

Maroon & White

Enrolled among our athletes, the pale youth Whose limbs ere while weak,
and of muscle void, Tottered beneath their puny load, soon gains The bloom
of health, and issues forth at last Robust and hardy as the mountaineer.

(Athletic & Cycling News, 1886)

Of all the forms of running, cross-country is the most basic, back-to-nature exercise. The track and road are, after all, simply artificial surfaces developed by man, but the grass and mud of cross country really provides the athlete with a tough, challenging and absolutely natural carpet on which to run.

The elements may make the mud heavier, cover the course in deep snow, or leave it bone hard. The hills, ditches and fences provide their own specific challenge. But they will still be there when today's runner has gone: The very grass itself, perhaps churned into mud by hundreds of pairs of feet on the Saturday afternoon, will grow green again when the athletes have packed their kit and left. It is likely that the same ground that athletes of former days trod on, is oft traversed by the latter day runner.

Organised cross country running has its roots in the mid-nineteenth century when it began as a winter pursuit for members of the Thames Rowing Club which met at Roehampton in Surrey. They decided to take runs on the nearby Wimbledon Common to keep fit, and in 1868 began to organise paper-chases. These events involved several runners setting off as 'hares' and laying trails of pieces of paper cut like confetti while the other runner had to follow as 'hounds' and there was a prize for the first 'hound' to reach each 'hare'.

Trinity cannot claim to have been the pioneers in this branch of athletics in Ireland. The City and Suburban Harriers and the County Dublin Harriers fought out the two first cross-country championships in 1881 and 1882. It wasn't until Michaelmas term of 1886 that a Harriers club was formed in College for the purposes of promoting the sport.

On the afternoon of 14th December 1886, a number of Trinity men interested in cross-country running held a meeting in the new pavilion in the College Park. In the absence of that splendid all-round athlete, gallant gentleman and eminent man of science, George

Francis Fitzgerald, who had promised to preside, the chair was taken by Rev. H.B. Kennedy B.A. Out of this meeting, Dublin University Harriers was formed. The moving spirit in the inauguration of D.U.H. was C.W. Mosley, who graduated in 1886.

The meeting elected Professor Fitzgerald as the club president, a position he held until his death in 1901, with A. C. O'Sullivan F.T.C.D. and Professor D. J. Cunningham M.D. as vice-presidents. W.P. Douglas was the club's first captain with Mosley taking the position of vice-captain. Lyster Cole-Baker was elected both the secretary and Treasurer, with the remaining committee members being R.D. Freeman, V. Rutledge R.L. Joynt, D.F. Rambant and W.P. Kennedy.

The large attendance of students present were enrolled as members.

Later that same day, at a general meeting of the Cross-country Association of Ireland, in the committee rooms of 36 North Great Georges Street, D.U.H. proposed by the City of Dublin Harriers and seconded by H.H. was elected a member of the association, bringing total membership of that association to seven.

The opening meet of the club was held on Saturday 15th January 1887 at Dollymount but, due to a term examination, there were only twelve members present. At 3.30pm Mosley and E. Fletcher were started as hares and after seven minutes the pack started in pursuit. The route taken was rounded by Raheny, leaving the junction on the right. After crossing the Great Northern Railway, the pack made for Baldoyle and Sutton, and then straight for home. The race report in the 'Irish Sportsman' described the run home as being very close, the placed men being well together. Cole-Baker was first home followed by Fry, H. R. Jones and Adair, with Rutledge, Joynt, Allen, Davoren, Egerton and Brooking being well up.

The club participated in their first Irish Cross-Country Championships on Saturday March 26th, 1887 in Baldoyle. The individual title was won by C.C. Carp of the City of Dublin Harriers, with the County Dublin Harriers winning the team event scoring thirty-nine points: The D.U.H. team finished fifth, with W. P. Kennedy being the club's first finisher in 17th position. The other scorers were E. W. Grimshaw 34th, J. S. Craig 36th, R. L. Joynt 39th, L. C. Baker 45th and E. Fletcher 52nd.

In 1891, the club had its most successful season so far in Irish athletics. Captained by F.R. Carr, it succeeded in winning both the senior and the junior cross-country championships. In the senior race, Trinity had its entire scoring team of six in the first seventeen, another Trinity man finishing nineteenth.

It wasn't until January 1895 that D.U.H. got its first international runner when the then captain A.A. Seeds was selected on the Irish International Team for a race against England in Baldoyle.

During the first ten years of life, the Harriers contented themselves with home competition, but in February 1897, an Intervarsity match was held for the first time with a competition against Edinburgh University Hare and Hounds. A Trinity team captained

by Tom Stewart, but deprived of more than half of its chosen men by measles, influenza and examinations travelled to Edinburgh. The result was disastrous to the Trinity team.

As a result of the defeat, an anonymous correspondent of 'TCD' launched a sweeping attack on college athletes. "They are," he asserts "in a state of rapid consumption, and must presently become absolutely extinct". He directs criticism against D.U.H., writing that the Executives of the Harriers were guilty of "impardonable error in entrusting the reputation of the university to a team, many members of which were substitutes and some untrained."

The following issue contained a defence, penned by R.J. Rowlette, the Clubs Hon. secretary who admirably put down the correspondents claims.

In the return match the following December, the "unpardonable error" was well retrieved. The race held over the clubs Meadowbrook course saw the entire Trinity team — scorers and non-scorers alike — finish inside the Edinburgh scoring team.

This competition against Edinburgh became an annual fixture right up until the 1950's. For the first few meetings, the clubs won alternatively, the home team always being victorious, until Trinity succeeded in winning in Scotland on December 3rd, 1906 with G. G. Duggan and G. M. Mayberry the first men home. Duggan, who became captain in 1907-8 was a very fine runner, travelling to Paris with the Irish international team in 1908. He later died of wounds at the Dardanelles in 1915.

Trinity has also had a strong association with Oxford University Hare and Hounds. In 1898, the Harriers first met Oxford U.H.&H, for a race over the Meadowbrook course. Dublin won easily, but the race itself provided an exciting dual for the premier position. After a neck-and-neck tussle for the last six hundred yards, Dawson of Oxford beat the Trinity captain R. C. Cree by some eighteen inches.

On March 1st, 1902 London United Hospitals Hare and Hounds became the first visiting 'varsity team to defeat D.U.H. After defeating Edinburgh a month earlier by two points, (17 to 19), D.U.H. were confident even though the victor on that occasion, Horan, was not running. The race, run at Meadowbrook saw L.U.H.&H. finish 1, 2, 3 with Lister, Gibbs and Simmons, with Norton completing the scoring quartet in 6th place. D.U.H. accumulated 25 points with Askins 4th, Hart 5th, Kerr 7th and Fry 9th.

Two years later, on December 10th 1904, this fixture was to be the scene of drama when, on the second lap, H. Scott of the visiting Hospitals team broke his leg in negotiating the water jump. He was removed to Dunns' hospital. For the record, the race was won by Candler of the London side, but Trinity led by Murphy in third place packed well and thus ensured the easiest of victory by a margin of some 14 points.

Athletes representing Trinity in track and field competition participated under the auspices of the Athletic Union, which was the central athletic association, the forerunner of the modern day DUCAC. D.U.H., as the name suggests, confined its interests to cross-country running, although old programmes and reports of meets invariably showed that

athletes representing Trinity ran for D.U.H. and the A.U. at the same meet.

The club did, however, in conjunction with the Bicycle Club, promote the 'Bicycle and Harriers Sports', which was held towards the end of Trinity term. This, for all intents and purposes, was the club championships.

The college races continued to be the highlight of the college track and field season. A report in TCD early in 1906 notes the fall off in student participation in the races, the writer concluding that "it is the duty of every member of the University to support the College Races loyally if they are to be a success." Another report estimated that only approximately 30 of the 1,000 students on the college books took part in the races. Probably as a result of this fall-off, the A.U. agreed in 1908 that interfaculty relays be introduced.

Originally an isolated fixture, the races have been, since 1909, the central event of Trinity week, first held that year. The 'week' usually included a cricket match, a regatta, the finals of the lawn tennis championships, a boxing tournament, a golf championship, a ball and a dinner of the T.C.D. Association.

While this is essentially a review of the beginning of DUHAC, it would not be complete without some mention of the personalities who represented the college in track and field competitions. Although, as we noted, they did not participate as D.U.H., the D.U.A.U. did have members of D.U.H. on its committees and was the driving force behind the foundation of DUHAC in 1921.

In 1908, the college sent a team to the British Intervarsity sports; the meet proved highly successful and the strong Trinity contingent were victorious, beating seven other universities.

The brightest star of the eighties was Dan D. Bulger. Standing over six feet, D. D. Bulger was beautifully proportioned and quickly attracted attention in his student days with D.U.H. He entered college in 1883, and soon he was scratch man, and when he opened his championship record in the 220 yards IAAA in 1885 and 100 yards and 220 yards under the G.A.A. in 1886, he paved the way for a collection of titles any athlete would envy. When he was in his prime, no sprinter or hurdler could approach him in this country. At that time, there was an amiable working agreement between the G.A.A. and the IAAA. Each recognised the others performances and records, with athletes competing on Saturday under IAAA and on Sundays under G.A.A. rules.

Bulger won the Irish 100 yards championship six times and the 220 yards, 120 yards hurdles and long jump four times each. In all, he accumulated 25 Irish championship gold medals. He was also English champion long jumper in 1889, 1891 and 1892, also winning the English 120 yards Hurdles in the latter two years.

The highlight of Bulger's career must undoubtedly be the IAAA championship of August 1892 when, at Ballsbridge, he equalled the then world record for the 120 yards hurdles, winning in $15\frac{4}{5}$ seconds.

A. Vigne, who was contemporary with Bulger, was Irish 100 yards champion in 1886 and 1887, 220 yards champion in 1887 and 1888 and 440 yards champion in 1888. Vigne and Bulger shared the 100 yards record of $10\frac{1}{5}$ with D. Murray and N. Morgan until N. J. Cartmell covered the distance in 'even time' in 1909. Vigne also held the Irish 220 yards record of $22\frac{4}{5}$ seconds until this too was broken by Cartmell in the same year.

C. R. Dickinson was the first Irish man to win a flat race championship of England, which he did by winning the 440 yards in 1892 in a time of $50\frac{2}{5}$ seconds. This success was followed by J. C. Meredith who won the same English championship in 1896. Dickinson was Irish champion at 220 yards in 1892, and at 440 yards in 1891 and 1892. His brother, Cyril H. Dickinson, also a Trinity man, was Irish champion at 880 yards in 1897 and 1898, and at one mile in 1897.

Meredith was Irish champion at 100, 220 and 440 yards in 1895. He won the Irish 'quarter' for four years and equalled the Irish record of 51 seconds in 1896. The athletic correspondent of 'The Freeman' writing at that time "thinks him probably one of the best men in the world over any distance up to a mile".

Grimshaw was Irish one mile steeplechase title holder in 1894, but much to the dismay of his fellow athletes, he failed to defend his title the following year.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Trinity had two fine track runners: H. Thrift and G. N. Morphy. Thrift who won the Irish 440 yards in 1906 won the scratch 100 yards at the college races for seven years in succession, from 1902, when he was a Junior Freshman, to 1908 when he was the Madden Prizeman. Morphy took the Irish 440 yards in 1908, 1909 and 1910, and the half-mile and mile in 1905, 1906 and 1908. In the college races of 1905, Morphy set what appeared to be an Irish record for the 880 yards, running 1 minute $57\frac{2}{5}$ seconds. The track, on measurement, proved to be five and half yards short and the record was disallowed. However, a week later at the Bicycle Club Sports, Morphy covered the distance in 1 minute $56\frac{4}{5}$ seconds, Morphy also won the mile for Ireland against Scotland in 1906.

F. R. S. Shaw was the star of the years immediately before the first world war. He won the Irish 220 yards in 1912, 1913 and 1914, also winning the 100 yards in the two latter years. Running in the 100 yards for Ireland against Scotland in 1913 at Belfast, Shaw won the race and equalled Cartmell's Irish record of 10 seconds. Shaw was also a good cricketer and captained the first eleven in 1914.

For much of this period, Mr. J. H. Askins was the Harriers team trainer. For the purpose of students who wished to participate in the college races, the Athletic Union 'engaged' a coach. For the latter part of the nineteenth century, it was Brierly. Preceding the war, T. Cronin filled that post.

From the club records, it is clear that training didn't amount to much.

Sprinters, jumpers and throwers didn't begin their training until March, although invariably most of them played rugby during the winter months.

A bit of coaching advice which appears in TCD on 28th May 1898 surely has echoes of Arthur Lydiard in it:

“Some of the men are sadly in want of constant training, as I notice that they have an abnormal quantity of adipose tissue distributed over their body, a considerable portion of which must be got rid of before they can call themselves fit. The best way to accomplish this end is not by going intermittent short distances at high speed, but by doing from seven to ten miles at about half speed, and not to attempt sprinting until they have become more hard”.

Although advice given to the Harriers team by the captain prior to the Christmas vacation of 1909 sounds very appealing, “all members of the team must keep in training by taking long walks at least twice a week”!

While a set time for training existed, TCD in its May 17th 1902 issue noted that Brierly would be most willing to attend to any man whose lectures interfere with the ordinary time for training.

The Harriers trained on a Saturday, with a further run often organised on a Wednesday in the College Park.

The Saturday training runs varied in distance from 3–10 miles. The variance in length is also matched by a variety in the type of training. No mention can be found of fartlek or interval running or repetitions of for that matter of any of the technical methods employed now by coaches.

The club seemed to use many different venues for these weekly pack runs. Sometimes they took the 2 o’clock Parkgate Street steam tram for a 3pm run from Chapelizod (‘The Mullingar’). Other times, they ran in Howth, Dollymount, Malahide or Rathfarnham.

By far the most popular form of training was ‘hare and hounds’.

The ‘hares’, who were usually the slower runners, were dispatched with pieces of paper, cut like confetti. After an agreed interval, the other runners, the ‘hounds’ set out after the hares. The hares could take any route they pleased, but they must leave clear indicators of the direction they followed by placing the paper, conveniently located, to indicate their route to their pursuers.

It was on such a run on Saturday 5th February 1898 in Rathfarnham, with the hounds hot on the heels of the hares, that crossing a field, a large ram detached itself from a flock of sheep and charged full at the club captain, J. H. Askins, “butting him below the belt, and nearly bowling him over”.

The 1906–1907 season seems to be full of incidents, especially when Keer was the hare. On a training run on December 8th, the hares, Keer and Shegog, crawled on all fours “through hedges and barbed wire” (reminding the writer in TCD of the “conditions of modern warfare”); Three of the hounds were caught in it and had to be “extricated

by the others". Another exciting incident was an attempt made in a farmyard, by a farmer, to tackle Blackbourne, who escaped over a wall just in time.

On another run, on February 1st, the hares, Keer and Blackbourne found that the hounds were only 30 metres down. Keer at once made for a ploughed field, with Mayberry and Armstrong at his heels. While Blackbourn sped swiftly in the direction of a farmyard, with hare in pursuit, Blackbourne escaped by crossing the roof of an outhouse while hare vainly sought him amount the farmyard roosters. Some twisting and turning in the plough enabled Keer to baffle his pursuers and he and Blackbourne arrived home uncaught.

A more realistic form of Hare and hounds was often employed by the club in the 1980's when they would travel to Tallaght and run with Mr. Godley's beagles. The runners would all set off with a scent and it was up to the beagles to catch them.

Socially, the club was also active during this period. An annual club dinner was held towards the end of Michaelmas term. The myth that distance runners train like animals during the day and drink like heron at night is given some support, for the second mentioned remark only it seems, by the evidence provided in reports about the club dinner. While the original Dublin University Harriers may not have been your average 100 mile a week runners, an advertisement in TCK of November 25th, 1900 promoting the dinner notes that "only drinkers of 'aqua-pura' — it being a harriers dinner — will be allowed to take their 55 seats"!

The club also organised smoking concerts, or "smokers" as they were better known, to raise funds. The attendance would smoke and listen to red songs. Good training for the lungs.