

Cambridge University Athletics Club

Quarterly Newsletter



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A Message from the President

Jess O'Flaherty

I am honoured to begin the first newsletter for the 2025-26 academic and athletics year of CUAC. I'm Jess O'Flaherty (Girton College, 400/400H). I will be taking on the role of president this year, alongside an executive committee including Honorary Secretary Nausicaa Ng (Lucy Cavendish College, High Jump/Hurdles), Women's Captain Maya Vandermark (Downing College, 200/400), Men's Captain Jack Lipman (Emmanuel College, 400/800), and Para Captain Katy Shaw (Selwyn, T72 100). We are part of a 26-strong committee this year, including a new role of BUCS officer, to help with the ever-increasing numbers of CUAC at the national university championships!

The committee have been working hard to continue the smooth running of the club, and all our annual events have already been arranged. This includes our matches (Fresher's Varsity, VFEAR and the 151st Varsity Match), Alvers Cocktails, Annual Dinner and Warm Weather Training. This year also brings Penn and Cornell to Cambridge for the Transatlantic Tour in June.

The past year was historic for Cambridge, Oxford and modern athletics. To highlight Cambridge's varsity achievements, we won 9 out of our annual 11 matches. This **included 4 out of 5 wins in the 150th men's, 49th women's and 2nd Para Athletics Varsity Match** – a complete turnaround from the 2024 varsity match. It was also very special to have this win on home ground and for **the club to accept its very own Heritage Plaque from World Athletics**. **World Athletics CEO and Cambridge alumnus Jon Ridgeon** (Magdalene College) returned to his alma mater to present these plaques. The 4-strong senior committee team of Jess Poon, Milly Dickinson, Dillon Rinauro, and Johanna Schönecker worked tirelessly to organise this match, and it had every success! They were supported by members of Achilles and Alumni, whom without, the match would not have been possible. **Alumni also supported us on the women's side with the creation of the 50 years of Women at Varsity sponsorship fund. Thank you all who pledged sponsorship supporting many of our female athletes** last year while we celebrated 50 years of Women in CUAC. I was also lucky enough to be sponsored, and I hope that eventually I too can give what was kindly given to me. Furthermore, I have heard that some of you have continued to sponsor our female athletes. This single note does not do it justice but thank you so much for your continued support while they are studying at Cambridge and competing for CUAC... (continues next page)

Some **notable performances** from some of our new athletes last year include blues statuses for freshers **Anne-Sophie Bremans** in the **400** and **Samuel Ashadu** in the **100** and **200**. **Helen Pretorius** also achieved blues status in the **100** and **200**, despite being a 400 athlete by trade! Some athletes also added more blues statuses to their growing collection, including the brilliant **Leonie Brunning** in the **hammer throw**, as well as **Milly Dickinson**, with a shiny new **1500 Blue**. There were also some close calls on the blues status front. Including Anise Mellodey in the 100, Jane Mills in the long jump, Kaila Bogards in discus, Alex Blake-Martín in discus and hammer, and Sol Inglis in the 400, who ran CUAC's first sub 50 in 3 years. We have every confidence that they will achieve their blues this year. Furthermore, some match day performances were also record-breaking – **Bea Wood's 5000 match record** that surpassed the time set by her previous Cambridge runs teammate Pheobe Barker just the year prior.

There were also some stand out times & distances outside of the Varsity Match too. We had a fabulous start to the year with the **Cambridge women** made up of **Poppy Craig-McFeely, Milly Dickinson, Bea Wood** and **Niamh Bridson-Hubbard** winning the **BUCS cross country championships**. Poppy Craig McFeely placed 4th at the U23 national championships, leading her to her first GB vest at the U23 European cross-country championships. The GB team achieved gold in the team event. We also had some very strong BUCS performances including our triple jump star Reese Robinson who came 6th with a wind legal PB of 12.46! She extended this PB to 12.75 in the British National Championships, also placing 6th! Having switched from the 800 to 1500, Milly Dickinson made the BUCS final in a shiny new PB, shaving a few more seconds off this time at the...



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...National Championships. Fresher Sol Inglis dipped below 50s in the 400 for the first time at the BUCS, qualifying for the 400 final. Cambridge also fielded a finals-qualifying Men's 4x400 team. Niamh Thompson and Thomas Dugre mirrored each other with 4th in the steeplechase final. Finally, Bea Wood and Niamh Bridson-Hubbard showcased the depth of distance running at Cambridge with a respective 4th and 7th place in the BUCS 5000 final.

With the commencement of winter training, we have seen a record number of interest in athletics and take up with students, both with fresher's and non-fresher's. **The growth of the club has led to the creation of a development squad.** While we have a lot of new and exciting CUAC athletes continuing with their training at Cambridge (queue the Fresher's Varsity Match...), we have a lot of uptake from athletes who are returning to athletics after a hiatus. The aim is ensuring athletics is accessible and to help these athletes decide whether they would like to continue with training in the respective squads. **This has been kindly taken on by our amazing sprints and para coach Hayley Ginn.**

CUAC holds such a rich history. I am very fortunate to be part of such a lovely and supportive community that you continue to be part of even after your studies here have concluded. I look forward to the continuation of this ever-fostering relationship between CUAC past and present and extend a warm invitation to you all to our events this year that hopefully leads to more Varsity Match wins!

Save the Dates!

Alvers' Cocktails

15th of November

Wilberforce Road Sports Pavillion, 20:00

165th Annual Dinner

6th of March

Selwyn College, 19:00

151st Men's, 50th Women's, and 3rd Para Varsity Match

23rd of May

Iffley Road, Oxford

Transatlantic Series: Achilles v Penn & Cornell

27th of June

Wilberforce Road

Banquet to follow at Gonville & Caius



Alvers' Cocktails

Sol Inglis

Hi there! We're Sol, Olivia, and Sunshine, your 2025-2026 Alvers' and Allies' Captains.

A wise man and woman were once recorded having said: In Our Lord, Wo' Trust. As such, we're delighted to share that this year's Alvers' Cocktails will be held on Saturday the **15th of November from 20.00 GMT** at your favourite location, as always: Wilberforce Road Sports Pavillion.

Your support has always been at the heart of what makes this event so special for both alumni and current students. Over the past few years, we've faced increasing costs to keep our much-loved venue, the Wilby Sports Pavilion because the University Sports Service requires us to use third-party catering. While we're eager to continue hosting the event here, we may need to explore other venues or having to ticket the event to all attendees in the future if we're unable to sustain these costs.

So far, **we have only achieved about 50% of our fundraising goal** which covers the cost of the event. With your help, we're confident we can host another wonderful evening at the Pavilion this year. Contributions of any size are deeply appreciated and make a real difference in keeping this tradition alive.

If you would like to contribute to the event, you can do so [here](#). Thank you again for your continued generosity and support — it truly means the world to us!



Tribute to Chris ('Doc') Thorne

Delivered by Paul Willcox at the Memorial Service

I knew Chris for over 50 years. By the time I was an undergraduate Chris had already served his first term as Senior Treasurer of CUAC – Cambridge University Athletics Club, CUAC.

Many attended the party we threw for Chris in St. Catherine's College about ten years ago; but there are countless more whose sporting lives he enriched—probably without their even being aware of it.

Chris was a hurdler in his youth. He was modest about his achievements, as about everything, but he represented Alverstone, the University second team, against Oxford.

And for Catz, he continued to score points in Cuppers competitions well into his fifties—and I rather suspect his sixties too. But it was his deep passion for the sport that has left such a remarkable legacy.

Over the last sixty years Chris, or Doc Thorne as he became affectionately known to recent generations of university athletes, provided the glue of continuity that held CUAC together.

His wry, sardonic manner masked a steely determination that things be done properly. Always diffident, he shunned the limelight and was embarrassed when thanked.

But as Senior Treasurer he was the guiding light of successive CUAC committees—never dogmatic, always supportive, ever-present at matches and events, usually grumbling quietly to himself but doing whatever was needed to make things run smoothly. And for Achilles, he was a wise steward of the Club's charitable trust.

As a mathematician, Chris was fascinated by results and rankings lists, and was a member of the NUTS—and if that wonderfully appropriate acronym has hitherto passed you by, it stands for the National Union of Track Statisticians.

He maintained meticulous records of Varsity Matches, the performances of CUAC members, and, in particular, the results of Catz alums, whose results he followed throughout their sporting careers

He was a first-class race timekeeper, and when not officiating he was a dry and entertaining announcer at inter-varsity events—if a little too biased for Oxford tastes.

Chris's lasting monument is the all-weather track at Wilberforce Road. The move from the old Milton Road cinders to proper facilities owed much to his tireless lobbying and his skill in steering the project through planning and committees.

Touchingly, though, his heart remained at Fenner's—home of Cambridge athletics for a century, when it was still a winter sport. And it was at historic Fenner's that Chris expressed a wish that a memorial bench should one day be installed.

For what Chris didn't know about the history of CUAC was probably not worth knowing. His many research projects included the origins of the Cambridge Blue itself.

Indeed, as Secretary of the Blues Committee, he became in...

...some respects an arbiter across the whole spectrum of Cambridge sport: a firm but fair guide to new activities seeking Blues status, and to what properly constituted a sport.

He is remembered as both kind and strict—but always encouraging. And his commitment to the Cambridge University Orienteering Club was scarcely less than to Athletics.

On receiving what he himself described to me as "intimations of mortality," Chris made sure a few years ago that his huge and important archive was safely stashed in the University Library. It is now very much up to us to continue his legacy of service to sport.

So, thank you, Chris, for the fun, and thank you for all that you did for so very many of us.



Photo credit: Julian Johnson, via St. Catherine's College

The Thorne Society

Dillon Rinauro, Johanna Schönecker, and Archie Harper

In memory of Chris Thorne, we are proud to establish the Thorne Society, a new alumni society eponymously honouring his decades of service to CUAC, as well as the greater sporting community.

All proceeds raised through this initiative will support initiatives close to Chris' heart: a **memorial bench** at **Fenner's Cricket Ground**, a **plaque** at the **Wilberforce Road timekeeper's booth**, assistance for **hosting competitions** and **match officials**, and **funding support** for current athletes and alumni to **obtain officiating qualifications**. Any **additional funds** will be used to **reduce future club membership fees** for students to increase the accessibility of athletics as a sport.



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In keeping with his meticulous archive and the club's founding year (1857), **anyone can become a member of the Thorne Society by donating £18.57 per quarter**. Alumni that have matriculated within the last 10 years can join for just £18.57 per annum.

All members will receive an exclusive society pin, have their **named published on the CUAC website**, and will be **invited to attend biennial drinks receptions** at all Varsity Matches hosted at Wilberforce Road. Those who donate £185.70 or more per year will also be eligible to attend the Annual Dinner, free-of-charge, and those who donate £1857 will become society patrons.

Donations to the club can be made via the [Achilles Trust webpage](#), where as a charity, the Trust can see an additional 25% gift aid. There, you can specify your contributions are apportioned to CUAC for the Thorne Society. Thank you for helping us continue Chris' legacy!

Costs come to roughly **£65 for track hire and equipment transport**, plus around **£110 for flights** (which you'll book yourself). There is limited space in the accommodation, so you'll also **need to sort your own accommodation** as well. **We are happy to connect you with other alumni** interested in attending so that you can save on a space together! Once you register your interest, we'll circulate the WWT 26 info PDF, which has all the essential details, including location guides and sample itineraries.

In short — sunshine, sport, socials, and a chance to start the season strong. Don't miss it! Sign up [here](#) today. If you have any questions, please contact me at: ak2446@cam.ac.uk.

Cuppers Results

Dec Griffin

The cold wind that rushed over the track on the day off Cuppers was bleak, but it wasn't chilling enough to stop our competitors turning up in strong numbers to represent their Colleges (or to stop Sunshine maintaining that competing in high jump was a good enough warm-up for the 400m). We saw a strong turn out of representatives from (almost) every college (Homerton: do better), but **Emmanuel ultimately took the overall crown with a colossal 170 points**. Emma were closely followed by **Girton (157 points)** and **St. John's (139 points)**. Congratulations to everyone that competed, and especially to the top three teams.

The individual performance of the day has to go to Leonie Brunning for single-handedly securing a whopping

WWT Training 2026

Aadarsh Khimasia

Get ready for **Warm Weather Training 2026!** From **23rd to 30th March**, CUAC will be heading to the Algarve for a week of sunshine, track sessions, and top-tier team bonding ahead of Easter Term and Varsity. We know that many of our alumni have enjoyed the beaches of Tenerife in years past; however, continually rising costs in the Canaries plus limited facilities for our hammer throwers, the southern coast of Portugal provides the perfect alternative for CUAC!

You can expect the week to be just as eventful as in years past, with a mix of serious training, beach socials, a day trip to Ayamonte, Spain, apartment swap dinners, and the legendary kilo (or two, or three, if you're Bilen) challenge, all whilst enjoying the stunning surroundings of Vila Real de Santo António (VRSA). It's the perfect mix of hard work and good fun with athletes from across all CUAC squads.



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Freshers' Varsity Match Results

Archie Harper

113 points for Emma (if Leonie was a college, she would've come fourth), achieving wins across the board in hammer (of 45m, which is Blues standard), discus, shot put, long jump, triple jump, and high jump. Other notable performances include **Elizabeth McCall** achieving a blues standard of 14.48m in the F38 Javelin, and half-blue standards achieved by **Alice Eyssens** (200H), **Alex Blake-Martin** (discus), **Lauren Healy** (pole vault), **Rachel Marsh** (pole vault), **Remi Livesey** (javelin), **Daisy Kaye** (javelin) and **Katy Shaw** (T72 100).

On the track, **Rhys Gibbs** demonstrated the strength of that dawg mindset when **winning the men's 100m and 200m** despite knocking over his blocks and some bloke running laps attempting to jog across the race. **John's** did an excellent job at recruitment, managing to **pull together a team for the mixed 4x400m** to take an uncontested win, although some might say they got a bit ahead of themselves when taking what looked suspiciously like a 'victory' team photo afterwards...

As well as serious athletic talent, the weekend also uncovered hitherto unrevealed editing skills from Zain Ahmed. Running my first race on Wilby was special, but it was made even more so by the edit Zain produced using Augustus' videography. As evidenced by the audio of the edit, Cuppers brought out bountiful levels of team spirit, support... and scrutiny (Team 4 wants it). Well done to everyone who participated; we look forward to the year ahead!



As the notorious week 5 blues swept across Cambridge, disgruntled students stayed up into the early hours to complete problem sheets and scrambled to submit essays. There was one group however, of significant athletic prowess, that were solely focused on finishing off a different kind of opposition. The 79th Freshers' Varsity Match took place at Wilberforce Road on Saturday, where captains Jack and Maya had selected strong teams to take on Oxford. Fortunately, November's weather showed mercy, and the athletes were only subject to a cool fourteen degrees Celsius and cloudy skies. This did not stop the young runners, jumpers, throwers, and vaulters from setting the track ablaze however, and we were treated to a thrilling day of athletics. The two clubs competed diligently and shared the spoils at a tight margin, with **Cambridge's women emerging victorious (84-83)**, whereas the men just fell short (85-86), if not for the mixed relays unconventional scoring towards both individual matches, rather than the combined.

On the women's side, our athletes proved too strong in key areas, sweeping the 800m and 400m on the track, followed by the javelin and triple jump in the field. There were many impressive performances, including Daisy Kaye's victory in the javelin with a blues-standard of 39.64m. Despite having already competed in a rowing competition, **Tamsin Tewson achieved a half blues standard in the 800m**. **Serena Jampel and Esther Jay also secured half-blue standards in the pole vault and discus, respectively**. Not only did everyone perform well, but...



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...they performed many times; Tori Buckley, for instance, demonstrated prowess in five track & field events. The ladies' 4 x 100m relay team capped off the day with a commanding win, securing victory for the light blues. Well done to the whole women's team for their supreme effort and technique.

An excruciatingly close margin of defeat did not take away from the effort of Cambridge's men, who displayed talent and determination that is sure to blossom in the Spring. Another **blues standard** was achieved by **Mikhail Evloev** with an **extraordinary 44.4m** launch of the **discus**, combined with a **(half blues standard)** win in the **shot put**. Even in November's lactic-inducing chill, **Augustas Ukvalbergas** participated in four track events to a high level, even doubling up for the 4 x 4 and 4 x 1 (only 10 minutes apart). In the 1500m, **Dan Taylor** cruised to victory in a **half-blue time** of **4:07.1**. Despite the team's best efforts, and more stellar performances in the horizontal jumps, the men's side just missed out on witnessing Jack Lipman lift the coveted trophy.

Ever exciting, the day finished with the Mixed 4 x 400m, which saw a narrow defeat for the light blues, whose athletes had already competed in numerous events already across a variety of disciplines. Under the waning light of a classic Wilberforce autumn afternoon, the trophies were presented to the victors, and post-match celebrations ensued at the Hawks' Club. The teams united and displayed comradery befitting of the old rivals, and CUAC rallied on their home turf, looking forward to the indoor and outdoor seasons where they proved so strong last year. Upon reflection, I am sure that the young athletes will remember this day as the symbolic beginning of their time with CUAC, which for many of us has been so fulfilling not only throughout our degrees, but beyond.



Transatlantic Series

Sarah Owen & 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 last recorded Achilles victory over the American duo came in **June 1966** — and we hope to see that dry spell end next summer!

The **first leg** of the tour will take place at **Wilberforce Road, Cambridge**, on **27 June**, followed by a **reception at Gonville & Caius**. They will then travel to Oxford for the 2nd leg of the tour. Your help in making our guests feel welcome would be most appreciated, even if you're only able to join us for a short time.

This year's event will also feature a limited number of **opportunities for alumni to compete**, even as non-scoring athletes. Further details will follow in due course.



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