

THE STORY OF LIGHT BLUE: THE MAGAZINE OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY SPORT

'All correspondence care of Emmanuel College'

Light Blue was a phenomenon of the 1950s and early 1960s. For almost all of that time, the magazine was run entirely by undergraduates from Emmanuel. It was printed and distributed termly, with sales representatives in every college, and regularly sold over 2000 copies each issue, at a time when there were only 9000 undergraduates in the University. It was required reading for anyone in the sporting fraternity, and was probably the largest circulating magazine by a long way, rivalled only by the weekly newspaper *Varsity*.

The magazine originated in St Catharine's in 1950, and was the brainchild of Peter Matthews and Neville Burston. Its operation was supervised with a very light touch by Captain C R Benstead, a don at St Catharine's. All undergraduate operations of this kind were required to have a don available to ensure that they did not get into too much trouble.

Sport was a passion amongst undergraduates in those days, and was played by great numbers of men. Women also played, but there were only three women's colleges, Girton, Newnham and New Hall. All other undergraduate colleges were men only, and girls were outnumbered in the University by nine to one. As a result women's sport was treated kindly but rather patronisingly by the magazine, as will be apparent from a glance at the women's pages in any issue.

Emmanuel undergraduates were particularly keen on sport. It was popularly believed that the then Master Edward Welbourne had a policy of selecting new undergraduates only if they looked capable of gaining either a first class degree or a sporting blue.

The large numbers playing sport are well illustrated by a report in the *Emmanuel College Magazine* of the period that the Hockey Club had 55–60 members. In 1954–55, as many as 30 people turned up in sports gear for the annual Club photo, and the College regularly fielded five teams on a Saturday. The teams were called 1, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B, because it was felt that no other college would be prepared to play against fourth and fifth teams. Over the years the Hockey Club provided a disproportionate number of people for the *Light Blue* board.

The College's sporting achievements are chronicled in the *College Magazine* and do not need to be repeated here. *Light Blue* was not usually

featured in the *Magazine*, presumably because it was not an official College Club or Society. Nevertheless it played a significant part in the life of undergraduates at that time. The College was so strong in all sports that when Matthews and Burston graduated in 1951, responsibility for the magazine transferred to Emmanuel where it remained for almost the whole of the decade.

The format of the magazine remained similar for the whole period. The elements were as follows:

- Compact size, A5, about 80 pages, printed on glossy paper by Crampton's of Sawston.
- Articles from famous sportsmen and sports journalists. It was found that such people were prepared to write articles for no fee. Over the years there was a remarkable list of top sportsmen and journalists who wrote for the magazine, including for example Don Bradman on cricket, Harold Ricketts on the Boat Club, Harold Abrahams on athletics, Fred Perry on tennis, C B van Ryneveld on Rugby Football, Mike Pinner on Association Football, and others too numerous to name.
- Articles on College sport, written by undergraduates themselves, usually from Emmanuel. The late David Newsome wrote some superb articles on University cricket in 1952 and 1953. Many of the authors are now well-known public figures, including for example Cecil Parkinson and Tom King (later cabinet ministers) and John Culver (later a US Senator). The policy here was to pack the articles with as many names as possible, in the belief that those mentioned would be certain to buy a copy for themselves, and probably extra copies for parents and girlfriends as well.
- Superb action photographs, often full page. The magazine was fortunate in having the free services of Frank Kenworthy of Stearn's photographers, who had a virtual monopoly of taking club photographs in the University. Frank was passionately keen on sport, and took wonderful photographs for the magazine.
- Numerous sporting cartoons drawn by gifted undergraduates of the day. The outstanding contributors were Tony Harris, Angus McCrae and Tim Birdsall (all from other colleges). The writer of this article remembers a visit to Downing, to try and persuade Gavin Lyall to contribute cartoons for the magazine. Lyall later became a well-known author, but on this occasion made it clear

that doing cartoons for a pathetic sports magazine was beneath him intellectually.

- Helpful information, such as a map of college sports grounds, and a fixture list of sporting events for the term.
- Advertisements, mostly from local traders. Apart from advertisements and sales, there was no other funding. The magazine generally made a small profit on each issue. In the event of a loss, it was understood that the editor would have to carry the can, which certainly encouraged them to try their hardest to make it a success.
- Circulation representatives in every college. To become the *Light Blue* representative carried a cachet, and leading sportsmen usually took the job. For example Dennis Silk was the rep for Sidney Sussex in his day. It was said that he stood at the entrance to the College on publication day, and everyone had to buy a copy. Donald Trelford (later editor of *The Observer*) was the rep for Selwyn.

Every year, there was a *Light Blue* dinner, to which the captains of the nine Blue sports were invited, together with Captain Benstead, Frank Kenworthy, the founders Matthews and Burston, the current editorial board, past members of the *Light Blue* society, and guests such as Harold Abrahams, Chris Chataway and E W Swanton. This was an exciting event for the *Light Blue* members, because the captains of the Blue sports were like gods in their day, and they all turned up so you got to meet them all. Fifty years on, the magazine makes fascinating reading, because it is so full of the names of people who later became famous in many different fields.

Below is a list of editors and members of the *Light Blue* board over the years. A curiosity is that three of the editors were also captains of the College Hockey Club (John Britten, John Mirams, and Alan Britten) and two of them were brothers. It is believed that Tod Wainwright was the last editor. His predecessor Alex Watson reports that there was a sharp decline in advertising income and that Tod was left facing financial difficulties, which he thinks brought the magazine to an end in 1963.

Year	Editor	Business Manager	Circulation Manager	Other Staff
1950/51	Peter Matthews (St Cats)	Neville Burston (St Cats)	?	David Allen, Asst Ed
1951/52	Keith Marriott	John Williamson, Ian Sherborne	?	Jack Laybourne, David Corder , Tony Harris, Cartoonist
1952/53	Simon Wood			Tony Harris, Cartoonist
1953/54	Alan Davenport	John Griffiths	Robert Stinson	Tony Harris, Cartoonist, Jock Pirie, Legal
1954/55	John Britten	Alan Alexander	Owain Howell	John Mirams, Asst Ed, Peter Spencer , Angus McCrae, Cartoonist (Jes), Jock Pirie, Legal
1955/56	John Mirams	Dick Clements	Bill Downey	Tim Taylor, Asst Ed, D R W Knight Asst Bus Mgr , Angus McCrae, Cartoonist (Jes), Jock Pirie, Legal
1956/57	David Thomas	David Willis	Mike Brining	Tony Hidden, Asst Ed, Robert Jacklin, Sub Ed , Tim Birdsall, Cartoonist
1957/58	Robert Jacklin	Hugh Avey	Spencer White (?)	Peter Shaw, Asst Ed, Stephen Holt, Asst Bus Mgr, Roger Nicholson, Asst Bus Mgr , Norman Parker, Cartoonist, Tim Birdsall, Cartoonist
1958/59	?	?	?	?
1959/60	Alan Bain (St Cats)	P R Chamberlain (Sel)	Alan Britten	G M Reid, Asst Bus Mgr (St Cats), Bill Skinner, Asst Ed (St Cats)
1960/61	Alan Britten	S M Evans, Alex Watson	?	A L Corder, Asst Ed, James Wyness, Sub Ed , John Godfrey, Sub Ed, J R L Cunningham, Asst Bus Mgr, Donald Trelford (Sel), Nick Ranson
1961/62	Alex Watson	Roy Withyman	?	Nick Ranson, Mike Ross
1962/63	Tod Wainwright	?	?	?

Note 1: Members of Emmanuel College are in bold

We all had a fantastic amount of fun with it, and plenty of thrills and spills. It was recognised that the editor should expect to drop a class in the examinations, because of the time spent on *Light Blue*, but of course it looked marvellous on our CVs when we went hunting for jobs. If you want to see what it looked like, most of the issues are available in the College Archives.

John Britten (matric. 1952)