

# Dublin University Harriers & Athletics Club



A Centenary

1885–1985

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# DUBLIN UNIVERSITY HARRIERS AND ATHLETIC CLUB

## A CENTENARY HISTORY



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“The past is a foreign country:  
they do things differently there.”

L. P. Hartley  
— The Go-Between

“It is a very sad thing  
that there is so little  
useless information”

Oscar Wilde (D.U.A.C. member)  
— Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-educated.

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## A CENTENARY HISTORY, 1885–1985

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Figure 1: The 1862 Dublin University Foot Races Committee



# Preface

The Harriers and Athletic Club has served well not only college students for 100 years, it has also served athletics well. Until the 1960's, there were two athletic unions in Ireland, we in one and U.C.D. in the other. In 1961, these unions allowed us, as an exceptional measure, to compete and this began the unifying of the unions. It generated the co-operation which led to the Willwood Games, which became the present Tailteann Games. So divisions in athletics were healed and this released a great upsurge of energy for the development of athletics in Ireland.

In the 1961 discussions, the club was represented by its student officers, often meeting more senior members of other clubs. The club has been typical of most Trinity clubs in always being run by students. Even beyond athletic prowess, it has consistently supported the younger. Conspicuously, it accepted in 1962 for its match with U.C.D. a trophy by Edward Delaney. It was the first Irish commission he ever received and was followed by his gaining commissions for the Thomas Davis and Wolfe Tone memorials and far many other major works.

D.U.H.A.C. is one of the longest established of the sports clubs in Trinity. When the college was much smaller, membership of any club or society implied tighter communal loyalties than today. Yet the continuing strength of these loyalties are splendidly demonstrated by the energies that have been given to these centenary celebrations and the production of this book. This is a valuable record of the history of the club and the prowess of many of its members. It is a record which will recall many friendships and of which all members can be deeply proud.

May the club honour its traditions by achieving as much in the future as it has in the past.

Professor George Dawson

President of Dublin University Harriers and Athletic Club.

# Introduction

In writing an account such as this celebratory history of a single small aspect of the university or national whole, one can usually rely on an existing general reference work from which to quarry the foundations, with other sources such as word of mouth, legend and newspaper reports providing the whimsical and or humorous structure. Unfortunately in this case, no such monumental reference work exists.

There are histories of the university certainly but these deal almost exclusively with the academic and ignore, no doubt correctly, sport or other such frivolous pastimes. As for a history of Irish athletics, if not indeed athletics in Ireland, though the subject is large enough, it has not so far attracted an author to attempt it seriously and no reliable text exists. Such texts as there are normally exhibit a bias towards one particular viewpoint, their authors more interested in having a gallop on their favourite hobby horse than in producing anything that resembles history, a not uncommon failing as regards Irish historical writing as a whole.

With such slender sources to draw from, any prospective researcher would naturally then turn to the club's own records and here again encounters problems.

In a series on the early history of sports clubs in the University published in T.C.D. Miscellany during the Michaelmas Term of 1921, the author states:

“The early records of the Club have not been preserved, and the First Secretary whose name I have been unable to find was Mr. R.L. Joynt, now Surgeon to the Meath Hospital, who was Secretary in 1888.”

Thankfully, this is not wholly true as records which appear not to have been known to the author do exist. However, the records as they exist are sporadic, some years being covered in great detail and others not at all, a situation not uncommon with student societies, this fact of course being of absolutely no consolation to the historian. From such sources as these, together with the previously mentioned word of mouth, legend and newspaper reports are the following assembled.

The authors of this history must start with a confession. 1985 is not the centenary year of Dublin University Harriers and Athletic Club, Dublin University Harriers were in fact founded in December 1886 and the origins of Dublin University Athletic Club

go back to 1872. However, the university authorities have always recognised 1885 as the year the club was founded as it was in that year that the club became one of the founding members of the I.A.A.A., a body set up to regulate Irish athletics and more importantly perhaps, keep it out of the hands of the G.A.A.

But more of this later. Based on such scant and various sources, this history is bound to contain some (hopefully not many) inaccuracies. The club would be delighted to put these right and welcomes any corrections or additions. Furthermore, there are many other minute books and other club memorabilia which was not uncovered and perhaps this book will go some way to restoring these to college.

All that remains is to thank the many club members who opened their memories, and in many cases their attics, to us; and to thank all the contributors; our President, Professor George Dawson for his continual support; and finally, the person who has contributed the most in both his time and his sanity — our present captain, Conor Mulcahy.

Lastly, though this is a history of the athletic club of an academic institution, it is not an academic history. All the academic trimmings of history have been copiously avoided. This history, like any other, is merely our interpretation of events. This is simply our story — no more, no less.

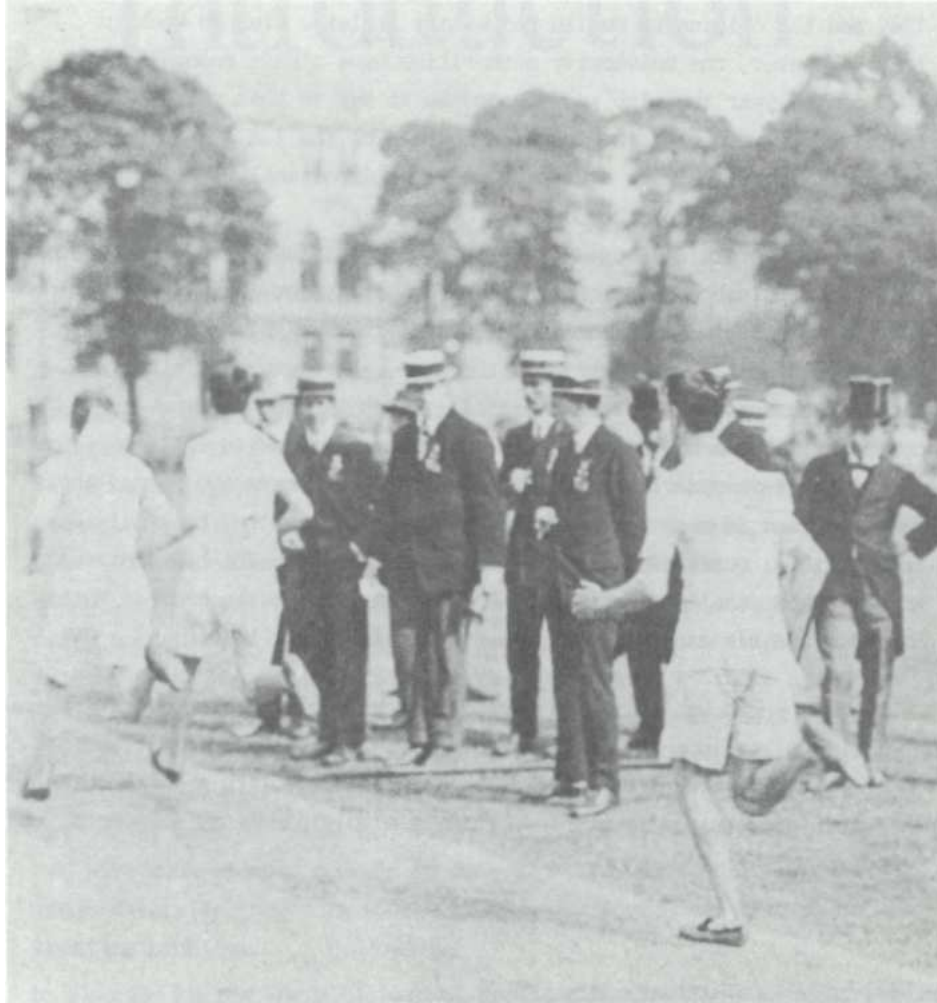


Figure 2: "So we beat on boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."