



## Save the Dates!

### 151<sup>st</sup> Men's, 50<sup>th</sup> Women's, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Para Varsity Match

23<sup>rd</sup> of May

Iffley Road, Oxford

### Transatlantic Series: Achilles v Penn & Cornell

27<sup>th</sup> of June

Wilberforce Road

Banquet to follow at Gonville & Caius



## CUAC in the News

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, Rob Harle, Senior Treasurer, and I, Jess, as President of CUAC had the pleasure of attending the Alec Nelson Cambridge Blue Plaque unveiling with current members, coaches, and alumni of CUAC. The plaque, recognised by the Cambridge Blue Plaque committee, is now installed on All Saints Passage.

The plaque celebrates the contribution of amateur sprinter and coach Alec Nelson who revolutionised British athletics coaching. Alec was responsible for sending 50 athletes to the Olympics, 17 of which won medals, -- he also happened to be coach of CUAC from 1908 to 1940. He is also one of the brains behind the founding of the Achilles Club and the tracksuit!

Ian Stone, Professorial Fellow, Professor Emeritus at Durham University, and great-great nephew of Alec Nelson, put forward the application to the Cambridge Blue Plaque committee. He also wrote a biography on Alec's life titled "Alec Nelson and British Athletics prior to World War II: A Professional amongst Gentlemen" after digging into his family history. CUAC now holds a copy of this book.

## The Thorne Society

Dillon Rinauro, Johanna Schönecker, and Archie Harper



In 2025 we established our alumni group, named in honour of Dr. Chris Thorne's decades of service to CUAC: the Thorne Society. With the generous support of the Thorne Society's two patrons, Karen and a second anonymous donor, we have already managed to secure funding for both the memorial bench at Fenner's Cricket Ground as well as a plaque at Wilberforce Road timekeeper's booth. Installation of the bench and plaque will take place later this year.

All additional proceeds raised through this society will support initiatives close to Chris' heart: assistance for **hosting competitions** and **match officials**, **funding support** for current athletes and alumni to **obtain officiating or coaching qualifications**, as well as **reducing financial barriers to accessing the sport** for our students.

There are four membership tiers, in nominations of 1857, the club's founding year:

1. **Patron:** one-time donation of £1857
2. **Gold:** £185.70 / annum
3. **Silver:** £74.28 / annum (£18.57 / quarter)
4. **Blue** (matriculation after 2016 only): £18.57 / annum

Patrons and Gold tier members, should they wish, will have their names proudly listed on the soon-to-be-published society's webpage, and are warmly invited to attend our Annual Dinner each year, free of charge.

All society members are invited to attend bi-annual receptions at Wilberforce Road Varsity Matches, when CUAC is hosting, and will receive a member's pin as a token of appreciation. The design (above), by our very own Leonie Brunning, features the Hawk's Club hat Chris was often spotted wearing, as well as a bouquet of roses and blackthorn, a play of words on the society's namesake. Thank you for your support!



# VFEAR Match Report

Jess O'Flaherty

The 2026 edition of VFEAR delivered another brilliant afternoon of Varsity competition at Lee Valley, with Cambridge and Oxford renewing one of the most distinctive fixtures in the athletics calendar. Across relays, field events, and track races, CUAC athletes produced a series of standout performances, many at or near Blues and Half Blues standard, while the atmosphere from athletes, coaches, alumni, and supporters made for a fantastic occasion.

The field events produced some of Cambridge's strongest performances of the day. Leonie Brunning starred early on, throwing a PB of 44.31 m in the hammer to further cement her Blues status, before also winning the high jump with 1.60 m. In the women's throws, Cambridge javelin, swept the top four places through Carys Ward, Daisy Kaye, Anna Prince, and Jemima Bland. The women's pole vault squad was equally impressive, with Lauren Healy, Summer Breen-Levine, and Rachel Marsh all achieving Half Blues standards, while Marni Lai impressed on her event debut. The men matched that success in the pole vault, where Chin Aik and Sol (or maybe now Pole?) Inglis secured a memorable 1–2 finish.

Cambridge also excelled in the Men's javelin, with Remi Livesey producing a PB of 61.05 m to strengthen his Blues credentials and lead a dominant men's performance. In the discus, Alex Blake-Marfin claimed victory despite competing with a broken thumb...



...throwing 37.01 m, while Mantas Gudelis finished runner-up in discus, and winning the shot put in a throw of 13.07 m. Georgia O'Dell enjoyed an excellent afternoon, securing second in the long jump with 5.03 m to confirm her Half Blue standard before later taking second in the 60m hurdles alongside Alice Eyssens.

On the track, the women's 4x400m relay team of Maya, Daisy Kaye, Olivia Sparks, and myself opened strongly with victory, while the men's team of Rhys Gibbs, Zac Baylis, George Warren, and James McCulloch narrowly missed out in a close contest. Sam Ashadu was one of the sprint standouts of the day, winning the men's 60m in 7.11 before anchoring the men's 4x200m team to victory with a dramatic chase-down on the final leg. Olivia Sparks impressed across multiple events, taking third in the women's 60m shortly after competing in the 400m.

The hurdles also delivered strong performances, with John Bennett winning the men's race in 9.16 and later stepping up in the pole vault alongside Alex Kingston and Finlay Nunn, who all impressed despite limited preparation. Particular credit also goes to athletes who competed outside their usual events to strengthen the team effort, including Alex Kingston in the hammer, shot, and hurdles, as well as Marni Lai, who took on both pole vault and hurdles in her first season with the squad.

Cambridge ultimately secured victory in the women's track and field competition while retaining the men's track title, rounding off another successful VFEAR campaign. More importantly, the afternoon once again highlighted the depth, versatility, and team spirit that continue to define Cambridge University Athletics Club as the club looks ahead to the rest of the Varsity and outdoor season.



Photo credit: Andy Hodge



Instagram @cambridgeuniathleticsclub



Facebook Group CUAC



Strava Club



WhatsApp Alumni Group



## Penn Relays

*Ben Greenleaf*

In late April, five Cambridge athletes travelled to Philadelphia to compete at the Penn Relays, joining colleagues from Oxford under the joint Achilles banner. The squad contested the College Men's Eastern 4x400m at Franklin Field, racing twice over the weekend in front of one of the largest crowds in collegiate athletics.

The Cambridge contingent comprised Jack Lipman (Emmanuel), James McCulloch (Peterhouse), Rhys Gibbs (Fitzwilliam), Sol Inglis (Downing), and me, Ben Greenleaf (Fitzwilliam). The party was managed and coached by Bridget Wheeler, Dillon Rinauro, and Lynn Davis, the latter herself a Penn alumna and the first woman to compete at the Penn Relays for the University of Pennsylvania, who later trained alongside Bridget at Cambridge.

Friday's College Men's 4x400 Eastern heat began for Cambridge at 20:15 local time. The squad was drawn in heat one alongside American International, LIU, Lehigh, and Marist among others. James McCulloch led off, handing to Jack Lipman on the second leg, with the pair through 800m in 1:40.29. Rhys Gibbs ran the third leg in a 49.83 split, moving the team from twelfth to eleventh place at the second exchange. I anchored in 50.59 to bring the team home tenth in a final time of 3:20.70.

The performance was sufficient to qualify Cambridge for the College Men's 4x400 Eastern final on time, with confirmation arriving later that evening following a disqualification to one of the qualifying teams.

Conditions on Saturday were considerably tougher: persistent drizzle and a falling temperature meant that the warm-up areas were busier than normal and the call room was packed. The final was scheduled for 17:25. The squad retained the same running order. McCulloch and Lipman went through 800m in 1:41.86 in sixth, with Gibbs and me splitting 51.66 and 51.16 respectively in the wet. Cambridge crossed the line in 3:24.67 to finish eighth of the eight teams that completed the race. Manhattan College took the win in 3:19.67, narrowly ahead of West Chester and Voorhees.

While the time was slower than the heat, simply reaching the final at the Penn Relays carries its own weight, and the squad were proud to represent Cambridge alongside Oxford at one of the oldest and most storied meets in the sport.

This trip would not have been possible without the generous support of **Paul Willcox**, whose contribution underwrote the costs of travel and entry and made Cambridge representation at Franklin Field this year a reality. The team and the club are sincerely grateful for his support of the joint Achilles squad, and hope this account conveys something of what the weekend meant to those who took part.

The squad would also like to record its thanks to the coaches and managers who made the trip work on the ground. Bridget and Dillon offered the squad expert coaching, tactical insight, and a wealth of race-day advice that proved invaluable in the build-up to both performances at Franklin Field. Their coaching across the winter season laid the groundwork from which both races were run. Lynn was a tremendous support, and gave the team the singular privilege of competing at Penn alongside one of its own pioneers, a connection that none of the athletes will forget.

Finally, our thanks to the Achilles Club itself, and to the Oxford 4x800 team with whom we travelled, raced, and represented our two universities at the 2026 Penn Relays.



Instagram @cambridgeuniathleticsclub



Facebook Group CUAC



Strava Club



WhatsApp Alumni Group

# London Marathon

Katy Shaw



The 2026 London Marathon brought near-perfect running conditions, with cool temperatures, bright skies, and an incredible atmosphere from start to finish. For me, this year's race was about far more than just crossing the finish line.

Taking on the marathon in a running frame was a huge personal challenge, but on the day, I made it through all 26.2 miles and completed the race in a time of 4:24:55 — becoming one of only a handful of people ever to complete the London Marathon using a running frame.

Beyond the time itself, the moment felt significant for para sport and for raising awareness of frame running, which is still a relatively niche discipline. The support from the crowds throughout the course was unforgettable, and every donation has helped support Metabolic Support UK, a charity that played a huge role in giving me the confidence and opportunity to take on this challenge.

If you'd like to join me in raising funds for Metabolic Support UK, there is still time to donate [here](#). Thank you in advance!

# Transatlantic Series

Ben Ellis

The Achilles Club is delighted to confirm that **2026 will mark the return of Penn and Cornell** to the British Isles for the **37th Achilles v. Penn–Cornell Transatlantic Series Match**. This tour celebrates **105 years of friendship with Cornell** and **73 years with Penn** (who joined the series in 1953, replacing Princeton).

The **first leg** will take place at **Wilberforce Road, Cambridge**, on **27 June**, followed by a **reception at Gonville & Caius**. Tickets for the banquet will be available for purchase shortly – please keep a look out for communication from the Achilles Club.

This year, athletes and all alumni can still compete as guests (non-scoring), if not selected as a scoring athlete. For more information on eligibility or selection criteria, please contact [Martha Bevan](#) or [Miles Weatherseed](#).

Even if not competing, the Achilles Club would be most grateful for any support, whether it be entertaining our guests, assisting officials with event operations, or simply coming along to cheer.



Photo credit: Peter Guvra



Instagram [@cambridgeuniathleticsclub](#)



Facebook Group [CUAC](#)



Strava Club



WhatsApp Alumni Group

CUAC is proudly sponsored by

**WP**  
SOLICITORS

Wordley Partnership