

Competition, communities and identities at  
the University of Westminster since 1864

# An Education in Sport

Mark Clapson



The History of the University of Westminster  
Part Two

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## Contents

	<i>Foreword by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geoff Petts</i>	<i>iv</i>
	<i>Introduction by Dr Dikwyn Porter</i>	<i>v</i>
	<i>Acknowledgements, Conventions and Abbreviations</i>	<i>vi</i>
	<i>Name changes</i>	<i>vii</i>
	<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>viii</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>Prologue</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The sporting heritage of the University of Westminster</b>	<b>7</b>
	Quintin Hogg: philanthropist and sportsman	
	Sporting facilities at Regent Street	
	Satellite sporting facilities	
	The Studd Challenge Trophy Memorial	
<b>3</b>	<b>A community of communities: sports at the Polytechnic, 1882–1914</b>	<b>31</b>
	Sporting clubs at Regent Street Polytechnic	
	Sisters in sport? The Young Women’s Institute	
	Sport and war	
<b>4</b>	<b>Spartans and suburbanites: the sporting polytechnic, 1918–39</b>	<b>61</b>
	Reconstructing Polytechnic sport in the aftermath of the First World War	
	Women and sport at the inter-war Polytechnic	
	The Chiswick Memorial Sports Ground between the wars	
	The historical significance of Poly sports between the wars	
	Sport and war, revisited	
<b>5</b>	<b>New beginnings and new achievements: 1945 onwards</b>	<b>85</b>
	Reconstruction and renewal: the sporting facilities of the Poly	
	Reconstruction of the sports clubs	
	Women and sport at the post-war Polytechnic	
	The Elsie Hoare Trophy	
	The Polytechnic Harriers and the post-war Olympics	
	Sports personalities and the changing identity of the Regent Street Polytechnic	
<b>6</b>	<b>Epilogue: the sporting legacy of the University of Westminster</b>	<b>111</b>
	Sports at the University of Westminster today	
	Chiswick and Regent Street, revisited	
	<i>Picture acknowledgements</i>	<i>120</i>
	<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>121</i>
	<i>Index</i>	<i>123</i>

## *Foreword by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geoff Petts*

The University of Westminster is proud of its long and illustrious sporting history. Together with the support of the Quintin Hogg Trust, I am pleased to have commissioned this book written by one of our academic staff, Dr Mark Clapson. It forms the second in a series of publications outlining the evolution of the University from our predecessor institutions, the Royal Polytechnic Institution, the Regent Street Polytechnic and the Polytechnic of Central London.

Here we tell the history of sport at the University and show the fulfilment of Quintin Hogg's vision to educate mind, body and spirit in action. The story takes you from the foundation of amateur athletic, swimming, football and cricket clubs in the 1870s to professional national and international competition across a wide variety of sports and activities spanning the twentieth century and carrying on into the twenty-first.

It is also a study of the University as place, with our prime location in central London and the original heart of sporting activities located there, but quickly spreading out across the city's growing suburbs and to the Thames itself, at Chiswick.

The book communicates the University's sense of community based on nurturing team talent and creating a sense of belonging and association, while also celebrating individualism. The University of Westminster, like its predecessors, enjoys the richness of a genuinely cosmopolitan, multi-cultural and diverse student body. Our sporting heritage truly reflects the successes of remarkable men and women across these centuries. Most recently, in 2011, we hosted an international quadrangular hockey tournament seeing England compete against New Zealand, Belgium and South Korea.

The University's Olympic connections are an integral part of this story: from the Polytechnic's important organisational role in the 1908 London Olympic Games (when London stood in as Host City for Rome, following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius) to the scores of Olympic athletes who have trained for success with us since then.

During 2012 London will host the Olympics for the third time, having received the torch from Beijing who successfully staged the 2008 Games. These two global cities have an extensive history of trade and cultural connections that are mirrored at the University of Westminster today. The University has enjoyed formal links with China since 1977 and our internationally renowned China Media Centre, founded in 2005, leads the continuing development of our partnerships with institutions across China. As we approach London 2012 the University running and cycling clubs are enjoying renewed popularity and the 2011–12 student sports societies report a surge in participation.

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games are an opportunity for our city to showcase its unique multi-culturalism, together with its cultural and sporting heritage; a heritage that the University of Westminster most definitely shares with its home city. As Chair of PODIUM, the Further and Higher Education Unit for the London 2012 Games, I am pleased to continue the Westminster tradition of engagement with the Games and to contribute in a small way to building a legacy from the 2012 Games by promoting opportunities, fostering collaborations and enhancing experiences.

## *Introduction by Dr Dilwyn Porter*

Since the nineteenth century the development of sport in Britain has been closely connected with education. Most people first encounter sport at school; some use the opportunities offered by further and higher education to pursue it in their adult lives. The connection is well established and well documented.

To date, however, most histories of British sport, though acknowledging this important link, have focused largely on the public schools and the old universities. While the founding fathers of sport at the Polytechnic were themselves part of this tradition, they reached out beyond men of their own class to create a sporting culture that touched the lives of thousands of Londoners, both men and women, who joined the various sports clubs and societies based at 'the Poly'. In so doing they helped to diffuse and democratise the values associated with amateurism, the defining ideology of British sporting life from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

Amateur sport helped to define the Polytechnic while enabling it to establish a meaningful presence in suburbs far removed from Regent Street, notably at Chiswick, site of the boathouse and the Quintin Hogg Memorial Playing Fields. As London morphed into Greater London, sport enabled the Polytechnic to keep pace with its expansion. Polytechnic teams competed against sportsmen and sportswomen from across the metropolis. The Polytechnic Harriers began their cross-country runs in Willesden; the Cycling Club carried the name of the Polytechnic with them on its 'run-outs' to Barnet, Kingston and beyond. For almost a century after 1909 the Polytechnic's Windsor to White City marathon was an annual fixture in London's sporting calendar.

The achievements of élite athletes in Olympic competition were also important in raising the Polytechnic's profile. It supplied a total of 27 competitors at the first London Olympic Games in 1908 when Jack Andrew, secretary of the Polytechnic Harriers, found himself at the centre of an international controversy after assisting the exhausted Dorando Pietri across the line at the end of the marathon. Later distinguished Polytechnic Olympians include George Albert Hill, double gold medallist in 1920, Arthur Wint, who won gold in 1948 and 1952, and Alan Pascoe, silver medallist in 1972.

Violet Webb, a hurdler and sprinter who competed in 1932 and 1936, and fencer Mary Glen-Haig, who competed at four successive Olympic Games from 1948, are especially significant in that they point to the Polytechnic's role in extending sporting opportunities to women. As Mark Clapson reminds us, thanks to the 'sisters' of Langham Place and Little Titchfield Street, the Polytechnic Netball Club, founded in 1907, remains the world's oldest netball club.

The Polytechnic's massive contribution to the development of both élite and recreational sport in Britain is recorded here. In its own way it anticipated the emphasis on 'Sport for All', which has underpinned so many policy initiatives since the 1960s. The University of Westminster has a unique sporting heritage of which it should be proud.

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## *Acknowledgements, Conventions and Abbreviations*

I am grateful to the University of Westminster Archives and the Editorial Board for assistance with the research, and for advice on the text. Thanks also to Dr Dil Porter for writing the Introduction. Any errors which remain are my own.

Mark Clapson

### **Conventions**

#### **A note on archive sources**

The research for this book was undertaken while the University of Westminster Archive was being re-catalogued. All material has been recorded under the new cataloguing system, but the old reference, where applicable, has also been included in parenthesis.

#### **Abbreviations used in footnotes**

ODNB	The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, edited by H.G.C. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The Dictionary is also available online at <a href="http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/online/">http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/online/</a>
PBC	Polytechnic Boxing Club
PCC	Polytechnic Cycling Club
PIN	Polytechnic Institute
RSP	Regent Street Polytechnic
UWA	University of Westminster Archive

*Name changes*

- 1838 **Polytechnic Institution** opens, later becoming the Royal Polytechnic Institution (RPI) following the patronage of Prince Albert.
- 1864 Quintin Hogg establishes the **York Place Ragged School and Mission**, to provide basic education for some of London's poorest children in the slums of Covent Garden.
- 1873 Hogg develops his vision to provide educational, sporting and social opportunities for young working men by establishing the **Youths' Christian Institute** at 15 Hanover Street.
- 1878 The Institute moves to 48–49 Long Acre and is renamed the **Young Men's Christian Institute**.
- 1882 Hogg's Institute moves into 309 Regent Street, following the closure of the RPI, and gradually becomes known as the Polytechnic.
- 1891 The Charity Commission Scheme of Administration establishes the governing body and begins the transition from private to public institution. **Regent Street Polytechnic** becomes the official name, but the institution continues to describe itself as 'the Polytechnic'.
- 1970 The **Polytechnic of Central London (PCL)** is designated on 1 May 1970 as a result of the White Paper 'A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges' (Cmd. 3006) published in 1966. PCL is the result of a merger of Regent Street Polytechnic with Holborn College of Law, Languages and Commerce.
- 1990 Merger with Harrow College of Higher Education.
- 1992 PCL gains university status following the Higher and Further Education Act (1992), which abolished the remaining distinctions between polytechnics and universities. It is renamed the **University of Westminster**, with the right to award its own degrees.

## List of illustrations

Fig. 1	Holly Hill House near Southampton, c. 1884.	page 8
Fig. 2	Quintin Hogg (1845–1903), founder and President of the Polytechnic.	page 9
Fig. 3	Quintin Hogg and the Cricket Eleven, 1878.	page 10
Fig. 4	The Polytechnic water polo team, 1909.	page 11
Fig. 5	J.E.K. Studd (1868–1944), President of the Polytechnic from 1903–44.	page 12
Fig. 6	Robert Mitchell (1855–1933), Director of Education at the Polytechnic, 1891–1922; Governor and Vice-President.	page 13
Fig. 7	Regent Street Polytechnic facade, 309 Regent Street, 1896.	page 14
Fig. 8	Gymnasts at the Polytechnic, 309 Regent Street, 1899.	page 15
Fig. 9	Programme for a gymnastics competition display on 29 September [1883].	page 16
Fig. 10	Sketch of the swimming bath, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , 14 June 1888.	page 17
Fig. 11	Photograph of the swimming bath, c. 1935.	page 18
Fig. 12	Programme for the opening of the swimming bath on 23 September 1883.	page 18
Fig. 13	Floor plan of the basement of 309 Regent Street, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , April 1912.	page 18
Fig. 14	Illustration of the sporting and social facilities at the Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute, from <i>The Graphic</i> , 24 November 1888.	page 19
Fig. 15	Illustration of the Polytechnic Institute Rowing Club's new boathouse, from <i>Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News</i> , September 1888.	page 21
Fig. 16	Poly boys clearing land at Chiswick for the sports ground, 1905.	page 22
Fig. 17	Surveying land at Chiswick in preparation for building the sports ground, 1905.	page 22
Fig. 18	Photograph of the opening ceremony of the Quintin Hogg Memorial Sports Ground at Chiswick from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , June 1906.	page 23
Fig. 19	Interior of the entrance foyer at 309 Regent Street, 1899.	page 24
Fig. 20	The Sporting Life Trophy.	page 24
Fig. 21	The A.E. Walters Shield.	page 24
Fig. 22	The Gayler Trophy.	page 24
Fig. 23	Polytechnic athletes taking part in the Lord Mayor's Show, 1922.	page 25
Fig. 24	Display of Polytechnic trophies held in the University Archive.	page 25
Fig. 25	The Studd Challenge Trophy Memorial at 309 Regent Street, listing recipients 1898–1992.	page 26
Fig. 26	The Studd Challenge Trophy.	page 27
Fig. 27	Bert Harris, 1891 National Amateur Cycling Champion.	page 28
Fig. 28	A boxing competition taking place in the Regent Street gymnasium, 1905.	page 29
Fig. 29	Polytechnic Harriers column header, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , 27 August 1887.	page 30
Fig. 30	Polytechnic water polo team, with the Hastings and St Leonards Town Observer Shield, undated.	page 32
Fig. 31	Quintin Hogg and the YMCI football team, 1882.	page 33
Fig. 32	<i>Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Poly Clubs and Societies</i> booklet, c. 1900.	page 33
Fig. 33	<i>Play The Game</i> sports clubs column header, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , July 1907.	page 34
Fig. 34	Sketch of The Cocoa Tree temperance tavern at Pinner, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , 12 February 1896.	page 35
Fig. 35	Photograph of William Reuben Applegarth on the occasion of his winning the Studd Trophy in 1912, with a list of his sporting achievements.	page 36
Fig. 36	Arthur Kinnaird, 11th Baron (1847–1923), originally published in <i>Vanity Fair Supplement</i> 'Men of the Day No. 2289', 11 September 1912.	page 37
Fig. 37	Signed photograph of Richard James, Polytechnic Harrier, c. 1914.	page 38
Fig. 38	Unidentified high jumper competing at Chiswick, early twentieth century.	page 38
Fig. 39	Programme for the Polytechnic Harriers' Marathon Trial Race, 25 April 1908.	page 39
Fig. 40	'The Stadium', Franco-British Exhibition, 1908, photograph from balloon by Wakefield, Brentford and Chiswick.	page 39
Fig. 41	Polytechnic Harriers Marathon Route Map, 1908.	page 40
Fig. 42	Parade of Polytechnic athletes during the Inauguration of the Stadium by King Edward VII and President Fallières of France, 26 May 1908.	page 42
Fig. 43	Officials and dignitaries on the field during the Inauguration of the Stadium, 26 May 1908. Lord Desborough and Pierre de Coubertin are pictured in the centre of the group.	page 42
Fig. 44	Polytechnic Olympic Games 1908 Honorary Members Register of Olympic Competitors, front cover.	page 42
Fig. 45	Polytechnic Olympic Games 1908 Honorary Members Register of Olympic Competitors, pages 1 and 2.	pages 42–43



Fig. 46	Polytechnic Olympic medallists, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , August 1908.	page 43
Fig. 47	1908 Olympic Stewards' medal.	page 43
Fig. 48	Polytechnic cycling team, with inset head of a young David Ricketts.	page 44
Fig. 49	Signed photograph of cyclist William James 'Boy' Bailey, 1909, photo by Florence Vandamm.	page 45
Fig. 50	Polytechnic boxers Corporal Chivers and Bombardier Wells, c. 1910.	page 47
Fig. 51	Signed photograph of Frank Parks, pictured with his boxing gloves and trophies, c. 1900.	page 49
Fig. 52	Memorial plaque dedicated to Frank Parks in 1946 by the Poly Boxing Club.	page 49
Fig. 53	Ladies' Lawn Tennis Club members including Mrs Hoare and Nora Brewer, pictured with J.E.K. Studd, 22 June 1935.	page 51
Fig. 54	<i>Letter to the Editor from An Indignant Sister</i> , published in the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , 17 April 1890.	page 53
Fig. 55	Alice Hogg (1845–1918), wife of Quintin Hogg and President of the Polytechnic Young Women's Institute.	page 54
Fig. 56	Ladies vs. Gents cricket match, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , July 1907.	page 55
Fig. 57	Ladies Gymnastic display practice at Chiswick, in preparation for the Inauguration of the Franco-British Stadium on 26 May 1908.	page 56
Fig. 58	Crowds outside the Polytechnic during recruitment for war service in 1914.	page 58
Fig. 59	Playing billiards in the Men's Social Room at the Polytechnic, undated.	page 59
Fig. 60	Members of the Men's Rifle Club, from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , September 1904.	page 60
Fig. 61	Photograph of Douglas McNicol, on the occasion of his winning the Studd Trophy in 1911, with a list of his sporting achievements.	page 61
Fig. 62	Signed photograph of cyclist Herbert H. Gayler, who enlisted with the 25th London Regiment in 1914.	page 62
Fig. 63	Letter of thanks from Herbert Gayler to J.E.K. Studd, President of the Polytechnic, for his award of the Studd Trophy, 23 November 1914.	page 63
Fig. 64	Polytechnic Boxing Club, 1926.	page 64
Fig. 65	Rugby match, undated.	page 65
Fig. 66	Vincent Robertson Hoare (1873–1915), Governor of the Polytechnic from 1898.	page 65
Fig. 67	Len Harris (1861–1942), Secretary of the Polytechnic 1896–1929.	page 66
Fig. 68	Harry Ryan and Thomas Lance, gold medallists in the 2,000 m tandem cycling at the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, photo by Ch. du Houx.	page 67
Fig. 69	Menu card for the thirty-seventh Annual Dinner of the Polytechnic Cycling Club, 7 November 1919.	page 67
Fig. 70	Competitors in the Annual Polytechnic Harriers vs. Polytechnic Cyclists race, early twentieth century.	page 68
Fig. 71	George Albert Hill (1890–1969), who won two gold medals at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics and was a member of the Polytechnic Harriers.	page 68
Fig. 72	Signed silhouette of Ronald R. Rawson.	page 69
Fig. 73	Signature of HRH Edward, Prince of Wales, visitor to Boxing Club on 12 December 1922.	page 69
Fig. 74	Harry Edward, of the Polytechnic Harriers, competing in the Amateur Athletics Association Championships on 1 July 1922.	page 70
Fig. 75	Member of the Polytechnic Ladies' Athletic Club, throwing a javelin, undated.	page 72
Fig. 76	Mary Lines, member of the Polytechnic Ladies' Athletic Club, 1921.	page 73
Fig. 77	Women's netball at Chiswick, undated.	page 74
Fig. 78	Violet Webb, 10 February 1934, photo by Reg Speller.	page 75
Fig. 79	Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing team at Chiswick Fete, c. 1930.	page 76
Fig. 80	Marion Taylor and Gwyneth Dewer competing in a Fencing Tournament at the Chiswick Fete, c. 1930.	page 76
Fig. 81	Programme for the New Year's Fete and Exhibition at the Polytechnic, 1932.	page 76
Fig. 82	Miss Connie Gilhead, Polytechnic Ladies' Swimming Club, undated.	page 77
Fig. 83	Dee Cornwall, Mrs A.M. Brewer and Lady Hoare at the Ladies' Bowling Club, undated.	page 77
Fig. 84	Women's Table Tennis, in the Little Titchfield Street building, c. 1930s.	page 77
Fig. 85	Souvenir Programme of the opening of the Polytechnic Stadium, Chiswick, on 18 June 1938.	page 78
Fig. 86	Postcard of the Polytechnic Stadium, Chiswick, 1938.	page 78
Fig. 87	The Polytechnic Boathouse photographed before the Second World War.	page 79
Fig. 88	Performers in the Polytechnic Cycling Club's Pantomime <i>Bluebeard</i> , 1896.	page 80
Fig. 89	Performers in the Polytechnic Cycling Club's Pantomime <i>Bluebeard</i> , 1929.	page 80
Fig. 90	Performers in the Polytechnic Cycling Club's Pantomime <i>Dick Whittington</i> , 1928.	page 80
Fig. 91	List of events for the Polytechnic Cycling Club Social Season 1937–38.	page 80
Fig. 92	Polytechnic Harriers' Waxworks Display, 1900.	page 81
Fig. 93	Ticket for the Polytechnic Cycling Club's Christmas Gala Dance, December 1950.	page 81
Fig. 94	The Polytechnic Cycling Club Annual Dinner, 1937.	page 81
Fig. 95	List of proposed dance fixtures for the Polytechnic sports and social clubs, 1958–59.	page 81

Fig. 96	Polytechnic Harriers' 'Tennis through the years' costume at the New Year's Fête, mid-twentieth century.	page 81
Fig. 97	'Fitter Britain' Programme for the New Year's Fete at the Polytechnic, 1938.	page 82
Fig. 98	Window display at 309 Regent Street, 1939.	page 83
Figs. 99, 100	<i>The Polytechnic: A social rendezvous for young people</i> leaflet, undated.	page 84
Fig. 101	Ladies' Pavilion, Chiswick, c. 1925.	page 85
Fig. 102	Bernard Studd (1892–1962), Chair of the Governors 1950–1962.	page 86
Fig. 103	Polytechnic Football Club, undated.	page 87
Fig. 104	A basketball match at Regent Street, undated.	page 88
Fig. 105	Polytechnic Hockey First Eleven, 1947–48 season.	page 89
Figs. 106, 107	Bronze medal won by David Ricketts in the 4,000 m Cycling Team Pursuit at the 1948 London Olympics.	page 90
Fig. 108	Letter from Bill Mills, Hon. Sec. of the Olympic Training Committee to David Ricketts, detailing arrangements for the British Olympic cycle team, 19 July 1948.	page 90
Fig. 109	Olympic identity card for David Ricketts, 1948.	page 91
Fig. 110	Lap of honour by the bronze medal-winning British cycling team at the 1948 Olympics, White City.	page 91
Fig. 111	Women's billiards in the Portland Hall, Little Titchfield Street, undated.	page 92
Fig. 112	Mixed archery at the Polytechnic, undated.	page 92
Fig. 113	Elsie Florence Hoare (1873–1965).	page 93
Fig. 114	Doris Purcis and Marion Taylor of the Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing Club, on the steps of the Little Titchfield Street building, March 1938.	page 94
Fig. 115	Mary Glen-Haig, member of the Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing Club, Olympian and double Commonwealth Games medallist.	page 95
Fig. 116	Photograph of members of the Polytechnic Ladies' Swimming Club from the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> , July 1957.	page 96
Fig. 117	Two members of the Polytechnic Ladies' Rifle Club (pistol shooting team), illustrating the front cover of the <i>Polytechnic Magazine</i> in May 1966.	page 97
Fig. 118	Programme for the Polytechnic's Coronation Fête, held at Chiswick in June 1953.	page 98
Fig. 119	Arthur Wint setting a British record (47.4 seconds) over 440 yards at Chiswick on 22 July 1948.	page 100
Fig. 120	Emmanuel McDonald Bailey (centre), with N. Stacey (left) and B. Shenton (right), [Amateur Athletics Association Championships meeting, White City], undated.	page 101
Fig. 121	The new extension Pavilion at Chiswick, shortly before its opening on 7 May 1960.	page 102
Fig. 122	<i>Programme of Events</i> for the Polytechnic's Quintin Hogg Centenary Year, 1964.	page 104
Fig. 123	The men's billiard room in the Regent Street building, undated.	page 105
Fig. 124	Men's badminton in the gymnasium at Regent Street, 30 May 1950.	page 106
Fig. 125	Poly Harriers Ken Yates and John Maylor at Ruislip, 1950s.	page 106
Fig. 126	Water polo match in the swimming bath at Regent Street, undated.	page 107
Fig. 127	Members of the Polytechnic Cycling Club Midland Section, including Dick Swann (front left), August 1964.	page 108
Fig. 128	Alan Pascoe collecting a medal from Lady Alexandra Studd at Chiswick, undated.	page 109
Fig. 129	Alan Pascoe winning a 400 m hurdles race at Crystal Palace, 9 September 1978.	page 109
Fig. 130	Retired Poly Harriers, 20 October 1970. Several of the members have signed the back of the photograph.	page 112
Fig. 131	Brochure advertising facilities of the Polytechnic of Central London's Recreation Unit, 1979–80.	page 113
Fig. 132	University of Westminster footballers at Chiswick, October 2006.	page 114
Fig. 133	Cricketers enjoying tea at the Chiswick Pavilion, undated.	page 115
Fig. 134	Hockey being played at Chiswick, November 2006.	page 115
Fig. 135	Interior of the boathouse at Chiswick, November 2006.	page 116
Fig. 136	Members of the University's Boat Club, October 2006.	page 116
Fig. 137	Boathouse, Chiswick, undated.	page 117
Fig. 138	The Deep End at 309 Regent Street, 1995.	page 117
Fig. 139	University of Westminster netball players at Chiswick, May 2007.	page 118
Fig. 140	Judo at Regent Street, undated.	page 118
Fig. 141	Hockey being played at Chiswick, November 2006.	page 118
Fig. 142	Multi-fitness gym, Regent Street, October 2006.	page 118
Fig. 143	University of Westminster Staff Sports Day 2010.	page 119
Fig. 144	University of Westminster Staff Sports Day 2010.	page 119
Fig. 145	Aerobics class at Regent Street, October 2007.	page 119

## Prologue

Regent Street Polytechnic, the forerunner of the Polytechnic of Central London and of the University of Westminster, was created during the second half of the nineteenth century by the vision and patronage of Quintin Hogg (1845–1903). Without Hogg, there would be no University of Westminster.<sup>1</sup> A Christian benefactor, educator and businessman, Hogg originally established a Ragged School and Boys' Home at York Place, Charing Cross, in 1864, for the street waifs or 'ragged element' of Victorian London. These were the poorest in society, the street urchins, mudlarks, orphans and illiterate young boys and girls about whom Henry Mayhew had written in his classic of social observation, *London Labour and the London Poor*.<sup>2</sup> As Ethel Hogg (1878–1970) argued in the biography of her father, the Ragged School was 'the spring' from which the Young Men's Christian Institute, and later the Regent Street Polytechnic, would flow.<sup>3</sup> The York Place Ragged School existed to rescue and give a moral compass to the poorest boys of the capital city, seemingly adrift from respectable society and the world of regular work. Bible classes formed the basis of its activities. Its undoubted success as an establishment to promote discipline, morality and a degree of educational attainment in its young subjects led to a move to Castle Street, off Hanover Street, near Covent Garden. Following Hogg's marriage to Alice Graham in 1871, increasing attention was paid to poor and vulnerable young girls who were also given religious instruction under the auspices of the School. Alice Hogg became a powerful supporter both of her husband's vision and of his strategies for the expansion of Christian education in London.

Yet Hogg was not only concerned with London's poorest children. A room at the front of the building in Castle Street was utilised for religious instruction and educational activities among boys from a higher social class than those for whom York Place was primarily established. Ethel Hogg was unspecific about when this busy front room began to be called 'the Institute' but it was most likely during the 1870s. What is clear, however, is that the boys at the Institute were not those ragged boys who had initially provoked Hogg's sympathy and interventionist tendencies, but were rather the sons of mechanics and artisans, those in more regular or better-paid employment. Within less than a decade, the needs and aspirations of these boys had grown to occupy

1 A history of the University of Westminster Part Three covering all the various academic, social and sporting endeavours of the institution from 1882–1992 will be published in 2013.

2 Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: a cyclopaedia of the condition and earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work* (London: 1851–2).

3 Ethel Hogg, *Quintin Hogg: A Biography* (London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd, 1904).

more and more of Hogg's time, so a friend, Thomas Pelham, took over the running of York Place while Hogg increasingly concentrated on the life of the Institute. The growing numbers of boys also necessitated a move to larger premises, and so the Young Men's Christian Institute (YMCI) was established at Long Acre, Covent Garden, in 1878. The YMCI absorbed more and more of Hogg's time, money and energy, and became a hugely important proving ground for his beliefs. He famously held to a laudable all-encompassing intention to improve the education, morals and physical well-being of his boys. Amateur sports – free from the taint of financial gain associated with professional sport – had a powerful role to play in this holistic vision, because sporting endeavour reflected the classic Victorian values of self-denial and self-improvement through hard work. Chapter one expands upon the historical provenance of the sports clubs that were established at the YMCI.

In 1881 Quintin Hogg purchased 309 Regent Street, the headquarters building of what is now the University of Westminster. The move to Regent Street was engendered by the perennial need for more and better facilities. Chapter two details the early expansion of sports amenities at the Institute after 1882, outlining how indoor sports provision was developed, while other facilities were constructed in the outer London suburbs. The success and expansion of what increasingly became known as the Polytechnic Institute (and, from 1891, as Regent Street Polytechnic) was one reason for the continuing quest for more resources, but so too, in more general terms, was the booming population at the end of the 1880s. The Polytechnic was both unique of its kind but also very much of its time, because it contributed to the promotion of physical recreation in late Victorian London. The later nineteenth century was also an age when the rapid and unbridled growth of urbanisation led to new forms of governance for British cities, and in 1889 the London County Council (LCC) was formed. This new institution of local government, in existence right up to the 1960s, would cast a watchful eye over Hogg's Polytechnic, as it would over all other technical educational institutions in the County of London. The quality of the provision of recreational and sporting resources fell within the remit of the Education Department of the LCC.

From the early years of the Polytechnic, the members of the sports clubs at the Institute were the major beneficiaries of these new amenities. There was something of a binary divide in the Polytechnic, between the members of these clubs and the registered students, who, although they came primarily to study, could also join the Institute's sporting and social clubs. And from January 1886 younger pupils were welcomed into the Institute with the introduction of a Day School, later to be named the Quintin School, which added to the stock of potential sportsmen, or more accurately, sports boys, based at Regent Street. In founding his Day School, Hogg wanted to extend educational, moral and physical opportunities for improvement to much younger boys, and he succeeded. In fact the 'Old Quintinians', the former members of the Day School later formed a club that was affiliated to the Institute and competed in a variety of sports with past and current pupils and members.

And what of the girls? The establishment of the Women's Institute in 1888 was an important moment in the incorporation of young women into the life of the Poly. It owed much to the efforts of Alice Hogg, who became known as the 'mother' of the Women's Institute, and of the Polytechnic in general. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, young women were keen to take up sports, and enjoyed many successes at both individual and team level during the Victorian and Edwardian years. But it was during the twentieth century that sportswomen at the Poly began to reach new heights in amateur sports, from pioneering new sports clubs for women to the winning of medals and trophies, on both the national and international stages.

The initial investments in amateur sports made by Quintin Hogg were amply rewarded in the subsequent sporting history of the Polytechnic as his legacy was carried forward by others. During his lifetime, Hogg was ably assisted by other individuals at the Polytechnic with a keen interest in sports, including J.E.K. Studd, Arthur Kinnaird and Charles J. Pratt. All had a strong belief in the contribution that sporting endeavour could make to the development of individual character, as well as to the capacity for teamwork. As detailed in Chapters two and three, the élite of the Polytechnic ensured that the ethos of amateur sports remained at the very heart of its value system. The Edwardian years until 1914, and the interwar years between 1918 and 1939, witnessed the expansion and consolidation of the Poly's reputation as a centre of sporting excellence. Perhaps one of the most visible examples of this was the proactive role of the Polytechnic Harriers Athletic Club at the London Olympics in 1908.

Chapter four explores the post-1945 years, which also witnessed the introduction of new sporting arenas and equipment at the Poly against the backdrop of nationally-led changes in further and higher education in the UK. During the twentieth century, Regent Street Polytechnic possessed the most extensive sporting facilities, and concomitant sporting culture, of any of the metropolitan institutions of tertiary education in London. This happy situation continued until the 1970s, after which time the nature of polytechnic education changed, and the Institute side of the Polytechnic ceased to play the important role that it had previously done for a hundred years.

When Ethel Wood (née Hogg) published an updated history of the Polytechnic in 1965,<sup>4</sup> Regent Street Polytechnic was still under the auspices of the London County Council. Yet within five years of that publication, Regent Street Polytechnic was no more. It was superseded by the Polytechnic of Central London (PCL), one of a host of new polytechnics created by national educational legislation of the 1960s. PCL was born of a very different vision of higher education when compared with its Victorian predecessor. Although an element of vocational education remained important to its remit, the Victorian inheritance of the Institute, with its rather top-down structures to encourage the promotion of the social life of the Poly, became significantly weaker. There were many reasons for this shifting culture, and these begin with the expansion of tertiary education during the 1960s. In 1965,

<sup>4</sup> Ethel Wood, *A History of the Polytechnic* (London: Macdonald & Co. Ltd, 1965).

Anthony Crosland, the Secretary of State for Education in the first Labour Government of Harold Wilson, declared that a 'binary principle' should exist in tertiary education. Existing technical colleges and polytechnics would not be allowed to become independent universities, or even to join with existing universities. Instead, they were to become a new generation of polytechnics. The polytechnics did not possess the independent bachelors and masters degree-awarding powers that the universities had. Rather, they were designed to emphasise education for employment, particularly technical and skills-based diplomas. It soon transpired, however, that degree courses were to be offered at the new polytechnics with the establishment of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), which validated degrees at British polytechnics from 1965. And some polytechnics began to offer arts, humanities and social science degrees, in addition to more overtly vocational courses. These courses began to attract many entrants who might not have met the A Level entry requirements needed for university. During the later 1960s and 1970s, the polytechnics became the sites of student-led organisations, from protest groups to a host of clubs and societies that reflected student activities and interests. The *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s influenced student life at PCL as it did elsewhere. Young people in higher education were increasingly unwilling to relate to the Victorian legacy of the Institute. Moreover, the ideologies and practices of the Inner London Educational Authority, which ran education in the inner London boroughs from 1965 to 1990, were opposed to the paternalism that had done so much to sustain the sports and leisure life of the Poly since the 1880s. A rather grim bureaucratic centralism now pervaded the atmosphere of higher education in London. At the Polytechnic of Central London, the Men's and Women's Institutes were wound up, and with them many of the sports clubs also disappeared. Long-standing internal publications that had begun during the Victorian era, such as the *Polytechnic Magazine*, ceased.

In 1992, the Conservative Government led by John Major introduced the Further and Higher Education Act, enabling polytechnics to award their own degrees, and to become universities in their own right. A new phase of higher education began at Regent Street: the word 'polytechnic', used since 1891, was dropped from the institution's name and the University of Westminster was born. Taking its name from the City of Westminster borough in which Regent Street is such a prominent thoroughfare, the new university continued to evolve as a student-centred institution. This too impacted upon the sports clubs. Many of them now comprised members from outside the university, and as is detailed in the Epilogue, many sports clubs changed their names, folded or moved elsewhere to other sites in the capital.

The history of sports at the University of Westminster thus begins during the Victorian years and ends in the early years of the present century. And although the Institute itself is no longer with us, the echoes of Hogg's dedication to sporting provision as a context for self-improvement and for the inculcation of teamwork, can still be heard in the sporting and keep-fit arenas of

the University of Westminster today. Recent successes in hockey, basketball and other sports are further proof of that dedication and Hogg would have taken great pride in them. The ongoing commitment of the University of Westminster to invest in its sports and leisure facilities can also be viewed, in part at least, as a continuation of Hogg's legacy.

This history draws on many original sources held in the University Archive including the in-house publications of Regent Street Polytechnic, the surviving records of many of the sports clubs, and a fantastic variety of illustrations and photographs, to tell its story. The book aims to provide a lively narrative overview of the main events, personalities, achievements and endeavours of this modern educational institution. In so doing, it also highlights the ways in which the evolution of sport at the Poly both reflected and promoted wider social changes, from the growing participation of women, to the expansion of the suburban middle classes, to the professionalisation and internationalisation of sports. The Poly became a hub of metropolitan and worldwide sports during the twentieth century, anticipating the global role of the University of Westminster today.





## *The sporting heritage of the University of Westminster*

When the great athlete Harold Abrahams ran over the finishing line of the 100 metres at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, and into immortal glory, his Cambridge University background finished equal first with him. There was no need for a photo-finish or a stewards' enquiry to prove this: the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* made it clear that his privileged education and his emotional yet determined desire to prove himself in the face of anti-Semitism, had schooled the athlete in self-determination and the will to succeed. The film also shows Abrahams running in the Trinity College Great Court Run, and outpacing competitors in some major national races en route to the Olympic podium. As a paean to élite universities with a history that stretched back many centuries, a subtext of the film may be indicated in the form of a question: how can later higher education establishments possibly compete with that?

The University of Westminster has a sporting heritage to compete with that. In many ways, it outperforms the accomplishments of Oxbridge. This is partly because the University of Westminster is one of Britain's oldest 'new universities'. Although the new universities from 1992 were created from former polytechnics and colleges of higher education, the Polytechnic of Central London, which became the University of Westminster, had inherited not only the facilities but also the history of Regent Street Polytechnic, in existence since 1891.<sup>1</sup> And in its founding days the Regent Street Poly had inherited much of the history of its predecessor, the Royal Polytechnic Institution, which had been founded on the site of the present Regent Street building in 1838.<sup>2</sup> Hence the sporting heritage of the University is a hugely significant part of a widely overlooked story of how the 'new' universities of the twentieth century put British sport on the international map long before they came into existence during the 1990s. After all, it was the Polytechnic that established marathon running in Britain during the early twentieth century, and the Poly that hosted an annual and widely regarded city marathon – the Polytechnic Marathon – until the 1990s, when it became eclipsed by the London Marathon. During the twentieth century, Poly athletes appeared at almost every Olympic Games. Although it was Sebastian Coe of Loughborough University who led the 2012 London Olympic bid to the International Olympic Committee, he was assisted by Alan Pascoe of the Polytechnic Harriers, the best known of the Poly sports

1 Regent Street Polytechnic was officially formed in June 1891 under the Charity Commissioner's Scheme of Administration. However, Hogg's Institute pre-dates this renaming and can trace its origins back to 1864.

2 Brenda Weeden, *The Education of the Eye: History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution 1838–1881* (London: Granta Editions, 2008).

clubs. Pascoe was a household name in the 1970s. His triumphs in the Commonwealth, European and Olympic Games during the late 1960s and early 1970s prefaced a career in sports consultancy and sports development that has continued to the present.

Alan Pascoe is also commemorated on the Studd Trophy Memorial, named after its benefactor Sir J.E.K Studd, which adorns the stairwell above the foyer of the Regent Street building. In fact, Pascoe's name is on it six times from 1969 to 1974, making him its most prolific winner to date. The Studd Challenge Trophy, to give it its full title, was introduced in 1898, when the Regent Street Polytechnic was still less than ten years old. It is an annual record of the champions of Poly sport in subsequent years, except during wartime and during the 1980s, when the sporting culture of the Polytechnic of Central London was weakening. The Studd Trophy is discussed in more detail below. Yet the history of sports at the University of Westminster begins not with J.E.K Studd, but with a man whose philanthropic and educational work is often overlooked today as he is better known as the founder of a political dynasty.

#### QUINTIN HOGG: PHILANTHROPIST AND SPORTSMAN

The biography of Quintin Hogg is addressed more fully in a separate volume of the history of the University of Westminster, so we need not dwell too much on the details of his life here.<sup>3</sup> Yet in so many ways the culture of sports at Regent Street Polytechnic was personified by Hogg, whose values were influenced by his élite education at Eton. These may be summarised as a passionate belief in developing social, educational, physical and religious aptitudes among the students of the Polytechnic. Within the sphere of sports, this meant an insistence upon amateurism. The objective was to play the game with peers in an honourable manner, as both a strong and successful individual athlete, and as one who also shared in the team spirit of the Poly and its clubs.

Hogg himself was a keen competitor in his younger days and, like so many Victorian ex-public schoolboys who became gentleman amateurs, he was a decent all-rounder. A footballer first and foremost, perhaps the apex of Hogg's sporting career was playing for the Wanderers, an amateur team of public schoolboys and Varsity types. He also played international football for Scotland, as did his footballing friend Arthur Kinnaird (1814–1887). Furthermore, as a schoolboy at Eton, Hogg had been a rower, and had a lock-up on the Thames near Windsor. He liked to play cricket, and he was also a lawn tennis player, in possession of a grass court at his home Holly Hill near Southampton. His sporting participation continued through most of his life, despite a variety of illnesses, and even in the years leading to his untimely death, he was the nominal head or chair of many clubs at the Polytechnic.

The Poly was one of the leading educational institutions in the diffusion of amateurism to the lower classes, a diffusion that owed much to the influence



Fig. 1  
*Holly Hill House built for Quintin Hogg near Southampton, taken c. 1884. The house burnt down in July 1886.*

<sup>3</sup> *History of the University of Westminster Part Three, 1882–1992*, to be published in 2013.

Fig. 2  
*Quintin Hogg (1845–1903) as a young man.*



of Eton and Oxbridge.<sup>4</sup> Athleticism and amateurism defined these values in sporting competitions. As James Walvin has argued, ‘Public school athleticism spilled from its privileged confines to influence the working-class male world of urban Britain’:

Through the efforts of school teachers and administrators, churchmen, businessmen and philanthropists, the sporting institutions and ideals were passed on. [The] new athleticism fused with older popular traditions of recreations and popular cultural forms. And it seemed ideally suited to the contemporary obsession with the social and physical needs of the deprived urban masses.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hogg had an opportunity to study at Oxford University but instead chose to join the City firm of Messrs Thompson, tea merchants. Contemporaries Kinnaird and Studd both attended Cambridge.

<sup>5</sup> James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1987), pp. 88 and 93.

A strong endorsement of healthy competition as an arena for moral and physical development was at the heart of a culture of ‘rational recreation’ privileged by the opinion formers of the Victorian era. Instead of ostensibly irrational pursuits such as drink, gambling and sexual promiscuity – activities which we now know to be essential to the development of the fully rounded personality – rational recreation spoke of self-discipline, hard work and deferred



Fig. 3  
Hogg (centre) regularly played  
with the Cricket Club in the 1870s  
and 1880s.

gratification. It unwittingly speaks, too, of sexual sublimation. More than a few psychologists and social scientists of sport have argued that an over-emphasis upon sports is evidence of the re-channelling of the sex drive into harmless physical exertions.<sup>6</sup> Neo-Marxists used to argue that this was essential for the economy, to encourage productivity as opposed to procreation and subsequent exhaustion. Freudian psychologists have also maintained that the Victorian emphasis on sports was displaced sexual frustration, focused instead onto male competitive sports that burned up energies and released sexual tensions. As feminist historians have argued, this led to contrasting images of the passive and unathletic female.<sup>7</sup> Yet women were by no means unathletic, as this book emphasises on many occasions, despite attempts by some male members of the Polytechnic to caricature the opposite sex as unsuited for sports.

The Freudian analysis is also liable to simplistic application and analysis. Hogg was a gifted sportsman, but by his wife, Alice, Quintin also had three sons and two daughters. This suggests an ostensibly well-rounded man, although he regularly suffered from bouts of ill health, attributed by contemporaries as the result of contracting yellow fever in his youth and his subsequent over-use of mercury as a cure.<sup>8</sup> As many issues of the *Polytechnic Magazine*<sup>9</sup> demonstrate, Hogg's children went on to contribute to the educational, religious and sporting cultures of the Polytechnic in their various ways. Some were keen members of the sports clubs; others became patrons and nominal heads of some of the clubs and societies in the Poly.

The sporting culture at Regent Street was strongly influenced by religion, notably the Anglican disdain for idleness that had surfaced in the slipstream of the Protestant Reformation during the sixteenth century, and a defining component of the more austere version of Victorian values was the Protestant work ethic. As the wording on the nearby Liberty department store clock above the entrance near Regent Street says: 'No minute gone ever comes back. Take heed and see ye nothing do in vain.' Incidentally, the clock of this department store

6 B.G. Rader, 'Modern sports: in search of interpretations', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1979, pp. 307–21.

7 Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 17–18.

8 Ethel Hogg, *Quintin Hogg: A Biography* (London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd, 1904), pp. 77–8.

9 Institutional magazine published fortnightly, then monthly by Hogg. The first issues from 1879 were called *Home Tidings* but in 1888 the title changed to the *Polytechnic Magazine*. After Hogg's death, the Polytechnic continued to publish the magazine until 1971.

also shares an emblem with the University of Westminster, because it depicts the figure of St George slaying the dragon. The floor of the entrance foyer of 309 Regent Street has a mosaic of St George slaying the dragon, a motif that was transferred onto the covers of *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine*, and embellished onto the paraphernalia of Polytechnic sporting awards, trophies and programmes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In order to understand the sporting environment of Regent Street Polytechnic we need some awareness of developments prior to 1891. Nine years previously, in the wake of the 1870 Education Act that initiated compulsory education for the working classes, Hogg had established the Youths' Christian Institute at 15 Hanover Street, north of Long Acre in Covent Garden. Intending to promote social opportunities for poorer and working-class boys and young men, the Institute became the proving ground for Hogg's belief that sports and leisure should be deployed to facilitate the practical education and intellectual development of the working class. One outcome of this strategy was the birth of Hanover United Athletic Club in 1874, the first of the umbrella organisations under which the four major sporting clubs were coordinated; these were rowing, swimming, cricket and football (soccer, as opposed to rugby), thus reflecting in large part the enthusiasms of Quintin Hogg.

The sports based at Hanover Street travelled across London into the sporting culture at 309 Regent Street from 1882. As Brenda Weeden has asserted, the

**Fig. 4**  
*Water Polo was played at the Polytechnic from as early as 1882. Various local baths were used before the Regent Street swimming pool opened in 1884.*



Youths' Christian Institute became the Young Men's Christian Polytechnic Institute as it was transferred to Regent Street.<sup>10</sup> There were strong continuities between Hanover Street and the sporting culture of the Polytechnic. Both sports and Christianity were to play an important role in developing the mental, moral and physical strengths in young people that for Hogg were inseparable from the development of educational faculties. Hogg adopted a holistic view of the educational, physical, spiritual and social needs of his 'boys'.

Once the Polytechnic Institute was up and running, its sporting development also owed much to the influence of Sir John Edward Kynaston Studd (1858–1944) who, in common with Hogg, was a keen sportsman. 'JEK', as he was commonly referred to at the Polytechnic, was a famous cricketer in his time. He played at Eton during the 1870s and for Cambridge University while he was a student at Trinity College from 1881–84. He also played for Middlesex County during his years at the Polytechnic. His muscular Christianity and his commitment to amateur sports were also connected to a strong endorsement of militarism: Studd and other Poly leaders were members of the Volunteer Force, a precursor of the Territorial Army. Interestingly, the organisation of the platoons of the Poly Company reflected the Polytechnic Institute structure, with separate platoons of Polytechnic Athletic Club members, Harriers and Cyclists, and Gymnasium and other sections.<sup>11</sup> This is discussed further in the following chapters. A conservative in politics and a profound believer in Christianity, Studd was a businessman, a convinced philanthropist and a freemason. He also spent some time in the United States during the 1880s, with his family, where he assisted in Christian mission work with students. Like Hogg, Studd appears to have adopted the language and the image of the American frontier during that decade – the frontier was not officially closed until 1890 when all areas of North America could be declared as mapped:

On his return to England he was asked by Quintin Hogg, one of a group of Etonians undertaking evangelistic work in London, to join in pioneering the Regent Street Polytechnic, which combined technical and other educational work with social and sporting facilities. Studd accepted, and thenceforward became Hogg's lieutenant. He was honorary secretary from 1885, vice president in 1901, and, on Hogg's death in 1903, president of the polytechnic. He held the office until his death.<sup>12</sup>

The *Polytechnic Magazine*, most of which was authored by Hogg prior to his death, may also have been edited by Studd when Hogg was abroad or unwell. Although Hogg suffered from a variety of ailments – often referred as 'his old symptoms' in the *Poly Magazine* and its predecessor *Home Tidings* – he frequently took time out from his busy life of administration, business management, missionary work and religious proselytising to view many sporting events, and occasionally he was known to kick a football around the pitch, or lob a tennis ball over the net.

Other leading lights in the development of a sporting ethos and a culture of



Fig. 5  
J.E.K. Studd (1858–1944),  
President of the Polytechnic from  
1903–1944.

10 Brenda Weeden, *The Education of the Eye: History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution, 1838–1881* (London: Granta Editions, 2008), pp. 4–5, 101–2.

11 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1909.

12 B. Studd, revised by M.C. Curthoys, 'Studd, Sir (John Edward) Kynaston (1868–1944)', ODNB.

sports participation at the Polytechnic included Robert Mitchell (1855–1933), who had attended the Young Men’s Christian Institute as a student and went on to become the Poly’s first Director of Education in 1891. His memorial plaque adorns the foyer of the Regent Street building. Similarly, Vincent Robertson Hoare (1873–1915), who married Hogg’s daughter, Elsie Florence, in 1901, made an important contribution to the management of the University and to sports development. Born in Norfolk in 1873, and raised in the rectory in the village of Colkirk, Vincent was well suited to Poly life. Along with his religious upbringing, he was educated at Eton and was well known for his sporting prowess: Hoare played county cricket for Cambridgeshire in 1895–96, and subsequently for Norfolk. He later became a member of the Studd Trophy Committee. Another amateur sportsman who linked governance to sports was Len Harris (1861–1942), a footballer with Hanover United who later became Secretary of the Poly. Both Hoare and Harris were on the Polytechnic governing body, which by the end of the nineteenth century included representatives from the London County Council (formed in 1889 and responsible for education in London) and leading politicians, and of course key figures in the worlds of metropolitan missionary work, charity and philanthropy, including the Central London landowner and keen rower Thomas Scott-Ellis, 8th Baron Howard de Walden (1880–1946).

The untimely death of Hogg in 1903 came as a huge shock to the Polytechnic, from its élite governing body to its students, and it also proved that the Polytechnic was managed in a fairly dynastic manner, within which both family and sporting connections continued to be important. The death of Hogg led to the elevation of J.E.K. Studd, and a reinforcement of the founding families as guiding lights for Poly sport. As Charles Dickens, Jr. wrote:

On the death of the founder, Mr. Quintin Hogg, in January, 1903, considerable anxiety was felt as to the continuance of the work, so great had been his personal influence. In this emergency, Mr. J.E.K. Studd, the old Cambridge cricket captain, who had already devoted eighteen years to the service of the Polytechnic, first as hon. secretary and then as vice-president, was unanimously requested to succeed Mr. Hogg as president. Fortunately for the sake of the institution he consented to fill the breach, and, without fee or reward except the ‘joy of service’, devotes the whole of his time to the work. He has many loyal helpers, amongst whom may be specially mentioned Mr. Robert Mitchell, who, first as secretary and subsequently as director of education, has taken a leading part in the work since [the] institution was started. Mr. Douglas Hogg, son of the founder, acts as vice-president, and the governing body consists of a number of well-known gentlemen, all of whom take a deep interest in the work.<sup>13</sup>

From 1882, Regent Street was the major hub of this work. The rest of this chapter shows how the Regent Street building is a very useful ‘way in’ to understanding the Victorian provenance and the subsequent sporting history of the University of Westminster.



Fig. 6  
Robert Mitchell (1855–1933),  
Director of Education at the  
Polytechnic, 1891–1922.

13 Charles Dickens junior, ‘The Polytechnic &c.’ in *Dickens’s Dictionary of London: An Unconventional Handbook* (London: Dickens and Evans, c. 1908).



## SPORTING FACILITIES AT REGENT STREET

Moving to Regent Street brought new and greatly improved facilities to the Polytechnic, compared with the previous facilities available to Hanover United Athletic Club. To take football as an example, the initial venue for home matches was at Primrose Hill near Regent's Park, next to the pitch that was subsequently played upon by Tottenham Hotspur. In 1878, however, Hogg made available, through his generous funding, the use of a purpose-built football ground at The Limes, in Barnes, West London. The other sports played by Hanover United Athletic Club were also housed at Barnes.<sup>14</sup> From 1882, Hogg's provision of new facilities strongly reflected not only his mission to improve sporting opportunities for young sports people, but also to create a good impression of the new Poly and its facilities. This was also



Fig. 7  
The outside of 309 Regent Street  
in 1896. The current facade dates  
from 1910–12.



Fig. 8  
*The Gymnasium was used for gymnastics, fencing and boxing.*



evidenced by his invitation to the delightfully named Alexander ('Alick') Alexander, a pioneer and promoter of physical education among the young, to mount a display celebrating the inauguration of the new gymnasium at Regent Street. Alexander was certainly one of the best-known and most highly respected British athletes during the 1880s. Among other feats of strength, he could elevate his entire body using just one finger, and crush an apple by squeezing it with one hand.<sup>15</sup> He was also pretty good at events organisation. 'The Gymnasium display went off very well on Saturday, November 11th', enthused Hogg in the *Polytechnic Magazine* of the same month:

and so great was the interest displayed in it that every seat was occupied quite half an hour before the hour advertised for the commencement. The whole performance was well above mediocrity, and the squad exercises, such as those with the dumb bells, bar bells and clubs, were specially creditable, considering the very small opportunities for practice which the members had enjoyed.

Among the new items in the programme, for which our old premises had not afforded sufficient space, were tricks on the rings, trapeze and vaulting horse, the latter of which seems to afford special enjoyment on practice nights. It is certainly most creditable to see how rapidly our members have availed themselves of the opportunities afforded them by the large gymnasium, and the performances of the gymnasts were such as to do credit to the large body of gymnasts, while the manner in which they were received by the spectators must have given great satisfaction to all who took part in the display.<sup>16</sup>

15 Richard William Cox, 'Alexander, Alexander (Alick) (1849–1928)' *ODNB*.

16 *Home Tidings*, 11 November 1882.

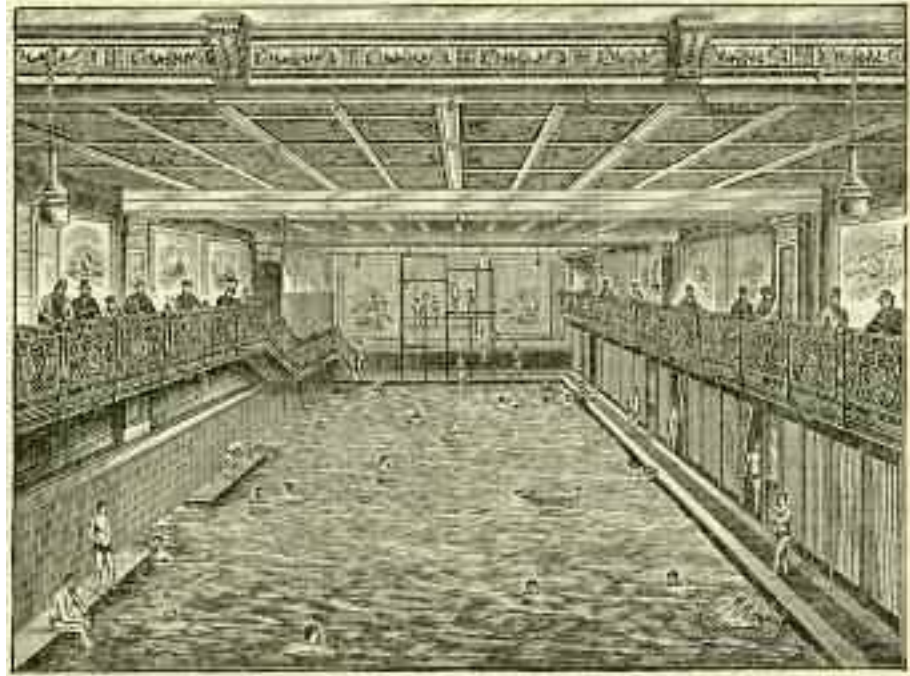


Fig. 9  
The Gymnastic Society was one of the most popular clubs at the Polytechnic and regularly gave public displays.

Along with gymnastics, aquatics was a popular sport in Victorian Britain, and the later nineteenth century witnessed the building of many new swimming baths across the country. Although some were constructed by local authorities, others were provided by local philanthropists. The new swimming bath at Regent Street Polytechnic, opened in 1884, was thus very much part of key trends, social and sporting, in later Victorian Britain. The

Fig. 10

In 1883 Hogg purchased stables adjacent to the Polytechnic in order to build a swimming bath, 'the want of which has been much felt during the past summer'.



Poly was certainly proud of its new facility. Most of those present at the opening were from the Polytechnic but the press were also invited. 'On Tuesday last', reported *Home Tidings*, 'the long desired opening of our new bath took place, on which occasion the Athletic Club held their third annual display.'<sup>17</sup> So many entries for the opening competitions had been made that there were fears the programme might have to be shortened to accommodate them all, but good fortune and hard work among the organisers obviated this problem.

Every part of this new building is thoroughly good, and the whole has been very simply but very tastefully decorated. The walls are all of glazed tiles, and are adorned with appropriate classical groups of figures, and the bath itself is also lined throughout with white tiles relieved with bands of colour. The actual tank is 76 feet long and 30 feet wide, the depth of the water ranging from four to six feet. There is a handsome gallery running around the tank, and below are commodious dressing boxes. ... There are larger baths than this in the metropolis, but on the whole it may be doubted whether a more complete and handsome establishment of the kind exists anywhere in the kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

The clear waters of the Poly swimming pool reflected segregation between the sexes in the fields of sport and leisure, both at Regent Street and more widely in late Victorian Britain. Men were allowed to swim in the pool all week, while women were only allowed a couple of hours on a Friday evening. It comes as little surprise, therefore, to find that male swimmers and

<sup>17</sup> *Home Tidings*, 27 September 1884.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily News*, 24 September 1884.

Photograph of the swimming bath, c. 1935 (Fig. 11). The swimming bath opened in 1884 (Fig. 12) and was used for almost 100 years, eventually closing in 1981. Due to a lack of space in the building, and the difficulties in heating the water, the pool was drained in the winter and used as a reading and social room. The plan (Fig. 13) shows the basement of 309 Regent Street, with the swimming pool among the various lecture theatres and workshops that made up the other aspects of Hogg's vision. The facilities were considered so outstanding that they warranted this front page feature (Fig. 14) in weekly illustrated publication *The Graphic*.



Fig. 11

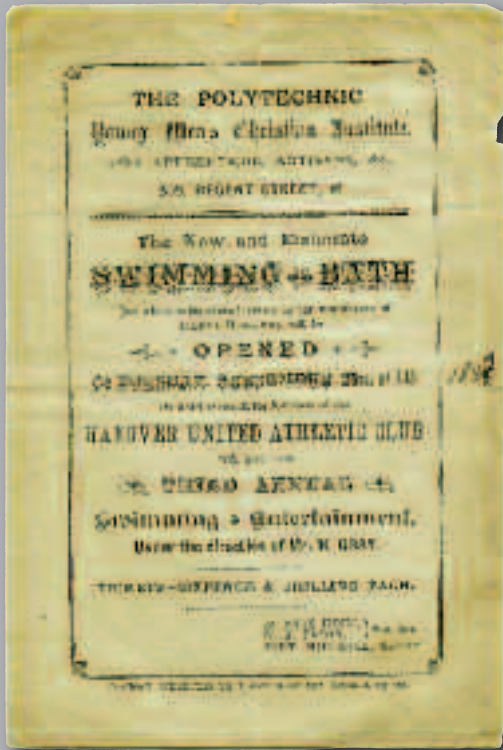


Fig. 12

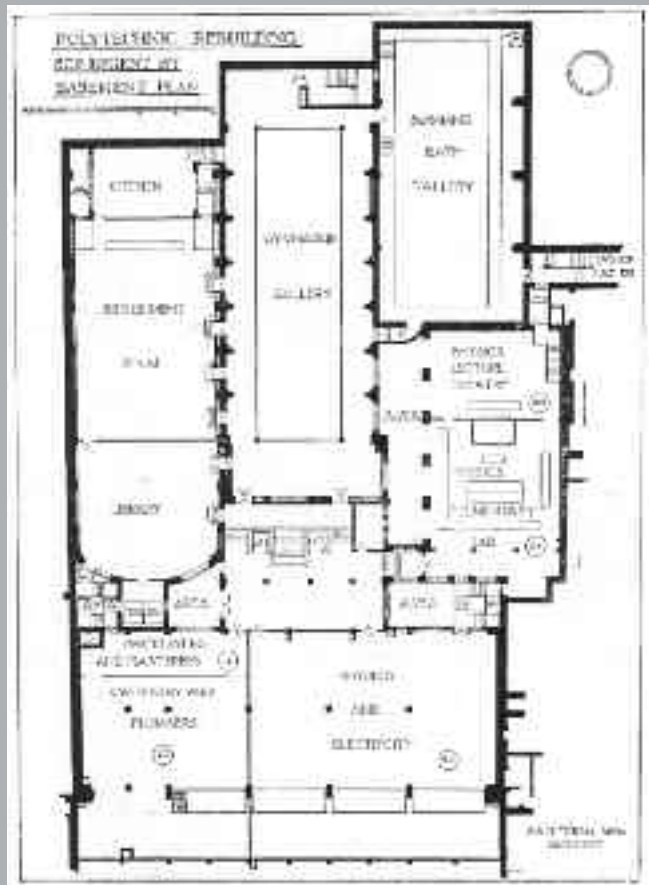


Fig. 13

Fig. 14



# THE GRAPHIC

AN ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

No. 500—FOLIO XXXVII.  
Registered in a Court of Law

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1888

WITH PICTURES  
COLLECTED FROM THE  
FIELD OFFICES OF THE  
POLICE DEPARTMENT



1. The Entrance

2. The Football Ground

3. The Entrance and Foyer

4. The Gallery, Range of the Terrace

5. The Waiting Hall

6. The Gymnasium

THE POLYTECHNIC, YOUNG MAN'S CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE, REGENT STREET

water polo players were more prominent in water-based sports at the Poly. Indeed, the first winner of the Studd Trophy in 1898 was Robert Grey, a notable swimmer and water polo player.

#### SATELLITE SPORTING FACILITIES

The Poly also took to the water through the sport of rowing, one of the main pursuits of Hanover United Athletic Club. The élite provenance of rowing owed much to Eton College, near Windsor. The Polytechnic Rowing Club was initially formed in 1879 under the auspices of Hanover United Athletic Club. Rowing was one of the earliest sports associated with the Club, not least because Hogg himself had been a keen rower at Eton, and he was eager to promote it at his Institute.

From *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine* it is clear that regular races were held on the River Thames in West London. Barnes was the favoured location to begin races during the 1870s, but other races were launched from Twickenham. There was no state-of-the-art home for Poly rowing, however, until the opening of the Polytechnic boathouse on the River Thames at Chiswick on 25 August 1888. The opening of the boathouse was one of the most celebrated events at the Poly. In addition to members of the Polytechnic Rowing Club, participants from other clubs and societies went along to celebrate the inauguration of the boathouse, and to take in a fine day of weather. Many sportsmen and sportswomen also attended to catch a glimpse of some amateur competitors of the later Victorian years. The investiture of the boathouse saw boating races, amusing tub races, processions of illuminated boats as the sun set, fireworks, a military band and a concert. Opening ceremonies are usually opportunities to bring together old acquaintances and to demonstrate élite connections, and this ceremony was no exception. The reflection of the boathouse on the surface of the Thames was given an extra glint by the reflected glories of Eton and Oxbridge, as can easily be inferred from the report in the *Polytechnic Magazine*:

A brief inspection was made of the house, and then our friends and members in force repaired to the Club-room for the opening ceremony. The Rev. C.J. Bristow, bow of the 1886 and stroke of the 1887 winning Cambridge eights, late President of the C.U.B.C. [Cambridge University Boating Club], whose college Boat Club, Trinity Hall, at Henley Regatta last year won every event for which they competed (five out of eight), presided. He was ably assisted by the Rev. P.S.G. Probert, an old Cambridge and Trinity Hall oarsman, and one of this year's ever-victorious Thames R. C. Eight...

The Chairman called on Mr. Robert Mitchell to make a statement as to the Boathouse. Mr. Mitchell said that from being some years back one of the weakest sections, the Rowing Club was now one of the strongest in the Institute, numbering about 150 members... The Boathouse was due solely to

Fig. 15

*The Polytechnic Magazine* reported in August 1888 that ‘the wet-bobs appear satisfied with their habitation’. The opening programme for the Boathouse included a passenger race, ‘ladies preferred’.



the generosity of Mr. Hogg, who had seen and responded to the needs of the rowing members.<sup>19</sup>

Hogg had paid for the construction of the boathouse, and also to have it stocked with rowing boats. Such generosity was rewarded with a flow of hurrahs and expressions of thanks. Those present expressed the wish that ‘there was one face the rowing fellows would like to have seen, that of their good friend, Mrs. Quintin Hogg. They hoped to see her on future occasions.’ The Polytechnic was, like many institutions, a vehicle for schooling its athletes in a mode of speech-making and toast-raising that was carefully calculated to exhibit courtesy, gratitude and respect.<sup>20</sup> The fact that Robert Mitchell was on the podium with past members of the University is a powerful reminder of class-mixing in the ostensibly élite sport of rowing. Mitchell was from a skilled working-class background, and had been enthused by a Bible class held by Quintin Hogg in 1881, since when he had become a devout and hard-working member of the Institute.<sup>21</sup>

Further testimony of the close relationship between the Polytechnic Rowing Club and its provenance in the rowing traditions of Eton, Oxford and Cambridge is the location of the boathouse itself. At the annual Oxford versus Cambridge Boat Race, the finishing line is marked by the Polytechnic boathouse. Hence the Polytechnic Rowing Club was very much part of what Stephen Wagg calls ‘the Thames–Isis–Cam axis’.<sup>22</sup> It was undoubtedly an élitist sport, drawn in part from the Eton and Oxbridge enthusiasts. Rowing was perhaps the staunchest bastion of class because there were highbrow prescriptions of where working-class boys could take to the oars, and in which races they could compete. The Amateur Rowing Association, to which the

<sup>19</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 30 August 1888.

<sup>20</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 30 August 1888.

<sup>21</sup> Ethel M. Wood, *Robert Mitchell: A Life of Service* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1934), pp. 1–2.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Wagg, “‘Base mechanic arms’? British rowing, some ducks, and the shifting politics of amateurism”, in Dilwyn Porter and Stephen Wagg (eds.), *Amateurism in British Sport: It Matters Not Who Won or Lost?* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 179.





**Fig. 16**  
*Boys from the Polytechnic helped to clear the land at Chiswick in preparation for the new sports ground.*



**Fig. 17**  
*Surveying the site at Chiswick, 1905.*

Polytechnic Rowing Club was affiliated, excluded ‘mechanics and artisans’ from the sport of rowing.

Another suburban site was added to the infrastructure of Poly sports during the 1880s. This was Merton Hall, near Wimbledon, purchased by Hogg in 1883. The grounds of Merton Hall hosted football, cricket, rugby and tennis, and were a regular feature of sports reports in *Home Tidings* and later the *Polytechnic Magazine*. Yet it was not long before Merton Hall was superseded





**Fig. 18**  
*The opening ceremony of the Quintin Hogg Memorial Sports Ground at Chiswick included fireworks and an illuminated projection of Quintin Hogg.*

first by the Paddington Sports Ground, in West London, which increasingly hosted athletics and football during the later 1890s, and subsequently – and more importantly – by the construction of a major sports facility at Chiswick, adjacent to the boathouse.<sup>23</sup>

Hogg died in 1903, just a month short of his 58th birthday. Following his death an appeal was launched at the Poly to finance a sports ground in his memory and, three years after he was laid to rest, the Quintin Hogg Memorial Ground was opened in the West London suburb of Chiswick. The Memorial Ground was presented as a testament to the huge contribution of Quintin Hogg to the development of sports at the Polytechnic, and also a fitting tribute to his life's work and his values. Covering 40 acres, the Chiswick ground was also testimony to the competitive energies that were bubbling up and simmering across the London suburbs. Chiswick became the home of the Polytechnic Harriers, who had previously trained and run at facilities on the athletics ground in Paddington. But from 1906 Chiswick also became the site of the outdoor sports of football, cricket and lawn tennis. It was a spatial expression of the relationship of a Polytechnic based in Central London with the suburbs of the great capital city. The opening of the Memorial Ground also played to the élite origins of amateur sport at the Polytechnic, and both

<sup>23</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine, passim.*

*The sporting trophies were held in high regard at the Polytechnic. They were on permanent display in the foyer of 309 Regent Street (Fig. 19) and the trophy cabinet was even paraded alongside Poly athletes in the Lord Mayor's Show of 1922 (Fig. 23).*



Fig. 19

*The Sporting Life Trophy (Fig. 20), awarded to the winner of the annual Polytechnic Marathon race.*

*The A.E. Walters Shield (Fig. 21), named after Albert 'Jenny' Walters, member of the Polytechnic Cycling Club from 1892, and winner of the long distance Bol d'Or race in 1899. The Shield was presented annually to the best all-round road rider.*

*The Gayler Trophy (Fig. 22), awarded to the winner of a 12 hour open road cycling race.*



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23

*Other Poly trophies (Fig. 24) include, L to R – back row: Polytechnic Ladies' Swimming Club Lily Pitt Shield, Polytechnic Swimming Club 100 yards Breaststroke Championship Shield, Polytechnic Inter-Club Billiards Championship Major V.R. Hoare Shield. front row: Bartlett Cup for 50 km point-to-point scratch race, Nixon Challenge Cup, Ditchman Memorial Trophy, Cooke Challenge Cup, 12 hour PCC Club Championship Cup, Hoare Cup for 100 yards flat Championship.*



Fig. 24



these themes – elite patronage and suburban strengths – came together in the address of Robert Mitchell. He praised the generosity and patronage of the Founder and paraphrased the old saying about Eton and Waterloo. ‘The victories of the Polytechnic’, he joked, ‘had been won in the playing fields of Mortlake and Merton.’<sup>24</sup>

### THE STUDD CHALLENGE TROPHY MEMORIAL

A marble pantheon of Polytechnic athletes sits alongside the main stairs just beyond the foyer of the Regent Street building at the University of Westminster. Many members of staff and students hurrying to or from classes, or en route to the historic cinema,<sup>25</sup> may have noticed the names and achievements of the sportsmen (as noted, they are all male), although many may never have given them a second glance. Yet these impressive marble memorials to manliness and sporting prowess are evidence of an exciting history of sports at the University of Westminster. The achievements of the athletes that passed through the gymnasia and playing fields of Regent Street Polytechnic deserve recognition in themselves. They are also closely intertwined



Fig. 25  
*The Studd Challenge Trophy Memorial is situated in the University's historic premises at 309 Regent Street.*

24 *Polytechnic Magazine*, June 1906.

25 Brenda Weeden, *The Education of the Eye: History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution 1838–1881* (London: Granta Editions, 2008).

Fig. 26

*The Studd Challenge Trophy, named after Sir J.E.K. Studd, was awarded annually to the best athletic performance by a member of the Polytechnic.*



with the sporting history that connects Regent Street to the rest of London, to sports in Britain, and to the international arenas of the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games and the European Championships. Hence the Studd Trophy became something of a global phenomenon as the leading competitors of the Polytechnic became significant international athletes, and even household names.

The Studd Trophy was awarded for ‘the best athletic performance or series of performances’ by a Poly athlete. All entrants were to have been members of the Young Men’s Christian Polytechnic Institute for at least three months, and only amateur sportsmen were allowed to compete. Their performances were to be consistent with those accepted by the national amateur organisation for each sport. The Studd Trophy Committee received nominations from the sporting clubs within the auspices of the Polytechnic Athletic Club (as the Hanover United Athletic Club was renamed in December 1887), and met to discuss them each October from 1898.<sup>26</sup>

The first Chairman of the Studd Trophy Committee was Douglas Hogg, one of the sons of Alice and Quintin Hogg, and he was ably accompanied by the aforementioned Vincent Hoare. Alongside Hoare and Hogg, other representatives of the Polytechnic Athletic Club served on the pre-war committee, because it was up to each of the sporting clubs within the Athletic Club to nominate their own outstanding sportsman of the year. At its first recorded meeting in 1898, the Committee chose between two nominees, Frank Parks of the Polytechnic Boxing Club, and Robert Grey, the captain of the water polo team. Parks was deemed ‘worthy of huge commendation’ but

26 *Studd Trophy Committee Minute Book vol. 2, 1932–1952*, Regulation for the Guidance of the Committee elected to award this Trophy, 1 October 1948, UWA PIN [P146b].

the water polo team under Grey's captaincy had won the Southern Counties Water Polo Championship, the London League Championship and the Middlesex Championship for two years in succession. Hence swimming became the first sport to be inscribed onto the Studd Trophy Memorial, because water polo was played by the swimming club.<sup>27</sup>

The list of champions on the Studd Trophy Memorial in Regent Street is a long and impressive one, because of the historic relationship of the Polytechnic to organised sports – locally, nationally and internationally. The memorial records the leading athletes of the Poly, many of whom went on to become top national and international competitors. It is a little like a historical listing of many leading or promising sporting careers of the twentieth century.

The second layer of testimony is the list of clubs to which the competitors belonged. These were among the best-known amateur sporting organisations in London. The Cycling Club and the Polytechnic Harriers are by far the most commonly represented clubs on the trophy memorial: leading cyclists at the Polytechnic won the Studd Trophy nineteen times, and eight of these occurred from 1900 to 1914. Cyclists were also represented on the Studd Trophy three times during the 1930s, three times during the 1950s, three times during the 1960s and once during the 1980s. This is impressive, but not as impressive as the tally for the track and field athletes. In total, the Polytechnic Harriers appear forty-six times on the Studd Trophy Memorial from 1905, the first year that a Harrier won it. The best years for the Harriers were the Edwardian years (five awards), the inter-war period (eighteen awards – they won it almost every year) and the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, a Polytechnic Harrier won the Trophy every year from 1946 to 1955, and again in



Fig. 27

*Bert Harris became the National Amateur Cycling Champion in 1891 and turned professional in 1894. He was nicknamed 'The Kid' on account of his youthful looks.*

27 *Studd Trophy Committee Minute Book vol. 1, 1899–1931, 23 October 1899, UWA PIN [P146a].*



Fig. 28  
*Boxing Competition in the  
 gymnasium at 309 Regent Street.  
 In 1905 the Boxing Club's Open  
 Competition awarded prizes of  
 specially designed silver cups,  
 valued at six guineas each.*

consecutive years during the 1960s and 1970s. Some sportsmen held the trophy more than once.

The other clubs represented on the trophy memorial include the Poly Boxing Club, whose boxers punched their way into immortality seven times, and the Fencing Club, whose members won it six times. The Rowing Club won it three times, and a swimmer won it just once, as noted, in the first year it was awarded. As with all texts or artefacts, however, there are absent or hidden facets to the Studd Trophy, gaps in the knowledge that can only be filled by understanding the ethos of the Victorian Polytechnic and its subsequent social history. A major lacuna on the Studd Trophy was the sheer variety of key clubs at the Poly. To take some significant examples, badminton, cricket, football, hockey and rugby are not there, despite the lengthy and active presence of these clubs at the Polytechnic. Awards by the Studd Trophy Committee, headed by J.E.K. Studd, were biased in favour of athletes who performed individual heroics in their sports. With few exceptions, those who excelled both individually or collectively at team sports were relatively disadvantaged by the approach of the Studd Committee.



Fig. 29

Each of the clubs produced regular reports for the Polytechnic Magazine. The column header for the Harriers shows a cross-country runner.

A further absence is explained by the fact that some athletes died young, before the Studd Trophy was even initiated. One such unfortunate athlete from the second decade of the Polytechnic's life was Albert ('Bert') Harris (1873–97), a leading cyclist during the late Victorian era, who joined the Polytechnic Cycling Club in 1894. Bert won a number of trophies and competed in both British and overseas competitions, but in 1897, on Easter Sunday, he fell from his bicycle during a ten-mile race, injured his skull and died in hospital a few days later. Bert was from the English Midlands, one of many leading athletes who made their way to London to be a part of the burgeoning sports scene at Regent Street. Thankfully, another Polytechnic cyclist of the twentieth century, Dick Swann, wrote a little paean to Harris, and his short but scintillating career has also been celebrated in Leicester, where he grew up.<sup>28</sup> Later, the two world wars, and particularly the First World War, cruelly denied many promising young sportsmen the chance to become champions in their chosen sports.

There are no women on the Studd Trophy: an exclusionary male bias in the formative sporting culture of the Polytechnic is the powerful unwitting testimony of the Studd Memorial. The Polytechnic Young Women's Christian Institute was established at 15 Langham Place in 1888, and as Ethel Wood described in her history of the Poly and her father Quintin Hogg, 'the Girl's Institute always had their own gymnasium, athletics and social clubs' and the Institute participated in a growing range of social and sporting activities after its formation.<sup>29</sup> However, the young ladies of Langham Place had nothing like the access to sports facilities enjoyed by their 'brothers' along the road, and for some years were using a gymnasium on Balderton Street, near Berkeley Square.<sup>30</sup> Yet inferior facilities were increasingly challenged by girls and women during the 1890s, as we will see in subsequent chapters. Later in the history of the Polytechnic, the Elsie Hoare Trophy was introduced for outstanding performances by Polytechnic sportswomen.

Despite some issues and problems, however, Regent Street Polytechnic could soon claim that it was a leading higher education provider in sports. Other polytechnics and higher education institutes promoted sports as well as technical and professional learning, for example, Battersea Poly, Finsbury Poly, Woolwich Poly and the Northampton Institute. These were all institutions that Regent Street competed against in various sports and leagues over the years.

28 Dick Swann, *Bert Harris of the Poly: A Cycling Legend* (London: Vance Harvey, 1964).

29 Ethel Wood, *The Polytechnic and Its Founder Quintin Hogg* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1932), p. 158.

30 Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 6: Westminster* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 525.



## *A community of communities: sports at the Polytechnic, 1882–1914*

This chapter begins in 1882, the year that Hogg’s Young Men’s Christian Institute completed its move from Long Acre to 309 Regent Street. It ends with the onset of the war that devastated but did not completely destroy the culture of amateur sports that thrived at the Edwardian Polytechnic. It is difficult to calculate how many students actively engaged in the clubs and societies there. The Polytechnic Day Schools promoted student sports through school-based teams, school sports days and the subsidised use of the Polytechnic facilities, available to former students who could become members of one or more of the sports clubs. In 1891 the Old Quintinians was formed to encourage ex-Poly boys to maintain links with their place of education.<sup>1</sup> The Old Quintinians went on to form their own teams in a variety of sports, and were one of many clubs and groups that comprised the Old Members’ Association.

However, most of the leading participants in Poly sports were members rather than students and the members were, in a sense, role models for the students. Their proclivities and talents and the sports clubs they participated in lent an identity to the Polytechnic as the leading educational institution for sports. This meant that member athletes were – to use a cliché beloved of Ministers for Sport in recent times – ambassadors not only for their chosen sport, but also for their institution of further education, and for their country.

### SPORTING CLUBS AT REGENT STREET POLYTECHNIC

Between the establishment of Regent Street Polytechnic and the outbreak of war the major clubs came into existence, albeit at different times, as detailed in the Timeline. The years leading up to the First World War also witnessed the rapid growth of the Rifle Club, whose members practised in the rifle range in the basement of 309 Regent Street. The largest clubs were the oldest ones; those that had begun life in the Hanover United Athletic Club and were by 1887 under the umbrella of the Polytechnic Athletic Club. Of those participating *in situ* at Regent Street, the Polytechnic Swimming Club boasted healthy attendances at its swimming galas, and had a regular training and event calendar that saw some of the leading ‘swimmists’ take a number of

<sup>1</sup> The Day Schools provided full-time courses in technical and trade subjects, including engineering and architecture. The Old Quintinians were former pupils at the Polytechnic Secondary School, founded in 1886. See *History of the University of Westminster Part Three 1882–1992*, to be published in 2013, for more details about the various different types of Poly members and students.

awards. As part of the swimming team, the Poly water polo team appears to have been one of the most successful in later Victorian and Edwardian London.

The spatial location of the Merton Hall grounds in suburban South London, along with the sports played there – cricket, football, rugby and tennis – reflected the increasing participation in the sports among the lower middle classes in the expanding suburbs around London and nearby towns in the Home Counties. Many sportsmen were also of the aspiring working classes and the uniformed working classes. The Polytechnic Members Candidates books illustrate that ‘clerks’, ‘salesmen’, ‘apprentices’ and a wide variety of ‘assistants’ and skilled uniformed occupations made up the majority of the Poly affiliates who played sports.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1890s and 1900s, for example, the Polytechnic Cricket Club had four teams. The First XI occasionally competed for the London and Suburban Cricket Association Challenge Cup against minor county and suburban teams. The rugby club mustered a similar number of teams.

Yet football remained the most popular participation team sport in the pre-1914 Poly (as well as afterwards). This is not surprising, partly because football was a popular national sport, a trend in which the Polytechnic naturally shared, and partly because Quintin Hogg, Arthur Kinnaird, G.A. Parker and George Ogilvie, a leading cricketer who was also useful with his feet, were all instrumental in developing football at the Polytechnic. Kinnaird has a claim to be the most important sportsman both at the Poly and in Britain from the 1870s. A prime mover in the governance of football as a national sport, he took a hand in developing football at the Poly during the 1870s and 1880s. Initially comprising a First team and six other lesser squads from the ‘B’ to the ‘F’ teams, the Polytechnic Football Club played the length and breadth of London and the South-East. Leading opposing clubs of the First



**Fig. 30**  
*Polytechnic water polo team, with the Hastings and St Leonards Town Observer Shield. The Observer trophy is still awarded today.*

<sup>2</sup> *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Candidates Books, [1879]–1958, UWA RSP 2/6.*

Fig. 31

*Quintin Hogg (centre) was still playing regularly with the Hanover Football Club in 1882, and continued to play infrequently until the early 1890s.*



Fig. 32

*As well as sports clubs, there were other leisure societies at the Poly, including modern languages, reading circles and discussion groups.*



team included the amateur gentlemen of the Corinthians and the more blue-collar denizens of Woolwich Arsenal. The lesser teams were engaged in matches against a wide variety of amateur clubs that represented the sociological bases of the sport: there were church teams, university and polytechnic teams, but also increasing numbers of workplace clubs. Some were white collar or lower middle class, but most were working class and increasing numbers of these teams were associated with places of work or worship in the suburbs.<sup>3</sup>

In common with other sports clubs, regular social events were held to promote a sense of involvement at the Poly Football Club. As Hogg wrote in March 1886, over 100 members of the football teams were expected at a social supper to be held in the Great Hall at Regent Street. Hogg made great play of the élite provenance of Poly football:

The Hon. A.F. Kinnaird is expected to preside. Mr. J. Rawlinson, our Old Etonian goalkeeper and worthy speaker of the [Polytechnic] Parliamentary Debating Society, also hopes to be present. As the oldest member of the Football Club (I think I might say the oldest player in the country, for I have just completed my thirty-third season) I shall also try to look in, if only for a few minutes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863–1915* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 27 March 1886.

In the 1892–93 season the Polytechnic FC was a founder member of the Southern Football Alliance, a League that went on to fragment and to morph into other local leagues in the twentieth century. In the first match they

played no less a team than Tottenham Hotspur FC, to whom they lost by two goals to one.<sup>5</sup>

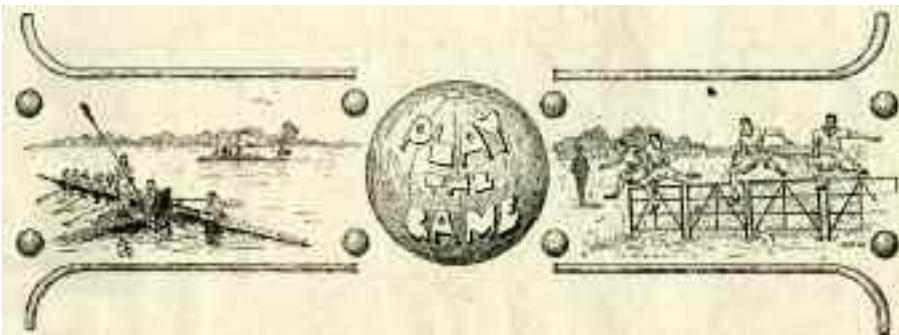
The popularity of football at the Polytechnic owed much to Hogg and Kinnaird but it is also explained by the rapid national expansion of the sport following the formation of the Football Association in 1863. Here, the Polytechnic was in an interesting and possibly contradictory relationship with the emerging ethos of football. The expansion of commercially driven, professional football occurred largely in the working-class areas of towns and cities, and London was no exception. However, the aristocratic-amateur ethos of the Polytechnic sporting culture privileged football as a pure sport. As such it was uncorrupted by pecuniary considerations and the disreputable association with betting and gambling that sometimes accompanied the emergence of sport as commercialised entertainment.

Interest and participation in football continued to expand at the Polytechnic. From 1900 the name Stewart Dandridge begins to feature regularly in the *Polytechnic Magazine* and other football records held at the University of Westminster Archive. Both player and manager, Dandridge was a leading light in the Poly First Eleven during the Edwardian years and the First World War. The First Eleven played in the Southern Suburban League, and later in the Olympian League: in the 1909–10 season Dandridge and his team came third in the Olympian League. Also named among the main players was William James Bailey, whose name also features on the Studd Trophy as a cyclist. Bailey was Amateur Track Sprint World Champion four times from 1909–13 and narrowly missed out on a medal in the 1908 Olympics. In common with so many other leading amateur athletes of his time, Bailey was adept at more than one sporting pursuit.

The Polytechnic Football Club joined the Southern Suburban League in 1902 and became a member of the Spartan League in 1911, although the Spartan League had been established some years before. The nomenclature of the Spartan League reminds us of the Grecian influences underpinning amateur Victorian sport. The statement of intent to play some of the better clubs in London was slightly at odds with this spirit.

Arthur Kinnaird had contributed to the rise of the Poly FC but he was

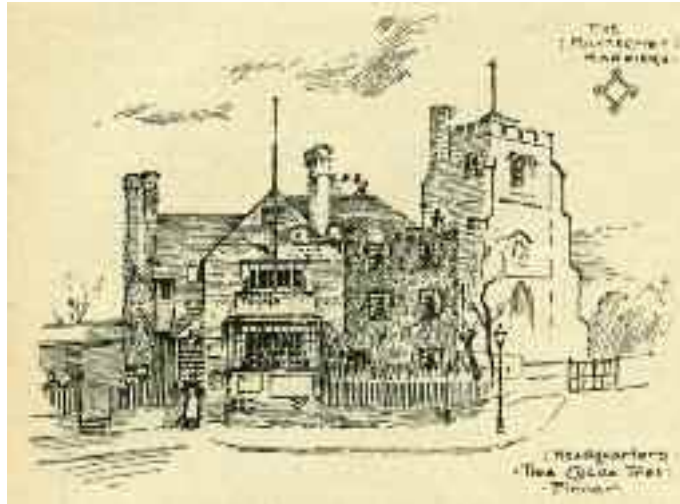
**Fig. 33**  
*The Play The Game* column header, used in the *Polytechnic Magazine* between 1907 and 1909, shows rowing and cross-country running.



<sup>5</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 29 September 1892. This was not the first encounter between the two clubs because the Hanover 3rd Eleven played what was then simply called Hotspur FC some years earlier, on 16 February 1884. They were more successful first time around, winning 2–1 against the North London side. *Home Tidings*, March 1884.

Fig. 34

*The Cocoa Tree temperance tavern opened in 1878, and became popular with London day-trippers after the arrival of the Metropolitan tube line in Pinner in 1886.*



not only a promoter of football. His energies were also devoted to amateur athletics, hence the fact that the Polytechnic Harriers were competing for the Kinnaird Trophy, introduced for inter-club athletic competitions, from 1909. The Kinnaird Trophy was the culmination of the formative era of the Harriers: with the assistance of the Polytechnic Cycling Club, and under the wing of the Hanover United Athletic Club, the Harriers held their first inter-club athletics tournament in 1883. *Home Tidings* from that year begins to include more and more reports on the Harriers, as they established themselves as a leading sporting club at the Poly during the 1880s and 1890s and a prominent club in London amateur athletics. As with most sports clubs based at Regent Street, they were affiliated to the leading amateur association of the day, in this case the Amateur Athletics Association (AAA). Within a few years the Harriers had adopted the team nickname of the ‘jolly dawgs’. The slang vernacular of the noun ‘dog’ suggests perhaps the influence of the United States of America at the time, and indeed *Home Tidings* and especially the *Polytechnic Magazine* carried many stories on ex-Poly members or graduates who had gone to live in the USA, whether on the frontier or in the great American cities. The Poly also played a leading role in establishing the Bowery Young Men’s Institute in New York, whose mission was much the same as its progenitor in London: to engage adolescents and young men in active sports and religious observance lest they fall foul of poverty and the vices of the big city.<sup>6</sup> Yet the name may also be derived from the Spotted Dog Hotel at Willesden Green in the suburbs of North-West London. By the mid-1880s Hanover United Athletic Club organised regular cross-country runs out of the Spotted Dog, as well as from other sites in the outskirts of London, including the Cocoa Tree temperance tavern at Pinner.<sup>7</sup> Another favoured suburban location was Tufnell Park, where the Athletic Club was competing in the One Mile Handicap for the Quintin Hogg Challenge Cup Race by the summer of 1886.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Home Tidings*, 24 July 1886.

<sup>7</sup> *Home Tidings*, 1886, *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> *Home Tidings*, 4 September 1886.



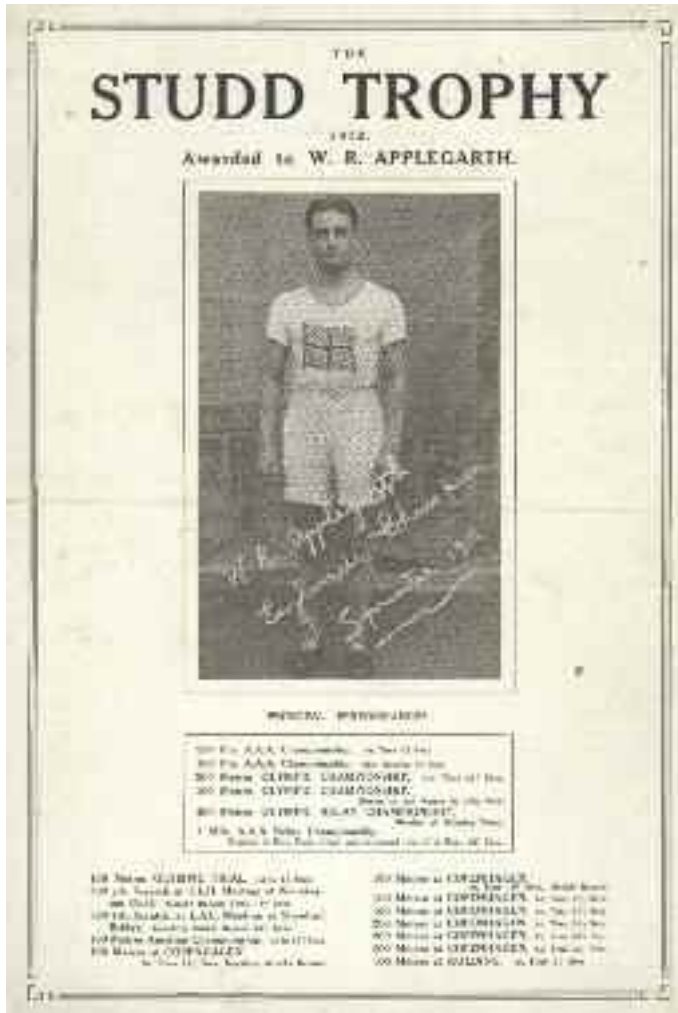


Fig. 35  
*William Applegarth turned professional in 1915, after a string of victories for the Poly Harriers, including winning the Studd Trophy in 1912. He emigrated to the USA and died in 1958.*

In subsequent years the Harriers improved their record in track and field events in the capital, outperforming athletes from other Polytechnic teams and other amateur athletics clubs from across London. Yet despite their victories outside the Polytechnic, they were not without internal critics at Regent Street. One of the dangers when writing of ‘community’ or ‘communities’ is that of lapsing into a simple-minded notion that things were more communal until a few years ago, that there was some kind of ‘golden age’ of sociability in the good old days or even in more recent years until something went wrong. In fact, a sense that some kind of demise in community life was undermining the social life of Regent Street Polytechnic first surfaced as early as 1893. The very bedrock of the corporate life of the Polytechnic, namely its sporting clubs and its leisure societies, came under criticism for being too sectional and too selfish. Interestingly, the debate exposed underlying critical perceptions of the sports and athletics members among the student body. In a correspondence entitled *Social Life in the Institute*, various

## ARTHUR KINNAIRD

Arthur Fitzgerald Kinnaird (1847–1923), eleventh Lord Kinnaird of Inchtute and third Baron Kinnaird of Rossie, was born in London to a Scots family, educated at preparatory school and later at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. At Eton, his sporting talents began to flourish, like so many Victorian amateur athletes, he excelled at more than one sport. Kinnaird was proficient at cricket, football, running, swimming and tennis, but football became his passion. Following his time at Cambridge, he became a banker in his career and a footballer in most of his spare time. In common with Quintin Hogg, he was also a philanthropist, becoming a founder member of the Boys' Brigade in 1870, and President of the YMCA. Kinnaird became involved early on in the sporting activities of Hogg's Castle Street Institute, helping to provide playing grounds, boats and sponsoring several events.

Kinnaird remains best known for his contribution to football, both as a player and in the development and management of the sport. He was the leading player in the Wanderers and played in nine FA Cup finals. That there was a Polytechnic Wanderers for a short while probably owed something to his influence. He also played international football for Scotland. In 1869 Kinnaird joined the committee of the Football Association (FA), which was then controlled by gentleman amateurs. As their influence within the game declined, however, professional football became a hugely popular sport among the working classes, some of whom saw playing football as a route to social mobility, but most of whom watched from the terraces or the touchline. Kinnaird continued to play matches at Merton as an emeritus amateur football player at the Polytechnic, even into the 1890s. He was a Treasurer of the FA and from 1890 he became its President, so his presence at the Poly was a powerful indication of the continuing importance of élite networks in its sporting patronage. He was also President of the London FA, and understood that professional football needed representation in the governing bodies of football. This argument made him increasingly unpopular with the old boys of amateurism during the early twentieth century, when the split between the unpaid gentlemanly pursuit of football and the professional game

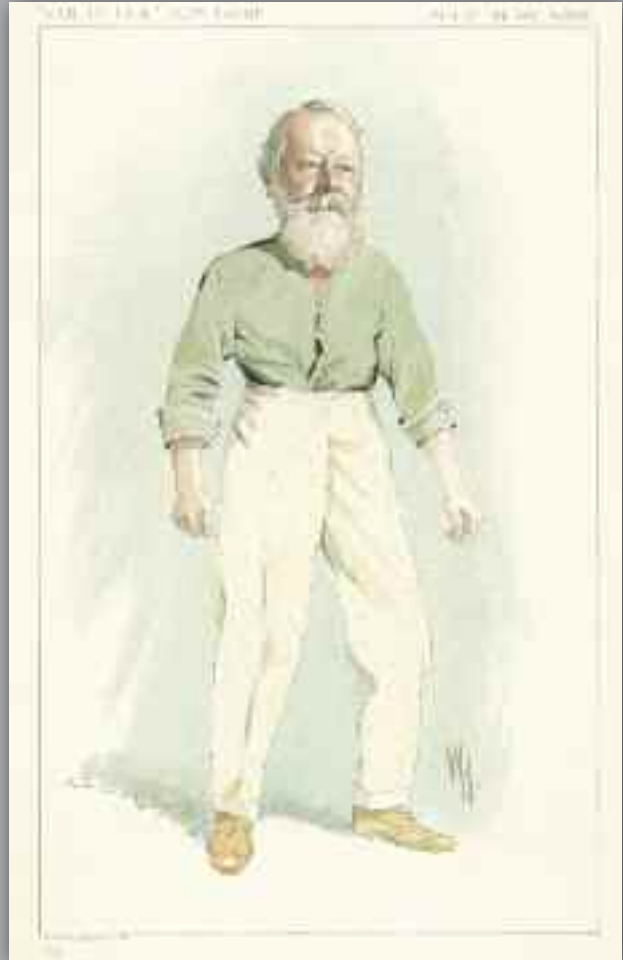


Fig. 36  
*Arthur Kinnaird, 11th Baron (1847–1923). Kinnaird was President of the Poly Harriers from their formation until his death in 1923.*

led to the formation of the Amateur Football Association in 1907. As Dilwyn Porter has argued, Kinnaird is now viewed as something of a class traitor for his advocacy of professional football, and he became isolated from his former amateur footballing friends.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, he continued to have an active association with the Polytechnic, and in 1909 the Kinnaird Trophy was introduced for the inter-club athletic competitions held at the Chiswick Stadium. Kinnaird remained president of the FA for over 30 years until his death a short time before the opening of Wembley Stadium in 1923.

<sup>9</sup> Dilwyn Porter, 'Revenge of the Crouch End Vampires: the AFA, the FA and English Football's "great split", 1907–14', in Dilwyn Porter and Stephen Wagg (eds.), *Amateurism in British Sport: It Matters Not Who Won or Lost?* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 70.

complaints were articulated to the effect that the Social Room was no longer the comfortable place it had once been, and that students discussing more academic matters were offended by the noisy behaviour of the sportsmen. Something of a divide was emerging between the Polytechnic Parliament,<sup>10</sup> who saw themselves as the more cerebral and reflective members of the Institute, and the athletics sections. The former attacked the latter for the degradation of the social life of the Poly. 'Their social character', wrote one irate contributor to the *Polytechnic Magazine*, 'has of late been getting smaller and not beautifully less':

Once the backbone of our Institute, a lot of jolly boys who were in the vanguard of everything, nowadays they seem to take not the slightest interest in its affairs; they just rush into the Social Room, without a word for anyone, gobble their food and are off again like a shot.<sup>11</sup>

In response to this 'extraordinary statement' the Honourable Secretary of the Polytechnic Harriers, Charles James Pratt, waxed defensive about the contribution that the Harriers and other sports clubs made to the Poly, and attacked the élitism of the Polytechnic Parliament.<sup>12</sup> But the Harriers were perhaps garnering envy as well as successes in the sporting arena. During the Edwardian years the Studd Trophy was awarded to a member of the Harriers no fewer than six times, and those awards partly coincided with the role of the Harriers in the Olympic Games in 1908.

The Olympic Games were reintroduced from their classical origins into the modern world in 1896. The city of Athens hosted the first of the modern



**Fig. 37**  
*Richard 'Dick' James, who was on the Committee of the Polytechnic Harriers in 1913.*



**Fig. 38**  
*As well as sprinting events, the Poly Harriers also competed in the high jump, long jump and hurdles.*

10 The Polytechnic Parliament Debating Society was founded in April 1883 as one of the oldest model parliaments in the country. Its members examined topical and contemporary issues with regular reports appearing in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. The society was wound up in 1970.

11 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 18 January 1893.

12 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 25 January 1893.





Fig. 39  
The Great Western Railway Co. allowed Poly Marathon competitors to change in the cloakrooms of Windsor station.

Olympiads, followed by Paris in 1900, St Louis in 1904 and London in 1908. The decision to hold the Games in London was based on a number of factors, including perhaps Baron de Coubertin's love of the Henley Regatta, and possibly his links with the British Monarchy. But the efforts of the British Olympic Council were paramount, and a huge public fair, the Franco-British Exhibition, was held in the West London suburbs at White City in 1908. This encouraged *bonhomie* between the French and British during the Olympic decision-making process (just a few years following the signing of the *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France) and, most importantly, it provided a convenient site for the Games.<sup>13</sup>

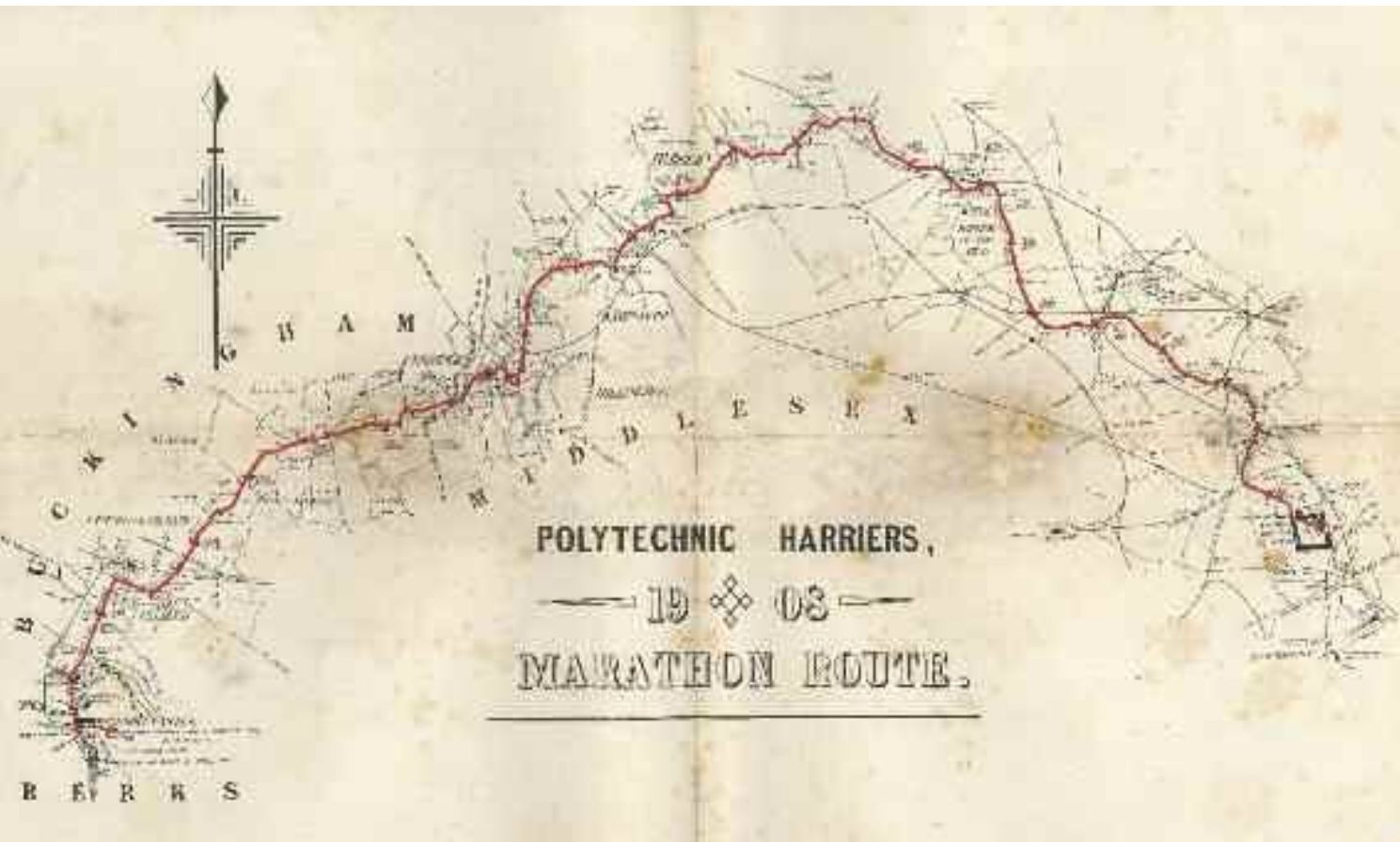
Polytechnic representatives performed impressively at the Olympics, both in the sporting events and as administrators. Twenty-seven athletes from the Poly participated, picking up ten medals including gold and silver in 100 km cycling, silver in featherweight boxing and bronzes in 10 mile walking and 400 m hurdles. Unfortunately, they were unable to win any medals in the most iconic race of them all, the marathon; their best position was 17th, achieved by Polytechnic Harrier James Beale.

The failure to win the marathon at these Games, however, does nothing to detract from the wider success of the Polytechnic in this race. In classical Greece, the origins of the marathon are attributed to the heroics of Pheidippides. Following the arrival of the invading Persians at Marathon, Pheidippides ran 25 miles (40 kilometres) from Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over Persia, earning himself great acclaim but also instant death: on passing on his news he died from exhaustion. The 1908 marathon was the first to be run in the modern era. Planned and organised by the Polytechnic Harriers, the route was mapped and trialled by some of their members prior to the Olympic Games. The Polytechnic Cycling Club, in existence since 1878, was also involved in monitoring the race. Royal patronage was strongly in evidence

Fig. 40  
'The Stadium' of the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908 where the Olympic events took place. The stadium was demolished in 1985.



13 Theodore Andrea Cook, *The Fourth Olympiad, being The Official Report: The Olympic Games of 1908* (London: British Olympic Association, 1909).



because the competitors began in the grounds of Windsor Castle and finished underneath the Royal Box in the White City Stadium, some 26 miles (42 kilometres) away. That it began at Windsor probably also owes something to Hogg's time, as an esteemed athlete and pupil, at Eton School, just over the River Thames. The *Polytechnic Magazine* also evidences the fact that Windsor was one of the favoured out-of-London destinations for cycling excursions and walks by the Polytechnic Rambling Club. Formed in 1885, and one of the oldest rambling societies in Britain, the ramblers sometimes joined up with the cyclists in order to exercise their legs in excursions from Windsor to London.<sup>14</sup> Although Windsor is 26 miles from White City, many other areas in the hinterland of London are 26 miles from there and could have been chosen.

The great marathon of 1908 also witnessed the exhaustion and collapse of its most famous runner in the Games. The diminutive Italian runner Dorando Pietri was helped to his feet and then assisted over the finishing line, only to be subsequently disqualified following an appeal by the American team. That story is well known in the annals of Olympic history. What is less well known is that Pietri was helped over the line by the Secretary of the Polytechnic Harriers and the Clerk of the Race, Jack Andrew, who was dressed in a smart suit and straw boater for the occasion. 'I did what I was ordered to and if

Fig. 41

*The Marathon route was planned by Mr Jack M. Andrew, honorary secretary of the Harriers.*

14 [www.polyramblers.org.uk/clubinfo/](http://www.polyramblers.org.uk/clubinfo/) [accessed 28 November 2011]; see also *Polytechnic Magazine*, from 1888, for reports on the Cavendish Cycling Club, the Polytechnic Rambling Club, and their trips around London or out to the countryside.

similar circumstances arose again, I would do the same’, Andrew stated afterwards. Pietri did not return to Italy without a trophy: he was awarded a special silver-gilded cup by Queen Alexandra.<sup>15</sup>

The controversy and excitement generated by the marathon in 1908 led to its permanent inclusion in the Olympic programme, and no doubt influenced the Polytechnic to introduce its own version of the event the following year, known simply as the Polytechnic Marathon. But British athletes did not perform very well in track events at the first London Olympics, so another important reason for the Polytechnic marathon from 1909 was as a training event for long-distance runners. The Polytechnic marathon ran for almost the entire twentieth century, from the starting blocks in 1909, stopping short of the millennial finishing tape in 1996.

The Polytechnic marathon route began in Windsor and terminated in the White City stadium in Shepherd’s Bush, which was bulldozed after the Second World War to make way for the BBC television building. The initiation of the Polytechnic marathon owed much to the sponsorship of the popular newspaper *The Sporting Life*, which from 1909 provided a very handsome trophy to be presented to the winner of each Poly marathon.<sup>16</sup> Had he lived, Hogg might well have disapproved of the association with a sporting paper whose rationale was partly to dispense news about competitors, matches and races, and partly to act as a vehicle for intelligence about betting. Although athletics was included in its weekly coverage of popular sports, it had a regular tipster known as ‘Augur’ and devoted much of its column inches to horse racing.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the financial support from this source was welcome.<sup>18</sup>

The involvement of the Polytechnic Cycling Club in the marathon proved that the two most successful clubs at the Poly could co-operate for the greater good of the institution. The *Polytechnic Magazine* in March 1918 looked back with some nostalgia at the origins and achievements of the Polytechnic Cycling Club:

Great excitement was caused at the Institute at Long Acre during the late seventies, when it became known that two members had dared the dangers of London traffic and ridden to Headquarters on bicycles! These two – Tom Nottingham and Jim Paul – had invested their savings in machines of the type which were just becoming popular – the ordinary. The old boneshaker, or velocipede, of a previous decade had gone, and the world looked with wonder on the men who risked their lives on the new fangled rubber-shod machines. But the bicycle had come to stay, and Tom and Jim were the pioneers of the many famous boys who have made the Poly Cycling Club the most renowned in the world.

In the spring of 1878 sufficient members had taken up the new sport to justify the foundation of a cycling club, so a meeting was called for the purpose of carrying the idea out. This was eventually done, and with the name of the Ian Cycling Club, the Poly-boys-to-be launched the great venture. Later, the name was changed to the Hanover Cycling Club, and it

15 Martin Polley, ‘From Windsor Castle to White City: the 1908 Olympic Marathon Route’, *London Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 2009, pp. 163–78.

16 *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1909.

17 Mark Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society, c. 1823–1961* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 29–31.

18 Since 1994, the Sporting Life Trophy (renamed the Chris Brasher Sporting Life Trophy in 2003) has been jointly presented to the men’s and women’s champion of the annual London Marathon. The trophy is on permanent loan at the Museum of London.

The Polytechnic organised a pageant and a procession of 1,000 athletes for the Inauguration of the Franco-British Stadium on 26 May 1908. This took place in the presence of King Edward VII and French President Armand Fallières. The march past (Fig. 42) included representatives of the Poly sports clubs as well as Engineering, Architectural and Technical students, Secondary School pupils and the Old Quintinians. Lord Desborough and Pierre de Coubertin (Fig. 43) were among the many dignitaries at the opening.



The Polytechnic extended honorary membership to all competitors at the 1908 Olympics; many took up the offer and used the facilities during their stay in London (Figs. 44, 45).

As well as competing in the Games and winning several medals (Fig. 46), members of the Polytechnic also assisted as stewards (Fig. 47).



Figs. 42, 43



Figs. 44, 45

Name		Address		Remarks	
1	Mr. J. H. ...	...	...	...	...
2	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
3	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
4	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
5	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
6	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
7	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
8	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
9	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...
10	Mr. ...	...	...	...	...





was not until the Institute was firmly settled in its new home that the name Polytechnic was adopted. From that time there has been no looking round for anything better.

The original cycling club was officially called the Ian Bicycling Club, so named after the young son of Quintin Hogg. Many of the Institute's sports clubs were called 'Ian' because of the family connection or 'Hanover' because the main Institute building was situated in Hanover Street, Covent Garden. The Institute had another branch at Salisbury Street so this gave rise to a number of different clubs in simultaneous existence during the Institute's early history. For example, reports can be found in *Home Tidings* for an Ian Cricket Club, a Hanover Cricket Club, a Trinity Cricket Club and a Gladys Cricket Club. The Cycling Club continued to be informally referred to as 'the Ian' despite two changes of name: the Hanover Cycling Club from 1882 and then the Polytechnic Cycling Club from 1885.<sup>19</sup> Anyone who could afford a cycle was able to join, and there was no discrimination between two wheels or three: bicyclists and tricyclists were equally welcome. Until the formation of a women's cycling club following the birth of the Polytechnic Young Women's Christian Institute in 1888, women were involved by invitation only.

Fig. 48  
*Polytechnic cycling team with David Ricketts inset. On the formation of the Cycling Club in 1881, Hogg described it jokingly as a 'form of suicide'.*





Fig. 49

*This photograph of cyclist William James 'Boy' Bailey was taken by Florence Vandamm. Bailey, renowned for his matinee-idol good looks, was a perfect choice for the portraitist who became well known as a photographer of Broadway stars.*



Destinations for a 'run out' on the cycles evidence the continuing appeal of moving at speed or perambulating at a gentle pace beyond the centre of London. It was common for the cyclists to meet at Cavendish Square or Regent Street, and then head off in an elongated snake towards the major roads that expedited their passage away from the city centre and towards the nearby countryside. Among the most popular areas for the club were the City of London and the further-flung suburbs of Barnet, Cricklewood, East Sheen, Elstree and Kingston Vale. Cycling events were held much further afield, for example in Guildford, Brighton or the North Downs, and in other country areas of the Home Counties. The crossbar, as opposed to the dipped bar used by women cyclists, was the norm for most cycling excursions, although a 'Ladies' Day' was held once or twice a year, but rarely in London.

An afternoon's cycling was often followed by tea, coffee and food at a public house or a cafeteria. Many healthy excursions were rounded off by an evening of cigar or pipe smoking. The so-called 'smokers' or smoking concerts

19 *Souvenir of the Coming of Age Dinner; Being a Brief History of the Polytechnic Cycling Club from 1878-1899* by Walter Groves, UWA PCC 10/9/1; *Home Tidings*, 17 January 1885.

appear to have been a popular way of getting one's breath back, singing traditional songs, and sharing in the camaraderie of the cycling club. What follows is an example of the 'run-out' on the bicycles and of the smoker sampled from the *Polytechnic Magazine*:

After [a run-out to Petersham Hill sat down to tea, then] the tables had been cleared [and] the members settled down to enjoy the smoker, but the bad roads and weather had kept some of the usual songsters away...

After 'Auld Lang Syne' the members got ready for home, reaching Oxford Street shortly after eleven, and thus ended a most enjoyable run. I only hope that when the weather gets more settled, that members will turn up in still greater force, and that all our outings will be as enjoyable as that of Saturday last.<sup>20</sup>

By 1890, the Cycling Club was one of the most successful at the Poly, and cycling victories provided opportunities for some proud outpourings from the *Polytechnic Magazine*, outpourings that were not shy about other successes in sport, whether by brain or brawn, nor afraid to own up to shortcomings elsewhere:

The Poly seems to be the permanent home of record-breakers. Our cyclists make it an everyday occurrence. Our swimmers, our draughts-players, our boxers – all produce their champions. Our gymnasts are undoubtedly the best in London, and surely our cricketers hold the record for getting nearest to the cups for which they enter (short of winning them), even as our footballers are unrivalled for getting knocked out in the first rounds.<sup>21</sup>

And the records kept coming. The Polytechnic Cycling Club could boast five World Championships, four Grand Prix de Paris, an Olympic Championship, nine British Empire Championships and thirty-one National Championships by 1918.<sup>22</sup>

After the Cycling Club and the Harriers, the next most award-winning club at the Edwardian Polytechnic was the Boxing Club. Boxing has been a sport long contested outside of the ring as well as inside it. Its origins in unregulated prize-fighting – bare-knuckle fist slogging – had led many puritans or religious nonconformists to attempt to ban it as a rough, dangerous and irrational sport during earlier decades of the nineteenth century, leading such elegant and powerful essayists as William Hazlitt to defend 'The Fight' in London against those whom he saw as its effete and supine critics.<sup>23</sup> The Tory conception of leisure during the second half of the nineteenth century did not conform to the gratification-deferring mindset of nonconformist Liberalism and the autodidact socialist. Instead, Tories saw leisure in terms of its enjoyment, and also its Englishness, not its class sectionalism. Boxing represented a value system that linked the aristocrat to the pauper, and the burgeoning *petits bourgeois* in their suburban terraces to the top-hatted toff.

20 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 13 March 1890.

21 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 30 October 1890.

22 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1918.

23 William Hazlitt, 'The Fight', in William Hazlitt, *Selected Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 78–97.

Fig. 50

*Polytechnic boxers Corporal Chivers and Bombardier Bill Wells, c. 1910. Wells was the first heavyweight to win the Lonsdale belt and later performed the role of 'gongman' for the J. Arthur Rank films.*



No matter what class you might inhabit, went the Tory-democracy paradigm, you could drink and gamble and eat roast beef according to your means. In other words, the later Victorian Polytechnic was influenced both by the traditionalism of English leisure as fun for its own sake, and the educational dictum that leisure was about learning to be a better person. Polytechnic boxing reflected this.

Stan Shipley has shown that most of the leading amateur boxers of later Victorian England 'came from a narrow social spectrum. They were invariably middle class.' He describes how many of the 'new model boxing clubs' of the time were formed 'at a pub, or a volunteer drill hall, and the new polytechnics with their woodblock floors and wall bars ...'.<sup>24</sup> The clubs that Poly boxers fought with included Belsize Boxing Club, Cestus Boxing Club, Finsbury Polytechnic, the German Gymnasium, the Repton Club and the Spartans, among the finest developers of boxing talent at the time.

The adoption of boxing at the Polytechnic also owed much to the muscular Christianity of Quintin Hogg and his work among the poor boys of London. In *Sport and the Making of Britain*, Derek Birley argues that boxing became 'part of the missionary work [of] the Regent Street Polytechnic' intended to civilise the urban poor and to forge closer links between the

24 Stan Shipley, 'Boxing', in Tony Mason (ed.) *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 81.

working-class boy and the ‘mostly lower middle class clientele’ of the Poly.<sup>25</sup> The establishment of the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) in 1880 facilitated the agenda of Hogg, and of course the Poly Boxing Club was affiliated to the ABA.

An emphasis upon skill and dexterity, or shrewd punching and close defensive positioning of the forearms and gloved fists, as well as the deft use of the feet to assist in attack and defence, was also at the heart of the code of boxing. A knockout engendered by the sheer weight and accuracy of a punch was acceptable, but not to be overly lauded in relation to the wider repertoire of clever footwork and feinting, and the jabs, uppercuts, hooks and parries at the disposal of the skilled pugilist.

The year 1890 was one in which the Polytechnic Boxing Club was engaged not only in sparring of the physical kind, but also in written combat on the pages of the *Polytechnic Magazine*. Leading members of the Boxing Club were outraged at the suggestion of the undoubtedly eponymous but also anonymous writer ‘309’ that there were too many knockouts in boxing, and that injury and death were possible results of such heavy blows. This was an offence both to manliness and to the rules drawn up by the Marquis of Queensberry earlier in the Victorian period. Hence ‘309’ made the bizarre suggestion that pugilists not be hailed as victors but, rather, judged to have ‘lost the bout’ if a knockout blow was delivered. The captain of the Polytechnic Boxing Club did not pull his punches. Not only manliness, amateurism and a sense of fair play were offended, so too was the skill of the boxer himself:

The Polytechnic Boxing Club being affiliated to the Amateur Boxing Association, it follows as a matter of course that their competitions will be governed by the sensible and humane rules adopted by that body. By those rules the judges have power (and invariably use it) to stop all slogging and rough fighting, and whereby any competitor in danger of receiving ‘the knock’ is taken to his corner and receives the attention of his ‘attendant’. Further, I must point out to ‘309’ that the knocking-out of an opponent is not achieved by means of *hard* hitting, but by placing the blow on the right spot, a proceeding requiring far greater skill than is possessed by the average amateur.

And the captain went on to ask polemically, ‘cannot “309” do something for our footballers? I notice that about forty percent of the Poly team were injured in a recent match.’<sup>26</sup> Later in the 1890s and 1900s reports in the *Polytechnic Magazine* waxed on the ‘most useful and manliest of English sports’ and pointed out that its most effective practitioners were ‘above mediocrity’, a phrase that crops up more than a few times in the pages of the magazine.

Whereas boxing incorporated upper-class, middle-class and lower-class followers of the ‘fancy’, other sports at the Polytechnic remained indubitably middle class. Imported from France in days of yore, the sport of lawn tennis was codified during the Victorian years, and it became increasingly popular in the late Victorian and Edwardian times. The Polytechnic reflected this ascendancy.

25 Derek Birley, *Sport and the Making of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 287.

26 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 20 March 1890.

## FRANK PARKS

Born in London, Frank Parks (1875–1945) was the more famous of the two Edwardian Jewish boxing brothers, Frank and Frederick Parks. Frank was a member of the Polytechnic Boxing Club from 1892 and his name appears on the Studd Trophy in 1902. The *Polytechnic Magazine* in September 1905 celebrated his boxing achievements as the retiring Heavyweight Champion of the World. His global achievements owed a great deal to his training and to the bouts that he fought at Regent Street.

Joining the Poly in 1892, Parks commenced his long list of honours as a heavy-weight boxer by winning the Poly Novices Heavy-weight competition in March 1893. The Stanhope Boxing Club 11st 4lb open competition was won in 1897, and in the same year he carried off the honours of the 16th Middlesex Championship (open to all the London Irish Volunteer Corps) and of the German Gymnasium Heavy Weight Competition. The latter Championship was won again in the following year, and on two other occasions. In 1898 the Polytechnic Boxing Club Championship fell to him, and the following year, which also saw him become World Champion for the first time, gave him the honour of the Polytechnic again. In 1901, Parks was again Champion of the World, a position he gained once more the following year, and again in 1903.<sup>27</sup>

Frank won a bronze medal in the 1908 Olympic Games.<sup>28</sup> A handsome man, tall and moustachioed, with a powerful hook and a sharp uppercut among his finest moves, he also made a splash in France, where towards the end of his career he defeated the French Heavyweight Champion, and in the United States of America, which he visited for a series of exhibition bouts in 1911.

Once he had hung up his gloves, Frank remained a keen member of the Polytechnic Boxing Club, regularly attending the Regent Street facilities where he coached novices, and by 1914 he was Honourable Secretary of the Club. After the First World War he was instrumental in rebuilding the Club's devastated membership, working hard to increase numbers. As a leading member of the ABA, and also as a Freemason, he was one of the élite sportsmen of the Polytechnic who linked Regent Street to the world of amateur sports management and



Figs. 51, 52

*Frank Parks, five-times ABA Heavyweight Champion. The memorial plaque presented in his honour is now in the care of the University Archive.*

administration. Parks worked hard for the Poly Boxing Club between the wars, and also pursued business as well as sporting interests. Sadly, Frank was killed in a car accident at Hampstead, North London, in 1945. A bronze plaque in the form of a laurel wreath dedicated to Frank was unveiled in the Club Room on 17 November, 1946.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, September 1905.

<sup>28</sup> Confusingly, some sources suggest that Frank's younger brother, Frederick, won the medal. However, details in the *Polytechnic Magazine* of November and December 1908 confirm that it was Frank who participated in the Olympic Games and that his brother was still a novice in the sport at this time.

<sup>29</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, December 1946.

As Helen Walker argues, the history of lawn tennis was about middle-class involvement in the game notably because of the cost of the equipment, which contributed to its social exclusivity within the networks of the metropolitan and suburban middle classes.<sup>30</sup> It had also appealed increasingly to women by 1900. Certainly the Hogg family, male and female, were tennis players.

Even when his powers were beginning to fail him, Hogg would play tennis if he could. Following an overseas excursion in 1890, a 'little bird' (no doubt Alice Hogg, his wife) told the *Polytechnic Magazine* that Quintin was painfully revisited by his 'old symptoms' but a lengthy recuperation at their country home was beginning to make him better, thanks to the restorative powers of lawn tennis:

Here, when not going round an estate he plays tennis for an hour or an hour and a half in the afternoon. It is quite a treat to see him playing, quite like the old days, and by the same token he has not forgotten how to use his racket either, and plays very well indeed. We have a lawn attached to the house, and QH and Len Harris play Tom and Mrs. Hogg, and Mr. Hogg really seems to enjoy it. Directly, however, he begins to do a hard day's work he is not so well.<sup>31</sup>

That Mrs Hogg enjoyed a game of lawn tennis was further evidence of its popularity among women of her class. Alice Hogg was also the 'mother' of the Polytechnic who took a leading role, notably in her bible classes, at the Polytechnic Young Women's Christian Institute on Langham Place. Here sport was emerging alongside religion as a primary interest in the lives of many young ladies at the Poly. The trouble was, they were not able to access the level of resources enjoyed by the Poly boys. The growing interest in sport among women was a cause of much controversy in *fin de siècle* Britain.

#### SISTERS IN SPORT? THE YOUNG WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

In the comic opera *Utopia Limited*, Gilbert and Sullivan waxed lyrical on the feminine charms of the 'bright and beautiful English girl', a femininity that was enhanced rather than compromised by her love of outdoor sports:

With a ten-mile spin she stretches her limbs,  
She golfs, she punts, she rows, she swims.

*Utopia Limited* premiered in 1893, when increasing numbers of women in Britain were participating in sports. Yet the growing number of sporting women was a controversial issue. Many were against it, and not only men. Writing in the *Nineteenth Century*, a leading *belles-lettres* journal in Victorian Britain, the female medic Arabella Kenealy argued that too much physical activity 'unsexed the woman' and rendered her more prone to diseases such as cancer.

30 Helen Walker, 'Lawn Tennis', in Tony Mason (ed.) *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 247, 251.

31 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 27 November 1890.



Fig. 53

*The Women's Lawn Tennis Club was founded in 1890 when 'Mr Mitchell, after much trouble and perseverance, [...] succeeded in obtaining tennis courts at the Paddington Recreation Ground for the use of members of the Sisters' Institute'. The club is seen here in 1935 with their president J.E.K. Studd.*



Sport also threatened to undermine the physical changes that accompanied the development from a girl to a young woman. The 'straight up-and-down lines of the girlish frame' she wrote, 'evolve into graceful curves and dignities. Her eyes are illumined with a new and tender light. It is a wonderful and beautiful transformation. Now watch this development thwarted by athletics.'<sup>32</sup>

The Polytechnic, and the Young Women's Christian Institute at Langham Place, were very much at the centre of debates about women's sports in later Victorian England. Young ladies with an interest or often a passion for outdoor sports were confined for some years to various 'ladies' days' in rowing and cycling, or specified but limited hours in the facilities of Merton Hall from 1883.

The letters columns of the *Polytechnic Magazine* illustrate that many 'sisters' were concerned less with the segregated nature of some sporting facilities than the arrogant attitude of influential Poly sportsmen to women's sports. But it was a male writer, using the *nom de plume* 'Hippomenes', who triggered one of the most bitter correspondences. It is interesting and highly relevant to note that the name 'Hippomenes' was carefully chosen, and nuanced, and has a fascinating bearing upon the episode at the Poly. In Greek mythology, Hippomenes was a handsome young man smitten with Atalanta, a beautiful and graceful female athlete. In addition to her feminine loveliness, she was gifted with 'masculine' qualities of determination, strength and speed. She could run faster than any man. According to the legend, Hippomenes consulted with the goddess Aphrodite to win the love of Atalanta, against whom he was pitted in a win-or-die race. Atalanta, the superior athlete, was going to win, thus leading to the death of Hippomenes, so Artemis advised him to scatter golden apples along the race track, which duly distracted her and caused him

32 Cited in Martin Polley (ed.) *The History of Sport in Britain, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 378.

to win. A strong love then developed between Hippomenes and Atalanta but this was destroyed by the jealousy of Aphrodite. Angered at their lack of gratitude for having brought them together as lovers in the first place, she manipulated them into having sex in the hallowed but forbidden confines of a temple. Their punishment was permanent separation from each other, and unfulfilled passion thereafter. In a sense, segregation between male and female athletes and lovers was the outcome of this tragic sporting tryst.

Yet permanent separation was far from the mind of our later 'Hippomenes'. He argued that Regent Street Polytechnic was a pioneer in so many ways, but much less so in the promotion of women's sports:

The devotion to athletics, which, for the past twenty years, has so possessed the youth of England, has not, fortunately, been restricted to one sex. Girls there are who toss their sculls with a 'skill and dexterity' out-rivalling the jolly young waterman of the ballad. At tennis their prowess has long been acknowledged, and we shall soon have an opportunity of witnessing the efforts of the lady cricketers. The physical good done by work of this kind is too palpable to be for a moment disputed. Therefore, the reasons why we have not attempted to keep pace with this movement must be either from a want of thought upon the part of the authorities, the question of expense, or a fear upon their part of the moral and social effects which athletics may produce amongst their members. The question of expense may be dismissed at once, for surely there is room at Merton Hall for a few courts, the expense of keeping which in order would be a mere trifle. The moral effect may be treated just as curtly, for if *mens sana in corpore sano* is true of boys, it must apply equally well to girls.<sup>33</sup>

He went on to admit that there would be a greater 'feeling of independence' among women athletes but added this was already the product of the expansion of women's education and the need for female labour, and he attacked the narrow-mindedness of men who were fearful of granting women more independence. He was also sanguine about the notion that women might become more masculine:

In my opinion this feeling of independence is a feeling to be encouraged. The only fear is that mannish women may be developed, but I think these people rarer than most persons imagine. Even though they don Rosalind's doublet and hose yet will Rosalind's nature still peep through.<sup>34</sup>

Yet the call for a more even playing field between the brothers and sisters was met with a response grounded in sexism. Warning of the dangers of allowing women equal opportunities for participation in organised sports, a 'committee' member called W.A. Poole attacked the very idea of ladies' courts at Merton Hall, and argued that Ladies' Days in the Polytechnic Rowing Club should be dispensed with, stating firmly that 'if the sisters are to be allowed

33 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 3 April 1890.

34 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 3 April 1890.

to use courts at Merton Hall this will be extended, and the members of both Institutes will act with more freedom towards each other and there will be a loss on the part of our sisters of that reserve which every young lady ought to possess'. He went on to add that 'Personally, I do not think the opening of the Sister Institute has contributed to our peace of mind, and Hippomenes' suggestion would certainly not add to it.'<sup>35</sup>

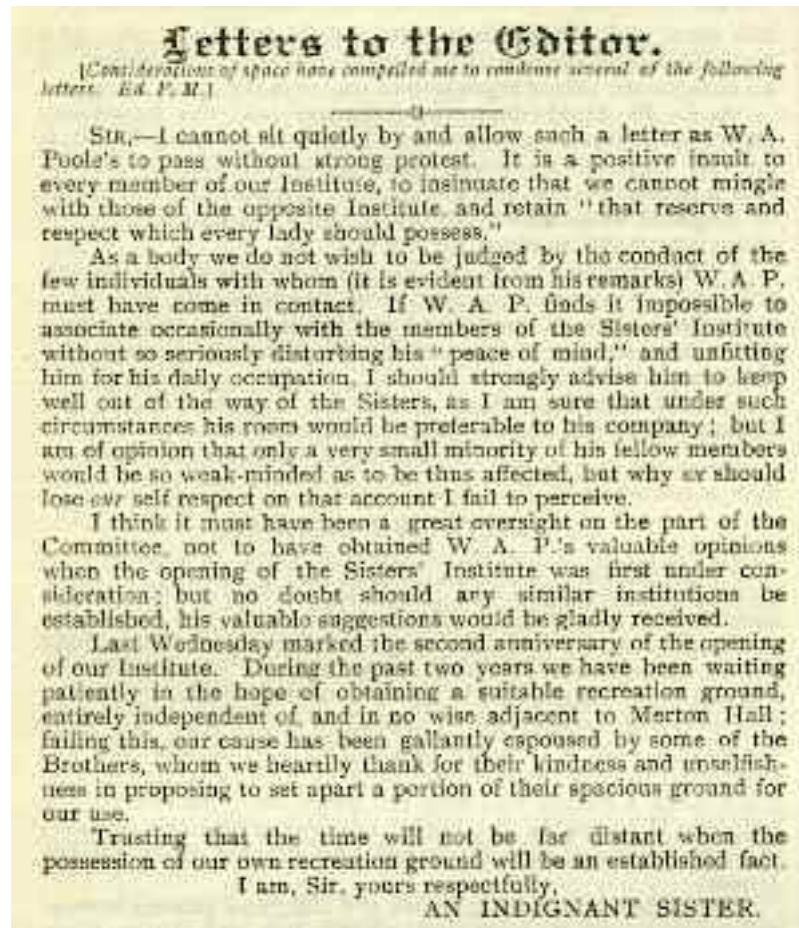
The correspondence between 'Hippomenes' and Poole provoked some furious 'letters to the editor'. A female writer ridiculed the notion that mingling between the Institutes would destroy the 'reserve' of young women:

During the past two years we have been waiting patiently in the hope of obtaining a suitable recreation ground, entirely independent of, and in no wise adjacent to Merton Hall; failing this, our cause has been gallantly expressed by some of the Brothers, whom we heartily thank for their kindness and unselfishness in proposing to set apart a portion of their spacious ground for our use. Trusting that the time will not be far distant when the possession of our own recreation ground will be an established fact,

I am Sir, yours respectfully, An Indignant Sister.<sup>36</sup>

Fig. 54

*The Polytechnic Magazine often saw heated debate in the Letters pages on ideas of how the institution should be run.*



35 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 10 April 1890.

36 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 17 April 1890.



Fig. 55

*Alice Hogg (1845–1918, née Grabam), wife of Quintin Hogg and President of the Polytechnic Young Women’s Institute. They married in 1871.*

Another sister of Langham Place, clearly in white-collar work, argued with some passion that lawn tennis was not only ‘pleasant but healthy exercise’, but for girls cooped up in ‘close offices and work rooms all week, whose long hours preclude their joining a gymnasium, it would prove a great boon’. Poole also offended the Rowing Club, and a woman ‘would-be rower’ who took umbrage at his suggestion that the club ‘already give up two of their best days to the Ladies, which is a pity’.<sup>37</sup>

Yet women did indeed begin to move from the edges of the court to its centre. Lawn tennis, the most middle-class of sports by the turn of the century, was a game in which women were increasingly prominent in England, and this was also the case at the Polytechnic. Here, Alice Hogg appears to have played a proactive role: she attended ladies’ tennis events at Merton Hall and from 1900 at Paddington, and was instrumental in setting up a tennis club at the Day School for Girls, established at Langham Place and modelled on the already existing Day School for Boys nearby at Regent Street. Begun in April 1888 with just 35 pupils, less than a year later it was full with 175 girls. Sport, as well as education, was on their daily curriculum.<sup>38</sup> The proactive role of Alice Hogg, however, evidenced a wider concern that the Polytechnic Young Women’s Christian Institute was taking in new members but not necessarily encouraging them to feel part of a community. Club membership was all very well, but how did the parts relate to the whole Polytechnic? In 1906 the Polytechnic Young Women’s Christian Institute established a Social Committee,

<sup>37</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 17 April 1890.

<sup>38</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 31 January 1889.

‘one of whose principal objects was to welcome new members and help them to find their niches in Poly life’:

This matter of really absorbing new members and not merely enrolling them was already a problem, a real solution of which yet remains to be found. It is difficult for us to realise how completely women were excluded from sharing in anything beyond what men were pleased to consider the ‘Women’s Sphere’ while they were disfranchised, and it is to the credit of the women members that as early as 1905 they had protested against being ignored in the *Magazine* so effectively that the editor was constrained to cry ‘Kamarad’ and promise ‘at least a column in the future’. Cooperation between the memberships of the two Institutes was almost entirely confined to philanthropic activities and to entertainments.<sup>39</sup>

Cricket was another sport increasingly played by women, and it was apparently bestowing upon its female participants the same virtues that were imparted to men. An article in the *Polytechnic Magazine* in 1893 entitled ‘An afternoon with the Poly Girl’s Cricketers’ emphasised that the most important lesson that cricket taught was ‘self reliance’ and an ability to play on regardless.<sup>40</sup>

Women’s gymnastics was also promoted at the Polytechnic, and there was a thriving gymnastic culture prior to the First World War. Yet the role of women as serious competitors was secondary to their more ‘visual’ contribution in the women’s gymnastics displays that were held at the Regent Street gym and at key Poly events for the delight of the mostly male audiences. Ethel Wood retrospectively saw these displays as proof that women athletes in the Edwardian Poly still had some way to go before they could cast off their metaphorical veils and become citizens of a more open and equal world of sports:

In June, 1906, the Quintin Hogg Recreation Ground was opened at Chiswick, and the ‘Ladies Gymnastic Section’ clothed up to the chin and down to the knee (plus stockings beyond that) ‘gave a very smart display’ ...

Fig. 56

*A Ladies vs. Gents cricket match, played in June 1907 at the Poly’s annual Garden Party. The Magazine reported that ‘The ladies did not win, though they made a gallant attempt.’*



39 *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1950.

40 *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 July 1893.





Fig. 57  
*The Ladies Gymnastic team  
 preparing at Chiswick for the  
 Inauguration of the Franco-  
 British Stadium on 26 May 1908.*

The Gymnastic Section was increasingly active during the early years of the century, competing in many outside events including the annual Inter-Poly competition. There were also special features such as a Basket-ball team which we believe so far forgot itself as to defeat the Polytechnic Gymnastic Men's Team, but this shameful event is only hinted at in the *Magazine!* ...

In 1908 the Olympic Games were held in London and the Parade and March Past with which they opened were organised by Bob Mitchell. Once again our Lady Gymnasts still carefully veiled from the neck downwards 'took a prominent and graceful part'!<sup>41</sup>

As this quote indicates, another Poly sport that women increasingly began to enjoy and to even challenge the dominance of men in was netball, sometimes referred to as basketball in the *Polytechnic Magazine* from 1907. There are a very few references to the sport prior to 1907, but netball became more prominent at the Polytechnic during the Edwardian years, and the Polytechnic Netball Club is the oldest club in continuous existence in the world, as certified by *Guinness World Records*.<sup>42</sup> In 1907, a match was played between a women's and a men's netball team at the recently opened Chiswick grounds. The growth of netball at the Poly continued over the next few years to the degree that by 1909 the Polytechnic Netball Club played Northampton Institute, winning the game by 40 points to 4. There were only a small number of amateur netball teams in London, however, and this remained the case for some years. Nonetheless, both young women and men increasingly took up netball at the Polytechnic, and by 1914 a Poly Netball League had been

41 *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1950.

42 *Guinness World Records*  
[www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com)  
 [accessed 28 November 2011].



established. These were still relatively early days for netball, but between the wars the sport became even more popular.

Despite its predominantly male membership, the Edwardian Polytechnic became a bastion of women's sporting leadership too. Alongside the more dynastic women heads such as Alice Hogg and Elsie Hoare, other women emerged to promote individual sports at the Poly. The first significant leader of the Poly Women's Netball Club, for example, was Miss Amy Gates, who was a prominent sportswoman at the gymnasium, as the match reports on netball testify to in the *Polytechnic Magazine* prior to the First World War. As the sport grew at the Poly, leaders such as Winnie Watling and Mary French helped to manage and promote it. First, however, we need to understand the relationship of Polytechnic sports to the cataclysm of the 1914–18 war.

### SPORT AND WAR

The contents of the 'quiet thoughts' column of the *Polytechnic Magazine* in March 1912 were drawn from a talk to the Polytechnic Men's Service given by J.E.K. Studd two months earlier. In 'Athletics and Christianity', Studd was forthright about the indisputable relationship between the two, and dismissive of any notion that they might in some way be incompatible. This Christian soldier was a commandant in the West London Volunteer Corps, and he was keen to see other, much younger, men volunteer for military service. Studd explained:

First we need to realise, as we all try to do in the Poly, that a *man* is always greater than his work, greater than his play, greater than his surroundings, greater than his appetite. If we fail to remember that, we are apt to mistake what should be one section of a man's life and think that it is his whole manhood. The man who does that is failing in all that was intended of him. We can either train all our faculties and coordinate them into a strong compact whole, or we can follow a process of elimination and cut off certain departments as it were from our life. By the one course we become strong all-round men, by the other we become weaker and of less use than in proportion to the things that we eliminate.<sup>43</sup>

Studd went on to praise Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome for developing organised and manly cultures of athletics that honed youthful endeavour, strengths and skills. He added: 'No small part of the Anglo-Saxon character has been developed through athletics.'<sup>44</sup> In addition to the much-vaunted and repeated emphasis upon amateurism, athleticism and Christianity as keystones of the Polytechnic ethos, the holistic conception of manliness espoused by Studd was moulded by the Victorian fascination with ancient European civilisations that had emerged in the wake of the aristocratic grand tours of southern Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (This is

43 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1912.

44 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1912.

45 The architects of the 309 Regent Street building, rebuilt in 1911, were George A. Mitchell FRIBA (1868–1952) and Francis T. Verity FRIBA (1864–1937). Their names are inscribed onto the stone tablet above the stairwell in the foyer.



also reflected in the architecture of the Edwardian Regent Street building: the floors and walls are decorated with the key design linear motif, an ancient Greek adornment on buildings that was resurrected in subsequent periods of design history.)<sup>45</sup>

Studd argued, with an almost Spartan contempt for the sins of the flesh or weakness, that those young men who repudiated Christianity and sport were 'likely to be anaemic and sentimental' and to acquire a 'badly developed and ill-controlled body'. Here was the emergent Edwardian fear that the British 'Anglo-Saxon' race might lose its pre-eminence if historical, moral and religious precedents went unheeded. In the event, such powerful propaganda in a column ostensibly given over to 'quiet thoughts' contributed in its own small and localised way to the gathering wave of pro-war sentiment across Britain.<sup>46</sup>

During the summer of 1914, and particularly in August and September, the sports club reports in the 'Play the Game' columns of the *Polytechnic Magazine* began to reflect the impact of war upon sport at the Poly. With that bewildering display of optimism and patriotism that we now identify among so many young men at the closing of the Edwardian years, many hundreds of

Fig. 58

*From the outbreak of war in 1914, the Polytechnic functioned as a recruitment centre as well as running additional classes in First Aid and Nursing from early morning until 10 pm.*

46 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1912.

47 The *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1914, contains four pages of names of young men 'who did fall in' for active service.

Fig. 59

*The billiards tables were installed in the Men's Social Room in 1910, with an additional table purchased in early 1914 due to demand.*



Poly boys rushed to volunteer.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the Football Club, the largest of the sporting clubs at the Polytechnic, saw most of its football players enthusiastically enlist for military duty. ‘With the thoughts of all centred upon the terrible crisis through which our country is passing’, wrote J. Gray of the Polytechnic FC in the *Polytechnic Magazine* of September 1914, ‘and with all good sportsmen answering the call in some way to help their homeland in its hour of need’:

It is splendid to be able to record that quite 80% of the members of our section are already serving the colours, and others are joining daily. A circular sent out to our members told this, and a meeting called for September 7th at the Poly could only muster about fifteen to twenty members. Accordingly we fully discussed the matter, and eventually passed the following resolution:

‘In view of the present serious national crisis, and the fact that by far the greater proportion of our playing members are serving the colours, it is proposed that the usual constitution of the Polytechnic Football Club be suspended, and fixtures generally cancelled for the present.’

Secretaries of other clubs at the Poly agreed to suspend sports until Christmas, reflecting perhaps the commonly held but naïve view that the conflict might be over in a few months.<sup>48</sup> As the war drew on, the major clubs such as boxing, cricket, cycling, football and rowing could offer little more than a restricted number of fixtures. However, the Rifle Club experienced ‘unprecedented activity’ in September 1914 as members and presumably students enlisted for shooting practice. The gymnasium continued to train and develop new influxes of athletes each year, and the swimming pool remained open for recreational swimming and the occasional race or game of water polo, except during the cold winter months.<sup>49</sup>

Some of the Polytechnic’s leading or most enthusiastic athletes went to fight in the conflict, and not all of them returned.<sup>50</sup> But all of the men and

48 *Polytechnic Magazine*, September 1914.

49 *Polytechnic Magazine*, *passim*, September 1914 to September 1918.

50 The impact of the war on the Poly is discussed in more detail in a separate volume, *History of the University of Westminster Part Three, 1882–1992*, to be published in 2013.



Fig. 60

*In July 1904 the Polytechnic Rifle Club beat twenty-eight other teams to win the Spectator Trophy. The club's aims were to teach the rudiments of rifle shooting to all men and to put Britain on a par with the Continent, where men were forced through conscription to learn how to handle a weapon.*

women, and boys and girls, who had been active in Polytechnic sports during the Victorian and Edwardian years, had created an enduring legacy in London. A pioneer in technical and vocational education, Regent Street was a pioneer in widening sporting participation to its associate members and many of its students. The Polytechnic had also proved to be very successful at encouraging talented young men and women to see themselves as achievers and strivers in amateur sports. Their individual identity was fused with those of the sports club they competed for, which in turn was powerfully imbued with the ethos of the Polytechnic. Hence the Polytechnic was a community of sporting communities. The decades following the First World War would witness both ups and downs in the collective sporting performances of the Polytechnic, but its reputation as an educational and sporting institution was strengthened after 1918.

## *Spartans and suburbanites: the sporting polytechnic, 1918–39*

### RECONSTRUCTING POLYTECHNIC SPORT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

At a meeting of the Polytechnic Athletic Club in December 1918 it was decided to group all the athletics sections of the Poly into the re-named Polytechnic Sports Club.<sup>1</sup> At this same meeting, Sir J.E.K. Studd ‘urged the necessity for making arrangements with the reconstruction of Institute life, especially with regard to Athletics, in view of the expected return of the members who had been on active service’.<sup>2</sup> There was a certain naïvety in this statement. Looking back on the impact of the 1914–18 war on the sporting and social life of the Polytechnic, Ethel Wood observed that most of the women’s clubs and societies at 15 Langham Place had been able to maintain their existence, as the premises had not been given over to officialdom, but sadly, ‘the position was very different at the Men’s Institute’:

In the ranks of every club and section there were great gaps torn by the four years’ wave of destruction; the social and athletic life of the Institute had not only been interrupted, it had been decimated, and a whole generation of those who in normal course would have been getting ready to assume responsibilities and take up leading positions, had been wiped out in the terrific struggle just ended.<sup>3</sup>

Douglas M. McNicol was one of the many who were ‘wiped out’. A Harrier, he is listed on the Studd Trophy Memorial for the year 1911. Sadly he is also listed on the memorial to the dead of the Great War of 1914–18 in the Regent Street foyer. In sharp relief, the death of McNicol evidenced the impact of the war on sports at the Polytechnic. The major clubs all suffered bereavements or injuries to their athletes and this effectively ended the pursuit of competitive glory: cycling was especially hard hit, for reasons that will become apparent, but so too were athletics, boxing, cricket, football and some smaller clubs.

The Polytechnic Cycling Club suffered acutely from the death toll of the 1914–18 war. Among the Cyclist Corps who were killed or injured, the fate of Bert Gayler symbolised how the Poly came to terms with its losses, and revered patriotism, both for country and for club. A leading cyclist in the

Fig. 61

*Douglas McNicol won the Studd Trophy in 1911 but sadly died of pneumonia in October 1914, after serving as a Private with the 13th Battalion, Notts and Derby Regiment.*



1 *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes*, 1918–1951, 2 December 1918, UWA PIN [P140].

2 *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes*, 1918–1951, 2 December 1918, UWA PIN [P140].

3 *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1950.



Edwardian Polytechnic, he was one of many who volunteered for military service as the call to arms was made during 1914:

With the outbreak of war, the Poly cyclists who were of military age joined up almost *en bloc*, and immediately proved that their training and associations in the old Club had well-fitted them to take a part in the more serious affairs of life. Some had had previous experience in the Rangers, and most of these rejoined their old Corps. Others entered the ranks of the London Cyclists Corps, and have seen active service in different parts of the world...

Poor Bert Gayler was one of those who went early. It needed no one to tell him where his duty lay, and away in the mountain ranges of Northern India is a spot which will be forever hallowed in the minds of Poly cyclists. Bert has paid the great price for the honour of the British Empire, in a land which is especially rich in the records of sacrifices made by noble Englishmen. What he was in life, so he was in death – a great hearted, loyal sportsman, whose first thoughts were for others, whose last were for himself. It was good to be a friend of such a one, it is better to know that we were worthy of such friendship.<sup>4</sup>

In the winter of 1919 a Poly boy who was a soldier in the London Regiment came across a camp in India containing some other Poly boys. They informed him that ‘Gayler had got knocked out.’<sup>5</sup> A terminal boxing metaphor for a cyclist, in this context, was perhaps the highest accolade, and Gayler posthumously lent his name to a cycling trophy competed for until this century. His death and the tragedy that befell McNicol evidenced the crisis that faced Poly sports after a war that had taken its toll on the lives and limbs of so many Poly athletes.

In the hiatus between coming to terms with the scale of the mortalities and the full-scale revival of its sporting culture, the Polytechnic emphasised its commitment to sports in another context, namely the Poly school boys, in its Cadet Football Squad. The Poly Cadet Corps was a connecting link between the Polytechnic and ‘The Rangers’, the 12th London Regiment in which over 800 Poly members and students were on active service in 1919. The aims of the Cadet Corps were clear: to improve physique; to develop the habits of self-discipline, obedience and self-control; and to encourage boys to understand the duties and responsibilities to be discharged as privileged members of the British Empire. Football was a means to these ends, and the successes of Poly Cadet Football after the war, against other army cadet teams, were expounded upon in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. Sadly, any *après la guerre* sensitivity to the lost generation was hardly in evidence in the magazine, which deployed such heavy-handed metaphors as ‘fired three rounds rapid’ or ‘volley after volley came thundering in’.<sup>6</sup> Such word play was intended to pander to both the martial and sporting instincts of the Poly Cadet footballer, and no doubt the majority of readers of the *Polytechnic Magazine* saw little or no irony in it, and may even have been amused.

Fig. 62

*H.H. Gayler joined the 25th London Regiment (Cyclists) in November 1914. Early in 1916 he went with his Battalion to India. Gayler died in June 1917 from wounds inflicted during fighting on the north-west frontier in the Waziristan campaign.*



4 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1918.  
5 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1919.  
6 *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1919.



Fig. 63

Letter from Herbert Gayler to J.E.K. Studd, President of the Polytechnic, thanking him for the 'entirely unlooked for presentation of the splendid gold medal' when he received the Studd Trophy in 1914.



At an inter-secondary school Cadet Camp in August 1919, the Poly Cadets performed very well, out-competing teams that included the Queen's Westminsters, Haberdashers, Wandsworth Technical Institute and Borough Polytechnic.<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of the twenty-first century, readying boys for war less than a year after the Armistice is the kind of behaviour that speaks of the past as a harsh and foreign country. But the textual relationship between war and sport had been powerfully forged both in the pre-war Poly and in the context of war and its aftermath. J.E.K. Studd was one of many who had done much to foster this relationship, one that promoted a wider deference to militarism during the Edwardian era. Among some members of the Poly, this mentality survived the carnage of the First World War.

Another example of the relationship between Poly sports and wartime heroics comes from Egypt. During the Egyptian troubles of 1919, when the country was occupied by the British troops in the vacuum left by the defeat of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, a member of the Poly Boxing Club who was serving in Cairo complained about the resentment of the 'Gippos' towards the British:

The Tommy, who has done the scrapping and kept the Turks out of Egypt for them, gets all the hard knocks. Everyone carries a revolver, those who have them, of course. I haven't one, but I walk out with a thick stick. If I pass a crowd of Gippos I grasp my stick ready for use, put a fierce look on (learnt the fierce look in the Boxing Ring) and get ready to run. I believe if anyone was after me, I could do the hundred yards in evens.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, August 1919.

<sup>8</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, May 1919.



He understood that it was a good idea to look tough, but to position himself to escape rather than get hurt. The Polytechnic Boxing Club had taught him well.

The metaphors continued into the reconstruction of sport at the Polytechnic in the aftermath of the war. Hence the Cricket Club in June 1919 announced ‘its sorrowful duty’ to honour and respect those of its members on the Roll of Honour. These were listed as Major V.R. Hoare, Lieut. Jack Webb, Lieut. G.B. Wright, Lieut. E.H. Stancer and Sergeant Arthur Dickson. ‘In life they “played the game” cleanly and well.’<sup>9</sup> The death of Hoare, one of the leading personalities of the pre-war Poly leaders, was later commemorated in the form of a sporting trophy.

The dearth of sportsmen following the war was viewed by the Polytechnic Sports Committee as an opportunity to encourage students to participate in sports through ‘linking-up the Day Schools with the Sports Clubs’. The Day Schools were the Engineering School, Architecture and Arts School, the Matriculation Department, Carriage Building and Tailoring, and Business Training, and they reflected the ongoing ethos of the Polytechnic for vocational education.<sup>10</sup> As a ‘means of arousing enthusiasm of boys’, better pitches for football and cricket were planned for Regent’s Park. More internal Poly competitions were called for in football and cricket, with more prize ceremonies and announcements of results in the Large Hall. A system of cheap train tickets was also envisaged for trips to the Chiswick Sports Ground and

Fig. 64

*In December 1926 the Magazine reported that ‘The Boxing Club has been going strong this winter and, desiring to have visible evidence of the same, they selected Tuesday evening, November 23rd, for a Club photograph. This was taken in the Gymnasium itself by flashlight and has proved a great success. Most of the portraits are good, and only one member seems really to have been caught in an unlucky position.’*

<sup>9</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, June 1919.

<sup>10</sup> The Day Schools had complimentary part-time Evening Departments, but these students most likely joined the Institute sports clubs.

Fig. 65

Rugby was played at the Polytechnic from at least 1885, initially as part of the Football Club.



Fig. 66

Vincent Robertson Hoare (1873–1915), Governor of the Polytechnic from 1898. Hoare served as a Major in the 12th London Regiment (The Rangers) and died in the trenches at St Eloi on 15 February 1915.



boathouse. The boys came from homes all across London and its suburbs, and cheap transport must have been a boon to them (just as the Cheap Trains Act in 1883 had been to working-class commuters in London). Beyond the Poly, new competitions with other secondary schools were planned, in cricket, football, rugby, athletics, swimming and water polo, and gymnastics:

Those boys who are considered especially suitable should be nominated by the Captain or Leader of the Sport as honorary members of the Sports Club, thus bringing the boys into direct union with the Sports Club of the Institute.<sup>11</sup>

Additional strategies for encouraging the growth of sporting participation included the maintenance of subscriptions or ‘fees’ of club members at the same level as the pre-war years. The annual grant made by the Committee to each club was increased in certain cases, to enable them to engage in more regular events and training.

By the spring of 1919, increasing numbers were signing up for sporting clubs at the Polytechnic. The swimming bath reopened in May 1919 after being closed for four and a half years, and the facilities at Regent Street and Chiswick were beginning to host regular programmes of indoor and outdoor sports, respectively.<sup>12</sup> These were still relatively early days in the reconstruction of Poly sports, but less than a year after the Armistice, most of the clubs were approaching pre-war subscription levels. The *Polytechnic Magazine* of June 1919 gives the following numbers for the men’s clubs:

Boxing	138	Football	52	Rowing	151
Cricket	86	Harriers	110	Swimming	121
Cycling	30	Hockey	20	Tennis	114

<sup>11</sup> *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes 1918–1951*, 25 February 1919, UWA PIN [P140].

<sup>12</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, May 1919.

Yet there was still a way to go. George Ogilvie, the Honorary Secretary of the Polytechnic Cricket Club, was pleased to announce in October 1919 that after four years of dormancy, the Club had regained its numerical strength, as member numbers almost reached the pre-war heights. Sadly, the talent level was lacking, suggesting that the Poly Cricket Club had gone for quantity not quality. Ogilvie was also disenchanted with the unwillingness of the oldest members to take up the game of cricket again after the war. He hoped that the youthful nature of many new members boded well for the future but 'some seasons must elapse before the immature material at present at command will have developed sufficiently to afford much help to the higher teams'.<sup>13</sup>

Len Harris, Secretary of the Poly from 1892 to 1929, made an important contribution to the reconstruction of a culture of football following the carnage of 1914–18.<sup>14</sup> Despite some tragic losses of and injuries to leading players, the Polytechnic Football Club was 'rebooted' in 1919, and was again formed of six teams. The Spartan League was reformed, and became one of the most enduring senior amateur leagues of the twentieth century. The high point for the Poly came before the First World War, when they had finished sixth. During the inter-war years, however, Spartan-level football at the Polytechnic had its ups and down. With some miserable results and a couple of foot-of-the-table embarrassments for the First Eleven, some of the better footballers went to play for teams in the higher status Isthmian League. By 1930, poor performances by the Poly Reserves saw them dropped from the Spartan League. A worse fate would have befallen such a team in ancient Sparta itself. The First Team raised its game during the 1935–36 season, winning promotion to the First Division of the Spartan League. This was the same season, incidentally, that witnessed Chelsea FC donating over £100 to the Chiswick Stadium Fund.<sup>15</sup> The connection was Charles J. Pratt Sr., a long-standing member of the Polytechnic, involved in both the Cycling and Harriers Clubs, who was also Chairman of Chelsea FC 1935–36.<sup>16</sup>

More importantly still, perhaps, and in the amateur spirit of playing on regardless despite the difficulties on or off the pitch, football at the Polytechnic continued to enjoy high numbers of participants. In addition to the members some ex-Poly students played for the various teams. By the time the Second World War broke out, the Polytechnic FC was one of the largest in London, numbering ten teams, and occasionally eleven on some weekends.<sup>17</sup>

Cycling also remained a leading Poly sport between the wars, although it was not only about competition. By the 1920s both male and female members of the more recreational Cavendish Cycling Club were touring the suburbs and the countryside at weekends, and taking teetotal refreshments in the cafes and pubs before heading back to the metropolis.<sup>18</sup> The more serious competitors in the Polytechnic Cycling Club, however, were back at full tilt by 1920 and competing at the most important cycling races in both Britain and Europe. At the Olympic Games in Antwerp in 1920, Harry Edgar Ryan and Thomas Glasson Lance won gold in the 2,000 metres tandem cycling race, with their achievements acknowledged on the Studd Trophy. In the Amsterdam



Fig. 67

*Leonard H. Harris (1861–1942) joined the Institute when it was still at Long Acre, becoming Quintin Hogg's private secretary from 1882 and then Secretary of the Polytechnic and Clerk to the Governors until 1929. He played many team sports, rowed in the Polytechnic Eight, founded the Polytechnic Boxing and Rifle clubs and was Vice-President of Poly Cycling Club. He also won the Bobsleigh Challenge Cup and several Curling trophies in Switzerland.*

13 *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1919.

14 *Correspondence and papers of Len H. Harris, 1919–1924 and 1924–1926*, UWA PIN [P141-142].

15 [www.polytechnicfc.co.uk](http://www.polytechnicfc.co.uk) [accessed 28 November 2011].

16 A plaque dedicated to Charles James Pratt Sr. was unveiled on the Chiswick Stadium in June 1938, in recognition of his support for the project. His son, Charles Pratt Jr., continued in his father's footsteps as a member of the Poly Harriers, and Chelsea FC Chairman 1966–68.

17 [www.polytechnicfc.co.uk](http://www.polytechnicfc.co.uk) [accessed 28 November 2011].

18 The Cavendish Cycling Club was formed in 1892 by members of the Rambling Club who wanted to 'ramble on wheels'. The Club organised social rides on Sunday mornings.



Fig. 68

At the 1920 Antwerp Olympics, three of the nine British cyclists were 'Poly boys'. Two of these, Harry Ryan and Thomas Lance, won gold in the 2,000 m tandem cycling.



Fig. 69

The thirty-seventh Annual Dinner of the Polytechnic Cycling Club was held at the Boulogne Club in 1919, with over seventy attendees.



Olympics of 1928 Ernest Chambers took silver in the 2,000 metres tandem cycling with John Sibbit of the Manchester Wheeler's Club. At Los Angeles in 1932, Chambers and his brother Stanley won a silver medal in the same 2,000 metres race.

The inter-war years were often good years competitively for the Poly Cycling Club, with success in London and Britain, as well as in the international arena. For example, at the Gayler Memorial Trophy Race, a twelve-hour unpaced road race in July 1923, out of twenty-three starters, six of the eighteen finishers were from the Poly. H. Fowler was one of the most successful of the expanding peloton of Poly riders during the 1920s. He won a number of road trials; for example, on 30 August 1924, Fowler came first, and E.C. Pilcher was second, while eight other Poly cyclists finished. A handwritten note in the Poly Cycling Club committee minutes by Fowler's name reads 'Best rider since War'. Other competing clubs included Bedford, Century Club, Finsbury Park, Home Counties, Kentish Wheelers, Marlborough, North Road, Twickenham, 'Vegetarian', and a team from Sheffield.<sup>19</sup> As the Club minutes demonstrate, at the Gayler Memorial 12 Hours Invitation Time Trial between the wars, Poly cyclists were almost always among the highest finishers, with J.S. Parmenter, F.W. Harris, L.J.M. Turner and R.B. Davis emerging as leaders of the pack by the end of the 1920s. Many of the leading cyclists of their generation were members of the Polytechnic Cycling Club General Committee.

Before the war the Cycling Club had the edge over the Harriers in the Studd Trophy. Not so afterwards. As Jack Andrew, the Honorary Secretary of the Harriers stated in 1919, 'The Polytechnic Harriers are making up leeway in fine fashion and although the war has played havoc with the Club, a number of very promising youngsters are coming forward.'<sup>20</sup> And 'considering our depleted condition', continued Andrew, 'we were very strongly represented in the AAA championships'.<sup>21</sup> The Harriers continued to compete in the major

<sup>19</sup> *Minutes of the General Committee Meetings of the Polytechnic Cycling Club, vol. 4, 1923–1929*, 4 September 1924, UWA PCC 2/1/4.

<sup>20</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1919.

<sup>21</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1919.



Fig. 70

*The Annual Polytechnic Harriers vs. Polytechnic Cyclists race began in 1930 as the concluding event of the Winter season.*

AAA competitions and during the 1920s they established themselves as the leading sporting club at the Polytechnic. The Harriers won the Studd Trophy an impressive seventeen times between the wars, awards that reflected early career achievements in London and British events as well as successes at leading international competitions, notably the Olympic Games. Among the most prolific medallists was George Albert Hill, who took gold in both the 800 metres and 1,500 metres races at the Antwerp Olympics in 1920, a glorious early start to the inter-war era for the Harriers. They were the only Poly team to win medals in every inter-war summer Olympic Games, with the exception of Berlin in 1936. Hill was awarded the Studd Trophy three times from 1919 to 1921.

The Poly Boxing Club also rebuilt itself after 1918 and performed well between the wars. Its most notable success was recruiting a returning soldier from the Front who went on to win gold at the 1920 Olympics. The *Polytechnic Magazine* romanticised the reconstruction of the Poly Boxing Club around this man:

A very tall and comparatively slightly-built stranger looked over the Gym gallery and experienced an overwhelming desire to renew acquaintanceship with the sport at which he had previously shown considerable aptitude. His name was Ronald Rawson Rawson.

Recently demobbed after upwards of four years in the Army (most of the time in France), he had brought back a record which would have made him doubly welcome at the Poly had we known it – the Military Cross with two bars and Mentioned in Despatches [sic].<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 71

*George Albert Hill (1890–1969), double Olympic gold medallist and member of the Polytechnic Harriers.*

<sup>22</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1920.



Fig. 72

*A silhouette of Ronald Rawson Rawson who became Olympic Heavyweight Champion a year after joining the Polytechnic Boxing Club.*



Fig. 73

*On 12 December 1922 HRH Edward, Prince of Wales, made a 'surprise' visit to the Polytechnic. He looked over the classes, talked with students and spent twenty minutes in the gymnasium watching boxing bouts before signing the visitors' book.*



The *Magazine* was deeply impressed by Rawson's reticence regarding his military and sporting record, and by the testimony of an old head teacher who described Rawson as probably the finest head prefect of any school in the world, an enthusiastic Boy Scout, and an excellent all-rounder at sports. In addition to his pugilistic skills, he was also a 'good tennis player and, as the Poly Harriers can testify, a remarkably fine runner'.<sup>23</sup> Thus did Rawson continue the traditions established by and praised by Hogg and Studd, and he also assisted in promoting the international reputation of Poly boxing after 1918.

His example probably inspired many would-be fighters to sign up to the Poly Boxing Club. The Honourable Secretary of the Club, B.J. Ashley, reported in 1923 that a temporary post-war drop in membership had abated:

The membership reached the remarkable figure of 700. During the year the club was honoured by a lengthy visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. All the events organised by the Club have been records regarding receipts and patronage. The Club is in every way sound. This is truly a wonderful record and speaks well for the ability and enthusiasm of the members, instructors and officers.<sup>24</sup>

In a record-breaking season for the Polytechnic Boxing Club, a total of ninety-four prizes were won by Poly boxers in seven different competitions at different weights, including fifteen in foreign championships. Three Club members were chosen to represent England in competitions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, while H.J. Mitchell retained the English Light-Heavyweight Championship in a season that also saw him defeat the French champion in a Parisian boxing ring in June 1923.<sup>25</sup>

Among the other men's clubs, swimming and rowing remained popular sports between the wars. The Quintin Boat Club, operating under the auspices of the National Amateur Rowing Association, was attempting to encourage the

<sup>23</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1920.

<sup>24</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, May 1923.

<sup>25</sup> *Annual Report of the Polytechnic Boxing Club*, 24 August 1923, UWA PBC 1/1.



Fig. 74

*Harry Edward at the AAA championships on 1 July 1922. Most of the Harriers' team took a week of their holiday to train in Brighton prior to the Championships and Edward fell down a flight of stairs on his first day and twisted his ankle. He won the Quarter Mile Championship nonetheless.*

previously excluded 'mechanics and artisans' onto the River Thames. Reports in the *Polytechnic Magazine*, while perhaps vague in sociological terms, suggest growing participation in the regattas and races of the inter-war years. Furthermore, the Day Schools were also encouraged to participate in rowing through the Schools Boat Club, which became increasingly active during the 1920s. Among the Poly Schools, the Architects and the Engineers emerged as the best rowers.<sup>26</sup>

#### WOMEN AND SPORT AT THE INTER-WAR POLYTECHNIC

There were fewer women's clubs than men's clubs up to 1920, when they were listed as follows:<sup>27</sup>

##### Men's section

Badminton Club  
 Boxing Club  
 Cavendish Cycling Club  
 Cricket Club  
 Cycling Club  
 Fencing Club  
 Football Club (Assoc.)  
 Gymnasium  
 The Harriers

Hockey Club  
 Lawn Tennis Club  
 Quintin Boat Club  
 Rifle Club  
 Rowing Club  
 Rugby Football Club  
 Swimming and  
 Water Polo Club

##### Women's section

Athletic Club  
 Badminton Club  
 Gymnastic Club  
 Hockey Club  
 Lacrosse Club  
 Lawn Tennis Club  
 Netball Club  
 Swimming Club

<sup>26</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1928.

<sup>27</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 1920 *passim*; *Polytechnic Clubs and Societies Booklet*, c. 1929, UWA RSP 5/2 [P151a].

The inter-war years, however, witnessed the growing participation of young women in sports, particularly in athletics, racket sports, netball, fencing and swimming. This was in large part a function of the new facilities for women's sport at the Little Titchfield Street building, which opened in 1929.

From its Edwardian beginnings, netball grew in popularity as a woman's sport between the wars. The Polytechnic contributed to the increasing numbers of girls and young women in the sporting arenas of London, Britain and the world. In the years after the First World War national political reforms intertwined with administrative and social changes at the Poly, to create a more self-confident body of female citizens there. As Ethel Wood recalled:

A limited Parliamentary franchise had been granted to women in 1918, though it took ten years to establish on equal terms with men. In 1919 the first woman MP to take her seat, the Viscountess Astor, entered the House of Commons, where Mrs Wintringham joined her in 1921. These matters may not appear very relevant here, but, in fact, the restoration of citizenship to women had a profound influence on the attitude of men to women in every sphere...

In 1925 for the first time the term 'Young Women's Institute' appeared in the index of the *Magazine*, and by the following year the rather silly heading 'Our Sisters' had disappeared for good...

Early in 1926 the Women's Council was formed, a most important development, marking not only the growing responsibility of members for the administration of their own Institute, but also the recognition by the Polytechnic as a whole of the place the Young Women's Christian Institute was destined to take in Poly life and history.<sup>28</sup>

The Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club led the way for sporting women. Manifesting a certain resentment at the male bias of the *Polytechnic Magazine*, Ethel Wood remembered that the magazine generally under-represented the achievements of sporting women compared with men. This changed when the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club blasted itself into the collective psyche of the Polytechnic in 1921:

The Editor of the Magazine appears to have overlooked his promise of 'at least a column,' as the Women's Institute is not even mentioned in the first three months of 1921; however, in April they appeared with a real splash – as real NEWS! A team of 21 women athletes drawn from our own and the Woolwich Poly went to Monte Carlo to represent England at the Women's Olympiad. They competed in 10 events and carried off 8 Firsts and 1 Second. Miss Lines, one of our girls, won the 60 metres and 280 metres, was 2nd in the 800 metres, set up a new record in the Long Jump, clearing 15ft 4<sup>4</sup>/<sub>5</sub> inches, and was a member of the two Relay Races, and of the winning Netball team – a pretty good record! The English team also won the Display Competition (45 mins) and, of course, Miss Lines was in that.<sup>29</sup>

28 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1950.

29 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1950.



Fig. 75  
*The first Women's Amateur  
 Athletic Association  
 Championships were held in 1923.*

The Poly was part of a significant sporting trend: the number of women's athletics clubs grew considerably during the 1920s, and the Women's Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA) to which the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club was affiliated, was formed in 1922, the same year that women's athletics began to feature more prominently in the *Poly Magazine*.<sup>30</sup>

The 1932 Olympics held in Los Angeles brought the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club to international attention. Only two medals were won by a much larger cohort of men, but Miss Violet Webb of the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club was chosen to represent England in the women's hurdling, winning a bronze medal in the 4 × 100 metres relay. The Polytechnic congratulated Miss Webb, noting that she was already a well-known international hurdler.<sup>31</sup>

The achievements of Violet Webb between the wars demonstrated to the Poly that the momentum for women's athleticism was accelerating. In October 1932 the all-male Studd Trophy Committee, with Sir J.E.K. Studd as Chairman, found itself considering an application from the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club for an award to Webb:

30 Jeremy Crump, 'Athletics', in Tony Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 45.

31 *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1932.

The Chairman stated that this was the first occasion on which an application had been received on behalf of a lady. After discussion the Committee were of the opinion that the terms of the Studd Trophy did not justify the award being made to a lady, but it was decided to recommend to the Governors of the Polytechnic that they should consider the question of making an appropriate award for women.<sup>32</sup>



**Fig. 76**  
*Mary Lines, seen here in 1921, was a long-jumper, hurdler and sprinter with the Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club who dominated the WAAA Championships in its early years.*

In the event, this was the Elsie Hoare Trophy, which was revealed in December 1938 to celebrate the 50th Jubilee of the Polytechnic Young Women's Christian Institute. Originally due to be first awarded in October 1939, competition for the trophy among the sportswomen of the Poly was suspended until the Second World War had ended. As a result, Violet Webb was never the recipient of either trophy.

Although women were cycling and playing cricket, golf and tennis in their clubs between the wars, two sports in particular captured the imagination of the Poly women, namely netball and fencing. Other women's clubs formed between the wars included billiards and bowling, as women took the opportunity to utilise the improving facilities at Chiswick and in Central London. The Ladies' Bowling Club, for example, which played at Chiswick, was established in 1932. The annual subscription was fixed at 7 shillings and 6 pence, with entrance fees of 3 shillings and 6 pence per tournament.<sup>33</sup> Given that a cheap seat at a cinema during the 1930s cost a few pence, these figures suggest that the club was for middle-class women members and students.

Originally founded in 1907, the Poly Netball Club emerged during the 1930s as a leading sporting club for Poly women. Under the enthusiastic tutelage of Miss Winnie Watling, it had become one of the most prominent in London by the outbreak of war. Comprised of five teams playing in different leagues, it was competing against such clubs as the Old Burlingtonians, the BBC, Bedford, Catford, Fulham, Fleet, General Electric, Golders Green, Kilburn Poly, Leytonstone, Mayfair, Middlesex, Pearl Assurance, and 'Trojan'.<sup>34</sup> The works-based teams suggest that netball at the Poly and across London was dominated by lower middle-class women and professional women. Large numbers of Poly sportswomen came from the London suburbs, as well as the centre of the city. Many came from across Britain.<sup>35</sup>

The formation of the Ladies' Fencing team in 1933 is also of great significance in the history of women's sport at the University. Based at Little Titchfield Street, and training and playing in the building's purpose-built gymnasium, it proved once more that women were as likely to make use of sporting facilities as men; and it went on to become, if not a well-known sporting institution in Britain, certainly one of the most successful Poly clubs in the post-war years. The Ladies' Fencing Club participated in tournaments against other polytechnic and university fencing clubs, as well as amateur clubs across London. Among many achievements during the 1930s, Mrs Elizabeth Carnegy-Arbuthnott, the Vice-President of the Poly Ladies' Fencing Club, competed in the Olympics in 1936 and won the British Ladies' Foil Championship in 1939.<sup>36</sup>

32 *Studd Trophy Committee Minute Book, vol. 2, 1932–1952*, 4 October 1932, UWA PIN [P146b].

33 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1932.

34 *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1939.

35 *Polytechnic Young Women's Institute Candidate Books, 1904–1958*, UWA RSP 2/6.

36 *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1939.

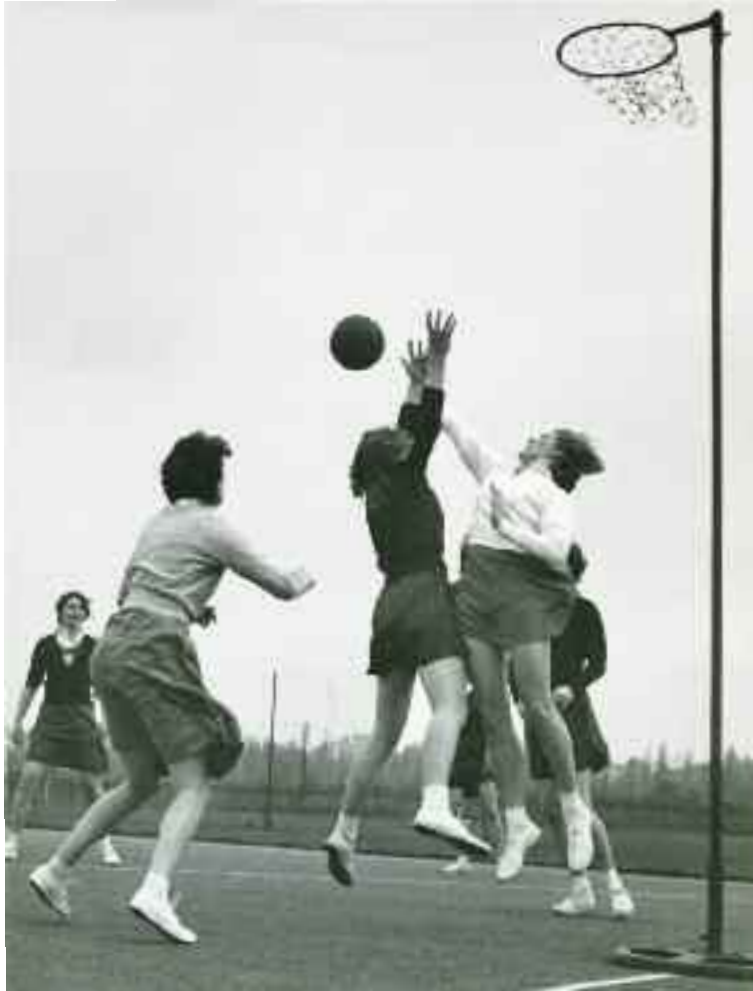


Fig. 77

*Netball was popular in the early part of the twentieth century, as one of the few sports deemed 'appropriate' for women.*

Other sports in which women's participation increased included badminton, bowling and table tennis. Exercise classes were also held for both women and men at the Polytechnic during the later 1930s, reflecting wider concerns of the Government that sport and exercise should make a more important contribution to the leisure life of Britain. The Central Council of Physical Recreation was formed in 1935 to promote the greater democratisation of sport, to provide a forum for clubs and organisations to articulate their interests, and to encourage closer co-operation between sports. On a smaller scale, parallel developments were occurring at Regent Street Polytechnic, both in Central London and at Chiswick.

#### THE CHISWICK MEMORIAL SPORTS GROUND BETWEEN THE WARS

The Quintin Hogg Memorial Sports Ground continued as a major focus of suburban amateur sports in the London region. It was the 'home' ground of the Polytechnic for outdoor sports. It was also a focus of collective identity



## VIOLET WEBB

Violet Blanche Webb (1915–99) was a pioneer of women's hurdling in Britain, and a superb ambassador both for the Polytechnic and for women's sport between the wars. Born and raised in the North London suburb of Willesden, where her father was a runner, and also where the Polytechnic Harriers held regular competitions from the 'Spotted Dog' hotel, Webb was introduced into running at an early age. She signed up with the Polytechnic Ladies' Athletic Club in her teens, and was soon one of the best of her generation, winning key races at Chiswick, and competing in London-wide and national competitions. By the early 1930s Webb was competing with considerable success in international events, and at the age of 17 she was selected to run for England in the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Pride in both her achievement and in the Polytechnic was expressed by the Honorary General Secretary of the Women's Athletic Club, M. Smith, in the 'Young Women's Institute' section of the *Polytechnic Magazine*:

I would like to say how very proud we are that V. Webb has been selected as one of the five women athletes to represent England at the Olympic Games to be held at Los Angeles. This is the first time that English women have competed in the Olympic Games, so we are specially gratified at having one Poly member in the team. The whole Club wishes her every possible success; we only regret that the venue is so far distant, making it impossible for any of us to travel over and see her.<sup>37</sup>

They missed seeing Violet come fifth in the final of the women's individual 80 metres, and her contribution to the winning of the bronze medal in the 4 x 100 metres final.

At the Berlin Games in 1936 Webb could not get past the semi-finals of the 80 metres and so missed out



Fig. 78  
*Olympic competitor Violet Webb photographed in 1934.*

on a medal in a Games at which she recalled, of Adolf Hitler's entrance into the stadium: 'you'd have thought God himself had come down from heaven'. Following the Berlin Olympics she retired from hurdling and married a man called Harry Simpson. Her daughter, Janet Mary Simpson (1944–2010), followed in her mother's footsteps and went on to compete at three Olympics, winning a bronze medal at the Tokyo Games in 1964. In 1998, the year before her death, Violet Simpson met somebody who had almost worshipped her as a hero of female running, Sally Gunnell OBE, a leading personality in women's sport in the late twentieth century.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1932.

<sup>38</sup> Adam Szreter: 'Violet Webb: Obituary', *Independent*, 2 June 1999.

for the Polytechnic in the western suburbs of London, an identity that was most fully celebrated in two events during the 1930s, namely the anniversary of the Polytechnic in 1932 and the reopening of the extended and improved Chiswick Sports Ground in 1938.

The Jubilee celebrations in 1932 involved events both at Regent Street and Chiswick. In Regent Street a reception hosted by Sir J.E.K. Studd ‘was enlivened by selections played by the Bon Accord Orchestra under the direction of Mr. Leonard Coombs’, including music for dancing.<sup>39</sup> Here was a reminder that social gatherings remained at the heart of Poly life. And a much-vaunted Garden Fête held at Chiswick on 11 June 1932 perfectly encapsulated the role of sports in the identity of the Polytechnic. Many, if not

**Fig. 81**  
*The Annual New Year's Fete and Exhibition included displays by the sports and social clubs, as well as exhibitions by the Poly's academic departments, and amateur dramatics.*



**Figs. 79, 80**  
*The Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing team in the 1930s. The team includes Marion Taylor, Gwyneth Dewar, Isobel Raven, Dorothy Breese, Winnie Breese and Mary Wirsley.*



<sup>39</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1932.



**Fig. 82**  
*Connie Gilbead was elected to the Committee of the Polytechnic Ladies' Swimming Club in May 1927. In 1929 she attempted to swim the English Channel but abandoned her attempt after six hours on the advice of her trainer.*



**Fig. 83**  
*Dee Cornwall, Mrs A.M. Brewer and Lady Hoare at the Ladies' Bowling Club.*



**Fig. 84**  
*Table tennis in the Ladies' Games Room of the Little Titchfield Street building.*

all, of the field sports for which the Poly was well known were represented in various displays and events. The Jubilee Fête also drew some of the other Polytechnics that Regent Street competed against in London. According to the *Polytechnic Magazine* of July 1932, about 7,000 members, students and their friends attended the celebrations. The Governing Body was represented by the President, Sir J.E.K. Studd, and Lady Studd, Lord Aberdare, Lady Trustram Eve, Sir Malcolm Hogg, Mrs Vincent Hoare and Major Robert Mitchell.

The sporting events were inclusive, embracing most sections of the Polytechnic, and representing members, students, men and women. They included:

- Polytechnic Harriers Mile Handicap
- Polytechnic Ladies Athletic Club 400 Yards Handicap
- March Past the Governing Body comprising representatives of all the athletics sections of the Polytechnic Institute
- Physical Training Display, given by the students of the Polytechnic Secondary School
- Exhibitions by the Polytechnic Boxing Club and the Fencing Clubs
- Athletics performances in the Gymnasium by Battersea Polytechnic, Borough Polytechnic, City of London College, Northampton Polytechnic, Northern Polytechnic and Woolwich
- Children's sports
- Ladies Inter-Club Relay team
- Relay race between the Old Quintinians and the Secondary School
- 800 yard Jubilee Handicap race by the Cycling Club
- Novelty races, namely a sack race, Adam and Eve race, cigarette race, and a married ladies' egg and spoon race.

The finest moment for the inter-war Chiswick Memorial Ground came in June 1938, when it was extended to accommodate the continuing growth of sports at the Polytechnic, and also to provide more facilities for women as both participants and spectators. Over 20 acres were added to the facility, including a new sports arena of seven and a half acres provided 'not only for the Polytechnic Harriers, the Polytechnic Ladies' Club and the Polytechnic Schools, but also for clubs and schools generally in the London and Middlesex area'.<sup>40</sup> This was a fine example of sporting outreach, and an attempt to



Figs. 85, 86

*At its opening in 1938 the Polytechnic Stadium boasted a restaurant seating 150 people and dressing accommodation for 260 competitors.*







**Fig. 87**  
*The Polytechnic Boathouse was to suffer significant bomb damage during the Second World War and the boats were destroyed by fire.*

encourage pupils in the suburban schools to identify with the Poly. The construction of a smart new modern grandstand with a cantilevered roof was also begun. Designed by Joseph Addison, the Head of the School of Architecture at Regent Street, it also boasted a restaurant on its first floor. The Ladies' pavilion was upgraded, and the new facilities were also wired for sound through the new telephone and radio broadcasting apparatus.<sup>41</sup>

The opening ceremony in 1938 was another opportunity to celebrate the loyalty of individual athletes to the Poly. The famous names at the ceremony at Chiswick were impressive, and hinted at the élite networks and political environment in which the Polytechnic leaders operated. In addition to the Hogg and Studd families, Lord Aberdare, a member of the Board of Governors, attended. Aberdare was also the Chairman of the National Fitness Council, an inter-war initiative designed to promote increased levels of exercise among the population. The Mayor of Chiswick, Sir Alfred Baker of the London County Council, whose education department regulated the Poly, and Sir Isidore Salmon, a member of the Board of Governors and Conservative MP for the Harrow Division of Middlesex, were among other key names at the ceremony.<sup>42</sup>

The new sporting facilities at Chiswick were opened at a hugely significant time in the history, not only of Polytechnic sports, but also of 1930s Britain. Here the broadcast media was playing an increasingly important role. The inclusion of the broadcasting and telephone facilities at Chiswick coincided with the live transmission in 1938 of key national and international football matches by the BBC (an England versus Scotland international match, and the FA Cup Final from Wembley).<sup>43</sup> In that same year, the BBC used the Poly boathouse for the broadcasting of the Oxford–Cambridge Boat Race.<sup>44</sup> Thus was the élite provenance of Poly rowing married to the democratisation of the sport, and of other sports, during the 1920s and '30s.

41 *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1938.

42 *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1938.

43 Mark Clapson, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2009), pp. 80–1.

44 *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1938.



The sports clubs didn't just get together to practise or compete, but also had strong social sides. Most of the clubs hosted an Annual Dinner and the larger clubs organised Gala Dances over the Christmas period (Figs. 91, 93-95).

The Polytechnic New Year's Fête was also an important fixture on the social calendar, with the Cycling Club's Pantomime a particular favourite among members. Figs. 88-90 show various performances by the Cycling Club in the pantomimes Bluebeard and Dick Whittington.

The Harriers also wholeheartedly embraced the social aspects of the Polytechnic: another popular performance was the Harriers' 'Living Waxworks' display, seen here in 1900 (Fig. 92) and Fig. 96 shows members in fancy dress illustrating 'Tennis through the ages'.



Figs. 88, 89, 90

Fig. 91



## THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF POLY SPORTS BETWEEN THE WARS

The history of sports at the Poly during the 1930s also reflected the growing affluence and self-confidence of many men and women in inter-war London and its hinterland. Unlike many industrial areas of northern England, south Wales or central Scotland, the diverse economy of London and of the South-East witnessed growing prosperity and an enthusiastic participation by people in regular employment in a modern lifestyle, influenced by the mass media, and shaped by growing opportunities for commercialised leisure. America was increasingly influential upon this emerging modern lifestyle, from the content of cinema through to the motorisation of Britain by Ford and General Motors, to the design of more streamlined and less constraining sportswear. In his *English Journey*, first published in 1932, the writer J.B. Priestley observed that the emergence of this more modern, mobile and leisured lifestyle was at its most extensive in the suburbs of London. Priestley termed this 'the third England' as opposed to the antique world of the first England, the rural realm, and the grim proletarian towns of the 'second England' or the industrial north.<sup>45</sup>

The inter-war years commonly bring to mind images of hardship and unemployment following the Great War, and of poverty, strikes and mass demonstrations of the unemployed during the 1920s and '30s. The Great Depression from 1929–31 adds an almost apocalyptic sharp relief to these images. The rise of anti-democratic fascist and communist movements between the wars appears as another dark development during this period. Such was the historical orthodoxy until the revisionism initiated by John Stevenson and Chris Cook during the 1970s, and the more recent historical work of Martin Pugh.<sup>46</sup> Whereas once neo-Marxist historians were inclined to emphasise poverty and despair, strikes and communism, the more mature historiography, and it is by no means a neo-Liberal canon, paints a more nuanced and even optimistic canvas of the inter-war period. This is because this was an era characterised by economic growth in new sectors of employment, and by social change that benefited previously disadvantaged major sections of society. In the sphere of gender this meant women, and in the realm of class this meant the working class. The landscape of sports and leisure activities was changed forever by some hugely important developments in gender and class. One was the growing numbers of places to play sports. The formation of the National Playing Fields Association in 1925, which lobbied local authorities for new outdoor recreation grounds, was testament to the fact that as towns and cities grew, people needed parks and recreation grounds to play sports or to watch them, and local authorities were obliged by government legislation to provide them.<sup>47</sup>

Such exciting new expansions in mass leisure were accompanied by continuities in the sports and leisure activities of the nation. Athletics and football were booming sports between the wars, and cricket, rugby and swimming



**Fig. 97**  
*The 1938 Polytechnic New Year's Fête reflected the Government's 'Fitter Britain' campaign which aimed to put physical education at the centre of health provision.*

45 J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1937), p. 401.

46 John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics 1929–39* (London: Longman, 1994); Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009).

47 Stephen G. Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Inter-war Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 129–63. During the 1960s Regent Street Polytechnic and the National Playing Fields Association co-operated on a joint report, to wit Gerald Aubrey Perrin, *Community Sports Halls* (London: NPFA/CCPR, 1965).



also remained popular nationally. These sports continued as key clubs at the Poly. Other sports, for example fencing, took off between the wars while those with Edwardian roots, notably basketball and netball, continued to play their part in the panoply of Poly sports and pastimes. Sadly, however, these positive developments were to be rudely interrupted by the onset of the Second World War.

### SPORT AND WAR, REVISITED

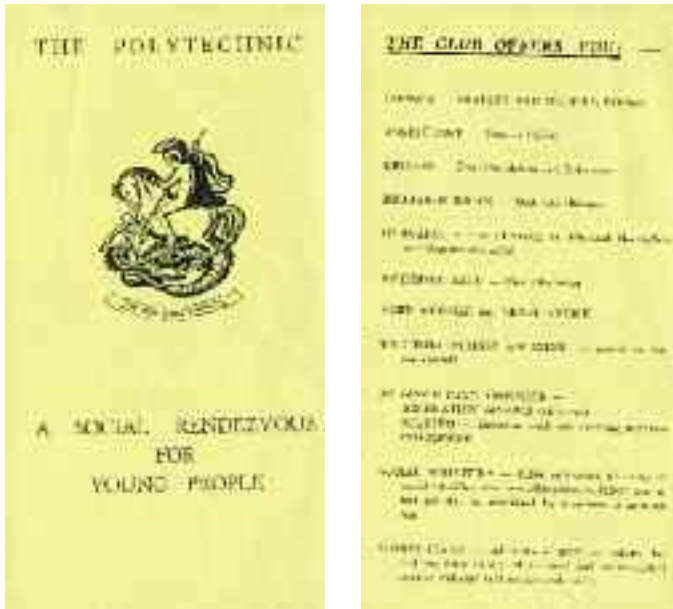
It is usual for histories of sport during wartime to mention the cessation of the sporting calendar and the subsequent reintroduction before war's end of a limited set of fixtures. Following the long-drawn-out 'phony war' from late 1939, damage and destruction were again visited upon London from September 1940. The Polytechnic buildings were put at the disposal of Air Raid Precautions and the swimming bath was drained in readiness to be used as additional shelter. Education continued on a reduced but still regular basis. So too did sports, as the war did not completely destroy the sporting culture of the Polytechnic. More limited sets of fixtures were necessary as facilities both indoors and outdoors were often unavailable due to Air Raid Precaution arrangements, blackouts and V1 and V2 attacks. Most young men were also conscripted for war service, while many Poly women volunteered for the auxiliary services.<sup>48</sup>

Nonetheless, the sporting dynamic of the Polytechnic was maintained during the war. By October 1939 the Poly Sports Committee was trying hard 'to keep together the various sports clubs'. The football club was running three teams, which actually rose to four during the war, while cricket, hockey, lawn tennis and rugby matches took place at Chiswick when and where possible.

**Fig. 98**  
*The window displays at 309 Regent Street were used to advertise the Polytechnic's classes, clubs and societies, making full use of its central London location.*



<sup>48</sup> The impact of the war on the Poly is discussed in more detail in a separate volume *History of the University of Westminster Part Three, 1882–1992* to be published in 2013.



Figs. 99, 100

*This undated leaflet for the Polytechnic emphasises its wide range of social and leisure activities, as well as its sporting opportunities.*

The Harriers arranged for regular Saturday runs ‘round the park’ while the indoor facilities at the Regent Street building continued to be utilised for athletics training, boxing, gymnastics and other indoor sports. Boxing training, for example, took place on Tuesday and Friday evenings, conditions permitting. Following the delayed start to hostilities following Neville Chamberlain’s declaration of war on Germany in September 1939, the swimmers were back in the pool and the rowers back on the Thames within a few months. At the Polytechnic Young Women’s Christian Institute, a fuller calendar of sports continued at Little Titchfield Street or at Chiswick, including badminton, fencing, golf, gym, hockey and netball. The Social Room continued to host women’s informal sports such as billiards, darts, table tennis and other social activities.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, it is also notable that many of the sporting clubs at the Polytechnic also kept up social evenings, to keep the sporting traditions of the Polytechnic alive, and to sustain the morale and identity of the clubs. ‘Rambling through the Blackout’ continued as a running joke in the early months of the wartime *Polytechnic Magazine*. Most histories of wartime London and Britain, even those concerned to highlight the ‘myth of the Blitz’, emphasise the sense of humour and the associative action that fused together to defy the Nazi war machine. The Poly was part of this collective wartime effort.<sup>50</sup>

49 *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1939; November 1939; *passim* through 1940–45.

50 A fuller account of the Polytechnic during wartime can be found in the *History of the University of Westminster Part Three, 1882–1992* to be published in 2013.



## *New beginnings and new achievements: 1945 onwards*

### RECONSTRUCTION AND RENEWAL: THE SPORTING FACILITIES OF THE POLY

Although the indoor facilities of 309 Regent Street and Little Titchfield Street were undamaged during the 1939–45 war, the Polytechnic boathouse and the sports ground at Chiswick were not so fortunate. The sports ground had been initially requisitioned by Middlesex County Council for use as an emergency mortuary, before later being occupied by the Army and the Royal Air Force. In July 1944 the *Polytechnic Magazine* described ‘yet another visit from the enemy’; seven high explosive bombs and hundreds of incendiary bombs had fallen on or near to the sports ground. The Ladies’ pavilion was razed to the ground, and there was collateral damage to the running track and the pitches. The nearby Polytechnic boathouse was damaged, and its boats burnt.

By November 1945 the track was being resurfaced, but it would not be until 1960 that the Chiswick Sports Ground was finally opened again to full capacity.<sup>1</sup> The boathouse was more fortunate. In July 1948 the Quintin Boat Club was compensated the sum of £3,600 for rowing boats destroyed by enemy action. Planning for the renewal of the boathouse was under way by this time, and in April 1950 the Ministry of Works granted a licence for repairs totalling

Fig. 101  
*The Ladies’ Pavilion at the  
Chiswick ground c. 1925.*



<sup>1</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, November 1945.

£5,175 to be made. Competitive tendering for this job produced a lowest bid of £8,000 so the Polytechnic Trustees opted for a modified rebuilding of the facility. By February 1951 the Chiswick boathouse was ready for action once more.<sup>2</sup>

## RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SPORTS CLUBS

The sporting culture of the Polytechnic was much less seriously damaged by the Second World War than by the Great War. Mortalities and injuries were far fewer, although honourable mentions are given in the *Polytechnic Magazine* for ex-sportsmen missing or killed in action. A memorial to the dead of the Second World War is also located in the foyer of 309 Regent Street.

Many of the sporting clubs, both male and female, did not immediately bounce back into full fitness once the war had ended. Over the six years of the war, some of the more 'elderly' athletes, those in their twenties or thirties, had grown out of the fitness levels or enthusiasm for sports they had demonstrated prior to the war. Many who had served overseas no longer participated as members of the Poly clubs. Some were injured or dead. The revival of the smaller clubs appears to have relied upon the encouragement of new entrants by some of the various Secretaries of the clubs and their longer-established athletes. The Ladies Athletic Club, for example, was only slowly reactivated during the latter half of the 1940s. As late as 1950 two athletics organisers from the inter-war years, a Miss Scolah and a Mrs Wooldridge, were gratefully welcomed by the self-designated 'we newcomers' for their offers to help in various ways to build up ladies' athletics once more.<sup>3</sup>

Larger clubs such as the Harriers took a year or more to regain peak strength. Reports on cricket, football, hockey, rugby and other field sports show that influxes of new blood, assisted by sportsmen active in the pre-war years, resuscitated these sports. The clubs were back playing intra-Poly matches and competing in the local and regional leagues. The Polytechnic Football Club is a good example.

The Poly FC continued to play in the Spartan League when it was revived in time for the 1945–46 season. The league was divided into a new set of regions, and the Polytechnic FC found itself competing in its western division. In the first season of 1945–46, the constitution of the club remained the same, but the management was different, even though there was strong continuity at the top. Sir J.E.K. Studd had died in 1944, and the new Poly FC president was none other than Quintin McGarel Hogg (1907–2001), MP, grandson of the first Quintin Hogg. Born in 1907, the year the Spartan League had first begun, he liked to play football as a younger man, just like his father. Dynastic rule of Poly football was also evident in the fact that Bernard Studd (1892–1962), the son of J.E.K. Studd, took over from the younger Quintin Hogg as the latter's political duties became more demanding.

Were the post-war years an improvement on the inter-war period? The

**Fig. 102**  
*Bernard Studd (1892–1962), elected President of the Polytechnic in 1950. The youngest son of J.E.K. Studd, Bernard Studd was also Continental Director of the Polytechnic Touring Association.*



2 *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes*, 1918–1951, 8 July 1948 and 6 April 1949, UWA PIN [P140]; *Polytechnic Governing Body Minutes*, 17 April 1950, UWA RSP 1/BG.

3 *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1950.

answer is a qualified yes. By 1950 the Polytechnic Football Club comprised seven teams, namely the First XI, the Polytechnic Amateur Football Association (AFA) XI, the Polytechnic AFA Reserves, the Polytechnic AFA Reserves 'A' and 'B' XI teams, the Strollers, and the Polytechnic Youth XI. In the 1951–52 season the First XI was promoted from the western division into the premier division of the Spartan League. Results for the First XI from November to December 1952 show some of the teams they were playing:

November 15	Huntley and Palmers (Reading) Won 3–2
November 22	Hoddesdon (Hertfordshire) Lost 2–4
November 29	London University Won 3–2
December 13	Metropolitan Police Lost 1–7 <sup>4</sup>

The Strollers competed against teams including the Crouch End Vampires and the Corinthian Casuals, with whom the Polytechnic FC had shared the Chiswick Football Ground for the second half of the 1940s.<sup>5</sup>

The Poly FC finished mid-table in a number of seasons prior to the diminution of the Spartan League in the mid-1950s, as clubs defected to other regional leagues. The Poly teams were either playing at home in Chiswick, or getting out and about to compete across London and into the amateur footballing hinterland beyond. They also played international matches, for example in Belgium.<sup>6</sup> Yet too much travelling was proving expensive for the working-class cohort of players, so the Poly FC found itself, along with other clubs in and around Greater London, quitting the Spartan division for the Southern Amateur League, a less prestigious but nonetheless vibrant constellation of amateur football clubs.

Membership of the Southern Amateur League (SAL) saw a number of

**Fig. 103**  
*The Polytechnic Football Club,  
with a trophy from an unidentified  
tournament.*



<sup>4</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, January 1953.

<sup>5</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, December 1952.

<sup>6</sup> [www.polytechnicfc.co.uk](http://www.polytechnicfc.co.uk) [accessed 8 July 2011].



Fig. 104

*Three Polytechnic members (Trevor Davies, Robert Norris and Lionel Price) played in the British Olympic Basketball team in 1948.*

achievements by the Polytechnic First XI. In 1955 they were finalists in the Amateur Football Association Senior Cup, while the following season they won Division Three of the SAL and hence were promoted. From a lower base than before, the Poly FC was proving that its competitive spirit and skill was still getting results on the football pitches of London and the nearby provincial towns. A couple of years later, the first team were promoted to the premier division of the SAL while the second team also reached the top of their division. In 1959–60, however, the First XI were relegated, a bitter pill sweetened by the winning of the Banks Cup in the London Banks Football League, in existence from 1900.

Of the larger and most successful clubs, athletics, boxing and cycling were also active and growing after the Second World War. Lest the focus on the larger clubs be over-emphasised, it is pertinent to note that some of the smaller sporting clubs also thrived after the war. Among men's sports, basketball enjoyed high levels of participation and considerable popularity. February 1946 saw the first article on the Poly Basketball Club printed in the *Polytechnic Magazine* as 'keen interest' was being shown in the sport by the new members. They were charged 7 shillings and 6 pence if they were under eighteen and 12 shillings and 6 pence for those over eighteen. These quite high costs were not intended to appeal to working-class pockets.<sup>7</sup> Basketball at the Poly appears to have been given a considerable fillip by the American and Canadian servicemen in London, some of whom had made use of Poly sports facilities during the war. A couple of North Americans competed for the Poly basketball teams and among the first team fixtures were games

7 Various indexes and tables are available which calculate the relative value of wages and prices at different dates. The National Archives currency converter calculates that in today's money, 7s 6d is worth just under £10, and 12s 6d is worth just over £16; while the average annual salary in 1945 was less than £400. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/)

Fig. 105

*Polytechnic Hockey First Eleven, 1947–48 season. The Hockey club were able to field four teams in this season, such was the sport's popularity among members.*



against an American Army Hospital side, the Canadian Air Force team, and the 'Poly Engineers' from the Day School:

The most important item of news for London Basket-ball Players is the formation of a London League. At the moment the number of teams competing is small, but it is hoped that several clubs who played before the war will still resume. The Poly has entered two teams...<sup>8</sup>

#### WOMEN AND SPORTS AT THE POST-WAR POLYTECHNIC

The previous chapter shows that women's netball and fencing became leading sports among Poly women during the 1930s. They would also become post-war success stories. In general the women had now more or less caught up with men in the number of sporting clubs, which by 1950 were as follows:<sup>9</sup>

##### Men's clubs

Archery	Harriers
Badminton	Hockey
Basketball	Lawn Tennis
Boxing	Rifle
Cricket	Rowing
Cycling	(Quintin Boat Club)
Fencing	Rugby Football
Football	Swimming
Gymnastics	Table Tennis

##### Women's clubs

Archery	Lawn Tennis
Athletics	Netball
Badminton	Swimming
Billiards	Table Tennis
Cycling	
Darts	
Fencing	
Golf Society	
Hockey	

<sup>8</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1946.

<sup>9</sup> *The Poly Today*, c. 1950, UWA RSP 5/2 [P151b].



In the 1948 London Olympics, Polytechnic Cycling Club member David Ricketts was part of the British pursuit team who won Bronze in the 4,000 m.

These pages highlight some of the memorabilia held in the University Archive, including David Ricketts' Bronze Olympic medal (Figs. 106, 107); and a photograph of the lap of honour taken by the British cycling team at the Games (Fig. 110).

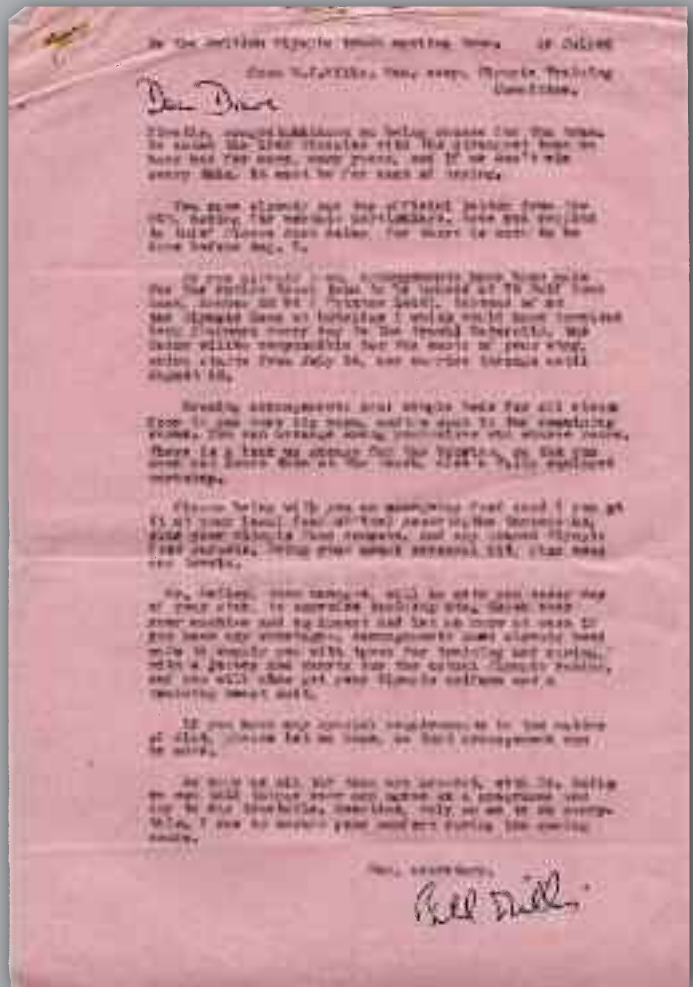


Fig. 108



Figs. 106, 107



Fig. 109

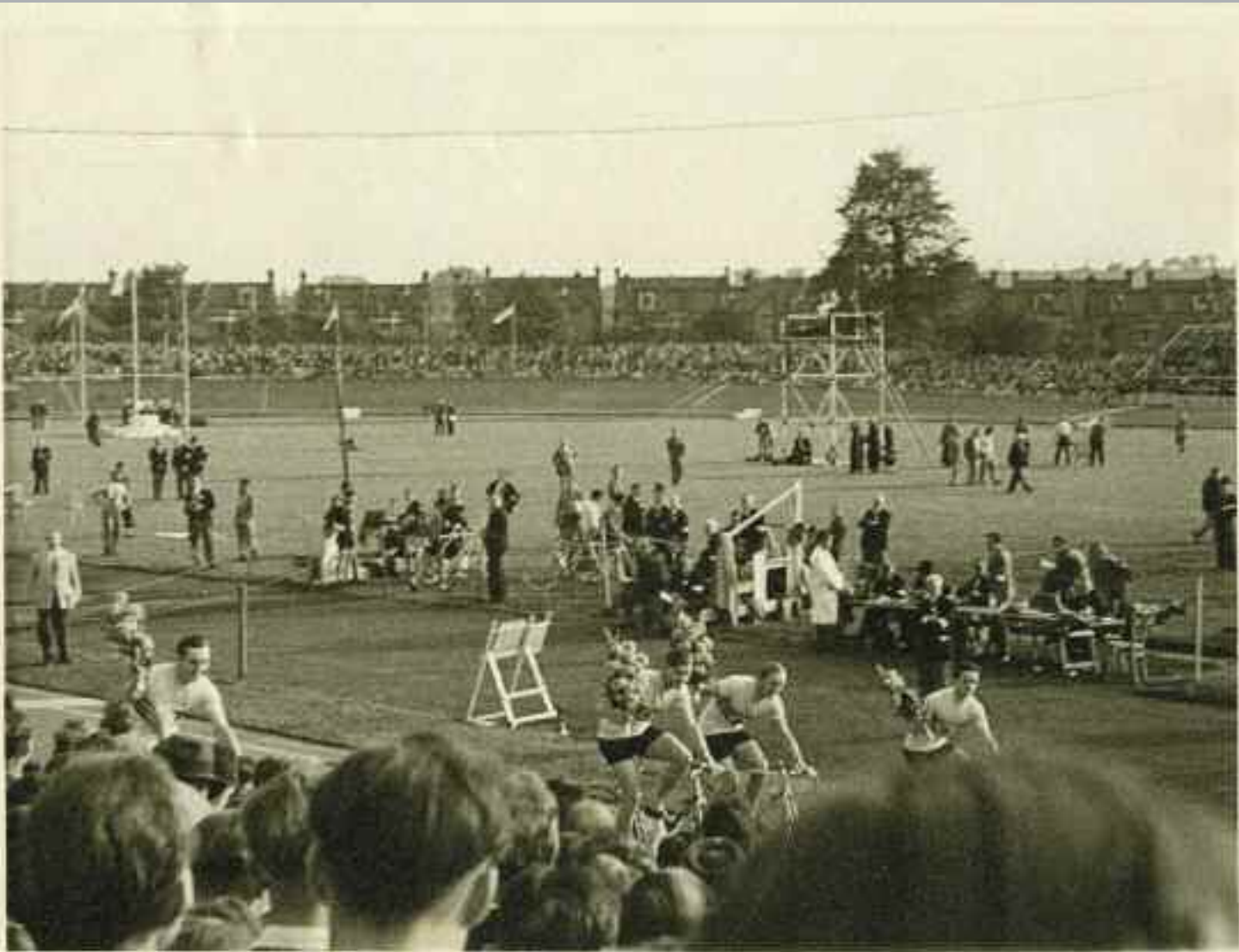


Fig. 110



**Fig. 111**  
*In 1935, the women's billiards tables in the Portland Hall, Little Titchfield Street were so popular that the Magazine warned they were booked up two weeks in advance.*



**Fig. 112**  
*During the 1950s the Archery teams practised in Balderton Street in the winter and in the summer they used the Rugby pitches at Chiswick.*

Women were participating in more indoor and outdoor sports than in previous decades. Billiards and darts, sports so often today associated with pot-bellied men smoking cigarettes, were very popular with Poly women. So too was table tennis. The Social Room at Little Titchfield Street was mainly a female space after the war, used by Poly women for billiards, darts and table tennis. Badminton continued to attract many women, and female hockey players continued to bully-off during the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike the pre-war years, moreover, the leading sportswomen of the Polytechnic now had an institutional trophy to compete for.



Fig. 113  
 Elsie Hoare (1873–1965, née Hogg), eldest daughter of Quintin Hogg.

### THE ELSIE HOARE TROPHY

Fourteen years after the idea of a women's institutional sporting prize was first mooted by the Studd Trophy Committee in 1932, the Women's Council of the Polytechnic finally initiated the Elsie Hoare Trophy in 1946 to recognise 'the best athletic performance or series of athletic performances by an individual or team'. The Selection Committee comprised the President of the Women's Institute, the Chairman (sic) of the Women's Council, the organiser of Women's Physical Training and Social Activities, and one representative of the women's sports and athletics clubs. The criteria for the award emulated those of the Studd Trophy: the committee met in October; competitors were required to have been members of the Polytechnic Young Women's Institute for at least three months 'prior to the performance submitted for consideration'; only amateurs were allowed to enter; and only achievements that would be recognised by other women's amateur sporting clubs within the Women's Amateur Athletic Association were to be submitted for consideration.

At the first award of the trophy in 1946, Ethel Wood initially suggested that Mrs Hoare should be allowed to choose the winner. However, a ballot was ultimately decided upon. By four votes for Mrs Mary Glen-Haig of the Fencing Club, to three for the Netball Team, the first award of the Elsie Hoare Trophy went to one of the best British female fencers of the last century.<sup>10</sup>

It is noticeable that in subsequent years, the Elsie Hoare Trophy mostly changed hands between the Fencing Club and the Netball Club, whether for individual or team-based performances. Occasionally, other clubs broke through to win the Trophy, for example the Ladies' Hockey Club in 1956, and an individual female hockey player in 1961, but the Fencing and Netball Clubs remained supreme.<sup>11</sup>

By 1950 the Ladies' Poly Fencing Club was a much more successful outfit than its male counterpart. Indeed, in January 1953 the Men's Fencing Club congratulated the Ladies 'A' team with a 'Bravo, Les Femmes!' for winning the National Foil Team Championship for the third time in a row, the ladies having seen off Salle Bertrand 10-6 in the final. By this time, Mary Glen-Haig had quit the Poly team for the opposing Lansdowne Fencing Club, whom the Poly Ladies put out in the semi-finals, Glen-Haig scoring the only Lansdowne victory.<sup>12</sup>

Both the male and female fencing clubs played against clubs in London, and in national and international championships. But it was ladies' fencing that thrust and parried its way into the national and international sporting arena. While the Men's Fencing Club picked up some victories in novice and junior fencing tournaments in the post-war years, the 'A' team underperformed relative to the Ladies' Fencing Club. 'For the third year in succession', claimed the *Polytechnic Magazine* in May, 1953, 'the "A" team returned with the Harrison-Slade Cup, making a total of eight wins to the Polytechnic in the thirteen years of the competition.'

10 *Elsie Hoare Trophy Minute Book*, 1946–1970, 21 October 1946, UWA PIN [ACC1996/40].

11 *Elsie Hoare Trophy Minute Book*, 1946–1970, *passim*, UWA PIN [ACC1996/40].

12 *Polytechnic Magazine*, January 1953.





Fig. 114  
*Doris Purcis and Marion Taylor of the Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing Club. Marion Taylor's parents had met at the Polytechnic and she herself joined in 1932.*

The loss of Mary Glen-Haig had little impact on the collective ability of the Poly lady fencers, among whom Barbara Screech, Elsa Copping and Grace Harvey were making national names for themselves. And the successful lady fencers just kept on winning. As the *Polytechnic Magazine* for August 1953 enthused: 'We recorded last month that Miss Barbara Screech was the winner of an International Open Tournament held in Antwerp by the Belgian Fencing Federation, but we did not know then because of her win Miss Screech had been selected to represent Great Britain in the World Games at Brussels held during the latter half of July.'<sup>13</sup> Barbara Screech was one of only two female fencers who represented Britain at the Championships; the other was Mary Glen-Haig.

Hence, in December 1954, the Polytechnic Ladies' Fencing Club celebrated its twenty-first birthday with rightful pride: the club had produced four internationals as well as winners of practically every competition in British fencing. The Polytechnic itself was also proud, claiming that the lady fencers of Little Titchfield Street represented 'one of the finest clubs in the country.'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, August 1953.

<sup>14</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, December 1954.



## MARY GLEN-HAIG

Mary Alison James (b. 1918) was born into a sporting family from which she drew much inspiration. She took up fencing during the 1930s, one of many women who made the sport a British amateur success story, and also a success story at the Polytechnic. Her most flourishing years as a professional fencer came after the Second World War, and continued until 1960. Glen-Haig practised intensively as a fencer while maintaining a white-collar job as a hospital administrator. She competed in the four Olympic Games from 1948 to 1960, and won two gold medals at the 1950 and 1954 Commonwealth Games.

Once her active fencing career was over, and while she continued to work as a hospital administrator, Glen-Haig enjoyed some notable achievements, becoming one of the first female members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the 1970s. In that same decade she became the Chairman of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, a body that sought to improve sporting facilities and to encourage participation among young people, particularly in working-class areas. In 1993 as an IOC representative she became a supervisor of the Women's Islamic Games organised jointly by the IOC and the Islamic Federation of Women's Sport in Iran.

Glen-Haig also performed well in the New Year's Honours lists. She was awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 1971 and became a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) six years later; and in 1993 she was bestowed the Dame Commander of the British Empire (DBE). Glen-Haig also assisted in the campaign to hold the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2012 in London. Although her time at the Polytechnic was relatively brief compared with many other athletes, Mary Glen-Haig personified the institution's principles of individual achievement and active promotion of sports as a means of self-expression and social advancement. She is among the lesser-known but most significant sportswomen of the contemporary era.



Fig. 115

*Dame Mary Glen-Haig, Life Member of the International Olympic Committee.*

### **British Empire Games:**

Gold, individual foil, 1950, Auckland, New Zealand

Gold, individual foil, 1954, Vancouver, Canada

Bronze, individual foil, 1958, Cardiff, Wales

### **Olympics:**

Finalist, individual foil, 1948, London, Great Britain

British team, individual foil, 1952, Helsinki, Finland

British team, individual foil, 1956, Melbourne, Australia

British team, individual foil and team foil, 1960, Rome, Italy

### **World Fencing Championships:**

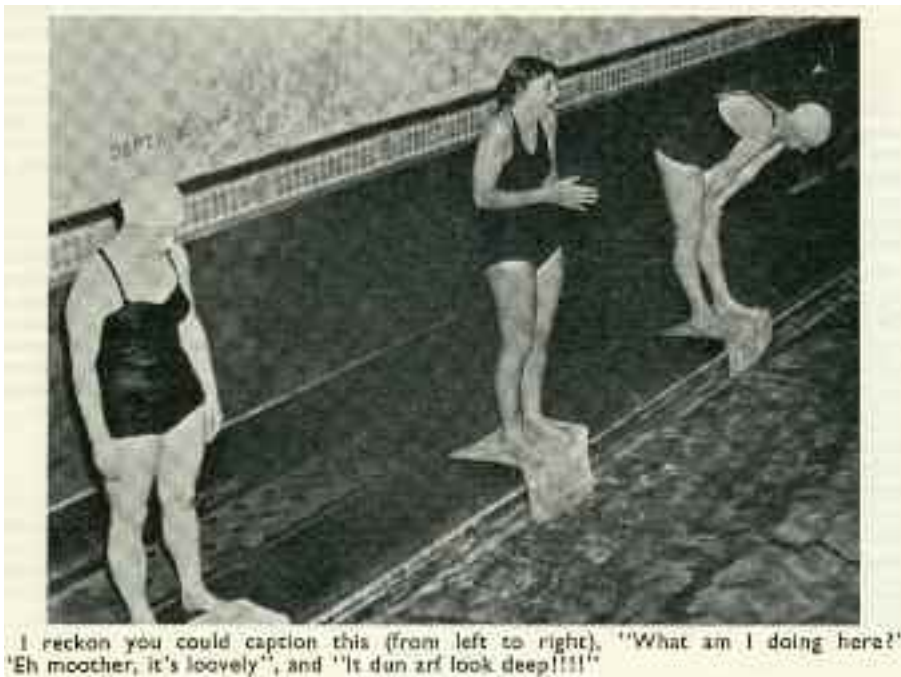
Competed 1937–38 and 1947–59

The Ladies' Fencing Club continued as the most successful female fencing club in Britain. By the 1960s the Poly lady fencers were a glamorous set of athletes, reaping the rewards not only of their own skills but also of a century of uneven but tangible improvements for women in the fields of employment and of sport which, it can be argued, had been pioneered by the 'indignant sisters' and the notable female athletes of the inter-war and post-war Poly. Reports on ladies' fencing in the *Polytechnic Magazine* provide unwitting testimony to this:

Success in national competitions is no novelty to the Ladies' Fencing Club, but the results achieved by its members in the recent Championship are remarkable even for them.

The fencers who reach the final pool of the National Championship must be ranked as the best in the country of the eight girls to reach the final pool of the Ladies' Foil Championship last month, six were Polytechnic fencers and they took the first five places in the pool. There is no record of a comparable result in British fencing.

These six girls, each of whom has a full-time job, have between them won practically every competition in Great Britain. Ruth Rayner and Julia Davis are not yet internationals, but the other four already have their colours; in addition, Shirley Netherway and Jeanette Bailey were awarded Olympic Colours in 1960 and Thoresa Offredy (British Champion in 1961 and 1962) fenced for England in the 1962 Commonwealth Games. If any women fencers are to be sent to the Tokyo Olympics these six have indisputable claims to be considered.<sup>15</sup>



**Fig. 116**  
*Members of the Polytechnic Ladies' Swimming Club at the 309 Regent Street pool in July 1957.*

15 *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1964. In fact, another member of the Poly Ladies' Fencing Club, Janet Bewley-Cathie-Wardell-Yerburgh, competed for the British team at Tokyo as well as in the next two Olympic Games.

Fig. 117

*Rifle range instruction for women at the Polytechnic started during the Second World War, when the instruction was free but women had to pay for their ammunition. It became a popular activity among female students at the Polytechnic in the 1960s.*



The successes of women's fencing at the Polytechnic reflected the self-confidence of skilled women at a time of accelerating social changes. The successes of women athletes in the 1930s were followed by post-war success, notably in the 1950s and 1960s which were winning decades for women's amateur sport at the Polytechnic. Nationally and internationally, the reputation of the Polytechnic owed much to the dedicated individualism of women athletes.

Poly women athletes continued to excel at swimming, pistol shooting, and in track and field sports too. The Polytechnic celebrated the award of Gymnastic Champion of Great Britain to Margaret Bell at the Royal Albert Hall in January 1966. The award was very much the product of a long-standing tradition of male and female athletics at the Poly. Although women's athletics features far less prominently in the *Polytechnic Magazine* by the mid-1960s than it had previously, Margaret's success owed much to the training she enjoyed from Poly athletes, one of whom – Jim Prestridge – had been a schoolboy at the Poly during the 1930s, when he was trained by PE teacher Captain Beadon. He



Fig. 118  
*The Polytechnic's Coronation Fête, held at Chiswick in June 1953, was an attempt to revive the old Polytechnic summer fête tradition that had been interrupted by the war.*

was something of a legend among Poly schoolboys. Prestridge and his wife Pauline trained Margaret Bell, who worked out at the Little Titchfield Street gymnasium, and in a gym near her home in Bexley, Kent. Margaret is worthy of mention because she was keeping the women's athletic tradition in the amateur sports spotlight, and proving that the Harriers were not the only representatives for field and track sports from the Polytechnic at major national and international events.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE POLYTECHNIC HARRIERS AND THE POST-WAR OLYMPICS

During the early post-Second World War years the Polytechnic Harriers hosted a number of impressive medallists at the Olympic Games. Foremost among them were Arthur Wint and Emmanuel McDonald Bailey, as the Studd Challenge Trophy makes clear. McDonald Bailey won the trophy five times, in 1946, 1947, 1950, 1951 and 1952, while Wint won it four times, in 1948, to mark his Olympic achievements in that year, in 1949 and jointly with Bailey in 1951 and 1952. The Studd Trophy Committee comprising members of the Hogg and Studd families and the leaders of the sports clubs, were of the opinion that the two runners were simply out in front.

16 *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1966.

The performances of McDonald Bailey and Wint proved that the Polytechnic Harriers were soon back on peak form following the war. The second half of the 1940s and the 1950s, despite witnessing both ups and downs, can be viewed as being among the most successful phases of the Harriers' history since the Edwardian period. At both national and international events, and in the club matches played between athletics clubs in London and across England, the Harriers broke records and picked up a number of trophies. The track season of 1950 was described in the *Polytechnic Magazine* as 'one of the finest ever for the club' and this success received a further boost with the selection of three athletes, high jumper Ron Pavitt and runners Peter Hildreth and Martin Pike, for the European Championships.<sup>17</sup> In that same year the President of the Polytechnic announced that the Studd Trophy Committee had decided the award should go to McDonald Bailey, but the Committee also commended Arthur Wint and Peter Hildreth for their 'excellent performances during the season'.<sup>18</sup>

The successes of the Harriers in the early post-war Olympic Games, and the achievements of other Poly athletes, were causes for celebration. But by the mid-1950s the Poly was engaged in its own, localised version of the 'what went wrong' debate. In Britain, a wider discourse acknowledged the fact that the country appeared increasingly prosperous but that it was somehow lacking in the spirit of wartime community. There was also a widespread nostalgia for the pre-war 1930s when, so went the romantic view, the country was more homogeneous and stable. The *Polytechnic Magazine* reflected some of this disquiet in relation to the culture and heritage of sports and sporting personalities.

#### SPORTS PERSONALITIES AND THE CHANGING IDENTITY OF THE REGENT STREET POLYTECHNIC

During the mid-1950s the magazine ran a series on Polytechnic 'Personalities of the Month'. Intending to sustain the contemporary collective memory of the Polytechnic by recalling recent triumphs in education, business and sports, the leading sportsmen and women featured particularly strongly as links between past and present. Many of the pre-war sportsmen and women, some of them dating back to the Edwardian years, were still involved in sporting administration. Yet some of the mini biographies were characterised by calls to reaffirm something that had, apparently, been lost at the Polytechnic, while others embraced change and looked forwards rather than backwards. This tension can be seen in the following examples.

The monthly personality for May 1955 was Maurice Poulain, the Captain of the Men's Lawn Tennis Club. His life was certainly a fascinating one. Prior to the Fall of France in 1940 he had been a French tennis champion and highly regarded hockey player, who then served with the French Artillery and the French underground movement during the war. Poulain played an active role in hockey in the early post-war Polytechnic, before joining the Tennis

<sup>17</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1950.

<sup>18</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, November 1950.



## ARTHUR WINT AND EMMANUEL McDONALD BAILEY

Born in Jamaica, Arthur Wint (1920–92) came to Britain during the Second World War on active service for the Royal Air Force. He was one of the many people who came to London from the Commonwealth to fight against fascism, for which he was rewarded with racism from some quarters, a professional career in medicine, and an amateur career as a leading runner with the Polytechnic Harriers. Following the war, Wint became a medical student at St Bartholomew's Hospital, but the time free from his medical training was spent practising at Chiswick. Wint already had some sporting achievements to his name before he became a Harrier, but his running career sprinted forward once he became associated with Regent Street. Known as the 'Gentle Giant' because of his height of 6 feet 6 inches, Wint won a gold medal in the 440 yards, and a silver in the 880 yards in the 1948 London Olympics, representing Jamaica. Unfortunately Wint pulled up with cramp in the 440 yard relay; but at Helsinki in 1952 he was back

on top form, and won gold with Jamaican team-mates Leslie Laing, Herb McKenley and George Rhoden. His final race of any significance was run at Wembley in 1953.

Wint was not only a sporting hero; he was also a scholarly man dedicated to doing good works in the community. Following his retirement from sports he completed his training as a doctor and returned to Jamaica to live and work in the town of Hanover (a nice coincidence given the London provenance of the Harriers) where he became the resident general practitioner. During the mid-1950s he was made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) and in addition to his inscription on the Studd Trophy Memorial, Wint was inducted into the Black Athlete's Hall of Fame in the USA during the 1970s, and posthumously into the Central American and Caribbean Athletic Confederation Hall of Fame.

Emmanuel McDonald Bailey (b. 1920) was an impressive runner from Trinidad. He moved to Britain with the RAF and signed for the Poly Harriers in August 1945. As the Harrier Coach Doug Wilson recalled:

Mac merely said to me, 'Oh, by the way, do you think I could become a member of your club?'

I quickly produced a membership form from my pocket and in the privacy of an Edinburgh hotel bedroom the 'Black Flash' duly signed.

It was not until the following season in the first post-war Kinnaird that 'Mac' really got his name into the headlines. He won his heat of the 100 yards in 9.8 seconds and just to prove that the timekeepers had not erred he followed it up with another 9.8 seconds in the final.

Though he had his ups and downs, got in and out of hot water frequently with officialdom, from that day on Mac never looked back, both literally and figuratively speaking.<sup>19</sup>

*Arthur Wint (Fig. 119) setting a British record over 440 yards at Chiswick, a month before his Olympic success.*

*Emmanuel McDonald Bailey (centre), with N. Stacey (left) and B. Sbenton (right) (Fig. 120), thought to be racing in an Amateur Athletics Association Championships meeting at White City, undated.*



Fig. 119

Bailey was first awarded the Studd Trophy in 1946 and although there was some discussion about his eligibility because 'he competed under the name of the Royal Air Force' the Committee agreed that 'as his was wartime service, this fact should not be regarded as a bar to McDonald Bailey's eligibility.'<sup>20</sup> In 1950 the President of the Polytechnic announced that the Studd Trophy Committee had decided the award should again go to Mr E.A. McDonald Bailey, 'one of the outstanding athletes in the world' who had had a hugely successful season. He had won the 100 yards and 220 yards AAA Championships, and set a new British record for the 220 yards at the Caledonian Games, as well as winning Poly sprints.

Bailey competed for Britain in the men's 100 metres in the London Olympics in 1948 and at the Helsinki Olympics in 1952. He won nothing in London but gained a bronze medal in the nail-biting finish to the 100 metres in Helsinki. Bailey was unlucky to lose but

this was perhaps the highlight of his international career. And unlike some other British athletes, he also raced in the men's 200 metres and men's 4 × 100 metres relay. The tall lean athlete cut a cool and commanding figure at Chiswick, but Bailey was considering another career by 1953. In August of that year the *Polytechnic Magazine* lamented that: 'News that E. McDonald Bailey has signed professional Rugby League forms comes as a big blow to us, and if his new club Leigh, in Lancashire, gets a tenth of the value and service out of "Mac" that we have enjoyed then doubtless they will be well satisfied.' In the event they were not to be so well satisfied, as Bailey played only one game for the north-western rugby club, a consequence of injury, before subsequently moving back to Trinidad and Guyana to work as a sports advisor.

<sup>19</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, August 1953.

<sup>20</sup> *Studd Trophy Committee Minute Book*, vol. 2, 1932–1952, 8 October 1946, UWA PIN [P146b].



Fig. 120



Club in 1950, and becoming secretary. He was also a keen supporter of the Men's Billiard Room. Nonetheless, tennis got his Gallic pulse racing the most, and he captained the Poly team in tennis competitions in 1953, 1954 and 1955. In the latter two years he led the Tennis Club to success in the Hoare Trophy Competition:

Maurice Poulain is in every way a Poly boy. With his Gallic charm allied to honest outspokenness he is already playing a large part in the life of the Institute. He is particularly keen to see more activities which enable the various clubs to get together socially, for only then, he feels, will the old real family feeling return.<sup>21</sup>

The use of the word 'boy' for a man in advanced middle age was commonplace at the Poly, then and since. Perhaps Hogg's early death gave the Poly a 'Peter Pan' complex that surfaced from time to time in the magazine. But equally significant was the sense of a family feeling now scattered to the post-war winds of change. Nostalgia for the former glorious days of the Polytechnic had been in evidence even in its earliest decades, but Poulain was not of the later Victorian and Edwardian Poly. Poulain appears to have accepted the myth that the 'old days' were better than the present, and that a feeling of community had declined since the Second World War.

A comparison between the views of Poulain and those of Helen Joan Forrow of the Polytechnic Ladies' Badminton Club is revealing. She was a prominent and successful Poly Club player, and also played in the London Moderate Players' Championship:

Fig. 121

*At the opening of the new extension Pavilion at Chiswick, on 7 May 1960, Bernard Studd reminded those gathered that it was not just an athletic or social centre, but also a memorial to founder Quintin Hogg.*

In her world of sport, Joan has two major ambitions; she would like to play for the County, but would not leave the Poly to achieve this, and she is desperately anxious to help the Badminton Club to win the Elsie Hoare Trophy...

She has one further desire; to see the end of the segregation of the sexes in the sports clubs, for only by so doing, she feels, will the Polytechnic really move with the times.

There are many Institute members, both men and women, who would heartily agree with her.<sup>22</sup>

Frank Dolman was a good example of how student sports at the Poly had encouraged students to progress in their sporting as well as their educational career. 'This Peter Pan of the Cricket Club,' stated the *Polytechnic Magazine* in 1955, 'started as a student in the Day School of Architecture in 1920 and six years later started to teach Building Construction and Geometry in the same school.' He was an active cricketer at Chiswick, assisting also in the rebuilding of the facilities there. He was also a footballer. As his cricketing days passed, he became secretary and later chairman of the Poly Cricket Club, and continued coaching and umpiring. As Joseph Edmundson,<sup>23</sup> who wrote these mini biographies for the magazine, argued, 'despite all that has been written about the changing times':

Frank is convinced that the spirit is still as good as ever, and that it will continue to be so, for so long as the inspiration given by the public spirited men and women like Mr. Bernard and Sir Eric Studd on the men's side, and Mrs Wood on the women's side continues.

One might add 'and when men like Frank Dolman help to carry on the work and traditions that have been established by generations of Poly members'.<sup>24</sup>

Man and boy, Dolman was offered as reassurance to those who were fearful that the Poly was losing its founding principles. He also referred to the dynastic organisation of the Polytechnic to support his case.<sup>25</sup> Yet the debate about the nature of social change at the Polytechnic, and the relationship of sports to it, did not go away.

During its anniversary year the *Polytechnic Magazine* was wittingly and unwittingly ringing in the changes in the student cultures of Regent Street Polytechnic. Although the January 1964 Hogg Centenary issue made much of Quintin Hogg and his Christian ethos, and stressed the inculcation of values of individualism and auto-didacticism, an editorial piece lamented the decline of individualism at the Institute. Bureaucratic interference from local and national governments, and the educational authorities were largely to blame:

The Poly was very much the product of an age when an individual could and did make a unique and outstanding contribution, but this seems no longer to be possible. Even the Governing Body is not entirely master in its own house,

22 *Polytechnic Magazine*, July 1955.

23 Organiser of Physical Education and social activities at the Polytechnic, 1948 to late 1960s.

24 *Polytechnic Magazine*, September 1955.

25 Frank Dolman remained an enthusiastic member of the Polytechnic Sports Committee into the 1980s.

but is subject to the ruling (and maybe over-ruling) of one or more outside bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the LCC, the Regional Advisory Council and the National Council for Technological Awards and, to this, the irreverent would add the refrain 'Old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and All'.<sup>26</sup>

This passage is typical of the simplistic take on previous eras that accompanies romantic or despairing historical interpretations on the rise and fall of individualism. After all, today we now see the 1960s as a decade when a newer, more libertarian individualism was challenging the Victorian paternalism whose passing was lamented, at institutional level, by the Polytechnic Governing Body. Certainly, the *Polytechnic Magazine* reflected the demise of categories that had been in existence for nearly a century. Gone were the traditional headings and in their place came 'Men's Clubs' and 'Women's Clubs' whose reports were much the same as they had been since the 1950s. The magazine now also included reports on the 'Mixed Clubs', notably Rambling.

The fortunes of the clubs continued to fluctuate, as might be expected, but they carried on playing an important role in the social life of the Polytechnic during the 1960s. During the lengthy centenary celebrations at the Poly in 1964, for example, the 'programme of activities' was redolent with historical precedents and continuities, and reflected both sporting competition and the community spirit at the Poly. Furthermore, although many events were held at Chiswick and in Westminster, sport was also played the length and breadth of London, from the centre to the peripheries.<sup>27</sup>

The celebrations demonstrated that although traditions and values implanted during the Victorian and Edwardian years had waned, sport was still at the heart of Poly life. And although Victorianism was weakening during the 1960s, it had not completely gone away. This became apparent in the debate over the licensing of Chiswick for the sale of alcoholic refreshments.<sup>28</sup> Here again, the history of Regent Street Polytechnic reveals wider themes and issues in the social history of post-war Britain, and much about the highly nuanced impact of 'the Sixties' on British society. Although the Sixties are commonly held to have revolutionised social values, the picture was a much more complicated one.

The question of introducing licensed drinking facilities appears to have first arisen at the beginning of the 1950s during a meeting of the Polytechnic Sports Club Committee. This in itself demonstrates that the liberalisation so commonly associated with the Sixties had its origins in previous decades. Mr T.W. Futrille, the representative of the Cricket Club on the Poly Sports Club Committee, requested that consideration be given to the 'sale of intoxicants' to provide both Poly members 'and more importantly visiting teams, with adequate social facilities'.<sup>29</sup> Pressure was building towards liberalisation of the leisure culture of the Polytechnic, not least because it appeared to be falling behind the times. In January 1951 the Quintin Boat Club submitted an application for permission to apply for a licence to sell alcoholic refreshments, namely wines and beers, in the boathouse in the November of that

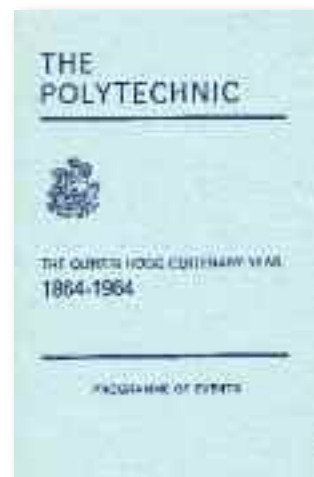


Fig. 122  
In 1964 the Polytechnic celebrated a centenary of Quintin Hogg's philanthropic activities.

26 *Polytechnic Magazine*, January 1964.

27 *The Polytechnic: The Quintin Hogg Centenary Year 1864-1964 Programme of Events* (London: Regent Street Polytechnic, 1964).

28 The Charity Commissioners' Scheme of Administration for Regent Street Polytechnic of 23 June 1891 stated that no intoxicating liquors should be permitted in any part of the Polytechnic buildings. This clause was not officially revoked until 17 November 1961, by Order of the Minister of Education.

29 *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes, 1918-1951*, 19 June 1950, UWA PIN [P140].





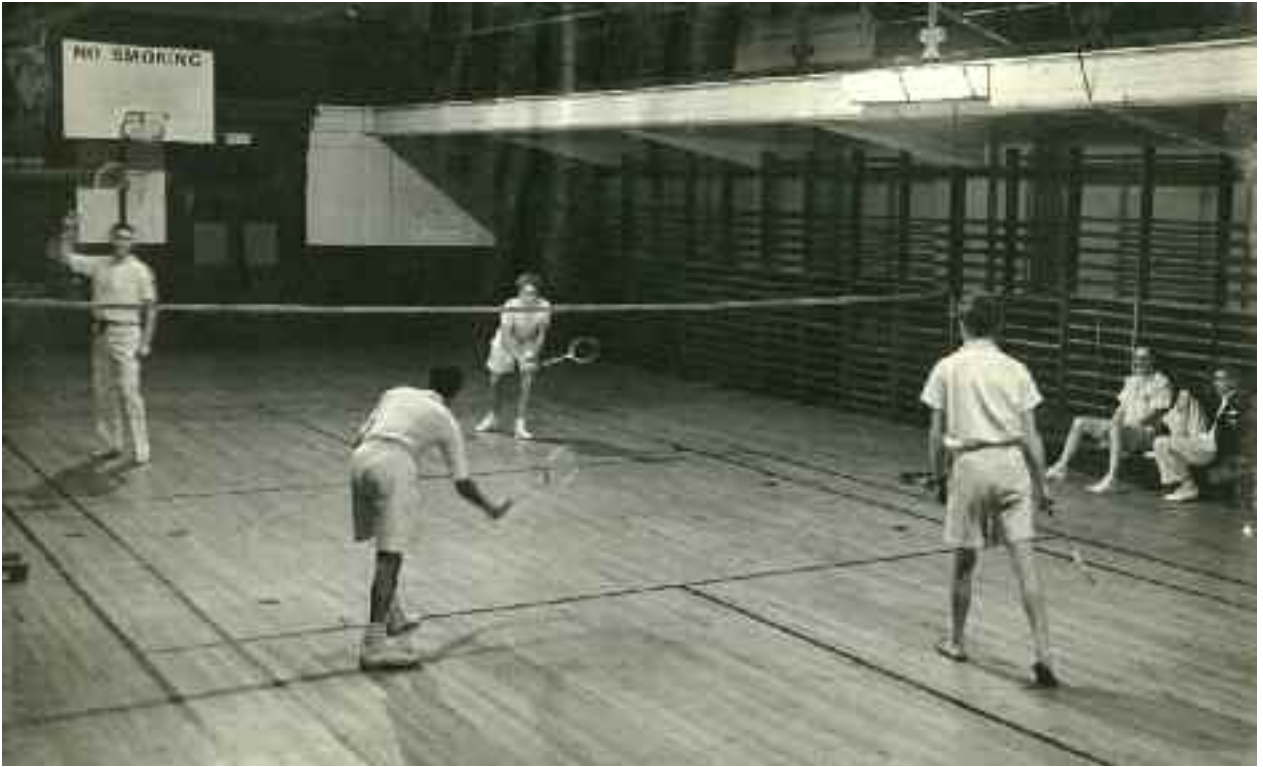
**Fig. 123**  
*Snooker and billiards continued to be popular with members and students.*

year. A sense that the Poly was out of kilter with wider social trends, and also that alcohol was a means to various ends, is the unwitting testimony of these requests:

The application is made on the ground that changes had taken place in the social life of the nation and that the time was now ripe to introduce into the QBC a normal feature of a rowing club. The QBC argue that the boathouse is open throughout the year and in the summer months members in training attend five days a week. It was felt that the Club should be able to offer the advantages of a social club. The Club felt the provision of this amenity would attract more old members to the Club who would be available for essential duties of coaching the novices and other non-rowing duties.<sup>30</sup>

The most significant objections to this request were made by Ethel Wood, who felt that the sale of alcohol 'would be a serious departure with the long-standing traditions of the institution'. She was also fearful that once a licence was granted to one club, others would follow suit. Other concerns discussed

<sup>30</sup> *Polytechnic Governing Body Minutes*, 15 January 1951, UWA RSP 1/BG.



by the Board of Governors centred on the implications for receiving funding for sports.<sup>31</sup> Dialogue between the Men's Council and the Board of Governors reveals that the Council were keener on the idea than the Governors were, while the charmingly named Mrs A.M. Brewer of the Women's Council was at one with Mrs Wood in opposing the sale of intoxicating drinks. Yet in April 1953 the Board agreed by eleven votes for to three against to allow alcohol to be sold at the boathouse. Two years later the Men's Council successfully requested that alcoholic beverages should be allowed for sale at the Chiswick pavilion, and in 1960, the teetotal culture of 309 Regent Street was challenged by the request from the Men's Council for an occasional licence to serve alcoholic refreshments in the restaurant used by Polytechnic Institute Clubs and Societies. This was approved and the licence was granted. By 1963 the Student Representatives Council also petitioned for the sale of alcohol in the refectories. Although the initial request was turned down, partly because of concerns about drinking and driving, by 1965 the Board of Governors had conceded the principle that students aged 18 years and over could drink in refectories. The Regent Street Building was deemed to be 'already overcrowded' but drinks were made available at the Poly refectories on the Marylebone Road and New Cavendish Street campuses.<sup>32</sup>

Issues about alcohol did not completely disappear, despite liberalisation, and surfaced again during the 1970s. By then, however, Regent Street Polytechnic was renamed the Polytechnic of Central London. The Polytechnic of Central London was designated in May 1970, as part of the plan for higher



**Fig. 124**  
*Badminton being played in the gymnasium at Regent Street in 1950.*

**Fig. 125**  
*Poly Harriers Ken Yates and John Maylor photographed at Ruislip, 1950s.*

31 *Polytechnic Governing Body Minutes*, 15 January 1951, UWA RSP 1/BG.

32 *Polytechnic Governing Body Minutes*, 1951–1970, *passim*, UWA RSP 1/BG.



**Fig. 126**  
*In the 1950s there were as many as three water polo teams competing for the Polytechnic.*

education of the second 1960s Labour government of Harold Wilson.<sup>33</sup> The new Poly was, consistent with the original vision of Quintin Hogg, to provide technical, professional and vocationally orientated courses, whereas the universities were intended to cater for the more academically minded students in the arts, humanities and sciences.

In the same year, Ethel Wood died. A long-standing and highly respected *doyenne* of the Polytechnic since the 1930s, her death coincided with a new era in the life of 309 Regent Street and the other sites that now make up the University of Westminster. But as we will see, sports continued to play an important role in the life of PCL, and subsequently in the culture of the University of Westminster.

As Regent Street Polytechnic came to an end, however, an appreciation of its democratic contribution to sports was offered by another leading personality of the Polytechnic. Writing in the *Polytechnic Magazine* in 1969, Dick Swann

<sup>33</sup> John Izbicki, 'The London polytechnics' in *London Higher: The Establishment of Higher Education in London*, ed. Roderick Floud and Sean Glynn (London: The Athlone Press, 1998).



Fig. 127  
*Members of the Polytechnic  
 Cycling Club Midland Section,  
 including Dick Swann (front left)  
 in August 1964.*

affirmed the longer-standing traditions of the Polytechnic in forging the relationship between sporting prowess and muscular Christianity. In the years leading up to the creation of the Polytechnic of Central London, the *Polytechnic Magazine* continued to celebrate the Christian provenance of the Polytechnic and its subsequent and continuing relationship with the sporting heritage of Regent Street. The undoubted access to sports for working-class athletes that the Polytechnic had pioneered was celebrated by Swann in a 1969 article entitled 'My Poly, Too', where he made much of his family's long-standing association with the Polytechnic and its sporting life, and also of his working-class background. His father had been killed in the war and his mother left him to a Roman Catholic orphanage and the world of paid employment by the age of 13. Swann still epitomised something of the Christian and sporting synthesis that had been founding principles of Hogg's Polytechnic, and that had remained at the heart of the identity of the Polytechnic through much of the previous twentieth century. He wrote of his Polytechnic days:

I never noticed any peculiar Poly odour; and the sports club I joined was noted for its lack of stuffiness. It still is. My church activities raised no sneers of 'religion-pusher' and I found no snobs in the Poly Christian Fellowship.

My father-in-law managed to win many races under Poly Harriers' colours, and still be a Christian; my son found Christianity no hindrance in winning races under Poly Cycling Club colours.<sup>34</sup>

34 *Polytechnic Magazine*,  
 September–October 1969.



## ALAN PASCOE

Of the many impressive athletes who competed for the Polytechnic Harriers in the post-war years, the name of the hurdler Alan Pascoe (b. 1947) is among the best known. The marble memorial in the Regent Street building has his name inscribed on it four times from 1970 to 1974. This was just one accolade in a career that saw Pascoe win medals in the Commonwealth Games, the European Championships and the Olympics, an impressive roster of achievements that amounted to four gold medals, three silver and two bronze.

### Commonwealth Games:

Gold, 400 m Hurdles, 1974, Christchurch, New Zealand

Silver, 4 x 400 m Relay, 1974, Christchurch, New Zealand

Bronze, 400 m Hurdles, 1978, Edmonton, Canada

### Olympics:

Silver, 4 x 400 m Relay, 1972, Munich, Germany

### European Championships:

Bronze, 110 m Hurdles, 1969, Athens, Greece

Silver, 110 m Hurdles, 1971, Helsinki, Finland

Gold, 400 m Hurdles, 1974, Rome, Italy

Gold, 4 x 400 m Relay, 1974, Rome, Italy

### European Indoor Games:

Gold, 50 m Hurdles, 1969, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

### AAA Championships:

200 m, 15 July 1972, London, Great Britain

### Scottish Championships:

110 m Hurdles, 17 June 1972, Edinburgh, Scotland

These achievements are all the more impressive when we remember that as an amateur, and as such within the best traditions of the Polytechnic, Pascoe undertook teaching to support himself. During the second half of the 1970s he also worked for the Sports Council and later the BBC Advisory Council. From 1974 he established the company Alan Pascoe Associates Ltd where he held a number of leading positions, and initiated numerous other sporting consultancies. In 2003 he was appointed Vice Chairman of the successful

British bid to hold the Olympics in London in 2012. He currently chairs the sports and events section of Fast Track Events Ltd, the sports consultancy company that he established during the late 1990s.



Fig. 128



Fig. 129

*Alan Pascoe collecting a medal from Lady Alexandra Studd, second wife of J.E.K. (Fig. 128) and winning a 400 m hurdles race at Crystal Palace in September 1978 (Fig. 129).*



At the time he was writing the article, Swann was based in the United States of America, where he was a well-known Christian speaker and a keen organiser of cycle racing. He was also writing in the year that the hurdler Alan Pascoe of the Harriers began to bring home gold, silver and bronze medals.

It is no exaggeration to argue that Pascoe was one of the finest runners in the history of the Polytechnic Harriers. Following the award of the Studd Trophy to Colin Campbell, another Harriers athlete, in 1970, Pascoe won it consecutively from 1971 to 1975. Yet his successes came at a hugely significant time for the Polytechnic itself, and most particularly for the Poly Institute that had done so much to promote sports.

The changes in tertiary education that were initiated in the 1960s and have been noted earlier in this book completely altered the nature and character of the Polytechnic. One unanticipated, yet directly attributable, outcome of the new national policies was the steady decline of the Polytechnic clubs. The clubs' members began to find themselves no longer at the centre, but instead on the periphery of a higher education institution whose main focus had shifted to the academic and to its students. In the face of increased competition for resources, the Polytechnic Institute was no longer sustainable. Its demise took place as alternative, student-led sports and social clubs came to the fore.

Alan Pascoe, notable for his individual achievements, also serves as an emblematic high point in the story of Polytechnic sport. He was the last in a successful sporting tradition inextricably linked to the Poly Institute and the legacy of founder Quintin Hogg.

## *Epilogue: the sporting legacy of the University of Westminster*

The Studd Trophy Memorial from 1970 to 1992 tells the story of both achievement and change. The Trophy was awarded for fifteen of the twenty-two years that made up the life of the Polytechnic of Central London (PCL), suggesting a less intensive culture of sporting endeavour than in previous decades. The Polytechnic Harriers had been the most prolific winners of the Trophy in the post-war years, but in its final decades, the Harriers did not have a monopoly. Other long-standing clubs were also represented. One of Britain's leading fencers, Jim Philbin, won the award in 1977 and 1978, while the fencer Richard Cohen was awarded the Studd Trophy medal three times between 1980 and 1984 (there was no award in 1983). Cohen also had a distinguished career as a historian of the sword.<sup>1</sup> Men's fencing had been eclipsed by the Ladies' Fencing Club in earlier decades, but during the PCL years leading male fencers enjoyed considerable success. So too did sportsmen in the Cycling (J. Pritchard, 1987), Basketball (A. Tilott, 1988) and Rowing Clubs. The last Studd award in 1992 went to R. Thatcher, a rower.

The thinning out of names on the Studd Trophy Memorial appears to contradict the famous argument of the historian A.J.P. Taylor that 'history gets thicker as it approaches recent times'.<sup>2</sup> Taylor was arguing that more varied and more surviving source materials could be enjoyed by the contemporary historian than by the historian of earlier centuries or periods. Yet his dictum does not apply to sports at the Polytechnic of Central London. By the mid-1970s the *Polytechnic Magazine*, with its monthly reports on the clubs and societies, was no more.<sup>3</sup> A sparse series of members' records affords the historian a much more fragmented picture of sports at the Polytechnic. Membership of the sports clubs declined as the leisure culture of the Poly became more diverse, and increasingly influenced by student interests. There was ongoing demand on PCL facilities from the sports clubs, and a continuing obligation on the Polytechnic to ensure that the sporting infrastructure kept pace with the needs of its participants, be they members or students. Here, the Polytechnic of Central London was still influenced, to a degree, by the personnel of Regent Street Polytechnic, who continued to exert themselves via the Men's and Women's Councils, and the Court of Governors itself.

From 1975–76, a little over five years after PCL was created, the social

1 Richard Cohen, *By the Sword* (London: Macmillan, 2002); see also *The Guardian*, 7 December 2002; [www.jimphilbin.co.uk](http://www.jimphilbin.co.uk).

2 Cited in Mark Garnett and Richard Weight, *Modern British History: the Essential A-Z Guide* (London: Pimlico, 2004), p. 1.

3 The publication is renamed the *Members Magazine* in 1971, before becoming *The Polytechnic Institute Sports and Social Club Newsletter*. The issues become ever sparser and less frequent, until the newsletter finally ceased in 2003: *Polytechnic Institute Members' Magazine* (September 1970–May 1974); *The Polytechnic Sports and Social Club Monthly Newsletter* (June 1974–December 1975); *Newsletter of the Polytechnic Members* (January 1976–July 1988); *The Institute of Polytechnic Social Clubs and Sports Newsletter* (March 1991–June 2003).



facilities at Chiswick, including the bar, were renovated and extended. Because this work was financed by the memorial fund for Sir J.E.K. Studd (who had died during the Second World War), it was agreed by various members of the sports clubs and by the Men's and Women's Councils that a photograph of Studd should be displayed in the main pavilion. The new extension to the bar at Chiswick was formally opened in November 1976.<sup>4</sup>

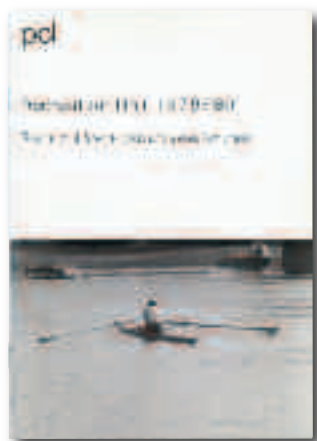
Yet despite the growing use of alcohol at the Polytechnic, the ghosts of Victorians past returned to question the more liberal attitudes towards drink that had been so vigorously opposed by Ethel Wood during the 1950s and 1960s. A member of the Men's Council asked whether 'the intention to allow play on Sundays was not debasing the memorial to Sir J.E.K. Studd for he would not allow the Rambling Club to meet under the Poly name on Sundays'. Other members agreed with such sentiments, and questioned the legitimacy of funding improvements to the bar at Chiswick from the memorial fund of a teetotaler.<sup>5</sup>

As the correspondence between the members and officials of the sports clubs and the Men's and Women's Councils illustrates, both the Chiswick Sports Ground and the central London buildings remained busy hubs of amateur sporting activities and also social events during the PCL years. Clubs based at Chiswick raised a variety of occasional concerns from time to time. These ranged from the provision of wickets, to the need to attract more cyclists from outside of the Greater London Council area, to the condition of

**Fig. 130**  
*After retiring from active racing, members of the Polytechnic Harriers continued to meet socially for many years afterwards.*

4 *Men's Council and Men's and Women's Council Meetings Minute Book, 1971–1989, Men's Council Meeting, 18 October 1976, UWA PIN [ACC1994/15].*

5 *Men's Council and Men's and Women's Council Meetings Minute Book, 1971–1989, Men's Council Meeting, 18 October 1976, UWA PIN [ACC1994/15].*



**Fig. 131**  
*PCL's Recreation Unit oversaw the sporting facilities and ran classes during the 1970s and 1980s.*

the running tracks and the huts used by the various clubs, to the parched state of the grass tennis courts and the hockey pitches during the long hot summer of 1976. Moreover, the clubs using Chiswick included not only existing members and students but also ex-members; the Old Quintinians, originally formed in 1891 to encourage former Day School pupils to keep in contact with the Polytechnic, played football, cricket and other sports at Chiswick, and this also appears to have put pressure on resources.<sup>6</sup>

At Regent Street and Little Titchfield Street, the social and billiards rooms continued to host informal games, social evenings and competitions between the men's and women's billiards clubs. Boxing, gymnastics, rifle and pistol shooting took place in the basement of the Regent Street building, and squash was played in the Portland Hall in the Little Titchfield Street building. The 1970s saw the continuation of martial arts sports from the previous decade, notably judo, while the 1980s witnessed the rise of keep-fit classes at the Poly. In common with martial arts, this was not an entirely new development, as keep-fit had also been a popular craze of the 1930s.

The correspondence between the sports clubs and the Men's and Women's Councils, along with the minutes of the Councils, both of which merit further research, prove that the diverse culture of sports at the Poly manifested both changes and continuities during the PCL years, and into the subsequent era of the University of Westminster. There were continuing successes in London-based and national sporting arenas, complaints about the problems of overcrowded or degraded facilities, and more than a few expressions of disgust about the offensive nature of the singing by the Rugby Club at the bar in Chiswick. J.E.K. Studd would have turned in his grave. But this was also proof that the Men's and Women's Councils were doing their job, because they addressed the complaints of the sports clubs, and forwarded those that required further attention to the Court of Governors of PCL. Cricket, football, hockey and rugby pitches were re-seeded, tennis and squash courts were repaired or built anew, and running tracks and the facilities at the boathouse were monitored and kept up to condition as far as possible. Problems with funding and maintenance, moreover, were not seen solely as the fault of Poly management. Since 1965, the Inner London Education Authority, which operated under the auspices of the Greater London Council between 1965 and 1985 (when the GLC was abolished) had funded and partially managed the Polytechnic, and incoming finances were not always adequate to meet the demands of the Poly and its sporting clubs. The culture of benefaction that stemmed from Hogg and Studd and other leading Victorians continued to assist ongoing sports development at the Poly throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

The Men's and Women's Councils were wound up by 1990, the same year that PCL merged with Harrow College of Higher Education, in a suburb of North London. In 1992 PCL gained University status in the wake of the Higher and Further Education Act of the same year. By the end of the 1990s, the educational activities of the University of Westminster were focused on

<sup>6</sup> *Polytechnic Sports Club Committee and Chiswick Sub-Committee Minutes, 1918–1951, passim, UWA PIN [P140].*

<sup>7</sup> *Men's Council and Men's and Women's Council Meetings Minute Book, 1971–1989, passim, UWA PIN [ACC1994/15]; Men's and Women's Council Correspondence, 1975–1976, UWA PIN [ACC1994/15]; Women's Council papers, 1975–1976, UWA PIN [ACC1996/40].*

four main sites: in Harrow and at Marylebone Road, New Cavendish Street, and the original Regent Street, the last three all within a relatively short distance of each other in the centre of London.

#### SPORTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER TODAY

The University of Westminster is a very different place from the Polytechnic of the Victorian and Edwardian era, and even that of the inter-war and early post-war periods. Originally, the fusion of the Christian ethos and sports, closely accompanied by the cults of personality projected by Hogg and Studd, united the identity of the students, members and governors: sport was a means of unifying a diverse set of interest groups and of promoting a sense of belonging to a greater whole.

As time wore on, the defining role of Christianity at the Poly declined in tandem with the growing secularisation of society, and the sports clubs' identification with the Polytechnic began to wane. As has been previously noted, the significant changes in tertiary education, initiated during the 1960s, impacted upon the character and direction of the Polytechnic. In combination with a more student-centred curriculum, and the challenge to Victorian values mounted by young people during the 1960s and 1970s, the era of paternalism, and of a concomitant deference, at Regent Street was over. The culture of amateur sport had also changed. Long gone were the days when the Olympics and other main sports were essentially lifestyle hobbies for middle and upper-class athletes with another source of income. Commercialisation and professionalisation changed the landscape of sports, a fundamental historical transition that is evident in most sports down from the Olympics to the gymnasia of schools and universities and on the pitches of suburban



**Fig. 132**

*Football is as popular today as it was in Quintin Hogg's time, and the University's teams continue to make good use of the pitches at the Chiswick ground that was bought in his name.*



London. Most people who are exceptionally talented in a given sport no longer wish to see it as an amateur adjunct to their career: rather, they want to make a career out of their sport. The evolution of Alan Pascoe from amateur athlete to sports consultant is but one example of this.

And what of the sports clubs? Where are they now? Most of the men's and women's clubs slipped away or were merged with others during the years of PCL and the early years of the University of Westminster. Those clubs that left often did so in order to participate in leagues that most former polytechnics were vacating as the priorities of the students, and the governing bodies, of the new universities changed.

In 1985 the Polytechnic Harriers merged with the Royal Borough of Kingston Athletic Club to become Kingston AC and Polytechnic Harriers. The years up to the 1970s were seen as the best years for the Harriers, even by current members.<sup>8</sup> The Polytechnic Marathon, with which the Harriers had been associated since the Edwardian years, ceased in 1996, but its heritage is impressive. Runners from the most prestigious British athletic clubs competed throughout its history, and marathon records were broken at the Poly event. Runners came from across the world to race from Windsor Castle to White City (until 1937) and to Chiswick from 1938. Earlier winners included a Frenchman, a Swede and a Canadian, while during the 1960s two Japanese runners won the Poly Marathon, in 1965 and 1968 respectively.<sup>9</sup> This was in the extended wake of the Tokyo Olympics, and Anglo-Japanese sporting interactions since 1964 are a subject worthy of further study.

The Polytechnic Football Club is still going strong, and continues to be based at the Quintin Hogg Memorial Ground at Chiswick. Comprising eleven teams, it plays in the Southern Amateur League and various AFA cup competitions. The website of the Polytechnic Football Club is a mine of information on match histories, leading players and sponsors of the various



**Figs. 133, 134**

*Cricket and hockey players still compete and socialise at Chiswick.*



<sup>8</sup> [www.kingstonandpoly.org](http://www.kingstonandpoly.org) [accessed 21 November 2011].

<sup>9</sup> [www.kingstonandpoly.org](http://www.kingstonandpoly.org) [accessed 21 November 2011].



Polytechnic sports. For example, it notes with affection and respect the death in 2007 of Frank Dolman, a stalwart of the Polytechnic Cricket Club, and Les Parsons, who had been at the Football Club since 1947.<sup>10</sup>

The Polytechnic Cricket Club is now part of Turnham Green and Polytechnic CC, comprising four teams playing league, social and junior cricket. Quintin Hogg, Arthur Kinnaird and George Ogilvie would approve of the emphasis on developing promising youngsters to play cricket.<sup>11</sup>

The Polytechnic Cycling Club was based at 309 Regent Street for almost one hundred years, until 1989, when it moved to the Quintin Hogg Memorial Ground. Today it survives in the memories of its former members and through the records and artefacts it has deposited with the University Archive.

The Polytechnic Swimming Club plays water polo as the London Polytechnic Water Polo Club, and its website makes much of the history of the club dating back to the 1870s.<sup>12</sup>

The Quintin Boat Club remains at the Chiswick Boathouse, and its history is also proudly displayed on its website. It holds annual dinner dances and other socials, and is still very much part of the rowing culture of the River Thames.<sup>13</sup>

The Chiswick Poly Tennis Club and the Polytechnic Hockey Club (re-named PHC Chiswick Hockey Club), both based at Chiswick in West London, continue to encourage children of all ages into their sports, and play in local and national leagues.<sup>14</sup>



**Figs. 135, 136**  
*The University's Rowing Club shares the facilities at the Chiswick Boathouse with the Quintin Boat Club, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2007.*

10 [www.polytechnicfc.co.uk](http://www.polytechnicfc.co.uk) [accessed 21 November 2011].

11 [www.tgpc.org](http://www.tgpc.org) [accessed 21 November 2011].

12 <http://polywaterpolo.wordpress.com> [accessed 21 November 2011].

13 [www.quintinboatclub.org](http://www.quintinboatclub.org) [accessed 21 November 2011].

14 [www.chiswickpoly.visualclubweb.nl](http://www.chiswickpoly.visualclubweb.nl) [accessed 21 November 2011]; [www.phcchiswick.com](http://www.phcchiswick.com) [accessed 21 November 2011].

Fig. 137

*The Boathouse, Chiswick.*



Fig. 138

*Now converted into a study and social space for students, the heritage of the swimming bath lives on in the name 'The Deep End'.*

Along with rowing, rugby keeps the name of the founder alive, although the Quintin Rugby Club no longer plays at the Quintin Hogg Memorial Ground but nearby at the Civil Service Sports Ground at Chiswick Bridge. The website of the club also emphasises its social life, from dinner dances to sports days. While no longer directly funded by the Poly, it still retains strong traces of its earlier traditions.<sup>15</sup>

Of the distinct women's clubs that still remain, the Poly Netball Club, while still retaining its historic name, is no longer affiliated to the University of Westminster. It now trains and plays its home matches in Kilburn in North London, participating in a number of leagues. In 2007 it proudly celebrated its hundredth anniversary, and the website of the club rightly celebrates its history as 'the oldest netball club in continuous existence in the world!'<sup>16</sup>

#### CHISWICK AND REGENT STREET REVISITED

At the time of writing, the University of Westminster is building strongly on the heritage of sporting facilities at Chiswick and Regent Street, and investing in a new era of sports at Harrow. At Chiswick the venues for football, hockey and other field sports were improved between 2004 and 2006, and the pavilion and stadium buildings have recently been refurbished. The site has an impressive water-based hockey pitch and many high-quality surfaces for a variety of sports. The University annual sports day is still held at Chiswick, and in July 2011 the ground hosted the London Cup 2011 Hockey Tournament, which saw teams from England, Belgium, Korea and New Zealand compete in the first event of its kind in London. Chiswick plays host to student sports teams, and encourages sporting participation among local schools in line with the 'Sport For All' project of recent governments which

<sup>15</sup> [www.clubquintinrfc.co.uk](http://www.clubquintinrfc.co.uk) [accessed 21 November 2011].

<sup>16</sup> [www.polynetball.co.uk](http://www.polynetball.co.uk) [accessed 21 November 2011].





**Figs. 139–142**  
*Some of the many sports enjoyed at the University today: netball (Fig. 139); judo (Fig. 140), hockey (Fig. 141) and keep-fit (Fig. 142).*

have sought to address issues about sporting participation among the young and among disadvantaged or difficult-to-reach groups in society.

At Harrow, there are firm proposals to develop sports and leisure facilities to meet current and future demands from students and staff. Proposed facilities include a new fitness multi-gym, and external multi-purpose games areas.<sup>17</sup>

The Regent Street and Little Titchfield Street buildings both register the changes in the sports history of the University of Westminster. At Little Titchfield Street, the women's social room is gone and the gymnasium is now a part of the library. At Regent Street, modernisation in the early 1990s to meet the needs of the expanding University led to redevelopment of the defunct swimming bath and the creation of the Deep End – an impressive social and study space for students. The rifle range in the basement has long disappeared, and the gymnasium is used as often for examinations or social occasions as it is for sporting activities. But it is still at the heart of a culture of sporting endeavour at the University, albeit one that is now more professionalised and technical in its approach to fitness and performance. Today, membership of the Regent Street Gym remains buoyant. Under the guidance of qualified sport scientists, the gym supports enhancing the well-being of all students, staff and members of the public from the wider community; they are mostly based on getting fit and keeping fit with fitness assessments, body composition analysis and personal training. This is the very stuff of self-improvement through physical exertion that the Victorian founders of the Polytechnic had encouraged.

The Regent Street building and the satellite sports facilities of the University are powerful reminders of the sporting heritage that the Polytechnic bequeathed to the University of Westminster. It privileged the nurturing of talent and the self-empowerment that came with sporting success. Yet it was



<sup>17</sup> *University of Westminster Estate Strategy 2008–2018.*

Figs. 143, 144

*University staff at the 2010 Annual Staff Sports Day, echoing the novelty races held at the Chiswick Stadium's opening ceremony in 1938.*



Fig. 145

*An aerobics class at Regent Street.*



also founded on a strong belief that sportsmen and sportswomen, and the clubs for which they competed, should always identify with the educational institution that fostered them. Encompassing the individual, the team and the Poly, this was an ethos that created a sense of belonging while celebrating individual achievement. It also allowed for the democratisation of access to sports long before the governments of the 1960s promoted 'sport for all'. And it also gave young people a sense of structure to their lives. These are important building blocks for any successful group or society; and for over a hundred years, Regent Street Polytechnic remained a community of communities, an open and unique institution, in a changing and often challenging world.

The Polytechnic Institute no longer exists, but its legacy lives on. The University of Westminster does indeed have a sporting history of which it can be proud.



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## Index

Figures in **bold** relate to illustrations or captions.

- Aberdare, Lord (Clarence Napier Bruce) 77, 79  
 Abrahams, Harold 7  
 Addison, Joseph 79  
 Alexander, Alexander ('Alick') 15  
 Amateur Athletics Association (AAA) 35, 67, 68, **70**, 100, 101  
 Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) 48, 49  
 Amateur Football Association (AFA) 37, 87, 88, 115  
 Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) 21–2  
 amateurism 8–9, 37  
 Andrew, Jack 40, **40**  
 Applegarth, William **36**  
 archery 89, **92**  
 Ashley, B.J. 69  
 Astor, Viscountess 71  
 athletics 3, 17, 23, 27, 30, 31, 35–6, 61, 67–8, **70**, 71–2, **72**, **73**, 97–9, **98**, 100–1, **100–1**  
 'Athletics and Christianity' 57
- badminton 89, 92, 102–3, **106**  
 Bailey, Jeanette 96  
 Bailey, William James 34, **45**  
 Baker, Sir Alfred 79  
 Banks Cup 88  
 basketball 88–9, **88**  
 BBC 41, 73, 79  
 Beale, James 39  
 Bell, Margaret 97–8  
 billiards 25, **59**, 73, 84, 89, 92, **92**, **105**, 113  
 Birley, Derek 47  
 boathouse 20, 21, 23, **79**, 85–6, 104, 105, 106, 113, 116, **116**, **117**  
 opening ceremony 20  
 Bon Accord Orchestra 76  
 Bowery Young Men's Institute, New York 35  
 bowling 73, 74, **77**  
 boxing 29, **29**, 39, 46–8, **64**, 68–9, **69**, **78**, **84**  
 Breese, Dorothy **76**  
 Breese, Winnie **76**  
 Brewer, A.M. 77, 106  
 Bristow, Rev. C.J. 20  
 Bruce, Clarence Napier, 3rd Baron Aberdare  
*see* Aberdare, Lord
- Cadet Football Squad *see* Polytechnic Cadet Corps  
 Campbell, Colin 110  
 Carnegie-Arbutnott, Elizabeth 73  
 Cavendish Cycling Club 40, 66, 70  
 Central Council of Physical Recreation 74, 95  
 Chambers, Ernest 67  
 Chambers, Stanley 67  
*Chariots of Fire* 7  
 Chelsea FC 66  
 Chiswick Poly Tennis Club 116  
*see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Men's Lawn Tennis
- see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Women's Lawn Tennis  
 Chiswick Sports Ground 22, 23, **23**, 64, **65**, 74, 76, 78–9, **78**, 85, **85**, **114**  
 Chivers, Corporal **47**  
 Christianity 10–11, 57–8  
 Cocoa Tree temperance tavern 35, **35**  
 Coe, Sebastian 7  
 Cohen, Richard 111  
 Coombs, Leonard 76  
 Copping, Elsa 94  
 Corinthian Casuals 87  
 Corinthians FC 33  
 Cornwall, Dee **77**  
 Coronation Fête **98**  
 Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) 4  
 cricket 8, **10**, 11–13, 22, 23, 29, 32, 37, 46, 55, **55**, 59, 61, 64, 65, 66, 73, 82, 83, 89, 103, 104, 113, **115**, 116  
 Crosland, Anthony 4  
 Crouch End Vampires 87  
 cycling 28, **28**, 30, 39, 41–6, **43**, 51, 59, 61–2, 65, 66–7, **67**, **68**, 73, **80–1**, 89, **108**, 111, 116  
 Cyclist Corps 61–2
- Dandridge, Stewart 34  
 darts 84, 89, 92  
 Davies, Trevor 88  
 Davis, Julia 96  
 Davis, R.B. 67  
 Day School for Boys 1, 2, 54  
 Day School for Girls 54  
 Day Schools (technical classes) 31, 64, 70  
 de Coubertin, Pierre 39, **42**  
 Deep End, The 117, 118  
 Dewar, Gwyneth **76**  
 Dickens, Jr., Charles 13  
 Dickson, Sergeant Arthur 64  
 Dolman, Frank 103, 116
- Edmundson, Joseph 103  
 Edward, Harry **70**  
*English Journey* 82  
 Elsie Hoare Trophy 30, 73, 93, 103
- fencing 29, 70, 71, 73, **76**, 83, 84, 89, 93–6, **94**, 97, 111  
 'Fitter Britain' Campaign **82**  
 football 11, 12, 14, 22, 23, 29, 32–4, 35, 37, 48, 59, 61, 62, 64, **65**, 66, 70, 79, 82, 83, 86–8, 89, 113, **114**  
 Football Association (FA) 34, 37  
 formation of 34  
 Forrow, Helen Joan 102  
 Fowler, H. 67  
 Franco-British Stadium 39, **42**  
 French, Mary 57  
 Further and Higher Education Act (1992) 4  
 Futrille, T.W. 104

- Gates, Amy 57  
 Gayler, H.H. 'Bert' 61–2, **62**, **63**  
 Gayler Memorial Trophy **24**, **67**  
 Gilbert and Sullivan 50  
 Gilhead, Connie **77**  
 Gladys Cricket Club 44  
 Glen-Haig, Mary 93–5, **95**  
 Graham, Alice *see* Hogg, Alice  
 Gray, J 59  
 Great Depression 82  
 Greater London Council (GLC) 113  
   *see also* London County Council (LCC)  
 Grenfell, William Henry, Lord Desborough **42**  
 Grey, Robert 20, 27–8  
 Gunnell, Sally 75  
 gymnastics 15, **15**, 16, **16**, 55–6, 65, 84, 89  
   gymnasium display 15, **15**  
   Ladies Gymnastic Section 55–6, **56**
- Hailsham, Right Hon. Viscount  
   *see* Hogg, Quintin McGarel  
 Hanover Cricket Club **10**  
   *see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Cricket  
 Hanover Cycling Club 44  
   *see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Cycling  
 Hanover Football Club **33**  
   *see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Football  
 Hanover United Athletic Club 11, 14, 20, 27, 31, 35  
   *see also* Polytechnic Athletic Club  
 Harriers *see* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Harriers  
 Harris, Albert ('Bert') **28**, **29**  
 Harris, F.W. 67  
 Harris, Len 13, 50, 66, **66**  
 Harrison–Slade Cup 93  
 Harrow College of Higher Education 113  
 Harrow sports facilities 114, 117–18  
 Harvey, Grace 94  
 Hazlitt, William 46  
 Henley Regatta 20, 39  
 Hildreth, Peter 99  
 Hill, Albert G. 68, **68**  
 Hitler, Adolf 75  
 Hoare, Elsie Florence 13, 57, 77, **77**, **93**  
   *see also* Elsie Hoare Trophy  
 Hoare, Major Vincent Robertson 13, 27, 64, **65**  
 hockey **89**, 93, **115**, 116, 117, **118**  
 Hogg, Alice 3, 50, 54, **54**  
 Hogg, Douglas McGarel 13, 27  
 Hogg, Elsie Florence *see* Hoare, Elsie Florence  
 Hogg, Ethel *see* Wood, Ethel  
 Hogg, Malcolm 77  
 Hogg, Quintin 1–3, 8, **9**, 10, **10**, 11, 12, 13, 14,  
   15, 20, 23, 32, **33**, 50  
 Hogg, Quintin McGarel 86  
 Holly Hill House 8, **8**  
*Home Tidings* 10, 11, 12  
 Howard de Walden, eighth Baron *see* Scott-Ellis,  
   Thomas
- Ian Bicycling Club 41, 44  
   *see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Cycling  
 Ian Cricket Club 44  
   *see also* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Cricket  
 individualism iv, 97, 103, 104, 119  
 Inner London Educational Authority 4, 113  
 International Olympic Committee (IOC) 7, 95  
 Isthmian League 66
- James, Richard **38**  
 Jubilee Fête (1932) *see* Polytechnic Jubilee Fête  
 judo 113, **118**
- Kenealy, Arabella 50  
 Kingston AC and Polytechnic Harriers 115  
 Kinnaird, Arthur Fitzgerald 3, 8, 32, 34, 37, **37**  
 Kinnaird Trophy 35
- Laing, Leslie 100  
 Lance, Thomas Glasson 66, **67**  
 Lansdowne Fencing Club 93  
 lawn tennis *see* tennis  
 Liberty department store 10  
 licensed drinking facilities, introduction of 104–6  
 Lines, Mary **73**  
 Little Titchfield Street building 71, **77**, 84, 92,  
   **92**, **94**, 113, 118  
 London Banks Football Association 88  
 London County Council (LCC) 1, 3, 13  
   *see also* Greater London Council (GLC)  
 London Cup 2011 Hockey Tournament iv, 117  
*London Labour and the London Poor* 1  
 London Marathon 7, 41  
 Lord Mayor's Show (1922) **24**, **25**
- marathons 7, 39–40, **39**, **40**  
   *see also* London Marathon  
   *see also* Polytechnic Marathon  
 Major V.R. Hoare Shield **25**, 64  
 Manchester Wheeler's Club 67  
 Mayhew, Henry 1  
 Maylor, John **106**  
 McDonald Bailey, Emmanuel 98, 99, 101, **101**  
 McKenley, Herb 100  
 McNicol, Douglas M. 61, **61**  
 Men's and Women's Councils 111, 112, 113  
   *see also* Men's Council  
   *see also* Women's Council  
 Men's Council 106, 111, 112, 113  
 Men's Social Room **59**  
 Merton Hall Sports Grounds 22, 32, 51  
 Mitchell, H.J. 69  
 Mitchell, Robert 13, **13**, 20, 21, 26, 56, 77
- National Amateur Rowing Association 69  
 National Playing Fields Association 82  
 netball 56–7, 70, 71, 73, **74**, 83, 84, 89, 93, 117, **118**  
 Netherway, Shirley 96  
 New Year's Fête **76**, **80–1**, **82**  
*Nineteenth Century* 50  
 Norris, Robert **88**  
 Nottingham, Tom 41
- Offredy, Thoresa 96  
 Ogilvie, George 32, 66, 116



- Old Members' Association 31  
 Old Quintinians 2, 31, 78, 113  
 Olympian League 34  
 Olympic Games 38–9  
   Amsterdam (1928) 66–7  
   Antwerp (1920) 66, **67**, 68  
   Berlin (1936) 75  
   Helsinki (1952) 100–1  
   London (1908) 3, 34, 38–41, **42**, 56  
     1908 marathon 39–41  
   London (1948) **90–1**, 100–1  
   London (2012) iv, 7, 95, 109  
   Los Angeles (1932) 67, 72, 75  
   Paris (1924) 7  
   Tokyo (1964) 75, 115  
 Oxford–Cambridge Boat Race 21, 79
- Paddington Sports Ground 23  
 Parker, G.A. 32  
 Parks, Frank 27, 49, **49**  
 Parks, Frederick 49  
 Parmenter, J. S. 67  
 Parsons, Les 116  
 Pascoe, Alan 7–8, 109–10, **109**  
 Paul, Jim 41  
 Pavitt, Ron 99  
 Pelham, Thomas 2  
 PHC Chiswick Hockey Club 116  
 Philbin, Jim 111  
 Pietri, Dorando 40  
 Pike, Martin 99  
 Pilcher, E.C. 67  
 Polytechnic Athletic Club 12, 27, 31, 67  
   *see also* Hanover United Athletic Club  
   *see also* Polytechnic Sports Club  
 Polytechnic boathouse *see* boathouse  
 Polytechnic Cadet Corps 62–3  
 Polytechnic Company 12, 61–2  
 Polytechnic Coronation Fête *see* Coronation Fête  
 Polytechnic Harriers *see* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Harriers Polytechnic Jubilee Fête (1932) 76–7  
 Polytechnic Institute 2, 12, 78, 106, 110, 119  
*Polytechnic Magazine* 4, 11, 12, **21**, **30**, **53**, 84, 111  
   Hogg Centenary issue (1964) 103, **104**  
 Polytechnic Marathon v, 7, 41, 115  
 Polytechnic Netball League 56  
 Polytechnic of Central London (PCL) 3–4, 8, 108, 111–14  
   establishment of 3  
   Recreation Unit **113**  
   Sporting facilities 111–114  
 Polytechnic Parliament 38  
 Polytechnic sporting clubs  
   Athletics 3, 17, 27, 31, 35, 61  
   Basketball 88–9, **88**  
   Boxing 27, **29**, 46–9, **47**, **49**, 63–4, **64**, 68–9, **69**, 70, 78, 89  
   Cricket 32, 64, 66, 70, 89, 103, **115**, 116  
   Cycling 24, 28, 30, 35, 39, 41, 44–6, **44**, 61–2, 66–7, **67**, **68**, 70, **80–1**, **108**, 116  
   Fencing 29, 70, 78  
   Football 32–4, 59, 70, 86–8, **87**, **114**, 115  
   Girl's Cricketers 55  
   Gymnastic Society 15–16, **15–16**, 70, 89  
   Harriers 3, 23, 28, **30**, **34**, 35, 36, **36**, 38, **38**, **40**, 67–8, **68**, 70, **70**, 78, **81**, 84, 86, 98–9, 100–1, **100–1**, **109**, 111, **112**, 115  
   Hockey 89, **89**, **115**  
     *see also* PHC Chiswick Hockey Club  
   Lacrosse 70  
   Ladies' Athletics 70, 71, **72**, **73**, 75, **75**, 78, 86, 89  
   Ladies' Badminton 70, 89, 102  
   Ladies' Bowling 73, **77**  
   Ladies' Fencing 73, **76**, 89, 93–6, **94**, 111  
   Ladies' Gymnastics 55–6, **56**, 70  
   Ladies' Hockey 70, 89, 93  
   Ladies' Swimming 70, **77**, 89, **96**  
   Men's Fencing 93, 111  
   Men's Lawn Tennis 70, 89, 99  
     *see also* Chiswick Poly Tennis Club  
   Netball 56–7, 70, 73, 93, 117  
   Quintin Boat Club 70, 85, 89, 104–5, 116  
   Rambling 40, 104, 112  
   Rifle 31, 59, **60**, 70  
   Rowing 20, 21–2, 29, 51, 54, 70, 89  
     *see also* Quintin Boat Club  
   Rugby **65**, 70, 89, 117  
   Swimming 31, 65, 79, 89, 116  
   Tennis 116  
   Water polo 11, **11**, 27–8, 32, **32**, 70, **107**, 116  
   Women's Lawn Tennis **51**, 54, 70  
     *see also* Chiswick Poly Tennis Club
- Polytechnic Sports Club 61  
   Committee 104  
   *see also* Polytechnic Athletic Club  
 Polytechnic Stadium 78, **78**, 79, **100**  
 Poole, W.A. 52  
 Porter, Dilwyn 37  
 Portland Hall **92**, 113  
 Poulain, Maurice 99, 102  
 Pratt Sr., Charles James 3, 38, 66  
 Prestridge, Jim 97–8  
 Prestridge, Pauline 98  
 Price, Lionel **88**  
 Priestley, J.B. 82  
 Propert, Rev. P.S.G. 20  
 Purcis, Doris **94**
- Quintin Boat Club *see* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Quintin Boat Club  
 Quintin Hogg Memorial Sports Ground, Chiswick *see* Chiswick Sports Ground  
 Quintin Hogg Challenge Cup Race 35  
 Quintin School *see* Day School for Boys  
 Quintin Rugby Club *see* Polytechnic sporting clubs: Rugby
- rambling 40, 66, 104, 112  
 'rational recreation' 9–10  
 Raven, Isobel **76**  
 Rawlinson, J. 33  
 Rawson, Ronald Rawson 68–9, **69**

- Rayner, Ruth 96
- Regent Street Polytechnic 3, **14**, **19**, **24**, 36, 47,  
51, 52, **58**, 59, 64, 99, 103, 106  
establishment of 1–2, 7, 11, 31  
gymnasium 15, **15**, **19**, **29**, 55, **64**, 68, **106**, 118  
sporting clubs *see* Polytechnic sporting clubs  
sporting facilities 14–26, **18–19**, **59**, **77**, **78**, **88**,  
**92**, **96**, **105–7**  
swimming pool 16–17, **17–19**, **96**, **107**
- Rhoden, George 100
- Ricketts, David **44**, **90–1**
- rifle shooting 31, 59, **60**, 66, 70, 89, **97**, 113
- rowing 11, 20–2, **21**, **23**, **34**, 59, 65, 70, 79, **79**,  
85, 89, 105, 111, 113, **113**, 116, **116**, 117, **117**
- Royal Polytechnic Institution 7
- rugby 11, 22, 29, 32, **65**, 82, 83, 86, 89, **92**, 101,  
113, 117
- Ryan, Harry Edgar 66, **67**
- St George and the Dragon emblem 11
- Salmon, Sir Isidore 79
- Schools Boat Club 70
- Scott-Ellis, Thomas, eighth Baron Howard de  
Walden 13
- Screech, Barbara 94
- sexism in sport 50–5, 103
- Shenton, Brian **101**
- Shipley, Stan 47
- Sibbit, John 67
- Simpson, Harry 75
- Simpson, Janet Mary 75
- soccer *see* football
- Social Life in the Institute* 36
- Southern Amateur League (SAL) 87–8, 115
- Southern Football Alliance 33
- Southern Suburban League 34
- Spartan League 34, 66, 86
- Sport and the Making of Britain* 47
- Sporting Life, The* 41
- Sporting Life Trophy **24**
- Spotted Dog Hotel 35, 75
- Stacey, Nicolas **101**
- Stancer, Lt. E.H. 64
- Strollers 87
- Studd, Bernard 86, **86**, 103
- Studd Challenge Trophy and Memorial 8, 20,  
26–30, **26**, **27**, 28, 30, **36**, 61, **61**, 98, 111  
committee 27, 29, 72–3, 93, 99
- Studd, Sir Eric 103
- Studd, Sir John Edward Kynaston 3, 8, 12, **12**, 13,  
29, **51**, 57–8, 61, 63, 72–3, 76, 77, 86
- Swann, Dick 30, 107–8, **108**, 110
- swimming 11, 16–19, **17**, **25**, 28, 31–2, 37, 59, 65,  
70, 71, **77**, 82, 83, 89, **96**, 97, 116  
swimming baths 16–17, **17**, **18–19**, 59, 65, 83,  
**96**, **107**, **117**, 118
- table tennis 74, **77**, 84, 89, 92
- Taylor, A.J.P. 111
- Taylor, Marion **76**, **94**
- temperance *see* Cocoa Tree temperance tavern  
*see also* licensed drinking facilities, introduction of
- tennis 8, 12, 22, 23, 32, 37, 48, 50, **51**, 52, 54, 65,  
69, 70, 73, **81**, 83, 89, 99, 102, 113, 116
- Territorial Army 12
- Tottenham Hotspur FC 14, 34
- Trophies **24–5**  
*see also* Elsie Hoare Trophy  
*see also* Gayler Memorial Trophy  
*see also* Kinnaird Trophy  
*see also* Major V.R. Hoare Shield  
*see also* Sporting Life Trophy  
*see also* Studd Challenge Trophy
- Turner, L.J.M. 67
- Turnham Green and Polytechnic CC 116
- University of Westminster, establishment of 4  
sporting facilities 114–119  
*Utopia Unlimited* *see* Gilbert and Sullivan
- Vandamm, Florence [photographer] **45**
- Wagg, Stephen 21
- Walker, Helen 50
- Walvin, James 9
- Wanderers FC 8, 37
- water polo **11**, 20, 27–8, 32, **32**, 59, 65, 70, **107**,  
116
- Watling, Winnie 57, 73
- Webb, Lt. Jack 64
- Webb, Violet Blanche 72–3, 75, **75**
- Weeden, Brenda 11
- Wells, William Thomas, ‘Bombardier’ **47**
- White City Stadium 40–1, **40**
- Wilson, Doug 100
- Wilson, Harold 4, 107
- Wint, Arthur 98, 99, 100, **100**
- Wintringham, Margaret 71
- Wirsley, Mary **76**
- Women’s Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA)  
72, 93
- Women’s Council 71, 93, 106, 111, 112, 113
- Women’s Islamic Games 95
- Women’s Social Room 84, 92, **92**
- women’s sports 50–7, 70–4, 84, 89, 92–8
- Wood, Ethel 1, 3, 30, 55, 61, 71, 93, 105, 107, 112
- Woolwich Arsenal FC 33
- World Games, Brussels 94
- Wright, Lt. G.B. 64
- Yates, Ken **106**
- York Place Ragged School and Mission 1–2
- Young Men’s Christian Institute (YMCI) 1, 2,  
11–13, 27, 31
- Young Women’s Christian Institute *see* Young  
Women’s Institute
- Young Women’s Institute 3, 30, 44, 50–7, 71, 84,  
93
- Youths’ Christian Institute *see* Young Men’s  
Christian Institute