerequisite for success.



Teddy Andrews on his way to a points win and OUABC boxers and coaches

Q&A WITH TIM FELL

Whilst the work of the coaches at OUABC has been fundamental to the success of the club over the years, there have also been a number of key individuals without whose commitment and contributions we might not have a boxing club at all. One of those is Tim Fell - as Chris Mack puts it, "He has always been incredibly inspiring and provides extremely wise counsel. Apart from coaches and assistants, I can't think of anyone who has done more for the club over so many years."

Tim was a winning Blue at light-heavyweight in the 1989 Varsity Match, boxing under David Holmes in the second of his two years as Head Coach. In his own words, "I didn't do much for the next couple of years but support and go to matches", but that changed when Henry Dean became Steward at Vincent's, providing the ideal opportunity for Tim to reignite his involvement in the club through his discussions with Henry about what the club needed to maintain its success.

Helping out at training, guiding the committee, organising matches, driving, raising money, buying kit, liaising with the university, writing the newsletter, inspiring each year's crop of boxers, providing continuity, not to mention holding the post of Senior Treasurer from 1993 to 1997, the list goes on... But it was perhaps setting up the Alumni Association in December 1996, which has raised over £50,000 for Oxford boxing, that was Tim's greatest contribution to the club. And over 25 years later he is still the Treasurer. He has organised several dinners (including the Centenary Dinner in 1997) and compiled the list of Varsity Matches and boxers dating back to 1887 - as he says, "I think I spent more time in my library researching it than I did on my thesis!"

So, who more appropriate and deserving to be featured in the regular newsletter Q&A? And it's worth the read...

What was your boxing experience before going up to Oxford?

None. I had never even been to a boxing match. I did a few years of Karate in my teens but had never punched anyone in the face before.

How did you get involved with OUABC?

Through John-Mark Considine, a fellow Teddy Hall rugby player and drinking buddy. JM is a quietly spoken gentleman with impeccable manners. I knew he was a judo black belt so not a man to cross, but his polite demeanour did not match my preconception of a boxer at all. I didn't even realise he was training with the club until a few days before the varsity match. Unable to reconcile what I thought I knew of JM and of boxing I went along to the Oxford Town Hall to watch my first ever boxing match.

I thought I had an idea of what to expect but both the ferocity of the bouts and the partisan nature of the crowd took me aback. But that was nothing compared to when JM stepped into the ring at light-heavyweight to box the Cambridge captain Guy du Parc Braham. I had never seen anything like it and was simultaneously exhilarated and horrified. What had happened to JM? Surely some form of witchcraft was at work. A Jekyll and Hyde potion perhaps. I suspect Guy was the better boxer, but he'd unfortunately found himself in the ring with a Spartan warrior. Moments after JM had taken the honours he was back to his charming self, and in that instant I vowed to myself to be in that ring next year.

Do you remember your first bout for OUABC?

An impossible night to forget, but not particularly for my performance. It was the first match of Michaelmas 1988. Dave Holmes was head coach and he drove half a dozen of us OUABC first-timers down to HMS Sultan to box some squaddies under the supervision of Navy PTIs rather than ABA officials.

Matchmaking was somewhat creative. To their credit the PTIs wanted to give us all a chance to box, and the 300 strong crowd of rowdy sailors something to cheer. I had been starving myself to make light-heavyweight and got matched with a heavyweight who had a good stone on me, but it was near enough. What they couldn't do though was match our lightweight, Eliot Giuralarocca, just turned 18 and with no fights on his medical card. The only lightweight they had was the combined forces champion. I can still see their faces when Dave said we'd take that match, a mixture of incredulity, hilarity and a little bit of 'wouldn't that be a fun thing to see'. It took some persuading them, but one PTI did seem to remember the name Giuralarocca from the schoolboy ABAs, and what the hell, the crowd would love it.

I was the penultimate bout. Everyone had boxed pretty well for their first outing, but we had yet to win a match. The crowd was getting boisterous and didn't want the party spoiled. All I remember of the match is that I was a bit fitter and faster than him and that whilst I really enjoyed it, the mob in the gloom beyond the ring lights did not as I was given the points decision.

But never mind, the main event had come, and it was pure ancient Rome. Their coliseum gladiator about to slay the Oxford toff.

Eliot had boxed as a junior, well over a hundred bouts if my memory serves me correctly. However his true passion was, and still is, acting. A 5 ft 10 beanpole of a lightweight with foppish hair he took to the ring and gave an outrageously camp show of shadow boxing whilst the home team brought forth their squat solid, tattooed emblazoned dog of war and unmuzzled him in the corner. The crowd were going berserk at Eliot's antics as the ref brought them together and at the open bell battle commenced.

I saw Eliot box many times for OUABC after that night and I don't recall ever seeing him take more than a few seconds to dispatch his opponent to the canvas. This was a different bout altogether. When the final bell had rung and the ref was collecting the scorecards I saw Dave lean over to Peter Coughlin, our assistant coach and say, "get everyone ready to go, now".

Credit to the PTI judges. They could easily have been swayed by the crowd, but they deservedly gave the decision to Eliot. And then we were out of there as fast as we could as the pack spilled out of the sports hall and harangued our minibus off the base. On the dark drive home I remember looking at my little bronze medal and thinking the night had far exceeded my expectations and how I loved it!

What did you enjoy most about being part of OUABC?

Watching myself and teammates grow. Cause and effect happen very quickly in a boxing ring. There is no place to hide. No one else to blame. It is a cliché, but it is character building and I found it a hugely rewarding experience.

What did you enjoy least about being part of OUABC?

Diet Coke. An abomination, but I wouldn't have made the weight without it. That and getting punched on the nose by Mark Pantling in sparring every god-damn time!

Which was your toughest bout?

Easy, oh so easy. It makes my toes curl just to think about it.

It was a cold, bleak day in late January 89 when we drove down to a London gym to box in the Universities, Hospitals and Military Academy Championships. On the way Dave Holmes told me that if I was drawn against a boxer from Kent University, nicknamed Polyunsaturates due to his impressively

long and tortuous Greek surname, that he would pull me on account of no one ever lasting more than a round with him, such was the power of his punching. I shrugged and thought, we'll see.

As it happened 'luck' was with me, and Polyunsaturates' first bout was against Officer Cadet Haslam from Sandhurst on the other side of the draw. The script then changed a little, but the plot was the same. Officer Cadet Haslam decked Polyunsaturates in seconds, as he did every other opponent on his way to the final.

When I got through the other side of the draw to the final Dave gave me a big slap on the back and said "well done lad, but that's as far as you go". I, flushed with success and the foolhardiness of youth, had other ideas. It wasn't quite a blazing row but not far off. In the end Dave relented and let me box. I remember thinking it funny he seemed to have trouble meeting my eye as we walked to the ring. My teammates would sometimes teasingly call me the statue, due to my granite-like footwork. However, the jest could equally be applied to my chin which was fairly hard. What I'd previously thought of as a blessing was quickly revealed as a curse. Officer Cadet Haslam hit really hard, and like a fool I wasn't falling over.

After I'd made it through the first round Haslam looked quite bemused he had to box again. In the second my nose erupted and I remember feeling envious of his red Sandhurst singlet as I was boxing in white. I had no idea how I was holding on but eventually the bell for the end of the second came. As we stood for the final round I saw a hint of respect cross his face, but I was about to lose that horribly.

Now here's the thing. In sparring we had got into the habit of touching gloves after every round, until Dave took us all aside and said, "you touch gloves before the first bell and you shake hands after the last, and nothing in between". Unaccustomed as he was to third rounds, upstanding Officer Cadet Haslam came across the canvas with his hands down, motioning to touch gloves.

I think I was ashamed before I even did it, but it didn't stop me. I hit him across the chin with all my might. Out of the corner of my eye I saw his classmates leap to their feet, but my concentration was on him as he reeled back across the ring to slump on the ropes. There seemed to be a commotion in the crowd but that could wait as to my horror his head slowly rose in that Arnold Schwarzenegger Terminator way that only has one ending. And so began two of the most painful minutes of my life.

I lost but I had stayed on my feet. Dave laughed; I am not quite sure why. After finally shaking my opponent's hand I slowly stumbled my way to the dressing room to clean up. Officer Cadet Haslam was already there and suddenly the room seemed the size of a telephone box. After an awkward moment I turned to him and said "look, I'm sorry about..." only for him to put his hand up and reply, "no need, you taught me a valuable lesson there". We shook hands again and went our separate ways. I'm guessing nobody ever sucker punched Officer Cadet Haslam again.

Who was your most difficult sparring partner?

Have I mentioned Mark Pantling? Actually it was probably Eliot Giuralarocca. Even though a lightweight he comfortably sparred with everyone. None of us could lay a glove on him, except Henry Dean of course!

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

There are dozens of amazing memories. High up there has to be the 1999 varsity match in Cambridge. Coming off the back of 13 straight defeats Cambridge found themselves 4-0 up at the break and this surely was the year they broke the Oxford run. The home crowd were going wild, already celebrating quenching a thirst for victory that had eluded them for so long.

Years later, I am rather naffly reminded of Aragorn's final battle speech in Lord of the Rings "A day may come when the courage of Men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship, but it is not this day".

With grit and determination Oxford clawed the match back to 4-4. This valiant fight back scarcely dented the Tabs excitement though, as they knew the final bout would see Ollie Slack, their accomplished heavyweight, rugby blue and all-round local hero pitched against our mild-mannered theologian, Mark Mullins in his first bout.

Ollie came out like a bulldozer, overpowering his novice opponent in a blizzard of punches. It was all Mark could do to cover up tight in the corner, until after a murderous 30 seconds the ref called for them to break. The crowd was in raptures. Everybody thought it was over - well nearly everyone. As Mark slowly lowered his guard and regained his composure, a few of us standing ringside got a glimpse of the look in his eyes. His expression is one of my abiding memories of boxing at Oxford. It was OUABC, heart and soul. Ollie Slack didn't know what had hit him.



Tim winning his Blue in 1989, or as he puts it "explaining gravity to Pete Joy of Cambridge"

Did you box at all after you left Oxford?

Some questioned whether I actually boxed whilst at Oxford, so I certainly didn't push it after I'd left. I did go on to be Senior Treasurer of the club though. What an honour that was to work with Henry Dean and all the lads throughout a part of that amazing 16-year winning streak.

What are you doing these days?

I do biotech start-ups. I am on my fifth one now and still loving the thrill of innovation.

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

Develop a team narrative you can weave into your personal motivations. Nurture that story and pass it from year to year. Aside from coaching, I believe that makes a crucial difference between winning or losing a varsity match. OUABC has fantastic lore to draw upon, from Robert Nairac saving the club, to the 16-year run, to the blood, sweat and tears shed on Headington Hill. Embrace that history, add your own, and then pass it on.

Who is your favourite boxer of any era?

Sugar Ray Leonard (followed closely by OUABC's Antony Potts - but that is a story for another to tell some other day).

Any other thoughts?

Henry Dean is much in my thoughts. He's even back in my dreams bellowing at me to double jab! I spent a lot of time with Henry over the years and I know that he felt immensely privileged and proud to be Head Coach of OUABC. Whilst Percy Lewis and Dave Holmes coached the first three wins of the 16-year varsity winning run, it will largely be Henry's legacy and each of those wins brought him great satisfaction.

There was another occasion though when I saw him burst with as much, if not more pride, and that was when in 1994 he took 4 boxers to the BUSA championships and came back with 4 gold medals. Alex Mehta, Rorie Duncan, Iain Sutcliffe and John Roberts boxed their hearts out for Henry that day and such was the scale of their achievement in his eyes I saw the lovable old rogue shed a tear of joy.

Not so fierce after all!

THE BOXING POET

Peter Weygang was a member of OUABC in the mid-50s and a contemporary of a previous boxer featured in the Q&A - Terry Adams. Now living in Canada and an "occasional poet", Peter has uploaded one on boxing to YouTube - look out for a mention of Alf Gallie...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Tb1BALVVo8>

BOOK RECOMMENDATION - “MUHAMMAD ALI - HIS LIFE AND TIMES” BY THOMAS HAUSER

I doubt any boxer has had more books written about him than Mohammad Ali - I've certainly read a few of them. Whilst the word “definitive” is probably a little over used, in the context of Ali biographies, it seem entirely appropriate for Thomas Hauser's 1991 book, which was written with the cooperation of the great man himself.

The biography is not a short read - the hardback version runs to over 500 pages - but it is engaging throughout, as you might expect with such rich material. There are many myths and much received wisdom about the Muhammad Ali story, so it is refreshing to read a thoroughly researched book that draws on the thoughts and memories of those who were closest to him throughout his life and career, and whose words make up a large proportion of the book. Hauser's documenting, in particular, of Ali refusing to take the draft and the involvement of the Nation of Islam in this part of his career, presents a subtly different take on the “truth” many people think they know.

The book includes some wonderful photos and is structured broadly chronologically. I'm sure many of you will have read it but, if you haven't, treat yourself and enjoy!

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Muhammad-Ali-His-Life-Times/dp/1907554807/ref=sr_1_1?crid=26Q01ZVMKCQ79&keywords=thomas+hauser+muhammad+ali&qid=1668616220&srefix=thomas+hauser+muhammad+ali%2Caps%2C84&sr=8-1

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