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ENGLAND ATHLETICS

# HALL *of* FAME

# INTRODUCTION

Individuals have taken part in athletic contests for thousands of years and many performances have entered our history books.

In the modern era performances by Dorando Pietri, Emil Zatopek, Dick Fosbury, Bob Beamon, Al Oerter, Seb Coe and Usain Bolt will live in the memories of those who were fortunate to witness them. They are a snapshot of athletes at the limits of physical achievement and have been the inspiration for thousands of athletes in their desire to be better athletes. I have run many hundreds of miles over the years whilst visualising Chataway beating Kuts at White City in 1954.

The England Athletics Hall of Fame is our opportunity to recognise the outstanding achievements of those English athletes who have entertained and inspired us with their outstanding performances over the years and for us to showcase our magnificent heritage to the outside world.

I hope that as Athletics fans like me, you will enjoy reading the contents of this 'first edition' commemorative publication.



**John Graves**  
*Chair, England Athletics*

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## SIR ROGER BANNISTER

**Born:** 23.3.1929, Harrow (Middlesex)

**Club:** Achilles

**Major medals:** Gold – 1954 Commonwealth Mile; 1954 European 1500m; **Bronze** – 1950 European 800m

**World records:** Mile – 3:59.4 in 1954 (3:43.0 1500m en route); 4 x Mile Relay – 16:41.0 in 1953

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



As the world's first sub-four minute miler, Roger Bannister is arguably the most celebrated name in British athletics history ... and in a way his success can be traced back to one of his world mile record holder predecessors, Sydney Wooderson. Bannister was 16 when taken by his father to the White City in 1945 and the sight of Wooderson battling against Sweden's Arne Andersson made a deep impression on him. "Seeing Wooderson's run that day inspired me", he reflected.

Although his first attempt at the mile, as a 17 year-old Oxford University freshman, took him all of 4:53 he quickly revealed his potential at the distance and in 1949 he ran 4:11.1, the world's fastest by a 20 year-old at that time. Dropping down in distance, he finished a close third at 800m in the 1950 European Championships. Almost god-like in action, the lanky, long-striding medical student revived dreams of the first four minute mile when in 1952 he covered three-quarters of a mile in what was then considered the phenomenal time of 2:52.9. That time trial was just before the Helsinki Olympics but the introduction of a semi-final round in the Games ruined his careful 1500m preparations for a well separated heat and final and he finished fourth in a UK record time of 3:46.0, just 0.8 sec behind the winner.

In one sense, that defeat led to Bannister's eventual iconic status. Had he won he would probably have retired, but in order to compensate for his own personal disappointment he decided to extend his running career for another two years. Although reluctant to admit it publicly, he was intrigued by the very real possibility of becoming the first man to break four minutes. In 1953 he broke Wooderson's British record with 4:03.6 and followed up with an illegally paced 4:02.0.

It all came together at Oxford on 6 May 1954 when, assisted by his training companions Chris Brasher and Chris Chataway, he passed 440yds in 57.5, 880yds in 1:58.2 and three-quarters of a mile in 3:00.5. Needing a 59.4 last lap for eternal glory, he clocked 58.9 to break the tape in 3:59.4, taking two seconds from the world record which had stood since 1945. On the way he unofficially equalled the world 1500m record of 3:43.0.

That mile record survived less than two months as Australia's John Landy ran 3:57.9 but in what was justifiably dubbed the 'mile of the century', at the Commonwealth Games in Vancouver; Bannister the kicker prevailed against Landy the front runner in 3:58.8 (3:42.2 at 1500m), setting British records at both distances. Three weeks later, in his final race, he virtually toyed with a talented field to sprint away with the European 1500m title. He went on to have an illustrious career as a neurologist and was knighted in 1975 for services to medicine.



**I**t is one of the rich ironies of the sport that whereas the first four minute miler Roger Bannister and world 5000m record breaker Chris Chataway never won so much as an Olympic bronze medal between them it was their less exalted training companion, Chris Brasher, who was to become Britain's first Olympic athletics champion since 1936.

Brasher was for years merely a capable but unexceptional flat runner, and it was not until he switched to the steeplechase – an event more suited to his rugged qualities – that he became a world class performer. He made the 1952 Olympic final but limped home 11th out of 12 after crashing into a barrier on the second lap.

He put his own ambitions on hold for the next two seasons, becoming better known as Bannister's pacemaker and training colleague, and returned to serious steeplechasing in 1955. A distant third behind Eric Shirley and John Disley in the 1956 AAA Championships, he was for a while in danger of being omitted from the Melbourne Olympic team but later clinched his place with a personal best of 8:47.2. The first indication that Brasher might prove the best of the British trio came with the news from Australia 15 days before the steeplechase final that he had slashed nearly 13 sec off his fastest 2 miles time with 8:45.6. Reunited with his charismatic coach, Franz Stampfl, he had hit the best form of his career at just the right time.

In the Olympic final Brasher attacked early on the last lap and, taking his rivals completely by surprise, he quickly opened up a gap which stretched to 15m by the finish. He was Olympic champion! Or was he? Sándor Rozsnyoi of Hungary was announced as the winner with Brasher disqualified "for interference in the last lap". An appeal was lodged and after three nerve-racking hours Brasher was declared champion. "Well done the old scrubber" read the telegram he received from his training mates back in London. His time was a British and Olympic record of 8:41.2 ... and he never raced on the track again.

As Bannister wrote of him: "He ran the most perfect race of which he was capable. Brasher, the mountaineer, who was once considered for a Himalayan reconnaissance expedition, had now climbed his own personal Everest."

Brasher went on to make a massive contribution to the sport in other ways. An outstanding athletics correspondent of *The Observer* for many years and a prize-winning TV broadcaster, he conceived and masterminded the London Marathon with his old steeplechase rival John Disley as his right-hand man. Thanks to his visionary zeal, organisational skills and forceful personality, the first London Marathon was held in 1981 and it grew to become the world's biggest, most colourful and classiest marathon, raising countless millions for charity. Brasher, who surely merited a knighthood for that initiative alone, died aged 74.



MARK SHEARMAN

## CHRIS BRASHER

**Born:** 21.8.1928, Georgetown (British Guiana; now Guyana); died 28.2.2003

**Club:** Achilles

**Major medals:** Gold – 1956 Olympic steeplechase

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



MARK SHEARMAN

## LORD COE

**Born:** Born: 29.9.1956, Chiswick (London)

**Clubs:** Hallamshire H, Haringey AC

**Major medals:** **Gold** – 1977 European Indoor 800m; 1980 Olympic 1500m; 1984 Olympic 1500m; 1986 European 800m; **Silver** – 1980 Olympic 800m; 1982 European 800m; 1984 Olympic 800m; 1986 European 1500m; **Bronze** – 1978 European 800m

**World records:** **800m** – 1:42.33 in 1979, 1:41.73 in 1981; **1000m** – 2:13.40 in 1980, 2:12.18 in 1981; **1500m** – 3:32.03 in 1979; **Mile** – 3:48.95 in 1979, 3:48.53 & 3:47.33 in 1981; **4x800m Relay** – 7:03.89 in 1982 (has held UK 800m record since 1978, 1000m record since 1980). **World indoor records:** **800m** – 1:46.0 in 1981, 1:44.91 in 1983; **1000m** – 2:18.58 in 1983

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



**H**aving won the Yorkshire Colts cross country title at 14 and become AAA Youth 1500m and English Schools' Intermediate 3000m champion at 16, it looked as though Seb Coe's future would be at the longer track events. However, after taking the bronze medal at 1500m in the 1975 European Junior Championships he and his father-cum-coach Peter Coe decided that if he was to approach his limits at that distance and above, his basic speed had to be improved drastically.

The emphasis on speed began to bear fruit in 1976 when he improved his 800m time from 1:53.8 to 1:47.7 and, although still only 19, ran a 3:58.35 mile. He became recognised internationally for the first time when winning the 1977 European indoor 800m title and that summer claimed the UK record with 1:44.95. He concentrated on that event in 1978, disappointed to finish 'only' third in the European Championships after blazing through the first 400m in 49.32, but later was happy to reclaim the British record from Steve Ovett with 1:43.97.

The 1979 season proved to be a magical one for Coe, for in the space of 41 days he smashed three world records: 1:42.33 for 800m in Oslo (over a second inside the old mark), 3:48.95 for the mile, again in Oslo, and 3:32.03 for 1500m in Zürich. In between those astonishing exploits he also exhibited his awesome turn of speed with a 45.5 400m relay leg.

He was now the most famous athlete in the world and his forthcoming duels with Ovett were hailed as the highlight of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. Oddly enough, each man won the 'wrong' event. Coe, considered a near certainty for the 800m gold medal, ran a poor tactical race and finished second to Ovett, but came good in the 1500m with a last lap of 52.2 as Ovett (who hadn't lost at this distance for three years) placed third.

Coe enjoyed another record breaking season in 1981, setting prodigious world marks at 800m (1:41.73, which went unbeaten for 16 years) and 1000m (2:12.18, which survived for 18 years) as well as gaining (3:48.53), losing (3:48.40 by Ovett) and regaining (3:47.33) the mile record.

Illness affected his form in 1982 and 1983, and injury delayed his preparations in 1984 but at the Los Angeles Olympics he followed up another silver medal in the 800m with victory in the 1500m, becoming the first man ever to retain a quadrennial Olympic 1500m title and the only Briton to claim four individual Olympic medals. He finally nailed a major outdoor title at 800m in the 1986 European Championships and at last fulfilled his father's prediction (when Seb was 13!) that one day he would run 3:30 for 1500m by clocking 3:29.77.

A Conservative MP from 1992 to 1997, he was created a life peer in 2000 and won immense public acclaim by leading London's successful 2012 Olympic bid.



**D**avid Coleman was awarded the OBE in 1992 for services to broadcasting, but the honour could equally have been for services to athletics. He was, for some 40 years, the voice of athletics as he commented on the sport's great moments during that long period, including every Olympics from 1960 to 2000, the year of his retirement.

Coleman was himself a useful runner first with Stockport Harriers and then with Manchester AC; winner of the Manchester Mile in 1949 and Cheshire mile champion in 1951 before injury cut short his career. Many years later he served as president of Wolverhampton & Bilston AC.

Professionally, he was a successful journalist before turning to television. He started off as a reporter for the *Stockport Express* prior to his National Service in the Army, and at 22 became editor of the *Cheshire County Express*. In 1954 he joined the BBC in Birmingham as a news assistant and sports editor, and made his first TV appearance on Sportsview on the very day that Roger Bannister made miling history ... 6 May 1954.

He rose rapidly through the ranks in the BBC sports department and with his encyclopaedic knowledge and distinctive delivery ('the Lord of the Larynx' as he was once described) he developed into the country's foremost sports presenter. He introduced Grandstand from its inception in 1958, presided over A Question of Sport for 18 years and was a top football commentator in addition to being the dominant figure in the televising of athletics.

Perhaps his finest, but most poignant, moment as a broadcaster was his marathon stint describing the 1972 Munich Olympic siege as it unfolded, bringing into play his journalistic background. Such was the quality of his work at so many editions of the Games that in 2000 he became the first broadcaster or journalist to be awarded the Olympic Order, the highest honour to be bestowed by the International Olympic Committee.

According to former Olympic sprint hurdler Stuart Storey, his co-commentator from 1974, "David always said he would give up everything to be an Olympian like the rest of us in the commentary box; well, he was. He was an Olympian of television. As an all-round broadcaster I think he was the greatest."



# DAVID COLEMAN

**Born:** 26.4.1926, Alderley Edge, Cheshire

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



## GEOFF DYSON

**Born:** 22.6.1914, Camberwell (London); died 5.2.1981

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008

**I**t could be argued that Geoff Dyson made a greater individual contribution to British athletics than anyone, for it was he who, just after the Second World War, laid the foundations for a national coaching scheme - which became the envy of the world. He was a dynamic, charismatic and inspiring trainer. The McWhirter twins, Norris and Ross, described him as "probably the greatest all-round coach in the world."

Dyson lived a fascinating life. He ran away from home when he was 15, slept rough in London for a while and joined the Army at 16. Competing for Surrey AC and the Army, he developed into a good athlete, ranking third in Britain in 1938 at the high hurdles with what was then the world class time of 14.9. That same year, aged 24, he was obliged to retire from competition as he forfeited his amateur status by becoming a lecturer in athletics at Loughborough College. Returning to the military for war service, he rose to the rank of Major, commanding Army schools of physical training in Africa and Italy.

After his 'demob' in 1945 he went back to Loughborough and in 1947, still only 32, he was appointed as the AAA's first chief national coach. His main function was to train coaches to a higher standard and establish a network of qualified coaches throughout the UK. As though that wasn't demanding enough he also formed a small personally coached squad of athletes in what were then considered 'Cinderella' events: John Disley in the steeplechase, Geoff Elliott in the pole vault and decathlon, John Savidge in the shot, Shirley Cawley in the long jump and Maureen Gardner (who became his wife) in the 80m hurdles. All five went on to set British records and three of them won Olympic medals with Maureen Gardner losing by inches only to the legendary Fanny Blankers-Koen in the 1948 hurdles final. A later pupil was Arthur Rowe, a European record breaker in the shot.

His book, *The Mechanics of Athletics*, was first published in 1961 and remains the definitive work on this subject, having run to eight editions and been translated into five languages. As John Disley said: "He devoted his life to making coaching a science." Unfortunately, his professional and innovative attitude meant he did not always see eye-to-eye with some of the amateur officials of the day. Dyson resigned in 1961. From 1962 to 1970 he worked as director of the Royal Canadian Legion's Sports Training Plan and his final post, back in England, was as director of physical education at Winchester College.

Awarded the OBE for services to athletics, he died aged 66, his wife Maureen having passed away in 1974 at the shockingly early age of 45.

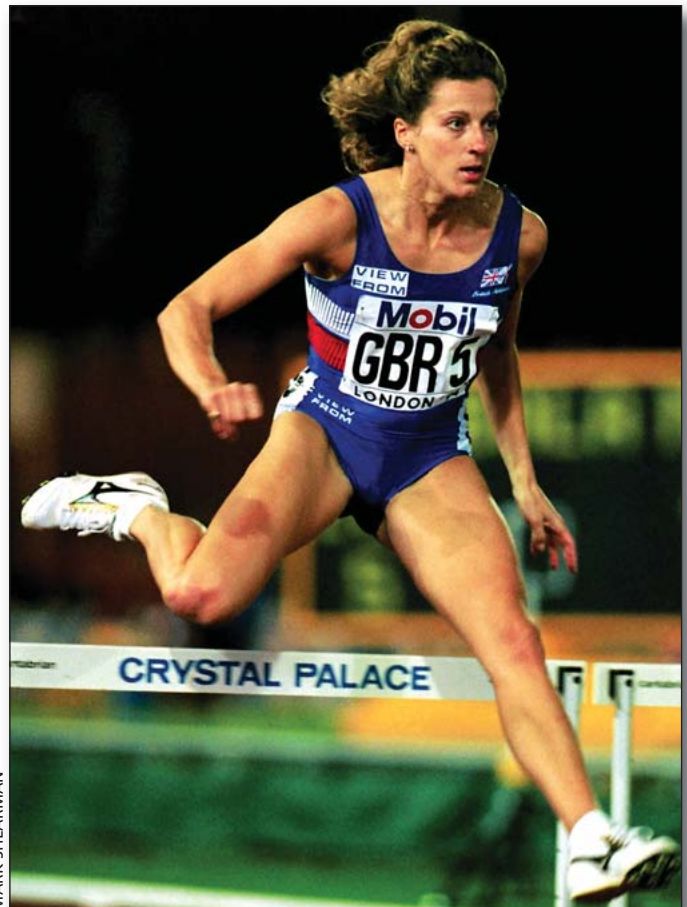
**I**t was touch and go whether Sally Gunnell became a serious athlete. At school she was equally promising at gymnastics but at age 11 she decided to join Essex Ladies and 17 years later she would become the only woman to achieve the 'grand slam' - simultaneously holding Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth titles not to mention the world record, all at 400m hurdles.

Sally's first major success came in the long jump, becoming Women's AAA and English Schools' Junior champion in 1980. In 1982 she contested her first heptathlon and the following year – guided by Daley Thompson's coach Bruce Longden – she set a British age-16 best of 5564. Her final season at heptathlon was 1984 by which time the 100m hurdles was emerging as her strongest event. She set a UK junior record of 13.30, fastest in the world for her age that year.

Two years later, in 1986, she was crowned Commonwealth Games champion at 100m hurdles but she and her coach realised she would never be a world beater in that event. In 1988, effectively her first season as a 400m hurdler, she displayed immense potential by repeatedly breaking the UK record, ending up with 54.03 for fifth in the Olympic final. She also became British record holder in the sprint hurdles with 12.82.

Indoors in 1989 she was a revelation at 400m, capturing the European title in 52.04, while early in 1990 she came away from the Commonwealth Games in Auckland with three medals: golds in the 400m hurdles and 4x400m relay, and silver in the 100m hurdles. It was in 1991 that the real glory years at 400m hurdles began. At the World Championships she claimed the silver medal, just 5/100ths behind the winner, in a Commonwealth record of 53.11 (plus a spectacular relay leg of 49.46), and the following year in Barcelona she took the Olympic gold medal, followed by a bronze in the relay. In 1993 she won the World title, in the magnificent world record time of 52.74, with another relay bronze for her collection, and she was voted the world's female athlete of the year.

More honours came her way in 1994, triumphing both in the European Championships and Commonwealth Games to rank as the world's number 1 in her event for a fourth consecutive year. She also anchored England to victory in the Commonwealth Games 4x400m relay. Injuries held her back after that and she retired in 1997 with a strong claim to being considered the most successful British woman athlete of all time.



# SALLY GUNNELL

**Born:** 29.7.1966, Chigwell (Essex)

**Club:** Essex Ladies

**Major individual medals:** Gold – 1986 Commonwealth 100m Hurdles; 1989 European Indoor 400m; 1990 Commonwealth 400m Hurdles; 1992 Olympic 400m Hurdles; 1993 World 400m Hurdles; 1994 European 400m Hurdles; 1994 Commonwealth 400m Hurdles; **Silver** – 1990 Commonwealth 100m Hurdles; 1991 World 400m Hurdles

**World record:** 400m Hurdles – 52.74 in 1993 (UK record holder since 1988)

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008





MARK SHEARMAN

## DAVID HEMERY

**Born:** 18.7.1944, Cirencester

**Club:** Ruislip-Northwood (later Hillingdon) AC

**Major individual medals:** Gold – 1966 Commonwealth 120y Hurdles; 1968 Olympic 400m Hurdles; 1970 Commonwealth 110m Hurdles;  
Silver – 1969 European 110m Hurdles;  
Bronze – 1972 Olympic 400m Hurdles

**World record:** 400m Hurdles – 48.12 in 1968

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



The Mexico City Olympics of 1968 will forever be associated with Bob Beamon's futuristic long jumping exploit, but to British fans those Games were memorable primarily for David Hemery's superlative victory in the 400m hurdles, becoming the first British man since Tom Hampson 36 years earlier to win an Olympic title with a world record performance.

To an unique degree he was a product of both British and American athletics. Born in Gloucestershire, he moved with his family to the USA when he was 12, where at high school in Massachusetts he combined two seemingly incompatible events: the high hurdles and the half mile. It was a pointer towards his eventual speciality.

Back in Britain again he began to be coached by Fred Housden, the man who – in Hemery's words – "taught me how to hurdle". In 1963 he became AAA Junior 120 yards hurdles' champion and the following year he entered Boston University where he was fortunate enough to find himself another exceptional coach in Billy Smith.

He first made his mark internationally in 1966, setting European indoor bests at 600 yards and 60 yards hurdles, followed by a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games 120 yards hurdles. A bad hamstring pull caused him to miss practically the entire outdoor season in 1967, but that proved a blessing in disguise as the enforced rest enabled him to undertake a gruelling non-stop 60-week build up for the Olympics. Although he didn't rank among the world's top 50 400m hurdlers with a modest best of 51.8 for 440 yards (equivalent to 51.5), Hemery thought he could break 50 sec and make the Olympic team.

Throughout 1968 he chipped away at the British record, clocking 49.6 prior to the Games and 49.37 in his Olympic semi-final. In the final Hemery ran the race of his dreams. He blasted from his blocks, whizzed along the back straight at breakneck speed with the hurdles hardly disturbing the graceful flow of his stride and he never flagged to cross the finish line some seven metres clear in the staggering time of 48.12 as compared to the previous world record of 48.94! Later he demonstrated his flat speed with a relay leg timed at 44.6.

Looking for other challenges he turned to the decathlon and kept his hand in as an outstanding sprint hurdler, winning the silver medal at the 1969 European Championships and retaining his Commonwealth title in 1970. However, he was tempted back to his best event in defence of his Olympic laurels in 1972, finishing third after too fast a start, and completed a set of Olympic medals by taking silver in the 4x400m relay. He closed his amateur career with a world best of 34.6 for 300m hurdles and later won the BBC Superstars title three times. He served as the first President of UK Athletics between 1998 and 2002.

**D**avid Holding's successes were achieved over a spectrum of distances. But whether it was a race over 100m or the 26.2 miles of the London Marathon it was his sprinting speed that was able to set him apart from his rivals.

It is easy to understand how that was the case in winning global titles at 100m with Holding's hugely powerful arms and upper body able to quickly accelerate the wheels to a blur of speed. But Holding also won the Wheelchair London Marathon on four occasions - in 1989, 1994, 1996 and 1997. He had the ability to match or challenge his rivals' pace over the marathon distance before then unleashing that brutal speed to power away in the latter stages of the races. This was the story in 1989 when Holding contested his first Wheelchair London Marathon. But the race was not just about the finishing speed he had at his disposal, his time was 1:59:31 – the first time a wheelchair had gone under two hours in London.

Holding first started wheelchair racing at the age of 13. At the time he was a pupil at Kingsley Disabled School, Kettering. He progressed from the Eastern Junior Athletics Games held at Ely, Cambridgeshire and qualified for the Junior National Games which were held each year at Stoke Mandeville.

After leaving school Holding was introduced to Wheelchair Road Racing, and entered his first 10k Road Race – the St Ives 10k in Cambridgeshire. From this beginning to his road racing career he went on to race in many road events across the country, up to and including half marathon. In 1988 came his first outing over a marathon when Holding contested the Huntingdon Marathon. Throughout his career he won numerous titles at the British Wheelchair National Championships with his list of honours once again reflecting his ability to compete over a range of distances. The Wheelchair Great North Run was another happy hunting ground for Holding with victories coming in 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996 and 1997.

Holding attributed the range of his ability to the fact that he spent the winter building up a base of endurance before then tailoring his training to the more event specific requirements of the 100m and 200m. It was at the shorter distances that the major global titles came. In October of 1999 he set a world record of 14.33 for 100m.



# DAVID HOLDING

**Born:** 5.6.68 (Kettering, Northamptonshire)

**Club:** BWRA (British Wheelchair Racing Association)

**Major individual medals:** **Gold** – 1996 Paralympics 100m; 1998 Disabled World Games 100m; 2001 Disabled European Athletics Games 100m; 2003 Disabled European Athletics Games 100m; 1994 European Athletics Helsinki 1500m; **Silver** – 1994 Commonwealth Games 800m; 2001 Disabled European Athletics Games 200m; **Bronze** – 1996 Paralympics Atlanta USA, 200m

**World record:** 100m - 14.33 in 1999

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008





MARK SHEARMAN

## STEVE OVETT

**Born:** 9.10.1955, Brighton

**Clubs:** Brighton & Hove AC, Phoenix AC, Annan & District AAC

**Major medals:** Gold – 1978 European 1500m; 1980 Olympic 800m; 1986 Commonwealth 5000m;  
Silver – 1974 European 800m; 1978 European 800m;  
Bronze – 1980 Olympic 1500m

**World records:** 1500m – 3:32.09 & 3:31.36 in 1980, 3:30.77 in 1983; Mile – 3:48.8 in 1980, 3:48.40 in 1981;  
**World best:** 2 miles – 8:13.51 in 1978

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



After winning the Olympic 800m title in Moscow, Steve Ovett could with some justification be considered the greatest competitive athlete Britain had ever produced up until that time, for that success – achieved at the age of 24 – completed a remarkable sequence of major triumphs.

A prodigious talent from the outset he was English Schools' under-15 400m champion in 1970, set a UK age-15 800m best of 1:55.3 the following year, while in 1973 he became the world's fastest ever 17 year-old with 1:47.3, captured the European junior title and achieved a British junior mile record of exactly four minutes. His versatility was astounding: in 1974 he not only ran 47.5 for 400m and trimmed his mile best to 3:59.4 but was disappointed to finish second in the senior European Championships 800m with a European junior record of 1:45.8. A few months later he romped away with the English junior 6 miles cross country title.

The 1976 Olympics were a valuable learning experience for him and it was from 1977 onwards that Ovett's trademarks, the unmatched burst of acceleration 200m from the finish and his cheeky waves to the crowd well before the race was over, made him a charismatic and controversial figure. Coached by Harry Wilson, he chalked up a fabulous sequence of 45 consecutive victories at 1500m and the mile, including a UK record 3:34.5 in the 1977 World Cup 1500m and the 1978 European 1500m title. Until 1979, when Seb Coe began his world record frenzy, Ovett was content to win races and was not too bothered about the times, but all that changed when he found he was no longer the king of middle distances in Britain – never mind the world.

He set his first world record, 3:48.8 for the mile, in Oslo in July 1980, and later that month on the same track he equalled Coe's 1500m time of 3:32.1. The stage was set for two momentous clashes against his rival at the Moscow Olympics with Coe expected to win the 800m, at which he was world record holder with 1:42.33 (against Ovett's best of 1:44.09) and Ovett favoured to extend his unbeaten run over 1500m. In fact, each won the other's speciality: Ovett triumphed in the two-lap event but finished a mentally and physically drained third as Coe lifted the 1500m gold medal.

There were further world records for both men, with Ovett clocking 3:31.36 for 1500m in Koblenz at the end of the season, followed by a 3:48.40 mile on the same track a year later and finally 3:30.77 for 1500m in Rieti in 1983. Bronchial problems, dehydration and hyperventilation ruined his chances at the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984, although he ignored medical advice to battle through to the 1500m final, and the last significant victory of a remarkable career came in 1986 when he won the Commonwealth Games 5000m title.



**F**rancis Morgan (Daley) Thompson remains after all these years the world's all-time greatest decathlon competitor. No one can match his momentous winning streak of 12 decathlons over a six-year period, during which he collected world, European and Commonwealth titles as well as two Olympic triumphs. Until injury brought him down to the level of a mere mortal he was not only unbeatable but could never even consider being defeated.

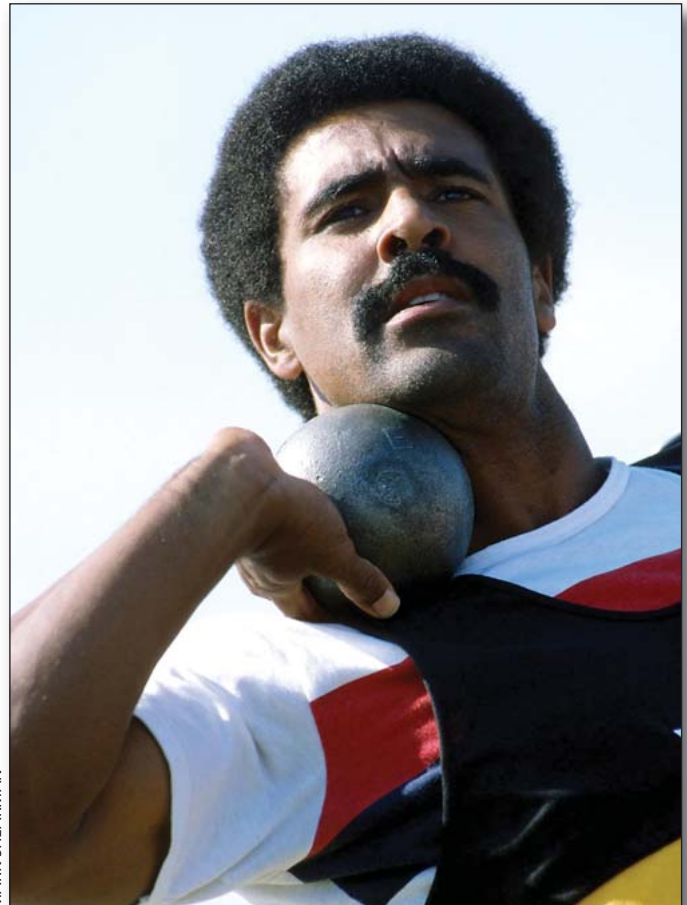
He took up the decathlon in 1975, aged only 16, and such was his rapid development that by the time he was 18 he was the British senior record holder. Over the next four years, guided by Bruce Longden, he gradually approached, and then surpassed, Bruce Jenner's world record score of 8634. In 1977 he set world junior records of 8056 and 8082; in 1978, a few days before leaving the teenage ranks, he scored 8470 to win the Commonwealth title.

Sometimes spending up to eight hours a day training, Thompson was one of a new breed of full-time athletes, existing on officially channelled sponsorship money until the sport became fully professional at the elite level. At Götzis in Austria in May 1980 he realised his ambition of becoming world record holder with a score of 8648 and two months later, still only 21, he fulfilled another goal by taking the Olympic gold medal in Moscow.

Following a low-key post-Olympic season he let rip in 1982 with a world record 8730 in Götzis and then demolished arch-rival Jürgen Hingsen to take the European title in Athens with 8774. That made Thompson the first man in any event to hold Olympic, European and Commonwealth titles as well as the world record, and he went one step further in 1983 by capturing the inaugural world title in Helsinki with 8714.

The supreme moment of his career came in Los Angeles at the 1984 Olympics. He led Hingsen by 114 points after the first day with a best ever score of 4677 but faced a crisis in the discus where his German rival threw a personal best of 50.82 while he managed only 37.90 and 41.42. If he couldn't improve on his final attempt then Hingsen would sail into a 68-point lead. It was just the sort of challenge Thompson relished ... he threw 46.56, close to his best, Hingsen despaired and Thompson went on to retain the title and set a world record of 8847 to boot!

Further honours and big scores came his way in 1986, but injuries plagued him thereafter although he did finish a plucky fourth in the 1988 Olympics. His personal bests: 100m-10.26, 200m-20.88, 400m-46.86, 1500m-4:20.3, 110m hurdles-14.04, 400m hurdles-52.14, high jump-2.14, pole vault-5.25, long jump-8.01 & 8.11w, shot-16.10, discus-49.10, javelin-65.38!



MARK SHEARMAN

# DALEY THOMPSON

**Born:** 30.7.1958, Notting Hill (London)

**Clubs:** Haywards Heath H, Newham and Essex Beagles

**Major medals:** (Decathlon) **Gold** – 1978 Commonwealth; 1980 Olympics; 1982 European; 1982 Commonwealth; 1983 World; 1984 Olympics; 1986 Commonwealth; 1986 European; **Silver** – 1978 European

**World records:** Decathlon – 8648 in 1980, 8730 & 8774 in 1982, 8847 in 1984 (has held UK record since 1976)

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2008



## HAROLD ABRAHAM

**Born:** 15.12.1899, Bedford; died 14.1.1978

**Clubs:** Achilles, London AC

**Major individual medals:** Gold – 1924 Olympic 100m

**World records:** 4x100m relay – 42.0 in 1924

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009

Europe's first Olympic 100m champion ... athletics journalist, historian and statistician ... radio commentator ... leading administrator and official. Over a period of more than half a century Harold Abrahams made a massive and extraordinarily varied contribution to British and international athletics. He died, aged 78, three years before the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire* was released, but how gratified he would have been to know that he would become even more famous than in his sprinting heyday, although he would certainly have chided the film makers for the many historical inaccuracies inserted for dramatic effect!

As a law student at Cambridge University he failed to make any impression at the 1920 Olympics but produced a stunning upset at the next Games in Paris. Coached by the celebrated Sam Mussabini, Abrahams trained meticulously during the winter of 1923/24, concentrating on a low arm action, improving his start, perfecting his distinctive 'drop' finish and modifying his stride length. "I shall always believe that the vital factor in my running in Paris was that by conscientious training I had managed to shorten my stride an inch or two and get an extra stride into my 100 metres."

"Truthfully," he wrote, "I did not think I had any chance of a gold medal, nor did anyone else." However, he equalled the Olympic record of 10.6 in the second round, did so again in his semi-final despite a dreadful start, and once more in the final which he won from Jackson Scholz (USA). He climaxed his race with that drop finish – "scudding like some vast bird with outstretched wings, a spectacle positively appalling in its grandeur," according to one observer.

He later took a silver medal in the 4x100m relay but that was effectively the end of his active career. In May 1925 he seriously damaged his leg while long jumping (his 7.38 in 1924 stood as the English native record for 32 years!) and turned to other ways he could serve athletics. A barrister by profession, he brought to the sport a clear, probing, analytical mind which propelled him into high office. He was a member of AAA general committee from age 26 and was treasurer of the BAAB from 1948 to 1968, BAAB chairman from 1968 to 1975, and in 1976 fulfilled a life ambition by being elected AAA president.

He was for many years also an influential member of the IAAF, largely responsible for the framing of the rule book. He was a prolific writer, notably as athletics correspondent of *The Sunday Times* from 1925 to 1967, and provided radio commentaries for the BBC over an even longer period. He also loved the sport's facts and figures, co-founding the worldwide Association of Track & Field Statisticians in 1950 and serving as the first president of its British offshoot, the NUTS.

**F**or one man to have guided four athletes to the dizzy heights of becoming Olympic or world champion must be an unique achievement among British coaches but Loughborough trained Malcolm Arnold can claim that distinction.

Arnold was the fourth ranked British triple jumper in 1963 with 14.94, and was working as a 27 year-old PE teacher and part-time coach when he applied for a job vacancy advertised in *Athletics Weekly*. The position was Director of Coaching in Uganda and it was there between 1968 and 1972 that he established himself as a master of his art.

His star pupil was John Akii-Bua, a promising sprint hurdler whom he persuaded to take up 400m hurdles. Arnold's belief that he had discovered a potential world beater was justified when at the Munich Games of 1972 – from the inside lane – Akii-Bua succeeded David Hemery as Olympic champion and world record holder in 47.82, a time nobody achieved in 2009.

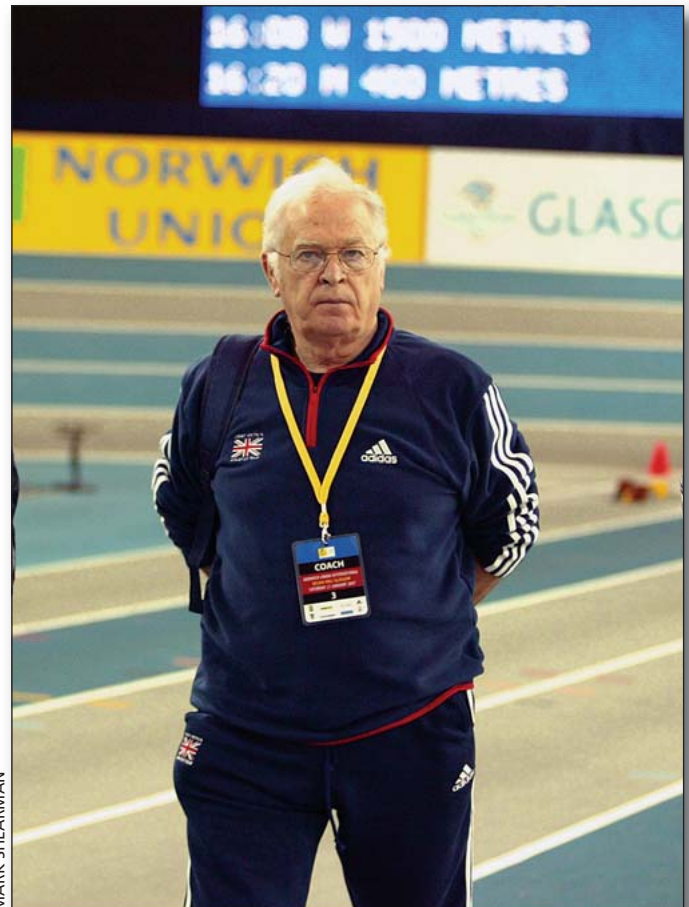
After returning to Britain, Arnold was appointed Welsh National Coach in 1974, a position he held for 20 years. His first notable success was with sprint hurdler Nigel Walker, then along came a highly talented teenager Colin Jackson. Arnold told Jackson's parents that if their son worked hard enough he might just make the 1988 Olympic team; in fact he went on to take the silver medal in Seoul and gained every other honour in the sport including world records at 110m hurdles (12.91 winning the 1993 world title) and indoor 60m hurdles (7.30 in 1994 and still unequaled).

Jackson paid this tribute in his autobiography: "Throughout my career Malcolm was a brilliant technical tutor in athletics; a truly expert teacher who helped to give me all the physical and psychological skills needed to achieve excellence in my event. And from the first, though he's a bluff northerner who can make an art out of grumpiness, he has been my friend."

Ironically, Jackson – favourite for the 1992 Olympic title – was carrying an injury in the final and the gold medal went instead to his Canadian friend Mark McKoy, who had benefited enormously from training with the Welshman under Arnold's supervision for the previous nine months.

Arnold's other successes have included Kay Morley (1990 Commonwealth Games 100m hurdles champion), Jason Gardener (world indoor 60m champion and Olympic 4x100m gold medallist in 2004) and Craig Pickering (second to Gardener in 2007 European Indoor 60m), and this year he has guided David Greene to the World Championships 400m hurdles final and Lawrence Clarke to the European Junior 110m hurdles title.

Voted UK coach of the year 1992-93, he served as British Athletics Head Coach, UK Athletics Performance Director and UKA Senior Performance Coach. He is currently National Event Coach for Hurdles. As Colin Jackson has stated: "Malcolm must be the most successful British coach there has ever been."



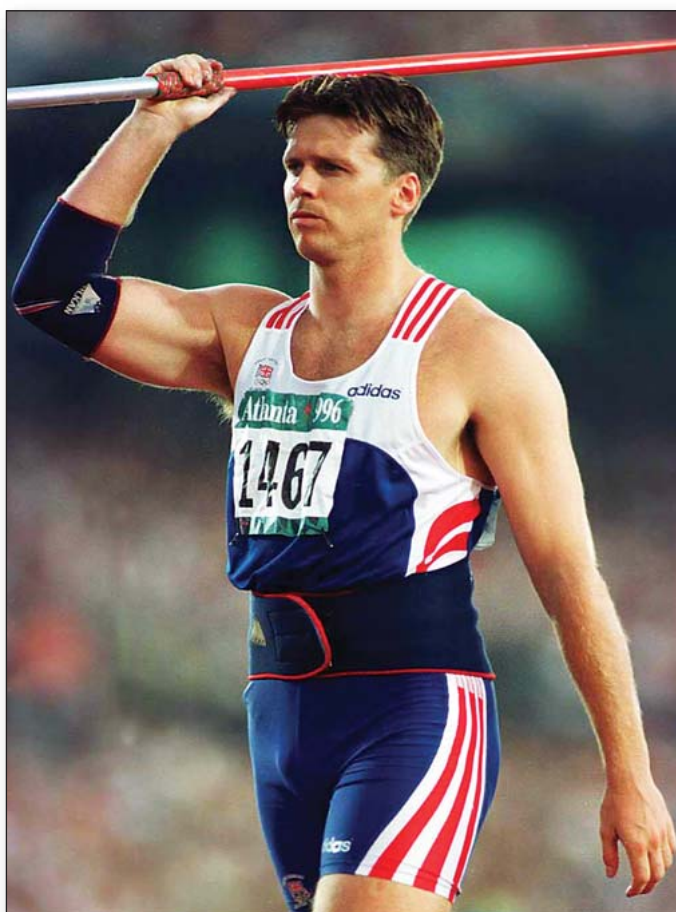
MARK SHEARMAN

# MALCOLM ARNOLD

**Born:** 4.4.1940, Northwich (Cheshire)

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009





MARK SHEARMAN

## STEVE BACKLEY

**Born:** 12.2.1969, Sidcup (Kent)

**Club:** Cambridge H

**Major medals:** Gold – 1990 Commonwealth; 1990 European; 1994 Commonwealth; 1994 European; 1998 European; 2002 Commonwealth; 2002 European;

Silver – 1995 World; 1996 Olympics; 1997 World; 1998 Commonwealth; 2000 Olympics;

Bronze – 1992 Olympics

**World records:** Javelin – 89.58 & 90.98 in 1990; 91.46 in 1992

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009

**I**t was Steve Backley's privilege but misfortune to have been the main rival of the greatest of all javelin throwers, Jan Zelezny, for most of his career. The Czech's presence provided Backley with much of his motivation but had it not been for Zelezny he would have been world champion in 1995 and Olympic champion both in 1996 and 2000! Nonetheless, Backley had the distinction of being the first British male to set a field event world record and his medal haul was awesome.

The son of a 4:10.8 miler, Backley started his athletics career as a cross country runner but at 14 decided that chucking a javelin was more fun. Within four years, coached by John Trower, he was the 1987 European junior champion and the following year he set a world junior record of 79.50 although he was disappointed by his second place in that season's World Junior Championships.

Expecting to advance to around 82-83m in 1989, the Loughborough sports science student progressed at such a rate that he ended up ranked as world's number one, setting a Commonwealth record of 85.90 when winning at the World Cup. In 1990 he won the first of three Commonwealth titles, initiated an amazing sequence of four European championships (a title Zelezny never won) and unleashed a world record throw of 89.58, even if it did survive only 12 days before Zelezny wrested it from him. However, Backley reclaimed the record later in the season with 90.98 and a worldwide poll conducted by the IAAF voted him male athlete of the year.

Due to a change in the javelin specifications, Backley's 90.98 and subsequent superior marks were withdrawn as world records, to be replaced by Backley's 89.58, but on a trip to New Zealand early in 1992 Backley set a new distance of 91.46. However, several months later at the Barcelona Olympics he could muster only 83.38 for bronze as Zelezny threw 89.66 for the gold medal.

Backley fared better at the 1995 World Championships, placing second to Zelezny, and was runner-up again to the Czech at the 1996 Olympics with 87.44, a remarkable achievement considering he had been on crutches only a few weeks earlier following an Achilles tendon operation.

Further global silver medals followed at the 1997 World Championships and 2000 Olympics, although he must have thought for a while that the gold medal was his at last in Sydney. In the second round he threw an Olympic record of 89.85 ... only for his Nemesis to counter with 90.17. Backley's consolation was that he had become the first Briton in any event to obtain an Olympic medal in three Games. He took his final Olympic bow in 2004, placing fourth.

**L**ike Harold Abrahams, Lord Burghley's status as an Olympic gold medallist would make him a worthy candidate for inclusion in the Hall of Fame purely as an athlete, but he too followed up his active career with a lifetime of service to the sport at the highest levels.

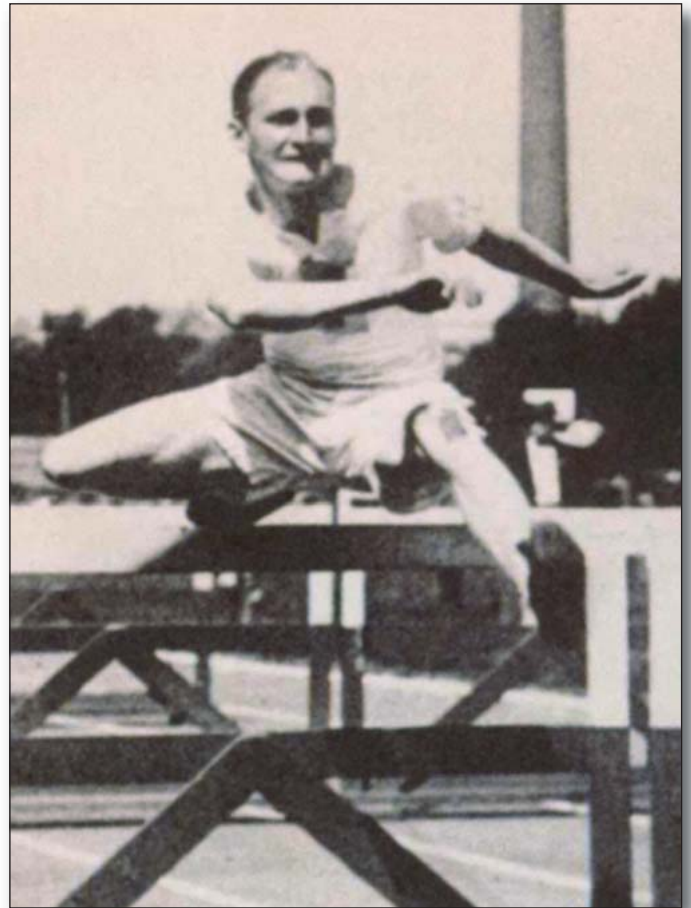
Unlike Abrahams and Douglas Lowe (another product of Cambridge University), Burghley made no impression at the 1924 (Chariots of Fire) Olympics, but his time would come four years later. In the meantime he set British records at all three hurdling events – 120 yards, 220 yards and 440 yards – and for a few hours in 1927 he shared the world record for 440 yards hurdles with 54.2 in the AAA Championships, only for John Gibson to smash that with 52.6 in the American Championships that same day.

Burghley never approached that time for the shorter 400m hurdles at the Amsterdam Olympics of 1928 but – serving at the time as a lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards – he won the gold medal with a British record of 53.4. It was the first time the USA had failed to win this particular title and the 'peerless peer' was carried off the track shoulder high by jubilant team-mates.

He won both the 120 yards and 440 yards hurdles at the inaugural Empire Games in 1930 and ran easily his fastest ever race in defence of his Olympic laurels in Los Angeles in 1932. He cut no less than 1.2 sec from his British record with 52.2 (which was not bettered until 1954) but the event had moved on and that proved sufficient for 'only' fourth place. Later in the Games he contributed an excellent 46.7 leg for Britain's silver medal winning 4x400m relay team.

Although best known for his exploits at the longer hurdles event he was a formidable performer also in the 'highs' and his ultimate British record of 14.5 in 1930 was only a tenth of a second outside the world record of the day.

Elected Conservative MP for Peterborough from 1931 until in 1943 he was appointed Governor of Bermuda, Burghley became a member of the International Olympic Committee in 1933 and was elected president of the AAA and chairman of the British Olympic Association in 1936. For many years he was the proud owner of a Rolls Royce bearing the number plate AAA1. He served as president of the IAAF from 1946 to 1976 and as chairman of the organising committee for the 1948 Olympics he played a vital role in the success of the London Games. Born David George Brownlow Cecil at the ancestral home near Stamford, Lord Burghley succeeded to the title of Marquess of Exeter in 1956 and died aged 76.



## LORD BURGHLEY

**Born:** 9.2.1905, Stamford (Lincolnshire); died 22.10.1981

**Clubs:** Achilles, London AC

**Major individual medals:** Gold – 1928 Olympic 400m Hurdles; 1930 Commonwealth Games 120y & 440y Hurdles

**World records:** 440y Hurdles – 54.2 in 1927

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009





MARK SHEARMAN

## STEVE CRAM

**Born:** 14.10.1960, Gateshead

**Club:** Jarrow & Hebburn AC

**Major medals:** **Gold** – 1982 Commonwealth 1500m; 1982 European 1500m; 1983 World 1500m; 1986 Commonwealth 800m & 1500m; 1986 European 1500m; **Silver** – 1984 Olympic 1500m; **Bronze** – 1986 European 800m

**World records:** **1500m** – 3:29.67 in 1985; **Mile** – 3:46.32 in 1985; **2000m** – 4:51.39 in 1985; **4x800m Relay** – 7:07.89 in 1982 (has held UK 1500m, mile & 2000m records since 1985).

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009



**I**t's not often that the most precocious of talents go on to fulfil their potential but Steve Cram was an exception. He attracted attention in 1977 by setting a UK age-16 1500m best of 3:47.7 and just kept on improving. That huge stride carried him to an unprecedented hat-trick of 1500m titles – European, Commonwealth and World – and a silver medal in the Olympics. And there was more, for in 1985 he became the first to crack 3:30 for 1500m, followed by other world records at the mile and 2000m. When Seb Coe broke three world records within 41 days in 1979 we doubted we would ever see the like again. Well, Cram surpassed that by setting three world records in just 19 days!

Born of a Geordie father and German mother, Cram was spotted at age 11 as a 400m runner of promise by Jimmy Hedley, who would remain his coach for his entire career. By 1978 he was the most talked about young athlete in Britain, smashing Steve Ovett's age-17 best with 3:42.7 and, in his first ever mile race, clocking 3:57.43 to break Jim Ryun's world age record. His first international gold medal came in 1979 when he won the European Junior 3000m and the year after that, still only 19, he reached the Moscow Olympic 1500m final won by Coe.

He remained a supporting player rather than a star in 1981 when improving his mile time to 3:49.95, but in 1982 he came into his own as he claimed the European and Commonwealth 1500m titles and, demonstrating impressive speed, topped the world 800m list with 1:44.45.

Overcoming injury just in time, he ran a canny tactical race to become the inaugural world 1500m champion in 1983, a season in which he topped the world list again at 800m (1:43.61) as well as improving by 2 sec at 1500m to 3:31.66. Again in 1984 his preparations were hampered by injury but he excelled to finish second to Coe in the Los Angeles Olympics.

His annus mirabilis was 1985 as he just held off Said Aouita to break Ovett's world 1500m record with a barrier-breaking 3:29.67 followed in rapid succession by eclipsing Coe's mile record with 3:46.32 and John Walker's 2000m mark with 4:51.39. He then went close to Coe's 1000m record with 2:12.85 in adverse conditions and ended up beating Olympic 800m champion Joaquim Cruz in 1:42.88 to become the fourth fastest ever at the distance.

He never ran as fast again but in 1986 he completed an 800m/1500m double at the Commonwealth Games and retained his European 1500m crown, while in 1988 although a disappointed fourth at the Seoul Olympics he was ranked as the world's top 1500m/mile runner for a fifth time. He has since retained a high profile in the sport as the BBC's lead athletics commentator.



**D**iagnosed as suffering from the energy-sapping Epstein Barr virus following a lacklustre 1994 season, Jonathan Edwards could have been tempted to retire from triple jumping. He was 28, had been competing for 13 years and as far as he knew might have reached his limits anyway. He had won two Commonwealth Games silver medals, a bronze medal in the World Championships and a World Cup victory. His best distance of 17.44 placed him second on the UK all-time list and equal 36th in the world.

Fortunately, he decided to persevere although his objective for 1995 was simply to rebuild his strength and confidence. No one, least of all himself, ever imagined he was destined to take the art of triple jumping into a new era.

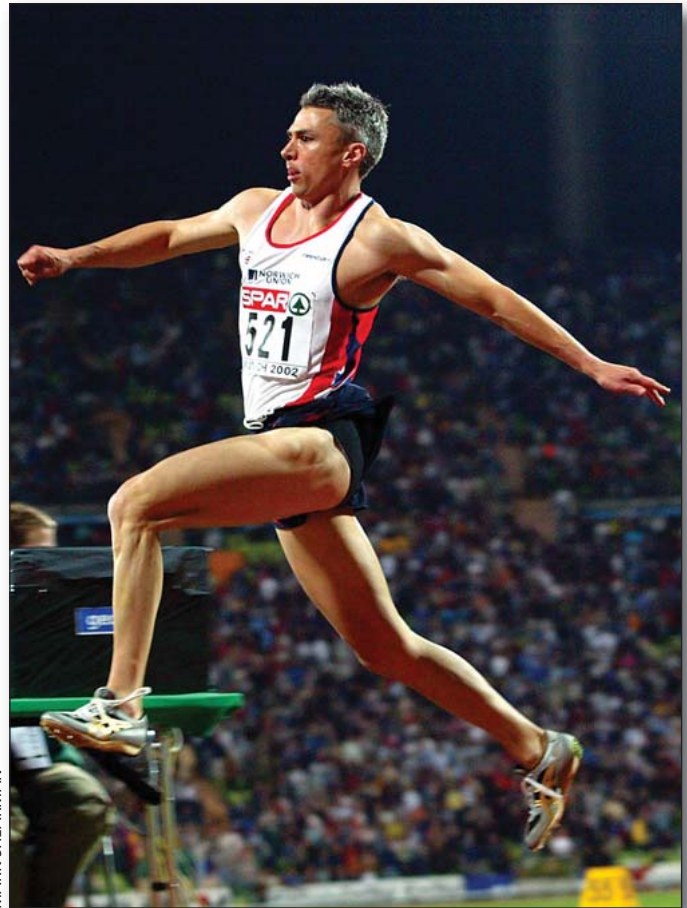
The English Schools' champion in 1984, he made the Olympic team four years later but his showing in Seoul hardly indicated that here was a future gold medallist as he placed 23rd in the qualifying round with 15.88. Having in the meantime progressed to 17.43, Edwards found the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona even more devastating, this time mustering just 15.76 for 35th place. He bounced back at the 1993 World Championships, taking the bronze medal with a wind legal personal best of 17.44, but his form disintegrated the following season. Medical tests indicated rest was required.

The 1995 season had a dream-like quality. He started by setting a UK record of 17.58 and it just kept getting better. At the European Cup he created a sensation by soaring to astonishing wind-aided distances of 18.43 and 18.39. It was no fluke. He went on to bounce his way to a wind legal world record of 17.98, while at the World Championships in Gothenburg he obliterated that with 18.16 and 18.29.

Quick (10.48 100m) and deceptively strong for a man of slim build, Edwards was a joy to watch in action as he skimmed smoothly from one phase to another in stark contrast to the crash-bang-wallopp style of many of his rivals.

Despite jumping 17.88 he was well beaten for the 1996 Olympic title by Kenny Harrison (USA) whose 18.09 is the closest anyone has got to Edwards' world record and it wasn't until the 2000 Games in Sydney that, at 34, he became easily the oldest Olympic champion in this demanding discipline. He went on to claim another world title in 2001 and in 2002 topped the world merit rankings for a seventh time.

Edwards is now a leading athletics media pundit, joining a formidable commentary team on BBC athletics including fellow hall of fame legend Steve Cram and panel member Paul Dickenson.



MARK SHEARMAN

# JONATHAN EDWARDS

**Born:** 10.5.1966, Westminster (London)

**Club:** Gateshead H

**Major medals:** **Gold** – 1995 World; 1998 European Indoor; 1998 European; 2000 Olympics; 2001 World; 2002 Commonwealth; **Silver** – 1990 Commonwealth; 1994 Commonwealth; 1996 Olympics; 1997 World; 2001 World Indoor; **Bronze** – 1993 World; 1999 World

**World records:** Triple Jump – 17.98, 18.16 & 18.29 in 1995

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009



## RON PICKERING

**Born:** 4.5.1930, Hackney (London); died 13.2.1991

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009

**R**on Pickering was the renaissance man of British athletics. He was a coach, broadcaster, writer, motivator, visionary, administrator ... a force of nature, a communicator par excellence, an inspiration. Perhaps even more important than anything else was his role as the conscience and guardian of the sport. An insightful and independent thinker, his was considered by many to be the authoritative voice of athletics.

As it states on the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund website: "Ron Pickering was many things ... but above all he stood for the ethics of the sport, the aspirations of the young and for the belief that sport could enhance their lives in more ways than the physical." He believed that sport was the most precious commodity we have to hand on to the next generation.

Previously a PE teacher, Pickering was a disciple of AAA head coach Geoff Dyson when in 1961, aged 30, he was appointed National Coach for Wales and South West England. It was his good fortune that early in the post he spotted the potential of a Welsh schoolboy by the name of Lynn Davies. Primarily a triple jumper at that stage, he was advised by Pickering to concentrate on the long jump. It was a marriage made in heaven as each learned so much from the other and Davies went on to score a shock victory at the 1964 Olympics where Pickering was one of the British team coaches.

By the time of the next Olympics in 1968 he was a member of the BBC television commentary team, his acclaimed partnership with David Coleman lasting until his premature death in 1991, aged 60. As *The Times* obituary stated: "To the millions who knew him from his television commentaries, Ron Pickering's was the voice which brought an inimitable blend of excitement and knowledge to the BBC's coverage of athletics meetings all over the world."

Pickering, who during his 17 year stint as president of Haringey AC built up the club into the strongest in the land, was never reluctant to air his strong views on the menace of drugs in sport and the importance of fair play. Had he lived, he would surely have been heavily involved in the preparations for the 2012 London Olympics for it was he, back in the 1960s when Recreation Manager to the Lee Valley Regional Park, who first suggested plans for an Olympics in that area.

He was married to 1954 European long jump champion Jean Desforges (their son Shaun competed in the shot at the 1996 Olympics) and it is Jean who is not only sustaining the memory of her husband but helping so many of Britain's young hopefuls through the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund. No fewer than 52 of the 67 track and field athletes who represented Britain in Beijing were financially assisted by the Fund early in their careers.



**J**ust in time Ann Packer discovered her best event. Whereas the star of the 1948 Olympics, Fanny Blankers-Koen, began her career at 800m but became a legendary sprinter, hurdler and jumper, Ann started as a sprinter, hurdler and jumper but found fame at 800m. And whereas the Dutchwoman was 30 when she achieved Olympic immortality, Ann retired immediately after her 1964 Olympic success, aged only 22.

She could look back on a remarkably varied career. She won the 100 yards at the 1959 English Schools' Championships, was WAAA long jump champion in 1960 and was a finalist in 1962 at 200m in the European Championships and 80m hurdles at the Commonwealth Games. In 1963 she moved up to 400m, swiftly bursting into world class, and finally in 1964 she took up the 800m with astonishing results.

A PE teacher, coached by Denis Watts, Ann realised she would never become a world beater as a sprinter but thanks to training considerably harder that winter she emerged a much stronger athlete in 1963 and was only 0.1 sec outside the European and UK 400m record with 53.3.

During the winter of 1963-64 she trained even more ferociously with her fiancé, European 400m champion Robbie Brightwell. Her Olympic objective was to win the 400m, but to test her enhanced stamina she opened her season at 800m, winning in a promising 2:11.1. She won her next outing in a similar time and was a close second in her third in 2:05.3. Suddenly she had become a genuine Olympic prospect at that distance as well as 400m and the British team selectors took note.

In Tokyo, after winning her semi in a European record 52.7, she had to settle for silver in the inaugural Olympic women's 400m final as Australia's Betty Cuthbert held her off, 52.0 to 52.2. These were the two fastest ever times in official competition but Ann was dismayed at losing an event she had been confident of winning.

Although on paper she was the slowest of the 800m finalists, she had plenty of motivation. Not only did she wish to atone for the 400m reverse but she also wanted desperately to present a gold medal to her fiancé to compensate for his disappointment at finishing fourth in his 400m final.

Despite her novice status, she ran the race with impeccable judgement. Disregarding the furious early pace, she worked her way through to second around the final turn. Maryvonne Dupureur of France was still five metres ahead entering the home straight but as she flagged so Ann's stride lengthened and her spirits soared. Passing her exhausted opponent, and with a beatific smile on her face, she won in a world record 2:01.1. Shortly after the Games she became Mrs Brightwell and, explaining her immediate retirement, said "running a home is more important than running races."



MARK SHEARMAN

# ANN PACKER

**Born:** 8.3.1942, Moulsoford (Oxfordshire)

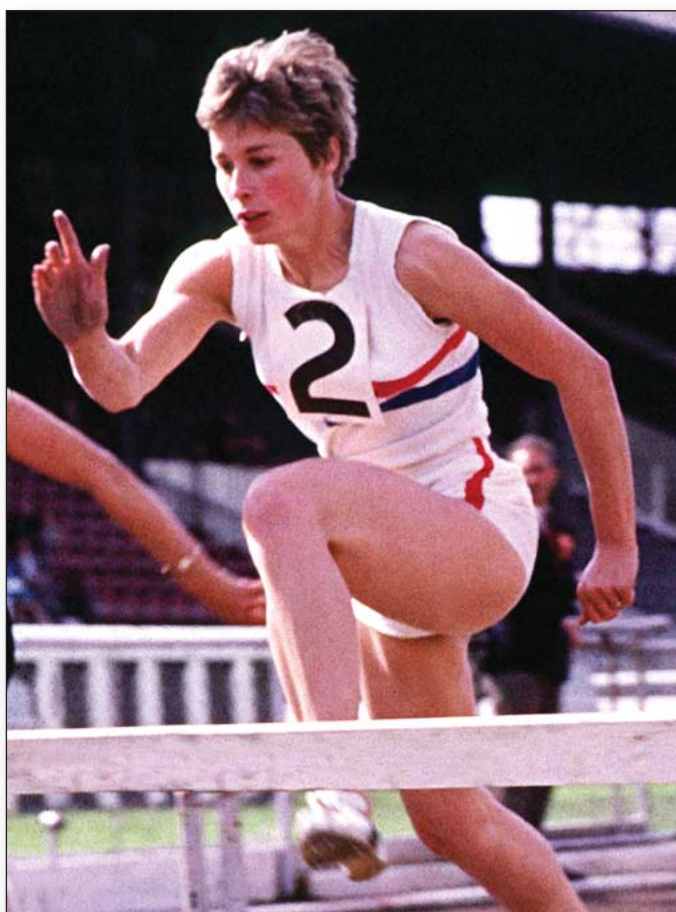
**Club:** Reading AC

**Major individual medals:** Gold – 1964 Olympic 800m; Silver – 1964 Olympic 400m

**World records:** 800m – 2:01.1 in 1964

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009





MARK SHEARMAN

## MARY RAND

**Born:** 10.2.1940, Wells (Somerset)

**Club:** London Olympiades

**Major individual medals:** **Gold** – 1964 Olympic Long Jump; 1966 Commonwealth Long Jump; **Silver** – 1958 Commonwealth Long Jump; 1964 Olympic Pentathlon; **Bronze** – 1962 European Long Jump

**World records:** Long Jump – 6.76 in 1964; 4x110y Relay – 45.2 in 1963. **World indoor record:** Long Jump – 6.35 in 1965

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009

There was seemingly no end to Mary Rand's talents. She excelled as a sprinter, hurdler, high jumper and pentathlete, triple jumped decades before it became a standard event for women, and even competed in a mile walk race! Her crowning glory, though, was the long jump and in Tokyo in 1964 she set a world record of 6.76 in becoming the first British female athlete to win an Olympic gold medal.

As her coach John Le Masurier described that leap of a lifetime: "Technically it was superb – a fast approach, with the body becoming vertical as she crouched into a powerful take-off. A perfect hitchkick with the feet stretched forward together for landing and just sufficient forward speed remaining to allow her to stand up in the sand." It was a performance way ahead of its time, for there was a headwind of 1.6m/sec and the clay runway was rainsoaked. Off today's synthetic surfaces and with that amount of wind behind her it's possible that jump would have been in the neighbourhood of seven metres. It's a salutary fact that the best British mark in 2009 was just 6.47.

As Mary Bignal she first attracted attention while a pupil at Millfield School and in 1957, when only 17, she set an English record in her first pentathlon. At the time of the 1960 Olympics she was being regarded as a possible long jump winner and she led the qualifiers with a British record of 6.33 ... only to flop in the final, placing ninth. After fouling her first two jumps she registered only 6.01. It was a shattering disappointment, redeemed only slightly by an unexpectedly high fourth place in the 80m hurdles.

She married Olympic sculler Sidney Rand in 1961 and only four months after the birth of their daughter she took the long jump bronze medal at the 1962 European Championships. In 1963 she was a member of the British team which set a world record in the 4x110 yards relay and she posted British records in the 80m hurdles, long jump and pentathlon, while her exploits in 1964 prior to the Olympics included equalling the European 100 yards record of 10.6. At the Games she collected a complete set of medals, for after the long jump triumph she placed second in the pentathlon – finishing ahead of Soviet winner Irina Press in three of the five events but losing too many points in the shot – and helped Britain place third in the sprint relay.

British athletics' original 'golden girl' never recaptured that form and retired when injury prevented her making the Olympic team in 1968. Resident in the USA for some 40 years without ever quite losing her Somerset burr, Mary subsequently married Bill Toomey (the 1968 Olympic decathlon champion) and John Reese.

**A**cknowledged as the world's greatest distance runner in the early years of the 20th century, Alf Shrubb was denied his chance of Olympic glory as in 1904, at the height of his powers, Britain did not send a team to the Games staged in St Louis. His reputation rests on the number, range and longevity of his records, together with his victories in the newly instituted International Cross Country Championships of 1903 and 1904.

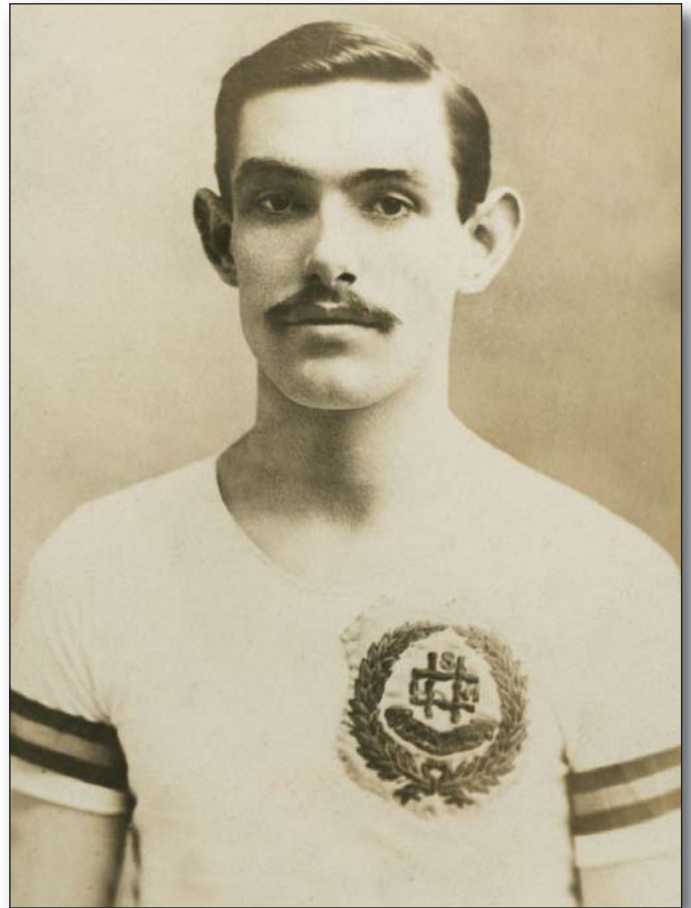
A small man with a short, shuffling stride, Shrubb trained considerably harder than his contemporaries, gained his first national titles in 1901 and set his first English records the following year. His versatility quickly became apparent for in 1902 he clocked the second fastest ever 15 miles time and the following season defeated British record holder Joe Binks for the AAA mile title.

His supreme achievements on the track in 1903 were world records at 3 miles (14:17.6) and 2 miles (9:11.0) within the space of nine days, that 3 miles time remaining the British record for 33 years. He fared even better in 1904, winning his fourth consecutive English cross country title, his second International cross country championship and his fourth successive AAA titles at 10 miles and 4 miles (the latter just 75 minutes after retaining his mile laurels) ... together with a huge tally of world records.

These included 2 miles in 9:09.6 (which survived until 1926), 4 miles in 19:23.4 (unbeaten until 1924) and 3 miles in the unratified time of 14:17.2. In what proved to be his last great race as an amateur, in Glasgow on Guy Fawkes Day (November 5), the 24 year-old Sussex tobacconist provided fireworks galore as he broke every record from 6 miles onwards during a one hour race held in far from ideal conditions. That 6 miles time of 29:59.4 remained the British record until 1936; his 10 miles mark of 50:40.6 stood as a world record until 1928 and his one hour distance of 18,742m went unsurpassed as a British record until 1953!

'The Little Wonder', as he was affectionately dubbed, now held every amateur world record from 2000m to the hour, but after spending several months touring Australia and New Zealand he was declared a professional by the AAA in September 1905. He continued to race as a 'pro' for many years, mostly in North America, and after living in Canada for ten years he served as Oxford University's first paid coach from 1920 to 1927 but then returned to Canada for good and died there aged 84.

The hardest trainer of his era, Shrubb's methods were studied carefully by the man who would himself become one of the greatest distance runners of all time, the 'Flying Finn' Paavo Nurmi.



## ALF SHRUBB

**Born:** 12.12.1879, Slinfold (Sussex); died 23.4.1964

**Clubs:** Horsham Blue Star H, South London H

**Major medals:** Gold – 1903 & 1904 International Cross Country

**World records included:** 2 miles – 9:11.0 in 1903, 9:09.6 in 1904; 3 miles – 14:17.6 in 1903, 14:17.2 in 1904; 6 miles – 29:59.4 in 1904; 10,000m – 31:02.4 in 1904; 10 miles – 50:40.6 in 1904; 1 hour – 18,742m in 1904

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009





## NOEL THATCHER

**Born:** 23.1.66 (Harlow, Essex)

**Club:** Newham & Essex Beagles

**Major medals:** Gold – 1988 Paralympics 200m; 1990 World Championships 400, 800m, 1500m, 5000m & 4 x 400m; 1992 Paralympics 1500m; 1996 Paralympics 5000m & 10000m; 2000 Paralympics 5000m;  
**Silver** – 1984 Paralympics 400m; 1988 Paralympics 1500m; **Bronze** – 1992 Paralympics 800m; 2000 Paralympics 10000m

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009



Noel Thatcher had an unlikely springboard into his athletics career. At the age of 12 he was caught smoking and his punishment was that he spent the next four weeks running five miles a day after school. From struggling near the back of the cross country field he went to finishing third in the schools' cross country championships. But from these beginnings Noel Thatcher went on to become one of the true British paralympic greats as a visually impaired athlete.

It was not just cross country that then appealed to the young Thatcher. He was very active in schools' athletics over a range of disciplines running from 100 to 3k and also taking in field events. He progressed to winning national school's titles and then his first senior title came at 400m in 1983. It was after this event that he was 'spotted' by John Anderson who Thatcher recalls approached him while he was being sick over a fence due to his exertions. Thatcher was coached by John Anderson for the first 10 years of his career, before being advised by Alan Storey, Alan Stevens in Harlow and several coaches in Japan where he took on board many of the Japanese training methodologies and philosophies. The early years of his career also saw him mentored by former 5k world record holder Dave Moorcroft. While many of the key sessions and races were written down Thatcher did not keep a training diary – his philosophy remains 'what you do tomorrow is more important than what you did today'.

Thatcher won medals at almost every major championships he competed in. The only two exceptions being the 2003 World's where he had to return home before competing due to family reasons, and the Athens Paralympics where he finished 4th in both the 5k and 10k. This record at championships saw him accumulate 42 gold medals across his career.

Thatcher was a true championships performer. In the Barcelona Paralympics he set a new world record in winning the 1500m. Four years later in Atlanta he took the 5k and 10k double with his performance in the 10k setting a world record despite the fact he was carrying a stress fracture. Then in Sydney there was a gun to tape victory which saw the 5k world record fall.

As well as substantial success in disability athletics Thatcher represented the South of England at 5K, won the Essex 10k title and also won medals on the roads at half marathon and 10 miles. Many of his performances in these races saw him run faster times to those which he recorded in championship visually impaired races and which were therefore the ones officially endorsed as World records. He also regularly competed for Newham and Essex Beagles in events including the National Athletics League and the National Road Relays.

Thatcher was awarded an MBE for services to disabled sport in 1997 and works as a physiotherapist.

The distinction of becoming the first British woman to gain an Olympic athletics medal fell to Dorothy Odam who, at 16 and on her first trip abroad, placed second in the 1936 Olympic high jump. In fact she was unlucky to come away with the silver rather than the gold medal for she cleared the winning height of 1.60 at the first attempt, while Hungary's Ibolya Csák managed it only at the second try. Under the present rules Dorothy would have been declared the winner but a jump-off was decreed and Csák, who succeeded at 1.62 whereas Dorothy could go no higher than 1.60, claimed victory. A few days later the IAAF passed a new rule governing ties and, had that been in force in Berlin, Dorothy would have been hailed as Britain's first female Olympic champion ... fully 28 years before Mary Rand.

Earlier in 1936 she had set a British record of 1.65 which for some reason was never ratified as equalling the world record, and she was still only 17 when she won the Empire Games title in Sydney early in 1938. The following year she cleared 1.66 for what was eventually recognised as a world record. At the time the listed world record was 1.70 by one Dora Ratjen of Germany in 1938, but 'she' turned out to be 'he' (Hermann) and the record was deleted.

Dorothy married Richard Tyler in 1940, served during the war in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and gave birth to sons in 1946 and 1947. She then proceeded to make an astonishing comeback after an absence of eight years and again went so tantalisingly close to Olympic victory, this time in her native London in 1948. She was in the lead after clearing 1.66, equalling her British record, but needed two attempts at 1.68 while Alice Coachman (USA) succeeded first time ... and Dorothy had to settle again for silver.

In 1950 she retained the Empire Games title after a gap of 12 years and placed second in the European Championships with the same height as the winner, her team-mate Sheila Alexander (later Lerwill). Now coached by Arthur Gold, she changed her style from the outmoded scissors to the western roll in 1951. Despite injuries she placed equal seventh at the 1952 Olympics, while she took yet another silver medal at the 1954 Commonwealth Games. Still she wasn't done: she finished equal 12th at the 1956 Olympics and as late as 1961, aged 41, she ranked fifth in Britain with 1.63!

A fine all-rounder, she won the WAAA long jump and pentathlon titles in 1951, setting a British record in the latter event. She later became a coach, official and British team manager as well as taking up golf (three times winning the national over-80 title) and in her 90th year maintains a keen interest in athletics.



## DOROTHY TYLER

**Born:** 14.3.1920, Stockwell (London)

**Club:** Mitcham AC

**Major medals:** Gold – 1938 Commonwealth; 1950 Commonwealth; Silver – 1936 Olympics, 1948 Olympics, 1950 European, 1954 Commonwealth

**World records:** High Jump – 1.65 (unratified) in 1936; 1.66 in 1939

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009





## SYDNEY WOODERSON

**Born:** 30.8.1914, Camberwell (London); died 21.12.2006

**Club:** Blackheath H

**Major medals:** Gold – 1938 European 1500m; 1946 European 5000m; Silver – 1934 Commonwealth Mile

**World records:** 800m – 1:48.4 in 1938; 880y – 1:49.2 in 1938; Mile – 4:06.4 in 1937; **World best:** ¾ Mile – 2:59.5 in 1939

**Inducted into Hall of Fame:** 2009

Roger Bannister achieved sporting immortality when in 1954 he became the first to run a mile inside four minutes. But, had the Second World War not intervened to deprive him of what should have been his best years as an athlete, who's to say that Sydney Wooderson would not have beaten Bannister to that milestone by a decade or more? It was Wooderson, by the way, who inspired Bannister to become a serious runner. As a 16 year-old schoolboy Bannister had watched Wooderson's gallant mile race against the mighty Swede, Arne Andersson, at London's White City in 1945 and that fired his youthful imagination and ambition.

Wooderson, a diminutive and bespectacled solicitor, was an unlikely looking champion athlete but with his deceptively long stride, big heart, deadly sprint and genuine modesty he attracted much affection and admiration from the British public of the 1930s and 1940s. He was coached by Albert Hill, the Olympic 800m and 1500m champion in 1920, but unfortunately never had the opportunity of making his own mark as an Olympian. A cracked bone in his ankle ruined his chances at the Berlin Games of 1936 and of course the Olympics of 1940 and 1944, when Wooderson could have been at his peak, were cancelled.

It was in 1937 that Wooderson became a legendary figure by setting a world mile record of 4:06.4 off scratch in a handicap race at Motspur Park in Surrey. He had merely been aiming to better his British record of 4:10.8! The following year, in another Motspur Park handicap event, he broke two world records in one race, clocking 1:48.4 for 800m en route to 1:49.2 for 880 yards. Note that Bannister's fastest half mile time was 1:50.7. Later that year Wooderson won the European 1500m title while during a curtailed 1939 season he set a world best of 2:59.5 for three quarters of a mile.

Dogged by ill health during the war years, Wooderson developed such severe rheumatism in the summer of 1944 that he was in hospital for nearly four months, followed by two months' convalescence, and was told by doctors he could never run again. They bargained without his iron will. Within six months of leaving hospital he was racing again and, astoundingly, later that same year (1945) he ran the fastest mile of his life: a British record of 4:04.2!

In 1946 he moved up to 5000m and proceeded to capture the European title in 14:08.6, the world's second fastest ever time and 23 sec inside the British record. Among his beaten rivals were Emil Zátopek and Gaston Reiff, who would win the 10,000m and 5000m respectively at the London Olympics two years later. By then Wooderson had retired, although in March 1948 this remarkable man who had at one time or another been the best in the world at 800m, mile and 5000m, became English 10 miles cross country champion!

# REWARD & RECOGNITION: OUR PROUD ATHLETICS HERITAGE

At the 2009 Annual Hall of Fame Evening in Birmingham, England Athletics proudly displayed a select number of trophies, kindly permitted through its partnership with the AAA of England.

Athletics in England has a rich heritage, of which we are all proud. These trophies represent this heritage and have been awarded to many of the sport's legendary figures over the past decades, including athletes inducted to the England Athletics Hall of Fame.

Images of these trophies can be found on the following pages, together with a short description of each. England Athletics are indebted to Jack Miller and Philip Andrew of the British Athletics Supporters Club for their support with providing the images and descriptions of the trophies.



## THE EARL OF JERSEY TROPHY

This magnificent trophy was donated by Victor Albert George Child Villiers, 7th Earl of Jersey, and the first Chairman of the Amateur Athletic Association. It was originally presented to the predecessor of the AAA – the Amateur Athletic Club.

Jersey had taken part in the second Inter-Varsity sports in 1862 competing in the mile and two mile races. He was on the organising committee of the first AAC Championship in 1886. He resigned as AAA Chairman in 1890 when he was appointed Governor General of New South Wales.

The trophy was originally presented to the winner of the four miles, but was re-engraved in 1932 when the Championship distance was changed to three miles. In 1969 the metric distance 5000 metres was adopted.

The trophy has some great names engraved as holders including Walter George, Alf Shrubbs, Albert Hill, Hannes Kolehmainen, Paavo Nurmi, Sydney Wooderson, Christopher Chataway, Gordon Pirie, Ron Clarke, Brendan Foster and Henry Rono.



## P M THORNTON CHALLENGE CUP

Percy Melville Thornton (1841-1918) was a founder member of Cambridge University Athletics Club and heavily involved in the founding of the AAC. Thornton's name is engraved on the trophy as first winner but this predates both the Championships and the formation of the AAA. Thornton became Member of Parliament for Clapham from 1892 to 1910.

He claimed in his book *Some Things We Have Remembered* to be the first amateur to have run 880 yards in under two minutes.

The half mile trophy itself is elegant but it is the pedigree of the past winners that make it significant. Among the great names are Albert Hill, Bevil Rudd, Douglas Lowe, Thomas Hampson, Godfrey Brown, Arthur Wint, Roger Bannister, Ron Delaney, Derek Johnson, Steve Ovett, Steve Scott, and Sebastian Coe.





## SOPHIE ELLIOTT-LYNN PERPETUAL CHALLENGE TROPHY

This trophy was presented to the Women's Amateur Athletic Association for its Discus Championship by its first Treasurer/Secretary Sophie Peirce-Evans. Born in County Limerick, she graduated from Dublin University then came to England and was a founder member of the WAAA. In that capacity she went to the International Olympic Congress in 1925 as part of the medical commission to argue for women's participation in athletics.

Elliott Lynn was one of the sport's most colourful characters. She won the WAAA Championships in high jump and javelin (twice). She wrote one of the earliest books on women's athletics in 1925.

She became famous as an aviator, setting flying and altitude records and even became the first woman to make a parachute jump. She cultivated publicity particularly for her aviation activities – flying to Cairo with six dresses, a fur coat and tennis rackets.

She married three times. The second was to the much older wealthy Sir John Heath – himself a donor of a WAAA trophy.

The trophy was donated in 1952 but is engraved with winners going back to 1925.



## THE HARVEY CUP

This silver gilt cup was awarded by the AAA to the Champion at their championships achieving the best performance by a male champion.

Charles Harvey had been a respected starter who became President of Northern Counties' AA. Charles Harvey died in 1907 and the trophy was donated in his memory by his brother Gordon Harvey M.P.

The trophy was first awarded in June 1907 jointly to Alex Duncan and Jack Morton. Inevitably given the terms of reference there are some great names among the winners. The list is a reminder that AAA Championships were open to foreign athletes as well as British stars.



## THE C W F PEARCE TROPHY

This is the most unusual and certainly the heaviest of the AAA Trophies. It was presented to the winner of the Men's Javelin Championship. It is unusual not just for its design but also that it was not donated but acquired by the AAA in memory of its Hon Treasurer Claude W F Pearce who was taken fatally ill at an AAA Committee Meeting in 1947. He had been Hon. Treasurer since 1938. Pearce had also amazingly been President of Herne Hill Harriers both before and after both World Wars (his terms of office being 1909/10, 1919/20 and 1938/1946).

The bronze trophy is also distinctive for the detachable javelin.



## THE C B LAWES TROPHY

This trophy was presented first to the mile and later 1500 metres male champion and is therefore one of the prestigious trophies.

Charles Bennet Lawes (1843-1911) was a fine oarsman having won the Diamond Sculls at Henley in 1863 and stroking the Cambridge Boat Race Crew in 1865. He won the inaugural Oxford v Cambridge Race in 1865 wearing tight and light blue hip drawers (then a costume worn only by professionals). He became a sculptor. In 1882 he libelled a fellow sculptor Richard Belt and after a long trial was ordered to pay damages of £5000 (then of course a huge sum)... At the age of 55 he took up speed cycling and set English Amateur records at both one and twenty five miles. In 1900 he succeeded to the family title and became Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge.

Any AAA Mile Trophy is bound to have great names upon it but it is a mark of greatness that the only five times winner is Sydney Wooderson (who also appears on the Earl of Jersey Trophy for winning the 3 miles).



## THE DESBOROUGH PERPETUAL CHALLENGE CUP

This trophy for long jump was presented to the WAAA by one of the foremost sporting administrators. William Henry Grenfall, 1st. Baron Desborough was President of the 1908 Olympic Organising Committee, AAA, Amateur Fencing Association, Marylebone Cricket Club and The Lawn Tennis Association. He was also a steward of the Henley Regatta. As well as these many sporting positions he was also Member of Parliament initially for Salisbury and holder of many public offices.

He had been a considerable athlete and rower when at Oxford. He not only swam the Niagara rapids twice and climbed the Matterhorn three times, but still found time to be a considerable benefactor to Maidenhead.

The trophy was one of the first donated to the WAAA and was first awarded in 1923. It has several famous holders including Dorothy Tyler, Jean Pickering, Mary Rand and Sheila Sherwood.



## A G SPALDING & BROS PERPETUAL CHALLENGE TROPHY

This was one of the original trophies donated to WAAA for their first Championship in 1923. The first winner was Mary Lines. The Trophy, although purchased and hallmarked in England, was donated by the famous American sports goods supplier A G Spalding. Albert Goodwill Spalding was a leading baseball player in the nineteenth century. When he retired from baseball he set with his brother a Company which supplied all sorts of sports equipment, but predominantly baseball and basketball. The Company also published sports books marketed as Spalding's Athletic Library. The Company now ultimately owned by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway still owns the rights to National Basketball League authorised basketball.

The trophy which was the blue ribbon prize has been held by many well known athletes. The name most often on the roll of honour is Joice Maduaka but other winners include Eileen Hiscock, Maureen Gardner, June Paul, Dorothy Hyman and Kathy Cook.



## OFFICIAL EYEWEAR PROVIDERS TO ENGLAND ATHLETICS

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Profiles of David Holding and Noel Thatcher © Andy Barber

All other profiles © Mel Watman

Trophy text by Jack Miller and Philip Andrew

More detailed profiles of many of those featured can be found in the book *All-Time Greats of British Athletics* by Mel Watman; published by SportsBooks Ltd ([www.sportsbooks.ltd.uk](http://www.sportsbooks.ltd.uk))

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