

A Long Running Saga

On 20 July 2012 Maj Gen Keith Spacie carried the Olympic torch through Guildford. This was not a privilege that merely came with the rank or the rations, but was recognition, as least in part, of a lifetime's career as a distinguished middle-distance and cross-country runner, formerly at Combined Services and Army level and currently as a leading national and county veteran. That career also embodies a significant link that stretches back through much of the history of modern Olympiad by virtue of the general's position as the President of the Milocarian Athletic Club.

The club was founded in the early 1930s to encourage graduates of the armed services's colleges to continue taking part in athletics when they had reached their units. The name is an amalgamation of Milo, a 6th century BC wrestler from Southern Italy who had been Olympic champion six times and Icarus who, according to classical myth, escaped from Crete on wings of wax and feathers, but flew too close to the sun and plunged to his death when the wax melted in the heat.

The Milocarians were a force in national athletics in the 1930s and provided medal-winning members of 1932 and 1936 British Olympic teams, among them Godfrey Rampling, a 400m runner and father of Charlotte, the actress and Donald Findlay, a hurdler, who subsequently captained the British team when the games were last held in London, in 1948. Lord Burghley, the chairman of the post-war Olympic organising committee was also a Milocarian as were four other members of the British team. It was a remarkable achievement for the club to produce athletes of Olympic standard in the aftermath of the war when the services were stretched tight across the globe. Also, more than 100 members of the club had been killed in the fighting from which the club never fully recovered.



The Milocarian Trophy, a magnificent George III silver-gilt urn, made by Garrards, was inaugurated in 1946 to commemorate the war dead and was pledged to the Amateur Athletic Association to be awarded for an inter-school athletics competition. Most recently, on 9 May 2012, the Chairman of the Milocarian AC presented the cup to the winning South East Region athletics team at the finals of the annual Schools' Games, Sponsored by Sainsbury's and held in the Olympic Stadium, thus adding a further strand to the Milocarians' enduring Olympic connection.

The club is still running, but now concentrates on cross country matches around the London area and a little, gentle road running in the summer. Membership is open to all serving and retired members of the three services and accommodates all ages and standards of runner, male and female, so anybody who is keen to continue their running career and retain the competitive edge should contact the Chairman, Neil Wood, on 01622 718665 or the Cross Country Secretary, Paul French, on 01264 710623 for details.