



Newsletter No 4

December 2011

Welcome to the final centenary newsletter. This edition includes: reports on the big events (the party, mobmatch and dinner); centenary goodies; memories from John Coppin; and an interview with President Ron Bond.

Clubhouse opening and centenary party: 10th September

The formal opening included speeches by Barbara Newman CBE chairman of the Epping Forest Committee and David Golton from the London Marathon Charitable Trust and the unveiling of the Orion sign.



Then there was a club photo and a rendition of the Orion Cry to set 150 members off on the inaugural run. After the run was a party, including the stunning cake.



Centenary Mobmatch: 22nd October

A glorious sunny day and the driest the forest has been for a mobmatch in living memory set the stage perfectly for Orion's Centenary Year mobmatch.

Annual fixtures against Ranelagh Harriers, Blackheath and South London Harriers go back to 1912 and have been run every year other than when world wars and foot and mouth prevented them.

An impressive 91 Orion runners finished the course, beating our previous record turnout of 82 set in the 1930s.



Blackheath brought a strong team of 41 and Ranelagh 33, with the field boasting 193 finishers.

First man home was South London's Ryan Evans in 45.02 and first lady was a guest R Karaliauskaite in 50.16. Orion were led home by Ben Hall in 2nd, though but for following a wayward Blackheath runner off the course, that honour would probably have gone to new boy Matt Woodman. First Orion lady was the strong running, Clare Thurgood.

Orion's quality and strength in numbers ensured a clean sweep in the team results with comfortable victories: over Blackheath (with 39 scoring for each team); over Ranelagh (with 31 scoring for each team); and in the multimob beating Blackheath, Ranelagh and South London (with 12 scoring for each team).



After the race and trophy presentations, the competitors, clutching their well-earned centenary mugs as a memento of the day, made short work of the excellent buffet.

Enormous thanks to all who ran from Orion and particularly our guests, as well as to all the people without whom the race could not have happened: Bill and all the marshalls, the timekeepers, Nigel for doing the results, the trail-layers, Alan and everyone in the kitchen.

Centenary Dinner
(report by Warwick Barton)

Orion took over West Essex Golf Club for the night of the 26th November, festooned as it was with red and white (and a bit of black). Almost 150 members got together, chatted over good food and wine, swapped stories, caught up with old friends and contemplated a bit of history in the making. There were also spirited renditions of the Cherubims of Chingford, Harry the Harrier and, of course, the Orion cry.



Ted Hefford joined us from Macclesfield (the longest serving member present, having joined in

1955). Ken Jones (veteran of every London Marathon) fresh from his run to the ‘lost’ pond and as vigorous and energetic as ever, regaled us with several toasts and the “seniors’ choir” treated us to a splendid rendition of some old Orion songs. Indeed they were all in fine spirits.

Overheard at one of the seniors’ tables: Bright young waitress to member, while serving: “Are you having an enjoyable evening sir?” Blazered senior’s response: “It could be better”, slipping his arm around her waist.

Other memories from the evening include the splendid Centenary Cake, complete with oak leaves and acorns, masterminded by Regis.....Jane [Farrier] keeping to time.....Don [Taylor] getting close to the edge.....Such was some of the banter later one commentator noted that the Master of Ceremonies needed a canon, rather than his diminutive bell.



Anne de Asha’s final toast bears repeating, summing up for many there what it was all

about: *“To our founding members, to those who have inspired us, to the open road, the exhilarating forest, to special friends, fun, to those who have supported us along the way, to the challenges and personal successes... I ask you raise your glasses to the future of our great club...ORION.”*

Postscript: It is hoped that Alan Croucher enjoyed his evening. He should be aware that when the organisers were compiling the table plan it seemed that about half those attending wanted to sit with him. What’s the secret Alan?

Warwick Barton

Centenary Dinner Programmes: The club has a few Centenary Dinner Programmes left over. They are available to members if they forward a stamp addressed envelope (for A5 size paper) to Warwick Barton 37 Jacklin Green Woodford Green Essex IG8 0TY

Looking ahead

Looking ahead to the rest of the centenary season, there are still a number of events to come:

Ranelagh mob match Saturday February 4th at Richmond Park. While we beat Ranelagh as part of the centenary mobmatch, we also have an away fixture against them too. Have no doubt that they will have a strong team (they had 66 runners out to comfortably beat Blackheath on 26th November). Last time we raced them at Richmond, we beat them by the narrowest of margins in a 52 a-side match. It's absolutely essential everyone comes to this.

A mobmatch against Eton Manor as part of our home Chingford League match on 24th January.

Centenary Merchandise

Now is a good chance to snap up your centenary mementoes before its too late. Virtually all the junior t-shirts have gone, but there are still some ladies fitted t-shirts £6 and men's tech t-shirts and

vests £10 and a few centenary mugs (£5) left (see Pete and Fran). There are also the club cloth badges for £1 each.

Quin now has a stock of the updated silk club ties (£12).

John Coppin's Memories of Orion

John is currently Orion's longest serving member and sent in his memories of the club:

“I am now 96 and I joined Orion in 1934. The captain was Geoffrey Ross and the next captain was Douglas Elgie.

We had this song called “the Cherubims of Chingford”:

we have a run and a bit of fun.

And they say “Who are we?”

We're the Cherubims of Chingford.

ORION – THAT'S US!

*They talk about Harriers down South London Way,
Who refuse to drink beer and make work out of play
..... and so on*

The songs are written by Arthur Hood, who I don't remember being a running member but I think he may well have been one of the original members who founded Orion Gymnastic Club in Hackney. That was where it originated. He used to come to the concerts and sing these songs. There was another one- Harry was a Harrier.

The Blackheath Harriers were more like ourselves. We always used to have a good run with them and party afterwards. They were a similar type.

I ran in the Southern Junior Championship for the club, in a snowstorm. It was held at Horton Kirby up on the North Downs. I was a last minute entry as I was only just 20. I've got the medals somewhere. I ran in the Southern Championship at Epsom and the North of the Thames Championships, the National, which was up Liverpool way. I was never very highly placed.

A lot of the emphasis in the pre-war years was on the social side. Harold Lee and I ran two treasure hunts, not only did you have to follow a route which was all done in verse, but they had to collect things on the way. One of the things we got them to collect was a

“sow's ear” or a “silk purse” and somebody knocked up a slaughter house and actually came back with a sow's ear! They were quite good fun.

After the season had finished we also used to have an “outlying run” in a different area. We used to say we couldn't go back to the same pub twice because they'd never have you back. I remember falling off my bike at the War Memorial at Cookham.

In 1938 we had the Brighton Walk, which wasn't competitive. We started from London Bridge as Big Ben struck 4 and walked through the night to Brighton. We stopped half way at Eric Askew's house. The club owes a lot to him. He was never a very fast runner, but during the war he was a prolific letter writer and he wrote to members in the service to put them in touch with other Orion members. We were spread out all over the world then, of course. He was the secretary then and he kept the club alive until after the war.

I remember some of the pre-war members: Bill Wood, Lester Turner who was a member of the rubber exchange, Freddie Ager who was a great friend of mine who also lived in Loughton, and there was Bill Wilson. There was a very close connection between the Orion and the London Rifle Brigade. I enjoyed the LRB through the Orion. Tommy Townsend was one of the old members and Basil Tweed who was secretary for years and Ernest Ingall.

This was all before Harold Lee started the Road-Running section for the summer after the war. Harold later did a lot of the basic work for the London Marathon, measuring up the course. He was always rather fed up because those chaps who did all the work got no credit.

We always had an Orion Dance held at the small Queen's Hall, which was destroyed during the war. These continued after the war at the Hotel Rembrandt.

I was deputy captain the year before the war; Harold was Captain that year, the 1938 season. He ran in the marathon, which in those days was run from Windsor to White City where the AAAs Championships were held.

We had three main races: the 5 miles, the 7½ and 10. The 10 mile crossed the main Epping Road. The traffic got too heavy, so we had to stop crossing it.

We made a wide circle round the Wake Arms instead.

Running was more unusual in those days- nobody was jogging then. It was only done as a recognised sport. There was never any thought of a women's section either.

The club played an important part in my life. The contacts helped me with my future career in the Camerons and I had many friendships that have lasted throughout my life and some very fond memories.”

John Coppin

Club President, archivist and former athlete Ron Bond is interviewed by Tim Wright.



Ron, How and when did you come to Orion?

I ran in the Orion schools Invitation Cross Country Races in 1954 and 1956. The testing course, with an uphill finish and a welcome beaker of tea at the end, plus the hospitality of Orion members, left a favourable impression on me. After university and National Service, I joined in October 1961 at the same time as Peter Filler.

What would you pick as your best performance in an Orion vest?

Helping us to finish third on two occasions in 1968. First the prestigious Finchley 20 in extremely humid conditions in which only 103 of the 179 starters finished. Then the Bernie Hames Half Marathon, after quaffing a pint of Tartan Bitter at the RFH. I narrowly missed another medal the following year in the Chelmsford Half

Marathon when we were third again. Surprisingly I beat the other ten Orion runners, but I had been entered as part of the B team!

Do you have any sporting regrets?

Yes, that I didn't join the club until I was 25 and that I retired from running (except for the annual training week) at 45.

What do you think makes Orion special?

Our nearness to the forest and open spaces and our members are like a box of Bassetts; allsorts!

What would you pick as the all-time best Orion performance?

Danielle Sale 4th scorer for Great Britain and Northern Ireland Junior Women's Team - who finished 5th (ahead of the rest of Europe) in the IAAF World Cross Country Championships at Fukuoka, Japan in 2006. She recorded the same time as our 3rd scorer and only 10 seconds behind Stephanie Twell.

Who would be in your Orion dream team?

My dream team, based partly on results in the Southern and English National Cross Country championships, would include Hughie Dare (2nd, 8th and an English vest in 1923) and Reggie Ries (15th and 14th in 1933). Good positions in the Southern earn Marshall Pontifex (4th in 1925) and Geoffrey Vines (14th in 1938) their places. Post-war winners of the club 10 miles Championships, The Mercury, John Frost (10 times) and Paul Filler (13) are joined by present-day runners Natalie Kipps and Clare Thurgood. They easily refute the jaundiced views of the editor of the OH Gazette in February 1926. He wrote "*we note that the feminine variety of the Harrier has been seen on the plain and even in the forest... As far as speed goes we fear they would fare ill against our slow pack, and the aesthetic aspect is not as favourable as the Sunday papers try to make out.*"

Who's the best athlete who has never quite fulfilled their potential?

I am tempted to select Danielle again. Aged only 19 she retired in 2007, listed 4th and 2nd respectively at 5,000 metres track and 5 miles road in the UK under 20 women's rankings. But my choice is Charles Spencer Edgington. As a student he won the Universities Athletic Union Cross Country title in 1933 and ran for 4 different teams against Orion before joining us in 1936. Expected to be our 3rd scorer on his debut, he finished 58th out of 78, beaten by 35 Orion runners in the SLH mobmatch at Chingford. He never raced again.

You've seen some enormous changes in the sport and in the club. Tell us about them.

Fifty years ago, athletics was an amateur sport enjoyed by comparatively few people. Gradually, professionalism has crept into the highest ranks, but most athletes remain unpaid. The birth of the London Marathon in 1981 saw an enormous expansion in participation and the popularity of running.

Inter-club races between 2 or 3 teams have been replaced by league fixtures, although our mobmatches have survived. The biggest changes in the club have been the admission of ladies in 1986, the expansion of the juniors and the subsequent introduction of track and field athletics, now embracing seniors as well.

You've seen some tough races, in some tough conditions. Which is the hardest race you've ever seen?

The senior men's race in the English Nationals at Sutton Coldfield in 1972. Rain which lashed the course on the first lap changed to sleet on the second and to freezing snow on the third. The stream which was forded twice on each lap, got deeper each time until finally it reached our waists. "*this wasn't sport ... It was a survival test*" wrote the editor of Athletics Weekly.

You make an enormous commitment to the club, officiating and supporting. What motivates you to stand out in all conditions supporting our athletes?

I have got so much out of the club for so long that I am trying to repay a little of it while I can. As a December child, I have always enjoyed winter and I am much happier in the summer officiating than when I was running.

Tell us one little known fact about yourself.

I attended the same school as Ray Valins of '100 club' fame.

Tell us one little known fact about the club.

The youngest person elected as a member was Timothy Canham aged 9 months in 1963.

Can you pick out a couple of your proudest moments as Club President so far?

The devoted work of members in adapting the Jubilee Retreat, the huge turnout of our runners and rivals at the Centenary mobmatch and those who made the Centenary Dinner so memorable.

What are you most looking forward to in 2012?

The completion of our most successful season ever, promotion for our juniors in track and field and a host of new members encouraged by the Olympics.

What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the club going forward?

On the country, new courses that avoid some of the busiest roads if possible. On the road, continued success bolstered by the intake from Walthamstow. On the track and field, more participation by the seniors; the union of young and old in last season's was encouraging.

Thank you all

It's been a great centenary season so far and there are more events to come. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of it. Now all we have to do to honour all those involved in the club over the last hundred years is make the next hundred even better!