



# OUABC

## Alumni Newsletter

Hilary  
Term 2021

## Welcome to the Hilary Edition

Never before have I been so pleased to be on the receiving end of an Oxford jab - and I'm looking forward to the next part of the 1-2 combination! This time not thanks to Sam Neaman, Steve Diggle et al. but to Prof Sarah Gilbert and her team. (Being further up the vaccination queue is perhaps the only advantage of being old...) Sadly for OUABC, Covid has again been the obvious theme this past term as detailed in Club President Jo Heymann's following report. Hopefully things will get better for the Club next term and, among other things, we can look forward to a Varsity Match in 2022.

Henry Dean very much enjoyed reading Peter Davies' wonderful tribute to him in the last newsletter. However, he pointed out that he could not have achieved his extraordinary success without his assistant, Peter Coughlin. 'In all those years he never once missed a training session' said Henry. This

edition therefore contains an excellent article on Peter written by Mark Linehan, winning middleweight in 1985 and 1988 (captain). Mark also had a terrific jab, though perhaps a little too terrific as he broke his hand so couldn't fight in 1986.

Among other articles, this edition also contains news of a telephone call made to Henry by the Foreign Secretary, as well as a thank you to retiring newsletter editor Peter Davies.

## OUABC Training in Covid Times

Club President, Jo Heymann writes:

Hopes of eased restrictions regarding sport were dashed with the announcement of Lockdown 3.0 at the start of January. We had managed to obtain 'Return to Play' status from Sports Fed for the start of the Christmas vacation and were able to run one in-person session before Iffley Sports Centre closed for the Christmas period for those remaining in Oxford.

0<sup>th</sup> week Hilary term saw the return of virtual training run by the OUABC captains. Six sessions were run each week consisting of circuits, Tabata and conditioning along with some basic technique sessions aimed at new joiners. This dropped to three sessions in the last few weeks of term to streamline attendance. This term also saw the creation of this year's OUABC Strava account and keen new boxers have been ramping up the running miles. The initiative of "Boxing families", where new boxers are allocated senior boxing "parents" to help them get to know the club and other members and get advice on training, has also been a hit. This scheme, along with the weekly random pairings (or "Don't Chat In Our Gym" (DCOG) as it was affectionately named) that enabled boxers to meet up with a different member each week, was implemented early on in Michaelmas Term.

Uni life is rather different from the norm, with each college implementing their own set of rules. Many colleges only allowed a few people to return this term, giving Oxford a rather emptier feel. However, Uni Parks, Christ Church Meadow and South Parks have been full of students on social walks in pairs and an ever increasing number of runners. Another innovative "gym-like" activity has emerged in the form of gymnastics rings, which, formerly first seen early in Michaelmas, has bloomed in popularity. The end of Hilary Term saw the first few socially-distanced college formals occurring and more colleges have made plans to bring them back going into Trinity Term, in an exciting return of Oxford traditions.

We have come to the difficult decision not to plan a Varsity match this summer due to continuing uncertainties about a return to full contact training and the availability of athletes outside of term time. However, we expect Varsity 2022 to go ahead as usual with Oxford hosting in the Town Hall.

Indoor training is currently expected to return in May with outdoor training, likely resembling that from the start of this academic year, beginning in 0<sup>th</sup> week of Trinity. Despite a sparse year of boxing as we know it, we have some dedicated new members and expect to field a strong team in the coming academic year.

## Peter Coughlin 1934-2014

The description “unsung hero” is overused but, in the context of Peter Coughlin’s contribution to OUABC, it seems apt.

Peter was born in Poplar, East London in 1934 and evacuated to Oxford during the Second World War. East London’s loss was Oxford’s gain, with Peter volunteering as assistant coach and corner second at the boxing club from 1979 to 2004 and working with head coaches including Alf Gallie, Percy Lewis, David Holmes and Henry Dean. Henry once said that the success he had during his tenure as head coach simply wouldn’t have been possible without Peter.

For any of us who boxed during that period, Peter was the voice of calm authority and reassurance. He quietly took boxers on the pads, uttered words of encouragement and made wry observations, whilst the head coach oversaw sparring. Outside the gym he always wore his trademark flat cap and had a cigarette hanging out the corner of his mouth. His sister, Tess, recalls the old Sunday morning training runs in Headington Hill Park, where Peter would shout at boxers to get a move on, from the top of the hill whilst puffing on his cigarette. One of the trio of Duggan brothers who won boxing blues remembers complaining to Peter of shin splints, to which he shook his head and responded “What you need is more road work.” Always a great motivator.

As a boy in Oxford, Peter attended the Salesian College in Cowley and qualified as a technical engineer. After leaving he worked at the university’s Department of Experimental Psychology, which some might suggest was perfect preparation for his role as assistant coach. However, Peter’s love of boxing started as a schoolboy when he boxed for Salesian Boys, competing in annual tournaments against other clubs, ironically held every March at Oxford Town Hall.

Everyone has a story about Peter, but a couple spring to mind. Once, when working the corner as second to Percy, Percy removed the mouth guard of a boxer who then took a mouthful of water. When it came to spitting it out, in the excitement Peter thrust the bucket to the wrong side and, depending on whose version of events you believe, the mouthful ended up on Peter, a judge or a ringside spectator in black tie.



Peter at the 100<sup>th</sup> Varsity Match celebrations in London, 2007

On another occasion, in 1986, Peter enjoyed the post-Varsity Match dinner a tad too much. This resulted in members of the team calling Mrs Coughlin from a phone box (remember those) explaining his predicament, telling her where he was and that he needed picking up. Somewhat fearful of her reputation, the guys did the only reasonable thing and left him propped up in the phone box waiting for his lift.

And in a reconstruction of the 1986 team photo, taken at the same event but after a bit too much celebrating...



I boxed from 1984 to 1986, before going abroad as part of my degree. During that year Percy Lewis stood down as head coach, to be replaced by David Holmes, and when I returned as captain for the 1987/8 year I was delighted to see Peter's familiar face still in the gym and as second in the corner, providing important continuity. He was a modest man and certainly not in it for himself - like so many of the coaches we all benefitted from working with, he did it because of a love of boxing and wanting to give people like us a helping hand. I will always be grateful to him for that.

I know he was incredibly proud of his involvement in the club and of our achievements. He had all his team photos up on his walls and his daughter, Sarah Murfin, has kindly donated them to the club so those originals will be part of the display to be erected outside the GLD at Iffley Road. Peter passed away a matter of days before his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was buried in his blazer and OUABC tie. That ought to bring a lump to your throat...

Mark Linehan

## Foreign Secretary Calls Henry Dean

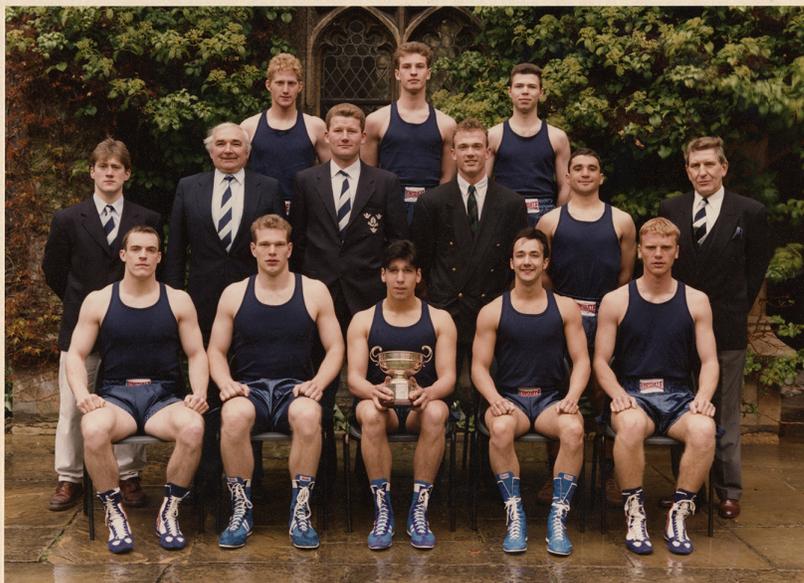
In the last newsletter we mentioned how much Henry Dean would like to hear from 'Henry's Boys.' He will tell anyone 'There is not a day goes by I don't think about those boys.'

Sadly Henry has Parkinson's and has found it particularly hard in lockdown. He is tremendously grateful and really enjoyed hearing from all those of you who have been in contact. So if you know Henry but have not been in touch for a while do give him a call 01865 200141. He would love to hear from you.

One who responded to the suggestion in the Michaelmas newsletter was none other than the Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP. If you didn't know it, Dom (as I believe he was know then) was at LMH and the victorious Light Heavy in Henry's winning team of 1995. Henry was over the moon

to hear from Dominic and to reminisce about the characters, the training, and the boxing back then. As Henry said ‘It’s not every day you get a call from the Foreign Secretary!’ Thanks to Jenny Dean for helping with the call, and to Dominic’s Office Manager, Jane Gordon-Cumming for arranging. Tremendous thanks as well to Dominic for finding the time in his obviously busy schedule, you made Henry’s day!

*Oxford University Amateur Boxing Club*



Peter Coughlin and Dom Raab in the victorious team of 1995.

Thankfully the fashion in shorts has since changed...



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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                  | ANDREW JAMES<br>(WADHAM)        | GREG GARLAND<br>(UNIVERSITY)   | KARIM AYOUBI<br>(PEMBROKE)          |                             |                            |
| JAMES EDDY<br>(KEBLE)            | PETER COUGHLIN<br>(ASST. COACH) | TIM FELL<br>(SENIOR TREASURER) | JAMIE STEIN<br>(ST HUGH'S)          | CHRIS LYNHAM<br>(HERTFORD)  | HENRY DEAN<br>(HEAD COACH) |
| DOM RAAB<br>(LADY MARGARET HALL) | JAMES HURRION<br>(QUEEN'S)      | SEIM MUNIF<br>(LINCOLN)        | GREG PATERSON - JONES<br>(HERTFORD) | IAIN SUTCLIFFE<br>(QUEEN'S) |                            |

## Huge Thanks to Peter Davies

We owe a huge debt of thanks to Peter Davies [PWD] who has been editing the newsletter since the start of 2018 but who has decided to hang up his pen. From his own initiative Peter Ho started the newsletter way back, and in his time Peter Davies has expanded it to make it much more substantial. He has done a tremendous job, including many varied articles from both current Club news and events to stories, anecdotes, and articles about the Club from the past, all written with his particular brand of humour, which I for one have very much enjoyed. Besides attending every social event (usually closing the bar) he has attended and reported on every match. A sterling effort!

Peter (appropriately enough at St. Peter's....the Peter bit not the St.) was the victorious Light Welter in the winning teams of 1972, 1973 and 1974. Under his captaincy in 1973 Oxford won for the first time in Cambridge with Alf Gallie as coach. Think about that for a minute. Alf's first Varsity match was in 1946, no wonder when asked about the judging there Alf used to quip 'In Cambridge you have to knock 'em out to draw!'

Peter continues to be a terrific supporter of the Club, always willing to give help, time, and advice when asked. He also helped Charles Masraff organise the fantastic 'Nairac Lunch.' If all that wasn't enough he has, like many of you, a generous standing order to the Club and never fails to respond to requests for sponsorship of events/bouts etc. Buy him a drink when you next see him, he deserves it!

*PWD writes: "It has been a privilege to be involved with OUABC again, especially to meet old friends and make new ones. I finally persuaded my Managing Director to move from Worcestershire to Northumberland {and there is still snow on the Cheviots in April, which is something of a shock} and as the new house was operating as a B&B having formerly been the village police station and court house, and is complete with cells; there is a lot of work to be done. Paul Newton calls his beloved "The Leader of the Opposition" which is a funnier epithet but "Managing Director" more properly reflects my subservient status in my marriage of >30 years, and I am still only on parole. The MD asked if I minded going on cruises in 2022 and 2023 and while I welcomed being invited, I failed to check the dates. The first coincides with the next Varsity match and the 2023 venture probably will as well. So with the house to renovate also, it is a good time to bow out. Best wishes to everyone and thanks to everyone for the support and, especially, to Chris."*

### **Sugar Ray Leonard - recommended listening**

When Marvellous Marvin Hagler died I noticed there was a series on BBC Sounds by Costello and Bunce called 'Greatest Fights' where they go through ten of the best fights in history. I listened to their analysis of the Hagler Hearn fight which was terrific. I enjoyed it so much I went straight on to the Sugar Ray Leonard Hearn fight which is just brilliant broadcasting. Absolutely fantastic. Ray himself chats to them analysing the fight and gets completely carried away with excitement. It's great stuff and somehow even better listening rather than watching. Highly recommended next time you are cutting the grass/running the streets etc.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/boxing/52868012>

### **Meeting Minds - recommended viewing**

For those who are unaware, each year the University holds an Alumni Weekend of lectures and events, dubbed Meeting Minds. This is usually held in September and as a previous attendee (when it hasn't conflicted with the T20 finals day!) I can highly recommend. There is a huge and varied programme of events showcasing some of the very best that the University has to offer. This year there is an alternative online week of lectures 'Meeting Minds Global' from 12-17 April. I encourage you to take a look.

<https://web.cvent.com/event/a811adf3-1c04-4ce9-89ba-40b50ce8df8e/summary>

## Remembered

Michael Wenner was the Middleweight in 1947. Paratrooper, Linguist, Boxer, Diplomat, Business executive, Author, he was quite the renaissance man. He died last November at the age of 99 and the following obituary appeared in the Telegraph.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2021/02/01/captain-michael-wenner-wartime-paratrooper-commando-later-diplomat/>

## Error

The last newsletter stated that David Holmes was the head coach for the 1987 and 1988 Varsity matches. In fact Percy Lewis was still coach in 1987. David Holmes took over for the 1988 and 1989 matches, and Henry for the 1990 match onwards. Apologies for my error. I gave Peter the wrong information.

Edited and mistakes by: Chris Mack

In line with data privacy laws, we have drafted a Privacy Policy <http://www.ouabc.com/> that tells you what we do with and why we hold your personal data - things like your name, email address, educational history and information related to your boxing career - as well as how you can amend, see or remove your data from our systems.

We have your details on our system because you have previously provided it to us to keep you abreast of OUABC-related events and developments. Therefore, we shall continue to provide you with such updates over email unless you email us to tell us to stop.