

Cambridge University Athletics Club

Quarterly Newsletter



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A Message From the Vice President

Dillon Rinauro

My journey with the club began in 2019 when I moved to the UK for my PhD. It had been over four years since my last competition, and I believed those days were behind me. Yet, not even 48 hours into my arrival at Cambridge, I was convinced by the Women's Captain, Lea Wenger, to return to the track and lace up my spikes for old times' sake. That single conversation with a new friend left a lasting mark on my time at Cambridge—and beyond.

When I arrived at Wilberforce Road, I found a vibrant community of like-minded athletes and began training with the 400m and middle-distance groups. Just as I was regaining momentum, the global pandemic brought everything to a halt. COVID-19 disrupted the club in countless ways. Varsity 2020 was cancelled, and Varsity 2021 only happened—belatedly in July—thanks to Lea's quick thinking and determination. Group runs became solitary efforts, training moved online, and coaches had to rethink programmes entirely. But perhaps the greatest challenge was the impact on our ability to recruit talent and connect with alumni.

Returning to the club, now as its Vice President and as coaching assistant, the last few years have been a labour of love—not to restore a lost glory (I don't think that glory ever truly left), but to help the club adapt and grow, retain talent, and remind alumni that CUAC will always be their home. This year, it feels like we're truly back. 2025 marked a historic milestone. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of Women's Varsity (the 49th match), the 150th Men's Varsity Match, and our 2nd Para Athletics Varsity. The support from students, alumni, and even World Athletics was incredible. There were personal bests not just on Match Day, but throughout the season. Watching this new generation of athletes—with my 'coach's' hat on—I've felt a growing sense of community returning.

As we reflect on a year of history, resilience, and connection, I'm filled with pride for how far we've come—and great optimism for what lies ahead. CUAC is more than a club; it's a legacy, carried forward by every athlete who steps onto the track and every alum who remembers what it meant to wear Cambridge blue. Thank you for being part of that legacy. We hope you'll continue to support, inspire, and stay connected as we move into CUAC's next chapter.

Save the Dates!

CUAC London Meet Up

21st of September

Venue TBC

Alvers' Cocktails

15th of November

20:00 Wilberforce Road, Sports Pavillion

49th Women's Varsity Match

Oli Hector



Photo credit: Andy Hodge

Blues: 101 to 110, Oxford Win

Alligators: 120 to 90, Cambridge Win

Our first blue's win of the day went to Leonie Brunning (first of many!) with a PB in the shot put. The Allies also took the event, thanks to Maïke Deckert's 10.25m. The 400m hurdles brought more PBs, including from captain Jess O'Flaherty in her first year at the event. Pole vault was up next, with standout vaults from Lauren Healy and Rachel Marsh. In the 100m, Allies' Nat McEvoy showed blistering speed, while Blues' Helen Pretorius and Anise Mellodey starred — Helen winning in 12.35s, the fastest in recent memory.

At this stage, the Blues were holding their own, but the Allies were starting to pull away. The Hammer saw more dominance from Leonie and Maïke, followed by Bea Wood breaking the 5k record in 16:16.36, and Niamh Thompson taking the steeple in 7:05.80. Reese Robinson won the triple jump, with Allies' Talia Turay also taking victory. Allies kept their momentum with a 1-2 in the 100m hurdles from Georgia O'Dell and Bryher Smith.

Leonie struck again in the High Jump, with Annie...

... Durand-Marandi maximising Blues' points. Allies' Mati Strevens and (Fun)Sunshine Kellah-Nash impressed too. Maya Vandermark and Charlotte Lord delivered a 1-2 in the 400m for the Allies. In the Discus, Maïke's 35.85m would have won the Blues match, and both teams took 1-2s in their events.

Helen and Maya won the 200m, keeping the Blues in touching distance. Carys Ward's javelin win gave hope, but big throws from Maïke and Zoë Wright sealed Allies' victory. A loss in the 4x400 left the Blues just short at 110-101, while the Allies finished strong at 120-90. Huge congratulations to everyone who competed! Read the full report [here](#).

2025: A Year in Review

Jess Poon

It has been an honour and privilege to be President of CUAC this year. As I reflect on the year gone, I am incredibly proud of how the athletes, coaches and committee have come together and built such a successful year for the club both on and off the track.

Dominant wins at Freshers Varsity, VFEAR, and BUCS highlighted the hard work of CUAC athletes this year. The pinnacle was, of course, Varsity — especially significant as it marked the 150th Men's, 50th Women's,



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and 2nd Para-athletics matches, all hosted at Wilberforce Road. CUAC came away with a 4-1 victory, narrowly missing the Women's Blues, and celebrated many outstanding performances. The anniversary was marked with a panel featuring Sarah Owen, Allison Benton, Jo Hollands, and Liz Stapleton, pioneers of women's inclusion in Oxbridge athletics, as well as the opening of the World Athletics Women in Athletics Exhibition.

This year also saw the long-awaited return of Warm Weather Training in Portugal, where 50 athletes trained, raced, and bonded ahead of summer season. Socials thrived too, with Allies and Alvers at swaps, Alver's Cocktails, and a memorable Annual Dinner, where alumna and Sarah Winkless, MBE shared insights from her time in CUAC and rowing.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the incredible support of alumni, coaches, and committee members. From donations like the Women's Sponsorship initiative to cheers at Varsity, your backing remains vital – thank you for helping make CUAC such a special club. As I hand over to Jess O'Flaherty as President for next year, I look forward to seeing the successes of the club under Jess and her committee and joining the proud alumni network of the club. I hope to see many familiar faces at Alver's Cocktails, Annual Dinner and Varsity over the next year and many to come! Click [here](#) for the full review.



Photo credit: Graham Smith Photography



Photo credit: Graham Smith Photography

150th Men's Varsity Match

Jess O'Flaherty

Blues: 123 to 86.5, **Cambridge Win**

Alverstones: 129 to 81, **Cambridge Win**

Our first win in the men's blues came from James McCulloch in the 400H with a shiny new PB on home soil (well... his new home). Even injured, Alex Kingston grabbed third with a PB. In the seconds 400H, Zhe Xi Ho took the win after re-learning hurdling just a week earlier. This set the tone for the day, ending with victories for both blues and seconds in the men's 150th varsity.

Star of the day? Oyare Aneju — winning 3 of his 5 events. He took high jump (1.95m), triple jump (14.19m, by 40cm), and discus (43.28m in just three throws). He was second in long jump to Morgan Treasure (6.79m) and in shot to Oxford's Joel Bell.

Men's sprints had a golden year, with three sub-11 PB athletes — a nice headache for captain Oli Hector. Blues 100 saw Zute Ogbedeh (10.72) and fresher Samuel Ashadu (10.89) leave Oxford behind. In the Alvers' 100, Pelumi Babalola and Ben Greenleaf did the same. Zute also won the 200 (21.84), whilst Pelumi and Ben repeated their 1-2.

Fresher Sol Inglis dipped under 50s again in the 400, the first Oxbridge athlete in over 3 years to do so. Oli Hector showed how it's done in the 200H (even jogging the last 20m) ahead of McCulloch. In javelin, Remi Livesey threw a massive PB of 60.64m for third.

To cap it off, Zute, Samuel, Pelumi and Morgan won the blues 4x100 with clean changes, as did the other 4x100 and 4x4 teams. In their 150th varsity, the men's team put on a real show — though Oli Hector's shorts may have been the only weak link. Speaking of [links...](#)



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The Cross Channel Classic

Zain Ahmed



Photo credit: Dublin University Harriers & Athletics Club (DUHAC)

By Friday evening, 11th July, the Achilles team had arrived in central Dublin. Some came early to explore—touring Trinity College, visiting Temple Bar, and watching the Morton Games at the race venue. But by Saturday, the focus shifted: this wasn't about the Guinness Storehouse.

Achilles dominated the sprints against DUHAC. Anise Melodey won the women's 100m in a PB of 12.70, with Georgia O'Dell close behind. Samuel Clarke and Kaesi Opara took both men's sprints, followed by Zute Ogbodeh and Pelumi Babalola. The men's 400m saw widespread PBs; Alexandra Burchill won the women's. Clarke and James McCulloch also claimed the 110m and 400m hurdles, respectively.

Max Walk's 5000m, paced by 10000m winner Terry Fawden, was a standout—finishing solo in 14:40 and earning a full blue.

The Irish 'Weight for Distance' was cancelled, so some of the throwers joined forces with other athletes to form a second 4x100 team. While the first team won despite a shaky exchange, the second was disqualified. Marley Young won in the throws, and Alex Blake-Martin PB'd for second in shot put. Check out the full report on our [website!](#)

In the end, Achilles narrowly secured the Cross Channel Classic Shield, 216-205. DUHAC hosted a post-match banquet at Trinity College Pavilion, with celebrations at Copper Face Jacks—or Dicey's for the under-20s. For the full report, click [here!](#)

Celebrating the Life of Chris ('Doc') Thorne

Paul Willcox

I am sad to report that Dr Chris Thorne, doyen of CUAC since the 1960s as Senior Treasurer (twice), statistician, timekeeper, archivist and general all round go-to authority on just about everything has died on 9th August. His contribution to our sport was immense.

Chris Thorne began athletics as a hurdler, eventually switching to distance running. Having run at Fenner's, Chris played a huge role in both CUAC's and CUHH's histories, where for the latter, he was Vice President. We hope to pay tribute to and honour his legacy.

Our thoughts go out to his wife, family, and friends. Condolences may be sent to: Dr Karen Thorne, Room 206, Castor Lodge Care Home, Splash Lane, Castor, Peterborough, PE5 7BD.



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The logo for WP Solicitors, featuring the letters 'WP' in a large, bold, gold-colored serif font, with the word 'SOLICITORS' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font directly below it. The entire logo is enclosed within a thin, gold-colored rectangular border.

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