

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SHAFTESBURY BARNET HARRIERS

(Founded in 1890 amalgamated with Barnet Ladies in autumn 1986)

What a distance the club has travelled since that day in 1890, we are not sure of the exact day or even the month, when some young men met at the old Jubilee Hall at Hornsey and decided to form a running club and called it Shaftesbury Harriers. Jubilee Hall was then newly built and used for dances, concerts and such like social events, and was over what was then called a coffee tavern. It stood at the corner of Hornsey Road and Fairbridge Road, not far from Hornsey Road railway station and a mile from Hampstead Heath. It seems probable that, like others of the many clubs being formed about that time, the title came from a road in the district. Possibly some of the lads lived in Shaftesbury Road close by; with its tall Victorian houses the road has not changed so much with the passing years. The Shaftesbury Tavern is still on the corner. (Pictures from p14 of Club History) The first headquarters were at a coffee shop in Crouch End from which runs were held for two seasons after which a move was made to the Fox and Crown on West Hill, Highgate. This pub has since been demolished, but carved on the house built on the site is "The site of the Fox and Crown".

In 1933 we had our first ever inter-club track matches, on bumpy grass tracks at Parliament Hill or on irregular shaped cinder tracks at Regents Park and Finsbury Park. In 1939 Parliament Hill Track was opened and became our track HQ. As we had members from all over of North London we also had a training base at Headstone Lane, Harrow in addition to Parliament Hill. We also held many matches at the Maccabi Stadium, Hendon that was knocked down to make way for the M1 motorway into London. A new era began when we moved to our present home at Cophall Stadium which opened in 1964 for the English Schools and was later converted to an all-weather surface in 1976.

We found Club development difficult at Cophall with limited facilities so in 1983 we built a Clubhouse, helped by a grant from the Sports Council and with much of the work done voluntarily by our own members. In 2013 following Saracens Rugby Club's decision to relocate to Cophall, the Stadium has been rebuilt with a new stand, an indoor athletics training area and has been renamed "Allianz Park".

We qualified for the **British Athletic League** in 1976 (Division 4) and by 1980 we made it to Division 1 (renamed the Premiership in 2006). We have since been ever-present at the top level, but it took us 32 years to win our first Premiership title, which we did in 2012 to coincide with the London Olympics. We retained the title in 2013 and represented GB&NI in the European Champion Clubs Cup for senior men. SBH women qualified for the **UK Women's Athletic League** in the early nineties and won their first Premiership title in 1999 and went on to represent GB&NI in the European Champion Clubs Cup for senior women.

It is August 1978. The place is the athletic stadium at Cwmbran in South Wales. Shaftesbury has surprised everyone by getting to the final of the GRE Gold Cup (the athletic equivalent of the FA Cup) for the second year. With three events to go, the club is still in with a chance of winning the Cup. But few believe a Division 3 club can do it in the face of opposition from Cardiff, Edinburgh Southern, Wolverhampton and the other big clubs with national reputations. Then, Frank Attoh produces a great triple jump win; our sprint relay team also win and little Shaftesbury Harriers are the Cup Champions.

We were founder members of the **National Junior League**, which was formed in 1989. We won the title on numerous occasions but most significantly in 2012, the final year of this excellent competition. We were also members of the **UK National Young Athletes League** and were winners of the title

on six occasions. The Club went on to represent GB&NI in European Champion Clubs Cup competitions on a number of occasions and were the first ever British winners in 2012. Not surprisingly SBH were awarded the prestigious Athletics Weekly Club of the Year Award in 2012.

The Women

With the advent of the boom in jogging and running in the 1980's many of the girlfriend and wives of the Shaftesbury Harriers men wanted to belong to the same club. Discussions took place with the established ladies only club Barnet Cophall Ladies AC and amalgamation took place in the autumn of 1986. The history of the ladies club goes back to 1948 when they were formed as the ladies section of Hampstead Harriers. In 1966 Hampstead Harriers merged with Barnet AC to become Barnet and District AC but 10 years later the ladies section broke away to form Barnet Ladies AC and in 1984 the name was changed to Barnet Cophall Ladies AC to reflect their presence at Barnet Cophall Stadium.

Progression

From those early days in the 1890's the Club had its ups and downs developing from a harrier tradition to an all-round club catering for all ages, male and female, and providing competition over country, road and track & field including indoors. For many years the cross-country headquarters were at Brook Farm, Totteridge with inter club races throughout the winter. The Club now participates in a range of local, regional and national leagues.

Internationals

The Club's first international was **Doug Thompson** who represented England in the International cross country championships held in Dublin on 26 March 1949. Doug ran for England again in 1950. International representation was spasmodic in the 1950s and 1960s but it was in 1963 that a certain **David Bedford** won the Shaftesbury Boys' cross-

country race. In the years that followed Dave went on to win numerous junior and senior cross country titles including the Junior International cross country championship in 1969 and the Senior title in 1971. Dave was the Club's first Olympian in 1972 and broke the world record holder for 10,000m in 1973 with a time of 27:30.8. On retirement from running, Dave continued in the sport initially with the International Athletes Club and more recently as the Race Director of the world famous London Marathon. Dave was awarded an OBE in 2013 for his services to athletics and charitable fund raising.

On the women's side **Joyce Smith** also went to the Munich Olympics of 1972 in the 1500m and like Dave Bedford gained international representation over country, road and track. Her outstanding achievements were winning the International cross-country in 1972. Joyce was captain of the British women's Olympic team in 1972. She gained a bronze medal in the European 3000m championship and went on to win the first two London Marathons in 1981 and 1982. Joyce represented GB&NI in the first world championships 1983 and at the 1984 Olympics. In 1984 she was awarded the MBE for services to athletics.

In 2014 **George Harrison** was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to athletics.

Since Joyce and Dave competed in the Munich Games in 1972, SBH have had representatives at each of the 11 Olympic Games that have taken place between 1984 and 2024. The Club have had a total of 46 members as summer Olympians with pride of place to **SIMONE JACOBS** for competing in 4 consecutive games and to **NATASHA DANVERS** for winning the bronze medal in 400m Hurdles in 2008. A full list of Olympians appears in the Club Achievements section. SBH have also had countless representatives at World, European and Commonwealth events.

SBH have also had 3 representatives at the Olympic Winter Games – **ANGUS MCKENZIE** 1984 Sarejevo, **COURTNEY RUMBOLT** 1998 Nagano and **STUART BENSON** 2014 Sochi.