

# PLAY the GAME

## The sporting heritage of the University of Westminster

### What is the exhibition about?

This exhibition aims to celebrate the history and achievements of the Polytechnic Sports Clubs. The Polytechnic was the University's predecessor.

### Where do the images come from?

The images are digitised copies of original photographs, drawings and documents in the University Archives. The originals are often small, fragile and faded, and do not match the quality of modern sports photography, but they represent the sporting heroes of their day.

### Why is the exhibition called Play the Game?

The title and logo used in the exhibition are copied from *The Polytechnic Association* of 1909, where they appear as the heading for the Sports Clubs reports.

### Why did the Polytechnic have so many Sports Clubs?

Quintin Hogg, founder of the Polytechnic, was a firm believer in the health-giving and character-building qualities of sport. He also enjoyed taking part, especially playing football. He provided the facilities for a range of different sports and actively encouraged members to participate. They were open clubs – membership was wider than the student body.

### Where did they play?

The first football was played in public parks and the first swimming races were in the Thames. Following the move into 309 Regent Street in 1882, Hogg provided a gymnasium, a swimming pool and a rifle range inside the building. In 1888 he bought the boathouse at Chiswick. The sports ground adjacent to the boathouse was bought with money raised by public appeal as a memorial to Hogg, who died in 1903.

Supported by the  
Heritage Lottery Fund



### Why were the Clubs so successful?

The active promotion of sport, combined with the generous provision of facilities at the Polytechnic, made sport accessible to large numbers at a time when many sports (such as football) were becoming organised for the first time and local, national and international competitions were beginning to develop. As the Clubs grew, talented athletes and some notable coaches were attracted to them.

Remarkable success came from this strong base: the Clubs have won at least 50 Olympic medals, 10 world and 175 national championships.

The wider membership was able to take part in sport, and also to enjoy the social life – concerts, dances, excursions and parties – which was a feature of all Polytechnic Clubs.

### Is this the complete picture?

No. The archives are incomplete, and many sports, such as basketball, cricket, hockey and rugby, are not included because few images have survived.

### Where are the women?

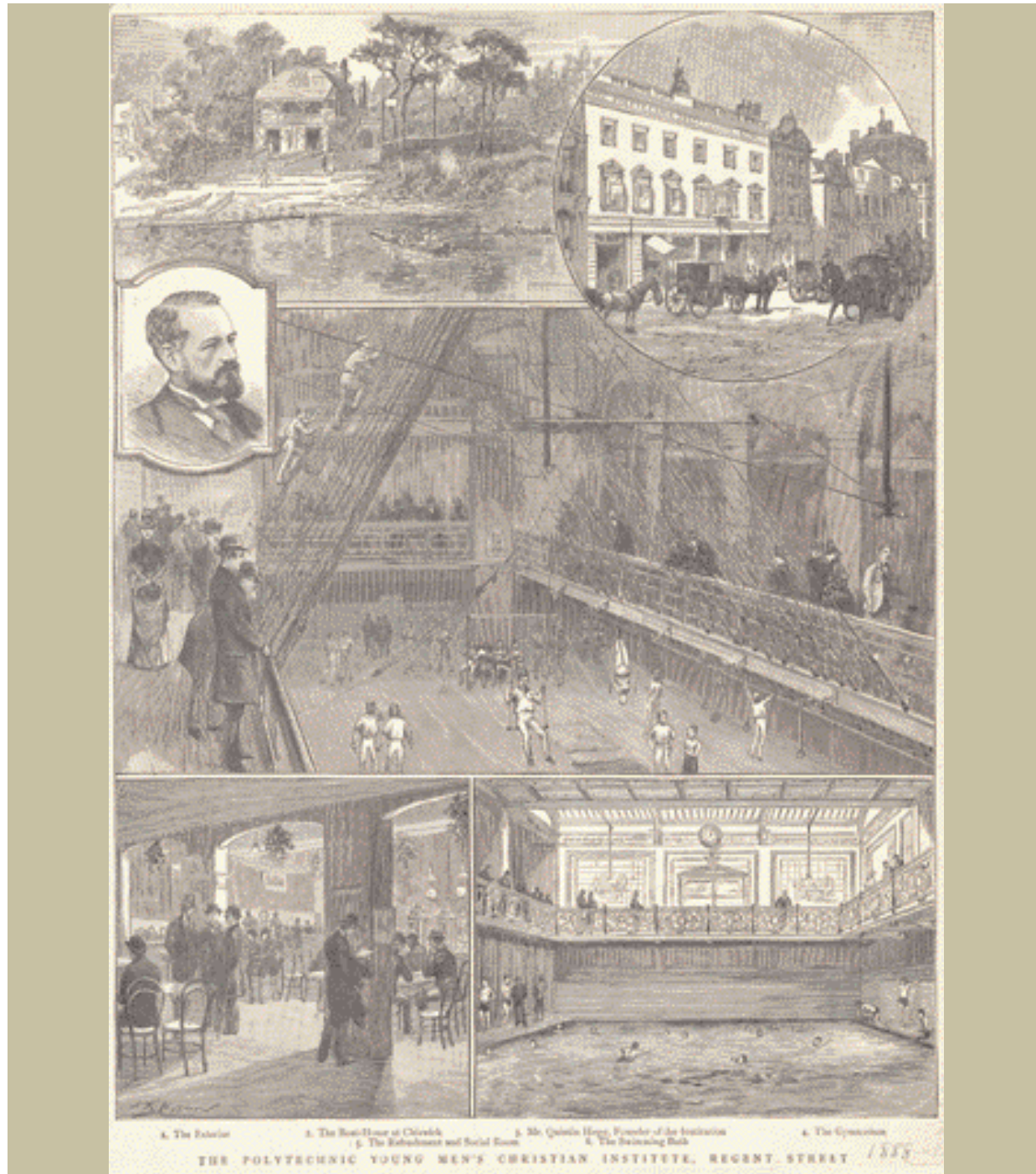
The early Sports Clubs were exclusively for men – a reflection of social practice in Victorian Britain. Women were allowed separate and limited use of the sports facilities such as the gymnasium and the swimming pool, and some separate Clubs were established, most of which finally became integrated with the men's clubs in the second half of the twentieth century.

### The Studd Challenge Trophy

From 1898 the Studd Trophy was presented for the best performance by a Polytechnic athlete during the previous year. The winners are listed in the marble on the staircase wall at the back of the Regent Street foyer. The names are unfamiliar to us now, but most were world, Olympic or national champions in their particular sport.

# PLAY the GAME

This news cutting from *The Illustrated London News*, 24 November 1888, publicises the new sports facilities at the Polytechnic. It shows Quintin Hogg on the left and illustrates the boathouse, the gymnasium and the swimming pool. The exterior of the Regent Street building shown here was demolished during the rebuilding of 1910-1912, when the present frontage was built. The gymnasium and the swimming pool remained unchanged during rebuilding. The swimming pool is now the Deep End Café. The boathouse was damaged by bombing in 1944, and reconstructed in 1951.



# Polytechnic Gymnastics



Above: Polytechnic gymnasium 1899.

Right: girls from the Polytechnic Craft Schools exercising on the roof of Little Titchfield Street, 1930s.

Below right: gymnasium, Little Titchfield Street, late 1940s.



When the Institute moved to the Polytechnic building at 309 Regent Street in 1882, one of the first changes was to turn the old Exhibition Hall into a gymnasium. It was used by men and women, and frequent displays were given, sometimes in conjunction with other sports such as boxing and fencing.

A second gymnasium was installed in the Polytechnic Extension building which opened in Little Titchfield Street in 1929. This space is next to the Portland Hall and is currently part of the Regent Campus Library.



# Polytechnic Fencing Club



A fencing society was founded within the Polytechnic in 1883. Some girls took it up as part of their gymnastic activities. Many young men belonged to volunteer regiments, and fencing may have been included in their military training. The Polytechnic Club was officially constituted in June 1898. Douglas Hogg, later Lord Hailsham, the son of the founder Quintin Hogg, was the Club's first President. He played an active role, winning the Club Championship in 1900. He is pictured (left) in his robes as Lord Chancellor.

The Club achieved particular success during the late 1950s and 1960s. The women won the English Team Championship in 1960, 1963, 1964, 1967 and 1969, together with other individual and team events. The men's Foil Team won the Sporting Record Cup in 1959 and 1961.

The Poly Fencing Club continues to meet in the gymnasium at Regent Street.

Right and below:  
Polytechnic fencing  
classes 1899.



Right and far right:  
Polytechnic fencers,  
1960s.





# Polytechnic Harriers



In 1883 Polytechnic members asked for running to be added to the existing sports clubs.

At a meeting in 1883 the Polytechnic members asked for running to be added to the existing sports clubs. The Polytechnic Harriers was founded; it did indeed become a leading club, producing a series of Olympic and national champions. In 1938 a new running track and stadium were opened at Chiswick, and the annual Kinnaird Trophy meeting – an inter-club competition – was a major national event. Large crowds were attracted to Chiswick, as seen in the picture of McDonald Bailey, national sprint champion (left), winning there in the late 1940s.

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A Harrier attracts attention in Regent Street.



Above: this Harriers relay team includes W.R. Applegarth (second from right) who won two medals in the 1912 Olympic games.

Right: Harry Edward winning the Amateur Athletic Association quarter mile national championship in 1922. He also won the 100 and 220 yards, and was awarded the Studd Trophy in 1922.

# Polytechnic Marathon



Below: L.B. Griffiths winning the Polytechnic Harriers' Marathon, Windsor Great Park, 1940.



# Marathon

In 1908 the Olympic Games were held in London and the marathon was reintroduced as a modern event. The Polytechnic Harriers organised a Marathon Trial Race, from Windsor Great Park to Wembley Park, and then helped organise the Olympic event.

Public concern at the lack of British success in the Olympic marathon caused the *Illustrated London News* newspaper to offer a splendid trophy for a regular event. The Polytechnic Harriers took up the challenge, and the Polytechnic Marathon became an annual event. The first race in 1909 was won by a Polytechnic athlete, H. Barrett, pictured (centre left) with the trophy.

The race always started in the grounds of Windsor Castle, and it was frequently a member of the royal family who fired the pistol. On the left, Queen Mary is seen talking to runners before the race in 1921. Following the building of the new stadium in 1938, the race was rerouted to finish at Chiswick.



The start of the Polytechnic Harriers' Marathon from Windsor Castle, 1939.



# Olympics

# London 1908

In 1908 the Olympic Games came to the White City Stadium in London. The Polytechnic organised the opening and closing ceremonies and the Marathon. Visiting athletes from abroad were invited to become honorary Polytechnic members and to use the sports and social facilities at 309 Regent Street.

At the Games, C.H. Bartlett of the Polytechnic Cycling Club won a gold medal, and the Poly won six silver and bronze medals in boxing, cycling and track events.

King Edward VII, Queen Alexandra and the President of France visited the White City Stadium on 26 May, three weeks before the Games began. The Polytechnic staged the events, which included a parade of athletes and a gymnastic display.

These post-cards (left) were produced to mark the occasion.

The 1908 Olympic Marathon, the first run in the modern games, made the headlines. The first runner into the Stadium, Dorando Pietri of Italy, was badly dehydrated and collapsed just before the finish. Jack Andrew, Secretary of the Polytechnic Harriers (pictured with megaphone, below) who was in charge of the event, helped him to his feet, so Pietri was immediately disqualified and the second runner, Jim Hayes of the USA, was declared the winner. Such was the popular support for Pietri that he was presented with a special medal by Queen Alexandra.



# Polytechnic

# Swimming Club



Swimming was one of the first four sports which formed part of Hanover United Athletic Club, founded in 1874. Legend has it that in the early days in Covent Garden, Quintin Hogg walked the boys to Highgate to swim in the ponds. The first reported competition was at Whitfield Street baths in 1879, but longer races were swum in the Thames between Chiswick Church and Barnes Bridge. H. Bowden was the Polytechnic's first national swimming champion, winning events over this course in 1888, 1889 and 1890.

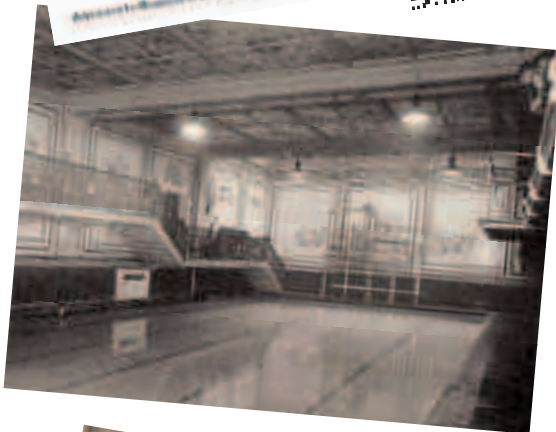
The Polytechnic had its own pool from 1884, in the space now occupied by the Deep End Café. The pool was always closed in the winter, and used as a reading room, so the swimmers had to use the Davies Street Baths.

The Polytechnic swimmers began to play water polo with considerable success, producing a series of winning teams and international players – Bob Grey



(pictured left) was England captain and first winner of the Studd Trophy in 1898. The Club Championship of England continued to elude them until they finally won it in 1956 – a year in which the first team won every game it played. The Club continues under the name Polytechnic, though it left Regent Street following the closure of the pool.

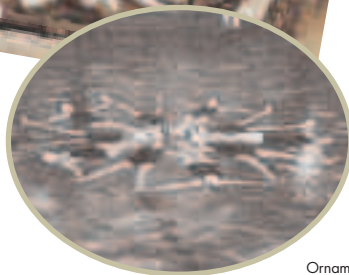
The Polytechnic Ladies Swimming Club introduced the first displays of 'ornamental swimming' in the 1930s – the forerunner of synchronised swimming.



The Polytechnic Swimming Pool.



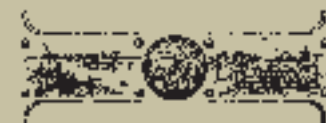
Polytechnic Water Polo Team, 1909.



Ornamental swimming.



The pool in use as a reading room, winter 1899.



# Polytechnic Boathouse



The boathouse after rebuilding in 1951.



# Boathouse

From the earliest days in the Institute, Hogg encouraged the members to row. Rowing was included in the first four sports of the Hanover United Athletic Club. The Polytechnic Boat Club was founded in 1879, and in 1888 Hogg presented the Club with its own Boathouse at Chiswick. The opening ceremony was marked by boat and swimming races, a procession of illuminated boats, fireworks, a military band and a concert. In 1907 the Quintin Boat Club was formed as an open club able to compete in Amateur Rowing Association events.

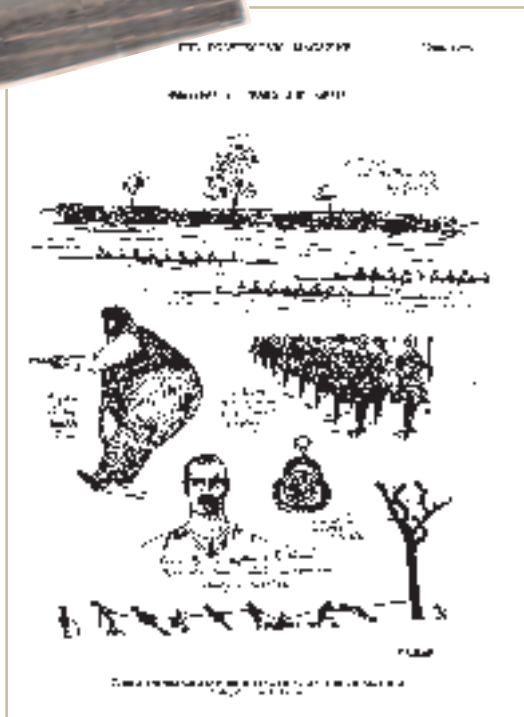
The Boathouse was damaged by bombing in 1944; it was reconstructed and reopened in 1951. Its position marks the end of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race.



# Chiswick Sports Ground



Above: aerial view of site. Left: 1938 Stadium.



In 1888 Quintin Hogg bought a boathouse on the Thames at Chiswick for the Polytechnic Boat Club to use. Hogg died in 1903, and money was raised by public appeal for a suitable memorial. Part was spent on the Hogg statue, now in Portland Place, and part on buying a 40 acre permanent sports ground adjacent to the boathouse. The pavilion was the gift of Lord Howard de Walden. The photograph below and the cartoons from *The Illustrated London News* illustrate events on the opening day, 19 May 1906.

As a result of the success of the Sports Clubs, and the large crowds which came to watch the events, the ground was extended, a running track added and a stadium built in 1938.

Chiswick is currently being redeveloped for use by the University and local sports clubs.



Right: Annual garden party at Chiswick, 1920.

# Polytechnic Football Club



Hanover United team of 1882. Quintin Hogg is seated in the centre.



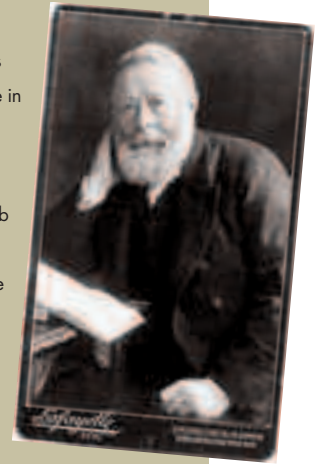
The Polytechnic Rangers Football Team, which won the Territorial Army Cup in 1912.



Football at Chiswick, 1950s.

During the 1860s and 1870s football began the transformation from public school pastime to national game. The Football Association rules were established in 1863, and the first FA Cup competition took place in the 1872-73 season. At first teams of gentlemen amateurs were successful, but professional players and clubs came to dominate.

In 1875 the members of the Institute asked Hogg to found a sports club for football, cricket, swimming and rowing. It was called the Hanover United Athletic Club. Matches were organised against other clubs. The name was changed to the Polytechnic Football Club at the beginning of 1888. Hogg himself played for the Club, together with his friend Arthur, later Lord, Kinnaird, the most famous amateur player of his day. Later in life Kinnaird (pictured right) became president of the Football Association.



The first games were played on Primrose Hill and in Regent's Park. Hogg provided grounds for the Club at the Limes, Barnes, in 1878, and then at Merton Hall, Wimbledon, in 1885. The Club moved to its present ground, the Quintin Hogg Memorial Ground at Chiswick, in 1906. By the 1930s, the Polytechnic was fielding ten or eleven teams, as it still does today.



The Polytechnic Football Club first team, April 1922, outside the club house at Chiswick.



# Polytechnic Cycling Club

Cycling began to emerge as a popular hobby and a competitive sport in the 1870s.

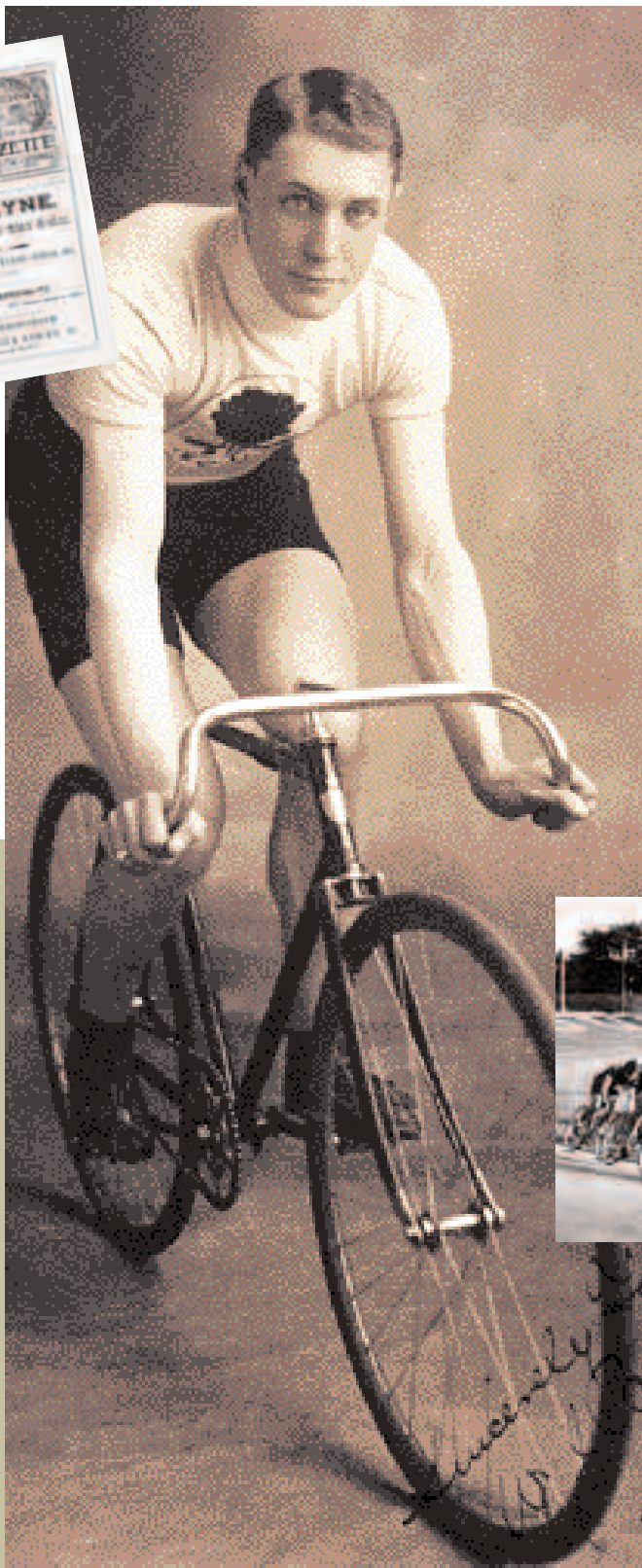
In 1878 a group of boys from the Salisbury Street branch of the Institute asked Quintin Hogg if they could learn to cycle. Hogg provided the first bicycles and a Club was formed, called the Ian Bicycling Club after Hogg's baby son Ian. The name was changed to the Hanover Club in 1881. In 1885 it became the Polytechnic Cycling Club, destined to be the largest and most successful in the country.

The first object of the Club was to organise Club Runs. Members would meet in Cavendish Square on Saturday afternoon (most people still worked on Saturday mornings) and then cycle out of London. At holidays such as Easter longer trips, both at home and abroad, were organised.

The PCC held its first race meeting in August 1883 at the Lillie Bridge track. The Club organised a growing number of track and road races and time trials. Its members competed at home and abroad. By the Club's 60th Anniversary in 1938, they had won five World, two Olympic and 62 national and empire championships, and the success continued after World War Two.



Time triallist, c. 1910.



Bill Bailey, world champion at 1000 metres, 1909.



Track races at Herne Hill, 1950s.



Refreshment break during the annual Poly 12 hour race, 1920s.



H.G. Ryan and T.G. Lance, winners of the 3000 metres Tandem Cycle Championship, Olympic Games, Antwerp, 1920.



# Polytechnic Rambling Club



Above: ramblers in Epping Forest, 1888.

Right: nutting ramble 1890.



Poly Ramblers taking part in the 1938 Lord Mayor's Show.



Near Henley 1893.

# Rambling Club

The Polytechnic Rambling Club was founded in 1885 to provide locally accessible and social recreational activity. It was the first and forerunner of the more formal groups of ramblers in London.

Rambling was growing in popularity as people took advantage of the new railways to escape from the noise and grime of London – then the world's largest city – and walk in the surrounding countryside.

The Club was for men only; a separate women's club was founded in 1910 and the two merged in 1955. Women joined many of the early rambles by invitation, however, and indeed the Club gained a reputation for match-making. The autumn nutting rambles attracted much comment: *THE POLYTECHNIC RAMBLING CLUB'S NUTTING RAMBLES*. (July 1895).

By the 1930s the Club was so popular that numbers on some rambles had to be limited to 100 or 120. There were concerts, garden parties and sports days, and in the winter there were visits to places of interest.

There was a revival of enthusiastic membership in the late 1940s and 1950s, following the privations of World War Two. The Polytechnic Rambling Club is currently flourishing as an open club.

