

History of the Milocarian Athletic Club

Early Days

Before the world war of 1914-18, the important athletic event of the Service Colleges was the annual match between the Royal Military College Sandhurst and The Royal Military Academy Woolwich. On the formation of The Air Force College Cranwell, the match became a triangular contest and was first held as such in 1927.

It was after this contest in 1930 when Woolwich won by 2 points from Sandhurst, who in turn were second, by 2 points from Cranwell, that the Milocarian Athletic Club was formed. Major the Hon W S P Alexander, DSO, of the Irish Guards, and the late Captain I E F Campbell, of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, had for some time past hoped for such a club to be formed in order to encourage cadets to continue with athletics after they had joined their Regiments, and it was on 10th May 1930 that the officers i/c Athletics of the three Service Colleges met in the South West Wing, RMA Woolwich, and decided to form the Club.

The Club when formed was open for membership to Blues and half Blues from the three Services Colleges. From its formation it was always hoped to open the Club to the Royal Navy, but at that time it was not possible to incorporate the Royal Naval College Dartmouth, owing to the difference of the age of the cadets.

The Club

The name of the Club is derived from a combination of MILO and ICARUS. Milo was a strong man from Croton in Southern Italy in the 6th century BC. His prowess at wrestling, running, long jumping, throwing the discobolus and javelin made him winner of the ancient Olympic games no less than six times. He could hold a pomegranate in his hand so tightly that no one could wrest it from him yet so lightly that it was not crushed. Icarus was the son of Daedalus and according to classical mythology fled with his father out of Crete to avoid the wrath of King Minos. They escaped by attaching wings to their bodies. Unfortunately for Icarus, he ignored his father's warning not to fly too close to the sun with the result that the wax used to attach his wings melted and he plunged to his death into the Icarian sea, which was also named after him.

The Club Colours - dark blue for the Royal Navy, red for Sandhurst, yellow for Woolwich, and light blue for Cranwell, were designed by Capt R H B Longland, RE.

Halcyon Days

The first match that took place was a cross country race against the Royal Military College at Sandhurst over a five and half mile course early in 1931. On the occasions the Club suffered its first defeat. The race was started by Mr W H Roberts, OBE, MC the senior mathematical professor at Woolwich. He was the first Hon Member of the Club, and was elected for his enthusiasm and interest in athletics over a period of many years.

Between, 1931 and 1939 the Club won many successes on the track, notably in the AAA Championships, the Kinnaird trophy, and the 'News of the World' Whit-Monday Games, besides having representatives in the Olympic Games of 1932 and 1936.

During the war 1939-1945 over a hundred Milocarians were killed in action. In 1946 the Milocarian Trophy was purchased and presented by the Club to the Amateur Athletic Association, for competition among schools as a memorial to the Milocarian fallen.

Mixed Fortunes

For obvious reasons a purely Services Club such as the Milocarians was unable to function during the war. It was not until 1948 that the Club found itself in a position to embark on a full track season programme. Owing to lack of recruiting during the war years the number of active athletes was limited. However, no less than five Milocarians represented Great Britain in the Olympic Games in 1948.

Between 1948 and 1962 the troubled state of the world greatly handicapped the revival of the club, and our successes did not reach pre-war standards. The maintenance at Strength of overseas garrisons and the constant movements of units about the world meant that a large percentage of our active athletes were serving abroad. However, branches of the Club were formed overseas and members were often prominent among winners of events in all overseas stations.

The Demise of Track and Field

In 1960 a re-formed Committee set about the task of rebuilding the Club. This proved to be an arduous and difficult task and it was not until 1964 that the Club showed signs of returning to its former strength. In that year after a successful cross country season, the club won eight of its matches, including the Gosport Trophy and lost only one, thanks to good support from all three Services and sound organisation.

The dominant feature of the late sixties and early seventies was the effect the Northern Ireland commitments had on the availability of Army strength. This led to the Club being unable to field balanced teams of a reasonable size. The result was that our performance in the athletics arena was badly hit, despite membership of the club being made available to all members of the three Services and to MOD civilians. The advent of the league system in English Athletics led to the eventual demise of the Milocarian track and field effort, but the Milocarian flag was kept flying in cross country running by a small number of dedicated members.

Is this the same club? A quote from 'The Rover' No. 1740 - November 1st, 1958.

"The race had aroused such wide interest that teams were coming from all over Great Britain. There were two local entries. The Greystone Hall Athletics Centre, founded for the improvement of British athletics, had entered a very strong team. Greystone Harriers would have ten men running under the leadership of Len Eldon. The seal had been set on the event when it was announced that the Royal Milocarians were entering a team. The Royal Milocarians were to running what the M.C.C. was to cricket. It was not a club in the ordinary sense of the word. The coveted membership was by invitation only. Thus their team would consist of crack athletes from all parts of the country".

Today and Tomorrow.....

Where are we now? The start of the 2012/13 cross country running season sees the Milocarians with an enthusiastic group of active members, but like many previous seasons over the last 10 to 15 years, the nucleus of 10 to 20, sees the sprightly young, the more experienced middle-aged and some wiry veterans, turn out for the Club. Our fixture list, mainly on Saturday afternoons against friendly, well-established, clubs in the London area, includes a dozen or so meetings. In

summary, the club is fit and well but could, as ever, use new blood. We would particularly like to have more runners join us from MOD London.

If you enjoy running and the friendly company of like-minded people then join the Milocarian Athletic Club, the cross-country running club of the Services. It is your club and membership of it will give you active enjoyment long after you have left the Services. Whilst we like to win, we run for enjoyment: without the pressure of having to win. You may need us as much as we need you. Interested? Then send in your membership application to join the club now.

2012 Update

During recent seasons there has been a most encouraging increase in the number of runners representing Milocarian AC. Teams have been running on a regular basis to take part in a full and interesting fixture list. The cross country runs have included matches against Kingston & Poly AC, Bank of England AC, Hercules Wimbledon AC and Orion Harriers. These fixtures have taken place on courses set in Richmond Park as well as other London Parks. During the last three seasons the team has been boosted by the regular participation of runners from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and London University OTC as well as from 4 Para Regt(V). Some good results have been achieved with the club winning and being runner up on a number of occasions. Several members of Milocarian AC have competed in both the Fleet Half Marathon as well as the London Marathon. Teams from Milocarian AC have continued to take part in the summer, Runnymede Relays. Three teams were entered in 2012 with Kate Brown achieving the ladies prize for the 6 mile leg. The team spirit in events has been excellent and strong efforts are now to be made to reintroduce our important home fixture. Milocarian AC won a strongly contested 'Ellis Trophy' on Saturday 8th December 2012. This annual event hosted by Ranelagh AC was held over a 5.5 mile course in the picturesque surroundings of Richmond Park.

2017 Update

One indication of the steady progress that has been made in more recent years, is that the Milocarian team have been achieving team placings of 1st, 2nd (twice) and 3rd in the Windsor Park Relays. This event attracts some fifty teams. Frazer Alexander (twice) and David Brandfoot achieved placings of 1st and 2nd respectively in the 6 mile leg of this prestigious competition. In addition, the club has won the Ranelagh AC, Ellis Trophy, in both 2013 and 2014 as well as the Terry Lewins Trophy at our home matches in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The strong link with RMAS has been a big boost to our club where the Academy have kindly introduced a dedicated officer to work closely with our Club Match Secretary. This close working arrangement has certainly been most fruitful. A Milocarian Medal has recently been introduced which is awarded to the first male and female cross-country runner in the RMAS Inter Company Cross Country event. The first Milocarian medal recipients were OCdt Tom Shepherd and OCdt Rosie Wild; the latter having been a member of Milocarian AC prior to joining RMAS. In all our home matches, there was a close and exciting tussle with Thames Hare & Hounds AC with the results being unknown until late on each occasion.

Recruitment has increased with some forty to fifty club members being involved in the Club internal individual championship for the Ploen Trophy and ladies Wyvern Cup. Club winners of the Ploen Trophy to date are: Nick Wood (2013 & 2014) Felix Keating (2015 & 2016) and Tom Rann (2017). The recently introduced ladies Wyvern Cup have Hannah Jarvis (2016) and Beth Belin (2017) as the first two winners of this competition. These competitions have certainly increased interest and have contributed much to the overall standard achieved. As well as RMAS, excellent

support has been provided by OTC London University and Kings Troop RA, In addition to the two main trophy matches, the Milocarian AC team have consistently been well placed in the regular Inter Club Competitions with wins being achieved in matches at Thames Hare & Hounds AC, British Airways AC and Bank of England AC as well as team runners-up placings at Ranelagh AC, Hercules AC and Thames Hare & Hounds AC (away).

A club fixture card is issued to club members at the start of each season. This together with the excellent web site which has been set up by Mike Sumpter does much to keep all members past and present, fully informed. In recent years the club has been progressing very well. This is most encouraging. The support from RMAS is very much appreciated.

The Milocarian Schools' Trophy and Milocarian Memorial Youth Cup have been keenly contested; winners in 2016 were, Millfield School and SE District respectively. Venues in recent year for the above competitions have included both the London Olympic Stadium and Iffley Road Stadium, Oxford.