'A NEW DAWN RISING'\
AN EMPIRICAL AND SOCIAL STUDY
CONCERNING THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF ENGLISH WOMEN'S ATHLETICS UNTIL 1980

Gregory Paul Moon

Submitted in part fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at Roehampton Institute London
for the University of Surrey

August 1997

1Sutton and Cheam Advertiser 1979. Dawn Lucy (later Gaskin) was the first athlete I ever coached. Previously, she had made little progress for several years. In our first season together her improvement was such that the local newspaper was prompted to address her performances with this headline.
ABSTRACT

This study explores the history of English women's athletics, from the earliest references up to 1980. There is detailed discussion of smock racing and pedestrianism during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, but attention is focused on the period from 1921, when international and then domestic governing bodies were formed and athletics became established as a legitimate sporting activity for women. The methodologies employed are varied, incorporating the use of original documentary sources (for example, newspapers, minute books, and other archival material) and interviews, which were conducted with a range of athletes and administrators. The history of English women's athletics is presented chronologically in Chapters Three to Six which cover key events, such as the formation of the governing bodies, the successes and failures of some of the key athletes and administrators, and the dominant ideologies which have affected women's entry, degree of involvement and continuance in the sport. The varied factors which have encouraged or constrained women from expressions of physicality, and which have changed over time, are considered. Equally complex have been the relationships with the men who have been associated with athletics, both in England and in the global context; concepts of male hegemony are explored, as are the relationships between different groups of women.

Attention is given to the complexities surrounding women's athletics, which have resulted in uneven growth around the country and on the world stage. Throughout the thesis the development of women's athletics has been related to wider issues which have impinged on its structure and development. For example, specific cultural, political, economic and ideological patterns which have influenced the history of women's athletics are discussed. Chapters Seven and Eight are thematic, covering the whole period under examination. Chapter Seven focuses on changing medical and social attitudes to the female body over
time, and examines images of athletic femininity, changing dress codes, and the particular problem of gender verification testing. Chapter Eight examines the issues of power and control, inequalities and discrimination, and, more specifically, the concept of male hegemony and gender relations of power. This last element incorporates an analysis of the changing relations between men and women, and between different groups of women, including an examination of the roles of administrators, familial relationships and coaches, together with discussions centred on the myth of equal opportunities for women in relation to finance, facilities and press and media coverage. Chapter Nine concludes the study by looking at the spread and democratization of women's athletics, discussing schoolgirl athletics, class distinctions and ethnic expansion. This thesis ends in 1980 when the commercialization and commodification of sport entered a new phase and changed the nature of women's athletics fundamentally.

© Copyright Greg Moon 1997
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

ABBREVIATIONS x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE THESIS
  A) INTRODUCTION 1
  B) OUTLINE OF THE THESIS 12

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY
  Introduction 16
  Original Documentary Sources 16
  Oral Histories 24
  Problems of Sampling 27
  Questioning Technique 28
  Reliability of Data 31
  Interpretation of Data 32
  Conclusion 37

CHAPTER THREE: THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS IN ENGLAND: IN THE SHADOW OF MEN
  Introduction: The Establishment of Athletics as a Male Activity 38
  Breaking the Pattern - Earliest Races for Women 41
  Smock Racing - A Highly Organized Activity 42
  Racing for Wagers 46
  Racing Abroad 47
  Pedestrianism 48
  Mid-Victorian Social Changes and Sabbatarianism 52
  The Rise of Male Hegemony in the 'New' Athletics 55
  Contemporary Literature 59

CHAPTER FOUR: 1914 TO 1939: FORMAL BEGINNINGS
  Introduction 64
  Post-War Social Changes 65
  Pre-Administrative Competition in England 68
  Early Growth Abroad 73
  England Enters the International Arena 74
  Alice Milliat and the Founding of an International Administration 82
  Formation of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association 85

iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without funding for three full years from the Sport Studies Department, Roehampton Institute London, and a further six months' funding from Roehampton's Research Office.

Financially, I am also indebted to the Office for National Statistics, Medscreen, International Doping Tests and Management, and John Whetton for offering additional sources of income to fit around my requirements during this lengthy period of study.

Individually I must thank all those who generously gave of their time to assist my studies, particularly: Joan Allison, David Barrington, Ruth Berlandina, Christine Benning, Christina Boxer, Jim Braben, John Bromhead, David Cocksedge, Eric Cowe, Sarah Cranmer, Sylvia Disley, Sandy Duncan, Carol Dyhouse, Marjorie Ferris, Dawn Gaskin, Steve Hewitt, Frank Horwill, Liz Joyce, Lily Kager, Kev Kelly, Dame Marea Hartman, Brian Hewson, Jill Lindsay, Peter Lovesey, David McCobb, Tim Lynch-Staunton, William Moon, Tom McNab, Eric Nash, Judy Oakes, Wilf Paish, Jenny Pawsey, Phyllis Perkins, Professor Peter Radford, Jonathan Rosenthall, Vera Searle, Judy Vernon, Denis Watts, John Whetton, Mabel Winter and Mary Wixey - and Walty and Jenny.

I am particularly grateful to David Terry, who allowed me access to his personal library, and to Sue Stevens, who made numerous suggestions to improve the final text.

I also acknowledge the help of the staff of: Birmingham University Library, The British

My co-supervisor, Dr Garry Whannel, provided frequent encouragement. But most of all I
am indebted to my director of studies, Professor Jennifer Hargreaves, who, despite
everything, has managed to retain a sense of humour. I could not have wished for more
understanding, helpful and knowledgeable guidance.

Finally, to my wife, Debbie, without whom I might not have finished.
Dedicated with love and affection to

my late mother

and to Gemma, who passed away on the morning of the examination
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAU</td>
<td>American Athletic Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Athletic Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAAB</td>
<td>British Amateur Athletic Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAF</td>
<td>British Athletic Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOA</td>
<td>British Olympic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSA</td>
<td>English Schools' Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCPR</td>
<td>Central Council of Physical Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFSF</td>
<td>Fédération Féminine Sportive de France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSFI</td>
<td>Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEC</td>
<td>General Electric Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHS</td>
<td>General Household Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAAF</td>
<td>International Amateur Athletic Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOC</td>
<td>International Olympic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOAC</td>
<td>London Olympiades Athletic Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCWAAA</td>
<td>Midland Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAL</td>
<td>National Centre for Athletics Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCWAAAA</td>
<td>Northern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMAAC</td>
<td>Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>Schools' Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAAAA</td>
<td>Southern Counties Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCWAAA</td>
<td>Southern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAAA</td>
<td>Women's Amateur Athletic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRAF</td>
<td>Women's Royal Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRNS</td>
<td>Women's Royal Naval Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

A) INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE

Sport is a distinctive feature of British life and in common with many of today's popular pastimes began life and developed in England, before spreading out across the world. One of the most popular and distinctive sports in England is athletics, yet there is only one comprehensive work on the history of British track and field - and it concerns the male side of the sport only - Peter Lovesey's *Official Centenary History of the AAA*, published in 1979. As its title suggests, this text is essentially a descriptive history, almost totally removed from its social context. This is not a fault on the part of the author, since he met the remit of the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) who, with a rare regard for history, wished to look back on a long list of athletic achievements. Since the organisation of men's and women's athletics in England have been inextricably linked since the foundation of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA) in 1922, this work does, however, provide several pointers to an understanding of both sides of the sport, as it deals in detail with many of the key figures and events affecting men and women. Many leading officers served both the AAA and the WAAA, as well as the British Amateur Athletic Board (BAAB), which represented both men and women in the international context. The selection of teams, and the representation of the country on international committees and in coaching more often than not featured the same people. Invariably they were men, so

---

1Amateur Athletic Association.

2Formed as the International Board in 1932 and renamed BAAB in 1937.
an understanding of their roles and practices is directly relevant to English women's athletics.

Throughout the history of athletics innumerable books have appeared on the subject, mostly historical, many autobiographical, almost all lacking social commentary, and invariably by, and specifically for, men. Quercetani's *A World History of Track and Field Athletics 1864 - 1964* (1964) and Nelson and Quercetani's *The Milers* (1985), both ostensibly all-embracing, make no reference to women at all. Jordan and Spencer's *Champions in the Making* (1969) hardly goes further. Again, a world history of athletics is presented, but the only reference to women is where the American, Babe Didrickson gets an oblique mention with regard to a rule change in the high jump (1969:199). In Lovesey and McNab's seminal bibliographical *Guide to British Track and Field Literature 1275-1968* (1969), of the 885 titles quoted only 27 have a direct bearing on women. Hargreaves observes that sports books in general are 'almost certainly predominately about men.... [and] the bulk of the writing in sports history and sociology assumes male standards' (1994a:1). This is a position that Holt also adopts when he writes that 'The history of sport in modern Britain is a history of men' (1989:8). Apart from early contemporary accounts - Eliott-Lynn's *Athletics for Women and Girls* (1925) and Webster's *Athletics of Today For Women* (1930), and Pallett's later *Women's Athletics* (1955), little has been written to help us understand the historical and social significance of English women's athletics - so we are left in the main with men's selections and views of the available facts which may not necessarily include details of women's athletics. And the trend continues today, with only a very few top female athletes contributing to the literature. Michele Shoebridge, in *Women in Sport: A Select Bibliography* (1987), cites
four auto/biographies of English women athletes, each one a leading performer. Men, however - often of relatively minor standing - continue to have their stories in print, but of the female non-medallists from the Olympics and Paralympics only Zola Budd (1989) - whose principal interest to the reader lies away from the track - has published.3

It was not until 1964 that a female athletic biography was written, of the outstanding sprinter, Dorothy Hyman (Sprint to Fame). In stark contrast to the men, consummate performers like Mary Lines, Nellie Halstead, Dorothy Tyler and Muriel Cornell never committed their stories to paper, so part of our athletic heritage has already been lost to time. This is, quite simply, a tragedy. Autobiographies and biographies are not just historical documents, often ghosted by jobbing journalists; the best in the athletics sphere provide a wealth of information for the sociologist, detailing the problems that beset individuals and organisations, how these challenges were met, the background of the athlete and how social forces and conflicts affected her or him - information that is perhaps available nowhere else, individual detail which can help to build up a picture of women's athletics and the social and historical contexts in which it was framed. History is not simply about the biographies of the great, but without them conclusions can all too often be based on assumption lacking the benefit of empirical data. Sheila Rowbotham (1977 rear cover), states that 'History, thank goodness, does not stand still. It is possible now to draw on many more oral accounts.' However, if not only the person of interest, but all those around, are no longer with us, then second hand-reports may lack the clarity of the original speaker, making analysis unclear and interpretation uncertain.

3Compendiums, such as The Courage Book of Sporting Heroes 1884-1984 (Rhys 1984), deals with only one female athlete, the Pole, Irena Szewinska, out of its 105 entries.
Nevertheless, some of the limited work in athletics by and about women has proved to be an excellent source of material. Sophie Eliott-Lynn (1925), who was one of the early pioneers of organized athletics, and Messrs Webster (1930) and Pallett (1955), have all written with a depth and insight so often lacking in work about men. Each of these three women's histories have supplied details of the problems that beset female athletes and officials during the early years of the sport, and of how these challenges were met. Eliott-Lynn, for example, sets out the formation of the WAAA and early athletic meetings, and Webster describes women's struggles to gain admittance to the Olympic movement. They prove an excellent starting point to this thesis.

The most studied area of women's athletics relates to their inclusion in the Olympic Games, but the commentary usually refers to all Olympic female sports, and contains limited information specifically about track and field. Several of the most authoritative writers, such as Segrave (1988) and Guttmann (1991) emanate from America and deal with universal problems relating to women's international sport, lacking the detailed research and analysis required for an English study.

The scant literature on female athletics is compounded by the general opinion until recently that leisure itself was 'too frivolous a theme for those economic and social historians' (Walton and Walvin 1983 rear cover). There are some earlier texts by Wymer (1949), McIntosh, Dixon, Munrow and Willetts (1957), and McIntosh (1968), but the latter two deal in detail with the educational aspects of exercise for both sexes, making only one brief mention of the WAAA. However, in the last twenty years:

....contemporary problems in the provision, use and control of recreational activities have loomed large enough to encourage historians to examine the nature and
content of leisure pursuits in the past. Attitudes to and uses made of leisure time provide an essential dimension for our understanding of the workings of past societies, as of contemporary ones, and as ever our understanding of the past can help to illuminate the problems of the present (Walton and Walvin 1983 rear cover).

There is also a marked lack of in-depth sociological examination of sport (Ford 1977:7). Much of the earliest feminist sports sociology emanated from America in the 1970s (Oglesby 1978; Parkhouse and Lapin 1980; Twin 1979), but although it was an important reaction against male dominance in sports sociology, according to Hargreaves (1994a:25) it was weakly theorized. Sports feminism rapidly spread to other countries, particularly to Britain where recent texts give much more social analysis and interpretation of what women were doing, at home, at work, and in the playing field - a trend which runs parallel with a simultaneous rise in the output and quality of a more critical and analytical sports sociology.

Consequently, in recent years well-researched and -written accounts of women in sport have appeared, such as Mangan and Park's edited collection, From 'Fair Sex' to Feminism (1987) and McCrone's Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women (1988), which look closely at medical prejudices towards women pervading the late nineteenth-century, and the role of sport in education. However, whilst concentrating on several team and individual sports, athletics regrettably receives no attention. It was not until 1994, when Jennifer Hargreaves' extensive work, Sporting Females, successfully attempted to bring together the whole range of women's sporting activities that athletics was mentioned. This text was reviewed by Margaret Talbot as 'a splendid counter-point to all the current texts on sports sociology, which are focused on elite, male competitive sport and which rarely
take the trouble even to acknowledge that women exist'. Hargreaves places women at the
centre of the study, rather than adopting the route of most histories, which concentrate on
men and she deals in some detail with the emergence of the WAAA and the struggle of
female athletes to enter the Olympic Arena. The breadth of subject matter enables her to
make valid comparisons between widely differing sports - and the overlooked question of
class in leisure is also given comprehensive coverage.

Despite occasional works like that of Hargreaves, the general lack of examination of
female issues in sports sociology is consistent with the study of history, despite its recent
rapid expansion as a general field of enquiry. June Purvis (1995) highlights the limited
knowledge about English women's history when she refers to Virginia Woolf's writing
from 1929:

The history of England is the history of the male line, not of the female. Of our
fathers we know always some fact, some distinction. They were soldiers or they
were sailors; they filled that office or they made that law. But of our mothers, our
grandmothers, our great-grandmothers, what remains?....the dates of their marriages
and the number of children they bore (Woolf 1976:141).

Until the beginning of this century literature on women was restricted to royalty and a few
key historical female figures. Purvis (1995) quotes Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland's Lives
of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest (1840-48) and WH Davenport
Adams' Stories of the Lives of Noble Women (1882) as typical. The more mundane
existences of field or factory workers - who had always contributed to the family and
national economies - 'do not seem to have been a major concern of these early historians
of women's history' (Purvis 1995:8). It was not until the 1890s that university academics
began to research new fields in the social and economic life of the nation. Nevertheless:
Mainstream history was largely written by men and about men's activities in wars, politics, business and administration. Women's history was largely invisible or, if represented, located within sex-stereotypical discussions about the family or the effect of women's paid work upon their family roles (Purvis 1995:9).

Despite the fact that 'one of the most significant features of the social history of sport in the twentieth-century has been the emancipation of women and the opportunity for them to compete in a wide variety of sports' (Ford 1977:235), only with the social reappraisal consequent upon the rise of feminism in the late 1960s did women's overall contribution to society and history begin to be more reasonably represented. Prior to this, even such important movements as the Suffragettes were consigned to a dismissive few lines in mainstream histories, such as the two and a half pages in Thomson's popular England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914 (1950). But this is exactly Sheila Rowbotham's point. Her aptly titled Hidden from History (1977) confirms that histories do not focus on women, but are shrouded behind the activities of men. All too often the experiences of women are marginalized, and specifically in the case of sports history and sociology 'reflect the male dominance of academic discourse [and so] incorporate male-defined definitions and values' (Hargreaves 1994a:7, 8).

Equally, few ethnographic studies on women's sport exist. Types and levels of participation are often drawn from the generalised figures supplied by the Office for National Statistics' continuous General Household Survey (GHS). Whilst the sample base is large, the questions lack a depth sufficient to make a meaningful sociological investigation. Reasons why women do or do not participate in sport, the importance leisure plays in their lives and their hopes for improvement are not questions that have been asked of a wide population sample. Such reports that do exist are merely local in
nature. The quantifiable national studies are about men alone.

Not surprisingly, amongst feminist writers there is a strong antipathy towards the kind of history that ignores or marginalizes women. My particular interest in writing about women's athletics is to redress the gender imbalance in relation to one specific sport, but I am also concerned to be objective and to take account of the complex and often contradictory tendencies. For example, the argument that sport 'is an institution created by and for men' (Messner and Sabo, 1990:9) has to be reviewed carefully in the case of athletics in view of the fact that men and women worked cooperatively together in a number of different ways.

Whilst academic output in the last few years has been marked by a major leap forward in the quality of feminist sports sociology, Hargreaves argues that there is still:

.....a general failure....to incorporate gender relations of power into analyses (including relations of power between men and women, and between different groups of women and different groups of men), to relate them to other structures of power in society, and to deal with conflict and change (1994a:26).

This is an area of importance in the discourse on British women's athletics, and one which is debated fully in Chapter Eight.

But why make a study of women's athletics? Perhaps because nobody else has. When I asked Vera Searle (in a private conversation in 1990), who at the time was President of the WAAA, why men had an athletic history, but not women, she simply replied, 'Nobody has ever bothered, dear boy!' My initial reaction was one of surprise. I have followed the sport for over 30 years and there have been several female athletes who captured the public's imagination with their sporting ability, charm, and force of personality. From my
own childhood I still remember with affection Ann Packer's Tokyo win in 1964, and the late Lillian Board's achievements, before her public struggle with a terminal illness. Surely an anthology of some sort would have been attempted? But no! All that exists is Lovesey's account of male athletics.

I should have been more aware of the lack of interest in the female side of the sport. My limited athletic ability had led me into coaching, and returning from my first conference armed with new qualifications it quickly became clear that many club women were left to their own devices. Consequently, by default, I became a coach to female athletes. On travelling to meetings around the country the same situation regularly presented itself. Despite sharing facilities with men, and often belonging to the same club, female athletes were frequently marginalized, sometimes ostracised, and even on occasions treated as annoying irrelevances. When I began coaching I also noticed that, almost without exception, women had no knowledge of - nor appreciation of - the history of their event. They had little idea of the training involved, the key personalities through history, or even the current performers they might have to meet. In part, at least, I felt this to be due to a lack of available literature.

My justifications for a history of women's athletics, then, are simple. One does not exist, and the subject is of great interest to me. I am concerned as well not only to contribute to the body of literature on women's sport, but also to provide a commentary that can be viewed within the wider context of social history. It may be that the events of the past can better help us to understand present day issues and developments. For example in 1928, to gain admission to the Olympics, women agreed to a mere five events on the
programme, when thirteen had already been successfully staged in their own World Championships. The result was the assimilation of their own sport by the men's governing bodies. The amalgamation of the WAAA in 1991 with the AAA has followed a similar process, with never more than one woman at a time gaining a place on the governing body.

E.H. Carr argues that:

The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of history....The function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interrelation between them (1987:55, 68).

Hargreaves takes a similar stance when she says that 'the history of women's sports also provides a basis for understanding sports today' (1994a:4). She goes on:

The history of women's sports can provide an understanding of the origins and causes of women's subordination in sports, and of the nature of resistance to change and the struggles for change....By looking at the experience of women, historically, we can better understand male experience and the whole of the history of sports (Ibid:37).

In this thesis I have tried to move away from the statistical bias of most histories of athletics and I have combined statistical data with individual biographies and social analysis. Consideration of the conditions in which athletes lived and the social factors influencing their participation allows us to build up a more comprehensive picture. History and sociology are vital elements in the understanding of any part of society in any historical setting. This study takes account of such factors as class and gender relations, as well as the economic and political dimensions attaching to each period.
Where to start? I feel strongly that the study should extend back to the earliest references to female athletics that can be found. Smock racing\(^4\) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, has long been known to us. The rewards from smock racing - and other forms of pedestrianism\(^5\) - could be substantial, with a limited number of women able to make a comparatively good living from the income generated. Peter Radford, in an unrecorded conversation (1995) has indicated that smock racing was a highly organized activity, with elaborate procedures for handicapping, prizes and appeals. But the bulk of the study is concerned with organized athletics for women which became established after the foundation of the WAAA in 1922. Biological and social constraints are explored in order to explain why women lagged behind men in athletics. Such discussions are already well presented in relation to sport generally (McCrone 1988; Vertinsky 1990; Hargreaves 1994), but there are considerations particular to athletics which are assessed in this study. Nevertheless, female athletics did not suddenly begin in 1922. The background and traditions relating to female sports participation - and lack of participation - are rooted in an earlier period.

At the other end of the scale, at which date should the study stop? Issues which have cast a pall over the sport in recent years - grasping at money, drug abuse, the affairs of the BAF Promotions Officer, Andy Norman, the surrender of the organisational power base by the WAAA to the male administration of the AAA to form the British Athletic Federation in 1991 have fundamentally changed the character of English women's athletics. These

\(^4\)A race in which a smock was offered as a prize to be run for by women or girls (See Chapter Three).

\(^5\)Professional walking and running races (See Chapter Three).
are complex issues and it is far too early to assess them properly in their true historical context. 1980 is an ideal time to conclude the study. It was not a good Olympic year for English women; a new style of coaching was being introduced; money was starting to become more openly available; and moves were again initiated for a joint administration. History may well reflect on this as a watershed year.

B) OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the problems associated with researching women's athletics. The advantages and disadvantages of each research method are discussed, and the difficulties of tracking down primary source material, including subjects for oral interviews, are identified. The methods of interpretation of the collected data are addressed, and the value of placing women at the centre of the investigation is highlighted.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS IN ENGLAND: IN THE SHADOW OF MEN

This chapter looks first at the early history of athletics as an occasional diversion for women. Smock racing and pedestrianism for women are also considered in detail, as are the influences which led to their eventual disappearance. This chapter, and the following two, utilise, where possible, empirical and primary sources, provide a chronological history of the events that occurred, and take account of the particular social contexts in which female athletics developed. The emergence of men's athletics in advance of women and some of the advantages afforded men in relation to women are also considered.
CHAPTER FOUR: 1914 TO 1939: FORMAL BEGINNINGS

This chapter continues the historical theme and concentrates on the broad issues which began with the formation of the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI) in 1921, and led to the formation of the WAAA in 1922. Key issues are also discussed, particularly the inclusion and continuation of women in the Olympics, and the British female athletes' refusal to compete in the Games of 1928. Accounts of the Women's World Games and other major events which English female athletes took part in are included. It is a period when the relationships between the WAAA and AAA were established, as were those with the international federations. It is also a time when many women took part in this new sport and established the right of women to follow them. But, more than at any time, there were often significant retreats to gain small advances.

CHAPTER FIVE: 1939 TO 1964: WAR AND RECOVERY

This chapter brings the story up to the eve of English women's greatest successes on the track. This is a time of consolidation after the interruption of war, with new events gradually being introduced, and the sport's progressive expansion around the world. The rise of the Soviet Union as the most formidable power in women's athletics is traced and compared to the factors affecting the sport in England.


This chapter begins with the highlights of the Tokyo Olympics, which are looked at in detail, and follows the gradual decline of English women athletes, in world terms, finishing with their failures and disappointments at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The reasons for this decline are considered, as are the increasing pressures faced by English
international athletes and the rapid growth towards professionalism.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ATTITUDES TO THE FEMALE BODY - MEDICAL AND SOCIAL

Nineteenth-century medical and social ideologies, which were utilised to prevent women taking exercise are outlined. Their residual effect is discussed when organized athletics for women begins during the inter-war years. The continuing constraints on women are illustrated in the description of changing training methods, which are compared to those of men. The hindered expansion of the programme of events for women is investigated, although by the end of the period under investigation women were outperforming men in some of the most gruelling of athletic competitions. The commercialization of the body in athletics, which is of increasing significance towards the end of the period of study, is carefully considered in the context of the sport, as traditional images of athletic femininity are constantly challenged and redefined. The problems associated with changing dress codes are looked into and gender verification testing is critically considered.

CHAPTER EIGHT: POWER AND CONTROL: PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

In essence this chapter concerns the pros and cons of separation from, and assimilation with, men. The support and antipathy of men are considered in a number of contexts, including the continued battle for the place of women in the Olympic movement. Differences with men are highlighted in discussions on inequalities of access to finance, facilities and media representation.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION: THE SPREAD AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

The particular role of the schools in the democratization of women's athletics is the starting point for this chapter, which goes on to discuss the significance of class in the context of adult athletics, followed by a brief look at the expansion of athletics among ethnic minorities. The conclusion draws briefly upon the findings of this research and the hopes for the future of English women's athletics.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Since the history of women's athletics is an under-researched field and there are notable limitations in research resources, this study is in essence introductory and exploratory. Several methods of investigation have been employed, including the use of archival sources and specialist libraries in order to examine contemporary literature, documentary evidence and visual material; personal interviews with female athletes who provided oral histories of the span of time between the inter-war years and 1980; and the extensive use of secondary source material in order to contextualize the data. The uses and limitations of each method are discussed in this chapter. In order to make sense of the material collected, the questions addressed and the concepts employed are sociological ones - this approach is also discussed below. Cohen and Mansion describe historical research as being concerned with a 'broad view of the conditions and not necessarily the specifics which bring them about' (1994:45). In this study, there has been an attempt to document events as fully as possible, but the overall aim has been to provide an understanding of past events and their 'relevance to the present and future' (Ibid).

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Wherever possible I have referred in this thesis to original documentary evidence such as club records and minute books; memorabilia, such as letters, diaries and photographs; and contemporary texts, including magazine and newspaper reports. But getting hold of this material was time-consuming and frustrating because the archives of key organisations were believed to have been either lost or mislaid and very few athletic clubs have
continuous records. It was necessary, therefore, to evaluate and follow up disparate clues in order to piece together a story of events and the people involved in them. Although this was a difficult process, one of the advantages of a thirty-year interest in athletics has been the large number of people I have had contact with, several of whom have given me invaluable advice, provided contacts, or allowed access to their extensive libraries and collections. This study has benefitted from a process of networking where one person has put me in touch with an increasingly large circle of contacts. It is through this method that I have managed to track down certain key resources.

From the start of this project, I intended to investigate the records of the major organisations concerned with women's athletics. In particular, I wanted access to the records of the national governing body, the WAAA, and to those of the local regional association, the Southern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association (SCWAAA) - the two leading authorities in the development of women's athletics in England. But following the death of Marea Hartman\(^1\) in 1994, the records of the WAAA seemingly disappeared - and the SCWAAA records were also reported missing. Over a period of a year of continuous investigation, during which time there were several setbacks, numerous telephone calls to people who had held positions in the WAAA finally paid dividends when their records were found in a cupboard of the South of England AAA offices. Prior to this the WAAA minutes were variously reported as being destroyed, at the British Athletic Federation (BAF), or in the National Centre for Athletics Literature (NCAL) in Birmingham University. Following similar networking procedures, the SCWAAA records were found in a loft in Bromley, and out of print and rare books, which are not even in

\(^1\)WAAA Honorary Secretary from 1950 to its demise in 1991.
the British Library, were traced. It was less difficult to utilise the NCAL, since it is open to public inspection. It is a collection formed primarily from material donated by late athletics enthusiasts, and includes invaluable resources which cannot be found anywhere else - for example, minute books of the AAA, the Northern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association (NCWAAA), and the Midland Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association (MCWAAA); tape recordings of leading performers; and scrap books, including various materials about women's athletics. I was also particularly fortunate in this study that the British Olympic Association (BOA) is located within walking distance of Roehampton Institute London, and their unique records were made freely available for inspection.

It was the difficulties associated with locating key primary resources which prompted me towards studying English women's athletics only. To trace and utilise these records alone was time consuming and expensive. To include in the study the other home countries of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, would have extended to unacceptable limits constraints on time, expenditure and, ultimately, word-count. However, this in itself creates problems, particularly in relation to the Commonwealth Games, where nationalities are relatively easy to exchange. This was the case, for example, with Mary Stewart, who switched allegiance between Scotland and England. In addition, administrators can be part of the English domestic administration, having competed for one of the other home countries, as has been the case with Irish athlete Mary Peters. Nevertheless, where such anomalies have been recognised, the text relates solely to English female athletes and their administration.
Another major source of original documentary material regarding English women's athletics was the athletic clubs, the main context within which the sport operated. Their archival collections revealed much about what happened at local and national levels. I turned first to athletic clubs that I knew had good reputations for women's participation. However, very few of these clubs have continuous records, although Birchfield Harriers (Alexander and Morgan 1988), GEC\(^2\) (Nielsen 1996) and Sale (Wilson 1986), for example, all of which have been central to the development of women's athletics in this country, have produced excellent histories. The Polytechnic Harriers\(^3\) history (Winter 1977) also contains important information regarding women. In addition, the Polytechnic is, as far as I know, the only club to deposit their minute books in a public records office - in this case in London. The vast majority of clubs have no long-term commitment to record keeping. It is the job of an unpaid secretary, whose main concern is to deal with the current requirements of an athletic club. Record-keeping is a burdensome task and one which very few people continue for longer than they have to. As a result of the frequent changes of club secretaries records are often lost, not passed on, or dispensed with as being of no relevance, or because space in the secretary's home is at a premium. This has been the case with Cheltenham Ladies AC,\(^4\) Mitcham AC and the British Milers' Club, for example.

The concept that any historical account is incomplete is supported by the methodological problems encountered in this research. The search for historical evidence has, in several instances, been only partially successful and, in some cases, the complete absence of any

\(^2\) General Electric Company

\(^3\) Now Kingston Athletic Club and Polytechnic Harriers.

\(^4\) Athletic Club
records presents particular problems in the construction and interpretation of events. For example, one of the key events in the history of female athletics in England was the women's international meeting in Monte Carlo in 1921 and the subsequent formation of London Olympiades Athletic Club (LOAC) by many of the athletes who had participated in this inaugural International, most of whom belonged to the gymnastics classes of the Regent Street Polytechnic.5 The mystery as to why they did not either form their own club at the Poly at that time, or set up a women's section of the men's athletic club - then the most powerful in the country - cannot now be answered. A Polytechnic Ladies AC was eventually formed in 1925, but it is now defunct and the records no longer exist - and the LOAC records only begin in 1924. In contrast, the records of the men's Polytechnic Harriers have survived to the present day, illustrating a general trend that men's athletic records are invariably easier to locate than women's records.

However, searching for historical material sometimes resulted in unexpected finds. In some cases, careful examination of hitherto unpublished material revealed startling new evidence. For example, Callard (1949) produced a small booklet for the members of Highgate Harriers, wherein he claims that his (men's) club formed 'a very successful Ladies Section in 1920' (1949:7). This is important for two reasons: 1920 was two years before the formation of the WAAA, and Highgate's action may now be recognised as the earliest direct male intervention into the management of women's athletics.6 Callard's

5Always referred to in athletic circles as the 'Poly.'

6There is evidence, which is discussed in Chapter Three, that men were willing to promote track and field meetings for women as early as 1907, but Highgate's action in 1920 appears to be the first occasion that men were prepared offer women the benefits of club life within a male environment.
assertion contradicts previously accepted knowledge that LOAC was the first female athletic club in England.

Newspapers, which are generally also characterised as documentary evidence, have been another major source of original archival material for me. Particularly in the last century, national newspapers failed fully to record athletic achievements of women, and many reports of athletics can only be found in local publications. Peter Lovesey, whose studies of English Victorian athletics are perhaps the most complete available, has looked into nineteenth-century women walkers. But he found a comprehensive in-depth account impossible, principally, he says, because 'the national press regarded women's walking as at best a dubious activity and at worst beneath contempt' (1993:1). He argues that many performances went unrecorded in the national press, and often found the best coverage in provincial newspapers. His experience highlights one of the problems of historical research inherent in my thesis.

Peter Lovesey's story of Emma Sharp attempting to walk one mile in each of 1000 consecutive hours (recorded in Chapter Three) provides another example of the benefits of local reporting. Lovesey found the details of this event in Bradford Public Library, in a book of local news items, possibly dated about 1903. Today full credence is given to the achievement: in a letter to The Sunday Times (11 May 1969), Brenda Holroyd claims that Emma Sharp completed the task 'with, it seems, less discomfort' than Robert Barclay\(^7\) in his original feat. Ironically, the major national sporting publication of the time, Bell's Life (4 July 1874), expressed disbelief that such an act could be completed by a woman. If

\(^7\)See Chapter Three for details of this performance.
such an influential national periodical either refused to accept, or print, athletic performances of note set locally by women, then this also illustrates part of the difficulty facing a historian of women's sport - a lack of information in the most obvious empirical repositories.

Local newspapers are also an excellent source of statistical data, illustrated in the work of Eric Cowe (1985). For example, he makes full use of figures about school sports prior to 1914 gathered from local papers, which provided a useful source of information for this study. Although I have looked mainly at the national press (because locating and studying local papers proved too difficult and time consuming), I found information in scrapbooks kept by associations, clubs and individuals invaluable, since they often detail local events of little interest to national periodicals.

Even when a national periodical does report women's athletic performances, credibility and interpretation can be affected by the type of paper concerned. Different newspapers can give different accounts of the same events. Broadsheets tend to concentrate dispassionately on athletics; the tabloids, however, tend to focus on images of femininity at the expense of objective sports reporting. But it helps to be aware of the qualities of the individual writer. Joe Binks, for example, was an excellent objective reporter, who was also a staunch supporter of women's athletics from the earliest days. His qualities were not normally those one might have expected to find in his paper, the News of the World.

But even when relatively full and apparently impartial reporting occurs, there can be
problems. Not uncommonly, different reports record conflicting evidence and information; a particularly good example is the case of statistical data. If we turn to the first international athletics meeting for women held in this country on 4 August 1924 and look at the results, there are clear discrepancies. The *Daily Mirror* of 5 August 1924 carried the banner headline 'Seven World Records For Women's Sport.' Pallet (1955:24) lists eight world records - for Edith Trickey in the 1,000 metres, Mary Lines in the 120 yards hurdles, the British 660 yards relay, Vera Palmer in the heats of the 250 metres - and Mary Lines in the final, Mlle Groslimond of Switzerland in the both-handed javelin, Violette Morris of France in the discus, and Belgium's Elise van Truyen in the high jump (1955:24). However, the previous world record for the last event stood at 1.495 metres. It was broken here by van Truyen with 1.498 metres, equalled (and so another world record), by Marguerite Patouillet of France, and then broken again by van Truyen with 1.51 metres. This makes ten world records. But, according to Cowe, Joan Belasco had already jumped 1.575 metres in May 1918 and 1.625 metres at the Inter-Kent County Sports for Girls on 27 May 1920 - that mark was not bettered until 1932 (1985:68-70). Webster on this occasion recorded eight records (1930:49), and his accounts of other events are also problematic. Although he was a prolific writer and his books are much respected and relatively easy to obtain, he was often careless in regard to detail. Nevertheless, modern writers tend to use his texts as if they are primary source material, equivalent to official records, and so his mistakes can endure. Best (1970) emphasises the importance of finding primary source material, rather than the more easily discovered secondary sources 'because of the errors that result when information is passed on from one person to another' (Cited in Cohen and Mansion 1994:51).
Some modern (secondary source) statistics also lack credibility. The late Peter Pozzoli, for example, was a diligent compiler of women's results. However, his work was badly flawed since he would often accept marks which had been aided by excessive wind speeds, or he gave equal credence to estimated times, as well as recognising correctly recorded ones. Thus, in many instances, information needs to be carefully cross-checked before it can be accepted as reliable.

Memorabilia was another very good source of information and was often located locally. This included such items as scrapbooks, training diaries, photographs, medals, or prizes. Very often such materials were gathered from clubs or individual athletes. Scrapbooks contain a plethora of information - apart from local newspaper reports already referred to, they can, for example, detail attitudes about women's bodies and include information about administrative constraints particular to one club; training diaries often reveal methods relevant to a specific historic period; photographs can be a rich source of information, providing for example, details of dress, competition numbers, crowd sizes and the physical conditions of the competitors; and medals and prizes provide evidence of the types of awards and esteem attached to performances. Although the contexts for finding these materials were local ones, I discovered, in fact, that much of the information related to national, rather than local, events and issues.

**ORAL HISTORIES**

Another key method of gathering original data was by carrying out interviews with subjects who were involved in women's athletics as competitors, coaches, administrators or associates. Interviews are a research method belonging to the interactionist tradition
(Cohen and Mansion 1994:168). They give voice to individual subjects and focus on the meaningfulness of social activities such as athletics. Interviewing is a very personal way of finding out about the achievements, difficulties, and social factors linked to the history of women's athletics.

Burgess is clear that one of the main tools of 'empirically oriented social scientists' is field research (1982:1). However, he laments 'the lack of space devoted to a discussion of historical materials' in sociological field research and ethnographic studies (Ibid:132). Oral histories have filled in many gaps, and opened up new possibilities for analysis and theoretical argument. Many of the women interviewed for this study recounted incidents unrecorded elsewhere, that existed only in their memories. Informants, according to Chadwick et al, have the opportunity to express themselves fully, to verbalise their attitudes and beliefs with the freedom that a contemporary biography might stifle (1984:101). Indeed, those interviewed for this study have told me about historical, social, and personal details that were not available from documentary evidence and have brought constraining instruments like minute books to life.8

But there were problems inherent in this process. In some cases, different subjects gave apparently equally reliable information, but accounts differed, or were even contradictory. When this happened, both reports were incorporated. For example, not every athlete after the war experienced problems in sharing track facilities, or was expected to retire upon

---

8An excellent example of this surrounds the controversial, protracted and acrimonious debate surrounding the selection of the British team for the 1988 Olympics, where the minutes simply state 'The recommendations of the selection committee were then received and discussed. The team was then selected as recorded in the minute book.' For full details see Miller (1992:31-34).
marriage. There is also the possibility that individual experiences, or viewpoints, were untypical of the female athletic community as a whole, and those with vested interests might have distorted or withheld information. These are methodological problems illustrated by E.H. Carr's claim that the facts of historical research never come 'pure' (1987:22). Certainly, throughout the research period I discovered repeatedly that issues are not necessarily clear cut, generalizations are difficult to make, and the establishment and development of women's athletics in this country has not been even and consistent.

Whilst oral histories proved an invaluable research tool, identifying and contacting subjects who have been involved in women's athletics and were able to relate information about their personal careers and associated conditions was difficult and time consuming for several reasons. Women who marry or divorce invariably change their names. Ann Packer, for example, is almost always referred to in athletic circles by this, her maiden name, even although she married and became Ann Brightwell almost immediately on retirement after her 1964 Olympic victory. Problems were also created if either the maiden or married name of an athlete was unknown. The available evidence suggests that women tended to retire from the sport upon ceasing an athletic career, whereas men were more likely to stay on in administrative capacities, and so remained more easily contactable. Sometimes I only became aware about the previous location of a possible informant when I read her obituary. However, occasionally the problem was overcome. Well-run clubs often stay in touch with their star performers, perhaps to present prizes annually, or to serve in a figurehead capacity, such as president. Others may be vice-presidents or life-members. In such cases, addresses could be obtained from current secretaries. Failing all other avenues of enquiry, tracing retired participants was frequently
by word of mouth from interested athletics archivists.

Although the finding (and co-operation) of subjects was often a difficult task, interviewing was a preferable alternative to sending out questionnaires, since it allowed interaction with the informant and the potential for unstructured probing of topics, a factor that can influence both quality and quantity of response (Adams and Schvaneveldt 1985:213).

PROBLEMS OF SAMPLING

Most respondents (listed in the Bibliography) were women. There was an attempt to interview subjects who together covered the entire period of organised women's athletics from 1922 to 1980 - including those who had become part of the key moments in the history of the sport, those who competed in a wide range of events, and those who came from different social backgrounds. Early in the period of study I tried to identify people of interest from the inter-war period. Sadly, due to their advancing years, several died before I was able to make contact. Almost all of those involved in the early days of the WAAA, for example, are deceased, and so a representative selection of athletes of the period was impossible. However, a small number of female athletes and administrators have recounted their stories elsewhere. Some have recorded their experiences on television and radio, and these have also been utilised as important resources.

Because of the difficulties of tracing subjects, interviews have been carried out with almost all those who could be contacted who were involved in women's athletics between the wars, and a selection of those active after 1945. In total, 24 subjects were interviewed for this study, of which 15 were conducted myself. Almost all the athletes I traced have
been successful ones. Those who were less successful, or dropped out of the sport after a short duration without perhaps reaching their potential, or took up running as a recreation, are not central to this study. And yet, in many ways, their stories may have been more informative. The reasons they left the sport might have shed considerable light, for example, on particular obstacles faced by certain individuals or categories of women, such as the opposition of men and the effects of medical constraints.

The limitations in the selection procedures have inevitably resulted in the possibility of bias. Because the sample frame was limited, and randomness in selection was not present (Mann 1985:122), the history of women's athletics related in this study is incomplete.

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE

The importance of a skilled technique is intrinsic to the interview situation. Foote Whyte, in Burgess (1982:11), describes the most successful interviewing technique in field work as 'non-directive,' but goes on to suggest that this method nevertheless requires considerable preparation. A non-directive approach helps in eliciting new information or understanding, whilst keeping the areas covered in the control of the interviewer, and thus focused on the study. This is the method I adopted in all interviews - often characterized as semi-structured interviewing.

In each interview there were some standard closed questions - to provide information regarding specific factors relevant to all subjects and from which it was possible

---

9 Random sampling occurs when all the population has an equal chance of selection.

10 Closed questions have a limited, or set, range of answers - such as 'Yes' or 'No.'
sometimes to make generalizations. These questions were intended to establish the social backgrounds of informants, their educational attainments, their occupations, and their athletic achievements. Open-ended questions were utilised, in order to give the subjects opportunity for personal commentary and the development of answers and ideas, thus providing depth and a consequent richness of data. Although informants were at times gently guided (probed) into areas of relevance, part of each interview was completely non-directive and subjects were encouraged to develop their own responses. This combination of closed and open questions thus ensured that key areas of investigation were covered, as well as many not perceived as important prior to the interview. By this method it was possible to add rich anecdotal accounts concerning the history of the sport and the investigation of several key areas (particularly the part played by men during the period of study), to more basic details of social backgrounds, athletic careers and key personalities. Although this is known as an 'ethnographic grounded approach', which emphasises and encourages the generation and development of theories, because of the variety and contradictory nature of much of the data, the results were not always easy to analyze (Howard 1985:216-7).

The interview technique used for this study could be characterized as friendly conversationalist, rather than serious and probing. It was used in an attempt to create a feeling of confidence in the respondents. Ethical considerations were not central to the methodologies utilised, but concern was expressed by some respondents as to how the material was to be used, since they had previous experiences of journalists who had distorted what they had said. I was able to assure them of accuracy of presentation and impartiality and to offer them opportunity to read any relevant material before publication.
Accuracy and impartiality are two key concerns of the Government statistical office's (Office for National Statistics) social surveys. Another major criterion is never to lead an informant to the answers that are being sought. This is the approach I followed during the interviews I conducted. I tried to ensure that the informants' answers were not influenced by leading questions, or by revealing the object of the questions, in order to reduce the possibility that the reply could be one that would be given to please. This interview technique was important in order to avoid, as far as practicable, the possibility of introducing inaccuracies and 'social bias' (Chadwick et al 1984:112). The order of questions was also important. For example, inquiry about male involvement in athletics at the beginning of an interview might have led the subject to believe that the work was structured against men and thus engender a contrived response.

The pattern followed was first to ask questions about general familial, educational and sporting backgrounds, followed by questions concerning sporting careers and personal obstacles to participation. Interviews began with questions of interest to the respondent that were non-threatening and relatively easy to answer, leading on to more complex and sensitive issues (Chadwick et al 1984:117, Sproul 1988:191). Without exception, all the subjects I interviewed were helpful and co-operative and few problems were encountered, which is consistent with the findings of Bradburn and Sudman (1979) who reported that questions relating to leisure and sports create little apprehension (Cited in Adams and Schvaneveldt 1985:205). It was usually possible to put informants at ease with a preliminary introduction, either by phone or letter, and by showing appreciation and respect for their athletic abilities by briefly researching their career. This latter approach proved helpful in gently prompting reminders to those who had forgotten key elements of
their sporting lives.

All interviews were recorded on tape, including some telephone interviews (which assisted in reducing costs and time in the field), and then transcribed. Recording each interview proved invaluable, since there were facts which, at the time of being given were regarded as irrelevant, but as the study progressed, took on greater significance.

RELIABILITY OF DATA

It has been argued by Chadwick et al that: 'The collection of retrospective data [by interview] provides detail, interpretation and information about situational or contextual factors unavailable via any other research technique' (1984:101). But it is a process that can be fraught with problems, as Samuel is at pains to stress: 'The living record of the past should be treated as respectfully, but also as critically, as the dead' (in Burgess 1982:145).

Although I did not feel at the time that any of the subjects of this study lacked credibility or reliability,11 there is inevitably always a risk of inaccurate or biased information. Even the very elderly appeared precise about their answers. For example, they could clearly recall important races, or disagreements with officials, even after fifty or sixty years. Sometimes information given by respondents contradicted what had been read or heard previously and interviews gave the opportunity to cross check and probe further to assess their accuracy. This was a clear advantage of using more than one method of investigation. For example, when speaking to Vera Searle, I referred to an incident she had recounted on the television programme, Adventurous Eves (1990). There she said that her husband had not spoken to her for three weeks because she had competed in her club

---

11 Described by Cohen and Mansion as 'internal criticism' (1994:52).
championships. The programme went on to argue that her experience conformed to the idea that in the 1920s female athletes ceased to compete after marriage. However, in my interview with her she clearly stated that his annoyance was caused simply because she had not told him what she was doing that day, and so had been deceitful. When pressed on the interpretation that the programme had taken, she stressed that they were wrong. She gave a clear account, indicating that she had a reliable memory even in her mid-nineties. In some instances it was necessary to rely on secondhand reports, but, wherever possible, the information was cross-checked. For example, the late Geoff Dyson was the most significant person in athletic coaching - for both sexes - that this country has ever seen, but details regarding his influence on female athletics had to be collected from other people, some of whom had vested interests in specific accounts of his work in women's athletics.

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In this study there has been an attempt to relate the personal biographies of athletes and the specific events of the period of investigation to specific social structures and historical circumstances. This has been an undertaking in order to produce an analytical and critical, rather than a descriptive, thesis. The use of secondary sources has helped to make sense of what has happened. The primary source material, both written and oral, has been related to secondary source texts in order to contextualize the new data within a framework of established knowledge relating to a range of social factors. In particular, the experiences of women in English athletics have been compared and contrasted to those of men, as well as to those of women in other sports and physical activities. The historical limitations and opportunities available in track and field have been related to women's
corresponding experiences in society in order to assess the extent to which the establishment and growth of a new sport was influenced by more general attitudes to women. Events and practices peculiar to women within the framework of athletics, such as attitudes to the body, have been analyzed in order to assess how they have impacted on the sport's development.

One of the main concerns in interpretation of data has been the problem of objectivity. The idea that the material collected is intrinsically objective and factual has been treated problematically in this account of women's athletics. As Carr points out:

The facts of history cannot be purely objective, since they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian. Objectivity in history....cannot be an objectivity of fact, but only of relation, of the relation between fact and interpretation, between past, present, and future (Carr 1987:120)

Thomas continues the debate about the nature of objective knowledge by maintaining that certainty in objective claims are becoming lost with the continuing 'ideological underpinning, masculine bias and socially constructed nature' of historical sociological investigation (Cited in Hargreaves 1994b:116). Competing ideologies and biases of class, race and sex have distorted history - but, Hargreaves maintains, an authentic record of the past is feasible if texts are interpreted in the full knowledge of a writer's possible hidden agenda, and with an understanding of the political and social detail of the period. This is recognised as a more general problem to history per se by Clare, for example, who reports a general trend in historical methodology which emphasises 'source material at the expense of narrative', so that the period in which a text appears affects its interpretation (The Daily Telegraph, 19 September 1996).
In the context of athletics, as with other social activities, the individual interests, ideas and background of the writer may play a crucial role in interpretation. Throughout this study my own knowledge and appreciation of athletics and its history has widened considerably beyond the previous strictures of a specific interest in middle-distance running. Consequently, my ability to gather material has improved, and I have gained an enhanced appreciation of the sport, which has helped in selecting appropriate data to make 'judgements on the basis of the evidence, despite [my] own preconceptions' (Carr 1987:161). But sometimes objectivity became difficult. I liked the people who talked to me, sympathised with the problems they encountered as athletes, and was often tempted to make their accounts more significant than they warranted. Lucas summarises interpretative requirements as 'thorough, disinterested, scientifically dispassionate, and fair' (1993:8), and every attempt has been made to adhere to these tenets throughout this study.

The relationship between empirical material and theoretical ideas is the basis of sociological research, which 'does not just describe or classify social facts, but....constantly seeks to explain them' (Li 1981:19). Some writers, however, tend to use empirical findings simply to illustrate their theoretical positions. For example, Burgess cites Wright Mills objecting to the style of researchers who 'surround their data with "theory" after data collection has been completed' (1982:209). Although I have made extensive use of secondary sources, and some questioning and archival searches were based upon presupposed notions from secondary sources, I tried to remain sufficiently open-minded to allow the evidence to 'speak for itself'. Some lines of enquiry revealed facts never suspected and led me to challenge generally accepted arguments, although on occasion I lacked sufficient substantive empirical evidence to form grounded theories. The sample of
informant(s) was never big enough to make an assertion that the views expressed were those of the general female athletic population; although the validity of an interpretation could be strengthened and become more focused by adding to the depth of already gathered data.

But history is constantly changing. New facts become available and reappraisals occur all the time. It is also the case that interpretations that are acceptable to one generation are not to another. For example, the available literature of the early 1920s suggests that the limited leisure opportunities afforded women were considered by them to be perfectly adequate (Elliott-Lynn, 1925; Sandilands, 1928). Our interpretation today is radically different (Hargreaves, 1994a) - and no doubt further reappraisal in another seventy years would again formulate new conclusions. During this research I found that reactions to the same questions varied between those from different generations. For example, when asking athletes who were competitive between the wars whether there was any hostility from men when sharing track facilities, the answer usually elicited was negative. Female athletes from the 1950s often felt the opposite.

Behaviour differs from society to society, and between different classes within each society. Marx referred to the 'principle of historical specificity' in that any society must be understood in terms of the period in which it exists (Mills 1959:149). My analysis is mediated by an understanding and interpretation of events in the context of today's culture and society, whilst relating events to the conditions of the time at which they occurred, and drawing conclusions about the events in question in a 'faithful representation' of that age (Cohen and Mansion 1994:45).
But it is not enough simply to record on paper details of who won which event and when. For a statistician this is fascinating; for a social historian this says very little. Wright Mills has argued that 'Biography, history, society - are the co-ordinate points of the proper study of man' (1959:143). This implies an holistic approach to interpretation, one where individual actions (biography) are influenced by past circumstances (history), and to some extent externally driven by social factors (society). To study the history of one specific sport requires a study of wider social issues which have impinged upon the structure and development of that sport. For this reason specific cultural, political, economic and ideological patterns which have influenced the history of women's athletics have been referred to.

Carr argues that a history of events requires a sociological investigation - indeed, that the two co-exist:

Sociology is concerned with historical societies, every one of which is unique and moulded by specific historical antecedents and conditions....I would only say that the more sociological history becomes, and the more historical sociology becomes, the better for both (1987:66).

Abrams, who states that serious sociology must be historical sociology (1982:17), advances the case further, being concerned with establishing a lack of distinction between history and sociology when theory and empiricism merge. He provides the following explanation:

In terms of their fundamental pre-occupations, history and sociology are and always have been the same thing. Both seek to understand the puzzle of human agency and both seek to do so in terms of the process of social structuring (1982:x).

For the purposes of this study both original and secondary source materials have been
utilised to produce a social history of English women's athletics. Interpretation of primary-source data has been made in conjunction with texts relating to women in society, histories of women's sport, and those few works available devoted exclusively to women's athletics. Issues that have affected the establishment and growth of English women's athletics have been addressed. For example, the following factors have all been interwoven into the analysis: the position of women in society; the participation of women in other sports; medical constraints and the role of science on women's participation in exercise; attitudes to the female body; and the influence of social backgrounds, including family, education and employment experiences.

CONCLUSION

Wright Mills states that: 'Neither the life of an individual, nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both' (1959:1). For this reason the singular experiences of different people involved in the history of women's athletics is interwoven into the fabric of the history of the sport itself, and the society surrounding both. An analysis of events confirms that women were both determined by events in this sport and in society, and were themselves determining of events: some women took what was available, others sought for improved opportunities and were fundamental to the growth and acceptance of female athletics. To understand the development of the sport it is necessary to know something of the individuals behind the story, but to appreciate personal struggles and triumphs it is equally important to understand the factors which prompted individual actions. The women's side of athletics history is now, hopefully, a little less hidden, with the past providing a better background for the present:

Every time we place women at the centre, we provide a challenge to the ways in which histories of male sports have become the norm (Hargreaves 1994b:119).
CHAPTER THREE

THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS IN ENGLAND: IN THE SHADOW OF MEN

INTRODUCTION: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ATHLETICS AS A MALE ACTIVITY

The sport of athletics is generally acknowledged to have entered its modern phase about the middle of the last century in this country, although, as the most fundamental of sports, it was practised from the earliest times (Lovesey and McNab 1969:3).

In this quotation Lovesey and McNab fail to point out that almost all known references to the origins of athletics in England only record men's involvement. For example, if we can give credibility to The Book of Leinster, written about 1150, male athletics featured in the British Isles even before the ancient Olympic Games in Greece (an exclusively male competition), which first took place in 776 B.C. (Isaacs 1985:899). According to Lovesey and McNab, Lugnas (also known as the Tailteann Games), was also for men only. It apparently included many of the modern standard events and originated as early as 1829 B.C. (1969:3).

However, it is likely that organised competitions were rare and that the organic origins of athletics were in most cases activities that were intrinsic to the lives of hunters and soldiers, those that were part of the lifestyles of members of the nobility and leisured classes, or those linked to the betting and entertainment cultures of working people. All the following instances record the involvement of men only, making no mention of

---

1 Lovesey and McNab describe the Book of Leinster as a collection of Irish sagas, binding legend and fact closely together.

2 Lovesey and McNab are regarded as meticulous in their detail and accuracy but Owen (1981:8) refers to these Games starting even earlier, around 2000 B.C.
women, thus establishing at a very early time the relationship between athletics and masculinity. For example, Strutt (1801:II) was clear that pre-Roman Britons were:

...bold active and warlike people, tenacious of their native liberty, and capable of bearing great fatigue; to which they were probably inured by an early education, and constant pursuit of such amusements as best suited the profession of a soldier, including hunting, running, leaping, swimming, and other exertions requiring strength and agility of body.

Romans used the javelin in war and William Fitzstephen (Cited by Harris 1975:145), writing in the twelfth century, described Londoners throwing the javelin with thongs fitted over the throwing hand. Strutt (1801:VIII-IX) quotes from the Boke of Sir Tristram, describing the feats of King Arthur.³ 'No man,' it is claimed, 'did so well as he, in running...and [in] casting of the barre he found no maister.' The Venerable Beade detailed the exploits of the seventh-century saint, Cuthbert, who excelled in jumping, running, and wrestling (Harris 1975:135). Havelock the Dane, (c 1275), a poem depicting a putting the stone competition, is another of the earliest accounts of an athletics contest in English literature (Lovesey and McNab 1969:9).⁴ Putting the stone is recorded again at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and throwing the hammer, or 'sledge,' is said to have taken place in 1622 (Harris 1975:147).

Harris (Ibid:22-23) also shows us occasional sporting references during the Middle Ages, including running, jumping and weight-throwing. Lovesey and McNab, (1969:3) draw attention to Henry II (1154-1189) having 'open spaces set aside near London for sports,'

³According to legend Arthur lived during the late fifth century (Bahr 1984:751).

⁴Regrettably, the actual date of competition is unclear but Scandinavian Vikings were active from the late eighth to the mid eleventh centuries and established an Anglo-Danish dynasty in England (Isaacs 1985:1268).
and of the young Henry VIII being 'good at plummet and hammer-throwing, casting or
tossing the bar, leaping or jumping and pole leaping'.

The close association between athletic facility and an idealized image of masculinity was
consolidated and reproduced over the years. Athletic abilities are described by a number
of historians as necessary prerequisites only for gentlemen. Lovesey and McNab argue
that the explicit association of 'athletic ability with the masculine ideal persisted into the
nineteenth century, when athletic sports were known as "manly exercises"' (1969:4).
However, 'gentlemen' was narrowly defined and referred only to elite classes of men
participating in organised amateur competitions.

In opposition to the pervasive Puritanism of the day, James I authorised the first regular
athletic meetings in England, namely 'Mr Robert Dover's Olympick Games upon the
Cotswold Hills'. These Games commenced in 1601 and continued for forty years. The
sports included leaping, pitching the bar, throwing the sledge and tossing the pike (Harris
1975:136). Strutt (1801:XXI) also gives very detailed accounts of the Cotswold
Olympicks - but all his references, bar one - 'and the women danced' - relate exclusively
to men. Strutt thus intimates that while the men were competing in athletics women were
engaged only in stereotyped 'feminine' activities, like dancing or spectating.

The origin of professional athletics - of which pedestrianism was the most popular form -
seems impossible to date. Pedestrianism was invariably either a race between two parties,
or betting on the outcome of a sporting challenge. Lovesey and McNab (1969:4) found an early reference in one of the Harleian manuscripts to a sixteenth century foot-race which took place in Chester for a prize of 'six glayves of silver'. Additionally, they mention Shakespeare's Falstaff in Henry IV, Part I (c.1595), offering to run against Poins for £1,000.

BREAKING THE PATTERN - EARLIEST RACES FOR WOMEN

In all the above examples there is a strong link between all types of athletic activities and male participation. It appears the one exception in the English context was running. This does not necessarily mean women did not participate in other forms of athletics but that their involvement was perhaps not recorded. The earliest specific reference I have found for a race for women is by Radford and resulted from the terms of a will. In 1638, 'a prize of £10 was bequeathed for two young "maids" to run for' (Radford 1993:2, citing Annals of Sporting, 1823, Vol. III, No. 13:114). Another account is found in Samuel Pepys' diary, where he describes his wife and her maids racing against each other for wagers (Latham and Matthews 1974:167, citing The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 14 April 1667). Since Pepys does not express surprise at his wife's activity, and even goes so far as to state that he watched 'with much pleasure' (Ibid), one can only surmise that such

---

5Pedestrianism was a seemingly endless variety of foot races, limited only by the contestants' - or promoter's - imagination.

6In contrast, the folk play of the Middle Ages frequently involved both sexes (Strutt 1801), and from contemporary evidence it is clear that women shared with men 'such limited freedom for play as their lives afforded them' (Brailsford 1991:131, citing G. R. Owst 1961:393 and passim). Dancing was universally popular, as were many specifically female sports - or sports played separately from the men, such as stoolball, shuttlecock, marbles, skipping and racing (Ibid).

7The problems of reporting, both locally and nationally, are covered in Chapter Two.
races were not unusual. Furthermore, although he was a high churchman, he showed no concern that the races were on a Sunday (Latham and Matthews 1970:135).

SMOCK RACING - A HIGHLY ORGANISED ACTIVITY

The above examples are of a spontaneous form of activity and, from the limited references available, probably not commonplace. Smock racing, in contrast, provides the earliest instance of regular female competition, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Local girls and women ran for smocks at village fairs and wakes, described here by Strutt (1801:371):

Smock Races are commonly performed by the young country wenches, and so called because the prize is a holland smock, or shift, usually decorated with ribbons.8

Smock races were annual events which reached a peak of popularity between 1790 and 1800, and were part of traditional life in England. Recent work by Brailsford (1991) and Radford (1993) has revealed smock racing to be more frequent and extensive than originally thought. There is evidence during the early nineteenth century that smock races occurred not only at local annual church and folk festivals, fairs and Saint's days, but also at weddings (Radford 1993:1, citing Annals of Sporting, 1825, Vol. V, No. 43:57), and as an additional attraction at cricket matches (Buckley 1935:18) and horse-race meetings. Neither were the prizes restricted to smocks (or gowns, shifts, chemises, or petticoats); sometimes the reward was money (Radford 1993:9, citing Annals of Sporting, 1822, Vol. II, No. 7:55-6), or lengths of material or tea (Hone 1826, Vol. II:700-1). Money prizes could be substantial. At Ormskirk, in 1696, the prizes were smocks valued at one guinea

8 Holland smocks were those made of fine linen.
each and a guinea in gold (Fairfax-Blakeborough 1949:189), which at that time represented the average monthly wage for a farm labourer (Wrightson 1982:31-36).

Nevertheless, despite the economic inducements on offer, the races were usually integral to a community celebration or festival, lasting perhaps two or three days, and, as Radford observes, 'it was the spirit of such occasions to take part for a laugh and to be laughed at' (1993:2).

Interestingly, Radford's analysis of 18th century smock racing shows that fewer than one third of these meetings had running races for men, whereas almost eighty per cent had competitions for women. He contends that, taking all running events into consideration, there were more female than male runners (1993:8). Some women took their participation seriously and wore less attire than would normally have been decorously acceptable, because such sporting endeavour was rendered virtually impossible by the voluminous clothing of the period. It has been argued that dress appropriate for athletic performance was 'hardly reconcilable with the rules of decency' (Whitfield 1962:69-70), and inevitably offended the Puritan elements present in many local communities.

This leads us to question the motives of the promoters and male spectators. Advertisements for a number of events stressed the 'undress' of the competitors, rather than their athletic performance. Such promotion was undoubtedly aimed at attracting larger and more voyeuristic audiences. Arguments that female sport threatened female morality was from the start a recognisable feature of the development of all female sports, including athletics. This can be clearly seen in the smock races of the late eighteenth century:

Even at a time when the female breast was a much more public sight than it later became, press comment regularly mentioned the undress of girl competitors....The
moral ambivalence of smock racing was underlined by the stipulations for entry when they formed part of feasts and celebrations, and were not specially mounted one-off events. They were commonly described as for "virgins," or, in the terms of an advertisement for the 1797 Jubilee celebrations in Berkshire, for maidens "whose characters are unsullied and persons impregnable" (Brailsford 1991:134-5, citing Sporting Magazine, May 1797:98).

Other advertisements ran in a similar vein; one for a cricket match in 1744 promised the added attraction of a smock race between two ladies who were to 'run in drawers only' - and that 'Captain Vinegar would be on hand with his bruisers and bulldogs, that no civil spectators may be incommode by the rabble' (Brailsford 1991:134, citing Penny London Morning Advertiser, 11 June 1744). There are other race reports referring to the competitors giving 'a full display of their personal charms' (Ibid:134, citing Sporting Magazine, March 1805:304), or exhibiting 'with their wonted generosity, those beauties which are easier to be imagined than described' (Ibid:134, citing Sporting Magazine, April 1813:20).

Although there was a marked link between female racing and sexuality, athleticism was also a significant element of these events, which added to their popularity. Races over half a mile were common - and events were, as with horse races, serious enough to be decided from the best of three heats (Brailsford 1991:134, citing Reading Mercury, 2 July 1781). Beresford (1924:90), mentions a Nan Francis covering a heat of this distance in three minutes. Evidence here would certainly suggest that, in the century before Victoria, women received a wider acceptance of their athletic pursuits than would seem apparent for the next two hundred years. Hard work, and an ability to withstand pain in their endeavours, were integral elements of smock races. Many competitions would no doubt have been on poor, uneven grass surfaces, performed in restrictive clothing and unsuitable footwear. Whilst there is no mention of any training having taken place prior to events, it
seems that, given the circumstances, performances could be of a very high standard. Smock racing is generally regarded as being for local competitors, but there is evidence of long careers for some female athletes, and of successful performers travelling further afield for competition. It is clear from one example of a woman who, by 1832, had won 15 smocks (Egan 1832:265), that serious, possibly long-term professional competition occurred.

Women's smock racing provided good entertainment for crowds who lived within reasonable travelling distance of the venues and attracted large numbers of spectators. For example, at Walworth Common in 1744, two women competed against each other as an added feature at a cricket match, at which time steps were taken to control an anticipated large gathering (Buckley 1935:18). In 1791 2,000 people went to the sports at Tothill Fields in Westminster to watch an all-female event (Fairfax-Blakeborough 1973:94). There is also evidence that events attracted local dignitaries and members of the political and military establishments. For example, in 1814 Generals Wellington, Blucher and Platoff were invited to watch the sports at Farnham in Surrey (Nevill 1910:162). Although typical competitions had as few as two to six runners, this was still sufficient to attract large numbers of spectators (Radford 1993:3).

Another feature of the time was the early establishment of competitive structures and regulations. An example was the inclusion of age groupings in some events. Radford instances 'under 15, under 20, under 25, and sometimes older age groups, too - over 35 and "old women"' (1993:3). Hone describes 20 to 30 year old women running for a pound
of tea at the Hungerford revels (1826:700-702).⁹ According to Radford the whole system of smock racing was highly organized, even extending to a sophisticated appeals procedure over the results of races.¹⁰ Age grouping and appeals are just two of the earliest examples of significant elements of sports organisation normally associated with modern events.

RACING FOR WAGERS

A popular form of pre-Victorian entertainment was for two men to race against each other for a wager. Although not nearly as common, such races were found amongst women as well. Competition results can be traced back as early as Queen Anne's reign (1703-1714). Two instances are worthy of note: firstly, a London woman offered to race against any other local woman for the considerable sum of £50 or £100. Secondly, an older woman challenged any woman in England, at least 10 years younger than herself, since she did not wish to undervalue her abilities (Ashton 1883:243-4).

Radford also quotes cases of young girls involved in wager performances. For example, in 1823, within a period of eight weeks, Emma Freeman, aged seven, competed in three long-distance events in and around London. The first two were over thirty miles, both completed 'with perfect ease', and inside eight hours. The second of these performances was for 100 guineas, and another, over 40 miles, for £100 (1993:5). These were significant sums of money, and the girl's efforts clearly represented an important family income. The economic imperative was possibly the main reason why wager racing

⁹Age groupings subsequently fell into disuse for many years. Indeed, it was not until the late 1970s that veteran athletics - 35 and over for women - was formally reintroduced back into this country.

¹⁰This was an unrecorded conversation in 1995.
attracted females of widely differing ages. At the other end of the age scale there is evidence of a woman of 70 walking for money (Ibid:6). Another example is of an unnamed woman 'apparently about sixty years of age,' who completed 92 miles in under 24 hours in 1827 in Carlisle (Searle 1926:590). Perhaps for the same economic reason, marital status appeared to be immaterial, instanced by a Maidstone mother of six who completed 30 miles in each of 20 successive days (The Times, 18 March 1816).

RACING ABROAD

Mention here should also be made of performances from abroad. From the 1840s in America, professional pedestrian feats of walking and running were popular for men and women, particularly amongst the poor immigrants. With wages often no better than 50 cents for a long day of physically demanding labour, the prospects of a healthy prize purse - often $50 or $100 - together with a share of the gate money, proved enticing to many; a day's work for a year's pay. Poor immigrants invariably remained poor immigrants all their lives, and for some this was perhaps their only way of escape into a better future (Cumming, 1981:38). One of the largest groups were from the British Isles, and the likelihood is very high that a proportion of these athletic feats were performed by English women immigrants.

But again, as in England, reporting of these events suggests that some of them were regarded from a more prurient standpoint. Women were viewed primarily as entertainers whose sexuality rather than athletic ability attracted spectators. For example, during a six day event in New York's Madison Square Garden in 1879, The National Police Gazette: 'depicted the ladies as glamorous, attractive, buxom beauties and described the affairs from
the erotic viewpoint, rather than the athletic' (Cited in Cumming 1981:102-3).

The emphasis placed on women's sexuality at the expense of ability was reflected in the differences in prize money between males and females. Despite the degree of achievement by women, winnings rarely matched those of men. The performances in the above race (393 ⅜ miles by the winner, Amy Howard), are not inconsiderable, and a top man would often expect to have to cover a similar distance to finish with a share of the prize or gate money. In this race the first place prize was $975, but for the equivalent male event, contested in September of the same year, the victor, an Englishman named Charles Rowell, returned home $27,721 richer (Cumming 1981:93, 103). Nevertheless, top women could earn a good living from their efforts. Indeed, it was not unknown for men to dress up as women, specifically to try and win prize money. They were then removed from races which were exclusively for 'petticoated pedestrians' (Cumming 1981:104-5). This was to prove a recurring problem in British women's athletics. It is believed that, as late as the 1950s, loose fitting athletic costumes allowed men to pose as women and thus compete with them.11

PEDESTRIANISM

In England, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reports of male pedestrianism gradually became more frequent and its popularity rose steadily countrywide. It became the one sport to rival horse-racing as a spectator event.12 But the first significant athletic achievement of note, for either sex, which was to serve as a

---

11 I will look into this influence on English women's athletics in Chapter Seven.

12 The range of events seemed to be limited only by the contestant's imagination.
Robert Barclay, who, in 1809, won the staggering sum of 16,000 guineas for walking one mile in each of 1,000 consecutive hours.

Following Barclay's performance, such events, for both sexes, became more common, although women's pedestrian feats were not so frequent at the beginning of the eighteenth century. 1765 is the earliest instance quoted by Radford (1993:7), who refers to 'a young woman' covering 72 miles on foot in one day, and he writes about a wager over a 15 year-old Kent schoolgirl running a mile in 5 minutes 28 seconds in 1795. Longer distances, in particular, became more common: for example, an Exeter woman covered 50 miles in eight and a half hours in 1826 (Annals of Sporting, 1826, Vol. IX, No. 53:306). Bell's Life in 1853 reported crowds in Manchester going to see a female pedestrian called Pendleton, who, 'dressed in the Bloomer costume' was attempting the Barclay feat (22 May 1853). The following year, Mrs Dunn, 'a married woman, 31 years of age,' completed the same task. 'So little distressed was she by the feat,' it was reported, 'that she immediately commenced another task of walking 150 quarter miles in 150 quarter hours, which she completed in due time' (Liverpool Standard, cited in The Times, 13 July 1854; Bristol Mirror, cited in The Times, 25 September 1854).

Instances of several other prodigious feats are well-documented, such as the Irish woman,

---

13 Training could include the radical methods of purging, bleeding, sweating and special diets (Thom 1813).

14 The Bloomer costume was devised by Mrs Amelia Bloomer (who visited England in 1851). It was a controversial attire of coatee or bodice, pantaloons or 'bloomers' to the ankles, covered by a short skirt, and made athletic exercise more feasible than did the voluminous and fashionable crinolines and hoop skirts (Lovesey 1993).
Mary McMullen, who covered 90 miles, barefoot, in 24 hours (Annals of Sporting, 1826, Vol. X, No. 59:306). There were bright moments, such as when a crowd of 6,000 gathered to see her finish one walk. But unremitting hard work was often punctuated by interference from outsiders with an interest in the outcome, generally from those who had bet against the performer. These people often managed to abort the performance, as the athlete was arrested on the grounds that they were creating a 'public disturbance'. This was a common problem for both men and women. For example, a celebrated pedestrian of the time, one George Wilson, was arrested and imprisoned after completing 750 of his proposed 1000 miles in 20 days, and charged with this offence (Wilson 1815a; Wilson 1815b). A similar fate befell a Scottish woman in 1833 (Radford 1993:7, citing the London Packet, 21 August 1833). Another form of control was to offer rewards in order to disqualify the opposition. For example, during Pendleton's Barclay attempt 'a reward of £5 [was] offered to any person who shall detect her sleeping when she ought to be walking' (Lovesey 1994:4, citing The Lady's Newspaper, 4 June 1853).

Wagers over the outcome of women's performances, in comparison with those of men, were for comparatively minor sums - usually between £1 and £10. Nineteenth century female pedestrians were principally poor women who performed for money, with collections sometimes made by the watching crowds for those who had done well (London Chronicle, 31 January 1807). However, there were some feats which were more highly rewarded; for example, in 1852 an American, Miss Kate Irvine, came to England to complete 500 miles in 500 consecutive hours, for the sum of $500 (Bell's Life, 8 August 1852).

---

15 The Barclay feat required one mile to be covered in each of 1000 successive hours. Combating tiredness in this form of intermittent activity was one of the major obstacles preventing completion.
1852). Having successfully performed the task, she returned to the same venue the next year to repeat it (Bell's Life, 29 May 1853).

There is one well documented female Barclay feat, which refers to an Emma Sharp, who performed the task in 1865 at Laisterdyke, when aged about 32 (Lovesey 1993:7-8). Despite her husband's vigorous protestations, and her initial disappointments in failing to find a venue, she eventually gained use of the City Sporting Grounds and stipulated that she receive a share of the gate money during the six weeks of the walk. Around 100,000 people are reported to have attended and her 'share of the receipts amounted to a handsome sum' (Ibid:7-8). When it became clear she would complete the task and the betting fraternity would stand to lose considerable sums 'many mean devices to thwart her were used...until she was obliged to enlist the aid of the police'. Eventually she took to being preceded by a man with a loaded musket and carried a pistol in each hand herself. Despite this, 'the only physical inconvenience she suffered arose from swollen ankles during the early stages of the walk' (Ibid:7-8). In a letter to The Sunday Times (11 May 1969), Brenda Holroyd claimed that Emma Sharp completed the task 'with, it seems, less discomfort' than Robert Barclay in his original feat.

The earlier reference by Pepys is an exception to the general situation that pedestrian events were a part of the culture and entertainment of working people (of both sexes), and attracted sometimes those who were very poor and utterly dependent on these events to

---

16 This was unearthed by Peter Lovesey (1993) in an unmarked book of local items held by Bradford Public Library, dated about 1903.

17 Mrs Sharp was still alive in 1903, when the book was compiled, and proved keen to recount her performance.
survive. They were usually organised by women themselves, or their families, without the benefit of backers, who depended on money made before, during, or at the end of each performance (Radford 1993:6).

MID-VICTORIAN SOCIAL CHANGES AND SABBATARIANISM

During the early years of industrialization in Britain many people had moved away from village life and into the cities, where the population gradually concentrated, leading to radically changing recreation opportunities (Brailsford 1991:135). Pedestrian racing 'played a leading role in bringing competitive spectator sport to the growing towns and cities' (Ibid:77; Radford 1993:8), but increasingly attracted competitors from the lowest social classes, for whom it represented a small living.

However, the involvement of socially unacceptable low-class women, increasing instances of public disorder surrounding many events, revised attitudes towards public decency, together with new medical conceptions of the frailty of women, led to a rapid decline in female smock racing, pedestrianism and wager running. Whilst these forms of foot races had been relevant only to the lives of working people, their swift reduction during the second quarter of the nineteenth century left few athletic openings for women. Evidence suggests that by 1840 only long-distance fixtures survived (Brailsford 1991:120; Radford 1993:8). Opportunities arising from the gradual introduction of the sporting Saturday afternoon\(^\text{18}\) - to all classes of workers - changed this pattern of decline. Although for the most part the increased opportunities for leisure passed women by, in the case of

---

\(^{18}\)The Factory Act of 1847, allowing closure of the workplace on Saturday afternoons, consolidated a pattern already established.
pedestrianism women as well as men were the benefactors. The financial rewards for competitors and betting opportunities for spectators ensured a continued interest in the limited number of remaining events. But, again, the development of pedestrianism was uneven. With the introduction of amateur athletics its standing was further lowered in the public perception and female racers 'like the men tended to become as much part of circus entertainment as of sport' (Brailsford 1991:135). For example, The Lords Day Observance Society regarded the 1879 attempt on the Barclay Match by the redoubtable Madame Willetts a 'demoralizing exhibition' (Ibid).

Although Victorian middle-class men organised and pursued the new sport of athletics for their own enjoyment, the association of female participation with lower-class life militated against its acceptance among middle-class women. The relationship between athletics and masculinity was clearly a limiting factor for women also, as was the earlier influence of Puritanism, which affected female participation in all sports, including athletics. Brailsford feels that the Puritans were the first to make 'sport a matter for serious and critical debate' (1991:17). Their main concern was to protect the work ethic and they centred their arguments on the abolition of sport, attacking all forms of play and leisure. Whilst men were affected by this invective, it has been claimed that the attacks of the Puritans were:

....all the more furious where women were involved. The Puritans and their successors eventually produced an ambivalent attitude towards female play. It lost its openness and, like sex, moved uncertainly into a hinterland between the claims of purity and the frequent actuality of prurience in its male promoters and spectators (Brailsford 1991:133).

In addition, Brailsford suggests that the sporting use of leisure time remained essentially male up to 100 years ago. He argues further that:
Stress on domestic virtues as against communal participation, first from the Puritans, and then from the Methodists and Evangelicals, had modified the total nature of popular recreation, but their special denial had been directed at women.... As with male sporting activities, however, it took the hard material demands of the Industrial Revolution, with its economic and social pressures spreading across all classes, to quash most of the female sporting liberties of the past. When it did so, the consequences were sweeping, with women's lives too constrained and their sporting traditions too fragile for them to find the alternative outlets which their menfolk contrived. Nor, by the majority, were such alternatives thought either necessary or desirable. The women's place was securely in the home, that is when it was not in the mill or the workshop (1991:131,133).

Prior to 1914, female autonomy was rarely achieved, and a lack of freedom away from the home militated against physical expression in the sporting arena. Poor and ill-educated women were in general unable to earn sufficient income to become independent and to travel and spend money on leisure activities outside the family home. Consequently it was necessary for them to remain part of the traditional family environment. Work characterized as being for the middle-classes, such as teachers, nurses and clerical employment was also badly remunerated, and the better-paid professions were essentially barred to women. For example, female doctors were scarce, and there were no women in the upper levels of the civil service, law and accountancy (Rowbotham 1997:22).

An added hindrance to both sexes was that the only universally-sanctioned holidays 'to survive the tightening of the Protestant work ethic' were Easter, Christmas and Whitsuntide (Brailsford 1991:78-9). Victorian Sabbatarians initially targeted traditional feasts and fairs, which often ran over into a Sunday. The middle-classes were essentially the founders of the English Sunday, and it was they who were also the organisers of new, respectable, male-only forms of sport, including athletics. For example, the traditional Harlesden Green Fair of June 1811, which included a women's race for 'an inner garment of virgin
purity' (Sporting Magazine, June 1811:115), became subjected to increasing criticism. The question posed by Brailsford was how long the Green Fair 'would withstand the criticisms of evangelical parsons and changing views of what constituted legitimate amusement' (1991:79). Modern sports, which took shape in the second half of the century, were, as he suggests, 'moulded in Puritan and Evangelical traditions' (Ibid:23). It was the middle-classes who were the 'best-placed financially, or by inclination, to take up new recreations' (Ibid:118), and new middle-class sports were primarily participatory, rarely drawing large crowds (Ibid:64, 120).

THE RISE OF MALE HEGEMONY IN THE 'NEW' ATHLETICS

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s a new-found enthusiasm for sport existed amongst the middle-classes. Much of the impetus came from former pupils of the boys' public schools, (many of whom had had athletics on their curriculum),19 who controlled and established modern sports. By 24 April, 1880, when the Amateur Athletic Association was formed, most of the well-developed sports (cricket, football and rugby),20 had already become codified, and governing bodies were formed. Athletics was the last of a long line to set up a governing administration. In a similar vein to other sports, athletics organised a body that was for men only - there being no reference to, nor thought given, to women. Consequently, from the start there was in effect a separatist ideology in the formation of modern sports. Men's sports were owned, controlled, organised and exclusively membered by men. When women's organisations started they were always separate from those of

---

19Eton actually had a school sports day from 1837 (Harris 1975:137).

20Cricket's rules were drawn up a century earlier, in 1788; the Football Association was formed in 1863 and the Rugby Football Union in 1871.
By the middle of the century there was a plethora of athletic competition for men, although many associations regarded athletics as a sideline or diversion from their main activity. Cricket clubs, for example, organised events as an added interest to matches; rowing clubs put on athletic meetings as an off-season opportunity to keep fit (Saunders and Weeks-Pearson 1989:11; Running, September/October 1981:26-9). The Peckham Social Club, a literary and cultural society, also held athletic meetings (Saunders and Weeks-Pearson 1989:11). At the same time increasing numbers of athletic-specific clubs were also formed as far afield as London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Northampton. Athletic clubs were also founded in the universities, with the first Inter-Varsity meeting taking place in 1864.

An additional location of influence was the army. Apart from the regular services, the volunteer 'territorial' phenomenon - very important from the mid nineteenth century until well after the Great War - produced a flourishing and virile national athletic network (Saunders and Weeks-Pearson 1989:12). Muscular exercise was traditional in military training and not surprisingly diffused into civilian life. For example, the Hanover Park Rifles held regular athletic meetings (Ibid). The Times, in 1863, reported a field day near Brighton being attended by 20,000 men - and by the mid 1890s the figure had risen in excess of 200,000. Polytechnic historian, Arthur Winter, also points to the many volunteers who were unfit for military life and looked to various forms of exercise, including running, as a means of improvement (1975:10).
But in the formative years of organised athletics it was the men of the leisured classes who provided the impetus for the development of the sport, and middle-class sensibilities required it to be socially acceptable. Pedestrianism had a poor public image, being controlled totally by individual entrepreneurs who sought quick and easy profit at the expense of fair competition. It became an increasingly working-class sport 'surviving largely in the absence of any sporting alternatives elsewhere' (Brailsford 1991:64-5). The revival of puritanism in middle-class values and thinking required that the new amateur form of athletics 'distanced itself from the ill-repute of professional pedestrianism' (Ibid:108-110). This was also a contemporary view by Griffin (1889), who saw that the only hope for the new amateur athletics lay in rejecting the old pedestrian values, and in adopting a high moral basis from the start. Thus the gentleman-amateur tradition in modern athletics was established. This resulted in what Griffin felt to be a necessary gulf to develop between the gentleman and the professional, and - although he did not mention it - between the lady and the professional. The division between the gentleman and professional was reflected in the formation of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1880 - a male-only organisation, which excluded all those who had competed or taught for money.

Athletics was essentially a new sport. Pedestrianism had been tied to working-class communities and was linked to professionalism and betting. Organised (track and field) athletics was a new concept and a more constrained practice, initially associated with, and controlled by, middle-class men. In common with other sports, it was organised and bureaucratised, with structures and rule-making procedures for competition. Set distances, common around the country, could now be competed for and compared, and a whole new
range of events became possible, such as the throws and the jumps, which were gradually introduced over the years. The javelin was the last of today's events to be included, introduced at the 1908 London Olympics. The new athletics distanced itself from what might be described as its working-class roots, and deliberately neglected the long history of activities such as pedestrianism and match racing. From the start, it was also a sex-specific sport - and the AAA was an all-male autonomous body which was self-electing and self-perpetuating. The death knell of one sport (pedestrianism), for both sexes, and the birth of another (athletics), for men only, resulted in the exclusion of women during its initial growth spurt.

Although the 1880s marked the beginning of the foundation period of organised sports for middle-class women - associated with schools, universities, teacher training colleges and clubs - the establishment of national organisations for women's sports took place years after the establishment of men's associations (Hargreaves 1994a). Women faced practical and ideological constraints which systematically delayed the growth of participation (Ibid). In the specific case of athletics the foundation of the (men's) AAA pre-dated the foundation of the women's equivalent by 42 years. The Women's Amateur Athletic Association was inaugurated in 1922. Not surprisingly, the WAAA based their rules and procedures almost exactly on those of the AAA, establishing an amateur ethos and severing any possible links with pedestrianism. However, because the foundation of women's athletics came so late, during a period when there was greater working-class involvement in women's sports in general, unlike male athletics, from the start, there was greater democratization of the women's sport. In some contexts it was even characterized, pejoratively, as a working-class sport.
However, the separation of men's and women's athletics allowed men to retain overall control of the sport and to determine, in many ways, the development of female participation. The association of athletics with a specifically middle-class amateur-gentleman image of masculinity was firmly cemented and male hegemony was powerfully established.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

The literature of athletics also embodied male hegemony, reflected in the first publications, which were histories of the sport. Lovesey and McNab find the most important of the early works to be Wilkinson's Modern Athletics (1868), providing as it does a contemporary account of the formative years (1969:5). This, together with Shearman's Athletics and Football (1887), provides a complete picture of Victorian athletics for the wealthy amateur male. Throughout the nineteenth century English women had no work on competitive athletics devoted solely to their interests, having to rely entirely on those provided for the men. The first, Athletics for Women and Girls, by the active athlete and administrator, Sophie Eliott-Lynn, did not appear until 1925.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century numerous works were published by British authors which were of interest to both the amateur and professional male. However, by the 1890s athletes were increasingly turning abroad for advice, particularly to America, the success of whose athletes was well known. One of the reasons for the popularity of these texts was because they made reference to training methods which were

21Close examination of contemporary literature provides several references to athletics from the twelfth century onwards, although no publication purely on athletics can be traced before the nineteenth century.
claimed to fit into the ordinary mode of living (The Sportsman 1886).

This concept of training, where life was as little interrupted as possible, suited the Victorian amateur ideally. Whereas professional 'peds' found the time to fit in heavy training programmes (they had to, for athletics was invariably their prime source of income), the enthusiastic wealthy amateur often had business and social interests to attend to, which precluded such a slavish devotion to the sport. Consequently, the British editions of the American Spalding series were warmly received. Most professional performances were not surpassed until well into the next century but the new concept of light training enabled both sexes of the lower classes, with severely restricted time, to be competitive with the wealthier classes - for men, when social restrictions were eventually relaxed towards the end of the century, and for women during the early days of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association.

It was, however, not until 1903 that the first important work of specific interest to the active competitive female athlete appeared on these shores. Lucille Hill, the director of physical training at the widely influential American Wellesley College, edited Athletics and Out-Door Sports For Women. Although originally published in the USA, it was considered significant enough for reprinting in England. Very early in the text she emphatically declared an overriding concern for the long-term growth of a new sport. 'A good thing', she wrote, should not be 'so misused or overused that the majority of people lose sight of its true mission and recognise its superficial popularity only' (p4). She rebutted previous arguments opposing women's athletics and put the case strongly for the medical benefits of the sport.
The first English publication, which came over 20 years later, was in many ways less radical. Sophie Eliott-Lynn's book was published in 1925, by which time women's athletics was being hotly debated in the public arena of Olympic sport (Hargreaves 1994a:212-3). In common with a number of texts published from the first third of the nineteenth century that advocated only gentle forms of exercise for females after puberty (Walker 1837; Spencer 1861; Beale et al 1891), she recommended that women athletes should exercise caution and not be vigorous (pXIV). But the emphasis had clearly shifted; in the early years of the twentieth century contemporary English literature discussed exercise in general. Eliott-Lynn, in 1925, focused on athletics in particular. Nevertheless, a major constraint was the continuing medical attitudes to the limitations of women's bodies (Atkinson 1987; Vertinsky 1987; Hargreaves 1994a).22

Lucille Hill's radicalism was reflected in the early establishment of regular competition in America. In 1903, when she was writing, several regular fixtures, particularly in the university context, had been established. There are records of individual athletes of the time, for example Mamie Hubbard covering 100 yards in 17.0 seconds in New York in August 1890 (Cowe 1985:155), Roanna Reed clearing 1.135 metres in the high jump at Poughkeepsie in 1895 (Ibid:157), and, at the same venue in May 1898, E.V. Jones putting an eight pound shot 7.135 metres (Ibid:157).

Although England lagged a little behind, there is also evidence that athletics for girls and women in England was established well before the inauguration of the WAAA in 1922, influenced to some extent by men's athletics. However, competition was rare, mostly

22Medical constraints are considered fully in Chapter Seven.
limited to events between schoolgirls. For example, Cowe (1985) has found several pre-First World War references: D. Brock clearing 1.32 metres in the high jump in June 1912, at the Ramsgate County School for Girls Annual Sports (p89), and I. Poole, at the same event, leaping 3.86 metres in the long jump (p90). Since the meeting is titled 'Annual Sports', the implication is that the events were held regularly, but regrettably he can trace no earlier references.23 There are also two exceptionally early references of competition for women. The first occurred on 11 June 1907, when South London Harriers (a men's club) staged a 'Ladies Evening Meeting' at Crystal Palace. According to Lovesey, the highlight was a 4x110 yards ladies' relay in which Mr A.W. Hog's team beat four other teams. Two years later, a South London Harriers ladies' team set a time of 67.2 seconds for the same event, also at Crystal Palace (Letter to author from Peter Lovesey).

Hill's (1903) work was very advanced for the time; she forcefully argued for a rapid expansion of athletics to all women, unhindered by considerations of class or athletic ability. She pushed strongly for 'the greatest good to the greatest number; not the greatest good to the smallest number', which, she urged, was one of the evils of the way in which men had fostered a specifically middle-class sport (1903:13). Gradual, grudging, acceptance of artisan athletes was, by the turn of the century, becoming more widespread and it was the breaking down of class barriers that Hill saw as so important, a philosophy strongly echoed in the English context during the early years of the WAAA by Sophie

---

23 Perhaps there was an element of compulsion in a school setting; Cowe has been advised that sports days were a regular feature in many schools - but in a telephone conversation (1994) he recounted a charming story about his own mother practising high jump in the garden with her skirt tucked into her pants - and then being unable to clear the same height in competition. In the formal setting the bar was knocked off by her dress, as it was not considered ladylike to be otherwise attired.
Elliott-Lynn: 'Our clubs embrace all classes from university clubs to Factory Girls' Clubs' (1925:XI). Despite the danger of developing in fierce competition qualities that were not womanly, Hill saw the need for organised competitive athletics to cement the foundations of the sport (1903:5-6). This, though, was another long twenty years in the future for English women.

Another parallel between the American and English contexts related to the development of organisations and competitive structures. English women lacked any sense of direction. The want for facilities, including gymnasia and running tracks, was a universal problem. The early days of the new century were without any formal or organised administration, and guidance in training was virtually non-existent. Few 'coaches' knew their craft, and seldom imparted their information to women. The redoubtable Sam Mussabini was an exception (Webster 1930:8). In England athletics was one of the last sports to be formally accepted and taken up by women and before the Great War there were very few opportunities available.

Hill (1903:338-9) described track and field as an 'experiment' which had begun, and which women should be allowed to participate in. Athletics had received a considerable boost from the formation of the modern Olympics in 1896, and the London Games of 1908 gave it a fresh impetus. There were no female athletes at these Games, but no doubt there were English women present in the stands who wanted to be given their chance in a competitive arena. Dawn was beginning to break on a new sport for women. The formative years of a fledgling female activity in England were fraught with difficulty and it was to be some years yet before the sun would really start to shine in earnest.
CHAPTER FOUR

1914 to 1939: FORMAL BEGINNINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the involvement of English female athletes in the setting up, in 1921, of a world governing body, the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI), and the subsequent formation, in 1922, of a domestic administration, the Women's Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA). These events occurred between the wars when English female athletes were predominant. In common with the men's sport, women's athletics in England was impossible to separate from world developments (Pallett 1955:13).

The growth of athletics came at a time when there was an expansion in England of women's sports in general. Athletics provided many women with previously undreamt of opportunities to express freedom of movement through exercise and to exert control over their own bodies in an environment away from the home. Interest was enhanced by the transition from ad hoc arrangements for competition to formalised structures, including the formation of governing bodies and rules for competition. In other sports, including English men's athletics, the establishment of British National infrastructures occurred before international organisations were established. In the case of English women's athletics, the reverse happened. The original initiative for international competition and administration came from France; English women responded enthusiastically and took part in the earliest international events; the FSFI was formed with their assistance; and then the establishment of the WAAA followed a year later.
The growth of women's athletics across Europe was swift and widespread, transcending many social and demographic barriers that had characterised the growth of other sports. But, nevertheless, there were numerous hurdles to be overcome, particularly the opposition to the entry of female athletes into the Olympic Games in 1928, which involved the concerted efforts of both men and women from several countries. Like much of female life between the wars, English women's athletics was a series of advances and retreats, a period of 'continuities and discontinuities' (Hargreaves 1994b:116). Key features of the period which sharply affected women's progress, particularly the influence of men and the effects of medical and social attitudes to the female body, are dealt with in detail in future chapters.

POST-WAR SOCIAL CHANGES

The social trends already evident before the First World War were accelerated by it. Women's rights, particularly enfranchisement, gained sway and young working- and middle-class women showed their abilities and potential in the workplace and in the armed forces - contexts which were, according to Mason, 'often away from home and the stern parental supervision which traditionally went with it' (1988:8). A measure of freedom and self-esteem was thus created for young, single women, and married women were also removed from the traditional roles of housewife and mother. Those who had previously been poorly paid unskilled workers, or domestic servants, had the prospect of new opportunities and the freedom engendered through realistic wages from regulated industrial work. With the manpower overseas at war, women were forced to support families or continue family businesses, often singlehanded (Rowbotham 1997:75; People's Century: Half the People, 1997). For example, the long-term Honorary Secretary of the British
Amateur Athletic Board (BAAB), Jack Crump, recalls how, when his father was called up in 1914, his mother 'had the task of looking after and feeding a young family' (1966:15). Conventional female roles were subverted by the necessities of conflict.

However, with peace came a partial return to the traditional gender relations of the pre-war years. Over a million of the jobs taken by women during the war, such as those in the munitions and armament factories, were lost, and more established occupations, such as office work, reverted to the previous post-holders - men. Strong pressure was exerted on women to relinquish wartime jobs and, in many cases, they were ushered back into the home (Holt 1989:197). Despite the 1918 Representation of the People Act granting voting rights to women over the age of thirty, and the extension in 1928 of those rights to women over the age of twenty-one, they continued to be constrained by the ideologies of domesticity and motherhood. The demands for political and economic changes in favour of women tended to recede during the 1930s. Few women attained positions of power: the Coalition Parliament, in 1940, for example, contained only twelve female MPs. But many women did not want to lose the freedoms they had experienced during the Great War and particularly in cultural contexts there seemed to be a growing sense of emancipation and of the possibilities for radical expressions of womanhood. Allied to the post-war commercialization of sports and improvements in travel and communications, there were greater opportunities for women to take part in sport than ever before (Beddoe 1983:34; Hargreaves 1994a:112; People's Century: Half the People, 1997).

Other changes in English society during the inter-war years also influenced participation. For example, looser-fitting clothing and bobbed hair contributed to a new feeling of self-
expression among women which was linked to active physical outlets. Not surprisingly, however, those who were able to overcome repressive practices and attitudes and take advantage of new sporting opportunities were mostly from privileged social backgrounds. For example, affluent and leisured upper-class women took part in elite sports, such as hunting, flying, sailing and skiing, which required ample time and lavish financial outlay; and the dominant forms of female sports at the time, such as hockey, tennis, netball, and gymnastics were predominantly middle-class in character (Hargreaves 1994a:117-9, 124-5; Adventurous Eves, 1990).

In comparison, for women from the lower classes, life was particularly hard. Women's pay in the 1920s was forced down to a minimum fixed by the Trade Boards - a wage that was often not a living one - and regulations restricting long hours were frequently ignored by employers, who also often operated a marriage bar. Additionally, physical potential was severely limited by the debilitating effects of multiple pregnancies and lack of affordable medical care (Spring-Rice 1939, cited in Hargreaves 1994a:114; Rowbotham 1997:129). Hargreaves states that many working-class women had 'neither the energy, time or money to participate [in sports] and were particularly susceptible to the powerful idea that men, not women, deserved access to leisure outside the home' (1994b:120).

However, in common with Hargreaves (1994a:131; 1994b:124-5), my research reveals that athletics was different in several respects from the class-specific nature of many other sports, and that running, in particular, was a leisure outlet for many women from poorer families.

This was a complex period; whilst there were new ideologies and challenges for women,
many old social and medical values were retained. Gender relations were particularly complicated because the battles fought by women in striving to break away from traditional attitudes to women in sport were not necessarily in opposition to men. Women were not homogeneous and different groups of women struggled against each other over various issues (Hargreaves 1994b:119). These complexities were, to a great extent, reflected in the early years of English women's athletics.

PRE-ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETITION IN ENGLAND

Even before the Great War there were English schoolgirls, and young women, from different social backgrounds and contexts, who were keen to try some form of athletics. The limited evidence suggests a widespread and rapid growth immediately following the war. Webster feels that there were many girls who lost interest in 'the more manly forms of sport soon after they were released from war service'\(^1\) (1930:28) and who turned to the new activity of athletics. Athletics occasionally formed part of inter-service events and was frequently included in the annual sports of business houses, or attached to men's meetings (Pallett 1955:114).

Although the link with education was less strong for athletics than for other sports, there is evidence that there were opportunities for different events in some schools and universities. As previously discussed, statistician Eric Cowe (1985) has unearthed several references to English women's performances during Edwardian times. They are, however, restricted entirely to school sports days in the South of England. But there also exists in

---

\(^1\)Webster is unclear as to which sports were 'manly'. Also, he does not clarify whether these sports were participated in or merely spectated.
the Birmingham University archives several pictures dated 1913 of students practising relay running in the campus grounds, and Olympian Audrey Court (née Brown), who was born in 1913, is clear that both her parents did athletics at Cambridge (Court 1988). The limited information available indicates a growing interest in women's athletics in the university sector of education. For example, by 1919 women were already holding athletic meetings at universities 'throughout the country' (Webster 1930:14).\(^2\) Also in 1919 the Provincial Universities formed the Inter-University Athletic Board of Great Britain and Ireland and immediately decided to promote an inter-university athletics championship for male students. They considered including events for women but, Webster argues, 'It was decided...to hold this novel part of the programme in abeyance until such time as the venture, as a whole, should have proved itself successful' (Ibid:14). It was to be several years before women's events were welcomed into these championships.

Most female athletics, however, took place outside the context of education, and, it could be argued, was one of those spheres of activity that prior to the Great War of 1914-18 would have been impossible to contemplate (Mason 1988:8; Hargreaves 1994a:113). For example, there were new athletic opportunities and resources for women in the armed forces and for those with jobs in factories and other places of work. Webster recalls that during his own wartime service he was brought into close contact with women driving lorries and ambulances who 'learned the love of sport', which, he went on, 'builds up abounding health and beautiful bodies' (1930:10). Some of the earliest organised

\(^2\)This statement would appear to be unreliable. Apart from the early school sports, and inter-services events mentioned, there are few early references which appear to relate to adult female athletes. Elaine Burton in 1919, and Alice Garton in 1920, both competing over 100 yards in Manchester, were at meetings arranged for men, and not in a university context (Cowe 1985:81).
competitions for women took place in the armed forces. It is recorded that on 9 September 1918, and again in 1919, at the Inter-Services Championships, a 440 yards relay race was held for teams from the women's branches of the armed forces. On both occasions the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) team won. It is not recorded who their opponents were in 1918, but in 1919 they beat both the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC). In the first race the winning time was 58.8 seconds and the next year the same four athletes reduced this to 55.2 seconds (Watman 1968:228; Cowe 1985:96). This vast improvement suggests that during the year some form of training had occurred and that the WRAF took their racing seriously.3

In the context of employment, Pallett (1955:16) describes charity sports meetings during the war which included female athletic events when, he argues, women could 'emulate men on the track' because they felt equal to men in the workplace. It was increasingly commonplace for employers to provide facilities for their female workers and to encourage participation and competition in a number of sports, including athletics. For example, the GEC Annual Sports in 1919 not only included egg and spoon and potato races for women, but also a 60 yards race for 'Ladies' Juniors'. In 1920 a GEC subsidiary, the Leamington Glassworks, included a ladies' tug-of-war4 in their first sports meeting, as well as a girls' race for children (Nielsen 1996:171, 174-5). In 1918, Alice Woods, who was a munitions worker at Kerr's engineering factory at St Helen's, in Lancashire, played football for the

3Ironically, the WRAF and WRNS did not affiliate to the WAAA until 1947 (WAAA AGM Minutes. 7 February 1948).

4This was an Olympic event for men, governed by the AAA.
famous Dick, Kerr's Ladies' team, and was also a promising athlete. According to Newsham (1994:23-4), she was the first woman to win a race held under AAA laws, a practice that became increasingly widespread. The race was over 80 yards, and was held in Blackpool, in Lancashire. Alice also covered 100 yards from scratch in 12 seconds (Ibid). The evidence of different distances and handicapping procedures suggests that women were competing in larger numbers and more regularly than recorded events show.

The recognition and control of female athletics by the men's association predates by several years the formation of a women's domestic governing body (1922) who took over control of women's athletics. During the period of male control, increasing numbers of events were organised and women became more serious about their athletics, utilising available coaching skills and the most advanced dress and equipment available. For example, in 1919, Elaine Burton, from Yorkshire, won the inaugural Northern Counties ladies' 100 yards title (Webster 1930:14). Her father - an Olympic 400 metres hurdles finalist in 1908 - was her coach, and it seems his help benefitted her well, since 'she showed fine form and a comprehensive knowledge of the technique of the sprinter's art' (Ibid). Elaine's event was incorporated into a Salford Harriers meeting. This was a prestigious men's fixture, and this, together with the two meetings organised by South London Harriers, which were mentioned in the last chapter, are clear indications of the

---

5 In handicap races the best athletes covered the full distance, starting on the scratch line. Lesser performers started further forward, in a bid to ensure that everyone finished together.

6 She subsequently became Labour M.P. for Coventry South (Pallett 1955:16), and spoke in the House of Commons on State-aid for Olympic participation and international youth sports festivals (World Sports, July 1956:26). She later became Baroness Burton of Coventry (Watman 1968:228).
early support given to women by male athletic clubs.

Whilst not specifying the meeting or venue, Webster cites 1919 as the year when women first appeared in spikes and shorts (Ibid). A picture of Elaine in 1919 shows her in spikes and with her vest tucked into shorts which were briefer than those worn by men. Her outfit was more radical than WAAA regulation dress during the 1920s (World Sports, July 1956:26). The photographic evidence prior to this date shows women running in long-sleeved sailor suits, skirts - or plus fours - black stockings and plimsolls - or even stout walking boots (NCAL, Birmingham; Cumming 1981:104-5). Some women, who perhaps only dabbled in an athletic event during a company sports day, simply competed in their ordinary clothes - as did many men (For example, Nielsen 1996:169-70).

The link between men's and women's athletics was in part a result of a more generalized concern for national fitness. Widespread enlistment during the war made many millions conscious of the need for physical fitness, and physical education was receiving more focused attention in the national school system. Post-war demobilised forces and school-leavers - many of whom were women - took to sport as a way of sustaining fitness. The presence of this new pool of athletic talent did not escape the notice of the officers of the AAA who, in 1919, recommended the creation of County organisations, part of whose function was to encourage the use of playing fields, and to foster sport in schools (Lovesey 1979:65). It was this work, originated by the AAA, that encouraged an interest in athletics by the nation as a whole - and provided facilities that were to be of use to women as well as men. Although the inter-war years, according to Hargreaves (1994a:113), provided more sporting opportunities for men than for women, initiatives
such as these also afforded women the necessary facilities to pursue athletics when the opportunities arose.

EARLY GROWTH ABROAD

The development of women's athletics in other European countries was in advance of its development in England. There is evidence of women's races in France and Germany as early as 1903 (Middleton, 1904:189-201, cited in Guttmann 1991:102-3), and the formation of national governing bodies and the organisation of national championships took place in those countries prior to the establishment of the WAAA in 1922. France, led by Alice Milliat, took the lead in Europe with the foundation, in 1917, of the Fédération Féminine Sportive de France (FFSF), with a nucleus of three clubs. A few years later she promoted international competitions and the formation of an international governing body, the FSFI. In Germany, women's and girls' sections of the men's governing body were formed in 1919. In Austria, women's athletics was also increasing in popularity, and the first recorded international meeting took place in 1919 when the Austrian Danubia team travelled to Munich to compete against a team from that city (Webster 1930:12). Webster describes a post-war flurry of activity for the 'new cult' of athletics in other parts of the Continent, and outside Europe as well - notably in Japan and South America (Ibid:15, 27). Despite the proliferation and encouragement given to female intercollegiate sport in the United States of America, it was one of the later countries to formalise track and field activities. Nevertheless, a party of fifteen U.S. female athletes

7This is the first recorded international athletic meeting, since the implication by Webster (1930:12) and Pallett (1955:17) is that in 1918 a team from Vienna visited Hungary to foster the growth of athletics, rather than compete. However, the 1919 competition between Danubia and Munich was between cities, thus making the Monte Carlo competition in 1921 (see below) the first meeting between nations.
travelled to the ladies' international match, in Paris, in 1922 (discussed below), after which the men's American Athletic Union (AAU) took over control of women's athletics (Webster 1930:11-12, 15-17; Pallett 1955:18).

Because in both England and other parts of the world, particularly other parts of Europe, there was a considerable amount of athletic activity, the stage was set for very rapid advances in the sport at both national and international levels. The impact of women entering what, for them, was a new sport, was immediate, rapid and world-wide. Within a few years of the end of the Great War there were women's athletic clubs throughout the world and the necessary preconditions for the organisation of international competition were in place.

ENGLAND ENTERS THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

Were it not for the enterprising Frenchwoman, Alice Milliat, sending out invitations to teams from different countries to attend an all-female multi-sports gathering in Monte Carlo in 1921, the growth of women's athletics in England may have been greatly delayed. Her actions set in motion a chain of events which stimulated interest and increased participation in women's athletics in this country. She initially approached the newspaper, The Sporting Life, whose editor appointed Joe Palmer, a well-known men's

---

8 This meeting, over Easter 1921, was originally entitled the Reunion Internationale d'Education Physique Feminine et des Sports, but was soon referred to as Les Premieres Olympiades de Monte Carlo.

9 At that time, The Sporting Life covered a wide range of sports and did not restrict itself, as today, to mainly horse racing. The paper had also presented the Sporting Life trophy for the Poly marathon, by far the largest and most valuable award in British sport.
starter and time-keeper, to look into the matter. He, in turn, consulted Ted Knowles, secretary of Kensington AC, and Major Marchant, the newly appointed Director of Physical Education at London's Regent Street Polytechnic (Webster 1930:28; Pallett 1955:114). Both Ted Knowles and Major Marchant were to figure prominently in English women's athletics for many years, and their immediate support is an excellent example of how the development of the sport was in large part the result of ad hoc arrangements, personal contacts, and the efforts and influences of individual men and women and negotiations between them. It was also fortunate that Alice Milliat's approach to the newspaper was passed on to the Poly which was particularly well-known for men's athletics (The Polytechnic Harriers had for some time been the premier athletic club in the country where Sam Mussabini, widely acknowledged as England's leading coach, and one of the first to help women, was located) and whose other sports clubs had an unusual record of mixed-sex and essentially classless memberships and good support for female members, popularly characterised as 'The Poly Girls' (Clynes 1933:11; Webster 1938:22;

10Alice Milliat's previous overtures to the totally male bastion of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had met with a negative response. IOC membership and their active committee members usually comprised the same people who figured prominently in men's domestic governing bodies. Consequently, she would have had no reason to expect a more enlightened response from the AAA.

11In a telephone conversation with the writer, 26 February, 1997, David Terry outlined the background of Ted Knowles. He was a London painter and decorator who devoted his 'heart and soul' to women's athletics. He possibly founded Kensington AC. Whilst he has no proof, David Terry feels it is possible that he had started a ladies' section there as early as 1920, so he would have been an appropriate person to approach for advice on women's athletics. He was still active in 1963, when he was the announcer at the Middlesex County Track Championships.

12During this period the Regent Street Polytechnic catered mainly for part-time students following vocational courses, rather than essentially middle-class undergraduates. There was no requirement to be enrolled as a student at Regent Street to be a member of one of their sporting clubs, which gave the Poly sports clubs a wide ranging and essentially classless membership.
In the first week of 1921 the 'Poly girls', who were attending an evening drill class, were advised that there was the opportunity for some of them to go to Monte Carlo, together with representatives of the Woolwich Polytechnic, to compete against girls from other European countries in a variety of sports, including athletics. To see if any of these gymnasts could actually run, jump, or hurdle, the girls met on Saturday afternoons at Paddington Recreation ground under the direction of Joe Palmer (Webster 1930:28-9).

Webster claims that:

They could do all these things after a fashion - but the best part of a month passed before any of them were beginning to show proficiency in the art of starting....[good form was immediately apparent over the hurdles]....There was, however, little that was scientific about the jumping, and the throwing events were not even attempted....Finally, eighteen excited young females assembled at Victoria, with hordes of relatives and press photographers to see them off (Ibid:29-30).

As we have already seen, female athletics in England prior to 1921 was more widespread than previously believed - in the education sector, in the armed forces, in meetings associated with the workplace, in men's meetings, and in handicap races. The irony is that

---

13The connections between athletics and Swedish Drill and Physical Culture continued for many years. Middlesex Ladies, for example, incorporated these activities into their athletic training (Middlesex County Times: Ealing Edition, 22 December 1923).

14Hurdling practice was over a pole perched on two sticks (Webster 1930:29). There is no reason to suppose that full facilities were not available to the women. The track itself was excellent - double Olympic gold medallist, Albert Hill, for example, trained there. Race hurdles after the war were heavy and not designed to fall over with the line of flight. Consequently, injuries would have been likely for novices. (See, for example, pictures in Webster 1930, opposite pages 27 and 54, and Pallett 1955, opposite page 16). Unwieldy hurdles continued to be a problem for several years. Major Marchant, for example, pressed for lighter hurdles as late as 1928 (WAAA Committee Minutes, 2 July 1928).

15Competition took place on March 10.
it was not active women athletes from these contexts who were approached to compete in
Monte Carlo, but the drill gymnasts of the two Polytechnics, who had never before
attempted the sport! Only seven of the team of eighteen took part in the athletic events,
but they made an immediate impact and set a precedent for the future of women's athletics
in the country. Although they constituted the official British team, they were all English
and, indeed, all from the Home Counties. The inter-war international athletic teams
remained, with few exceptions, similarly composed.¹⁶

Although they suffered a cramped 36-hour train journey, arrived only the day before the
competition, and had to compete on an uneven, uniquely moon-shaped, sloping track, they
won five of the eleven events outright and shared a sixth title.¹⁷ The other countries
present were France, Italy, Norway and Switzerland (Pallett 1955:19). The English
athletes not only had the distinction of being their country's first internationals, but of
dominating a new sport of which they had no experience. The meeting provided an
immediate star competitor - the Lyons Corner House waitress, Mary Lines, who won the
long jump, 60 and 250 metres, took second in the 800 metres, and was in both the
winning relays, as well as competing in the winning basketball team. At 27 years of age
she had never run a race before this meeting, but, before retiring from the sport three years
later, had set world records and won championships in events ranging from 50 metres to
880 yards, as well as in the long jump and the hurdles (Programme for 1924 Jeux

¹⁶This is the story of English women's athletics. During these early years the
international teams were always referred to as 'British', but they were entirely composed of
English athletes. There were no athletes from the other home countries in the British team.

¹⁷Webster's text claims six wins but his results lists show five outright wins and one
event shared. In addition, three silver medals and one bronze were won. The results, rather
than the text, is corroborated by Pallett (1955:19).
In the early years of English women's athletics there were many well-rounded sportswomen, like Mary, who could compete successfully in several events, as well as in other sports. Conversely, men, at the same time, were becoming increasingly event-specific specialists.

The Polytechnic girls who represented England at Monte Carlo, together with athletes from other countries at that meeting, were the original pioneers of women's international athletics. On their return home, those from the Regent Street Poly formed a new club, LOAC. Given the high reputation of the men's Polytechnic Harriers, the failure to form a women's section of that club, or a separate all-female club attached to the Poly, seems strange, particularly since one of the chief supporters of the Monte Carlo venture was the Poly's Major Marchant, who became the first joint Honorary Secretary of the WAAA. Joe Palmer, a prime mover behind the formation of LOAC, was a co-founder with Major Marchant of the WAAA. Formed in 1921 with ten members, LOAC has been characterized as 'Britain's oldest women's athletic club'. It immediately became England's, if not the world's leading female club and was still pre-eminent in this country at the end of the period covered by this study (Athletics Weekly, 1950:14).

Whilst LOAC is generally accepted as the earliest all-female club, Pallett points to the formation of the ladies' section at Kensington AC in 1921 as the first women's group attached to a previously all-male athletic club (1955:114). But Callard (1949:7), in his little-known history of Highgate Harriers, claims that his club were the pioneers of ladies'

---

18 Regrettably, the first five year's records of the WAAA are believed to be irretrievably lost. LOAC is regarded as the first all women's athletic club in England in the absence of any contradictory advice.
athletics, because they established a successful Ladies' Section even earlier, in 1920.

However, once the WAAA was formed, the club 'considered it wiser for the ladies to have the entire management of their own affairs in a separate club', which lead to the formation of Middlesex Ladies AC (Ibid). Irrespective of which club provided the first domestic athletic opportunities, in all these contexts progressive and liberal-minded men were keen to support women's participation and played a key role in the development of the sport for women. Indeed, on rare occasions, the formation of a new club was a joint venture by both sexes. This was the case in 1923, when Ilford AC was formed to serve the athletic interests of both men and women in the local community (Perkins 1997).

Co-operation from men was an important feature of women's athletics. The contexts for participation were less insular than those of all-female educational establishments where games were played, and particularly in the case of the women's sections of men's athletic clubs, the administrations were heavily influenced by men, as were the subsequently formed Regional (Territorial) Associations and, indeed, the national governing body, the WAAA.

The first opportunity for women outside of the South was provided by Birmingham's Birchfield Harriers, who admitted lady members in 1922, despite some resistance from the men. For many years the men's and ladies' sections of the club were organised separately, because 'the men preferred it that way' (Alexander and Morgan 1988:24, 41). But it was

13The fate of the ladies of Kensington AC is disputed by Pallett, who is clear that Ted Knowles formed them into Middlesex Ladies AC 'not long' (1924, according to The Advertiser, 4 August 1976:10) after the Monte Carlo meeting. He also founded Spartan AC in 1930, after a dispute with Middlesex Ladies (1955:114-5).
the men who provided the initial opening, by staging a 'mixed relay' of two men and two
women per team, at Kings Norton in 1921, and it was the male administrators of the club
who did much of the groundwork for the formation of the ladies' section, and who erected
a changing hut especially for their use (Ibid:81).

Not every male-administered organisation was so positive and supportive; some took
longer to form ladies' sections. Resistance often had to be overcome and, on occasion,
hostility. For example, Liverpool Pembroke, in Lancashire, 'reluctantly admitted' ladies to
the club in 1927 (Athletics Today, 1 February 1990:30); Manchester AC, also in
Lancashire, did not form a women's section until 1929 (Hatton 1936:35) and Longwood
Harriers, in Yorkshire, waited until 1932, when about forty female athletes were accepted
as members (Percy 1989:15). Others were openly antagonistic. In 1931, for example, at
the Essex County AGM, when George Hogsflesh (also the AAA Assistant Secretary),
suggested that two or three women's events be included in the men's annual
championships, the Honorary Secretary and some other members of the Association were
outraged. A long and acrimonious discussion led to the matter being referred to a sub-
committee. It was not mentioned again for forty years (Havell, 1983:14; Crump 1966:38).

However, in spite of resistance and antagonism from members of the male athletic
establishment, the overall effect of male involvement in women's athletics was probably
beneficial. The formation of ladies' sections of men's clubs immediately made available
established facilities used by men, particularly tracks, implements and changing rooms.
Additionally, well established men's clubs already had administrations in place, which
made women's introduction into the sport far less burdensome.
During the early years of organised women's athletics in England the sport centred around club life and competition, and from the outset was organised in different ways from other female sporting activities - in particular in relation to class, male involvement, and foreign intervention. Hargreaves is quite clear that during the inter-war period the 'growth of the women's games movement in England was closely associated with the elite girls' schools, colleges and universities' (1994a:122) - institutions that were solidly middle-class in character, and, except for the universities, exclusively female establishments, with their own facilities and the power to control their own games in ways that were mostly insulated from male influences. But the organisation and growth of athletics followed a different pattern. The Regent Street and Woolwich Polytechnics, which played key roles, offered no degree programmes and ran only vocational or cultural courses which attracted women from more varied backgrounds. For example, the captain of the team which took part in the inaugural international was a waitress. Outside the Polytechnics, many female athletes belonged to business house or factory clubs with substantially working-class memberships. In all these situations, men played prominent roles. There were differences, too, in relation to international sport. In the case of the games movement, in most cases it was women from the specialist colleges of physical education and the universities in England who instigated connections and competitions with women from other countries. In the case of female athletics, the launching of female-controlled organisations, at both national and international levels, resulted from foreign intervention. (For full details of other sports for women during this period see McCrone 1988; Hargreaves 1994a).
For women's athletics to develop and prosper in individual countries and on the world stage, it was necessary for there to be agreed rules for competition that would be uniform around the world. The impetus for this initiative also came from Alice Milliat. In 1919 she had approached the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to include athletics for women in the Olympic Games, and although her proposal was rejected out of hand, she went on to plan meetings between national teams and to form an international organisation (Webster 1930:14). The Monte Carlo meeting, held over Easter in 1921, was a great success and showed the international potential for women's athletics.

Milliat was an ardent feminist, one who believed that women's suffrage 'could help bring about acceptance and recognition for women's sports' (Leigh 1974:161), and between the wars she became the world's leading voice for women's sport through the FSFI. By 1921 she was already an experienced administrator, having organised, as President of the FFSF, championships in hockey, football, basketball and swimming, and having previously been a rower with the club Fémina-Sport (Ibid:158). Between 1921 and 1936 she was the driving force behind nine major international conferences on women's sports (Guttmann 1991:168). It was her actions, more than those of any other person in the early history of women's athletics, that ensured its long-term and widespread acceptance. She forced the male administrators of the IAAF and the IOC again and again to reconsider their opposition to women's athletics. Avery Brundage (IOC President from 1952 to 1972)

---

20In 1920 she brought a team of lady footballers to England for four charity matches, at Preston, Stockport, Manchester and Chelsea. Crowds were reported to be in excess of 25,000, indicating the interest shown in women's sports (Newsham 1994:33).
claimed that: 'She was active for years and she demanded more and more. She made quite a nuisance of herself' (Cited in Leigh 1974:161).

Alice Milliat realised that the expansion of women's athletics depended on the establishment of an active international governing body to represent and legislate for women through cooperation with all existing national federations. This was her paramount consideration, since the ruling body for men, the IAAF, refused in the early years to concern themselves with the women's side of the sport (Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale 1936:1, cited in Leigh 1974:160). Leigh's contention is that both the IAAF and the IOC reflected a prevailing attitude: 'that female sport interested no one' (Ibid).

Following the success of the Monte Carlo international meeting in 1921, Alice Milliat wrote to the sporting authorities of numerous nations and to French Embassies all over the world, requesting their attendance at the inaugural two-nation fixture between France and England, in Paris, on 30 October21 22 (Webster 1930:11, 32). Britain, again composed entirely of athletes from the English Home Counties, won the international23 by 48 points to 37, with Mary Lines setting a world record of 11.8 seconds in the 100 yards. The other

---

21 English women, in fact, only lagged behind their male counterparts by a month, who competed in their first non-domestic international, against France, on 11 September, despite the AAA entertaining athletes from around the world at their annual championships since 1881 (Buchanan 1961:32).

22 France had also met Belgium on 28 August, winning each event. Also, during the year, Germany, Austria, Finland, Belgium, Holland, France and Czechoslovakia had championships - but it was only the last two who held a full programme of events (Pallett 1955:21).

23 At this time, football was a more important activity for women than athletics. The key interest in the stadium was an international football match, with the athletics as an added interest (Pozzoli 1965:6).
events won by English women were the 300 and 1000 metres, 800 yards relay, 100 metres hurdles, and javelin.

The day after the international, representatives from Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Spain and the USA,\textsuperscript{24} met at the Salle Pousset in the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris. Their concern was to organise and control, not only athletics, but the range of sports that women were involved in at the time. It was decided immediately:

\ldots to create a world-wide organisation, to be called the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale, to make smooth the relations between the existing women's federations in all countries\ldots Technical rules for individual and collective sports were unified, and the classical events were decided upon.\textsuperscript{25} The FSFI stated its claim to be the only body able to pass women's world's records, in accordance with the metric system and Anglo-American measures (Webster 1930:33).

The prerequisite for further athletic competition was established - namely, an international women's federation capable of laying down rules and establishing the events which were to be undertaken. Formal, organised athletics for women, on an international scale, was at last a reality, and subsequent growth proved to be both rapid and widespread. The English contingent returned home not only safe in the knowledge that their women were pre-eminent in international competition, and in this respect surpassed English men, but also with clear rules and guidelines for the establishment of the sport in England. From the

\textsuperscript{24}Leigh does not include Spain as being present. She bases her information on 'a pamphlet sent to [her] by Madame Germaine Gagneux-Bisson, July, 1973, p2' (1974:162). Pallett, however, cites Spain as being 'one of the founder members' of the FSFI (1955:22), as does Watman (1968:228).

\textsuperscript{25}The sports covered were to be athletics, and collective sports such as football, baretta, hockey, basket-ball, hazena and nautical sports (Programme for 1924 Jeux Olympiques Feminins, p17). The FSFI were thus keen to provide opportunities for females in a wide variety of sports (Leigh 1974:451-3, cites 38 events being recognised by the FSFI on its inauguration) - but only a few were Olympic events to be viewed on a world stage.
outset, English athletes were part of the establishment and development of the sport on an international stage. Paradoxically, although seven months had elapsed since the first international meeting, and the international governing body was now formed, there was no administration in place in England.

FORMATION OF THE WOMEN'S AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The national governing body for men's athletics, the Amateur Athletic Association, was founded in 1880, and, according to Lovesey, gave unofficial recognition to women's athletics as early as 1907 (1979:66). However, the first recorded reference to women took place at the General Committee on 30 October 1920, where the question of the eligibility of competitors in ladies' open races was discussed (but left unresolved). The minutes for the Committee meeting on 15 February 1922 mention correspondence concerning the control of female athletes. The Committee suggested that the best course of action was that an Athletic Association for women should be formed, and application then made to the AAA for affiliation (AAA General Committee Minutes, 30 October 1920 and 15 February 1922; Pallett 1955:115). The original intention, according to Lovesey, was that a women's association should 'function within the AAA [in the same manner], as the Race Walking Association or the English Cross-Country Union' (1979:66).

An undated, uncredited note in the WAAA archives states that early in 1922 Major Worsech, Director of P.T. at the Regent Street Polytechnic, received a letter from Alice Milliat 'asking if he could do something about forming an English Women's Athletic Association, with a view to joining the FSFI'. This is ironic, since England was already a founder member of the FSFI. As Major Worsech apparently knew nothing about women's
athletics he passed the letter on to Major Marchant, who in turn contacted Ted Knowles of Kensington AC, and Joe Palmer of The Sporting Life, who finally proceeded with the essential preparatory work necessary to form an association. At a subsequent meeting the female athletes Sophie Elliott-Lynn (Kensington AC) and Florence Birchenough (Regent Street Polytechnic) were also present, and the men and women together called for an inaugural meeting to form a 'Women's Athletic Association' (WAAA uncredited note).

The aims and objectives of the newly constituted Women's Amateur Athletic Association, which was set up to govern athletics in England, covered all aspects of the sport:

1. To co-ordinate and control women's athletic activities in this country
2. To ensure that women should compete only in suitable surroundings and desirable conditions
3. To register authenticated records
4. To give assistance and advice as to proper training and choice of events suitable to women
5. To improve the physique and physical efficiency of the nation (Programme of the Women's Amateur Athletic International, 1 August 1925:24).

The WAAA was to govern English women's athletics according to these criteria until 1991, when the BAF took over responsibility of the sport for both sexes. The immediate need to coordinate and regulate the activities of female athletes was encapsulated in the

26See the Methodology for a full discussion regarding the date and membership of this meeting. October is the most likely date. These (probably) contemporaneous notes put the date as October 1922 (Ibid), and the AAA General Committee Minutes, 14 October 1922, refer to receiving an affiliation application from the WAAA.

27At this time the Regent Street Polytechnic had no women's athletic club, so Florence was a member of at least one other Poly sports club.

28The objects gradually evolved over a period of time. By 1957, for example, the Constitution Laws of the WAAA had amended slightly: point (1) was altered to control amateur athletics and also covered Wales - and point (5) had been dispensed with (Women's Amateur Athletic Association 1957).
first three points, as was the desire for safety in competition. In common with the
discourse of other female sports, the fourth point embodied conventional ideas about
gender differences, and point five incorporated the dominant and influential sentiments
about sport being linked to the health of individual women and, as a result, to the health
of the nation as a whole. The health and well-being of the nation was a growing
consideration throughout the inter-war period. Lord Portal, vice-chairman of the King
George Jubilee Trust, spoke of 'large numbers of boys and girls....ill-equipped for the
responsibilities which face them', and Kurt Hahn, founder of the spartan Gordonstoun
School, referred to 'the contentedly unfit youth of today' and 'the sloth of modern
adolescence' (McCarthy 1989:24). The work of the WAAA was a move against this trend,
in common with women's keep fit organisations which subsequently sprung up, such as the
Women's League for Health and Beauty, founded in 1930. The Central Council of
Physical Recreation (CCPR), whose main concern was the fitness of the nation, acted as a
co-ordinating body for the growing number of organisations and agencies involved in a
wide range of physical activities (Evans 1974:40; McCarthy 1989:24).

Nationalism was a powerful and important ideology during the inter-war years - as women
took on more public roles they were perceived to be emissaries for the nation and
responsible, through their biologies, for national well-being. However, according to a note
of the inaugural meeting of the WAAA, its overriding aim was 'to prevent the exploitation
of women athletes' (WAAA uncredited note), which implies a concern for the welfare and
health of women, rather than a nationalistic expression of physical supremacy.

The response to the inauguration of the WAAA was immediate. Open clubs were formed
all over the country and more men's clubs introduced women's sections. Universities, big business houses and factory clubs quickly registered with the WAAA and within a few years there were several hundred affiliated clubs. Estimates of the number of female athletes varied. The programme of the WAAA 1925 International states that the Association touched over 23,000 girls. Eliott-Lynn, however, contends that by 1925 there were as many as 25,000 girls who were members of over 500 athletic clubs (1925:xi). However, both these figures may give an exaggerated impression of the nature and extent of female participation and commitment. A number of the affiliations came from business houses and factories and membership of such sports clubs usually included all the company's sporting affiliations. Although some of the employees competed at their firm's annual sports, which included running, jumping and throwing events, it is unlikely that many were active athletes throughout the year. For example, the photographic evidence in Basil Nielsen's comprehensive history of sport in GEC and its many subsidiary companies around the country shows the female competitors of the period dressed in their everyday clothes, which suggests a lack of long-term commitment to athletics (1996:169, 173).

Also, as late as 1935, it was reported that only 165 clubs were affiliated to the WAAA (WAAA AGM Minutes, 30 November 1935). Even a large and powerful club like LOAC reported a membership of just 80 at the end of 1924, and in later years their secretary admitted that membership was never as high as club records suggested, since many athletes had not paid their subscriptions for two years, or were inactive (LOAC AGM Minutes, 23 November 1924, 14 January 1928).

The stance of the men's AAA changed as women organised their own governing body. It was originally recommended that the women apply to the AAA for affiliation, but at the
General Committee Meeting on 14 October 1922 the application was refused, apparently on the basis that the WAAA was not properly formed (AAA General Committee Minutes, 14 October 1922). According to Vera Searle (1994), the ladies used the men's rule book as the basis for their own, making only minor amendments from 'him' to 'her'. At the same meeting, the AAA appointed their Honorary Secretary, Harry Barclay, to the IAAF Committee on women's track and field. However, to distance themselves from any implication of direct support for female athletics, they emphasised that he was to act only as a member of the IAAF - not as a representative of the AAA. Pash (1930:52) points out that 'The question of races for women appeared in the agenda for the first time in 1922 and the General Committee expressed the opinion it would be advisable that a separate Athletic Association for women should be formed' (See also Pallett 1955:115). The programme for the WAAA International at Stamford Bridge on 1 August 1925 also confirms that the WAAA was founded, 'at the suggestion of the Amateur Athletic Association' (p24).

Whatever the original intentions of the AAA, by 1926 they had decided that 'control of women's athletics [should be] left to the Women's AAA' (Pash 1930:54). The reasons for this change of heart are unknown. Lovesey wonders whether 'male chauvinists won the day, or the AAA simply took fright at controlling what was regarded in some quarters as risqué, and at the worst dangerous to health' (1979:66). Watman simply states that the AAA wanted no part of a sport deemed unfeminine.

---

29 This is borne out by the WAAA archives. Several early forms included the word 'Women's' handwritten in front of the printed 'AAA'.

30 This conflicts with the WAAA archives, since both contemporary (WAAA uncredited note) and subsequent (WAAA Summary 1921-6) accounts give no credit to the AAA for such a move.
(1968:229). In 1933, the AAA further distanced themselves from women when they declined to accept them as Honorary Members (AAA General Committee Minutes, 21 October 1933). Nevertheless, AAA members were integral to the setting up of the WAAA. For example, the WAAA Summary 1921-6 states that Captain Saveall was present, on behalf of the AAA, at the first AGM in October 1923, and the AAA handicapper, Bill Pepper, was appointed to the same position for the WAAA.

There were now two separate Associations, with women having autonomy over the development and control of their own side of athletics. This eventually extended to women’s events held in conjunction with men’s meetings, for in 1932 the AAA decreed that permits for such contests should be obtained from the WAAA, not themselves (AAA General Committee Minutes, 20 February 1932). The connections with the Regent Street Polytechnic remained strong, since the roles of both President and Chairman of the WAAA were filled by Major Marchant, and Sophie Eliott-Lynn took the positions of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer (WAAA Summary 1921-6).32 Also, the Poly premises in and around Regent Street were utilised for many years as the venue for both WAAA and SCWAAA AGMs and committee meetings. In addition, the gymnasium was used by the English team in the preparation for the 1938 Women’s Empire Games (For example, WAAA AGM Minutes, 22 October 1922, 28 January 1928, 28 November 1936 and 11 December 1937; SCWAAA AGM Reports, 1930 to 1954). From its inception, the

31By the early thirties the AAA considered joint working parties with the WAAA. However, rather than commit themselves to any form of agreement the matter was always deferred (AAA General Committee Minutes, 9 May 1931, 10 October 1931, 21 November 1931, 20 February 1932).

32These records are in the WAAA archives.
Association was run on a purely amateur basis. Many women took on the task of several roles in different committees. In contrast, although the AAA had numerous unpaid officials, there was a small core of salaried office staff.33

Once the WAAA had become established, three Regional (or Territorial) Associations, the North, the Midlands and the South, were formed.34 Individual clubs, female sections of men's clubs, and county associations, then affiliated to their own regional organisation, which, in turn, affiliated to the WAAA. The Regional Associations were delegated responsibility to manage and control athletics within their regions, subject to veto by the WAAA General Committee. The impetus for at least one of the Regional Associations came from the WAAA: in 1928 they suggested that a Northern WAAA be formed, in order to cover the area furthest away from the administrative centre in London (WAAA Committee Minutes, 1 October 1928). To further add to the administrative burden on club secretaries, clubs also affiliated to county associations, which began to be formed in 193035 (Pallett 1955:121). The Regions were the pathway from the WAAA to the clubs, and vice versa (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937). Regional and county associations picked and managed their own teams, but it was the WAAA who governed the sport in England, defining rules of competition, granting race or meeting permits, deciding the

33The AAA emphasised the core of salaried staff in their annual handbook for several years. For example, see Amateur Athletic Association (1951:2).

34The Southern Counties WAAA was the last to form, principally due to the sport being administered from the London base of the WAAA. Little, however, differed between the two organisations. The first Regional chairman was Major Marchant, one of the WAAA founders, and the first secretary was Vera Searle, who held the same position on the WAAA.

35Unpublished research by David Terry has revealed that Sussex formed a county association in 1927, three years before Middlesex, who are generally accepted as the pioneer county.
events to be contested, setting the national timetable of events - so precluding fixture clashes - and selecting international teams. As the number of female athletes and clubs grew, of necessity, administration was gradually devolved to various sub-committees to deal with specific tasks, such as team selection and organisation of track and cross-country championships. Each club had one vote at the WAAA AGM, although more than one delegate from each club was entitled to attend and speak. After the initial growth spurt had subsided, and women's athletics had a recognised working structure, the normal administrative pathway for an individual was to be voted onto a club committee, to represent that club at county level, then to represent the county at the Region, and finally to represent the Region on the WAAA Executive Committee.36

CONTINUED GROWTH IN EUROPE IS MATCHED IN ENGLAND

English women continued their predominance in the international context. In April, 1922, the newly formed FSFI organised their first event - another international meeting at Monte Carlo.37 The British team of thirteen English athletes, of whom nine were from LOAC, won 12 out of the 15 events. The previous year's meeting at Monte Carlo had seen only five countries participate, but on this occasion there were representatives from nine nations (Guttmann 1991:166).

On 18 August 1922, the Second Congress of the FSFI was held in Paris, coincident with another major international FSFI meeting, described as the First Women's Olympic Games

36For further detail see the annual handbooks of the WAAA, and Pallett 1955:243-8.

37Since the WAAA was not yet formed, they did not become affiliated to the FSFI until 1923 (WAAA uncredited note).
- an event precipitated by the intransigence of the IOC in refusing women's athletic events in Olympic competition. The Congress met two days before the competition began and made the decision to hold the event every four years.

The Olympiad, described by Webster as 'in every way' a success, was the most significant international female athletic event held up to that time (1930:36). 20,000 spectators at the Pershing Stadium in Paris sat down to a day of competition between athletes from five nations, under the presidency of Henri Pathé, Commissioner of Physical Education in France. The success of the English athletes continued. Indeed, they managed to do what no British men's athletic team had ever managed - they beat the USA in international competition, by 50 points to 31. As in the mainstream Olympics, patriotism, national identities, and national victors and hierarchies were produced through sporting rituals - the wearing of uniforms, flag carrying, and team scoring, for example. As emissaries of their country away from home, the English women were well received in Paris, and given a great ovation when they returned to England (Ibid:36). Of the eleven events contested - including a 1,000 metres race - four were won outright and one first place shared. Again, it was Mary Lines whose performances most stood out. Not only did she win two individual events, and was part of the winning relay team, but she 'ran at least half-a-dozen times that day' - as well as winning the long jump. Other victories were gained by

38A high attendance is confirmed by a report of this meeting; page 8 of the programme of the 1924 Jeux Olympique Feminins contains a picture of the finish of the 60 metres showing packed stands. Elliott-Lynn claims there were 30,000 spectators (1925:xi).

39Whilst this meeting is regarded as the first international championship meeting for women, Elaine Burton is credited with winning 'the World 100 yards Championship for Women' - in Neath, in 1920. This self-styled title was of little consequence, but her performance was creditable - 12.0 seconds (World Sports, July 1956:26).
Nora Callebout in the 100 yards, Hilda Hatt in the high jump, and the 4x110 yards relay team, who equalled the world record of 51.8 seconds (Webster 1930:37; Leigh 1974:163-5; Watman 1968:229). In all, four world records were set. Women like Mary, Nora and Hilda were demonstrably challenging myths about women's frail constitutions. Far from showing any permanent adverse effects, female athletes continued to perform to even more exacting standards, to establish new records of achievement and to create new images of physicality. Mary Lines, in particular, exemplified the new female athletic heroine demonstrating, from these earliest matches, the significance of women who were perceived as role models and figureheads of female sport.

This first Women's Olympic Games was a fundamental milestone in international sport for women. Probably for the first time a women's sports meeting was reported internationally with the same mixture of respect, admiration, and mystic fervour as had been inspired by the 'real' (male) Olympics (Leigh 1974:164). Alice Milliat was in no doubt about the 'Premiers Jeux Olympiques Feminins du Monde'. Her notes in the official programme fully expressed her message for women's physical liberation:

We are aware of having worked for the betterment of women, whatever class of society she comes from, to have helped her become a healthier human being, both morally and physically, having no fear of her responsibilities and ready also to demand that her rights be respected in every domain without losing the grace which has always been her charm (Ibid:164).

The following Sunday saw an international club match at the Stade du Parc in Brussels, between LOAC, Femina Sports Club, Brussels, and Femina AC, Paris. It was comprehensively won by the English athletes, who took seven of the eight events. It was quite usual during the early 1920s for individual women to contest several disparate events
at one international meeting. What is not clear, however, is whether this was linked to the concept of a fully rounded athlete or because of a lack of active performers. It is likely that working girls would have been unable to take prolonged unpaid periods away from work, and that the sport favoured, in international terms at least, those who could afford to compete. Nevertheless, its growing domestic popularity was seen on 22 September that year (1922), with the first inter-club match in Britain, at Plough Lane, Waddon, between Croydon Sports Club, Eastern Ladies AC, Kensington Ladies AC, and the women's section of Herne Hill Harriers. The meeting also incorporated the first English Women's Championships in two events. These were the 120 yards hurdles, over ten flights of two feet six inch barriers - won by D. Wright of LOAC - and the 220 yards sprint, won by Mary Lines in a world record time of 26.8 seconds (Pallett 1955:115-6). Two other championship events were held elsewhere in 1922, the 100 yards and 440 yards, both won by Mary Lines.

LOAC continued their supremacy in Europe for several years. Indeed, since the early international teams were comprised mainly of LOAC members they soon took to calling themselves the 'Olympic Champions 1921-2' (Meeting programme, 18 July 1922). It was not until 1934 that an international team failed to include a member of LOAC (Pozzoli 1965:20). In August 1923 the club visited both Brussels and Antwerp and in September 1924 they again travelled to Brussels. On each occasion they were comprehensive victors. Their trips, though, were not always simply to compete; they had a more altruistic motive to spread the new sport to other parts of the world as 'great missionaries to foreign countries' (Webster 1930:43, 52). Many years later, Marea Hartman, secretary of the

40It was not usual for holidays to be paid at this time (Moon 1992:10).
WAAA, described the early English female athletes as 'pioneers of the athletics for women movement' (1972:1). Exposure abroad ensured that England was at the forefront, not only of competition, but also of development.

In the early days of women's athletics the name London Olympiades (LOAC) occurs frequently. They dominated the sport in competitive terms both domestically and internationally; several of their members were responsible for the formation of the WAAA, and they provided administrative and competitive support for others at all levels. They are one of the few female clubs to have kept comprehensive records, and these archives indicate a well run and efficient organisation which encouraged the blossoming sport at home. Much of the impetus for new female competitions came from LOAC, who, for example, on 18 July 1922, held an evening sports meeting at Paddington, which became a regular feature during the summer.

The third Women's International Meeting was held in April, 1923, at Monte Carlo. Britain continued her female dominance of athletics by winning seven events to France's three (Pallett 1955:22-3). In other spheres there were also signs of movement. For example, in 1923, the Women's Inter-University Athletic Board was inaugurated 'to encourage and co-ordinate women's athletic activities in the various universities and university colleges of Great Britain' (Webster 1930:42) - and the next year saw the first official championships.

41Although the first three years have been lost, a copy of the records from 1924 to 1954 is stored at the Centre for Sport Development Research, Roehampton Institute London.

42Women's Inter-University sports had been held annually since 1921.
Later, in August, 1923, Essex promoted the first ladies' county championships, where Rose Thompson won the 100 yards in 11.6 seconds, only a fifth of a second outside the world record.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

The rapid expansion of women's athletics during these early years did not continue at the same pace. After the initial burst of enthusiasm had subsided, many of the men's clubs that had revived after the First World War and opened women's sections, and several of the women's clubs that were founded at the same time, disbanded, or were forced to amalgamate for survival. For example, Atalanta AC resigned from the SCWAAA because they 'had done nothing on the track for sometime' (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 9 November 1931), and on one occasion it was reported that six clubs had disbanded in the Southern region alone (Ibid 17 January 1933). As clubs proliferated, manpower, resources and athletes were spread thin. Many of them relied on a few dedicated individuals, without whom a club's infrastructure frequently collapsed.

43 The championships held in Yorkshire in 1919 had been open to the North of England.

44 County championships seem to have been slow in gaining acceptance. Middlesex, for example, who were home county to LOAC and Middlesex Ladies, did not organise a track championship until 1931. This ran annually until 1939, was discontinued during the war, and not resumed until 1950.

45 Many new athletes were attracted to the sport after the war. For example, Polytechnic Harriers had only five male athletes in March 1919, but by November membership was up to 'about 250, of whom only about one-fifth were pre-war members' (Clynes 1933:18).

46 These are stored at the Centre for Sport Development Research, Roehampton Institute London.
But athletic clubs often offered more than merely sport to attract and entertain their members. Many larger, well-administered ones provided frequent and varied social activities. Birchfield Harriers, for example, organised dances every Saturday night (Hayward 1988). Sometimes this was not only a means to raise funds, but also to provide entertainment. For example, Croydon Harriers organised a dance following the Southern Cross-Country Championships in 1933, with free admission to all competitors (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 17 January 1933), and Middlesex Ladies regularly held dances in the centre of London, at High Holborn and Kensington Town Hall. A dance at the latter venue was advertised less than one month after the club became affiliated to the WAAA, which illustrates the priority given to social functions by what was to quickly become one of the leading clubs in the country (Middlesex County Times: Ealing Edition, 12 January 1924, 15 November 1924 and 24 October 1925). Smaller clubs often lacked funds or an administration sufficiently large and well organised to offer similar diversions; consequently membership remained small. There are several instances of female athletes being enticed into athletics from a social, rather than a sporting, beginning. Birchfield's Doris Roden, for example, was invited to one of the club's dances by her future husband, Cecil Harris. She subsequently joined the club and trained three times a week 'mainly for fun', but within two years she finished sixth in the winning team in the National Cross-Country race. Later that year (1932) she finished second in the winning English team at the International Cross-Country (Alexander and Morgan 1988:39). In some clubs the social side became integral to athletic activities, as evidenced by Yorkshire's Longwood Harriers during the 1930s:

During this period up to the start of the 1939-45 war, many great friendships were formed, amongst the members. We met our girl friends, got married, then had our families during this time and we all stayed together as friends visiting one another's home with our children (Percy 1989:15).
It is possible that a club's poor organisation, limited facilities, and lack of social activities may have failed to attract individuals into athletics. Also, since private transport was not readily available between the wars, membership of a club was possibly determined by proximity. LOAC were keen to combat this. As late as 1950, the club was based at four well-spaced London tracks at Alperton (North West), Edmonton (North East), Southall (West) and Tooting (South West) (Athletics Weekly, 1950:14). Such a range of locations contributed significantly to attracting athletes from a wide catchment area.

Most clubs, throughout the period of investigation, survived on subscriptions, donations, and sporadic revenue-raising activities. Smaller clubs lacked sufficient resources to fund teams for inter-club competitions, and the cost of travel and entry fees would have caused clubs to decline fixtures. For example, as recently as the late 1970s, the families of several members of Mitcham Athletic Club were unable to meet competition costs to United Kingdom League matches around the country. Mitcham was one of the strongest women's clubs in the country, but financial difficulties led to its swift exit from the League. At the same time, Sale Harriers, from Manchester, who won this League for two successive years, also struggled under the heavy burden of travel costs, but by fund raising and running a profitable canteen, managed to survive (Wilson 1984:68).

Fund raising was a feature at all levels of women's athletics. As well as seeking sponsors to maintain its finances, the WAAA also looked to other profitable activities for specific events. For example, in the build-up to the 1934 Women's World Games in London, the

---

47 At the time I coached some of the female members of Mitcham AC.
Polytechnic Ladies ran a dance to raise money to assist this championship (WAAA Committee Minutes, 6 May 1933). WAAA fund-raising was a particularly English characteristic (the AAA received no official or regular funding either) which contrasted with the roles of the women's administrative bodies of most other countries who received government grants (WAAA Committee Minutes, 11 August 1934).

ENGLISH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND PROBLEMS OF REGIONALIZATION

The most significant event of 1923, the first full English Women's Championships, took place on 18 August, at the Oxo sports ground at Bromley, in Kent. This marked an important transition from occasional, ad hoc, locally run events, to the establishment of regular, recognised, centrally-administered championships. It also underlined the organisational abilities of the newly formed WAAA. The programme consisted of eleven events, including the half mile run and half mile walk. By taking these two longest events on the programme, Edith Trickey demonstrated again the mythical nature of female fragility. Women's redefined physical ability was also emphasised in the performances of Mary Lines, who, in the preceding week, had not only broken a world record and competed in ten events, but, including heats, had toed the line twenty times. At the English Championships, at the age of 29, she continued to defy accepted conventions regarding the physical limitations of women by taking the 100 and 440 yards, 120 yards hurdles, and long jump (Webster 1930:43-4; Pallett 1955:116). Also in these championships, Vera Palmer made her first appearance. She came third in the 220 yards and later in the season set a world record at 250 metres against the French. After she was married, as Vera Searle, she became Honorary Secretary of the WAAA in 1930 and played a vital role in the administration of the Association right up to the amalgamation
plans with the men's Association in 1991.

The advertising for athletic meetings during the early 1920s seems to have been poor. Vera, for example, was entered by her father for the J. Lyons and Co. Gala at Sudbury (Surrey) in 1923, but was unaware at the time that this was a trial for the English Championships (The Advertiser, 4 August 1976:10). Only a few competitors entered the inaugural championships, evidenced by a short day of competition starting at three p.m. Gradually, over the years, the championships grew in stature, as larger numbers of athletes necessitated more preliminary rounds, and an extension of competition to two days.

The championships originated in London and stayed there for many years, a factor which contributed to complaints of bias towards the South, compounded because the administration was also based in London. The most accomplished athletes during the early years were clustered in the South of England. In the regional triangular competition in 1930, for example, the South scored a comprehensive victory with 49 points to the North's 13 and the Midlands' 10 (Pallett 1955:123). But during the 1930s there was an expansion of excellence into other parts of the country. For example, Gladys Lunn, who set six world records in middle-distance (and won the Empire Games javelin title in 1934 - and the bronze in 1938), came from Birchfield Harriers, based in Birmingham, in the Midlands (Matthews 1989:60). Sisters Ruth Christmas and Mrs Esther Raven also lived in the Midlands, in Leicester, and represented England in the International Cross-Country race in 1932. The 1938 team consisted of five Birchfield athletes, with two from LOAC (Alexander and Morgan 1988:41; Sharlott 1994:6). An important figure from the North was Nellie Halstead, of Bury, in Lancashire, who, during her career, won every flat track
event at the WAAA Championships, and an Olympic relay medal in 1932. In the same year she set a quarter-mile world record that was to stand until 1954 (Watman 1968:231). However, the South promoted more meetings outside the National Championships. The Daily Mirror trophy, for example, which was promoted by Middlesex Ladies, was immediately established as the prime inter-club meeting.

The counties in the South were also more active in conducting their own championships. David Terry's unpublished research of county associations reveals that before the war nine counties organised their own track championships. Six of these were in the South, two in the Midlands and one in the North. Championships in the South generally coincided with the formation of a county association. In other regions, according to Terry, early championships were often organised by an enterprising local club, in the absence of a county association. Even in the 1950s, Pallett describes county championships outside the South as the exception, rather than the rule, and Terry's research confirms this pattern. Furthermore, also in the 1950s, in an attempt to dispense with the intermediate age group (ages 15-17), the Northern Counties WAAA declined to hold Northern Intermediate championships (Pallett 1955:247).

A certain regional insularity was a characteristic of English women's athletics for a number of years. For example, because of a reluctance to travel long distances, there were limited entries to several key competitions from athletes outside the area. One case was in 1937, when the National Road Walking Championship was held for the first time in the Midlands, but no Southern club was represented (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937).

---

48In football Nellie 'wasn't a bad centre-forward either' (Newsham 1994:80-1).
1937). The cause may have been financial, since the inter-area track competition in 1933 had already been threatened by the inability of the Midlands' team to meet the travel costs to St Albans, in Hertfordshire, for the meeting. The 25 shillings (£1.25p) per head was beyond the pocket of many athletes, which indicates that a large number of female competitors were not from wealthy families (WAAA Committee Minutes, 6 May 1933). World record holder for the half mile, Mary Hall, who lived and worked in the Midlands, was reluctant to travel South for other reasons. In 1938 she had to endure a long journey to get to a meeting in Mitcham, in South London, where she had to make a world record attempt on a poor track. 'I feel sure', she said, 'that I could beat this time on a Midland track' (Cited in Nielsen 1996:240).

The WAAA responded to the problem of regional insularity by spreading National Championships around the country. In 1937, for example, the Road Walk was held in the Midlands, the Junior Cross-Country at Epsom in Surrey, the Senior Cross-Country in the Midlands (on the ICI playing fields), the Indoor Track events at London's Wembley Arena, the 660 yards relay at Cadbury's in Birmingham, and the Track and Field Championships at Wembley (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937).

ENGLISH COMPETITIVE WEAKNESSES

Although English women predominated on the track, and set frequent world records, problems were found in the field events. Webster, who was a noted coach in these disciplines, and one of the few men to devote his expertise to female athletes, felt the field events malaise was due to a lack of coaching (1930:45). This was a weakness already long apparent in English men's athletics as well. England has always had a harrier
tradition, from the first days of hare and hounds, and during the inter-war years the
outstanding male athletes were mainly sprinters and middle distance runners. The great
coaches, such as Mussabini, had their roots firmly fixed in the days and ways of the Peds
(professional pedestrians), whilst the small number of coaches for jumps and throws, with
few exceptions, had little knowledge or experience of their events. So it is no surprise
that the women fared no better. Abrahams described some field events, like the discus
and javelin, as imports from abroad which had failed to become established, he suggested,
because they had 'not received sufficient support to merit encouragement'. He reasoned
that people could not be made to want an event simply because it was on the Olympic
programme (The Sunday Times, 7 November 1926). Pallett echoed Webster's sentiments
some thirty years later. He also argued that male athletes gave scant regard for field
performances, and as a consequence there was little technical knowledge about these
events available to either sex (1955:23). Domestically, this was not a problem, since all
English women were competing under the same handicap. However, in international
terms, their shortcomings in the field events would soon become apparent as other
countries took to the new sport of athletics with enthusiasm and gave more attention to
field events.

INTERNATIONAL ATHLETICS COMES TO ENGLAND

International fixtures had continued abroad against France since the first Paris match in
October 1921, but there had never been a meeting in England featuring female athletes
from other countries. A significant date in the development of female athletics in England
came on August 4, Bank Holiday Monday, 1924, when the first women's International

---

49 For a full account of men's athletics during this period see Lovesey (1979).
meeting in England, at Stamford Bridge, in London (home to the AAA championships), took place in front of 25,000 spectators. Characterised as the 'Women's International and British Games' it was promoted by W. Power-Berrey, the editor of the News of the World, and Joe Binks, its athletics correspondent. Belgium, Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, and Switzerland were represented (Pozzoli 1965:11). Over the weeks building up to the event, Joe Binks successfully created a competitive atmosphere by stating that: 'We shall offer a most remarkable programme, such as has never been seen in this country in the history of athletics' (News of the World, 29 June 1924). He felt sure that the British women would retain their world supremacy (News of the World, 6 July 1924). The WAAA recognised the importance of this meeting and the need for public support:

Women's athletics are now making rapid strides....from today....we hope that in consequence women's athletics will receive that stimulus which can only come from an enlivened public interest and active public help (Programme for Womens International and British Games, 4 August 1924:9).

Eleven events were contested, and world records were set in six of them. This very public display of competitive women's athletics did not disappoint the crowd. The feeling and atmosphere of a major sporting spectacle was enhanced by each national team wearing a

---

50Stamford Bridge was then the primary arena for English athletics. Attendance there for men's events was broadly similar - 30,000 for the AAA Championships in 1921 being typical (Moon 1992:59).

51It was not until 1930 that a women's international match (as opposed to an international meeting) was held in England, when Germany were entertained (Alexander and Morgan 1988:81).

52Joe Binks had an impressive reputation in athletics. He had been an exceptional runner himself and proved over many years to be an astute and understanding athletics correspondent, positively supporting women on many occasions.
distinctive uniform and marching into the stadium behind their country’s flag. The next
day (5 August 1924) The Daily Mirror devoted its entire front page to the meeting. Seven
action photographs were topped by the headline ’Seven World Records for Women’s
Sport!’53 Joe Binks was no less fulsome in his praise, describing this ’women’s Olympiad’
as a ’brilliant and unqualified success’ (News of the World, 10 August 1924).54 The press
highlighted the fact that Britain was the dominant country and once again represented
female athletes as symbols of nationhood. The fact that athletic women were now a cause
for national pride was shifting conventional images of femininity and strengthening the
link between fit bodies and the health of the nation (Hargreaves 1994a:132).

The following year, 1925, saw further advances as opportunities for competition and
standards of performance increased. On June 6, the first inter-club meeting for the Daily
Mirror Trophy was held. It was run by Middlesex Ladies on the lines of the men’s
prestigious Kinnaird trophy and was won, not surprisingly, by LOAC, with the host team
second (Webster 1930:50; Pallett 1955:118). The majority of competitors were from the
South, and the most powerful team in the Midlands, Birchfield, came a lowly fifth out of
the six teams present, with two points to LOAC’s 45½. This emphasised again that whilst
the growth of the sport had been nationwide, it was uneven around the country.55

53For comments regarding a discrepancy in the number of world records set, see
Chapter Two.

54The WAAA recognised the importance of good relations with the press. For
example, at the AGM of 1937 the ’London Evening Papers, Provincial Papers, and Local
Papers’ were all thanked for publishing news of women’s athletic activities. Moreover, the
News of the World, The Daily Mirror and The Daily Sketch were all acknowledged for
donating medals that year (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937).

55The Southern bias in organisation and excellence was a similar feature in men’s
athletics. The Polytechnic’s Kinnaird meeting had been organised since 1909, but it was not
Although this was only a domestic inter-club meeting, three world records were set. Women's athletics was by now established world-wide and these performances, together with those abroad, demonstrate the continuing dominance of LOAC in international terms. Indeed, LOAC's supremacy at this meeting continued until 1929, when Middlesex Ladies took the trophy, and with it, at the subsequent WAAA championships, the mantle of the country's leading women's club. Such domestic rivalry for honours emphasised how serious and competitive English women's athletics had become.

At the third annual English Championships on July 11, at Stamford Bridge, twelve titles were contested: 100, 220, 440, 880 yards, 4x110 yards relay, 880 yards walk, 120 yards hurdles, shot, discus, javelin, and the high and long jumps. Eight titles changed hands, a fact which Webster saw as a 'healthy sign' (1930:51), since new faces were coming through to replace the original pioneers. Young, fresh athletes were being recruited into the sport to help it develop and improve. Indeed, the overall improvement was such that standard medals were awarded for the first time.

INTERNATIONAL GROWTH MEETS OPPOSITION

In England, and abroad, the sport continued to grow. On 31 July 1924, in Paris, representatives from nine countries met for the Third Congress of the FSFI. It was already clear that the organisation had expanded to the extent that it was impossible to gather all member nations together every year, so it was decided to hold the Congress on alternate

until 1930 that Birchfield, the leading club outside London, were invited to send a team (Clynes 1933:48; Alexander and Morgan 1988:41).

56The number of countries competing had remained fairly static, however. Five had competed in the 1921 Monte Carlo meeting, the same number at the First Women's Olympiad.
years in future. It was also decided to extend the duration of the Women's Olympics from one to two days - and to fall in line with the mainstream Olympiad, by allowing each nation only two competitors per event (Webster 1930:47-8; Pallett 1955:23).

However, the success of women's meetings drew opposition from other quarters. By 1925 the women's international championships had attracted considerable attention from both the IAAF and the IOC, so much so that the latter body objected to them being called the 'Women's Olympic Games'. The IOC recognised the threat to its autonomy and asserted its sole right to use these words, so the FSFI, pending their next Congress in 1926, changed the title to the 'Second International Ladies' Games', later altering it to 'Women's World Games' (Pallett 1955:26).37 Despite this name change, on 7 August 1926 - at Battersea Park, in London - the WAAA held what they described as the first 'English Olympic Trials'. This meeting was in addition to the English Championships two months previously which had attracted entries from fourteen clubs. Despite Webster's earlier concern over the field events, the results, on this occasion, seem to have been of a higher standard than originally anticipated, suggesting that even the less popular areas of athletics were receiving attention:

Taken 'weight for age' so to speak, the results compared very favourably with the men's Olympic Trials first held in England in 1908; certainly the girls showed a vastly better field events technique than was displayed by their male forerunners of eighteen years earlier (1930:59).

The Women's World Games of 1926, originally to be held in Belgium, transferred at short notice to Gothenberg, Sweden. The Stockholm Olympics of 1912 were universally

---

37 Joe Binks still submitted reports from these World Games with the description 'Women's Olympiad' (News of the World, 29 August 1926).
regarded as the most popular of the celebrations to date, and it was a shrewd move on the part of the FSFI to incorporate several of the experienced organisers of those Games to help with the 1926 Women's World Games (Webster 1930:61). The event attracted women from a wider circle of countries worldwide than had previously been the case, and showed how well women were operating and performing. Part of the enthusiasm generated for these Gothenburg Games was engendered by a small group of British women athletes, who the year before had travelled to Sweden specifically to popularise the sport there (Notes of the Inaugural Meeting of the WAAA). Vera Searle recalls extensive press coverage during the trip, which was celebrated as an 'unqualified success' (The Advertiser, 4 August 1976:10).

Several features of the World Games were modelled on the Olympics, including the opening ceremony. They were also characterized as friendly games, taking place in 'an atmosphere of joyousness and delight' (Report: Second International Ladies' Games, Gothenburg 27-29 August 1926:11) and as less aggressively competitive than the men's athletics at the Olympics. The cover of the report of the Games depicts a woman in a skin-tight costume, leaping freely, symbolising spontaneity and enjoyment (Ibid:cover). Although women, in common with men, were representatives of their nations, female events lacked aggressive displays of chauvinism and xenophobia - features that had marred the (male) Olympics on several occasions. Some 3,300 spectators attended on 27

---

58 International matches between the wars continued to be conducted in similar vein. Muriel Cornell reported on the 'happy terms of friendly rivalry that exists in the world of women's athletics' (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937).

59 In the 1908 London Games, for example, there was feuding between nations. The leading American official, James Sullivan, accused the English officials of being 'unfair to every athlete except the British,' and matters came to a head in the final of the 400 metres.
August, the first of the three days (augmented from the single day of competition four years previously), but as word quickly spread about the high quality of competition, the crowd swelled to over 8,000 for the second day.\textsuperscript{60} The support shown by the Swedes confirmed again the popularity of women's athletics internationally, and the Games continued, according to Joe Binks, amid 'scenes of great enthusiasm, among both competitors and public alike' (\textit{News of the World, 5 September 1926}).

Royal patronage was granted by the Crown Prince of Sweden, whose father, King Gustavus Adolphus, presented a cup for the winning relay team - Britain (Pallett 1955:27). Of the ten countries entered, eight were present. Belgium, Britain, Czechoslovakia and France were joined by newcomers Latvia, Poland, Sweden, and Japan - the first representative from Asia in international competition. Thirteen events, two more than in the 1922 Olympiad, were contested (Pozzoli 1965:12). The two longest events, the 1000 metres and 1000 metres walk were both won by Britons. The former was a distance Webster said 'many men regard as one no woman should attempt' (1930:73). According to Pallett it was barred in some countries, where the longest contestable event was 400 metres (1955:29). Webster was at pains to point out that neither the winner in Gothenberg, Britain's Edith Trickey, nor the runner up, Sweden's Inga Gentzel, showed any 'undue signs of distress' (Ibid:73). Indeed, Binks stated that Edith Trickey won 'in her usual elegant style' (\textit{News of the World, 5 September 1926}).\textsuperscript{61}

For more detail see Killanin and Rodda (1983:68-74).

\textsuperscript{60}Binks claims there were 10,000 spectators present (\textit{News of the World, 5 September 1926}).

\textsuperscript{61}There were moves for even longer distances than 1000 metres. In 1928, LOAC demonstrated that changes could emanate from club level, by proposing that the National
Two individual world records were set, both by English athletes: by Eileen Edwards in the 250 metres, with 33.4 seconds, and in the 1000 metres walk, by Daisy Crossley, in 5 minutes 10.0 seconds. Success also came to the British 4x100 metres relay team, who equalled the world record in the heat, and then reduced it by four tenths of a second, recording 49.8 seconds in the final. Seven silvers and three bronzes were also brought home (Pozzoli 1965:12). The English athletes thus maintained their position at the pinnacle of the athletic ladder.

Muriel Gunn's (later Cornell) successes in 1926 provide an interesting case study of a newcomer who made an instant impression. At her club (Mitcham AC) championships that year she tried and won the long jump, even though she was tired after a track race. She was convinced that she could improve when fresh, and a practise jump was measured and found to be in excess of the world record. A club official then persuaded the WAAA, the organisers of the British Games at Stamford Bridge on 2 August, to include a long jump in the programme, where she set a new world record of 17 feet 8½ inches. Because the press missed this leap, although she was unwell, Muriel was coerced into another jump, which was recorded as 18 feet exactly. In Gothenburg, her inexperience - by then she had only been jumping for two months - let her down. Having made a very long leap she promptly turned to speak to an official, moving back in the pit as she did so. Since the shortest distance in the sand is the mark taken for measuring, this caused her to lose

Championship Track Walk be increased to one mile (WAAA Committee Minutes, 2 April 1928). In the same year the Road Walk Championship race was increased to two miles (WAAA AGM Minutes, 26 January 1929).

62One of the silvers was gained by Muriel Gunn, in the long jump, who was the first woman to use the hitch-kick successfully (Pallett 1955:28).

During the Gothenberg Games, the fifth Congress of the FSFI was held. Admitting Germany\textsuperscript{63} to membership swelled the number of countries to seventeen. It was an important meeting for two reasons. Firstly, new regulations for competition were established: all events would be over metric distances; the javelin would weigh 600 grammes, the shot 4 kg and the discus 1 kg.\textsuperscript{64} Secondly, the size and importance of the Ladies' Games were recognised and to preserve their significance it was decided that no other international competition could include more than three nations. The important and continuing contribution to women's athletics by Joe Palmer was also recognised by the FSFI, who conferred upon him 'honorary membership' - the first man to be so acknowledged (Webster 1930:78-9; Pallett 1955:31).

**CROSS-COUNTRY**

The foundations for track successes were laid during the winter months, in the form of cross-country running, which had been part of the winter training activities of many women's clubs since 1922, when LOAC instituted social runs and hare and hounds. But for five years cross-country activities rarely extended to actual races (Pallett 1955:172). However, the social side of cross country running was particularly important, and

\textsuperscript{63}Germany's membership had previously been declined - as had the men's from the Olympic movement - due to their involvement in the Great War.

\textsuperscript{64}All of these weights have been retained to date, each being lighter than the male equivalent. Recent changes have only been made to the men's javelin, which has been balanced to prevent the long and potentially dangerous throws over 100 metres. At the time of writing, women's throws with the lighter implement rarely exceed 70 metres.
peculiarly female. For example, Middlesex Ladies advertised a social run against Polytechnic Ladies in their local paper. Since long distance competition was not yet approved, there was a one mile non-competitive warm-up run, and then, 1000 metres from the end, all the runners lined up to race in to the finish. The club did not miss the opportunity for further publicity, as the run was performed in front of a 'large muster of press and film photographers' (Middlesex County Times: Ealing Edition, 23 February 1924). To encourage women into the sport, sometimes a more leisurely 'all-day stroll with Champions' (international athletes) was organised (Ibid:5 June 1926), or a dance was arranged after the run (LOAC Committee Minutes, 1 September 1925).

By 1927 there was a call for longer, more formal races over the country and that year saw the first National Cross-Country Championships for both team and individual honours. Held at Luton Hoo Park, in Bedfordshire,\textsuperscript{65} it attracted 80 runners - of whom 78 finished. They came from seven clubs, all from the South, and Middlesex Ladies took the team trophy (WAAA AGM Minutes, 28 January 1928). The next year, at Chigwell Row in Essex, the winner covered the 2 ¾ mile heavy, hilly course in 20 minutes 50 seconds. On this occasion, 90 of the 95 starters from 13 teams finished (Webster 1930:80,82). By the end of 1928 the WAAA had recognised the appeal of this type of competition and delegated responsibility for cross-country to a separate cross-country section, whose main object was to encourage, develop and control this element of athletics (WAAA Committee Minutes, 5 November 1928). But it was not until 1930 that the championship moved out of the South of England, when it was held in the Midlands, at Wolverhampton, in

\textsuperscript{65}Bedfordshire fell within the administrative area of the Southern Counties WAAA.
Warwickshire, with a record entry. This was the first women's National athletic championship of any sort - track, road, or cross-country - to move out of the South. The high entry indicated that enthusiasm for running existed in other parts of England, although Southern clubs continuously secured the team trophy up to 1935. This race provides another instance of the lack of enthusiasm for travel displayed by some clubs. Birchfield Harriers, for example, made their debut in 1930, and provided the individual winner in Gladys Lunn, but the club had not made the journey South for the three previous races (Alexander and Morgan 1988:36).

Soon, international matches were being organised, to ensure top athletes were offered competition throughout the year. The first International Cross-Country was against France and Belgium in 1931, at Douai. Gladys Lunn was the individual winner (Watman 1968:231), and England took the team title (Pallett 1955:174). The second International was held at Selsdon, Surrey, in 1932, (concurrent with the first National Junior Cross-Country Championship) (Programme for International Cross-Country, 19 March 1932). England continued to dominate this International Cross-Country event for many years. For example, in the 1938 race, in Lille, English runners took five of the first six places (WAAA AGM Minutes, 26 November 1938). However, after 1935, the races became sporadic, and following the Second World War, did not recommence until 1954, when the event resumed as a domestic affair between England and Scotland (Pallett 1955:175).

From 1933, it became the norm for cross-country championships to be allied to those for race walking. For example, the Senior National Cross-Country, at Ilford in 1936, was held

---

66Now West Midlands.
in conjunction with the fourth National Road Walking Championships (WAAA Programme, 7 March 1936), and the Southern Cross-Country of the same year, with the Regional Road Walk (SCWAAA Programme, 15 February 1936). The rationale for adopting combined championships was simply to cut financial costs (WAAA AGM Minutes, 21 October 1933).

**INCREASING WORLD-WIDE COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE**

In contrast to men's athletics, the administration of women's athletics had started with the inauguration of an international body, the FSFI, which had stimulated the development of a coherent and widespread competitive structure in England. Through the establishment of the WAAA, followed by the founding of the three Regional Associations, and then the creation of county organisations, by 1928 English women had year-round opportunities for competition at international, national, regional, county and local (inter-club) levels.67

Competitions were organised in a wide range of events, and standards in many of them rose dramatically. Indeed, at the 1927 WAAA Championships at Reading 'the spectators simply would not believe the things the announcer and the telegraph board told them' (Webster 1930:81). Eventually, after the track was remeasured, five world records were confirmed. As early as 1924 many men regarded the quarter-mile time of 60.8 seconds by Eileen Edwards 'as a freak run and swore that no woman would ever beat the even minute'

---

67Competition opportunities continued to increase. In 1937, for example, the Honorary Secretary of the WAAA, Muriel Cornell, was able to report back to members that the WAAA had held national championships at cross country (for both juniors and seniors) and for seniors at indoor track and field, road walking, outdoor track and relay. Four international teams had been sent abroad, and successfully taken part in a demonstration at the Festival of Youth (WAAA AGM Minutes, 11 December 1937).
But, in the 1929 Championships, Marian King won her heat in the world record time of 60.6 seconds, and in the final, one hour later, recorded 59.2 seconds - with second place also breaking the minute. 'Male athletes, including many old-timers whose names are still household words, looked at one another in wonder... And, thereby, as one ex-champion was heard to remark, they had achieved what was hitherto believed to be impossible' (Ibid:92-3). Women's athletics was generating considerable public interest, and the WAAA Championships were attracting particular attention, as Webster describes:

The English Championships were held at Stamford Bridge... and Ladies' Day proved that British women had at last lived down popular prejudice against their active participation in athletics, for a large crowd was very enthusiastic about the doings of the 400 girls, who were the representatives of three-and-twenty clubs from all over the country (1930:84).

The early WAAA Championships were the setting for several world records. The high standard of competition, allied to excellent facilities and well-supported events, attracted leading athletes from abroad. England was thus recognised as a centre for competitive excellence. The 1928 WAAA Championships at Stamford Bridge, for example, included the overseas entries of the multi-talented Kinue Hitomi from Japan, and South African, Marjorie Clark, 'the first great hurdler-high jumper' (Pallett 1955:31). There was more excitement than usual over these Championships because it was known that there would be female athletes for the first time at the Olympics later that year. Webster claims that: 'Great interest was evinced by the British public in such potential women Olympic champions as came to this country' (1930:84).

The international held in Germany in 1929 was also significant, since it was the only match lost by a British team between the first fixture against France, in 1921, and the
meeting with Italy, in Naples, in 1952 (Watman 1968:231). Although British teams continued to win international matches, it was no longer plausible to regard England as the leading athletic nation. But the WAAA managed to disguise Britain's decline by organising only occasional fixtures - often no more than one a year - against those teams that the British athletes would be likely to beat. In this way, they avoided facing powerful opposition that had built up in some other countries in the world. Additionally, medals at major championships became increasingly hard for English women to win. Comparisons between nations at future championships, whether on the basis of the colour, or number, of medals won, or the number of finalists, clearly demonstrated that England was no longer the pre-eminent athletics nation.68

The dominant country by the end of the 1920s proved to be Germany, their arrival as a force in women's athletics coming several years before the Nazi party's imperative to impress on the world stage. As early as 1927, the Reichstag provided considerable assistance to its sportsmen and women in their preparation for the 1928 Olympics, and in England critics were wondering what equivalent support was coming from our own governing bodies. Abrahams saw little to be gained by simply throwing money at sport (The Sunday Times, 1 May 1927) and, together with Webster, believed the problems were deeper. Comparing the German 1929 National Championships with our domestic equivalent, Webster noted with concern the field events performances. He highlighted the javelin, which was won in England with 85 feet, as against the 125 feet 5½ inches in

---

68Although major championships officially decide individual champions only, historically they have been regarded as the true test of a nation's worth. They still have no official points scoring system (Tomlin 1956:25). A European team championship was introduced in 1965, and a World Cup for teams instigated in 1977.
Germany; and the discus, with 100 feet 1 inch, in comparison with 123 feet 5 inches. He still felt that it was due to a lack of proper coaching in these events that 'our girls [were] beginning to fall behind the rest of the world, even as our men [had] done' (1930:94). The British record for the shot now lagged behind the world mark by almost ten feet, and the discus and javelin by over 26 feet each (Tomlin 1964:77-116). German women were breaking some of these world records and, more importantly, were replacing ageing champions with younger and even more talented athletes, which in several events the English were failing to do. On 18 August, 1929, Britain met Germany in Dusseldorf and suffered their first ever international defeat, by 53½ to 45½ points. This large margin of victory was the result of Germany gaining maximum points in all three throws (Ibid:94-5).

In a world context, England's position was also changing. At the beginning of 1930, English athletes still held the world records in four of the six linear track events, and compared very well with other countries in the two jumps. However, during the 1930s, many of these world track records fell to athletes from other countries, and in several other events English athletes could not match the progress made elsewhere. Webster (1934:7) noted that the quality of running and hurdling was still high, but that 'our field events standard is lower than that of the other nations'. Although it was not until 1933 that an English female athlete failed to set a world record, it was clear that athletes from other countries were successfully challenging the dominance that English women once enjoyed, and were improving at a faster rate. Muriel Cornell, now the Honorary Secretary of the WAAA, sadly lamented this trend:

The English girls were for many years in a class of their own where athletics are concerned, and although their performances have improved, and still are improving, rapidly, yet other nations, such as America and Germany, have made greater progress, with the result that, in some cases, they have surpassed the English
records (Cited in Webster 1934:6).

The differences between England and Germany were not unnoticed by the athletes themselves. Katharine Connal threw the javelin at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. After her last throw a judge commented 'You English can run, but we Germans should teach you to throw.' She wryly observed that, 'The [English] men did no good either' (The Australian Women's Weekly, 17 May 1972:6). The WAAA had already noted that English female throwers were now far behind the Germans and that there was no proper coaching for them. However, they failed to take immediate action to reverse the trend (WAAA AGM Minutes, 28 January 1928). Although Webster appeared to be at the forefront of the drive to improve the field events - for both sexes - the WAAA Committee received a complaint that he was 'giving so little' of the coaching he had agreed to give to women (WAAA Committee Minutes, 30 July 1930). The Times, at the same time, noted that 'Englishmen will probably never be convinced that hurling missiles of various designs, however great the skill required, is equivalent to running once, or twice, or four times round a track' (25 August 1930). Abrahams simply stated that the continuing lack of success in British field events was due to a lack of interest by the viewing public (Athletic News, 26 August 1929). Webster pointed to the general lack of throws facilities, particularly at Stamford Bridge, where there were none for practise, and also to the paucity of available throws competitions (F.R. Webster, undated newspaper clipping, Abrahams scrapbook). English women did eventually make attempts to improve their throwing performances, by inviting the German athlete Martel Jacob to spend six months in England to coach field events
THE FIGHT FOR INCLUSION IN THE OLYMPIADES

Perhaps the most important single event in the history, development and acceptance of women's athletics on a world-wide scale was its inclusion in the Olympic Games. This was an event linked to the actions of men's governing bodies around the world and to continuing medical and social prejudices. Because of their complexity, more detailed consideration of gender relations of power and prevailing medical attitudes at the 1928 Olympics are covered in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Whilst women's athletics on an international scale had been instigated by Alice Milliat, English women played key roles in the lengthy battles that ensued concerning the status of their sport. As leading world athletes, they became influential members of the FSFI in its dealings with the IOC and the IAAF, and as key members of the WAAA, they were able to lobby England's male representatives on the IOC and the IAAF. In 1928, Lady Heath (Sophie Eliott-Lynn) was appointed by the IAAF to be a track judge at the Olympics in Amsterdam, and also by 1928 English women had extended their influence to the BOA, when Mrs V.M. Cambridge, one of the founder members of the WAAA, was one of two

---

69 This was not a new trend - nor confined to women. In 1910, for example, an Amateur Field Events Association was formed by Webster, with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as President, to improve field events performances following disappointments at the London Olympics in 1908 (Lovesey 1979:55-6). Again, men's poor field performances were the subject of a special report by the International Board (BAAB) in 1934 (Ibid:67).

70 Field events remained a problem throughout the period of this study. In 1966 John Rodda expressed surprise when reporting a match against France: 'Today we won every field event except the javelin. This must be the first occasion on which the runners have been propped up against the field events exponents' (The Guardian, 19 September 1966).

120
women appointed to the BOA Council (Abrahams 1929:12).

When the IOC was approached by Alice Milliat, in 1919, it was not the first time that they had considered women's athletics. An undated report of the Secretary General of the French Olympic Committee,\(^\text{71}\) regarding the recent 1920 Olympics,\(^\text{72}\) specifically looked at the participation of women. This question had, according to the document, previously been raised in 1914, when the main objection to women was on the grounds that the overall size of the Games needed to be reduced. Nevertheless, by 1920, the French Olympic Committee were beginning to vacillate, and argued:

That a considerable evolution has taken place since 1914, and that we should at once face the question of the place which should be made in the Olympic Games of 1924 for women's athletics in all its forms\(^\text{73}\) (Ibid, in British Olympic Association General Minutes).

This stance was surprising, since in 1920 women had yet to compete in athletics internationally - and also in light of the rigid resistance to women's sporting participation per se shown by the President of the IOC, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. But the position of the French Olympic Committee was later reversed and the more conservative members of the IOC resisted change for several more years. At the eighteenth IOC Session in Antwerp, in August 1920, the IOC refused to consider the inclusion of women's athletic events for 1924, arguing again about the size of the Games, rather than on social or medical grounds (Leigh 1974:156), and resolving that 'as far as the participation of women

\(^\text{71}\) This can be found in the BOA General Minutes of 1920.

\(^\text{72}\) Although undated the report relates to past events from the Antwerp Olympics of 1920.

\(^\text{73}\) No doubt this discussion was prompted by the approaches in 1919 by the FFSF.
in the Olympic Games is concerned, the status quo ought to be maintained\textsuperscript{74} \textsuperscript{75} (Leigh 1974:173; Guttmann 1984:56). The twenty-first Session of the IOC, in April 1923, considered critically the feminist movement and the 'abuses and excesses evolving from its activities' (The Times, 23 April 1923:5), concluding that women should take part only in sports suited to their sex. Significantly, it was not until the 1925 Congress in Prague, after de Coubertin had resigned as President of the IOC, that the membership considered women's sport in a more favourable light. However, according to Leigh, the IOC advised men's international federations to take control of women's sports, and she regards any concessions made by the IOC as 'grudging', and 'particularly antagonistic' towards the FSFI (1974:174).

The IAAF, on the surface, appeared more accommodating than the IOC and reacted more positively to the world-wide growth and popularity of women's athletics around the world:

So many men's clubs were including women's events at their sports meetings, that it became necessary for the IAAF to take cognisance of women's activities, and the Seventh Congress\textsuperscript{76} [July 1924 in Paris] resolved to take over the government of women's athletics....but decided that there should be no women's athletic events at the Olympic Games (Webster 1930:98).

This was an extraordinarily contradictory position. Whilst recognising that women's

\textsuperscript{74}The status quo for women was tennis and swimming. de Clary here specifically mentioned the exclusion of fencing.

\textsuperscript{75}de Clary represented the IOC at the final banquet for the Monte Carlo Games of 1922 (Guttmann 1991:167). It is open to conjecture that his change of mind was influenced by his experience of women's athletics.

\textsuperscript{76}This was the culmination of two years deliberation by the IAAF, who had made the decision to govern women's athletics in 1922, from a proposal by the Belgian representative (Pallett 1955:32).
athletics was an important enough activity to warrant control, the IAAF were prepared to alter their rules to include women, but sought to exclude them from the Olympics. The wording Webster used was also sufficiently transparent to make it clear that women were to have little, if any, control over their own sport. Since in the Olympic rules it was necessary for each sport to be governed by one body, the only possible mode of entry to the Olympics was through membership of the IAAF.

Nevertheless, a Special Committee representing the IAAF and the FSFI was set up, which, in 1926, agreed that whilst the FSFI should continue to conduct women's sport, it was to be by delegation from the Council of the IAAF. Thus men were to take over the governing of women's athletics (British Olympic Journal, Autumn 1926:59), which:

...was to be organised in every country by that country's members of the IAAF, or by delegation to the country's Women's Federation (if any), and all Federations or nations in IAAF affiliation were to be entitled, upon request, to membership of the FSFI (Webster 1930:98-9).

The FSFI compromised on several key issues, the most important of which was to prove a severely retrograde step. Despite the FSFI's successful staging of the 1926 World Games with thirteen events, the Special Committee submitted a request to the IAAF Council for the IOC to include a mere five women's track and field events for all Olympics commencing with the 1928 Amsterdam Games - namely the 100 and 800 metres, 4x100 metres relay, high jump and discus.

The meeting of the IAAF Council, which considered the Special Committee's
recommendations, met in the Hague in August 1926.77 Long, emotive, and often irrational
discussion78 resulted in an amended proposal to be submitted to the IOC that women's
athletics be included in the 1928 Olympics only - thus leaving the option of discarding
women's events after those Games. The motion was passed by twelve votes to five, which
indicated significant support for women, and votes against the motion did not necessarily
reflect opposition to female participation. For example, Harry Barclay, who was President
of the WAAA from 1926 to 1929, voted against the motion because he was cognisant of
the wishes of the female officers of the WAAA. These women were unwilling to proceed
with such a limited number of events, and were prepared to stand against their
international governing body in order to achieve better representation on the track.

The Fourth Congress of the FSFI was held in Gothenburg later in August, 1926,
concurrent with the highly successful Second Women's World Games, where it was agreed
that a Joint Technical Commission be appointed to serve as the connecting link between
the IAAF and the FSFI. Despite the euphoria of some women about their inclusion in the
Olympics, others, and most notably the English contingent, were angry and in opposition
to the attenuated five events on the planned programme and about the prospect that this
experiment might not be repeated in future years. In spite of these divisions, Alice Milliat
was reported to have made a statement of compromise and acceptance at the Commission
meeting:

'Women's sport', [she said] 'cannot be an experiment now, as it has brilliantly

77Three weeks before the Women's World Games.

78Mr Pikhala, the IOC member from Finland, for example, vigorously opposed
women's participation. He reasoned that women in the Olympics was against the classic
Greek ideal and would only bring ridicule on them (Leigh 1974:179).
shown what it can do. Such a short list of [five] events cannot be a help to women's sport propaganda, and, on the other hand, we have to think of the moral question to be considered in connection with a world meeting including men and women together' (Cited in Webster 1930:101-2).

Pallett claims that Milliat 'made it plain that her own opinion was that it was a poor recognition of the place of women's athletics' (1955:34). Dr Bergmann, the German representative on the IAAF, who had spoken eloquently and forcefully in favour of women's athletics at the IAAF Council in August, was one of those who opposed participation on the terms offered (1955:34),79 as was Britain's Sophie Eliott-Lynn, who pointed to the successes of the two Women's World Games and to the problems of mixed competitions:

That in the majority of countries men-and-women meetings were avoided, as parents were adversely disposed towards them, and that women had nothing to gain by participation in the general Olympic Games (Webster 1930:102).

The British objections were so strongly presented that an impasse was reached. Sensibly, to enable a fuller world-wide discussion, the issue was referred back to each national federation's governing body of women's athletics for consideration. Those English clubs that were affiliated to the WAAA were canvassed as to their opinions and the almost universal response was to reject the inclusion of women's events in Amsterdam, due to the severe reduction in the programme offered (Webster 1930:102), and that the Women's World Games served their purposes better (Undated newspaper clipping, Abrahams scrapbook). Fifty years later Vera Searle asserted that all clubs voted to boycott the

---

79Webster's assertion is that Dr Bergmann vigorously recommended acceptance of the terms offered (1930:102).
80 Games (The Advertiser, 4 August 1976:11). This sacrifice must have been a blow to many of England's best athletes, since this was a time when the country still led the world in many events, and it was not until 1964 that an Englishwoman won an Olympic gold medal. As early as 1926, the BOA fully expected to send sportswomen to Amsterdam. In an official statement, they made it clear that, 'We intend to see that men and women who represent Great Britain and uphold British prestige...shall be properly fed, and properly equipped, to do themselves justice' (Abrahams 1929:57). In 1927, the traditional appeal for Olympic funding, by Lord Birkenhead, also demonstrated that English women, despite their stand, were keen to compete. He declared that, 'The athletes of Great Britain - men and women - are unanimous in their desire to participate in the Games' (Ibid:71-2).

The FSFI met again in Paris on 28 December 1926, with Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Poland and Sweden voting to accept the offer of the IAAF. Eventually, England were the only nation to vote against the inclusion of a restricted number of events.81 The WAAA International Committee were adamant that the 1928 programme 'be a full one, otherwise we do not compete, and be controlled by women' (WAAA International Committee Minutes, 25 June 1928). They categorically rejected Alice Milliat's compromise agreement, clearly understanding the dangers of being assimilated into a male organisation, and arguing that the development of the sport should be controlled by women.

---

80 Pallett's version differs, for he cites the lack of British women in the 1928 Games as being 'by reason of the decision of their governing body' (1955:120).

81Ironically, the residual all-male British team still marched into the arena behind a silk Union Jack, presented to the BOA by the WAAA (Abrahams 1929:67-8).
Acceptance of the restricted programme by the FSFI was perhaps the most important decision - and ultimately debilitating blow - in the early history of women's athletics. The situation was compounded still further by the seeming inactivity of the FSFI, whose International Committee did not meet again until 8 January 1928, when they agreed to the principle of participating at the Olympics but, taking note of the English arguments, decided that the programme must include ten events (Webster 1930:102). The Technical Commission felt a full programme at future Olympics should be: 100, 200 and 800 metres, 80 metres hurdles, 4x100 metres relay, long and high jumps, and discus, javelin and shot. By this time it was too late to alter the already agreed Amsterdam programme and the impetus for change was thus lost. Additionally, the Fifth Congress of the FSFI only met during the Games - too late to push though additional events, and too early to react to the events of the Games themselves.

Some commentators believed that the 1928 Games were a success, with twenty-one countries represented and world records set in every one of the five disciplines. Others, however, reacted adversely to the apparent collapse of several women after the final of the 800 metres, which led to its removal from the Olympic programme until 1960 and encouraged continued criticism of endurance events for women. The 800 metres was, paradoxically, an exceptionally fast race, being won in the world record time of 2 minutes 16.8 seconds by Lina Radke of Germany. It was also popular with the athletes, attracting 32 entries for the heats in Amsterdam - the less strenuous 100 metres had only eight more. During the rest of the year there was considerable activity in women's athletics, with world records set in 14 disciplines, the majority of which were not Olympic events. This added to the frustration of female athletes, who were denied the opportunity of setting these
records in Olympic competition.

A few days after the Games the Ninth Congress of the IAAF met in Amsterdam and discussed the future of women's athletics in the Olympics. The Congress allowed the retention of women's events by sixteen votes to six, but the request for a fuller programme of ten events was rejected by fourteen votes to eight. It was agreed that there would be only six events at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics - the high and long jumps were added at the expense of the 800 metres. Thus the longest event on the programme was the 100 metres, and it remained so until 1948 when the 200 metres was added. Once again, Britain was one of the dissenting voices and, once again, it was because of the limited number of events on offer.

This was not the end of the protracted discussions about allowing women the privilege to be part of the Olympic movement. The struggle continued until 1936 and resulted in the negotiated demise of the FSFI, and with it female control of international women's athletics. The roles played by the men and women of England were central to the thrust for improved competitive opportunities on the world stage. The history of these negotiations is complicated and better suited to a discussion of gender relations of power. It is therefore dealt with in Chapter Eight.

---

82The other five votes against retention of events for women were cast by Canada, Finland, Hungary, Ireland and Italy.
INTERNATIONAL ATHLETICS CONTINUES TO GROW OUTSIDE THE OLYMPIC ARENA

Women's athletics at the Olympics at last seemed to be secured: it was accepted by the world governing bodies, the IOC and the IAAF, and continued to spread and gain in popularity. Olympic competition emphasised the seriousness of women's endeavours, as well as giving world-wide press coverage to the events. But immediately following the 1928 Olympics the FSFI continued with its successful programme and seventeen countries competed at the Third Women's World Games, held in Prague from the 6 to 8 September 1930. European nations made up the majority of the 17 teams, with 214 athletes from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, France, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. Germany was also admitted for the first time. Only two countries outside Europe attended, Canada, the outstanding team in Amsterdam, and Japan. The relatively easy accessibility, for English athletes, of major competitions held in Europe, helped the growth and success of the sport in England, but hindered its development in countries further away, like America, Australia and Canada. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that limited finances precluded English athletes from a better showing in Prague by preventing a long enough period of adjustment in the city prior to the Games (British Olympic Journal, December 1930:102). Vera Searle recalls the early matches vividly, commenting that for an international it was quite usual to leave London early on Saturday morning, compete in Paris on Sunday, and be back in the office on Monday morning (Some Early Memories’, unknown date, WAAA archives).

83It is not clear why other non-European teams did not attend this and previous celebrations. No doubt cost was a limiting factor, but then so too must have been time. International air travel was still in the future and journeys by sea were slow and time consuming.

129
A full programme of twelve events, including the 800 metres, were contested in Prague. A triathlon was introduced (high jump, javelin and 100 metres), which was an important development. As standards in events rose and competitors became more specialised, this event allowed the all-round athlete fuller expression in international competition. Medals were now much more difficult to come by and success in the field events, according to Pallett, was now 'beyond Britain's capacity' (1955:44). The solitary win was by Gladys Lunn in the 800 metres. Silvers were gained by Muriel Gunn (later Cornell), in the long jump and by the 4x100 metres relay team, and Nellie Halstead took bronze in the 200 metres. Nevertheless, in the unofficial points score, there were still enough finalists to place the English athletes third out of seventeen teams, behind Germany and Poland.

**BRITISH WOMEN ENTER THE OLYMPIC ARENA**

According to Bowden, English women were keen to compete in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics under the conditions offered. In a traditional appeal for funds, it was confirmed that 'the athletes of Great Britain, both men and women, are unanimous in their desire to participate' (British Olympic Journal. December 1931:164). The power of Olympic ideology had drawn English women inexorably to the Games, despite the severely restricted programme of six events. But England was no longer the pre-eminent nation. It is particularly poignant that in the 1930 International match against Germany, Gladys Lunn beat the reigning Olympic champion over 800 metres, Lina Radke, which fuels speculation as to what English women might have achieved had they competed in Amsterdam.

The proliferation of women's world records at the Olympics continued, spearheaded by the
multi-talented Mildred (Babe) Didrikson from the USA, who equalled and then broke the world record for the 80 metres hurdles, and added over 11 feet to the javelin mark. She also leapt over two inches higher than the previous high jump record - but still had to settle for second place. She remains the only athlete of either sex to win Olympic medals in both a jump and a throw (Watman 1992:18).84 The first two athletes in the discus also exceeded the world record, as did the first three teams in the relay, where Britain gained her only medal - a bronze.85 With the 100 metres time also being improved, world records were, as in Amsterdam, set in every event, demonstrating that suitable competition, facilities and support enabled women to perform to the highest standards. These achievements were all the more remarkable since only fifty five female athletes from eleven countries (and, of these, four had only one contestant) were sent to Los Angeles, travel time and costs militating against the attendance of athletes from Europe. The costs for the British team, 'at least £150 per head' (Webster 1933:21), were prohibitive, particularly in view of the economic recession. Team selection was thus restricted to those who were at least likely to reach the final of their event, so only five English female athletes were sent (Ibid).86

---

84Babe Didrickson remains perhaps the greatest ever all-round sportswoman. Grantland Rice filmed her taking part in twelve sports (1956:148-151).

85Britain's time of 47.6 seconds was 0.8 of a second inside the previous world record. This performance was all the more remarkable, since the fastest athlete, Ethel Johnson, was injured and replaced by Violet Webb (Webster 1933:78-81).

86The entire British team, for all sports, consisted of only 72 sportsmen and women (Hampson 1956:28).
The second Empire Games\footnote{They were originally described as the British Empire Games. They became the British Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1954, and the British Commonwealth Games in 1970, when measurements changed to metric (Matthews 1989:91).} were held in London in 1934.\footnote{These Games had originally been awarded to South Africa, but were withdrawn after concerns were expressed 'over the way South Africa would greet and treat the black and Asian athletes' (Dheensaw 1994:21).} \footnote{There were no sports for women at the inaugural Games in 1930 (Dheensaw 1994:21).} Only Canada, England, Rhodesia, Scotland and South Africa competed, making the athletic competition small compared to the World Games to follow a few days later. England's Gladys Lunn demonstrated that it was still possible to enjoy an all-round athletic career, by winning both the 880 yards (equivalent to the 800 metres banned at the Olympics\footnote{The 880 yards was not held again at these Games for 28 years; 'due mainly to outdated official intransigence towards women's running' (Matthews 1986:34).}) and the javelin,\footnote{There were only four entrants, all English (Dell and Hartley 1982:51).} described by one commentator as 'one of the most unusual doubles in track and field history (Matthews 1986:34). Eileen Hiscock won both the 100 and 220 yards - the latter in a new British record time of 25.0 seconds, Phyllis Bartholomew the long jump, and England took the 440 yards relay (with legs of 220 yards, 110 yards, 110 yards)\footnote{The other relay, won by Canada, was equally eccentric by today's standards - 660 yards (220 yards, 110 yards, 220 yards, 110 yards). (Pallett 1955:52).} (Pallett 1955:52).

The Fourth (and, it transpired, the last) World Games, took place on 9 and 11 August, 1934, in London's cavernous White City, home of the 1908 Olympics. The event's administration fell to the Honorary Secretary of the WAAA, Muriel Cornell (née Gunn), and its President, Lord Decis. Attendances were disappointing, perhaps because the
Empire Games had finished in the same venue only two days earlier. The Times indicated a crowd of, at most, 5,000 (10 August 1934:3). But the number of participating nations increased to 19, and the only absentee from 1930 was Estonia. The American athletes made the long journey and were joined by those from the Empire countries of Rhodesia and South Africa. Again, it was Germany who dominated proceedings, with nine wins, five second and two third places from the twelve events. The triathlon was extended to the pentathlon, consisting of high and long jumps, javelin, shot and 100 metres. The 800 metres was won in the astonishing time of 2 minutes 12.8 seconds, emphasising the ability of women not only to withstand the rigours of the event, but also substantially to improve on the 1928 Olympic time with no ill effects. Altogether, four world records fell. For the first time, Britain provided no winners. Mary Milne was best placed with second in the high jump, and there were five bronzes to add to this. One of these bronze medals was perhaps the best English performance, that of Gladys Lunn, whose 2 minutes 14.2 seconds in the 800 metres stood as a British record for 20 years (Watman 1968:232).

POST-FSFI INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Twenty teams were attracted to the 1936 Olympics, which emphasised the continuing and widespread support for women's athletics. Despite the home advantage, the large partisan crowd in Berlin, and the 'chance for national advertisement' (The Listener, 14 March 1940:503), the German women did not continue the domination they had enjoyed in 1934, although they still won seven out of a possible eighteen medals (McNab 1975:61). But in true athletic terms the Games were a great success for women. Leni Riefenstahl's

31 teams actually entered - and 'Britain' still consisted of English athletes, although the team was no longer restricted to the Home Counties (Programme for the Fourth Women's World Games, 9 and 11 August 1934).
definitive sporting film, Olympia, gave extensive and uncritical coverage of their events. Mitcham's Dorothy Odam,94 aged sixteen and uncoached, featured in the footage of the high jump, where she gained a silver, only one centimetre below the world record. The rules were altered the next day, and in the new form would have given her the gold medal (Tyler 1956:51). The British team also gained a silver in the 4x100 metres relay. Standards were again high, with two world records broken and one equalled.95 But British women were still not taken seriously in some quarters. Men and women travelled to Berlin separately and, as Dorothy Tyler observed, twenty years later, 'Women's events were considered a less important part of the Games than they are now' (Ibid:50).

The third Empire Games were held in Sydney, Australia, in February 1938, which, for English athletes, necessitated a period of four months away from home, three of which were spent on the boat trip. Held in February, this also meant summer competition during the English winter. Fitness was maintained by running 'around a swaying deck which gave one the peculiar feeling of alternately being pressed down by a heavy weight and then being lifted bodily into the air' (Alford 1958:20). Training also took place at the frequent ports of call, where local tracks were fully utilised (Ibid). By winning the high jump, seventeen year-old Dorothy Odam emphasised that her Berlin result two years before was no teenage aberration. Dora Gardner was second in the high jump, Ethel Raby gained a silver in the long jump, and middle distance runner, Gladys Lunn, took bronze in

94In 1936 she became the first British woman to jump her own height (The News, 10 July 1964).

95It is ironic that due to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war Tokyo were unable to host the 1940 Olympics. Instead, the Games were awarded to Helsinki, Finland. Had war not intervened women would have 'invaded what had been the home of anti-feminism in the middle-twenties' (Pallett 1955:59).
the javelin, the only event open to her - there being no competition above 220 yards in the
programme. The English sprinters failed to reach the final in each event, but managed
second in the 660 yards relay and third in the three leg 440 yards relay. The celebrations
were low key, with only Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand and South Africa
having female competitors.

The Fifth Women's World Games, in 1938, were to have been hosted by Austria but,
according to Hargreaves, the Games were abandoned because the country was annexed by
Nazi Germany (1994a:214). Other evidence contradicts this. One of the IAAF conditions
in the negotiated demise of the FSFI was that these Games be allowed - but not as a
World Games, only as inaugural European Championships96 (Leigh 1974:203). They were
held separately from the men's championships, in contrast to the Olympics and Empire
Games. They were, however, organized by the Nazis, in Austria, shortly after the
Anschluss, in 1938, at the time of the Munich crisis. The meeting was totally ignored by
the British press - and Kathleen Connal declined to make the trip, partly due to political
conscience97 (Pozzoli 1965:24). Germany dominated the throws and overall were by far
the strongest team. Britain's athletes were sorely outclassed, with the best performances
being three fourth places. The best chance of a medal was lost with a disqualification in
the relay.

96There was, in 1931, a precursor to the European Games, the Olympiad of Grace. Eleven European teams took part in the twelve events, seven of which were won by English women (Pozzoli 1965:16).

97This was not the first instance of belief taking precedence over sport. Phyllis Green, high jump world record holder - and barely out of school - declined to travel to Gothenberg in 1926, for, as with Eric Liddell, she would not compete on a Sunday (Pallett 1955:118).
The imminent threat of war did not preclude a small team of six athletes travelling to Berlin in July 1939 for an international meeting. The best performance came from the young, but by now vastly experienced, Dorothy Odam. She came second in the high jump, only \( \frac{1}{4} \) of an inch below the world record of 5 feet 5\% inches, which she had set that May at Brentwood, during the Southern Counties Championships. Indeed, domestic events now afforded greater opportunities than the male-administered international competitions. The same year, for example, Evelyn Forster ran the mile in 5 minutes 15.3 seconds, a time which stood as a world record until 1952 (Watman 1968:233).

By the end of the inter-war period, English athletes were no longer dominant in international athletics, as they had been in the early years. Although their standards continued to rise, in a number of events they were overtaken by athletes from other countries who were improving at a faster rate. In particular, England continued to lag behind the rest of the world in the throws. To some extent this situation may have been because a new generation of athletes were not afforded the opportunity for international competition at the 1928 Olympics and because English women missed the advantages of improved, more 'professional' approaches to coaching and training. But, in spite of worldwide developments, and overall improvements in performances, a number of the world track records set by the early pioneers of English female athletics remained intact for many years, illustrating how superb their athletic achievements were for the time. Although in the years after the Second World War, the influences on English athletics were more varied and complex than ever before, and England was never again able to recapture the status of the world's leading female athletic nation, in several respects her post-war female athletes proved to be formidable performers.
CHAPTER FIVE

1939 TO 1964: WAR AND RECOVERY

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War was a time of contradictions and paradoxes for English women. In spite of its horrors and hardships, it opened up new possibilities and created new attitudes. As in the First World War, women took on hard and demanding roles. In December, 1941, National Service for single women between the ages of twenty and thirty was ordered - a workforce that was gradually to widen during the war. Pay did not match that of men, but it was an improvement on pre-war levels, and innovations such as part-time employment released many mothers with young families into the workplace, whilst safeguarding their position in the home. The problems and hardships of life, particularly in the big cities, made subsequent objections to the ability of women to withstand recreational physical activity look faintly ridiculous. Wartime rationing and enforced exercise improved the health of many poor and working-class women who had known only poverty during the Depression years (Rowbotham 1997:224, 237).

The war did not completely destroy athletics for men and women in England. The sport continued sporadically in different parts of the country. Indeed, in some areas significant advances were made. For example, during the fighting, Kent founded a County Women's Association, and new clubs were formed - and became active - such as Croxley Green, Oxford Ladies AC and Selsonia AC (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 3 January 1945, 8 February 1945). However, there was no international competition for the whole period from 1939 to 1945 (Leigh 1974:361). When international fixtures returned an unprecedented move was made by the AAA: in 1947 they invited the WAAA team to
share their international match against France with the men (Athletics, October 1947:18).
This marked the start of a closer working relationship between the sexes. Joint fixtures
cut administration and promotion costs considerably and allowed energies to be devoted to
other areas.

Recovery after 1945 was uneven, and by 1964 there were still significant differences in
athletics between men and women, particularly in the range of events available. Other,
new, factors also affected the competitiveness of English women - notably, the sporting
supremacy of the USSR and the effects of the athletic scholarships in the USA. It is also
likely that the persistent resistance to any shift away from the Victorian ethos of amateur
sport reduced the chances of English athletes winning medals and setting records in an
international context. With the demise of the FSFI and the absorption of women's
athletics into the male governing bodies of the IOC and IAAF, English women also
relinquished their stake in the control and direction of the sport internationally.
Nevertheless, there was much during this period that they could feel proud of.

WAR-TIME ATHLETICS
Immediately following the onset of hostilities in 1939 there was a wartime ban on crowds,
effective from 3 September - so all sport ceased. But within a few weeks ad hoc and then
more organised events were staged (McCarthy 1989:33). The initial position of the
WAAA at the beginning of the war was that they would be unable to continue their role
as a co-ordinating body and would have to abandon national, as well as international,
activities. However, they instructed the Regions, the Counties and the clubs to continue
any local events that 'conditions permit' (WAAA Circular, undated, in WAAA records).
As the war progressed several attempts were made by the WAAA to continue normal activity, including wartime AGMs. Meetings were held only sporadically, however, the first since 1938 being convened in 1942. On their own admission, the Association was not very active and few members attended the meeting - many had not been contacted and others had moved away (WAAA AGM Minutes, 31 October 1942).

It was noted at the 1942 AGM that there was limited interest in athletics around the country because, it was argued, 'everybody was anxious to get the war over' (WAAA AGM Minutes, 31 October 1942). Nevertheless, in 1942 the WAAA formed a War Emergency Committee and the report the following year suggests a surprising frequency of activity, with thirty-three race permits being issued in the South alone. These were for races within AAA organised events, indicating that co-operation with the men was a regular feature of domestic track meetings (WAAA War Emergency Committee Minutes, 6 November 1943).

Activity in the Regions was not uniform. In January 1940 the MCWAAA received notification that the SCWAAA would no longer operate - and although nothing had been heard from the NCWAAA, it was thought their position was the same (MCWAAA Committee Minutes, 18 January 1940). The SCWAAA initially circulated all affiliated clubs to advise them that 'In view of the National Emergency', it had suspended 'all activities until further notice' hoping for a 'speedy resumption in happier days' (SCWAAA Circular, undated, in WAAA records). They did not meet again as a committee until 31 March 1943, when they held an AGM. For the remainder of the war they made every attempt to continue their activities as normally as possible, held monthly committee
meetings and AGMs, and organised track and field events during the summer in and around London. Handicapping remained a feature of several of their races, which indicates that there was healthy track activity (For example, SCWAAA AGM Minutes, 31 March 1943; SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 19 May 1943, 16 June 1943).

Neither the South, nor the North, held any championship events during the war (Cheeseman 1950:46-55). The MCWAAA was probably the most active regional association. It worked hard to promote activities in the face of closed facilities and a lack of athletes and officials. The MCWAAA promoted Regional Track And Field Championships in most events throughout the war, and conducted a Cross-Country Championship every year, except 1941 (Ibid). Also, for example, in 1940, a Regional Road Walk Championship was organised, an inaugural Summer League in 1942, and, in 1945, the Region promoted a 'War Time National Junior Cross-Country Championship' (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 3 January 1945).

At local level, several clubs claimed to continue to operate for at least part of the duration of the war. For example, in the North, Longwood Harriers carried on with their pre-war procedures, structures and officials 'until about [the] 1942-3 season when most of the old brigade had been called up or were involved in the war effort, and working very long hours'. Then it became necessary for the secretary and treasurer to keep the club operational for the rest of the war so that its female members could continue to participate (Percy 1989:19). In London, LOAC promoted summer competitions during 1940, but then ceased to function until January 1946 (LOAC Committee Minutes, 18 April 1940, 23 May 1940, 17 January 1946). And in the Portsmouth area of Hampshire, it is recorded that the
Havant Sports Club organised athletics through the war (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 8 February 1945). More commonly, other clubs, such as Croydon Harriers, abandoned all activities throughout the hostilities (James 1970:11). However, outside the sphere of organised athletics, the WAAA noted that several small meetings had been held in connection with Holidays at Home¹ and the ARP² (WAAA AGM Minutes, 31 October 1942).

Not surprisingly, organisers and competitors experienced numerous difficulties that were unique to wartime conditions. For example, at one committee meeting, the SCWAAA reported the enforced absence of their secretary through war action, the death of two committee members, and the misplacing of the Association's records (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 3 January 1945). In 1940, The Midland Counties decided to forgo their track championships, since travel and black-out restrictions had severely affected competition and attendance numbers (MCWAAA Committee Minutes, 1 August 1940). The situation was similar for the WAAA in 1942, when they faced difficulties with travel and the funding of expenses for open meetings (WAAA AGM Minutes, 31 October 1942).

Athletics at all levels and for both sexes was hindered throughout the war by the reduction of facilities. Birchfield Harriers, for example, had to relinquish the Alexander Stadium in

¹These began in 1941, and were aimed at reducing transport problems by local authorities arranging events to encourage residents to stay at home. Part of the impetus for these activities came from the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR), aimed at the 'social and physical development of boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20 who have ceased full-time education'. They persuaded the Board of Education to 'undertake a direct responsibility for youth welfare' (McCarthy 1989:100).

²Air Raid Precautions.
Birmingham when it was requisitioned by the Government for use first by the Home Guard, and then by prisoners of war. The club was not able to resume the use of the track and stadium until February 1946 (Alexander and Morgan 1988:41-2). Around the country many grass tracks and playing fields became allotments, although there were several venues which continued to offer facilities throughout the war, such as those in London at Charlton, Parliament Hill, Tooting and Victoria Park (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 11 March 1944). The Midland Counties tried to retain contact with their clubs, but many of them were forced to close because membership numbers fell dramatically, or because of the loss of facilities (MCWAAA Committee Minutes, 1 August 1940). Some clubs, however, struggled to keep going, albeit on a very restricted basis. At Birchfield Harriers, for example, women members held training runs throughout the war, which assisted their rapid return to prominence when peace arrived. They had won the last three National Cross-Country team titles prior to the conflict, and then proceeded to take the first five after the competition resumed in 1946 (Alexander and Morgan 1988:42).

In the South several fixtures were promoted by men. For example, in 1943, the Southern Counties Amateur Athletic Association (SCAAA) included women's events at four fixtures in London, and in 1945 both the AAA and the London County Council promoted joint events (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 14 April 1943, 1 March 1945). Any restrictions which affected men encroached on women's activities as well. In 1939, for example, the SCAA called off a meeting because so many athletes were already in the Services, many as physical training (P.T.) sergeants (McCarthy 1989:69-70). Schools athletics was also affected because many specialist teachers were in the forces, and evacuation from the big cities removed children from facilities (Trembath 1948:25). Movement away from the
conurbations also had an impact on club life. For example, LOAC noted the difficulties associated with keeping in touch with, and collecting annual subscriptions from, evacuated members (LOAC Committee Minutes, 18 April 1940), and the SCWAAA experienced problems associated with the delivery of mail (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 14 April 1948).

THE POSITION AT THE END OF THE WAR

In 1945 athletic events were being contested in many parts of the country. In their efforts to ensure a swift return to normality at the end of the war the WAAA looked critically at the minimum age for competition, which, at 15, was generally older than for other sports. Consequently, during the war, the majority of children had rarely experienced athletics and no doubt turned to alternative forms of activity before they completed their education. The women's cross-country secretary, for example, pointed out that athletes could be lost to other sports, like swimming, if the age restrictions were not lowered. However, the WAAA decided to leave consideration of the question until the school leaving age was raised (WAAA War Emergency Committee Minutes, 29 September 1945; WAAA AGM Minutes, 1 December 1945). Surrey County WAAA had already considered the age issue in 1935, when they drafted rules to regulate athletics for girls under fifteen - and it was Surrey who responded to the WAAA imperative in 1946 by drawing up plans for the introduction of the Intermediate age group for 15 to 18 year olds. This move encouraged younger athletes into the sport, by enabling them to be introduced to competition with near contemporaries, rather than having to compete against fully grown women (Braben 1990:23).
The WAAA seemed to be looking to the future, repeating their concern, expressed at the start of the war, to attract new recruits the moment hostilities ended. They were keen to seek potential talent from those who were used to a physical lifestyle in the Youth Movements, or from a period in the armed forces, where physical training and sport were integral to life in the women's services (WAAA General Committee Minutes, 31 October 1942). Whilst Gladys Lunn retired from athletics when she was called up into the forces, it was noted that many women competed in their battalion or unit athletics championships (Cheeseman 1950:36; Lunn 1988). In a positive move to encourage new recruits into the sport, Dorette Nelson-Neal suggested that co-operation with the armed forces might provide a solution, if those bodies were able to include athletics in their curriculum (WAAA Committee Minutes, 31 October 1942). The Southern Counties responded to this proposition by contacting Army and Welfare officers with the aim of promoting athletics in women's units, and immediately after fighting had ceased promoted a women's Services 'Victory Sports Contest' (SCWAAA AGM Minutes, 31 March 1943, 7 June 1945).

Athletics in other countries continued in various guises. Throughout the war, unoccupied countries like the Americas, Sweden and Switzerland, could, with the exception of international meetings, conduct a normal series of events. Neutral countries in Europe were able to continue a fairly customary lifestyle, which included leisure pursuits, and they did not suffer food rationing and travel difficulties to the same extent as those countries at war. Consequently, they had the opportunity to raise their standards of performance during these six years. It was also the case, however, that several of the war-torn

---

3 The CCPR 'Fitness for Service' summer school in North Wales ran for six years and produced 'junior leaders' - many of them women - who were trained to encourage young people into action (McCarthy 1989:100).
countries were able to sustain considerable athletic activity for women, but that England
did comparatively poorly. For example, women's world records were set in Olympic
events in Germany, Holland and Russia, as well as in Australia and Switzerland (Tomlin
1964:77-114).

It may have been that the WAAA underestimated the possibilities for more 'normal
athletics' and had they continued to function more effectively, athletics in England may not
have suffered so much. With so many men away in the Services, the WAAA perhaps also
missed the opportunity to promote women's athletics as an alternative attraction, not only
to men's athletics, but also to other missing or attenuated activities, such as cricket and
football. It cannot be claimed that McCarthy's argument that 'a major social effect of the
war was the increasing influence of women in sport' was relevant to English women's
athletics (1989:70).

POST-WAR SOCIAL CHANGES
For many women who worked on the land, or in factories, in jobs which involved hard,
physical - and often boring - work, a return to normality at the end of the conflict came as
a relief. Peace gave the opportunity to enjoy a personal life, and to engage in activities
that had been impossible to imagine for six years. A 1947 survey of 2,807 women found
that the majority did not wish to work if it interfered with their domestic lives. As
Rowbotham observes, 'After a decade of doing one's bit, the inclination to do as one liked
appeared all the more enticing' (1997:249). Servicemen were assured of the availability of
their old jobs, and once again many women returned home to fill the traditional familial
roles of housewife and mother, evidenced by the baby boom of 1946-8, and by the
continuation of the wartime trend of marrying young. This trend was also emphasised by advertisements, which reinforced stereotypes of women in their homes. It also remained common practice for companies to operate a marriage bar, which consequently removed many married women from the labour force (Ibid:223-243).

At the same time, many women wished to continue working; they were assisted in their ambitions by a shortage of male labour, and the post-war government policy which sought for women to return to work. Guttmann argues that the residual effects of the war left many widows, and fewer available men for women to marry, so that for many women there was an imperative to bring in a wage to support a family. Additionally, with a shift to service sector employment, particularly by middle-class women, by 1948 there was a significant rise - of 350,000 - in the size of the female labour force, compared to the pre-war figures (1991:189-90). However, a wage freeze in 1948 contributed towards women not attaining equal pay status with men. When the female workforce was at its highest, women's wages had dropped to only 45% of men's (Rowbotham 1997:245; People's Century: Half the People, 1997). Lower pay scales and fewer promotions than for men persisted. In several respects, these conditions affected women's access to leisure in general, and athletics specifically, which were adversely influenced by economic and ideological factors, and competitive opportunities remained subordinate to those of men.

DOMESTIC POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

There were, however, many problems common to both sexes after the war. Austerity, limited housing and food, for example, placed recreational pursuits low on the social welfare agenda. One of the problems England faced in hosting the 1948 Olympics was
the severe rationing. It was only the generous contributions of several competing nations, who brought food parcels with them, which enabled home athletes to train on a full stomach (Pallett 1955:64; Leigh 1974:362). Post-war fuel shortages heightened difficulties in travelling to training and competition venues. Many tracks and sports fields had again been taken over to grow food, and with rationing, such spaces were slow to revert to previous use. Consequently, a return to normal sporting activity, despite the efforts of the WAAA and Regions, was not a reality. The post-war Labour government's objectives were the welfare state, education and housing, so that cultural activities such as sport and recreation were given little attention. Indeed, it has been argued that:

Sport came into the official picture only when educational needs could be shown, and it was administered through the Board of Education. The earliest national coaches, such as weightlifter Al Murray and athlete Geoff Dyson, were appointed in this way....There was a widespread feeling that it was the government's job to get people working harder, not playing games. It offered little help to the organisers of the 1948 Olympics beyond providing some spartan accommodation, and was of the general opinion - when it had one - that sport should look after itself (McCarthy 1989:179-80).

It was against this background that women's athletics restarted. The Southern Counties reacted quickly, and successfully, staging their championships on 4 August, 1945, with record entries (SCWAAA Committee Minutes. 23 July 1945, 6 September 1945). The first WAAA Track and Field Championships, in most events, were at Tooting Bee, in South West London, two weeks later, on 18 August. The 200 metres had been previously held at Bournville, in Birmingham, on 28 July. Both occasions were described as successes, 'athletically and financially' (WAAA AGM Minutes. 1 December 1945), although they were little more than domestic affairs, since Tooting Bec was a small club.

---

4War in Europe ended on 8 May.
arena with no stands. Stalwart supporters like Bill Pepper, Muriel Cornell, Dorette Nelson-Neal and Ted Knowles officiated at Tooting Bec, which gave a comforting impression that the sport was immediately able to function as usual. The athletes responded well, and there were as many as nine heats for the 100 metres. Although standards overall were generally low, it was reassuring for all concerned that the WAAA was able to stage the championships successfully, and to attract a good blend of old champions and young newcomers (Pallett 1955:130). The following year, proceedings moved back to the prestigious White City although, again, no British records were set (WAAA Committee Minutes, 22 February 1947; Pallett 1955:130-1).

The developmental differences between the Regions, which were apparent before the war, continued (Pallett 1955:130-1). In January, 1946, the Northern Region was still 'endeavouring to get its clubs "going" again' (Athletics, January 1946:13), whereas by the end of the same year, 52 clubs were affiliated to the South, and it took the Midlands until 1951 to bolster its affiliated clubs up to the South's 1946 level (Pallett 1955:130-1, 148). The power base, both in terms of administration and performance, remained in the South, although LOAC was unable to retain its mantle as the country's leading team. That fell first to Mitcham AC and then to Spartan AC, both London teams. But the position was now far from clear, with championship titles spread around several clubs and changing hands frequently. For different reasons, many competitions remained in the South. For example, the 1947 National Track and Field Championships were intended for the Midlands, but no suitable track could be found, so the meeting reverted to the South (Athletics, March 1947:16), and the majority of international athletes continued to be selected from the South. From 1921 to 1964, for example, 317 women represented
England and Britain from 135 clubs. Of these clubs only twelve had more than five international athletes, of which only one, Birchfield, was from outside the South of England (Pozzoli 1965:123). High level competition outside London remained a constant problem. Bristol's Margaret Critchley, for example, retired from the sport in the late 1960s partly due to the lack of top class competition available in her area (The Times, 16 July 1971). Similarly, Joy Grieveson's only compliant about athletics was the lack of competition in the North (Athletics Weekly, 16 February 1963:23), a grievance still maintained at the end of the period of this study by Jane Furniss, who claimed that 'living in the North doesn't help. I think we tend to get left out a lot' (Athlete's World, December 1983:38).

The quick return to a full programme of competition by the clubs in the South was rewarded by the emphatic victory over the Midlands in the Annual Inter-Region match, held on 1 September, 1945. The inactivity in the North was reflected by their inability to field a team. Confirmation of the WAAA plans to resume a full programme of events was outlined at their AGM, when they reported the intention to hold Cross-Country Championship races that winter at both Senior and Junior levels (WAAA AGM Minutes, 1 December 1945), and Junior and Intermediate Track and Field Championships were in place by 1948 (WAAA Track Championships Sub-Committee Minutes, 29 November 1947). The 1946 National Track and Field Championships attracted a record entry (Athletics, February 1947:12). But, by 1949, Abrahams complained that this meeting had grown unwieldy. For example, there were 72 entrants in the 100 metres, which necessitated twelve heats. Only the fastest two from each heat qualified for the next

5Aged 15 to under 18 on the day of competition.
round, a situation he regarded as 'most unsatisfactory', because often athletes worthy of reaching the final could be eliminated in the first round (H.M. Abrahams Scrapbook 1932-50, undated 1949 newspaper clipping).

On a more local basis, County championships began to re-emerge. In 1946, for example, Kent and London held their first-ever track championships, followed the next year by Devon, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire (SCWAAA Committee Minutes, 3 January 1945; David Terry, unpublished research). At the same time, Surrey described themselves as, 'in full swing, and doing all they [could] to encourage athletics for women and girls in their County' (Athletics, June 1947:22).

At club level, there was also growing enthusiasm and activity. More ladies' sections were being developed in men's clubs. For example, City of Rochester, in Kent, announced some promising athletes among the seventeen new lady members (Athletics, June 1946:11), and Manchester's Sale Harriers, who were to become one of the most influential women's clubs in the country, introduced a ladies' section in 1947. Indeed, it was noted that the formation of new women's clubs was rapid, and it looked 'as if the ladies may be beating the men in getting back to normal once more' (Athletics, December 1945:17). By the beginning of 1947 all parts of the country were active again.

The Chairman of the WAAA also observed that former athletes were now encouraging their own children into the sport, a factor which he believed helped to dispel the notion that athletics was harmful to women's procreative functions. He cited many mothers who maintained that competition had benefited their health for childbirth and motherhood.
Ironically, however, there were also setbacks and contradictions. Many of the clubs that escaped closure during the war now faced financial burdens which were a constant threat to their continued survival. As organisers of meetings, they had to pay, in advance, for track hire, permit fees, officials' expenses, and prizes - money which they hoped to recoup afterwards. However, post-war conditions made it difficult to estimate the numbers of competitors who would attend these meetings and the demand for services.

THE RETURN OF INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Some countries like the Balkans, Hungary and Poland had been devastated by the war, but they still managed to revive their national track championships in 1946 (Pallett 1955:60). Other European countries followed suit and the first international meeting after the war which involved English women athletes was held at Strasbourg on 11 August, 1946. The results reflected a similar pattern to those of pre-war competitions - excellent points were scored on the track, very few in the field, but this time, even fewer in the jumps (Pozzoli 1965:25).

The European Games, the first major championships since the same Games of 1938 - held from 22-25 August in Oslo, Norway - confirmed this trend. This was the first European Games to be run jointly with the men, although the Empire Games of 1934 and 1938 were also jointly organised. International competitions often meant that athletes were freed from the food restrictions of rationing and had better, more varied diets than at home. This was the case on the boat trip to Norway and in the team camp (Honorary Team
Manager's Report', WAAA Committee Minutes, 12 October 1946). From the team of six, two silver medals were secured by Winifred Jordan, in the 100 and 200 metres, but elsewhere results were disappointing, and not up to pre-war expectations. There were no British entries in the hurdles; the high jump yielded only seventh and ninth places, and the long jump thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth - all traditionally strong events. The discus provided the best result in the throws, with eighth place (Pozzoli 1965:25-6). The relay team placed fourth, which was quite a remarkable result, since they had not practised together before they arrived at the training camp ('Honorary Team Manager's Report', WAAA Committee Minutes, 12 October 1946). Paradoxically, occupied countries like France and Holland surpassed Britain in points scoring, and others, like Sweden and Switzerland, who had enjoyed all the benefits of neutrality, performed less well.

Although no world records were broken, of the nine events contested here, eight of the best-ever marks were by Europeans. Some of the countries competing before the war, such as Germany and Italy were not invited to these Games.

The strongest athletics nation was now the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), who won five of the nine events, with Holland taking three golds. By this time, the USSR were using sport as an ideological tool to prove the correctness and superiority of their political system. Their prowess as an international power in sport was limited almost

---

6The British men found medals difficult to win also, with Sydney Wooderson taking the only gold, in the 5,000 metres.

7This included the 200 metres, which had yet to appear on the Olympic programme.

6Germany were to stay out of international competition for several years, mainly because there were now two countries - East and West Germany - whose protracted negotiations over affiliations to the IAAF and IOC seemed insoluble.
entirely to Olympic sports - because they are the most visible and prestigious on the world stage. Soviet philosophy prior to the war had been on mass participation, rather than excellence, but, after the conflict, this stance changed radically, and elite female participation became a key element of their sports systems. It was carefully orchestrated that the Soviet athletes competed only when their expectations of medal successes were high, and by concentrating more than other countries on female talent they were able to remain top of the medal league for many years. By drawing attention to the athletic abilities of women, they significantly contributed towards changes in uneven gender relations in Olympic sport (Hargreaves 1994a:224-6, 236. Also, see Riordan 1985, 1986).9

Gradually, over many years, other nations adapted in different ways to this new form of 'state professional' athletics by investing in coaching and training programmes for elite performers, encouraging sponsorship and scholarship schemes, and working out ways to identify and develop talent in young athletes. For our female athletes the adjustment was particularly hard because of the adherence to a specifically English form of amateurism that was resistant to modernisation, and because unequal gender divisions continued to favour male athletics, and women's training and competing continued for a long time with minimal financial assistance and resourcing. Not surprisingly, the heaviest defeats in international matches were now inflicted by the Soviet Union. At an international match against the Soviet Union in 1955, the British team (comprised, with one exception, of English athletes) lost by 48 points to 83, and in 1959 by 41 to 76. Against other countries

9The Soviet athletes competed at the European Games in 1946, since they were affiliated to the IAAF, but they were not present at the 1948 Olympics, as they were not yet IOC members - but their National championships that year produced performances superior to those at the Games in all three throws (Pallett 1955:69).
they fared much better and between 1953 and 1955, for example, secured a fine unbroken sequence of seven victories (Watman 1973:111).

The fifteenth Congress of the IAAF met immediately before and after the European Games of 1946. At this Congress it was proposed by Avery Brundage, who was to become the President of the IOC, that a special commission for women's sport be elected (Pallett 1955:62). There were British members of the Commission, which gave them some say in the direction women's athletics was to take, although, with the demise of the FSFI, the voice of women in athletics had become significantly weakened. It was not an accident that the Women's Commission was set up at the time the USSR were emerging as an athletic power. The domination that Soviet women were to enjoy during the 1950s attracted significant criticism - in particular about the machine-like state organisation of sport and about suspicions of manipulative practices, including drug-taking. This discourse came at a time when there was antipathy by the West towards the East, so that female athletes rapidly became subjects in the Cold War of sport (see Riordan 1985, 1986; Hargreaves 1994a).

DOMESTIC SHORTCOMINGS AND POSSIBILITIES

The post-war British team was a mixture of old pre-war competitors, such as Winifred Jordan, Kathleen Tilley, and Dorothy Tyler - who had survived the war and maintained their skill and enthusiasm - and new young talent, such as Maureen Gardner and Sylvia Cheeseeman, which helped to create a continuous progression of athletes. What was also notable was the larger number of married women and mothers who competed internationally. Without doubt, there was greater acceptance of the sport by women, and
more of a challenge to traditional stereotypes of femininity.\textsuperscript{10} For example, Dorothy Tyler competed at the 1948 Olympics eight months after the birth of her second son, and in 1949 Mary Bartleet finished fourth in the National Cross-Country when she was 33 years old and the mother of three boys. It was 16 years after she had first run in this event (Alexander and Morgan 1988:43).

Deficiency in the field events was again recognised, and in a move to improve matters, a field events committee was formed in 1946, with representatives from each Area Association (Pallett 1955:131). It seems that this committee made little impact, as George Pallett wrote eight years later:

\begin{quote}
My tears smudge the pages I write on as I think of our throwers. When shall we persuade the hefty wenches who certainly exist in this country that athletics has a place for them even if no other sport has? (Athletics Weekly, 1 January 1955:15).
\end{quote}

It was argued that a lack of domestic competition was at least partly to blame. For example, it was said that Suzanne Allday's 'lack of close competition on the domestic front [during the 1950s] always weighed heavily against her in the tougher world beyond these shores' (Athletics Weekly, 13 April 1963:20). Brenda Bedford also drew attention to the lack of quality competition and asked for five fixtures every year between the ten leading throwers in each event. There is no evidence that this suggestion was acted upon (Athletics Weekly, 28 March 1964:8). Marea Hartman, the Secretary of the WAAA, commented that:

\begin{quote}
Altogether the field events continue to be a real headache even though we've had generous sponsorship to encourage coaching and specialist groups. A few years ago we went round farming areas trying to get big strong girls, who could hump
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10}The activities of female athletes away from the track was now considered newsworthy. For example, the marriage of 1948 Olympic 200 metres finalist, Margaret Walker, was reported nationally (Daily Graphic, 2 May 1950; Daily Mirror, 2 May 1950).
sacks of potatoes around, to take up the throws. But they weren't prepared to go out into an athletic arena in a pair of shorts and put the shot (World Sports, November 1965:27).

In 1969 Marea made a television appeal for throwers to represent Britain in the 1972 Olympics - publicly acknowledging the weaknesses in strength events. The response was encouraging - there were 832 replies. Marea was optimistic that a panacea for the continual dearth of throwers could be found. 'I know we possess the talent to knock the hides off the Russians and anybody else in these events, if only we can find it and give it the chance to flourish', she said (The Daily Mail, 26 November 1969). She was to be disappointed, because the throws remained a severe weakness in the armoury of English women athletes throughout the period of this study.

In 1946, the WAAA also realised that their athletes were no longer pre-eminent as a team, and considered the advisability of accepting invitations from abroad if they could not provide close competition. They also decided not to stage a home international until after the Olympic Games in Wembley, in 1948 (WAAA of Track Championships Sub-Committee Minutes, 12 October 1946).\textsuperscript{11} However, many of the new young athletes they had attracted during the war had notable successes in the early post-war years. In 1947, in the first peacetime international match, Britain beat France by 26 points to 24. Prominent among the new performers was Maureen Gardner, who was coached by her future husband, the recently appointed AAA Chief Coach, Geoff Dyson. In 1947, in her first season at the event, she set the British 80 metres hurdles record at 11.5 seconds, and then

\textsuperscript{11}1949 witnessed the first women's home international in 15 years (Daily Graphic, 20 August 1949).
recorded the same time a further four times. When she competed at the Olympics, the following year, at the age of nineteen, she ran even faster, setting a new Commonwealth record of 11.2 seconds. Although she was placed second, she recorded the same time as the winner, Fanny Blankers-Koen (Watman 1968:233; Tomlin 1964:96-7). Scientifically-based professional coaching was Dyson's hallmark, and despite being employed by the AAA, he became responsible for some of the most striking performances by English women during the coming years. His professionalism during the 1948 Olympics extended to taking Maureen Gardner to the Stadium by car, and arranging practice hurdles for her, since there were none at the track (Athletics Today: Supplement, 26 March 1992:9).

1948: LONDON'S AUSTERITY OLYMPICS

Two new British sprinters were also successful at the Olympics, both taking silvers at Wembley behind Fanny Blankers-Koen - Dorothy Manley in the 100 metres and Audrey Williamson in the 200 metres. Neither of these two had ever competed internationally before - and Audrey Williamson never did again. This contrasted with Dorothy Tyler, who had a long athletic career. When she won her silver medal at the 1948 Olympics, setting Olympic and Commonwealth records in the process, it was 12 years after she had won her first silver medal as Dorothy Odam at the 1936 Games in Berlin. She remains one of England's great Olympians, although her timing was extraordinarily unlucky. The rules of competition were altered after the 1936 Games and if the new rules had been in operation in Berlin then she would have won the gold there. After the 1948 Games the rules were changed again. If these new rules had been operational in London then, again, she would have taken the gold (Tyler 1976:41).
The British Olympic team was a mixture of young and mature, single and married athletes. They were participating at a time when women in general were taking part more confidently and openly in a widening range of sports, but it was probably the Dutchwoman, Francina (Fanny) Blankers-Koen, who, more than any other female athlete, influenced a change in the public's perception of women's physical abilities and of female athleticism (Pickering and Harris 1972:82). Despite having to train through the war in occupied territory, she equalled Jesse Owen's feat of winning four gold medals on the track, and her margin of victory in the 200 metres of 0.7 seconds remains the largest in an Olympic sprint, for either sex (Greenberg 1991:43). She claimed to be spurred on by pre-Games comments from Jack Crump, the British team manager, who felt that she was too old to win. 'I was very angry with him....It was just the thing to rouse me, to make me go out there and prove to them that, even if I was 30 years old and the mother of two children, I could still be a champion' (Cited in Athletics Today: Supplement. 26 March 1992:9). She had a particular influence on the English public and specifically on the English athletes because of her outstanding performances in the 1948 Olympics. They had been able to witness her in person, or on a small screen if they had access to one of the 80,000 television sets, (there were estimated to be over half a million viewers), or they were one of a crowd round the wireless listening to live commentaries (Killanin and Rodda 1983:129). Together with the extensive press coverage of the Games, television and radio reports brought Fanny Blankers-Koen's achievements very much into the lives of the English public, capturing their imagination. Much was made of her life of domestic bliss, the fact that she was a mother of two, a good cook, and always behaved impeccably

---

12 After her second gold medal, her husband's congratulations were limited to: 'Well done, Fanny. You aren't too old, after all' (Ibid).

158
and with great modesty. In a recorded interview in 1996, she maintained, 'All I did was win a few foot races' (Cited in the programme for the Securicor Games, 12 July 1996). She did much to popularise and gain acceptance for athletics among a wider range of English women than before. But Fanny (who was also the world record holder in the two jumps) marked the end of an era. With standards of performance now rising rapidly, the specialization for many years apparent in men's athletics began to become necessary for women also (World Sports, August 1952:13). Since 1948, there has never been another athlete able to dominate such a variety of events on a world stage.

Another athlete who created a favourable impression was the English high jumper, Dorothy Tyler, also a mother of two. She was the world's only pre-war female athlete of international standing to be ranked in the top ten in 1948, and her 'never to be forgotten' bid for the gold medal (H.M. Abrahams Scrapbook 1932-50, H.M. Abrahams, undated 1949 newspaper clipping; Matthews 1989:119) 'proved conclusively that the sporting public [would] watch top class women's athletics with absorbed attention' (Crump 1948:34). The 1948 Olympics was the first time for many years that the English public had the opportunity to witness quality competition and leading athletes. Apart from Fanny Blankers-Koen, and the high jump competition, there were the shot and discus winning displays (and third in the high jump) of the powerful French woman, Micheline Ostermeyer, whose throwing was described as 'a lesson in perfect timing and muscular control' (Bateman 1968:51). Jack Crump's description of the Olympics (in the official BOA report) marked the London Games as a milestone for women's athletics, placing them 'firmly on the Olympic programme' (1948:34). He was positive, appreciative and optimistic for the future:
Not until Wembley had the public taken seriously the endeavours of the fair sex in a branch of sport which has on the whole been regarded as predominantly masculine....this development is of the highest importance, and assures the beginning of a forward movement in what is at last recognised as a suitable sport for women....Women athletes can take considerable pride in the fact that their performances, their technique, their sportsmanship and general behaviour at Wembley, removed many of the objections which had been advanced by critics who opposed their inclusion in the Olympic Games (Ibid).

Crump's view was not endorsed by the organisers of the men's British Empire versus USA match, held just after the Olympics, at the White City. Whilst male athletes had a full programme, women were allotted a mere two events - the hurdles and sprint relay (Pallett 1955:68-9). This token allowance continued at the same meeting in 1952, when only three events were included in the programme (Ibid:154).

As was now usual, the IAAF held a Congress (the sixteenth) concurrent with the Olympics. It was an important one for women: the Women's Commission had looked in detail at athletics and made several wide-ranging proposals. For example, they recommended the inclusion of a pentathlon in both the Olympic and European Games, consisting of shot, both jumps, 200 metres and 80 metres hurdles. They also requested an 800 metres race at the 1950 European Games, in order to consider its suitability for the Olympics. Regrettably, the IAAF Congress rejected this submission.\(^{13}\) They did, however, ratify the pentathlon for the next European Games. Another matter which the Commission had considered, and which Congress sanctioned, was sex testing as a prerequisite for entry to the Olympics and Europeans, and for any world record ratification (Pallett 1955:67-8). There had frequently been suspicions surrounding men posing as women athletes - a topic

\(^{13}\)The 800 metres was agreed for inclusion in European Championships at the seventeenth IAAF Congress in 1950, too late for inclusion that year (Pallett 1955:77).
which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

In 1948, the number of nations including women in their Olympic team expanded to 27, including countries new to major women's championships, like Korea and Chile. Altogether there were 140 female athletes. Women's athletics continued its progress to become truly worldwide in character. The programme of events had also increased significantly, from six to nine, with the inclusion of the 200 metres, shot and long jump. They were important additions to the programme, which still lacked the depth of events offered at the pre-war series of Women's World Games. Indeed, the addition of these events was no real advance, since they had already been contested at the 1938 and 1946 European Games, and 'there was still no attempt to cater for runners whose aptitude was for the longer distances' (Athletics Today Supplement, 26 March 1992:4). The 200 metres was to remain the longest Olympic event until the re-introduction of the 800 metres in 1960.

However, English women continued to push forward the boundaries of competition. For example, in 1949, a Southern Counties team set an inaugural world record for the 3x880 yards relay of 7 minutes 7.8 seconds. English meetings continued to include these events although they were not officially recognised by the IAAF.

SOVIET DOMINATION OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS IN OTHER SPHERES

Another competition which was resumed after the war, in 1947, was the World University Games. USSR sportsmen and women were often given the convenience of student status while pursuing an athletic career. Because many of the Soviet students at the University
Games were also Olympic competitors, these Games also became a Soviet ideological tool. At the 1949 event in Budapest, Soviet women won every event except one. Iron Curtain States dominated the University Games so completely that in 1951 an International Federation of University Sport was founded, specifically to promote university athletics between students from outside the Soviet bloc. There was no comparison between the two meetings; every event at the inaugural International Student Games in 1951 was substantially inferior to the World University Games of the same year (Pallett 1955:84). The ideological and practical separation of amateur and 'professional' student sport highlighted the huge gulf that existed between the Western and Eastern blocs.

The election of the Soviet Union to the IOC in 1951 introduced the 'state athlete' to the Olympics. The Corinthian era, according to Charles Palmer, was over (Coe et al 1992:223). Throughout the 1950s, Soviet record setting became commonplace, and it was quickly realised by the British team management that to continue competing on even terms was an impossibility. Jack Crump was 'staggered by the wealth and power of the Russian sports plan', and he remained convinced that, 'If we cannot afford more money for sport, then we must expect to be beaten by a country like Russia....It's time we realised that physical fitness and education are as important as the arts and science' (undated newspaper clipping, WAAA archives). But his pleas largely went unheeded, and English athletics, for both men and women, continued in the same genteel and amateur vein that had persisted for many years.

---

14 The two Games merged in 1963 and are now held biennially (Matthews 1989:89).
15 For full details see Tomlin (1964).
16 Russia was one of the states of the USSR.
THE 1950S: SOCIAL CHANGES

By the 1950s many employers had adapted to women's needs in a variety of ways, due, in part, to a continuing labour shortage. The marriage bar was progressively lifted, enabling women to continue working to a much greater age; there was a significant rise in part-time work, and a slow, but progressive shift towards pay parity with men. Homely family values were still stressed, but young women were gradually adapting with confidence to greater social freedoms. Free school milk and the welfare state gave a sense of an improving future (Rowbotham 1997:290-301). Gradually, increasing numbers of women adapted to these changes and expressed their freedom in a variety of physical outlets, including athletics.

1950: TWO MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

1950 was a busy year for English athletes. In February they were in Auckland for the Empire Games. Only seven nations were present, and English results were disappointing. The Australian and New Zealand competitors took every event on the grass track except the high jump, which was won by the thirty year old Dorothy Tyler. Dorothy was described as 'the most experienced and unflappable female high jumper of her day' and this victory emulated her performance of twelve years earlier (Dheensaw 1994:39).

Dorothy's gold medal, together with two silver medals - one in the same event by Bertha Piggott, and another in the 660 yards relay, and bronze in the three person 440 yards relay were the only medals won (Pozzoli 1965:28). But limited finances had led to a reduction in team numbers. Only those with the most realistic chances of success were chosen - a mere seven athletes. Consequently, the two specialist high jumpers took part in the javelin - the only throw entered by English women. In each of the eight events Games' records...
were equalled or broken, and Australian sprinter, Marjorie Jackson, twice equalled world records (Oaten 1958:26). But, by comparison, English performances were poor. Pallett rendered the women invisible by commenting ironically that, 'England should feel fairly satisfied with the performance of the men' (1955:141), and Oaten simply stated that the English women did not take the competition seriously enough (1958:30).

The weaknesses exposed against Commonwealth opposition were again highlighted when the English members of the British team struggled to match the might of the Soviet Union at the European Games, held in August, in Brussels. These were little removed in quality from the Olympics, since nine of the world records for the ten events on the programme were still held by Europeans. Britain refrained from contesting events at which they were uncompetitive, and so, for example, did not enter any athletes for the shot and discus. There were serious weaknesses in several events, but there were highlights also, as the British team won the sprint relay and took the first two places in the high jump. The high jump was won by Sheila Alexander (later Lerwill), the world's first female straddle jumper; other jumpers, such as Dorothy Tyler, persisted with the outmoded scissors style (Athletics Today, 23 August 1990:28). Maureen Dyson (née Gardner) had almost recaptured her best form and came second in the hurdles. A silver was also won by Bertha Piggott in the newly contested pentathlon. School-girl June Foulds was placed third in the 100 metres, the same position as Dorothy Manley in the 200 metres (Pozzoli 1965:28). Overall, Britain were the unofficial second-placed team, which was a considerable improvement on the Empire Games' performances - but well behind the Soviet score (Pallett 1955:74-77).
Between the 1948 and 1952 Olympics significant advances were taking place worldwide as increasing numbers of countries were promoting athletics for women. For example, in 1950, women's events were included in a men's match between Pakistan and Ceylon, and 1951 saw the First Asian Games, held in India, which included women's athletics. Japan totally dominated this meeting, and competitors also came from Indonesia and Singapore (Pallett 1955:81). The majority of competing nations formed part of the British Empire and no doubt the colonial influence was partly responsible for the initial development of women's athletics in these countries, as it was in British Guiana,17 who staged it's first national track championships for women in 1951 (Ibid:80).

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

In England women's domestic opportunities improved, particularly in inter-club competitions. Some of these meetings demonstrated a marked co-operation with men, who were allowing increasing numbers of women's events in conjunction with their own fixtures. By the time of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, for example, the Norkopping Trophy meeting was held in conjunction with the Poly's male Sward event, and the Gibson Trophy meeting was put on by Ilford AC. Midlands' clubs also promoted women's fixtures, such as the one in conjunction with Birchfield Harriers men's Waddilove event. The popular Birchfield Floodlit Meetings,18 which commenced in 1948 and continued uninterrupted for twenty years, attracted crowds of up to 15,000 in the early 1950s, and were for the benefit of both sexes. The women's events often included exceptional talents, such as Fanny

17Now Guyana.

18Birchfield Harriers was a big, but not a rich, club. To raise money it let out the ground for speedway meetings, whose organisers installed the floodlighting for their own use (Alexander and Morgan 1988:43).
Blankers Koen, who competed there in both 1948 and 1952. However, with the installation of floodlighting at London's White City, foreign stars were more reluctant to travel to the Midlands for competition (Undated newspaper clipping, 1948, WAAA archives; Pallett 1955:149; Alexander and Morgan 1988:43).

Some events did not recommence immediately after the war. The first post-war Cross-Country International, for example, did not take place until 1954. No continental teams participated, and it was a low key affair with England overwhelming Scotland by 10 points to 34.\textsuperscript{19} However, it was cross-country which started the decentralisation of administration away from the Southern power base. The Midlands had made a considerable effort to continue athletics during the war and it was they who began the move for a separate association for cross-country and road-walking after the war. In 1950 the Women's Cross-Country and Road Walking Association was formed (Pallett 1955:175). This Association helped to reduce the administrative burden of the WAAA, which had already begun with the formation of the Regional Associations, and the BAAB,\textsuperscript{20} which was responsible for international affairs.

1952: THE HELSINKI OLYMPICS

McNab observes that from 1952 the Soviet Union had established 'a painstaking and systematic coaching scheme, combined with remorseless screening of talent, [which] was to develop a deeply seated athletic culture' (1975:66). At the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, the

---

\textsuperscript{19}In cross-country races the lowest score wins. The system is one point for first place, two points for second place, and so on. Each individual athlete's score is then added together for the total team score.

\textsuperscript{20}This was formed in 1932, and is dealt with in Chapter Eight.
women of the USSR dominated proceedings, winning eleven medals and providing finalists in every event except the 100 metres (Crump 1952:34; McNab 1975:66). They particularly overshadowed other competitors in the throws, because in most cases, it was argued, 'They were bigger, stronger and with better technique' (Athletics Weekly, 9 August 1952:12). Soviet concentration on these events had started to produce women specifically suited to each discipline. At the time of the 1946 European Games, Pallett had described the Soviet throwers as, 'Amazons bearing the hammer and sickle on their vests' (1955:61-2). Specialization was integral to the Soviet sports system, but its influence was widespread and led to the effective demise of the amateur ethos prevalent in the West during the pre-war era.

The British team was still mostly composed of English athletes, whose results in Helsinki were disappointing. Sheila Lerwill went into the high jump as world record holder, but had to settle for silver, at a height seven centimetres lower than her world record. Dorothy Tyler, in her third Games, was hampered by a pulled stomach muscle, and finished only seventh (Tyler 1956:52). Shirley Cawley's bronze in the long jump was the only other individual medal, and her leap of 19 feet 5 inches at last broke Muriel Cornell's twenty-two year-old British record. One more medal was won, by the relay team, who also took bronze. This was a particularly fine performance, since their time of 46.2 seconds was a fifth of a second inside the previous world record. With no individual world-class sprinters, the result was attributed to weeks of practice in London with the best coaches in the country, prior to sailing to the Games (Pallett 1955:153). Sylvia

---

In 1951 Dorothy had at last changed her style from the outmoded scissors to the western roll. This enabled her to continue at the highest level of competition well into her thirties (Watman 1973:172).
Disley (then Miss Cheeseman) recalls the benefits of this coaching: 'We were capable of gaining yards on every change and I think this is the whole secret of relay racing' (The Olympic Years: 1952, 1992). Jean Desforges reached the hurdles final, but in traditionally strong events like the sprints, only Sylvia Cheeseman advanced as far as the semi-finals.\(^{22}\)

In the discus and javelin, Suzanne Farmer (later Alliday) and Diane Coates had set world class British records that year, but in Helsinki both were well below par, each managing only fifteenth place. There was no one who could perform to a sufficiently high standard to send in the shot (Tomlin 1964:104, 111, 114; McWhirter and McWhirter 1972:137-146).

The considerable improvement in worldwide standards during this period was attributed by Crump to a wider acceptance of women's athletics, greater opportunities, and a 'more enlightened public attitude'. The events in Helsinki, he felt, were 'regarded with a much greater seriousness' than in any previous Olympics (1952:33). At Helsinki, Olympic records were set in every event except the high jump, and world records in the 200 metres, hurdles, shot and relay. The last three are all technical events, which implies that coaching standards were rising. In all, almost 100 performances exceeded the previous Olympic records. In addition, the gold medallists and record breakers came from Australia, Czechoslovakia, New Zealand, South Africa, the USA and the USSR, and thirteen countries were represented in finals, indicating that rising standards were worldwide (Abrahams 1956:36). In all, there were 267 entries from 39 countries

\(^{22}\)Sylvia's sprinting was not helped by the after effects of Scandinavian cuisine, as she suffered from 'the most terrible wind, and I could hardly get my shorts on - and I remember doing exercises right up to the final to try and get rid of this wind' (The Olympic Years: 1952, 1992).
British women had made some advances since 1948, but many of the gaps between world and domestic performances were widening, and countries like Australia were moving forwards in some areas as fast as the USSR. In all, twenty-one world records were set by women in 1952. Three of these were by British athletes; the 880 yards by Valerie Ball - in a time over five seconds slower than the metric equivalent 800 metres performance - and the 4x200 metres and 3x880 yards relays (neither event was run regularly in competition) (IAAF 1970:79, 82). Soviet women continued their seemingly inexorable advance, setting six of the nine world records made in 1953.

The eighteenth IAAF Congress met before and after the Olympics. Women were becoming fitter, stronger and faster, all facets which were evidenced during the Helsinki competitions. Consequently, proposals made by the Women's Commission to extend the programme of events at major championships were now met more favourably. The 800 metres - albeit by a narrow majority - and the pentathlon, were recommended for inclusion in the Olympics by Congress, as was a two miles cross-country. The latter event was an extraordinary inclusion, since it had long been deleted from the men's programme as being too difficult a race to contest in the heat of summer competition!

It was ironical that women were seeking an expansion of their athletic programme at a time of severe austerity, and when accommodation was difficult to find following the

---

23 In the men's events there were 995 entries from 57 countries, contesting 25 events (Ibid).

169
wartime destruction of property. For example, during the London Olympics, athletes and officials had to be billeted in several locations in and around London, rather than in one camp. Even home international matches were difficult to finance (Crump 1966:153). In the 1949 triangular match with France and the Netherlands, each team was limited to nine competitors, which led to some unusual event doubling up - Jean Desforges, for example, after winning the hurdles, threw the discus 'somewhat erratically about 70 feet in order to gain a point' (H.M. Abrahams Scrapbook 1932-50, newspaper cutting, H.M. Abrahams, 21 August 1949). The prohibitive costs of sending international teams abroad necessitated keeping the numbers of athletes to a minimum. For example, only eight athletes travelled to New Zealand for the 1954 Empire Games and nine to the Europeans later that year. The trip to New Zealand was hugely expensive and outlay for lengthy periods of accommodation was required for both competitions. However, thirteen athletes were able to enjoy the brief trip to the International in France after the European Games (WAAA Committee Minutes, 9 February 1954). Against this element of restricted expenditure, women sought for more events at major championships. The IAAF acceded to these requests, when in less austere times they had rigorously fought against any additions to the women's programme. It was apparent that after the Second World War, traditional arguments against women's athletics had become unsustainable.

However, the organisers of the post-Olympic Empire versus USA match in London did not follow this line of thought, and provided women with few opportunities for competition. As in 1948, the men's match took centre stage and women were allocated only three events - the hurdles and two relays. Women normally had many more opportunities in domestic fixtures. For example, in 1953, Ann Oliver set a British record of 5 minutes 9.8
seconds in the mile, although it was not a distance recognised internationally, nor was it accorded world record status (Pallett 1955:100; Athletics Monthly, December 1980:32). In 1954 Diane Leather became the first woman to break through the five minute barrier, with 4 minutes 59.6 seconds\textsuperscript{24} - just 23 days after Roger Bannister's first sub four minute run. The following year she made the phenomenal improvement down to 4 minutes 45.0 seconds\textsuperscript{25}.\textsuperscript{26} At the time, the WAAA were possibly the only National governing body to allow a mile to be run on the track, which again demonstrated their continuing commitment to give English female athletes greater opportunities than almost every other country (Pallett 1955:143; Giller 1982:96).

1954: TWO MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

The fifth Empire Games in Vancouver, held in August, 1954, are most commonly associated with the 'Miracle Mile' between Bannister and Landy, and the dramatic collapse of Jim Peters at the end of the marathon. For the English women the Games were less memorable. They won no gold medals. Dorothy Tyler gained a silver behind Thelma Hopkins who set an Empire record in winning the high jump and who, although English-born, had elected to compete for Northern Ireland. Further silvers were won by Suzanne Farmer in the discus, and the relay team. Jean Desforges took third in the long jump and

\begin{itemize}
  \item Less than an hour before the mile Diane won the 800 metres in the UK all-comers record time of 2 minutes 14.1 seconds (Athletics Today, 20 July 1989:16).
  \item On the 40th anniversary of Bannister's mark in 1994, numerous high profile celebrations were arranged. Nothing was done to honour Diane's performance.
  \item Later that year, at the WAAA Championships, Diane also set a world record for 880 yards of 2 minutes 9.0 seconds, which compared very favourably with the metric record of 2 minutes 7.3 seconds - approximately equivalent to 2 minutes 8 seconds for the half mile (Pallett 1955:109).
\end{itemize}
hurdles, as did Shirley Hampton in the 220 yards (Pozzoli 1965:34). Differences between English athletes and the world's best were highlighted in the relay, when Australia's Marjorie Jackson - who won the sprint double at Helsinki - took the baton for the anchor leg some twelve yards behind Anne Pashley, yet still overhauled her for gold (Dheensaw 1994:50).

Only a month later English performances in the British team at the fifth European Championships in Berne were more encouraging. Jean Desforges (later Pickering) won the long jump, having become the first British woman to clear 20 feet the year before. Jean's victory received front page coverage in the News Chronicle, which illustrated the significance of a now scarce win for an English athlete at a major championship. The back page carried the caption, 'Typist From London Outjumps Champion of Russia' (27 August 1954). The implication was that it was still possible for a simple, unpretentious amateur athlete and office worker to beat off the might of the full Soviet sporting nation. The overall picture, however, was that Soviet women dominated the twenty-two nations present, winning eight of the eleven gold medals on offer (Athletics Today. 23 August 1990:28). In some areas they were so advanced that direct comparisons with men's performances were made. For example, a reporter in Athletics Weekly observed that:

One could not fail to be impressed by the Russian girl runners, particularly Itkina, Turova and Otkalenko, all of whom have actions which many a male runner

---

27First in the 200 metres in 24.3 seconds. She also set a European record of 23.5 seconds for this event in 1956, which she reduced to 23.4 seconds in 1961; a world record in the 220 yards of 23.6 seconds in 1956; three world records at 400 metres between 1955 and 1959, reducing the figure to 53.9 seconds, and another world record in the 440 yards of 53.7 seconds in 1959 (Tomlin 1964: 82-8).

28First in the 100 metres in 11.8 seconds, and second in the 200 metres in 24.4 seconds.
would like to emulate. Their times, too, come to that, for their performances are now up to a useful club standard for men (11 September 1954:12).

However, in some events, English athletes were able to provide the Soviet women with stiff competition. For example, Diane Leather, who set a British record in the heats of the 800 metres, gained a silver in the final, splitting two Soviet athletes. There were also bronze medals for Anne Pashley in the 100 metres, Shirley Hampton in the 200 metres, and Pam Seaborne in the hurdles. This was a good range of medals, enhanced by other finalists in the 100 and 800 metres, the hurdles, and both jumps, although there were no English entries for any of the three throws, or the pentathlon (Pozzoli 1965:34-5).

Ironically, the increased internationalization of women's athletics appeared to do little to benefit English performances to a significant extent. The rationale provided by athletic analysts was that there were insufficient quality performers for English athletes to train with and compete against regularly. For example, in less regularly contested events, such as the 800 metres, Soviet athletes provided the only in-depth competition and it was asserted in Athletics Weekly that Diane Leather's failure to win this event in Berne was due in large part to her race inexperience (4 September 1954:11). This was also commented on by Joy Jordan, who agreed that a lack of domestic competition had held back her career. She said:

29 First in the 800 metres in 2 minutes 8.8 seconds. She also set three world records in 1954 and 1955 at this distance, with a best of 2 minutes 5.0 seconds, as well as one at 880 yards of 2 minutes 6.6 seconds in 1956 (Tomlin 1964:89-91).


173
Yes, this was definitely the trouble - not having a lot of hard races. I think it left me with no killer instinct, to be quite honest; I hadn't learned to fight. Running quarters against girls better than me [at that event], like Jean Sorrell and all those helped, but there wasn't enough of it (Athletics Weekly, 19 January 1963:15).

WORLD-CLASS ATHLETICS IN ENGLAND

Soviet women's athletics came to England later in 1954, in an inter-city match between London and a very strong Moscow team. This fixture, held under floodlights, and in conjunction with the men's match, drew a capacity crowd. Apart from the throws, in which the Soviets gained maximum points in each event, some of the London women's performances were outstanding. For example, in the 200 metres Jean Scrivens equalled the best-ever run seen in this country, with 24.5 seconds, followed one tenth of a second later by Shirley Hampton. The two Soviet athletes they beat had been the gold and silver medallists at the European Games. In the hurdles, Pam Seaborne equalled the British record of 11.2 seconds, and was credited with the same time as the winner. A full programme of events was contested, which gave the British public the opportunity to see many of the world's leading female athletes at the top of their form. The support of the crowd suggested that it was not necessary for English girls to win for the public to enjoy the athletic spectacle (Pallett 1955:111), although there was subsequent criticism that Soviet athletes were paid professionals (Athletics Weekly, 6 November 1954:10-13).

---

31 With the advent of floodlighting facilities track meetings now extended well into September (Pallett 154-5).

32 English records are distinct from British records, which can be set by any member of the four home nations. At this time almost all the British records were set by English athletes. Also, in the Empire and Commonwealth Games, there are separate teams for each home nation - but in the European and Olympic competitions the representatives combined to form one British team.
Throughout 1954 the British team had considerable successes in international matches, comfortably beating Czechoslovakia, France and Hungary, and they were described by Jack Crump, the men's team manager, as 'magnificent women athletes', who 'added considerable lustre to our athletic reputation by their achievements in international competition'. He placed the team as second only to the USSR (Athletics Weekly, 16 October 1954:10).33

During the early post-war period, women's athletics became a popular spectator activity in both West and East Europe, and international matches were utilised as an ideological tool for the building of international relations. For example, it was reported in the press that a British team that visited Russia in the mid-fifties was greeted at the airport by 'A yelling crowd of 1,500 [who] broke through the barriers and surged around the plane' (undated newspaper clipping, WAAA archives). The 1954 International in Czechoslovakia was reported locally as 'One of the most welcome sporting events of the year', under the headline, 'Sport Opens Way To Friendship' (Czechoslovak Life, December 1954:28). British victories created a considerable following for the sport and were a cause for national pride. Stories of successful female athletes commanded prime space in national newspapers and were used to divert attention away from national misfortunes in other sports. For example, in 1954, the News Chronicle carried a front page headline: 'British Girls Avenge The Arsenal' - a cry which related to the women's athletic wins against Czechoslovakia, and 'a powerful Hungarian side', compared to the Arsenal men's football

33The dominance of the Russian athletes - both men and women - was evidenced by a typical headline of a meeting between the two countries: 'Russians Leave Us Gasping: Britain's athletes retreat from Moscow - 79 point defeat' (Undated newspaper clipping, September 1951, WAAA archives).
team losing in Moscow 5-0. Although the Soviet Athletes remained pre-eminent, it was generally recognised that the British women's team were second only to the Soviet Union. This was claimed to be the case on Budapest radio, and Marea Hartman, the British team manager, reflected the pride of the nation and of the female athletic community when she said in an interview for the News Chronicle, 'Here at least is one place behind the Iron Curtain where they are very respectful of British sporting standards' (7 October 1954:1).

And the nationalist discourse continued to embody implications that British women were real amateurs and competing according to traditional standards of 'pure' athleticism and fair competition by comparison with the less ethical standards of sportsmanship intrinsic to the soviet sports system. Although English athletes continued to make up most of the British team, their Englishness was assimilated into Britishness throughout the period.

1956: THE MELBOURNE OLYMPICS

The Melbourne Olympics, held during the closing months of 1956, marked another shift in the declining status of English athletes, brought about by the rise in status of the Australians. The Melbourne Games were the first to be staged in the Southern Hemisphere, so that Australian women were competing in their own summer season, and took all four track events. Except for the high jump, won by American Mildred McDaniel, all the field event titles were taken by athletes from the Eastern bloc. Once again, the four English members of Britain's relay team ran inside the world record, but were still beaten. Their silver medal time of 44.7 seconds was two tenths of a second behind the Australian quartet. The English athletes, who had been practising baton changing since the summer, ironically blamed poor change-overs for their defeat by the star-studded Australians (The Sun, [Australia] 3 December 1956).
Dorothy Tyler finished equal twelfth in the high jump, in her last international appearance - 20 years after Berlin. At the other end of the scale, hurdler Carole Quinton was beginning her Olympic career, having just obtained a place in the British team. Sending her to Melbourne was an expense that could be ill-afforded at the time, but was vindicated because she progressed as far as the semi-finals. Aged only nineteen, she later regarded this Olympic experience as an encouragement to work harder in training - a major factor in her subsequent successes (Alexander and Morgan 1988:50). It soon became a feature of teams at major championships to include young, inexperienced athletes, with the intention of giving them a taste of a big event in the hope that this would benefit them in the future. For example, seventeen year old sprinter, Maureen Tranter, who had no realistic prospects of competition in Tokyo, was included in the 1964 Olympic team (undated newspaper cutting, WAAA archives). She subsequently enjoyed a successful career.

1958: BRITAIN HOSTS A MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP

July 1958 saw the Empire and Commonwealth Games move back to the UK for the first time since 1934. The competition was in Cardiff, in Wales. Thirteen nations took part, including women from India, and five teams from Africa. Prior to the Games, the Australian sprinters had seemed invincible, but after their unexpected failure in the 100 yards the possibility of an English victory took shape. The English 4x110 yards relay team of Heather Armitage, June Foulds, Dorothy Hyman and Madeleine Weston combined to break the world record, returning the time of 45.3 seconds (Hyman and Pilley 1964:45).

Sheila Hoskin took gold in the long jump, just holding off the challenge of eighteen year old Mary Bignal (later Rand). Heather Armitage won silver in the 100 yards, and bronze
in the 220 (whilst setting British records in both events), which was the same position
secured by Madeleine Weston in the short sprint. Carole Quinton took second place in the
hurdles. But the throws were a revelation. Suzanne Allday (née Farmer) won the discus -
in a Commonwealth record - with the last throw of the competition. This was the only
English women's achievement of note in this discipline during all the years covered by this
study, and she followed it with a silver in the shot. Averil Williams collected the bronze
in the javelin with a British record throw (Pozzoli 1965:45; Tomlin 1964:78-115; Dell and

There were also English successes at the European Championships in Stockholm in
August. Heather Young (née Armitage) took the 100 metres, although she tore ligaments
in her foot just two strides from the line. The injury prevented her taking any further part
in the meeting. June Foulds ran 24.0 seconds in the semi-final of the 200 metres and then
also withdrew through injury. The final was only won in 24.1 seconds. The loss of these
two leading sprinters precluded gold in the relay, and made the silver medal win a
remarkable achievement. Moyra Hiscox, in the 400 metres, and Dorothy Shirley, in the
high jump, both won bronze medals, and Diane Leather again split two Soviets in the 800
metres, in British record time (News Chronicle, 22 August 1958:1; Pozzoli 1965:46;

1960: THE ROME OLYMPICS

The 1960 Olympics were a disappointment for English athletes of both sexes. It has been
argued that a major contributing factor was the lack of acclimatization afforded the
athletes in the sweltering summer heat of Rome (Allen 1960:43), although nineteen year
old Dorothy Hyman thought that this did not affect her (Hyman and Pilley 1964:70).

However, the accusation was that English administrators had caused this problem by their
haphazard preparations for the Games, whilst other countries adopted a more considered,
professional approach. Several athletes, including Phyllis Perkins, requested an earlier
flight to Rome but this was refused on the grounds that there was no room on the plane.
Phyllis later discovered that seating was no problem and that she had been lied to by the
team manager. Another athlete was even refused permission to travel to Rome early at his
own expense (Athletics Weekly, 26 November 1960:10). There were other, more
individual reasons for failure, particularly for the perceived 'golden girl', Mary Bignal.
She suffered from the responsibility of being a favourite, and described herself, prior to
the Games as, 'One of the unenviable few to be tipped for a gold medal' (Bignal 1960:90).
She failed to reach the final stages of the long jump, finishing ninth, despite leading the
qualifying round earlier in the day with a Commonwealth record (Allen 1960:51).34

Increased standards, closer competitions, and higher expectations placed greater
psychological pressures on top competitors and was increasingly perceived as a problem
relevant to the developing field of sport science and the psychology of coaching.

The Olympics were still dominated by the Soviets, who took six of the available titles,
including the three throws (Tyler 1976:59, 61), but in the global context, there were
individual performers from an increasing number of countries around the world who were
achieving formidable times and distances and the Americans presented a heightened

34There was also conjecture that she may have been affected by newspaper stories
about a romance with a Dutch athlete (lbid:49). By this time some newspapers had ceased
objective reporting of activities on the track and started to delve into the private lives of
sportsmen and women. This publicised the sport, but added an unwelcome dimension to the
careers of many athletes.
challenge because of their production of athletes through the college scholarship system. Although Dorothy Shirley cleared a personal best height and shared silver in the high jump, she was unfortunate to be pitted against Romania's Iolanda Balas, a great athlete who remained undefeated for eight years. English women had now won the silver medal in this event in every Olympics since 1936, with the exception of 1956 (Watman 1973:96). Dorothy Hyman was another English athlete who faced exceptional talent. She describes below her experiences of being matched against Wilma Rudolph, one of the greatest sprinters of all time.35

I remember in the final I was frightened and I wasn't a particularly good starter....but I got a flyer and usually if I got a flyer it put me off, but it didn't - and I remember getting away well, and I would say at 40 metres I thought, 'I'm in front.' I couldn't believe it; but obviously, when Wilma got into her stride, that was it (The Olympic Years: 1960, 1992).

There was still opposition to women's athletics, but the positive impact made by Wilma was deeply felt around the world, a world that now had more immediate and impressionable access through the mediums of television and film:

I defy anyone who saw Wilma win the 100 metres today....to say they dislike all women's athletics. This was surely one of the most aesthetically satisfying moments in the history of the sport (Allen 1960:64).

Prior to Rome, Dorothy was only ranked sixth in the 100 metres and tenth in the 200 metres. Consequently, her silver in the 100, and bronze in the 200, were particularly creditable,36 and she set British records for both distances in the preliminary rounds (Allen

35'The rest of the world, past and present, is just not in the same class' (Allen 1960:64).

36'The only other female runner to win two individual medals in Rome was Rudolph (Hyman and Pilley 1964:75).
1960:64; Lechenperg 1960:220-2, 241-2; Hyman and Pilley 1964:69,73). Her second place in the short sprint\(^{37}\) was claimed to have 'stunned the statisticians, ruined the patterns of pre-Olympic form, but made many people back home in Cudworth [in Yorkshire] proud that they had once helped to buy this miner's daughter a pair of spikes' (Rodda 1961:57).

Dorothy's successes clearly had relevance not only for the athletic community, but also for people from her home town because it was symbolic of the solidarity of the local community. Female athletes across the world were the focus for more conspicuous and systematic constructions of both national and local identities - processes that were linked to their increased visibility in the media.

Also at the Rome Olympics, Carole Quinton equalled the British record in the final of the hurdles whilst winning silver behind the Soviet's Irina Press, and Mary Bignal recovered her composure sufficiently to place fourth. Carole's medal was regarded by some as surprising. By the time of the WAAA Championships in July she had raced only three times that season. The hurdles is a highly technical event and race experience is vital to bring out the best in a competitor. Carole was a member of Birchfield Harriers and, although they were one of the leading clubs in the country, their athletes were removed from the nucleus of high level competition, the South of England. The lack of international competition continued to be a factor that restricted development for English women. This had been commented on by Abrahams in 1948 (H.M. Abrahams Scrapbook 1932-1950, undated newspaper cutting) and again by Allen twelve years later (1960:57).

---

\(^{37}\)Jennifer Smart, in only her first international season, also reached the final, which was the first time that two English women had reached the final six of this event.
One of the most heart-breaking incidents in the Games concerned the javelin throwing of Sue Platt. In a traditionally weak event for English athletes - men and women - she threw somewhere over 177 feet, in excess of the Olympic record and comfortably in second place. She became so excited to see how far she had thrown that she walked forward after her javelin, and across the scratch line, thus invalidating her effort.38 Her best legal attempt placed her seventh, just outside the position necessary for a further three throws (Allen 1960:58; Eriksen 1962:36).

The 800 metres had been removed from the Olympics after the 1928 final, ostensibly due to the frailty of female athletes. It had now been reintroduced after an absence of 32 years, so great significance was attached to the athletes' performances.39 The organisers in Rome instituted a timetable of competition that was particularly difficult for the female competitors, leaving only twenty-four hours between the heats and final of the 800 metres (and a mere ninety minutes between the preliminaries and finals of the 200 metres). The 1928 800 metres winner, Lina Radke-Batschaur, was in the stands watching the final. She made the point that, in comparison with 1928, 'all the competitors are so well prepared that they will make a much better showing than in the old days, and score considerably better times' (Cited in Lechenperg 1960:224). It was a fast race, in which the world record was equalled, and although England's Joy Jordan finished a very tired sixth, it was in an excellent time of 2 minutes 7.8 seconds. Just two weeks later she had recovered

38 Pozzoli described her disqualification from this throw: 'An Italian official, apparently possessed by a spark of Mussolini's anti-British animosity, seized on this veriest technicality to declare the throw invalid. An outrageously unsporting decision totally opposed to the true amateur spirit of Olympic competition' (1965:51).

39 The IOC vote in favour of restoring the 800 metres was close - 26 to 22 (Guttmann 1991:203).
sufficiently to make a solo run in setting a new world half mile record of 2 minutes 6.1 seconds. An equivalent time over 800 metres would have been sufficient for the bronze medal in Rome.

There were mixed comments about the Olympic race. The Daily Express reporter, in identical fashion to those who opposed the 1928 event, characterized it a 'gruelling gallop' and argued that the '800 metres endurance test must be struck off the Olympic programme again', because it was too strenuous for women (6 September 1960). Allen, however, made no adverse comment, and regarded the race as 'exciting' (1960:89). But the very act of taking part, without ill effects, in an event surrounded by controversy about female ability, was part of a process which was stretching the boundaries of participation and redefining female physicality. As Hargreaves (1994a) points out, sportswomen were active agents of change.40

1962: TWO MORE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The European Championships were held in Belgrade, in September 1962, prior to the Empire Games. Dorothy Hyman continued her good form by taking a complete set of medals: gold in the 100 metres (the first individual gold of her career), silver in the 200 metres, and bronze in the relay. Joy Grieveson brought the British record down to 53.9 seconds in the 400 metres, while taking the silver. Sixteen year-old Linda Knowles gained a bronze in the high jump, as did Mary Rand (née Bignal) - who was beginning to exorcise the memories of Rome - in the long jump. Mary also gained a bronze in the

40For reports on these Games, see also Allen 1960:89, 91, 104; Lechenperg 1960:223-4, 241-4, 249; Eriksen 1962:26; Tomlin 1964:80-115; Allen 1965:51.
relay, and these performances came just four months after the birth of her daughter, which again emphasized that motherhood was no longer the supposed physically debilitating factor which could prematurely end an athletic career (Pozzoli 1965:57; Athletics Today, 23 August 1990:29).

Eleven women's teams travelled to Perth for the seventh Empire Games, at the end of November, 1962. Apart from the European Championships there had been four other British international matches, so this event came at the end of a long, hard season. Dorothy Hyman completed a sprint double, and there was a spread of quality performances which had not been apparent for some time. Betty Moore took silver in the hurdles, as did the relay team, and Joy Jordan followed her fourth place in the European 800 metres (in British record time) by setting a new British record in placing third in the reintroduced 880 yards. Sue Platt and Rosemary Morgan took the first two places in the javelin, and Suzanne Farmer (née Allday) won a bronze in the shot. Whilst there were no other English medals the performances in the field events were encouraging. There was a fourth in the discus; fourth, fifth and seventh in the high jump; and fifth and seventh in the long jump (Athletics Weekly, 8 December 1962:11-27 and 15 December 1962:12-27; Pozzoli 1965:58). The signs were very encouraging that many weak events were now being contested more competitively.

Overall, this was a mixed period for English women athletes, influenced in fundamental

---

41 This had last been competed in 1934.

42 Rosemary subsequently turned to coaching, including advising Tessa Sanderson at the end of the 1980s (Athletics Today, 12 April 1990:6).
ways by the new powers in the sport, particularly the Soviets, the Australians and the Americans. It was no longer easy in an athletic culture of harsh competition and growing professionalism for raw talent to flourish, and English athletes were falling behind those from other countries where systems of training and resources were more advanced, and resources were superior. The next major championships, the Tokyo Olympics, in 1964, were to prove a watershed for 'amateur' women's athletics.
CHAPTER SIX

1964 TO 1980: THE BEST OF TIMES, THE WORST OF TIMES

INTRODUCTION

The Tokyo Olympics of 1964 marked the last time that English women who were part-time athletes, competing in sport principally for enjoyment, were able to dominate their events. During the next sixteen years, until 1980, there was a steady decline in the number of medals they won at major championships and in the number of world records they secured. Other countries, particularly East Germany and the USA, improved their standing, and new nations swelled the number of competing countries and added to the pool of talent. For English athletes, the apotheosis of Tokyo was replaced in large part by failures and disappointments. However, there were exceptions. English athletes took a significant lead in the new events that appeared on the international programme, probably as a result of innovations in domestic competition.

Although during the 1960s and 1970s English female athletes achieved fewer quantifiable successes than during the previous two periods of investigation, they had greater expectations about conditions of training and competition and were more demanding about lack of opportunities and inequalities with men. In common with other sportswomen of the period, female athletes had become more politicized through an awareness of changing attitudes and opportunities for women in other social and cultural contexts.

SOCIAL CHANGES

The 1964 Labour Government tackled women's needs as part of their policy on general social issues. In Barbara Castle, women at last had a senior political voice at Cabinet
level. Her fight for women's rights was based on an understanding of lived inequalities and everyday needs. As she put it:

Real equality must go down to the mundane things, like how do I get enough to live on, do I or do I not have children, who will help bring them up? (Castle 1986:51).

But improvements in women's rights were linked not only to basic living standards and welfare, but also to radical visions of transformed lifestyles and opportunities. The 1960s was a time when women explored new experiences. A large measure of freedom was engendered with the introduction of reliable and available contraception, so that pregnancy became an option, rather than an inescapable fact of married life. More women were introduced into higher education, new opportunities arose in the workplace to accommodate those with better qualifications, and women participated in larger numbers in an increasing range of cultural and leisure activities. Athletics was just one example of this trend, attracting increasing numbers of women from different social backgrounds.

The desire to break free from stereotypical female traditions gathered pace during the 1970s. Sheila Rowbotham argues that, 'The collective culture of the new movement was springing from individual desires for personal transformation that went deeper than any ideology' (1997:398). Women's liberation became a significant element in public debate, thus placing gender relations on the public agenda. In England, legislation was passed which provided women with potential new freedoms and equalities. For example, the 1975 Employment Protection Act granted maternity leave as a statutory right. Also, in the same year, the Equal Opportunities Commission was created, and the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts both came into force (Ibid:405). Although there were limitations in
the application of these measures, and pay differentials and inequality of opportunity persisted, they were significant moves to enable women greater freedom and autonomy.

Tom McNab summarised these changes in 1969. He said:

It is obvious that great changes are occurring in the way women look at the world; relieved by the Pill from endless childbearing and by increasing affluence and time saving gadgets from much of the drudgery of housework, they are attempting to establish a sense of personal identity in a variety of different ways. One of these is in the pursuit of individual excellence in the field of sport. This involves work, discipline and stress; many people might say that it is a privilege to face such challenges, and that the type of situations which women face in sport increase their sense of being alive and involved in life (Letter to the editor of The Sunday Times, 2 September 1969, WAAA archives).

Conditions closer to parity with men were being achieved in many avenues, and sports were no exception. Between 1964 and 1980 considerable improvements for women's athletics were successfully negotiated and increasing numbers of women were able to enjoy them. However, there were also women who failed to capitalise on new opportunities and who were the subjects of a contradictory tendency.

1964: THE TOKYO OLYMPICS

In the last trouble-free, boycott-free Games of the modern era (Athletics Today, 21 December 1989:21), the Tokyo Olympics, in October 1964, was the defining moment for English women's athletics. After a wait of 36 years, two gold medals were secured, both with world record performances by supreme athletes that could stand comparison with those of other eras. They were role models for future generations of female athletes, and inspired a profound sense of nationalism as the public at home followed their successes in the media. Satellite technology afforded live television coverage and brought these achievements even closer to the English public. Slow-motion replays, which dramatised
and personalised performances, were utilised for the first time (The Olympic Years: 1964, 1992).

Preparation for the Games by the WAAA and the BAAB was meticulous. A trip to Tokyo had been arranged the year before for a small party of elite athletes, to acclimatise them for competition in the Olympic stadium (The Daily Telegraph, 18 October 1963). It was an expensive trip, but a shrewd move, because the athletes were able to anticipate how life and competition would be in Tokyo exactly a year later. Additionally, between 1962 and 1964, Bovril provided sufficient sponsorship to pay for overseas athletes to compete in the WAAA Track and Field Championships, resulting in vastly improved standards of competition for prospective Olympians. This was part of Bovril's plan to produce a British female Olympic gold medallist in 1964.¹ The co-operative venture of Bovril and the WAAA was a specifically English strategy. It contrasted with that of the Scottish WAAA who maintained their national championships exclusively for domestic athletes, militating effectively against top level competition (Scottish Daily Express, 17 May 1962:27).

Some of the £2,000 budget donated by Bovril for the 1963 meeting was used by the WAAA to pay for the inclusion of some men's races in an attempt, it was argued, 'To break down the paying public's traditional reluctance to watch women's athletics' (Sunday Citizen, 23 June 1963, and Daily Mail, 26 June 1963). On other occasions invitation men's events continued to be included in the WAAA Championships in an effort to

¹Bovril were so pleased by the successes of the British women that they continued their sponsorship after Tokyo.
popularise female athletics.² On the occasion of the 1963 meeting, however, the crowds were not tempted to brave seven hours of continuous rainfall, which waterlogged the track and made world-class performances impossible. The meeting still attracted media attention and favourable reports that the dreadful weather had failed to 'obliterate the fire and spirit of those contesting' (The Sunday Telegraph, 7 July 1963). This meeting was an index of the growing interest in women's athletics in England, but also of the insecurities of the WAAA about the abilities of women on their own to attract attention and support for their sport.

Interest in women's athletics continued to blossom both in the domestic context and in other countries all over the world. By the time of the Tokyo Olympics, the sport was well established worldwide and 40 women's athletic teams presented themselves for competition. The trend in the Olympics was for the medals to be increasingly widely distributed. By the 1960s, other East European countries as well as the Soviet Union had well-established systems of 'state professional' athletics for men and women (Riordan 1985, 1986); America had more female athletic scholarships than had been the case before;³ ⁴ and some developing countries were giving attention to women's sport as a feature of welfare and nationhood (Brasher 1964:99). Against this background two English women, Mary Rand and Ann Packer, were able to establish themselves among the

²For example, in 1965, triple Olympic gold medallist, Peter Snell, took part (Evening Standard, 2 and 3 July 1965; Daily Mail, 5 July 1965).

³American women did not enjoy collegiate sport to the same degree as their men, but there were colleges, such as Tennessee, which developed Wilma Rudolph, where athletics featured highly on the sports' programme for women (McNab 1975:75).

⁴America had also recently evolved a club system of athletics to avoid the high drop-out rate from the sport after education (Brasher 1964:73).
all-time greats of athletics (Pozzoli 1965:118; World Sports, August 1952:5 and October 1964:25).

No athlete in the long jump competition exuded more style, or more assurance, than Mary Rand - in contrast to her performance four years earlier. During her event one of the great men's 10,000 metres was in progress, but, according to Allen, the world's press:

....were most captivated by the personality, the shimmering mixture of health and cheerful sensuality that is our Mary....It was the sheer femininity that struck first, next must come the almost effortless superiority....Under the pressure of modern sport no British man or woman has ever won an Olympic victory with such authority. Here at last was our Elliott, our Zatopek, our Wilma Rudolph. Our goddess of the arena (Allen 1965:39).

As in Rome, Mary led the qualifying competition, but this time made no mistake. Now aged 24, married, with a daughter, and a maturity able to withstand pressure (Brasher 1964:37-8), she exceeded the Rome Olympic record seven times in one day (World Sports, December 1964:12, 27; Gardner 1965:38). In the first and fourth rounds she set new Olympic and British records, and in the fifth round, jumping into a 1.6 metres per second headwind, off a rain-soaked cinder runway, she also set a new world record of 22 feet $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches to become, on 14 October, Britain's first woman (mainstream) Olympic athletics champion, and Britain's first gold medallist ever (male or female) in either of the jumps (Bateman 1968:46-7; Athletics Today, 8 February 1990:11). Her domination was such that she won by over a foot from the silver medallist (Athletics Monthly, January 1981:31). The Queen, who believed that such a leap was impossible, marked the distance out on a carpet at Windsor Castle, for the benefit of her family (Hildreth 1972:70; Daily

---

5Herb Elliott won the 1500 metres in Rome by a record margin, in world record time. In his whole career he only lost one race at 1500 metres or the mile. Emil Zatopek's feat has never been approached. In Helsinki he took the 5,000 and 10,000 metres, and the marathon.
Express. 28 October 1964; The Sun, 28 October 1964). Many years later, Mary recalled her own surprise at the distance she had leapt:

Obviously the pressure was there but I think I dealt with it much better than I had four years before....Each jump I tried a little harder and I think when I actually did the world record it felt so easy. I can remember looking back in the pit....and 6.76 came up on the scoreboard in metres. I didn't know how far 6.76 was, so I ran back to my bag and got the programme - and it was further than the standing world record, and I can remember thinking, 'It must be a mistake'. And the crowd kept cheering and people ran over to me and I said 'Well, how far is it?' and they said 'It's 22 feet 2 and a quarter.' And, of course, as soon as I heard it in feet and inches I realised that I'd broken the world record and I knew I had won the competition. I still find it hard to believe today (The Olympic Years: 1964, 1992).

Mary was not finished, and took a silver in the inaugural Olympic pentathlon, behind the powerful Irina Press. Despite producing the highest scores in three of the five events, she was let down by a miserable shot putt of 36 feet, which was over 20 feet behind the Russian's effort. Nevertheless, she pushed the Press sister to a world record, and became herself only the second woman in the world to exceed 5,000 points (World Sports, December 1964:15). A bronze in the relay gave her a full set of medals, a feat which has never been equalled by an Englishwoman.

Twenty-two year-old schoolteacher, Ann Packer, had performed beyond expectations in the Belgrade European Championships in 1962, finishing sixth in the 200 metres, and winning a bronze medal as a member of the relay team (Allen 1965:2). It proved to be the turning point in her career. As she pointed out, 'I had just played at athletics until I was selected

---

6Mary was actually confident of achieving good results in this event in Rome, but it was not on the women's athletic programme then (Bignal 1960:91).

7Mary's talents were developed at Millfield School, where she took up a sports scholarship in 1955 (Buchanan 1991:110).
for Belgrade' (Cited in Running, July 1984:43). By 'playing' she implied that she had not trained seriously and had only toyed with several disparate events before finding those that best suited her. In Tokyo she was still inexperienced in her favoured event, the 400 metres, which was included in the Games for the first time. It was a problem she had recognised: 'My judgement's the only thing that worries me. I've never got it quite right at 400 metres, perhaps because I've done the event for such a short time' (Ibid:11). Despite being the favourite, she was to be proved right. Betty Cuthbert of Australia produced, in her own words: 'The only perfect race I have ever run' (Wallechinsky 1991150) to take her fourth Olympic gold medal. Ann lost by a long yard. Afterwards she said, 'I feel I've let everyone down' (Cited in Brasher 1964:57) and that:

It was a tremendous disappointment. Betty Cuthbert ran better that day. I ran a personal best and a European record, so I couldn't really be too disappointed about that. The pressure was there, but I think it is always there, whether you are favourite or not. You know your family want you to do well, and you want to do well for yourself, and the team wants you to do well (The Olympic Years: 1964, 1992).

But the 800 metres was an entirely different affair. As she crossed the line first, with arms aloft and a smile on her lips, she exuded ease and grace, rather than the more dour epithets usually associated with middle distance races, like pain and effort. It was only her eighth race over the distance and she finished as 'fresh as a buttercup' in a world record time of 2 minutes 1.1 seconds8 (Allen 1965:40-1; Emery and Temple 1978:63; World Sports, December 1964:19). In just over two minutes she had laid to rest the ghosts of Antwerp in 1928. Characterized as a 'slip of a girl who hardly looks strong

8North Korea's Sin Kim Dan had actually run under two minutes for the distance. She was precluded from competing in Tokyo due to political interference. But Packer's win was so authoritative that the result is unlikely to have been different.
enough to lift a suitcase' (Brasher 1964:79), she established that the 800 metres was
either too long, nor too strenuous, for women. Her fiancée, 400 metres finalist, Robbie
Brightwell, described it as 'a great win, not just for Great Britain...I think it was a human
win, one where people could see that underdogs could succeed' (The Olympic Years:

It would be virtually impossible today for an inexperienced runner to win in the way she
did on this occasion (Harris 1986:66; Sunday Times: Colour Supplement, 14 July
1996:13). As Ann explains in this interview for radio:

Before I went there...I hadn't run out of lanes...I had to ask somebody where to
cut in...off that bend. I was so naïve that it probably acted as a great advantage
to me really - my naivety...People kept telling me that my basic speed over 400
metres could pull me through, if I could stay in contact. Then, if I was still there
with 200 metres to go, I had a very good chance. So I had nothing to lose really.
That was a great position for me to be in and I think the strongest asset that I had
was my strength. Having run three rounds of the 400 metres in three days, and
then anticipating another three rounds in the following three days, that was
probably the most difficult thing. Once we were in the final then you hope you
might make a medal, but I could never have anticipated winning the gold (The

---

9 Anne Smith, from Mitcham, also finished eighth.
10 Kon Ichikawa's splendid film of the Games simply shows Ann's legs sweeping into
the lead in the home straight. I remember the audience rising to their feet in a darkened
cinema and cheering. I was a small fourteen year-old schoolboy who had to climb onto his
seat to be able to see the screen. Unfortunately, I was more enthusiastic in my support than
most and consequently spent the rest of the film squatting on a broken chair.

11 She had 'only allowed herself to be entered for the 800 metres for a laugh' (Brasher
1964:80), and was only the British number two in the event.

12 Ann was an extremely versatile athlete. In 1959 she won the 100 yards at the
English Schools, and the long jump at the WAAA the following year. In 1962 she reached
the final of the European 200 metres, the hurdles final in the Commonwealth Games, and
gained a silver in the relay. In 1963 she reached world class in the 400 metres in only her
Dorothy Hyman, the British women’s team captain, was another supreme English athlete who competed in Tokyo, but sadly failed to secure a gold medal. She had improved since 1960 to the extent that she was considered by many as the ‘firm favourite’ for both sprints at Tokyo (Daily Mail, 4 October 1963). During the 1963 season she equalled the European 100 metres record, making her the fastest active sprinter in the world that year. But an injury in July 1964 consigned her to last place in the final of the 100 metres. The Olympics came a few weeks too early for her.\textsuperscript{13} However, although she did not get an individual medal, together with Janet Simpson, Mary Rand and Daphne Arden, she won a bronze in the 4x100 metres relay, in a time inside the existing world record. This was Dorothy’s last championships and although she failed in her bid to become an Olympic champion, she left the international arena with more medals than any other British athlete. Altogether she won four gold, four silver and three bronze medals in Olympic, European and Commonwealth championships, which were gained before her twenty fourth birthday (Watman 1973:100).\textsuperscript{14}

The performances of other athletes in other events were also notable - for example, both Janet Simpson and Daphne Arden reached the final of the 200 metres, Frances Slaap placed sixth in the high jump, Anne Smith eighth in the 800 metres, and Sue Platt ninth in the javelin (Allen 1965).

\textsuperscript{13}This was eighth place. Until 1964 there were only six in each sprint final.

\textsuperscript{14}Dorothy was subsequently barred from international competition, since she received money from her biography. But she made a return to domestic competition in 1969, running close to her best ever times (Watman 1973:100).
No subsequent Olympics, including the boycott-affected celebrations of 1976 and 1980, have produced such outstanding results. It was the pinnacle of English women's athletics, which left an indelible impression on the nation. In The Evening News, for example, the two largest pictures in the Games' summary were of Mary Rand and Ann Packer. The country had waited a long time for female gold medallists, and was reluctant to let the women pass quietly into history. Both these supreme athletes were breaking performance barriers which, at the time, were considered astonishing. Since 1964, their extraordinary performances have been lived and relived, and are still talked and written about today with a naïve and mystic reverence. They were unassuming heroines, with outstanding natural ability, and who continue to be known and celebrated by the English public.

1966: THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL BEGINS

The Caribbean island of Jamaica was the setting for the Commonwealth Games, in early August, 1966. Results were varied, and certainly the English team was not as successful as four years before. Mary Rand, for example, performed well below form in the high jump, finishing eighth, and scratched from the hurdles heats. She almost failed to make the last rounds of the long jump, but with her fourth leap set a new Games' record to secure the gold, just two and a half inches ahead of Sheila Parkin (later Sherwood). Dorothy Shirley continued to perform well, taking silver in the high jump. Sue Platt was well below form, finishing sixth in the javelin, some ten feet below her throws of only a month before (Sparks 1967:106), but Deirdre Watkinson excelled herself to take silver in the 440 yards. Lillian Board finished fifth in the same event, in a time that was close to her best. It was claimed that she was, 'destined for the highest honours in years to come, [and had] made a wonderful start to her international career' (Athletics Weekly, 20 August
Her coach, Denis Watts, described her as 'The kind of girl prepared to take the moon in her teeth. She has the touch of genius' (The Times, 6 July 1966). Inexplicably, she was left out of the team for the European Championships only three weeks later. Two of the most exciting races of the Games featured English women. In a fast half mile Tokyo finalist, Anne Smith, finished third, and nineteen year-old Jill Hall excelled herself to gain a bronze in the 100 yards - then produced a storming anchor leg in the relay to take the team into the same position (Athletics Weekly, 20 August 1966:18-29, and 27 August 1966:18-32).

Held at the end of August 1966, the European Championships in Budapest are significant mainly for the entry of East Germany into major competition, whose women athletes were to dominate the sport throughout the 1970s. It was also a distinctly disappointing competition for the English women, who failed to secure a championship medal for the first time since the 1938 European Championships in Austria. Essentially the English women were outclassed. The nearest approaches to a medal were fourth in the 800 metres by Pam Piercy, and fourth in the pentathlon by an out-of-form Mary Rand. Mary even failed to make the final cut in the long jump final, finishing only eleventh (Athletics Weekly, 10 September 1966:22-35 and 17 September 1966:10-35).

Anne Smith was favourite for the 800 metres in Budapest, but, emotionally drained, left the village before the championships begun. She withdrew, she claimed, because she felt she could not win a gold medal. Long journeys to and from Jamaica, followed by an almost immediate departure for the European Championships meant that she 'didn't get a proper chance to train for it' (Daily Express, 1 September 1966; Athletics Weekly, 21
January 1967:8). Anne's frustrations were particularly galling, since, in July, she had set a European record for the half mile. The WAAA did not look kindly upon her actions and banned her from international competition for two years, which effectively ended her international career as an English competitor. In the national media the story was sensationalized and given front page status.

However, in spite of her international ban, Anne's domestic performances continued to break barriers. Twice during 1967 she took the world mile record, and on the second occasion, in June, at Chiswick, in London, she set world records for the 1500 metres and the mile in the same race. She is the last British athlete, man or woman, to set either of these records in races in the UK. This was a notable achievement, but one that is consistently ignored. The lack of knowledge, appreciation, and importance attached to English women's athletics, compared to men's, is illustrated by popular claims that the last British athlete to set the world mile record in the UK was Derek Ibbotson - in 1957.

THE DRAWBACKS OF AN EXPANDING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE CALENDAR.

The problems Anne Smith suffered were symptomatic of those encountered by the entire team. The close proximity of the Jamaican and Budapest meetings no doubt contributed to the disappointing results in the second event. As soon as the weary team arrived back in England, it was announced that the Europeans were to be held every two, rather than every four years, making the fixture list even more congested. This trend made a huge

---

15 Anne's coach, Gordon Pirie, emigrated to New Zealand. Upset by her treatment she eventually followed him and represented that country at the next Commonwealth Games.
increase in the physical, emotional and financial demands on athletes at the highest levels, and contrasted with the large gaps in the timetable for recovery and training typical of earlier years. Because the framework of the sport remained amateur, and athletes received no financial support, the burdens of the expansion fell on the athletes.

For example, the 1967 track season began with the European Indoor Games in March, in Prague, followed by the inaugural World Cross-Country Championships one week later, and then the second (team) European Cup semi-finals in July, and the final in September.  

In the summer, leading athletes were also expected to take part in the Commonwealth versus United States match in July, and to represent Europe against All America in August - both inaugural fixtures. In addition, students were expected to be available for the World University Games, in September, in Tokyo. On top of this heavy schedule there were the usual domestic meetings, the WAAA championships, and home and international fixtures (Athletics Weekly, 25 March 1967:29; Sparks 1967:24; Sparks 1968:22-3, 28).

It had already been observed at the inaugural European Cup in 1965 that the British team were jaded and exhausted by a season full of international duties. It was the 'sensation' of the season that the women's team failed even to qualify for the final (World Sports, November 1965:19, 25). But the failure was shrugged off by some officials with the observation that the Cup was, 'A meaningless and irrelevant addition....to the traditional round of international fixtures' (World Sports, November 1967:8). However, against this, the relative freshness of the athletes during the winter months lead to their domination of

---

16The European Cup was founded in 1965, and the European Indoor Games (Championships from 1970) in 1966 (Watman 1973:98).
international cross-country competition during the early years of the World Championships. The first event, in 1967, was won by England, closely followed by an unbroken series of five victories from 1970 to 1974 (Matthews 1989:85).

Constant exposure to high level competition became an increasing problem for top performers, as more events expanded the fixture list (The Daily Telegraph, 6 September 1966). The European Junior Championships, for example, were added to the calendar in 1970. At domestic level, the introduction of leagues and cup competitions, aimed partly at improving field events, also meant that leading track runners were yet again called upon. The introduction of 'professional' athletics at the end of this period of study did nothing to ease the load on the athletes. In a non-championship year, several athletes adopted the tactic of competing in the WAAA track championships, but not in their best events, in order to give themselves a brief respite from relentlessly grinding out quality performances in their normal championship disciplines (The Guardian, 20 August 1977). Indeed, some truly world class performers thought that the WAAA Championship was a 'rather pointless competition' (The Observer, 21 August 1977).

There was also a serious economic dimension to the lives of competitive athletes. In the 1970s, the WAAA heats were held on Friday nights, which for many competitors meant another day away from work. Most of those at work lost money whenever they were out of the country for lengthy periods during major championships. There were also reports that when out-of-work, full-time athletes were competing abroad, they were refused unemployment benefits (Athletics Monthly, January 1981:42). On one occasion nominal disbursements were made to assist athletes; Gladys Lunn recalls that the English
competitors at the 1938 Empire Games in Australia were given two shillings and sixpence (12½ pence) spending money each day. She dismissed the amount as derisory: 'a cup of tea and a bun [and] you'd spent it' (Lunn 1983). In 1956, the IAAF approved an allowance of up to two dollars (70 pence at the time) a day for out-of-pocket expenses at international meetings, but it was not until 1966 that the Sports Council recommended that the Government should pay 10 shillings (50 pence) a day to all UK competitors at the Commonwealth Games (Daily Mail, 6 July 1966). It was not a large sum, and certainly insufficient to prevent the retirement of numerous competitors through financial hardship. Throughout these years, England remained resolutely amateur, and the continual flaunting of the amateur rules in other countries merely added to the frustrations of, and disadvantages for, English athletes. For example, as early as 1945, in the Soviet Union, Pravda published details of the monetary rewards for outstanding performances, such as the 25,000 roubles given to Nina Dumbadze after setting a European record in the discus (Riordan 1977:134).

There is an accusation that on occasion money destined for athletes remained in the pockets of the management. Sylvia Disley cites two examples. On one occasion, in 1952, 'we knew that the management were given money to give to the athletes for incidental expenses - but we never got it' (1986). The other case involves Jack Crump. Sylvia says that after some athletes had been given expenses following a radio broadcast he 'took it off us and put it in his pocket....and we have no proof to find out whether that got into the AAA coffers, or not' (Ibid).

In 1974, the IOC declared that amateur sportsmen and women should be compensated for
loss of earnings during training and competition, and should be paid for out-of-pocket expenses. Previously characterised as 'broken-time' payments, it had been a heated issue during the 1920s. The idea was initially designed to help poorer sports nations, like England, to compete without disadvantage against state-supported Eastern European athletes, and those benefitting from the American college system. It was a response to the 'shamateurism' long apparent in international amateur athletics. However, the BAAB, the AAA and the WAAA did nothing - because they argued that such a scheme would be too costly to operate without government intervention. Denis Howell, the Labour Minister for Sport, was unable to help, and the resultant inactivity led to restricted training and competition, and premature retirement for several committed athletes. For example, Lynne Ilott, in 1975, was a twenty six year-old sprint hurdler, from Romford, in Essex. Twice a week she travelled to Crystal Palace, in South London, to see her coach, Tom McNab. These two trips, as well as training on a local track four times a week, required the employment of a baby-sitter for her daughter. This was an expense she could ill-afford, so she returned to teaching two mornings a week. She explains the problem here:

"I'm paying £8 a week in baby-sitter's fees and travel, and the only reason I work is to afford the baby-sitter so that I can train. It's a vicious circle. It got to the stage where I wrote to Tom telling him I would have to quit. I was finding it difficult. My health was beginning to suffer (Evening Standard, 4 June 1975).

1968: THE MEXICO OLYMPICS

The difficulties of winning Olympic medals was demonstrated by many teams in the build up to the high altitude Mexico Olympics in 1968. Held at a height of nearly seven and a half thousand feet above sea level, performances were expected to be detrimentally affected, except for those living and training at altitude. In an attempt to ensure that poorer countries were not discriminated against, the IOC restricted training at altitude to
four weeks in the three months prior to the Games. The British team rigidly adhered to this ruling, whilst most other major athletic nations did not (Brasher 1968:25; McWhirter and McWhirter 1972:22). Thus, even before their arrival in Mexico City, the British athletes were at a disadvantage.

David Hemery's domination of the 400 metres hurdles was the highlight of the Games for the English supporters, but there were many distinguished women's achievements. Sheila Sherwood watched Romanian Viorica Viscopoleanu break the world record for the long jump with her first leap, then responded in the fifth round to record 21 feet 11 inches - less than four inches behind Mary Rand's Tokyo leap - to take silver. Seventeen year-old Sue Scott (later Reeve) finished tenth in the pentathlon. She had only been drafted into the team at the last moment, when Mary Rand realised she was too injured to compete. However, although several English athletes were performing at their best in other events, rapid increases in standards amongst athletes from other countries, meant that they failed to advance beyond the preliminary rounds. Traditionally strong events for the English athletes, like the sprints, provided no English finalists, and the relay team could only finish eighth. But there was strength in depth in some events, like the 800 metres, where both Sheila Taylor (later Carey) and Pat Lowe both reached the final (Brasher 1968:86).

Lillian Board had now taken over the dubious expectations attached to being Britain's new 'Golden Girl'. The year before, in Los Angeles, she had recorded a remarkable 52.8 seconds for 400 metres, only 0.9 of a second outside the world record. On her return from America, with the other English winners from the same meeting, she received the unprecedented accolade of a lap of honour during the men's AAA championships (Daily
In the 400 metres final in Mexico she broke her own British record with 52.1 seconds and finished second. In contrast to Ann Packer four years before, she entered the straight some three to four yards in the lead, but in the run-in she was overhauled by Frenchwoman, Colette Besson, who finished one tenth of a second in front. As she put it, 'When I found myself in the lead, I couldn't believe it. I thought it couldn't last and it didn't' (World Sports, December 1968:13). By 1968, when aged only nineteen, Lillian Board was expected to repeat the achievements of Ann Packer. When she failed to do so, her disappointment was all the more acute. The weight of expectation placed upon her by an anticipatory public, and the subsequent hostile criticism from some sections of the British press (Wallechinsky 1991:150), led her to believe that she had failed her country:

In all honesty I am disappointed - I had wanted to win. During the last year there has been a terrific amount of pressure and so many people speak so callously of my winning a gold medal that they don't really know what is entailed. They even talk of two gold medals. It's just ridiculous - and anyway, I begin to believe them. I think: 'Gosh, yes, a gold medal.' So, and I knew that when I came to Mexico anything less than a gold was going to be a disappointment. I don't wish to sound selfish - I'm just being honest (The Olympic Years: 1968, 1992).

The development by some sections of the press and some officials to draw comparisons between new, rising athletes and past champions was surprisingly widespread and caused considerable problems. Whilst it raised the profile of both the sport and the athletes, it also placed huge pressures upon top performers. Another victim of the practice was Ann Wilson. At fifteen she was described as, 'The new Mary Rand', before she had even competed in her first pentathlon competition. At the same time Marea Hartman predicted: 'It is possible Ann could become an even greater athlete than Mary Rand' (Daily Express.
19 July 1965). Ann never did fulfil people's dreams, and it is likely the pressure of national expectation was a contributory factor.

1969: ATHENS, AND LILLIAN BOARD

The general decline in world standings of English women athletes between 1964 and 1980 had one notable exception, the European Championships, in Athens, in 1969 - perhaps because, exceptionally, it was the only major championship during the year. The results were so outstanding that at their Sports Review of the Year the BBC presented the British Women's Athletic Team with the outstanding team award of 1969. This was the first time that an amateur team had won the award (uncredited, undated note by the Bowater Corporation, WAAA archives).

Nineteen year-old Anita Neil won a surprise bronze in the 100 metres, with Val Peat one place back in the same time. Anita took a further bronze in the 200 metres, within one tenth of a second of two of the great East German sprinters, and an injured Madeleine Cobb (née Weston) still managed to take eighth spot in a personal best time. A third bronze came to Anita Neil, when she anchored the sprint relay team. Sheila Sherwood was injured when she entered the long jump and could only manage tenth, four places behind Maureen Barton. But, as ever, the throws were a disaster. Brenda Bedford finished eleventh and last in the straight final of the shot, and no English athlete was entered for the javelin, or discus. Whilst some English athletes performed as well as ever, performances elsewhere had moved on considerably. Dorothy Shirley, for example, equalled her best-ever leap in the high jump, but could finish no higher than eleventh, and Barbara Inkpen jumped almost to her best for only eighth position.
The 1,500 metres was an inaugural event in Athens. In common with the mile, it had been run regularly in England and consequently our athletes were expected to perform well. However, this event provided another example of improving overseas standards, when Rita Ridley bettered Anne Smith's British record by 1.4 seconds, yet finished only seventh. The world record fell, and every national record that could be broken in the final, was.

The two most notable performances were those of the late Lillian Board. Following the Mexico Games Lillian had moved up to the 800 metres, and, like Ann Packer, although inexperienced (this was only the eleventh race of her career), did so with devastating effect. The Athens' opposition included the defending champion, the world record holder, and the Olympic silver medallist. Although not at her fittest, Lillian ran a perfectly judged tactical race and, despite a strong headwind in the finishing straight, surged past her opponents coming off the last bend to leave them wallowing in her wake to win by some ten metres in 2 minutes 1.4 seconds (Athletics Today, March 1988:30, and 20 December 1990:15). Her performance was described as 'an example of track artistry at its most accomplished and but for the devilish wind the world record might have gone' (Athletics Weekly, 4 October 1969:14).

Her second race was in the 4x400 metres relay. Whilst the British team had broken the world record for this new event earlier in the year, the signs here were not promising. Both Nicole Duclos and Collette Besson of France had broken the 400 metres world record in the Athens final, whereas British athletes could do no better than fill the last two places a long way behind in the same race. Lillian was also suffering from back-pains,
sufficient to preclude her entry in the 400 metres. On paper the British team had no chance of victory, and, after the first leg had left them in fourth place, this seemed to be confirmed. But Janet Simpson's third leg run was sufficient to enable her to hand over to Lillian just behind the French team. Janet was so much in control that she deliberately gave Lillian the baton just behind Colette Besson, who had beaten her in Mexico. Lillian allowed the Frenchwoman to move away at a suicidal pace, so that she was some ten metres ahead after 300 metres. Gradually, down the home straight, a controlled Lillian pulled back the deficit, and just nudged ahead with her last stride. The world record and gold medal were almost secondary. It was, and remains, the most exciting race I have ever witnessed, made all the more poignant by the events which followed (Athletics Weekly, 27 September 1969:4-10, 27-31, and 4 October 1969:6-32).

The next season, 1970, began well for Lillian as she moved up to the mile, and was part of a world record team in the 4x800 metres relay in Edinburgh. But in June, in obvious pain, she finished only third in the 800 metres at the WAAA Championships. The original misdiagnosis of Crohn's disease was soon revised to terminal cancer, which was followed by a very open fight for survival. The press gave her struggle prominent, sympathetic and extensive coverage (for example, Daily Express, 2 December 1970:20, 4 December 1970:20, and 5 December 1970:2; Daily Mail, 7 November 1970:1; Daily Sketch, 7 November 1970:1, 24; Evening News, 10 November 1970:16; Evening Standard, 3 December 1970:1), and there was a hugely sympathetic public reaction. People worldwide, not necessarily with an interest in athletics, sent 25,000 letters of support, and donated to a fund which swelled to over £21,000. There were even impromptu collections in pubs. The money enabled her to take advantage of controversial treatment in Bavaria.
People saw in Lillian a consummate athlete unable to fulfil her destiny, an attractive personable young woman they were powerless to help. The nation identified with her struggle against insurmountable odds, which ended on Boxing Day that year. It was one of those rare occasions when the country became united in common grief, for the 'bubbling, laughing glamorous girl with a competitive heart of steel' (Athletics Today, March 1988:30). Broadcaster David Coleman had the difficult task of announcing her passing during Match of the Day, and today still finds her loss difficult to come to terms with (The Daily Telegraph Sport, 22 July 1996:S9). St. Paul's Cathedral could not contain the well-wishers and mourners at her memorial service. We have not had a middle-distance runner since 1969 to approach her ability, commitment and courage, nor an athlete blessed with her personality and popularity.

The sport has suffered from the lack of such personalities during the ensuing years. At the time, Mel Watman wrote that, 'Athletics will never be the same again.' Twenty years later he reiterated these feelings and added that her achievements 'represented only the foothills of what would surely have been a mountain range of success' (Athletics Today, 20 December 1990:15). The late Cliff Temple felt that athletics had 'lost the greatest advertisement it ever had' (Athletics Weekly, 9 January 1971:10). Mel Watman's obituary summarised the loss to the nation:

Her stunning successes on the track, allied to her very attractive looks and bubbling personality, led to acclaim and publicity of film-star proportions to be thrust on Lillian while still a teenager. It could have turned her head, but it most certainly did not. She remained a thoroughly delightful girl: charming, sincere, gracious (Athletics Weekly, 2 January 1971:35).
1970: A MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP IN BRITAIN

The ninth celebrations of the Commonwealth Games were held in Edinburgh, in Scotland, in 1970. For the first time the competition distances were metric. There was again a spread of medals, but it was clear that the rest of the Commonwealth could surpass English girls in many disciplines, particularly in the throws. Whilst Anne Farquhar won the silver, and Angela King finished fourth in the javelin, the best in the shot and discus were fifth and sixth places by Brenda Bedford. Undoubtedly the English highlight was supplied by Sheila Sherwood, who joined an exclusive band to become only the third athlete to clear 22 feet in the long jump, which she accomplished with her first effort (and twice more in her six jumps), to win her first major title, ahead of Ann Wilson. Ann also gained silvers in the high jump, and second in the inaugural pentathlon. Chris Bell won bronze in the hurdles, and the only medal in the sprints was an unexpected bronze in the 200 metres for Margaret Critchley. Margaret had never won an English Schools title, the traditional pathway to the senior ranks. However, she had persisted as an athlete, and now, as a twenty-one year-old, succeeded in the best company. The sprint relay team could not withstand the might of the Australians, but still recorded their fastest time outside the Tokyo and Mexico Olympics, to win the silver medal.

The 800 metres provided the closest race, with Pat Lowe, in taking silver, recording the same time as the winner. The 1,500 metres, which was not yet included in the Olympics, was only the second major championship race at this distance, and one full of drama. New Zealander Sylvia Potts collapsed just a metre before the line, to allow Rita Ridley and Joan Page (later Allison), in only her fifth race at the distance, through to take the major medals (Athletics Weekly, 1 August 1970:28. Also, Daily Mail, 24 July 1970:12).
The 400 metres provided both a world record and a controversy. Seventeen year-old Londoner, Marilyn Neufville, had won the European indoor 400 metres title earlier in the year, representing Britain. Here, in the same event, she removed a staggering seven tenths of a second from the world record, to win by the unheard of margin of 2.6 seconds, in 51.02 seconds - but in the colours of Jamaica. Racial abuse in England, she claimed, had led her to compete for the country of her birth (Athletics Weekly, 1 August 1970:5-37; Naidoo 1971-2:21). The British team had traditionally been an all-white one, and although there was a gradual increase in the numbers of second- and third-generation black athletes, Marilyn Neufville still remained an exception. Racism throughout English society was well documented at this time (see, for example, Cashmore 1982), but it is difficult to gauge the extent of racial abuse specific to athletics. Marilyn Neufville was an individual case and most examples have remained unrecorded.

1971: EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

In 1971, the European Championships were held in Helsinki, in Finland. With some exceptions, the English revival, seen in Athens two years before, was not repeated here. The selectors realised the competition would prove too stringent a test for many of the athletes, and so restricted the team to only those with a realistic chance of reaching their final. Marea Hartman, the WAAA secretary, admitted that, 'European standards in many events have risen more swiftly than in Britain' (The Times, 19 July 1971:7), and her pessimism proved to be vindicated. In the 100 metres, Anita Neil ran as fast as she had in Athens, when she came third, but this time her performance warranted only eighth position. No British athletes reached the finals of the 200, or 400 metres, and neither of the relay teams gained a medal. In the 800 metres final, both the world record holder and
the World Student Games' champion fell, leaving Pat Lowe, and Scotswoman Rosemary Stirling, to take silver and bronze in personal best times although, as Rosemary commented afterwards, 'With those two out it did not make it a real European' (Athletics Weekly, 28 August 1971:22). The 1,500 metres was looked forward to with anticipation by English supporters, but again, world standards were shown to be moving quicker than British ones. Despite fielding three finalists, Rita Ridley finished over three seconds behind the winner (and new world record holder) in fourth place, with Joan Allison eighth, and Sheila Carey eleventh. In the hurdles heats only one athlete was eliminated, the sole English contestant, and there were no English entries for the pentathlon, nor for any of the throws.

The jumps were perhaps the most successful area, with Sheila Sherwood placing fourth. A particularly encouraging performance was that of Barbara Inkpen in the high jump. With the introduction of the Fosbury flop in 1968, in preference to the long-established straddle technique, world standards had moved on quickly. Barbara had realised after the WAAA Championships that she was falling behind international standards, and so the next day switched styles. Just 25 days later, in Helsinki, she became the first Briton to exceed six feet, and she equalled the Commonwealth record, and shared a silver medal (Athletics Weekly, 28 August 1971:5-43).

1972: THE MUNICH OLYMPICS

Although in Mexico there was a world-wide spread of medals, in the Munich Olympics the dominating forces were clearly the East European nations, particularly East Germany. From fourteen events they won twelve medals, six of them gold (Rodda 1976:83). At
Munich the only title won by a Western athlete was the 100 metres. These Games saw the extension of the hurdles from 80 to 100 metres, and the inclusion of two new events, the 1,500 metres and the 4x400 metres relay. Both are tough events and marked a significant step forward in the physical emancipation of women. But there was still nothing like parity with men; no 5,000 metres, no 10,000 metres, and no marathon, for example. The transition to a longer hurdles race had already been anticipated in England. The WAAA had been keen to ensure that their athletes were familiar with new events and had introduced the longer distance at the 1966 WAAA Championships (The Sunday Times, 3 July 1966:19).

Munich was dwarfed by the tragedy of the Israeli massacre (see Brasher 1972). The Games also brought only one athletic gold medal to Britain, to Mary Peters, in the 45th pentathlon of her career (Buchanan 1991:107). Although Irish her effect on the English viewing public was significant - and on the stadium spectators, 80,000 of whom stayed to the end of her first day to watch and applaud her in the high jump (Brasher 1972:64). Her victory in the pentathlon (with a world record) was a highly popular one, which enthralled the nation for two days. In the absence of English champions, there was a notable shift in the rhetoric of nationalism in the press from 'Englishness' to 'Britishness'. Mary Peters' Munich success also had an influence on practising and aspiring female athletes. Her bubbling personality and success late in her athletic career, at the age of 33, encouraged young women to take up athletics and others to remain in the sport longer

17 Her first international pentathlon medal came two years earlier, when she took the Commonwealth title in Edinburgh.

18 Both Mary, and Thelma Hopkins, were, in fact, born in England (Pozzoli 1965:5).
English women continued to be slow in moving towards a more professional and single-minded approach to athletics. Their reluctance to make the necessary personal sacrifices was reflected in their lack of success. In contrast, Mary Peters had taken a year off to prepare specifically for Munich. As she recently recalled: 'For the whole year prior to the Olympics, the only thing in my mind was going for gold. Every day of my training for the year leading up to Munich was geared towards that medal' (Runner's World, April 1996:46).

It had already been announced at the WAAA Championships the year before that any athlete winning her event there would be preselected - and so able to concentrate on her preparation for the Olympics. This move was precipitated by the recognition that there were only a handful of world-class athletes in the British Isles and that, 'It would teach our athletes how much they are behind European and world peaks' (Daily Express, 16 July 1971). Certainly, for English athletes, the Games were a severe disappointment, and performances were often 'mediocre' (Brasher 1972:52). There were no English finalists in any of the track events, and in the 800 metres, for example, no English athletes had improved Ann Packer's Tokyo time, which would have placed her only third in one of the heats here (Brasher 1972:39).

The 1,500 metres was contested at the Olympics for the first time, and whilst it produced no English medals, it did provide the best English performances. The British captain, Joyce Smith, and Sheila Carey, appreciably lowered the UK record almost every time they
stepped onto the track, and Sheila came fifth in the final with 4 minutes 4.8 seconds, a staggering improvement of 11.4 seconds on her pre-Games' best. This time would have been a world record right up to the semi-final stages in Munich. Sheila Carey remains one of the most under-rated of English athletes. At a time when the media were searching for a new 'golden girl' of athletics, this quiet runner failed to fit such a public perception. Sheila received minimal attention from the press compared, for example, to the less talented, but attractive, blonde-haired Donna Murray (later Hartley). Sheila never bettered 57 seconds for 400 metres, and this lack of basic speed demanded unremitting hard endurance work in training. The training schedules she undertook were unusually severe for the early 1970s, which made her an athlete ahead of her time; she was one of the few English athletes prepared to make the necessary commitment to athletics to be successful (Running, December 1982:29). Munich brought a new dimension to the 1,500 metres; it was an event where standards were improving quickly - and included some English athletes who had benefitted from the foresight of the WAAA, who had provided competition at this distance for many years in England. Also, such was the acceptance now of women into the world of middle-distance running, that the collapse of West Germany's tiny Ellen Tittel in the final produced little adverse publicity (Pickering 1976:18; Athletics Today: Supplement, 28 May 1992:7).

In the field events, Barbara Inkpen, who came close to failing to qualify for the final of the high jump, finished fourth, equalling her own British record of 6 feet 0¾ inch (1.85 metres). But Sheila Sherwood, who was a silver medallist in Mexico, this time came only ninth in the long jump. One more centimetre would have allowed her a further three jumps in the final. The short (4x100 metres) relay team took seventh spot in a time which...
equalled the British record. Relay practise had remained a constant feature of the team's training, but it was now clear that excellent baton changing was no substitute for quality sprinters. Fifth spot was achieved in the newly introduced long (4x400 metres) relay, in a time one tenth of a second faster than the world record set the previous year by East Germany (Brasher 1972:50; Coote and Goodbody 1972:51-2).

At Munich a steady decline in the numbers of English women able to reach event finals continued. From a high of nine finalists in 1960, this had reduced to three in 1972. In part this was due to the expanding dominance of the Eastern bloc. The Soviet ideologies and training methods had been passed on to their satellite countries, particularly East Germany, and new countries joined the Olympic fold at each successive Games, to present additional competition. Some of these countries seemingly lacked every facility except a pool of talent, and the expanding collegiate programme in America encouraged many foreign athletes into their system. The emerging nations produced their first finalists in 1972, and took home two medals (McNab 1975:86-8). A similar analysis over the same period shows that Englishmen were holding their position in world terms better than English women. There are several factors which influenced this discrepancy and they will be considered in detail in the following two chapters.

1974: TWO MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 1974 Commonwealth Games, held in January, in Christchurch, New Zealand, provided some consolation for English athletes, but it was abundantly clear that it was only when separated from East European competition that English women could expect to be successful. Few of the medal-winning performances on this occasion would have made
an impression in the European Championships later in the year. This increasingly
unhappy state of affairs had not escaped the attention of a concerned individual (or
individuals), who anonymously proposed that changes in the structure and officers of the
WAAA should be implemented at the forthcoming AGM. The proposal set out the
declining standards of British women in European terms, citing that in 1969 they were
ranked fourth, in 1970 fifth, in 1972 sixth, and in 1973 seventh. Attention was also drawn
to excessive outlays on banquets and boat trips on the Thames, organised by the WAAA,
whilst the sport in some parts of the country was almost moribund (due to lack of
finance), and applications to the WAAA from athletes for financial assistance went
unheeded (Athletics Weekly, 9 February 1974:22). A groundswell of criticism was now
becoming more voluble, but no significant changes were to take place prior to 1980.

A more welcome feature of the English team was the presence of increasing numbers of
first- and second-generation West Indian athletes, who were often outstanding performers.
Andrea Lynch, for example, was outleaned for the gold in the 100 metres. Hers was a
particularly fine performance, since the race winner was triple Olympic silver medallist,
Raelene Boyle. What really pleased Andrea was her ability to run Raelene so close
outside of her own competitive season (Athletics Weekly, 16 February 1974:13). She
went on to anchor the sprint relay squad to another silver. The lead-off leg on this
occasion was her successor as the British number one, Sonia Lannaman, another athlete
originating from the Caribbean. She proved to be a truly world-class, but injury-prone
sprinter. She had the perceived required qualities for success: 'A tough, determined,
competitor who challenged and beat, at one time or another, the world's best' (Athletics
Today, 9 November 1989:16). She remains the only Englishwoman to have beaten eleven
seconds for the 100 metres, albeit wind-assisted. At the Montreal Olympics she was aged twenty, and in the best form of her life. But two days before the opening rounds of the 100 metres she pulled a hamstring during relay practice (Ibid:17). By the time of the Moscow Olympics in 1980 she had passed her best years.

At Christchurch, further silver medals went to Joan Allison (née Page) in the 1,500 metres, and to Verona Bernard, in a UK record, in the 400 metres. Verona also anchored the inaugural long (4x400 metres) relay team to a comfortable victory. Missouri-born Judy Vernon took the hurdles, and Barbara Lawton (née Inkpen), the high jump. Ann Wilson won a bronze in the pentathlon, but the javelin was the only bright spot in the throws, where Sharon Corbett won the bronze, Pru French finished fourth and Tessa Sanderson fifth. An unfortunate Brenda Bedford, the highest-ranked Commonwealth athlete in the shot prior to competition, injured herself in Christchurch and finished only sixth. But despite a championship benefitting from the absence of East European competition, there were no other throws medals, which emphasised the continuing world weakness in this area of English women's athletics (Athletics Weekly, 9 February 1974:16-21, 34, and 16 February 1974:5-36, 39; Dell and Hartley 1982:69).

The European Championships in Rome highlighted a new problem for English competitors. Because Britain was the only leading athletics nation eligible for competition in both the European and Commonwealth championships, athletes were in the difficult position of contesting two major fixtures in one year. Training loads were now

19Judy was born in America, where she met John Vernon at university and returned to England as his wife.
significantly higher, and in 1974 the top athletes were required to peak for the winter Commonwealth Games in New Zealand, and then return home to resume winter conditioning. Many found this transition difficult, after the fast running and specific technique work needed for a major championship in January. Consequently, several leading athletes had a limited endurance platform on which to base a full summer of competition, and a second competitive peak at the Europeans. One such athlete was Judy Vernon, who ran progressively slower hurdles races as the summer wore on. 'By the time I got to Rome', she said, 'I was exhausted and I didn't get through the semis' (Athletics Monthly, August 1980:36). This contrasted to the years when there was a Northern Hemisphere Commonwealth Games in the summer, closely followed by the European Championships, where the athletes were often jaded and over-raced. Thus, whichever type of competitive year it was, English athletes struggled to achieve peak performances at both fixtures. Paradoxically, there were others who needed major competitions to spur them through long winters of endless training. Hurdler Lorna Boothe, for example, found motivation difficult during 1979, because it was a year free of international championships. 'There was nothing to go for,' she said. Consequently, her performances suffered (Athletics Monthly, May 1980:30).

One athlete who benefitted in another way was Joyce Smith, whose event, the 3,000 metres, was not run at the Commonwealth Games in January, so she was left free to peak for the European Championships later in the year. Joyce had just failed to be selected for the 1960 Olympics at the longest event then open to her, the 800 metres. She almost retired in 1967, which would have ended a useful, but undistinguished international career. However, she relented, and as the years went by events previously denied her were
gradually introduced into athletic timetables. In 1972 she was made captain of the British team in Munich, and ran well in the 1,500 metres, and in Rome she competed in the inaugural international championship 3,000 metres. She finished third, comfortably breaking the rarely exceeded nine minutes. By the end of the 1970s she turned with great success to the marathon.

The only other medal went to Andrea Lynch, who managed to peak again at the end of a long season following her splendid Commonwealth runs, by finishing third in the 100 metres, behind Szewinska and Stecher, two of the all-time great sprinters from East Europe. Most performances, however, either fell behind those of Christchurch, such as Judy Vernon in the hurdles, or were below the improved standards of a European Championship. For example, the English 4x400 metres team won the gold in January with 3 minutes 29.2 seconds, whereas the stronger British team took only sixth place in Rome, running just four tenths of a second slower. Tessa Sanderson tossed the spear 48.54 metres in January to place fifth, and in Rome improved to 53.28 metres but failed to make the final; the same distance in Christchurch would have rewarded her with a comfortable silver medal (Athletics Weekly, 14 September 1974:4-37).

1976: THE MONTREAL OLYMPICS

The decline of British athletics continued at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. Despite the absence of many African nations through boycott, these Games were a disaster for English athletes. Coote observed that British women's athletics had not kept pace with the rest of the world and would not improve, 'Until all those at the top give way to men and women in whom the athletes have complete confidence and can fully communicate' (1976:20).
This assessment is exemplified by the British approach to selection compared to that of the Soviets, who were prepared to put forward athletes' names on the last day of entry, thus ensuring that the best team was selected. For example, they nominated Tatyana Kazankina for the 800 metres on the closing day of entries, and she went on to win the gold medal in world record time (Tyler and Soar 1980:108). The BOA, however, put sartorial elegance before performance. They required early team selection to ensure there was plenty of time to measure and fit uniforms. Athletes performing well in the trials were thus preferred to those rounding into their best form for the Games themselves (Ibid 45-6). This contributed to results which were the worst ever achieved by English women in any major championships to date. Never before, in 44 years of Olympic competition, had they failed to win a medal. The domination by the East Germans, in contrast, was almost complete, with their female athletes taking 19 of the 38 available medals from the 14 events, of which nine were gold.

A far-from-fit Andrea Lynch finished seventh in the 100 metres, the only individual English track finalist. But Andrea was serious in her intent; two years before she had broken off her engagement, since she felt emotional stresses would interfere with her Olympic preparation. At her best, she was a world-class athlete, and her injury precluded the possibility of a fine result, since she had beaten the silver medallist, East German Renata Stecher, prior to the Games (Butler 1976:14). The continuing advance in world standards was emphasised in the 800 metres, where four athletes ran inside the world record in the final, but none of the English athletes survived the first round. In the sprint relay the British team were eighth and last in the final, and seventh in the 4x400 metres relay; the best-placed field event result was ninth. The startling developments which were
taking place in some events were not being matched by English performances. For example, Tessa Sanderson added more than three feet to her British record in the javelin, but could only place tenth.

In an effort to keep alive spectator interest in women's athletics, satisfy sponsors, boost morale, and surround relatively mediocre performances with an air of achievement, esoteric and rarely-contested events were often staged. An example of this occurred in 1977, when, in the WAAA Championships at Crystal Palace, the breaking of the rarely run 4x200 metres world record was heralded as an exceptional performance by some less knowledgeable sections of the press (News of the World, 21 August 1977; Sunday People, 21 August 1977). The more astute Cliff Temple, writing in The Sunday Times, however, was less enthused, and observed that the event was not 'run often' (21 August 1977), and that it was an unnecessary burden to place on athletes already tired from a heavy season of international fixtures (4 August 1977). John Rodda, in The Guardian, commented that the record would return to either East, or West, Germany, the moment they bothered to contest the event again (22 August 1977), and Chris Brasher claimed in The Observer that the event was only included because 'a promoter [was] desperate to shore up a fading meet' (21 August 1977). However, these Championships did emphasise the WAAA's continuing commitment to allow English athletes the opportunity to contest new events which were rarely on the international calendar, such as the 3,000 metres and the 400 metres hurdles. The latter event had been pioneered in England, with special invitation fields put together. It was included, for example, as a guest race at the Inter-Counties meeting in 1973 (Daily Express, 28 May 1973; Daily Mirror, 28 May 1973). Judy Vernon was one of the early participants in the 400 metres hurdles, and she gives full credit to Marea Hartman for
securing this event in international competitions (Vernon 1997). In 1980, to compensate for neither of these events being in the Olympic programme, the more progressive IAAF staged them as World Championship events in Holland (Running, November 1983:36).

1978: TWO CLOSE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, Canada, was characterized as 'Just a little kids' game compared with the Olympics' (Athletics Weekly, 26 August 1978:14).

Although English athletes dominated many of the events, very few performances could be characterized as 'world-class' - a position which was highlighted at the European Championships just two weeks later, and again at the Moscow Olympics in 1980. Sonia Lannaman followed up gold in the 100 metres with silver in the 200. Donna Hartley (née Murray) and Verona Elder (née Bernard) took the first two places in the 400 metres, and Jane Colebrook the bronze in the 800 metres. Mary Stewart (who finished fourth for Scotland in 1974) on this occasion opted to run for England, comfortably taking the gold in the 1,500 metres from Christine Benning. Twin sisters (née Yeoman), Paula Fudge and Ann Ford, gained gold and bronze in the inaugural 3,000 metres. England won both relays by substantial margins, and Lorna Boothe, Shirley Strong and Sharon Colyear took all the medals in the hurdles. In the field events, Sue Reeve won the long jump, Judy Oakes took bronze in the shot, and Tessa Sanderson won the javelin by almost seven metres. The pentathlon saw Sue Mapstone and Yvette Wray win silver and bronze (Athletics Weekly, 19 August 1978:6-20, 25-41, and 26 August 1978:6-20, 25-37; R.A.C.E., September/October 1979:19; Dell and Hartley 1982:69; Matthews 1986:154).

On the surface this was a highly successful Games for English athletes. They confirmed

---

20 Her two brothers, Ian and Peter, always represented Scotland.
the continuing dominance of English athletes in the British team, since no female athlete from any of the other home countries won a medal.

The European Championships followed just seventeen days after the Commonwealth Games, and sandwiched in-between were the WAAA Championships. Several athletes competed in all three, but by the time they reached the Europeans in Prague their performances suffered. It was an almost impossible combination to attempt with any degree of success, and practically all the performances in Prague were below those achieved in Edmonton. The lack of British finalists, let alone medallists, was generally attributed to excessive competition, which deflected from the true reason, namely, the general inability to match world standards. The 800 metres provided a good example. In the inaugural post-war race, in 1954, Diane Leather came second, and achieved the same result in 1958. There were fourth places in 1962 and 1966, and in 1969 Lillian Board swept to a majestic title, followed by silver and bronze medals to British athletes in 1971. However, in both 1974, and again, in 1978, there were no British finalists. The last place finalist in Prague recorded 1 minute 58.8 seconds, whereas the fastest British (and English) time of the season was 2 minutes 01.7 seconds. The pattern was similar elsewhere. Christine Benning struggled to maintain contact in the 1,500 metres, finishing well adrift in twelfth place, and in the 3,000 metres, whilst Paula Fudge set a Commonwealth record, she commanded only eighth spot, over 15 seconds behind the winner. However, Tessa Sanderson confirmed her world standing by taking silver in the javelin, to become the first British woman to win a throws medal in a European Championships. Another bright spot, one which was totally unexpected, was the silver medal gained by the sprint relay team, who managed to beat the might of the East Germans and set a Commonwealth record.
These two performances did confirm what was possible with application and dedication - but they were becoming increasingly rare (Athletics Weekly, 16 September 1978:5-42, and 23 September 1978:4-14, 26-7).

I have barely touched on indoor athletics, and the European Indoor Championships featured several successes for English athletes during the late 1960s and 1970s. However, close analysis of several events reveals that the majority of world-class sportswomen, particularly from the strongholds of Eastern Europe, rarely competed indoors, reserving their peak performances for the major events in the summer. For example, Jane Colebrook, Verona Elder and Mary Stewart all had impressive records at the European Indoor Championships, but gained little success in the major outdoor events - the European Championships and the Olympic Games (The Daily Telegraph, 14 March 1977).

1980: THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS

The 1980 Games in Moscow suffered the loss of many competitors due to a United States inspired boycott. The British government supported the position of the USA and strongly recommended that British sportsmen and women did not compete in the Olympics, but the British Olympic Association refused to bow to government pressure; they allowed the governing body of each sport to decide what to do, and, in the case of athletics, a large team was sent. The antagonism of many sportsmen and women of Britain towards the government was summed up by Sheila Lerwill, the high jump silver medallist from 1952, who wrote to The Times. In one short letter she also outlined the lack of financial support

21 The International Athletes Club was quite prepared to spend £50,000 of its own money to fund an athletics team if Thatcher's government intervened (The Daily Telegraph, 4 March 1980).
Why inflict upon athletes the need to make a decision governments are unwilling to make? Get off the backs of those thousands of athletes who have dedicated their time and their own resources with little government help - why now does the Government enter the Olympic arena demanding this boycott? (2 February 1980).

The government, however, did place restrictions on those who were Civil Service employees, announcing that they would not be granted leave to train or compete. Consequently, several athletes, such as 400 metres runner, Joslyn Hoyte-Smith, were required to take unpaid leave, or had to give up their jobs to be able to travel to Moscow (Capes and Wilson 1981:48). Long jumper, Sue Reeve, managed to circumvent this. After intense pressure from the Civil Service, including the refusal of time off to compete, her union called her out on strike for the duration of the Games (Alexander and Morgan 1988:59; Clash of the Titans: Coe v Ovett, 1996).

Ironically, the Moscow Olympics received considerable publicity, highlighted by extensive public debate, principally due to the position of the government. Because they intervened in a sporting issue, they highlighted the political dimension of sport. Many athletes viewed their stance as hypocritical. Traditionally, British governments have taken little interest in sport, leaving sportsmen and women to train and compete unhindered, in a traditional amateur style. However, as was illustrated by the Moscow crisis, when it suited politicians they were prepared to utilise sport as a political issue. The athletes' response to the British government's politicking was typified by shot putter, Judy Oakes, who said:

I think it's great that the athletes have told the Government where to get off on this issue. In fact the whole controversy has helped us. It has made the public aware that we don't get any Government help, so why should we toe the party line?
The boycott issue also unsettled athletes during the vital physical and psychological build-up to the actual competition, although as far as Englishmen were concerned, it had less effect. Ovett, Coe and Daley Thompson, for example, were clear leaders in their events. But it was assumed that the absence of Australia, Canada, the USA and West Germany alone should have weakened several events sufficiently for our female athletes to be in a stronger position. Despite the missing competitors, however, the standard of competition was probably the highest yet and English athletes overall performed poorly. Perhaps the best event was the 200 metres, with all three sprinters reaching the final, and the depleted fields in both relays assisted the British teams towards two bronze medals. However, the inability of the English women to capitalise on the weaknesses in several field events emphasised their continuing downward spiral in world terms.

One of the greatest disappointments was the performance of Tessa Sanderson in the javelin. She had steadily grown in stature since Montreal, and in 1977 even inflicted a rare defeat on Olympic and European champion, Ruth Fuchs. She was now regarded, with the advantages of the boycott, as a genuine medal contender, but she failed to qualify for the final. Tessa registered only one throw, 48.76 metres, some twenty metres below her best, and a distance she was capable of throwing with no approach run. In some events the gap between England and the world leaders was staggering. For example, in the shot, Angela Littlewood placed thirteenth out of fourteen in the straight final, almost five metres

---

22 Tessa made amends in Los Angeles, at the 1984 Games, by becoming the first Briton and the first British black athlete to win an Olympic throwing event (Wallechinsky 1991:180).
behind the winner. Moscow was a watershed which emphasised the differences that had persisted and which could not now be erased (Hannus 1980:165-192; Athletics Monthly, July 1980:47; Athletics Today: Supplement, 28 May 1992:16-20).

CHANGES IN ASPIRATIONS OF ENGLISH WOMEN ATHLETES

There were some who thought that many English women athletes should not have competed in Moscow for non-political reasons. Teenage middle-distance runner, Jo White, for example, saw little point in going to a major Games simply to be eliminated in the heats. Her point was illustrated by the 1,500 metres final, where the Soviet's Tatyana Kazankina covered the last 800 metres in 1 minute 59.6 seconds. This was only seven hundredths of a second slower than the best individual 800 metres run by any British athlete that year (Athletics Monthly, December 1980:34; Matthews 1981:127). Jo became one of a growing number of athletes who devoted themselves more seriously, and in a more focused way, to their sport. Seeking sponsorship became increasingly commonplace and there was a growing realisation that full-time work and a truly competitive international career were incompatible (Athletics Monthly, September 1980:61-3).

Whilst these Olympics marked a low in the sport's history in England, Jo White's perception of what was necessary to succeed was at last leading to changes in training loads and lifestyles amongst the leading female athletes. But there were too few English women prepared to match the new professionalization of some of the leading Englishmen, who were totally committed to the sport as a full-time preoccupation. Hard work within the overall discipline of training and the absence of compromise necessary for international success epitomised the lives of, for example, David Bedford and Brendan Foster during
the early 1970s, and Coe, Ovett and Thompson at the end of this period (Running, November 1983:35). But, it has been argued, the problems women face are more severe than those faced by men. Success in athletics requires, apart from commitment, extended absences away from the home and family and, whilst these issues are also faced by men, as Weir observes, 'they tend to be more starkly presented to women, because of society's expectations of women' (1993:103).

English female elite athletes in general resisted the pressures to become dedicated and machine-like in their training, and tended to be critical of the influence of the Eastern bloc full-time athletes, and the American college system, which provided women with better resources. There were also athletes who believed that the successes of East European women were due to more sinister causes, particularly the use of illegal, performance-enhancing drugs. Often such allegations were unsubstantiated and were nothing more than hysterical reactions to intrinsically superior performances. Sometimes, however, there was substance to the accusations. For example, Christine Benning sacrificed her Olympic place for ethical reasons. She decided not to compete in Moscow, in protest at the IAAF's lax stand on the issue of drugs in her event, the 1,500 metres, which, she argued, resulted in her being unable to compete on equal terms (Athletics Monthly, October 1980:47). But whilst she was admired for her actions, particularly from retired athletes no longer involved in the sport - there were those, including Sebastian Coe, the Moscow men's gold medallist in her event, who felt she should have gone 'and been able to say she got into the last eight without taking drugs. That would have been something to build on,' he claimed, 'but drugs can become a cop-out for British women' (Coe and Miller 1981:131). Christina Boxer, who did go to Moscow, and reached the semi-finals of the 800 metres...
argued that her motivation for continuing in the sport was:

.....to find out how far I can go. I want to do it fairly, but you can only improve by getting out there and running against the best....If it weren't for the drugs, I might be that little bit more dedicated....I love athletics and I like being successful, but not enough to go to the extremes of cheating - or risking my health (Running, November/December 1980:27).

The world rankings for each event at the end of 1980 emphasised the lack of the international standing of individual English women athletes; in many events none featured in the top ten. The highest ranked athlete was Tessa Sanderson, third in the javelin. The only other name in the field events was Louise Miller, eighth equal in the high jump. In the Olympic track events only Sonia Lannaman, ninth in the 100 metres, and Joslyn Hoyte-Smith, eighth in the 400 metres, were included. Great Britain, with the help of a Scottish athlete, were ranked third in the long relay, and the British sprint squad was fourth, one place behind a domestic East German club team. However, more encouraging were the 5,000 and 10,000 metres performances of Kathryn Binns, third and first respectively. In 1980, in the latter event, she set a Commonwealth record in winning the inaugural IAAF World Championship title. Whilst all the other ranked performances in these two events were from the USA (except one from Sweden), and the Eastern bloc athletes had yet to take an interest in these non-Olympic events, the performances do demonstrate the continuing drive by the WAAA to increase the range of events available for women, and to be at the forefront of the move for their inclusion in major competitions (Athletics Monthly, November 1980:31).

CONCLUSION

During the period covered by this chapter athletics became transformed. Features of the
past were being reproduced, but also new sporting imperatives were becoming more pronounced. Globalization had turned international athletics into a major, lucrative, heavily sponsored sport, inextricably linked to exaggerated expressions of nationalism (Whannel 1992:151-162). But within this framework of increased commercialization and politicization, the WAAA resisted moves to combine with the AAA to form one organisation. Such a move, it was argued, would have marginalized women's athletics and resulted in a loss of control of the sport to the men. Ironically, however, to remain as a separate organisation, as the WAAA did during the 1980s, did result in marginalization, since the AAA and BAAB signed lucrative television contracts promoting men-only events. Many men were able to become full-time athletes, and a few of these became very rich. There were few equivalent opportunities for women. Those in favour of amalgamation into a mixed-sex organisation argued that an ideal opportunity to promote women's athletics on the world stage was missed. The heightened quest for sponsorship, and other forms of financial support, including employers who were supportive and flexible towards female athletes, was in competition with men, who were more successful in their approach and adaptation to the new form of athletics (Runner's World, November 1993:34).

It could be argued that gender divisions of power in English athletics had taken a new turn, linked less to biology and more to the market. However, throughout the period of sixteen years between 1964 and 1980, women continued in their struggles to increase the number of events that they could compete in and arguments about the harmful effects on their health of some of these events remained intrinsic to the position of opponents. Between 1964 and 1980 the 1,500 metres was the only track event added to the Olympic
programme, where women were still denied the opportunity to take part in the 5,000
metres, the 10,000 metres, the marathon, the 400 metres hurdles, the steeplechase, the 20
kilometre walk, the 50 kilometre walk, the triple jump, the pole vault, the hammer, and the
decathlon.23 However, in the domestic context, by 1980, English women were contesting a
national championship at the marathon, and on the roads and fells were competing with
men over even longer distances.

This was also a time of change in other respects. Women were searching for new leisure
opportunities and were taking part in increasing numbers in activities which prioritized
body maintenance and the health benefits of exercise (Featherstone 1982). The jogging
boom which begun during the late 1970s was part of this trend. Women were taking to
this new form of athletics as a means of physical expression, for health, fitness and fun.
They were in effect widening the definition of athletics to embody non-competitive
activities.

1980 marks the end of the period covered by this study at which time elite English
athletes were continuing to struggle for recognition and success on the international stage
while increasing numbers of other women were transforming athletics into a popular
recreative activity. It was a watershed for women's athletics in England because the years
to follow saw dramatic changes linked to condoned professionalism, the amalgamation of
the men's and the women's associations and further economic developments, as well as

23In 1980, the women's Olympic programme consisted of the 100 metres, 200 metres,
400 metres, 800 metres, 1,500 metres, 100 metres hurdles, 4x100 metres relay, 4x400 metres
relay, high jump, long jump, shot, discus, javelin, and the seven event heptathlon (The
decathlon has ten events).
more commercialized and popularized modes of recreative participation.
INTRODUCTION

Historically, arguments based on biological criteria have, perhaps more than any other factor, consistently constrained women from participation in sport, particularly athletics. Athletics is not a homogeneous sport, but a collection of widely differing events covered by one generic term. Detractors have often targeted one event as unsuitable for women and used this as a general attack on women's participation. Opposition based on accepted 'scientific' criteria has been used to delay the development of athletics on numerous occasions. For example, many Olympic events which were available for men have been banned from the female programme during the period under scrutiny because of the supposed biological limitations of the female physique, namely, the 800 metres, the 5,000 metres, the 10,000 metres, the marathon, the steeplechase, the walks, the hammer, the pole vault, the triple jump and the decathlon. Consequently, the history of women's athletics has not been a smooth evolutionary process or a story of the gradual lessening of constraints, but rather one of struggles, negotiations, advances and retreats.

Medical considerations have frequently been used to control the social behaviour of women - a form of biological determinism that has been most noticeable in sport, and specifically in athletics. The link between the biological and the social - or nature and culture - is central to the debate about women taking exercise and to the differences and inequalities between men and women. As Hargreaves argues:

To explain the cultural at the level of the biological encourages the exaggeration and approval of analyses based on distinctions between men and women, and masks the complex relationship between the biological and the cultural (1994a:7).
Guttmann claims convincingly that 'culture - not biology - accounts for most, if not all, of the gender differences that we see everywhere in sports history' (1991:4), a position also implied by Hargreaves when she states that, 'If women are given the opportunity they can participate in the full range of sports that men enjoy' (1994a:28, citing Dyer 1982 and Ferris 1981).

There are, without question, numerous physiological and psychological differences between the sexes (For example, see Vander Sherman and Luciano 1986) and it is not necessary to draw attention to them in this study - but such differences we now know should not preclude women from taking part in the full range of athletic events open to men; they may merely limit, or enhance, women's level of performance in comparison with that of men. Indeed, in ultra-distance\(^1\) competition there is evidence of women outperforming men.

In a variety of different ways, gendered ideas about the body have been central to modes of participation in athletics. In the first place, these were based on scientific and medical criteria, but, during the twentieth century, other factors - linked to the role of the media, finance, politics, and sexuality, for example - also became important. This chapter looks at a range of attitudes to the female body - both medical and social - which have affected the types of activities and events that women took part in and the ways in which they participated from the late nineteenth century until 1980.

\(^1\)Ultra-distance is any event longer than the marathon - 26 miles 385 yards. See 'The Expansion of the Programme of Events' later in this chapter.
Until around 1860, athletics for men was organised only on a casual basis, as an adjunct to another main event such as cricket, or as training for another sport - such as rowing. Formal intervention by way of rules emerged around this time and athletics became organised, as already detailed, by men from the emerging middle-classes, specifically for themselves. Henceforth, professional pedestrianism was limited to competition from both sexes of the lower-classes. However, it was the men of the influential middle-classes of the later Victorian period who constructed the ideological and behavioural standards in Britain which affected women's cultural experiences, in general, and their participation in sport and athletics, specifically.

Bourgeois family values were held high, with men responsible for income, and women for the maintenance of the home and, most importantly, the procreation and upbringing of children. Social Darwinism, with its key component of the 'survival of the fittest', whereby motherhood was the prime function of women, became fashionable towards the end of the century and, Hargreaves argues, 'Numbers of influential social theorists, politicians, medical practitioners and educationalists used scientific arguments to depict women as passive victims of their biology' (1994a:44).

This idealised vision of womanhood and of the family may have been practicable for the wealthy middle-classes, but it was an impossibility for the vast majority of working-class families, who depended heavily on a wife's income, and, in many cases, on the earnings of the children as well (Hargreaves 1987:131).
No less persuasive was the proposition upheld by the medical profession that women had only limited, fixed amounts of energy for all their activities. The prevailing argument was that child-birth and -rearing consumed so much of their available energy that minimal amounts were left with which to perform other tasks. Dr Edward Clarke in the United States and Dr Henry Maudsley in England 'became the classic proponents of [this] "scientific" principle' (Hargreaves 1994a:44-5), which became the predominant view of the medical profession. Maudsley extended the argument that women should be shielded from education and any other activity causing constitutional overstrain, which, he argued, would 'damage girls' development and lead to serious long-term impairment of health and fertility' (Atkinson 1987:42).

There was, however, an alternative view, one of the best known proponents of which was John Stuart Mill (Hargreaves 1994a:46, citing Mill 1970), who saw women as a product of their social environment - an 'eminently artificial thing....the forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others', which made everything forced upon them seem the natural course of events. Nevertheless, scientific justifications for restricting women's physical activities represented a compelling form of sexism that kept women firmly centred in the home during the Victorian and Edwardian years (Dyhouse 1976).

Guttmann (1991:87) contends that both European and American nineteenth-century doctors sought 'to control women's bodies in order to consolidate the power of patriarchal society', disguising their control by making prognoses about the invalid female. Consequently, during the first half of the nineteenth century, when education for girls was severely restricted, women were rarely able to appreciate any other view than that of their own
inferiority. So few middle-class women appeared healthy enough to be energetic, or participated in any form of sport, that the trenchant views of the medical profession were given additional status. By the 1880s, Hargreaves argues, 'Biological ideas were used specifically to construct social ideas about gender and to defend inequalities between men and women in sports' (1994a:43, 46). These were attitudes and conditions which materially influenced the usages of women's bodies and militated in fundamental ways against women participating in vigorous forms of sport and exercise, such as athletics.

Such attitudes about women's innate physical limitations became part of everyday thought and behaviour. Middle-class women wore tight, restrictive clothing which made breathing, let alone exercise, difficult. The frail, pale lady became the norm, enforced rest the cure, the 'conspicuous consumptive' the result (Duffin 1978:26; see also Ortner 1974). Ill health even became a cult 'in which women proved their femininity with invalidism' (Twin 1979:xviii), whilst the rude health of the working classes, where professional pedestrianism flourished, was considered vulgar (Hargreaves 1994:52, citing Wymer 1949). Vigorous forms of sport for middle-class women were actively opposed, and athletics - in the form of pedestrianism - was considered to be utterly unladylike and associated only with the low-life culture of working women.

EARLY SUPPORT FOR EXERCISE

Nevertheless, there was some support for middle-class women who wished to take exercise. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft, a woman far ahead of her times, argued that 'the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will....become the friend and not the humble dependent of her husband' (1929:45). Donald Walker had, in 1834, written the
influential British Manly Exercises, a landmark in the history of training methods (including athletics). He followed this in 1837 with Exercises for Ladies, which is probably the only nineteenth-century English work to make specific reference to women's athletic activities. It includes sections on walking and running and discusses their relevance specifically to the health of women. His recommendations were aimed to produce women strong and free from deformity, yet retaining the delicacy necessary for the attributes of grace and beauty demanded by society. He challenged the dominant ideology of passive inactivity, firmly advocating active exercises for all ages (Ibid:274-5).

Whilst Walker felt that over-indulgence in exercise was, in itself, damaging, this was nothing, he argued, compared to the continued inactivity imposed upon women by society, which he declared to be fatal to health and beauty. He pointed to the rude health of lower-class women, who had to labour as hard as their male counterparts, and reasoned that whilst they might lose some of their attractiveness through hard manual work, beauty could not exist without health, and that health was impossible without exercise. In his opinion working-class women's movements were positive, their appetites good, their complexions florid, and exercise, he maintained, gave them 'vigour, health and happiness' (Ibid:74).

Walker also commented on the slavish adherence of middle-class women to fashion and particularly to their use of the whalebone corset which, he argued, enfeebled their constitutions and caused deformities, in comparison with the 'fine figures' of peasant girls who did not wear them (Ibid:19-20). He strongly recommended that the whalebone corset be rejected in favour of Nicholas Geary's 'Exercise Stays', which were specially designed
to accommodate the additional movement necessitated by exercise (Ibid:283). This is the earliest example I have found of a code of dress specific to exercise. It was not until the 1920s that the corset was replaced by underwear which gave unrestricted movement, and loose-fitting dresses were worn.

He strongly advocated that parents and teachers should prescribe exercise and that:

Instead of fearing that their children should fatigue themselves by exertion in active sports, should subject them early to it. They will thus give them more than merely life and instruction; they will confer on them health and strength (Ibid:74).

However, there is little evidence to suggest that athletics formed a part of the physical activities of Victorian schoolgirls, although Chapman (1856:16) felt they 'should be able to run races and "hold their own" in the course of life', and both Harper's Monthly (October 1850) and the English Women's Journal (founded 1858) advocated that girls should 'Climb trees, walk briskly, run, leap, row, and swim' (Cited in Guttmann 1991:90). Walker (1837:118) recommended walking as 'the most simple and easy' of exercises (p118).

However, he strongly advised against running and leaping since, 'owing to the excessive shocks which both of these exercises communicate, neither of them are congenial to women,' and running, he also claimed women did 'without grace' (Ibid:131-2).

Walker was unusual in his references to working-class women, who were mostly outside the discourses of exercise and sport. Pedestrianism had disappeared by the turn of the century, and there is evidence only of limited athletic activities, such as running races at annual works' sports days. For the majority of working women, income was a necessity, and low-wage earning from hard physical labour co-existed with multiple pregnancies.
The requirements of work, motherhood and running a home left little, if any, time for recreative activities (Hargreaves 1987:131).

Walker made early references to walking and running in his general exposition about the relationship between women's health and exercise, but it was to be nearly three quarters of a century before English women had any book devoted specifically to their athletic interests. In 1903, Lucille Hill, the director of physical training at the widely influential American Wellesley College, edited Athletics and Out-Door Sports For Women. Although originally published in the USA, it was reprinted in the same year in England. In her introduction she mentioned the wide variety of exercises, sports and pastimes enjoyed by women as proof of their 'interest in health, strength and beauty....as a curative agent and a recreation' (Ibid:3). Whilst still stressing the need for an attractive body, her main emphasis was on health and strength brought about by sensible activities (Ibid:34). However, Hill argued that an over-enthusiastic involvement in athletics could lead to lasting harm and she advocated the need to ease gently into the male-dominated world of athletics. Her concern was for the long-term growth of athletics, which was beginning to attract a following in England, and she wished to ensure that 'a good thing was not so misused or overused that the majority of people lose sight of its true mission and recognise its superficial popularity only' (Ibid:4).

Hill's view of running was important. She recognised that it formed the background conditioning for all forms of athletics. She particularly recommended running for girls, since, she said, 'It is a good form of exercise, requiring as it does, not only the use of the muscles of the legs, but also the use of the body and arms for strengthening purposes'
At the turn of the century, there was a simultaneous increase in medical opinion supporting gentle exercise, which, it was argued would aid health and child bearing. Excessive energy expenditure remained anathema, but mild remedial massage and gymnastics became popular and were extensively encouraged (Hargreaves 1994a:48). The Swedish system of gymnastics reached its height of popularity following the opening of Dartford College in 1885 by Madame Bergman-Österberg (Fletcher 1984:30). However, I have found no evidence of athletics being part of the curriculum in the physical education colleges, although, as previously discussed, there is evidence of athletics within the university sector of education, which took place prior to the First World War.

Much of the impetus for increased levels of exercise was located in the education sector. In the Taunton Report of 1868 it was found that sixty of the one hundred private girls' schools canvassed provided no activity other than 'walking abroad, croquet, and dancing', and the poor health of pupils was attributed 'in large part to the neglect of physical training' (McIntosh 1968:128). Added to this was the gradual shift in opinion in some medical circles that 'More energetic forms of exercise for girls....should be a compulsory component of the curriculum' (Hargreaves 1994a:58). Sedentarism and tight corsets were now seen to be detrimental to health, thus complementing the views of Donald Walker, forcefully made thirty years before. Herbert Spencer (1868:186-7) argued that the frail pale girls of the middle-classes lacked the health of their male counterparts, who had grown up enjoying frequent and varied games and exercise.
By the 1860s the concept of a healthy mind in a healthy body had become an accepted educational principle, epitomised by the Muscular Christianity readily accepted in boys' public schools, where athletic activities like 'hare and hounds' and cross-country had a strong following (McIntosh 1968). Author Charles Kingsley wanted a nation of 'strong and beautiful women', with an education system following that of boys. He was supported by Matthew Arnold, a schools' inspector from 1851-6, and the son of Rugby's Thomas Arnold, whose concern for high moral ideals combined with physical health 'fitted into the drive for national efficiency which was a major concern of liberal reformers' (Hargreaves 1994a:60; see also, Dyhouse 1976, 1978).

Female education became increasingly relevant to the social concern for personal and national well-being and became fundamental to the growth of a sports culture.

Programmes of physical education were established in most middle-class girls' schools, often because graduates from the colleges of physical education and universities returned to their old schools and inculcated a new physically active culture in future generations. Change, however, was piecemeal, slow, and varied considerably from school to school and at first such changes were limited to gymnastics and hygienic measures (Hargreaves 1994a:61).

Because Swedish gymnastics were based on physiological principles designed to promote bodily health through movements that, it was claimed, were not 'detrimental to grace, figure and child-bearing', they were vigorously promoted by physical education specialists, such as Madame Bergman Österberg (Hargreaves 1987:138; Vertinsky 1990:20). In contrast, athletics was considered to be over-energetic and likely to cause unwanted side
effects, such as injury and masculinization of the female body. Even during the early days of athletics in the 1920s fears were expressed concerning its defeminizing effects and the possibility that it might contribute to a decline in the birth rate - at a time when the country had suffered massive losses by war and a subsequent flu epidemic (Mason 1989:59). But women's sport, and athletics in particular, had strong supporters, like Webster, who saw that the 'scientific' arguments against female participation were no more than ideology (Hargreaves 1994a:133). Webster argued that:

Not a few, I think, of the very drastic changes in women's fortunes of recent years are directly attributable to the greater freedom desired by sportswomen, and the saner view which they take of the benefits of fresh air and exercise.

...The modern girl is a better worker and a happier woman by reason of the healthy pleasure she takes in tennis, golf, badminton, hockey, lacrosse, swimming, running, jumping and other sports. The sacrifices which girls have to make to keep themselves fit are all for their good. They work better because they play better. When I see the well-filled playing fields to-day, I have no fear for the future of English woman-hood. To play well they must lead clean and healthy lives, and this is all for the good of the race (1930:vi).

Arguments based on the nineteenth century theory of constitutional overstrain (Ortner 1974; Duffin 1978; Vertinsky 1990) were becoming increasingly residual as more girls and women took up different sports and physical activities, including athletics. Nevertheless, these arguments did not die out altogether, and throughout the whole period of study justifications for limiting women's participation in athletics continued to be based on outdated 'scientific' ideas.

MEDICAL ARGUMENTS SURROUNDING ATHLETICS

Many arguments against athletics centred on the unfitness of women to withstand violent activity. These arguments were particularly persuasive when discussing women's athletics
at the Olympics. Athletics was the focus of the Games, the main sport, and female involvement threatened long-held ideologies supporting male domination of the Olympic movement. Opposition to women's athletics continued after other women's sports had become accepted as part of the Olympic programme. But, the issue was a controversial one, and by the second decade of the twentieth century, by which time more women in more countries of the world were active athletes, there were increasing numbers of people supporting them in their struggle to get their sport included in the Olympics. Harold Abrahams claimed, 'that there can be no really logical reason for allowing women to compete in the swimming, fencing and gymnastic competitions [in the Olympic Games], and excluding them from athletics' (1929:144). Others also tried to justify athletics on the basis that women were already active in other sports and everyday tasks that were physically demanding. For example, Webster argued:

It is hard to see how it can be contended that the throwing of a light javelin can impose a greater strain upon a woman than the use of the overhead tennis serve, since both actions call for the employment of exactly the same set of muscles. Again, how can it be said that a short cross-country race of two and three-quarter miles is likely to prove any more harmful than a day out with the beagles? Or what argument can be advanced to prove that a sane system of athletics will not the better fit a young woman for the daily household tasks, which frequently involve the moving and lifting of heavy pieces of furniture? On the score of endurance, women have at least as much 'staying power' as men, as is proved at the end of a hard day's hunting, or a long night's dancing, when the man usually finishes rather more "shop soiled" than his sister (Cited in Athletics Today: Supplement, 27 February 1992:14).

Sometimes the justification for women's athletics was more cultural than scientific. For example, the Greeting to the athletes at the opening of the Second World Games in Gothenburg, in 1926, stressed that:

The sporting ideals are fine aces. Sport is amusing, but it is by no means a frivolous amusement. Those who go in for sport in earnest win physical and moral health, self-control and presence of mind - qualities just as valuable to women as to
The organization of these contests have been inspired by such noble ideas (Report: 2nd International Ladies' Games, Gothenburg, 27-29 August 1926).

The ideologies of health and morality, focusing on the individual, were typically entwined with statements about the wider social welfare benefits of athletics and national well-being. Alice Milliat, representing the FSFI, reflected the dominant view among the female athletes from England and other member countries:

To strengthen the young girl, to ensure her health and vigour, good physical and moral equilibrium, enabling her to spread joy and happiness around her, to find a healthy and robust family; to help her Country against social plagues and to contribute to the peace of the world.

....When every woman understands the necessity and joys of physical exercise in the open air, the number of hospitals, sanatoriums and other curative institutions will be seen to diminish.

....Women - who are the foundation of the family and of the country - have, like young men, a right to the benefits dispensed by the air and light in the exercises allowing them to acquire the muscular strength which is necessary for every human-being to defend himself against physical, moral and cerebral anaemia and against the numerous difficulties of life.

Those who criticise women's sports do not understand their aim....They do not reflect that without competition there would be no progress in the World. In every branch of human activity there is competition....then, why complain of it in sports?

....We are conscious of having worked for the improved condition of Woman, to whatever class of society she belongs, of having helped to make her healthy, morally and physically, without any fear for her responsibilities, but also with a sense of her rights and ready to have them respected in every domain, without losing her graceful charm (Programme for the Jeux Olympiques Feminins, 1924:7).

In England medical support for athletics grew and became more positive in outlook. In 1921, before the formation of the WAAA, and with only very occasional athletic events on which to form a judgement, the Medical Officers of the Schools Association 'rejected the
view that athletics (and gymnastics) were bad for the health of girls' (Mason 1989:60).

This philosophy was also impressed on young athletes - both 'boys and girls' - during the early years of the Schools' Athletic Association (SAA), which was founded in 1925. W.K. Duckett, the chairman of the Association stressed that:

The primary objects of the SAA are the physical, mental and moral training of the children in our schools....Physical development is placed first, because a sound body is necessary for the possession of a sound mind (1928:7).

Whilst the WAAA recognised that 'Prejudice still lingers in some quarters', they were keen to stress that the benefits of exercise were now recommended by the medical and teaching professions. As they said in 1925:

Medical men and women and those who are entrusted with the education and training of our girls are now agreed that such athletic events as are permitted by the WAAA are of immense benefit to girls who train properly for them (Programme for Women's Amateur Athletic International, 1 August 1925:7).

But doctors continued to view female athletes as women first and sportswomen second, which contributed to the myth of female frailty and made it particularly resistant to change. Early athletes had to fight against the consensus of medical opinion, which still dictated that intense physical activity would harm their potential for reproduction. This view was, in effect, accepted by the WAAA. Eliott-Lynn's (1925) early and influential text, Athletics for Women and Girls, frequently gives the impression that her views were the official ones of the WAAA, and her cautionary beliefs about motherhood did little to further the expansion of events or to encourage a full expression of physicality. She argued that:

Even if one does not see any ill results at the time from too strenuous devotion to athletics, the final result may be very deleterious to the girls' health and natural functions. As one great authority has it, "It is only when children begin to come or
ought to begin to come that many women find they are having to pay a pretty heavy price for a very temporary period of athletic enjoyment and glory" (1925:19).

This view overshadowed more radical discourses on women's athletics until the early athletes themselves gave birth to healthy children and then continued with their athletic careers. The best early example was Muriel Cornell, who was also the Honorary Secretary of the WAAA. She argued that expectant mothers were given exercises to improve their stomach muscles and that sport merely replicated many of these exercises. In their concern for women's health the WAAA had collected favourable data regarding athletes' pregnancies and confinements, so she was also able to point out that many former athletes had given birth within a year of marriage, and that the children were in no way defective. They were, she said, 'agile, mentally advanced...and well up to, or even above, standard generally'. She also expressed concern for the well-being of athletes and reiterated that no harm would be caused by competition, which was always conducted under close scrutiny. Some caution was apparent in her conclusion where she said that it was inexcusable to allow women to continue in a sport if their health were to suffer (World Sports, December 1938:58; Hayward 1988).

Attitudes about athletics were usually age specific. For example, Williams regarded athletics as 'quite unsuitable for infants' (1934:16), but pre-pubescent girls were encouraged by Webster to 'play' at all events, including the pole vault. The greatest fears about the effects of vigorous exercise on the female body were addressed to girls around the time of puberty. Webster, for example, urged that the pole vault should be ceased on 'the slightest sign of bust development' (1930:7). Both Eliott-Lynn and Webster regarded
the four years after puberty (13 or 14 years old) as the most critical and difficult in a young woman's life, and believed that care and attention to her well-being at this time was of paramount importance. It was also a time, they believed, to carefully lay down the physical background for an adult career of strenuous competition (Eliott-Lynn 1925:28; Webster 1930:7). Webster, who was a father of two athletically competitive daughters, claimed that at eighteen a girl's 'frame [had] become more set and her life [was] more regular' and it was then that she could 'really let herself go and really enjoy vigorous physical exercise' (Ibid:7).

During the 1930s the impetus for athletics was given further momentum by political intervention. The British government was concerned at the growing fascism in Europe and in response sought to improve the health and fitness of the nation. The 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act resulted in the National Fitness Campaign, which urged both sexes to take some form of exercise. Traditional ideologies regarding female sport were challenged as exercise became legitimised and athletics was inevitably one of the beneficiaries of this campaign (Hargreaves 1994a:137).

But even after the Second World War there were men who unthinkingly opposed women's participation in strenuous events. Vera Searle recounts the story of a male official at the White City who said, 'Oh dear, I can't bear to see a woman running half a mile.' She replied, 'How old fashioned. Tell me, when you were a boy did your mother do her own washing?' He replied affirmatively. 'And did she wash blankets?....Have you any idea what a blanket weighs when it is wet? You didn't mind your mother doing that, did you - and these girls aren't out on the track much more than two minutes.' She never saw him
In 1955 George Pallett contributed a reassuring article to Athletics Weekly (23 April 1955:14-15), which was a summation of the history of medical opinion regarding women in athletics. He did much to dispel any lingering fears about the detrimental effects of athletics on women's bodies, childbirth and menstruation with his review of the extensive medical studies conducted specifically around women's involvement in the sport.

At the same time there were still entrenched ideas regarding women which emanated from some sections of the medical profession. For example, the Belgian Medical Society of Physical and Sporting Education announced that women should no longer compete in sport. They said that women were:

(1) restricted in their training and sporting efforts because of their glandular structure;
(2) over vulnerable to emotional factors; and
(3) extremely liable to organic upsets.

Both Pallett, and Harold Abrahams, writing in World Sports, dismissed these findings as out of date, and Abrahams - who had originally been against women's athletics - challenged anyone in the medical profession to produce any 'real' evidence to support them. He argued that women around the world had now competed in a wide variety of sports for many years and that:

Even if evidence could be produced of a few dozen, or even hundreds, who have suffered physically or psychologically, what would that prove? At the most it would indicate that competitive sport is not good for some women, just as it is not good for some men (March 1955:28).

He went on to deal with each of the Belgian doctors' findings in turn and made careful
comparisons with men. He argued:

Well, possibly women cannot train as hard as Gordon Pirie, Jim Peters or Emil Zatopek. We know they cannot run as fast as men, or jump as far or as high. But no one suggests they should compete against men, and one of the basic reasons for prejudice (I speak with knowledge of my own former prejudice) is comparing women's performances with men's.

"Women are over-vulnerable to emotional factors." So what? I have seen women distressed after strenuous competition, but I have seen men just the same....but it is futile to try to generalise and to say that, because women have certain different psychological characteristics, competitive sport should be the prerogative of the superior male.

....Competitive sport for women has come to stay, and it will need something more impressive than a few pompous utterances to stop it (Ibid:28-30).

Nevertheless, his brother, the influential Sir Adolphe Abrahams, who was the medical advisor to the BOA, found it difficult to break away from old prejudices. In his book Women. Man's Equal?, he pointed to the anatomical differences between the sexes and then continued:

It is not easy to eliminate prejudice from our judgement. The appearance of distress and suffering at the end of severe athletic effort, bad enough in the case of a man, is doubly unattractive and alarming in the case of a girl, so that, apart from aesthetics, fear is expressed of strain upon the circulation and other systems (Cited in World Sports. March 1955:30).

A report on the female sportswomen at the 1952 Olympics by some of the world's leading physiologists concluded that 'the female sex is more robust and more capable of adapting itself to the demands of the environmental challenges than has so far been assumed' (Jokl et al 1956:45). However, the year after the publication of these findings, some English doctors still accepted that there were unfounded restrictions placed upon female athletes by their profession and further articles regularly appeared in specialist athletic magazines in an effort to dispel these myths (Athletics Weekly, 26 January 1957:6). In 1958 the
WAAA reported that it was not only doctors who were responsible for the spread of false information. 'Far too many girls', they maintained, 'are denied the pleasures of sport by the misguided zeal of headmistresses.' The WAAA stressed that recent research had concluded that there was no reason why girls should not compete in strenuous physical activities 'of the non-bruising type' (Modern Athletics, June 1958:25).

It was not until the boom in running during the late 1970s that women were at last given full and positive support for athletics - that it was claimed to actually assist childbirth and lessen the pain accompanying periods, and that it was associated with a positive self-image. Indeed, it was reported that the pain and effort of childbirth helped athletes to handle the discomforts of sport (Athletics Today, 14 March 1991:22), and others claimed improved athletic performances after their children were born (Running, October 1986:73).

WOMEN'S BODIES AND TRAINING

It seems logical to assume that because there were marked differences in attitudes to men's and women's bodies which affected participation in different forms of sport, and in athletics specifically, that training schedules would be rigidly gender specific. However, the evidence about early forms of training shows that there were surprising similarities in training procedures for men and women and that the rhetoric of difference did not always cohere with the realities of practice.

There were no textbooks written specifically for the early pioneers of women's athletics and they had to rely on the limited literature written specifically for men. Sam Mussabini's Complete Athletic Trainer (1913) provided a link between the nineteenth century and the
modern era. He was one of the first recognised coaches to help female athletes, and was also the coach of Harold Abrahams, who, with his brother Adolphe, wrote Training for Athletes (1928). Lovesey and McNab (1969:31) regard this as the most significant advance in coaching literature to that date. These books were popular with male athletes and it is certain that female athletes would have been familiar with them. In 1927, Marjorie Alderman, a successful half miler on the track, who also came fourth in the inaugural National Cross-Country Championships, was given Alec Nelson's Practical Athletics and How to Train (1924) by her fiancé. Her future husband was the established marathon runner, Sam Ferris, who saw little wrong in recommending for female athletes the same workload that he would take on (Ferris 1995), and Vera Searle recalls Mussabini giving her exactly the same exercises to build up her strength and sprinting style as he gave Harold Abrahams (Adventurous Eves, 1990).

The earliest books on athletics for women make recommendations remarkably similar to those for men. For example, Eliott-Lynn (Athletics for Women and Girls, 1925), Mussabini (Running, Walking and Jumping, 1926) and Webster (Athletics of Today for Women, 1930), who were writing specifically about women's athletic training, make similar observations to Nelson (Practical Athletics and How to Train, 1924), Mussabini (Ibid), Webster (Athletics for Schoolboys, 1928) and Lowe and Porritt (Athletics, 1929), who all wrote in the inter-war period for men. Significantly, though, these books recommend a lesser degree of intensity of training for women. The advice to women was practical, lacked condescension, and was aimed at serious female athletes, as was the later WAAA booklet, A Guide To Training, written by their Chief Coach, Len Ward (1953).
But Spalding's *Track and Field Athletics for Girls* (1928) (published in America, and available in England), made specific recommendations to women. The book recognised fundamental differences between the sexes which 'require explanation in regard to their application to women's participation'. In common with advice made to boys, examination by a doctor was insisted on before entering the sport (1928:5).

The Spalding book also looked to women to maintain the impetus created in the early years:

> The athletic director is best qualified from training and experience to determine whether a sport is harmful or healthful. With the increasing number of women who are assuming positions of authority in the world of athletics, it is safe to predict that not only will they keep athletic activity for their charges on a safe and sane basis but at the same time will popularize athletic sport for women as no amount of unorganised and untrained direction can hope to equal (1928:5-6).

The Spalding book emphasised caution in the build up to parity with men. The book stated that 'generations of physical stamina...based on years of masculine activity of some sort' had been acquired by 'men and boys' but that women had 'not had the same muscular opportunities'. Quite naturally potential problems were envisaged if women were suddenly plunged into strenuous track and field competition without due preparation under proper supervision. There was a fear that harm would come not only to the individual athlete, but also to the women's athletics movement as a whole (1928:7). The recommendation of a gradual accommodation to workloads has always characterized women's training manuals, and although similar recommendations during this early period were made for boys entering the sport, the theme of avoiding over-exertion was stressed more strongly when the advice was directed at women.
As later books on training began to be directed at both sexes the theme of moderation for women, and differences between men and women, continued to be emphasised. For example, double Olympic gold medallist, Douglas Lowe, likened mature women to school boys:

It is important that women and young athletes should only attempt those [events] which are really suitable for their physique. Long-distance house runs, let alone races, are not beneficial for boys and may be positively detrimental; they are not permitted to women (1936:7).

However, during the inter-war years training for men was also very light. People did not believe it was possible to train every day without physically damaging the body (Scott and Bent 1984:26). Bevil Rudd, a gold medallist in 1920 in Antwerp, described training as 'essentially casual....We conformed to a traditional training schedule which, while it kept us fit, in no way tested our individual abilities or polished our style' (1938:2-3). Athlete and physician, Arthur Porritt (later Lord Porritt, the Queen's doctor) even advocated dancing for men as an 'excellent exercise' (1938:301), and dancing for women was also characterized by Sophie Eliott-Lynn as 'good training' (1925:26). The possibility of overstrain for women, based on the light training loads of the time, was remote. Vera Searle recalls that 'injuries [in athletics] were unknown' during the 1920s (1989).

Even though, throughout the period of study, women were consistently recommended to work at lower levels than men, to lift lighter weights, to run fewer miles, and to complete fewer repetitions on the track, the types of activities in women's training through time has mirrored that of men. After the Second World War work loads increased for both sexes. When Franz Stampfl assisted Roger Bannister to the first sub-four minute mile, his interval methods were adopted by both men and women with enthusiasm. When New
Zealand's Arthur Lydiard propounded heavy mileage, again both sexes responded to the challenge. The discourse on training and methods was similar for both sexes.

As the years passed, increasing numbers of textbooks on athletic training methods acknowledged the improving abilities of female athletes. For example, the popular English sprinter of the early 1950s, McDonald Bailey (1953:110), commented that he had never heard any of the leading women of the day complain of any ill-effects resulting from athletics. He argued that:

During the past few years the fair sex really has come into its own in the world of sport. Already records have been set up which, not so very long ago, would have been considered beyond the prowess of women. With the more serious and methodical approach to training by girl athletes which is becoming more evident, better and better times and distances can be anticipated with confidence.

Training loads increased progressively throughout the period of study. Like men, women were keen to try new methods of training and increased levels and intensity of exercise were experimented with as adaptations to heavier loads were made. These factors, combined with increased event specialization and more scientifically-based training schedules, contributed to a steady improvement in performances after the Second World War. However, there were critics who refused to accept that female athletes took their sport seriously. In the early 1950s, Jimmy Green, the editor of Athletics Weekly, maintained that the majority of women athletes were not fit. He claimed that some women treated training 'as a pleasant social occasion rather than a time for putting some hard work in to improve their performances' (7 February 1953:12).

Jimmy Green's comments may have been prompted by the caution which was still urged
upon women during the 1950s. Pallett, for example, maintained that women beginning athletics were 'in a comparatively less fit condition than men'. He argued that this was because their background of physical education and games was not 'conducive to strenuous athletic events', and he also advised women to build up more slowly (1955:196-7). But there remained in many texts the underlying theory that women were unable to accommodate the same intensity of training that men undertook, and so they were inferior to men. For example, Mcdonald Bailey, despite his enthusiasm for women's athletics, was typical in his recommendations that women could follow the basic training schedules of men, but that 'in every case the time spent, the distances covered, the number of times an exercise is repeated, can be cut down' (1953:78-9). By today's standards, training was, indeed, very light. For example, in 1936 and 1948, Dorothy Tyler won two Olympic medals training three times a week. In 1954 Diane Leather broke the five minute barrier for the mile when she was training only four times a week, and covering no more than three miles in her runs, and leading sprinter, June Paul, trained only three times a week in 1956 (Athletics Weekly, 7 October 1950:13; 3 April 1954:9; 27 October 1956:11).

Although women did not train often during the 1950s, it was argued that they worked hard during the sessions they did do. For example, it was asserted that Diane Leather's successes were based on 'hard unremitting work on carefully prepared lines' (Pallett 1955:165).

Outstanding women often faced other problems. Conventional 'wisdom' still abjured heavy training for girls, and if the athlete concerned was exceptional, it was difficult to find even men who were good enough athletes to complete sessions with. For example, as a teenage athlete in Yorkshire, Dorothy Hyman (who eventually trained six times a week) noticed
that sessions were often lonely:

It was partly through tradition, partly through lack of encouragement and facilities that not many young people trained properly and...not even the boys wanted to train as hard as I did (1964:26).

In the early 1960s, Ann Packer was one of the first women to train with the intensity required to compete against the East European athletes. She describes the workload involved:

At the time there was still considerable controversy about the physical capacity of women, in comparison with men, to withstand sustained endurance work. At the same time there was a reluctance for women middle-distance runners to recognise the vital need for high quality speedwork in order to cope with changes of pace and a kick finish (Running, August 1992:51).

At the same time, Mary Rand recognised that she needed to work harder, but that over-training for her main event - the long jump - could cause injury. She maintained that, 'To train too much at the long jump is a big strain on the muscles and can damage the feet.' She supplemented her event work with weight training, and sprinting and hurdling - which, she claimed, gave her the speed and co-ordination necessary for jumping (Bignal 1960:91-2).

Lillian Board, even as a young girl, had a single-mindedness of purpose, trying to train harder than was advised. She was regarded by one contemporary as being years ahead of her time, and was heard to comment at the end of a training session, 'I'll just do one more [repetition] daddy.² I don't feel tired enough' (Athletics Today, March 1988:29). But some coaches remained conservative in their approach to women. For example, one middle-distance runner, in 1980, expressed the wish to train twice a day. However, her

²Her father was her coach.
coach, she claimed, who was a National Event Coach, would not let her (Running Review, August 1982:8).

There were athletes who were precluded from training harder by the requirements of motherhood, or work. Sue Scott feels that if she had been competing at the end of the 1980s (when professional athletics had started), as opposed to the end of the 1970s, then she would not have been a civil servant, but a professional athlete, and able to train twice a day (Herrington 1988). By 1980, the physical demands of training were more in line with those of athletes from other countries. However, the level of work had became too intense for some athletes to adapt to and often resulted in premature retirement. For example, Mary Stewart's extra efforts to gain a place in the Moscow team ended her career (Alexander and Morgan 1988:58), although at the same time, at the age of 42, Joyce Smith could comfortably average over sixty miles a week of running, combined with a weekly track session. However, Joyce was critical of the loads placed upon Junior athletes, who were sometimes coerced by their parents into training twice a day and already working as hard as an adult (Running Review, April 1983:18). Her criticisms had been expressed by others several times before, and consistently ignored. For example, Harold Abrahams, in 1926, 'deplored the exploitation of infant phenomena' (Daily Dispatch, 17 December 1926).

As standards of performance improved, so the time taken over training increased. Many athletes had to compromise, or sacrifice social lives to the requirements of athletics, which gradually took more control of the female body. Marea Hartman described the sort of life a serious athlete could expect around 1960:
From the minute she joins a club, which can be as early as eleven years old, she literally has a one-track mind. No other hobbies, no parties, no smoking, no boy friends - not even the occasional night out when she is in strict training. No over-indulging in the foods that most girls love. Weight has to be watched all the time for every ounce counts when victory lies in inches (Undated magazine article, 'The Girls Who Dream Of Gold,' WAAA archives).

This lifestyle deterred some women from entering athletics. Diane Modahl (née Edwards) remembers that her sisters 'had other things on their minds - music, boys and late-night clubbing held a greater appeal than running in the mud and freezing cold' (Modahl 1995:19). Joy Jordan said that she and her husband had 'given up so much for athletics - we haven't had a holiday now for five years. And there's nothing much you can do about the home because you're out running and you come back feeling tired' (Athletics Weekly, 19 January 1963:16). Dorothy Hyman retired at the age of 23, in part, she says, because it was time 'to live a little'. From the age of thirteen she had been training while other girls were 'dancing, giggling, flirting, marrying, mothering'. Unable to join in these activities, she was to lose her close friends (Hyman and Pilley 1964:13, 18, 51). Sue Reeve's observation that she could not go to the cinema or theatre regularly, because she was too busy training, was typical during the 1970s (Herrington 1988). But many leading athletes were at pains to stress that they enjoyed a full social life. For example, during the same period, Tessa Sanderson enjoyed spending most Fridays and Saturdays in a soul club in Birmingham. She argued that she could do whatever she wanted, provided 'I'm happy and don't get drunk. I wouldn't lack boyfriends. I go out boozing at lunchtime with the girls at the office sometimes' (Undated magazine clipping, WAAA archives).

Many of the critics of the poor performances of English women on the international stage during the later years of this study point to their inability to train with sufficient intensity.
For example, in 1980, at a National Squad pre-Olympic training camp, the leading middle-distance runners in England were gathered for a weekend of intensive sand-dune running, culminating in a ten minute continuous effort up and down the Big Dipper, a large, steep, exhausting dune, at Merthyr Mawr, in South Wales. The two most senior women internationals refused to tackle this run, and the younger women athletes followed their example, despite the entreaties of two of the most respected coaches in the country, Harry Wilson and Frank Horwill (Athletics Monthly, July 1981:49). Joyce Smith reasoned that the fall in middle-distance standards was because English women were not prepared to train as hard as athletes from other countries (Smith 1981). In 1983, Cliff Temple expressed his exasperation at the negative attitude invariably displayed by English women, particularly in middle-distance. He argued that excuses that athletes from other countries were taking drugs, were state-aided, had better facilities and did not have to work for a living were spurious, since under similar conditions English men led the world in middle-distance. Athletes like Christine Benning, who was inquisitive regarding her training, were, he claimed, an exception (Running, June 1983:44). However, there were women who were prepared to train at every opportunity. For example, shot putter, Judy Oakes, always trained on Christmas Day (Jogging, December 1979:27). University student Wendy Smith (later Sly) was prepared to run fourteen times a week, as well as complete three weights sessions (Athletics Monthly, July 1981:47) and Judy Vernon, in the early 1970s, feels that she was ahead of her contemporaries in the volume of work she did. As she explains:

When I [worked] part time, that was a lot better because I used to see Tom McNab [her coach] twice a week at Crystal Palace, and we did three sessions every day that I was there. So we trained once before lunch and then two sessions after lunch. So I did train very, very hard. I think that's one reason why I did so well - and I was lucky I never got injured (Vernon 1997).
However, Judy's perception of the 1960s and the 1970s is that female athletes generally did not work hard. She does not intend this as a criticism and argues that:

Its just the way it was done. You still played at it [athletics], you didn't take it seriously....I was really a unique woman. Because I was so competitive. I mean, I used to train up here with the men and, you know, work to beat them. That's just the way I was, you know. I wasn't afraid to go out and push myself, and I wasn't afraid to win (Ibid).

THE EXPANSION OF THE PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

The WAAA were conscious of vociferous prevailing medical opinion against women's athletics and acted almost immediately after their formation at the end of 1922 to ensure that all events contested in England were not only suitable for women, but also posed no dangers to their health. This was in accord with the College of Preceptors, who, with the British Medical Association, in 1922, looked into the effect of physical education and sports on women (Sandilands 1928:78). In 1923, the WAAA formed a Medical Commission, composed of two doctors, and the leading coach, Sam Mussabini, to look into the possibilities of including the pole vault and the triple jump in their programme of events. Sophie Eliott-Lynn tried out the events but they were considered unsuitable, although no reasons appear to have been given. The following winter the Medical Commission was reconvened in order to judge whether cross-country racing was suitable for women. Several leading doctors were included on the panel: a Mr Williams, a leading surgeon, Dr Riggall, a nerve specialist, and Dr Shirley Smith, from the National Heart hospital. They examined female cross country runners over a four and a half mile course, which was described as being 'very heavy going in places'. Every athlete was tested before and after the run and the doctors 'expressed their great surprise at the runners' condition after the run [with] only one girl found suspect'. They reported that cross-
country, 'in moderation and with proper training, was suitable for women' (WAAA Summary 1921-6). In 1928 more precise scientific investigation was conducted to collect data on 'stride, oxygen in-take, exhaustion, and recovery tests after running' (WAAA Committee Minutes, 5 March 1928). Vera Searle is convinced of the importance that the Commission played. It was used on numerous other occasions and no new event was introduced unless it had the full backing of the appointed doctors (Searle 1994).

Care was also taken to ensure that athletes' bodies were not damaged in other ways. For example, during the early years of the WAAA throwing events were performed with both hands and the two results were combined for an overall distance. This was designed to prevent uneven body development (Searle undated article, WAAA archives). After the Second World War, leading representatives of the WAAA continued to show caution concerning the use of the female body during training and competition. For example, Dorette Nelson Neal arranged for a doctor to examine the younger athletes she coached both before and after races (Hayward 1988).

The WAAA were also keen to present an educated, caring and responsible front to the public, in an effort to attract women into athletics. For example, the programme for the 1925 International at Stamford Bridge carried the following assurances:

The policy of the Association has always been *moderation*. If anything the committee, which is composed of directors of physical training, welfare superintendents, a number of active girl athletes, old athletes, and women doctors, has erred on the side of moderation. It does not permit its members or its affiliated clubs to race over distances greater than 1,000 metres, believing these to be a strain to women. The shot which is used in the shot put weighs only 8 lbs., whereas that of the men's association weighs 16 lbs. The discus, too, is comparatively small and light. It is a rule that all jumping shall be done into a soft sand pit or on to thick mats, and the tug-of-war is actively banned (Programme for the Women's Amateur Athletic International, 1 August 1925:2).
It was claimed, by the few active coaches during the early years of the WAAA, that, through lack of knowledge, many athletes were competing in events which were not suitable for them. A.M.A. Williams, who won the inaugural National Cross-Country title, and was the coach to Polytechnic Ladies' AC, commented:

That some events are more suitable for girls than others is recognized by everyone. Often, though, teachers encourage one thing and taboo another without realizing why they do so, merely taking their lead from one or other of the many organizations dealing with school athletics....it must be remembered that some athletic activities which are valuable from the point of view of training are not suitable for competition; also that events which are suitable for girls of one age are not necessarily suitable for those of another (1934:16).

When it became clear to the male administrators of the Olympic movement that some of their own members were beginning to support women's athletics, they realised that the sport could no longer be marginalized. Women's athletics thus became the subject of their Pedagogic Conference in 1925. One of the key speakers was England's Sophie Eliott-Lynn, whose paper, she claimed, had been approved by the Medical Sub-Commission of the Olympic Congress. Her paper contained contradictory accounts of women's bodies - those that seemed to be in support of athletics for women and those that were clearly suggestive of caution and limited activity - but the overall effect was to hinder the development of athletics on the world stage for several years. For example, her opening comments reflected a positive attitude to the female body, and pointed to the close similarities between the sexes:

The male and the female are derived from the same parent stock. They have been evolved together, and their methods of life are similar.

They have somewhat similar organic systems, the differences in skeleton and muscular formation being minor. The differences in the nervous and the blood systems being still less noticeable.
The present adaptation of womanhood of itself to the demands created by the labour market, bring her still closer to manhood in her habits of life.

This feature of the question seems to indicate that the recreations and physical exercises taken by men might be found advantageous for women (1925:111).

She then proceeded to highlight the differences between men and women when they participated in sport, and stressed the possible detrimental effects on the female reproductive system, by endorsing the concept of constitutional overstrain:

The basic function of men and women is totally different. Women's function is highly specialized, and when it is brought into play those minor differences...become strongly pronounced, and the woman becomes a totally different creature from that which she was before her role of motherhood was entered upon.

The differences which appear in the nervous, skeletal and muscular systems are all necessary adjuncts of the great work of parturition and anything that might tend to hinder or make this more difficult must be very heavily deprecated.

We have therefore before us the problem of finding a suitable mean between those sports which tax the muscular frame and put a strain upon it, and which are, of course, wholly unsuitable for the feminine organism, which is more delicate and should conserve its energy for the great work before it, and those recreations which are not sufficiently physically energetic to assist the woman towards the most healthy development she may attain.

It seems to me, therefore, that if those sports and games which are suitable for men be modified and reduced so that they cannot in any way injure the woman, and if we can create organizations which will enforce these modified regulations stringently, we will have gone a long way towards achieving our objects (Ibid:111-2).

Eliott-Lynn finished by outlining specific objections to several events. Running, she reasoned, should only be done in moderation, and since starting and finishing involved the 'greatest strain' they should be 'not too much indulged in' (Ibid:113). On another occasion she was so conservative in her recommendations that she described the events from 250 metres to 440 yards as being 'middle-distance' races, a term conventionally used to
describe the half-mile, 1,500 metres and mile (Ibid:38). However, she did state to the Conference that the FSFI had found no ill-effects in women after 1,000 metres races, 'when [they] have been carefully and properly trained' (Ibid:114).

The overriding theme of her paper was to urge caution about the type of events competed in, and to underline the necessity of avoiding overstrain. Since her paper was 'medically approved' and presented at a world conference, she handed every male-administered governing body the justification they required for restricting women's participation in athletics. Dr Leonard Hill supported her arguments and emphasized the cultural distinctions between the sexes: 'We must not forget the weakening effect of civilization on woman, of the years and decades of tight lacing and restrictions, and we must accordingly begin by taking things very easily' (Cited in Eliott-Lynn 1925:ix).

Many of the attacks on women's athletics which have influenced the introduction of new events have concentrated on the unsuitability of the female body to withstand middle- and long-distance running. Even before the WAAA was formed it was noted at the 1922 International Games in Paris that many of the competitors in the longer races experienced difficulty, but this was generally attributed to a lack of training for the events. More experienced commentators argued that 'many individuals can run a longer distance at a slow pace with much less exertion than they can cover a shorter distance at a fast pace' (Spalding 1928:17-19). The panel of doctors who advised the WAAA on events concluded that 'if athletics did not harm women then the distance did not matter' (WAAA Committee Minutes, 6 May 1933).
The most notorious public debate over the suitability of an event for women concerns the 800 metres in the Amsterdam Olympics. Prior to the Games, Harold Abrahams had written that he did not 'consider that women are really built for really violent exercise of the kind that is the essence of competition. One has only to see them practising to realise how awkward they are on the running track' (Cited in Athletics Today: Supplement, 27 February 1992:14). Since this was the first time that women's athletics had appeared on the Olympic programme, their events attracted considerable press attention, and the 800 metres was almost universally condemned. One reporter stated:

If it served any purpose at all, it showed that the modern young woman is apt to attempt too much in the name of sport. As a spectacle, however, it was one for which I had no liking. To run roughly half a mile at breakneck speed is surely too much for any girl. Of the girls who came within reasonable distance of winning, four were so exhausted that they fell all of a heap on the grass, utterly weary and overwrought (Cited in Athletics Today: Supplement, 27 February 1992:14).

The storm of protest was world-wide. The Finn, Martti Jukola, characterized the race as 'absolutely inhuman for the women. Because surely they had not trained for such a long event carefully enough to complete the race without serious damage to their health' (Cited in Hannus 1980:201). The New York Times' response was to state that 'six of the runners were completely exhausted and fell headlong to the ground.' According to The Times, 'eleven wretched women' were scattered by the track (Cited in Guttmann 1991:169). Englishman, Philip Noel-Baker, received direct criticism from several officials at the Games, since it was his country, they argued, which had so vigorously fought for the event's inclusion (Noel-Baker 1976:51). Arguments like these were successfully used to persuade the IAAF and the IOC to remove the 800 metres from the 1932 Games.

In fact it was a remarkable race. In each one of the three heats the old world record had
been broken, and in the final the first three finished inside the old world record - and the winning time of 2 minutes 16.8 seconds was not beaten until 1944. Harold Abrahams was now very supportive of women's athletics and he wrote positively about this race in the BOA Official Report. However, this report, which had a very limited distribution, was not published until the next year, after the 800 metres had already been removed from the Olympic programme - although the FSFI continued to allow the event in their competitions. Abrahams considered more than just the race itself and argued that women were actually more suited to longer events:

Sensational reports appeared in the newspapers concerning the terrible collapse of some of the competitors. Although they were grossly exaggerated, the International Amateur Athletic Federation subsequently decided that the event should not be held at future Olympic Games. It is a somewhat anomalous position, that the Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale (the body responsible for women's international sport) presumably after taking expert advice, decreed that races up to 1,000 metres (1,093 yards) should be allowed, so that to eliminate the 800 metres seems, on the face of it, rather absurd.

I myself witnessed no signs of collapse such as have been described. It is perfectly true to say that two or three of the competitors (one of whom, I know, had never run the distance before) showed signs of mild discomfort, but I incline to the view that this was more psychological than physical, and entirely to be accounted for by the natural disappointment of being beaten. It is certainly open to argument that the high tension of short-distance running is more likely to be harmful to women than long-distance events, for it is generally agreed that a woman's physical make-up is more suited to endurance than speed (1929:147).

Many men in Amsterdam, when they were not denouncing the harm women were exposing themselves to, were dismissive of the seriousness attached by women to athletics.

For example, Urho Peltonen, a Finnish throws judge, commented:

On the training field near the stadium we had been watching the women practising their discus throw. It had given no favourable impression. Chatting, standing in front of the cameras and giving autographs seemed to be the main purpose of the training sessions most of the time. And then occasionally they would throw the discus. We became quite careful after a while and whenever one of the young ladies stepped into the ring we withdrew to a safe distance. The discus barely
stayed within the 90 degrees written in the rules, even behind the ring it got
dangerous sometimes. In the light of these experiences we regarded the event more
as light amusement in the tough Olympic fight (Cited in Hannus 1980:201).

The suitability of throws events has often been discussed in aesthetic, rather than physical,
terms. Webster, for example, who declared that female 'athletic feats can be things of real
beauty' (1930:3), also wrote an article entitled 'The Grace Of The Discus' and illustrated
his discussion with pictures of a tall, slim woman dressed in Greek costume, gently going
through the motions of a throw. He said:

Discus throwing rounds off and makes shapely the limbs, broadens the chest, and
develops just those unthought of little muscles which hide up the ugly cavities at
neck and shoulders. The rhythm of the action imparts to the carriage that
particular swaying movement so much admired. The head must be held high
during the whole evolution, and thereby the muscles come to maturity just where
the head is set upon the body, for which reason the column of the neck is
improved and good poise given to the head itself (1928b:134).

Sophie Eliott-Lynn also described the discus as 'sweeping and graceful' (1925:106), and
characterized several other events as 'graceful', when attempted by women. The javelin,
for example, she said was 'most graceful' (1925:91) and the high jump 'particularly
graceful' - although she considered it inadvisable for women to try to jump the scissors
style with a twist in the body action, since their bodies, she maintained, were
'fundamentally designed for another and a very special and important purpose' [childbirth]
(Ibid:65). Conversely, Webster noted that many commentators did not wish to witness
race walking, since it was not considered 'elegant' (1930:183).

During the slow process of event emancipation it was the athletic performances of women
themselves which did more to break down the medical and social barriers which had
blinkered the governing bodies responsible for change, rather than their efforts in
committee rooms. For example, many years after the 1948 Olympics (discussed in Chapter Five), Tony Ward argued that these Games were 'a moment of emancipation of women's sport. The world had seen nothing like the young women who sprinted, hurdled and jumped with abandonment' (Athletics Today, 10 May 1990:19). These sentiments echoed the contemporary views of Jack Crump, who wrote the official British report of the athletics competition. He regarded the public's absorbed interest in the top class athletics at Wembley as a 'development of the highest importance [which] assures the beginning of a forward movement in what is at last recognised as a suitable sport for women' (1948:34). He went on to say:

Women athletes can take considerable pride in the fact that their performances, their technique, their sportsmanship and general behaviour at Wembley, removed many of the objections which had been advanced by critics who opposed their inclusion in the Olympic Games (Ibid).

Jimmy Green, the editor of Athletics, was no less enthusiastic and endorsed Jack Crump's feelings when he wrote: 'There are still many diehards against the activities of women in track and field athletics, but the Olympics did much to popularise the sport and they gained many adherents' (January 1949:3). These endorsements were particularly significant, since a large proportion of the English public watched and read about the Games, and no doubt their interest was crucial to the post-war expansion of women's athletics.

The history of English women's athletics has been marked by the gradual introduction of new physical opportunities, which have co-existed with long-standing limitations. This process, which has involved the gradual breaking-down of stereotypes, has not been a smooth one. Up until 1980 the efforts of those seeking parity with men were invariably
concentrated on increasing the distances available to women, and many of the initiatives
came from England. In 1947, for example, the WAAA discussed a submission to have the
800 metres reinstated at the Olympics. At the same meeting a pentathlon was suggested,
which would include the 800 metres, together with the 100 metres, high jump, shot and
javelin (WAAA Committee Minutes, 22 February 1947). The composition eventually
agreed by the IAAF included the 200 metres as the longest event in the pentathlon, which
heavily favoured the stronger, bulkier athletes, rather than those with all round ability.

On a more local level, and in an effort to provide female athletes with competition best
suited to their abilities, Surrey County WAAA organised experimental 800 metres races
for Junior girls, and the first-ever 200 metres low hurdles for women, to 'help those with
stride pattern difficulty in the 80 metres hurdles, and also the 220 yards girl rather than the
100 girl' (Surrey County WAAA AGM Minutes, 24 July 1960). Their committee also
persuaded the WAAA to adopt a system that junior girls be allowed to compete against
more senior athletes, provided they were able to satisfy performance criteria. This allowed
young athletes, who were physically more precocious than their contemporaries the benefit
of a competitive environment (Surrey County WAAA AGM Minutes, 30 September 1970).
Surrey also provided additional competition in the rarely-contested pentathlon (Ibid:27
August 1957, 23 August 1958), which English athletes eventually competed in at
international level in 1959. At the end of 1959, women's race walking was also finally
accorded international status. Again on a local basis, the secretary of the Surrey County
WAAA, Jim Braben, introduced the local Lily B (Mrs Lily Braben) League in 1972, to
provide regular competition over a range of disciplines for girls aged under 15. He even
extended the competition to girls of 11 and 12 (Lilv B League Circular, September 1986,
Jim Braben archives). It was often local initiatives, like those in Surrey, which provided English women with opportunities to challenge the limitations set down by governing bodies.

In some areas it was necessary to cling to tradition to enable the sport to survive. For example, handicap racing remained popular in the Northern Region throughout the 1950s. With the lack of leagues and sufficient athletes of similar quality, handicap races were essential, to maintain interest in close competition, which encouraged athletes to stay in the sport and others to join it (Hyman and Pilley 1964:35).

The advances in women's events has, argues Tom McNab, a former British National coach, had 'no rationale, no central philosophy'. He cites the example of the marathon, which was introduced into the Olympics in 1984 following the popularity of mass marathons. In the same year neither the substantially shorter 5,000 metres, nor 10,000 metres were included (1991:22). The limitations have varied, not only from country to country, but also from fixture to fixture. In the previous three chapters I have discussed, for example, how the 800 metres and 1,500 metres were introduced at different dates into each of the three major championships open to English women, although these events were contested in England several years before their inclusion in international competition. At the furthest end of the scale, in 1926, Violet Piercy unofficially completed the Polytechnic Marathon course in 3 hours 40 minutes 22 seconds (Wallechinsky 1991:158). This time remained unbeaten until 1963, principally because the event remained officially barred to women.
Domestically, development during the period of study has been uneven. For example, in the 1970s, the rules governing road races in England were relaxed, which enabled senior women to contest any distance on the road. At the same time, the longest event on the track was increased from 1,500 metres to only 3,000 metres, and over the country the longest event was a mere three miles (Athletics Weekly, 7 February 1996:20). Women were quick to respond to the challenge of road racing. In 1978, the first British Women's National Marathon Championship was held on the Isle of Wight. Ironically, in view of the traditional reluctance to allow women to compete over long distances, this course was shunned by male competitors as being too exacting (R.A.C.E., June 1978:24). The first official marathon ever run in London was in 1980. It was an international, women-only race, sponsored by Avon cosmetics, and organised in part as a consolation for the omission of the race from the Olympics that year. The seriousness attached to the event was emphasised by the closing of London streets for the first time for a marathon.

By 1980, away from the context of conventional competition, but still under the authority of the WAAA, English women were achieving prodigious feats of endurance, and making a mockery of any residual medical arguments which asserted their frailty. For example, in 1980, women were allowed to compete in the 54 mile London-to-Brighton race for the first time. In 1978, Jean Dawes became the first woman to complete the Bob Graham Round [42 peaks in the Lake District in under 24 hours] (R.A.C.E., August 1978:38-40), and women competed regularly in fell races. In 1977, Ann Sawyer became the first woman to walk 100 miles in less than 24 hours. In 1979 she eclipsed the men's Three Peaks record by 11 hours 7 minutes, covering the 420 miles between Fort William and Caernarvon, via Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 7 days and 31 minutes; and, in
1980, Ann removed more than three days from the English women's record for the Land's End to John O'Groats walk, covering the distance in 13 days 17 hours and 42 minutes (Athletics Monthly, July 1981:37). However, championship races in cross-country were, at best, around half the distance competed by men. By 1980 female distance runners were still badly served in both conventional track and cross-country races.

Many other events received little consideration, and were not introduced until many years later. Women were keen to take part in less usual events, such as the steeplechase, but very little happened until the 1990s. So far just a few steeplechase races, of 2,000 metres, have been organised (the distance for men is 3,000 metres), and only the British Veteran's Athletic Federation have accorded the event championship status (Athletics Today, 28 October 1992:32). But these few races attracted little interest amongst women, principally, it was felt, because the barrier height was three feet, the same as in all men's races. Several women argued that the height should be reduced to two feet six inches, the same as the female 400 metres hurdles. However, there were others who felt that three feet barriers were a definite move forward for women, since lower hurdle heights had been fixed at a time when differences between the sexes had been emphasised and women's abilities at men's events were questioned (Ibid). This had led to the criticism of the 400 metres hurdles that the low barriers required little hurdling technique (Athletics Monthly, October 1980:39). However, there were regular competitions in the steeplechase, triple jump and hammer for veteran athletes many years before they were introduced during the 1990s into both English domestic competition, and major championships³ (Athletics

³The FSFI had, in fact, recognised several early performances in these events, including, for example, in 1917, a 2.184 metres pole vault, and a 10.21 metres triple jump, both performed in the USA (Loesch 1922:127).
The availability of events at major championships has often failed to keep pace with domestic development in England. A slowly progressive liberalism by male-dominated policy makers in the IAAF and the IOC, who tended to be reactive, rather than proactive, came too late for many English-women, whose best events were outside the Olympic programme. For example, in 1956, Janet Ruff broke the world record for the 400 metres, which at the time was not an Olympic event (Watman 1968:235). Both Madeleine Ibbotson and Diane Leather had passed their best years as 800 metres runners by the time it was reintroduced into the Olympics in 1960 (O'Connor 1960:76). Liz Joyce, from Cheltenham, one of the first women to break the five minute barrier for the mile, was never able to compete at this event internationally (Joyce 1995). During the 1960s, Joyce Smith could run no further than 800 metres in international matches. Since that was too short an event for her she was restricted to club athletics; she was in her forties before she was able to take part in international competition in the marathon (Smith 1981), and Carol Tyson, who was ranked second in the world for walking in the late 1970s, did not have an Olympic event open to her until 1992.

Judy Vernon, the leading English sprint hurdler of the early 1970s, was involved in the early exhibition races for the 400 metres hurdles towards the end of her international career. She regrets that there were not more races at the time. She says:

It's sad in a way because that really would have been my race, but it just came a little bit too late in my time on the track for me to take seriously; it was not in

---

4Even at the 1996 Olympics there were only 19 events open to women, compared with 24 to men.
It is very likely that many young natural distance runners were lost to the sport early, because of race distance restrictions, and they turned their attention instead to sprints and field events without success. Joyce Smith, for example, competed in the sprints and the long jump at school because 'that's all you were allowed to do'. She stopped competing when she left school, and it was only when she joined an athletic club that she discovered middle-distance events (Smith 1981).

In some meetings women were offered no competition at all for many years. For example, the annual Oxford and Cambridge cross-country race for men began in 1880; women had to wait until 1976 for a race of their own. Even now, women are only awarded a half-blue for the event (Abrahams and Bruce-Kerr 1931:265; Runner's World, April 1995:51). International veterans' athletics was staged for men in 1972, at Crystal Palace, in London. Women's events were not introduced until the 1975 World Veteran Games, in Toronto, Canada (Running, August 1984:66).

Advocates of gender equality in athletics argue that physical differences between men and women should not be used to deny women the opportunity to take part in any event of their choice and that women's athletics should be appreciated for its inherent values; that it should not matter that women use lighter implements than men to throw with, that they do not jump as far as men, nor run as fast as them. What is important is the quality of competition, the excitement of thrilling contests, and of new records. Those who have failed to appreciate the intrinsic qualities of women's athletics, it is argued, should not
have been able to hold positions of authority and decision-making which have led to discrimination of female athletes. Lillian Board put this very persuasively, shortly before her death:

The last hurdles of discrimination against women competing in the men's world of athletics are finally being cleared and the finishing line of acceptance on equal terms is in sight. No one will suggest that we girls will ever challenge the standards of the men, but people are beginning to appreciate that we too can strive to reach a plateau of achievement within our physical abilities every bit as demanding to us as the standards of the men. In doing this we can achieve an intensity of competition just as exciting to the spectators (1970:3).

IMAGES OF FEMININITY

Femininity, like masculinity, argues Hargreaves, is a relative concept which has been socially and historically constructed, and although female athletes are now more vigorous and muscular, she claims that there are still 'influential ideological assumptions about the harmful and masculinizing effects of exercise on the female body' (1994a:145-6). Whilst this may apply to athletes who train hard and seriously for their sport, the general rise in recreative fitness during the 1970s reflected the desire of women to improve their body image by weight loss. Athletics became, at this level, more 'feminine appropriate' - a trend which has continued to be promoted. In different ways over the years, images of femininity have mediated the development of women's athletics in England.

Early press reports of women's athletics during the 1920s were generally positive, and the initial successes of English women contributed to the extensive coverage which followed. In contrast to the factual reports regarding men's athletics, summaries of women's athletics also incorporated assurances that the athletes were feminine. Even the normally objective Joe Binks, reporting on the 1924 Stamford Bridge meeting, coloured his article with a
description of the athletes' determination to appear as attractive as possible:

"All out for the 100 yards hurdles," bellowed [the officials] like angry young lions, but Maud and Mary and Lisette and Kath were not to be bullied into the open until their bandeaux had been properly adjusted, or until their numbers were on straight. When the last finishing touches had been made, and the last glance in the mirror had been taken, they tripped daintily into the arena, and smiled sweetly at the purple-faced men with megaphones (News of the World, 5 August 1924).

Early women's performances compared very poorly with those of men, but as athletics grew in popularity, and performances improved, gradually approaching those of club level male athletes, reporters were keen to stress the femininity of outstanding women athletes, and to emphasise the differences between the sexes. For example, in the build-up to the 1934 Women's World Games in London, the Daily Mirror reported that female athletes would 'reveal more grace of movement than many a ballet' (9 August 1934). An emphasis on femininity was also used as a tool to attract women into athletics. For example, in 1930, Lord Decies, the President of the WAAA reasoned that:

Results have shown, too, the fallacy of the argument that vigorous open-air exercise impairs the natural beauty of women. The trim-figured athletic girl of today can afford to smile at her seniors who solemnly prophesied a lamentable shapelessness as the result of playing games (Foreword in Webster 1930:vi).

The conventional emphasis on femininity and womanhood in media reports tended always to detract from the athletic skills and achievements of the athletes. George Pallett's comments on Czechoslovakian Zdeňka Koubková's world record run of 2 minutes 12.8 seconds in the 800 metres in the 1934 World Games were unusual. He characterized her as a 'beautifully built athlete, and smooth in action', and her performance as 'astounding for a woman' (1955:50). What Pallett did not know was that Koubková's sex characteristics were irregular and that she later changed her status to that of a man.
More typical was the discourse surrounding the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the competition was more intense than ever before, and when it was being viewed on the largest world stage to date. The WAAA chaperon to the English athletes, for example, failed to comment on the performances of the athletes, but focused instead on the notion that athletics was not incompatible with conventional images of femininity when she said:

[I do not] think so many lovely girls have attended the Olympic Games before. Until recent years a woman athlete was not expected to be pretty....But modern dieting and conditions of life generally have changed all that. Athletics make the modern woman lovely, whereas they made the woman of the past ugly with muscles and sinews (Daily Mirror, 10 August 1936).

It was in general agreed that women should be offered an attenuated range of events in comparison to men, because, it was argued, these were the ones most suited to 'the fair sex', who were given 'abundant opportunity....to display their grace and skill' (Lowe 1936:8). If the event was unusual for women, such as the tug-of-war, reports were quick to emphasise that the competitors lacked 'neither grace nor energy' (Nielsen 1996:174). Fear of masculinization was intrinsic to popular observations of women's athletics, and hard competition was typically regarded as unfeminine. For example, Paul Gallico, in 1938, in an article entitled 'Women look their Ugliest when Playing Sport', stated that the majority of sportswomen appeared 'utterly silly' (World Sports, March 1938:3). He remained convinced that a woman should look beautiful, and there were few sports in which she was able to do this. He directed much of his venom towards athletics:

Females who don tracksuits and jerseys and run and jump in track meets are just wasting their time, and ours, because they can't run fast enough or jump high enough or throw things far enough to matter, and besides they weren't built like boys....and finally they ought to get a look at their faces as they break the tape at the finish of the 100 yard dash, twisted and contorted and pitted with the grey lines of exhaustion (Ibid).
Gallico's discourse failed to mention that men, as well as women, finish the same events with faces equally contorted. His contention, though, was that men and women were supposed to look different and that effort and pain in sports were masculine characteristics, unsuited to the femininity of women. Ethel Brown, in a previous article in the Daily Sketch, had characterized female athletes as 'bright and attractive' and 'such real girls'. She also defended the condition of the runners at the end of the Amsterdam 800 metres:

[Men] generally look murderous, ferocious, agonized or are registering determination of the most iron sort. They hardly come in happily smiling as girls are evidently expected to do (9 August 1928).

However, even when the 800 metres was reintroduced into the Olympics in 1960, male reporters had hardly changed their style. The Daily Mirror writer could not believe that anyone really enjoyed seeing women punished in this event. He wrote that, 'Certainly there is no grace or beauty about women under this sort of strain' (8 September 1960). The implication was that women were on display, performing only for the public at large, with no regard to the athletic interests of the women themselves.

Most discourses on women's athletics have been written by men. Comparatively few references in this study are attributed to women. Consequently, it is male images of female athletes which are reflected in the writing, where men comment not only on the athletics, but also on popular male representations of the female body. There have been a few exceptions to this dominant view, which have become more commonplace over the years. For example, a writer in Athletics Weekly in 1955 described reports of journalists as 'woefully ignorant of women's standards of performance, [and] still prejudiced against competitive women's athletics' (3 September 1955:4). Even in specialist publications, the
need to retain femininity continued to be stressed for many years, although more women
were devoting increased time and energy to the sport. For example, George Pallett wrote
that, 'Women in all spheres have shown a capacity for endurance and hard physical labour
without suffering [a] loss of femininity' (Athletics Weekly, 17 February 1951:12). His later
book contains several references relating to the attractiveness of the athletes, and he
stresses that athletics does not 'of necessity turn women into muscle-bound masculine
types. The most successful', he maintains, 'retain their eternal femininity and natural
charm, [and] are the healthier, physically and mentally, and are even more attractive for
physical recreation' (1955:196). He describes the 1930s sprinter Betty Locke, as a 'small,
dark, beautifully proportioned girl' (Ibid:126). Even the doyen of athletics writers, Mel
Watman, wrote in a similar fashion, describing Christine Slemon as 'petite' and 'fair-haired'
(Athletics Weekly, 16 April 1955:6).

Men were not the only ones absorbed with the female body. For example, Mary Flin, one
of the very few female commentators also writing in the 1950s, in typical 'male' style
focused on the femininity of female athletes:

Most women are naturally graceful runners....Nearly every athletic woman is well
proportioned and many beautifully slim....on the running tracks of Britain you find
a high percentage of the slim, feminine women of this country. Most girls who
begin serious training find their figures become trimmer than ever before (Athletics

Many leading male athletes, such as Bannister and, particularly, Zatopek, had ugly running
actions, which did not detract from the brilliance of their performances. But for women
style and beauty on the track were important. Women brought to the track, according to
photographer, Tony Duffy, 'an added ingredient missing from the men's events which can
be summed up in one word - grace' (Paish and Duffy 1976:89). As women trained harder, and in some events became bulkier - particularly the successful Soviet throwers - the imperative to stress the undoubted femininity of English female athletes grew. For example, during the early 1960s, Athletics Weekly ran a series of pen portraits of the country's leading athletes. As well as height and weight figures, women's vital statistics were also always included, and Tony Ward, commenting on Jean Desforges, the captain of the British team in the early 1950s, regarded her as:

An evocation of a golden era of British women's athletics, the immediate post-war period when a bevy of athletes summarily dismantled the amazonian image: attractive, ebullient, talented, they collected medals at every international level (Athletics Today, 10 May 1990:18).

During the 1950s meetings with the state-sponsored athletes of the Eastern bloc grew, and it was inevitable that comparisons were made with these competitors. However, some journalists were at pains to stress the attractiveness of many of these athletes as well, thus emphasising that femininity was not lost in top-class women's athletics. Norris McWhirter, for example, characterized the Soviet thrower, Galina Zybina as having a 'peaches and cream' complexion which, he argued, was 'more befitting a film star than a muscle-girl' (World Sports, January 1955:27). A few months later he commented that Nina Otkalenko, the Soviet middle-distance world record holder, had retained all her feminine qualities, and that it was not necessary to sacrifice these characteristics to achieve the very pinnacle of athletic achievement:

If you imagine that this great middle-distance runner is an unattractive amazon, you are wide of the mark. At the European Championships in Berne, where she added to her collection of bullion, this dainty 27 year-old blonde with smiling eyes came out high in the beauty stakes (World Sports, September 1955:31).
It is significant that the leading English thrower of the 1950s, Suzanne Allday was not a large or heavily-muscled athlete. In pictures with Eastern bloc throwers at major games she appears quite petite in comparison. It seems possible that the continued emphasis on the femininity of athletes had militated against larger, more muscled women entering the sport. Paradoxically, this led to complaints about the low standard of field competitors because there were no really big girls throwing the discus and putting the shot in England, but that there were 'plenty of them about and if other games could not absorb them, there was a wide open field in athletics' (Athletics Weekly, 3 September 1955:4). In the Athletics Weekly pen portraits of the early 1960s, no English field events competitor admitted to a waistline above 28 inches. In 1959, even the large, bulky Soviet thrower, Tamara Press, who had just added over two feet to the world record for the shot put, was described by an English commentator as 'tall and well-built without being unfeminine' (Modern Athletics, November 1957:11). Efforts were often made to highlight the more feminine aspects of each event, but there seemed to be contradictory tendencies. For example, a discus thrower was expected to possess 'the poise of the ballet dancer', yet a picture of Tessa Sanderson in her javelin approach run describes her as being 'caught in a warrior-like pose; the hunter about to capture the prey' (Paish and Duffy 1976:70, 76).

During the 1950s, American women gradually improved in athletics, but in the face of opposition from many American writers, who continued to describe the sport as unfeminine. Jack Crump, dismissed such claims as 'sheer rot' and claimed that he could:

....produce a dozen British women athletes to look and be more charming than any dozen film stars who can be produced in Hollywood....I'll choose, for example, Ann Pashley, June Paul, Heather Armitage, Jean Scrivens and Pauline Wainwright. Indeed I'd back Britain's Olympic women's team to beat any other for feminine grace, beauty and good breeding (World Sports, December 1956:19).

282
It was also a feature of post-war writers to emphasise the differences between the sexes and stress that a 'normal' lifestyle need not be abandoned by women athletes. Fanny Blankers-Koen was positively displayed as a housewife and mother of two who could cook and sew and fitted her athletic life around her household duties. Maureen Dyson's work as a ballet instructor was invariably commented on, and *World Sports* carried simultaneous pictures of her in both roles (October 1948:12). Frenchwoman, Micheline Ostermeyer, the powerful double throws champion in 1948, was depicted as a delicate concert pianist. She commented that, 'I am a pianist doing athletics, not an athlete playing the piano' (Cited in Hannus 1980:206; Greenberg 1991:188).

When English performances were unable to match those of highly trained athletes from other countries, then the feminine-appropriate virtues of Englishwomen were more regularly and powerfully stressed in press reports. For example, in the 1960 Rome Olympics, Carole Quinton placed second to the Soviet's Irina Press in the 80 metres hurdles. The *Daily Mirror* correspondent described her as being:

> Off like a swallow skimming over the eaves. She did not have the muscular power of Irina Press, one of the Russian's wonder girls, but her grace and technique brought her a richly deserved second place (2 September 1960).

The overtly sexist coverage was continued by the *Daily Express* reporter, who, after Carole's success, was no less fulsome in his description of her as a 'girlishly-slim 24 year old' and an 'English Rose' who 'looked even lovelier than ever through British eyes' (2 September 1960).

The imperative to conform to dominant stereotypes associated with female-appropriate events has contributed to the marginalization - even invisibility on occasions - of an event
like the shot, where Judy Oakes has competed at international level for twenty years. She has suffered from public perceptions that all competitors in her event need to be large and muscular, but feels she has lost none of her femininity. She describes her experiences:

The number of times I have walked into places [and people have said] "Oh! I expected someone far more masculine and bigger than you are." They expect a six foot four monster to walk through the door. This is the perspective that has come through the [1970s] with the East German regime and you know, now it's beginning to be dispelled and the fact that you can be feminine, and yeah, I'm impressive on the track and it's the nature of the event but when I go out in the evenings I like to put make up on. I like to dress up nicely. I like to be feminine - and you can be feminine, and you can look actually better being a heavy athlete 'cos you're muscular and you're toned rather than just a blob...you can be feminine as well. I think that's important (Oakes 1997).

The urge to remain slim and feminine pervaded reports up to the end of this period of study. For example, in the 1980 Olympic 400 metres, the Daily Express made comparisons between the first- and the last-placed athletes and implied that the winner's appearance was that of a man, enhanced by the use of drugs:

The women's 400 metres gold duly went to the world record holder Marita Koch, the East German girl built like a rugby wing three quarter.

She won with a new Olympic record of 48.88 [seconds] - as frail looking Linsey MacDonald coming in last like a kid off the beach who had got caught up in a carnival procession.

....The ultimate irony was that Scottish girl Linsey, who yesterday heard that she had passed all her eight O levels, was taken off for a dope test! (29 July 1980).

The expansion of the women's athletic programme in the 1970s, particularly when longer distances were introduced, brought a further problem related to body image, that of eating

---

5Judy is five feet four and weighs thirteen stones (Oakes 1997).

6Reports of these Olympics were often also coloured by Cold War politics, which had intensified over the boycott surrounding the Moscow Games.
disorders. Whilst he had no figures to corroborate his findings, journalist Cliff Temple, who was also a noted coach, pointed to the increase in anorexia specific to middle- and long-distance female athletes. He could not recall a thrower, who needed to be heavily muscled, nor a sprinter or jumper, who would also have spent considerable time in strengthening work, suffering from the illness. But distance athletes, he argued, need to be thin, and the role models which young athletes mimicked, like Kazankina, Grete Waitz, Kathryn Binns and Wendy Sly, were all slightly built. He cited cases of thin women who took to running in order to get thinner and as a consequence, lost their femininity (Athletics Today, 12 May 1993).\footnote{Preliminary results from a study at Leeds University indicate that at least eight per cent of England's current leading 250 middle- and long-distance female runners have suffered from eating disorders. This is eight times the national average for the age groups canvassed. It is also argued that the results 'might underestimate the scale of the problem. Although anonymity was assured, people with eating disorders [are] often loath to tell others' (The Times, 27 August 1997).}

ATHLETIC DRESS

Representations of the female body in athletics changed with the changing nature of the sport and in relation to popular images of women, to shifting attitudes to the female body, and to new fashions. For example, a painting of a smock race by Samuel Howitt, dated September 1800, depicts the female runners in ordinary day clothes (Cone 1981:102). The pictures of nineteenth-century pedestrians suggest that comfort was a key consideration in the variety of costumes they adopted. Pre-First World War pictures in the collection of Kevin Kelly, taken at works' sports days, also show women impeded by their normal day clothes - including hats - while competing in a variety of short races, and the 1913 pictures of female relay runners at Birmingham University show them in the shapeless
gym slips utilised by gymnasts of the time.

In 1922, when the WAAA was founded, women competed in just a few sports in public, like early tennis and croquet, which 'allowed the weaker sex to retain its picturesque weakness' (Sandilands 1928:72). It was only the move away from constricting dress after the First World War which allowed women to consider activities that required freedom of movement, like athletics. This revolution in dress was 'both a cause and effect of the physical and social liberation of women' (Ford 1977:240). One important dress development which was integral to the liberating process was the move for women out of the corset and into the bra, which, with its incorporation of elastic in 1914, gave women comfort, ease in dressing, and the possibility to consider more invigorating forms of activity (Phillips and Phillips 1993:129-147). A bra was considered essential for any athlete, and it was recommended that, 'As soon as a girl's figure begins to develop she should be told to wear a bust bodice; it will help her running considerably' (Williams 1934:95). Corsets were advised against by advocates of athletics: 'If you feel your back wants some support', said Elliott-Lynn, 'do some exercises that will strengthen the natural body wall of muscles' (1925:25).

The appearance of female athletes in public venues came as a shock to many commentators, particularly over their dress. Sandilands argued that:

In fact it was almost a revolution - and extremely immodest. Girls appeared in running shorts, and revealed great lengths of unclad legs. Even naked thighs were displayed - and displayed as if they didn't matter.

...In brief, the psychological struggle in the women's athletic movement is between the strong fear of appearing immodest and the strong desire of women to free themselves of their ridiculous clothes (1928:73-4).
Dress for athletics contrasted starkly with the everyday clothes of women between the wars which, despite the revolution in dress styles, was still modest. It was claimed in 1930, by Lord Decies, the President of the WAAA, that part of the change in fashion was attributed to the number of women involved in sport. He argued that:

Not a few, I think, of the very drastic changes in women's fashions of recent years are directly attributable to the greater freedom desired by sportswomen, and the saner view which they take of the benefits of fresh air and exercise (Foreword in Webster 1930:vi).

A strong sense of decorum pervaded the inauguration of the WAAA, which sought to prevent the 'exploitation of women' as one of its key aims. To ensure that female athletes were free of male voyeurism when competing they developed a loose, shapeless code of dress which was mandatory for all athletes. The 'costume' was to consist of 'Dark shorts, not more than four inches above the knee', with a 'loose fitting vest with elbow length sleeves' (WAAA Inaugural Meeting Notes, October 1922). Athletes were also advised to wear a big coat or wrap when not competing. This was not advocated to ensure that athletes were modestly dressed, but to prevent injuries (Williams 1934:95). Stockings were not recommended, since, to keep them up garters would impede circulation and suspenders would pull against the muscles (Eliott-Lynn 1925:32). However, knitted stockings soon became mandatory for many young athletes, insisted on by parents who were worried that bare legs were provocative and risqué. Muriel Cornell's mother refused to let her daughter run in bare legs, but compromised over the colour by letting her wear flesh-coloured lisle stockings (Adventurous Eves, 1990).

Early English women athletes appeared essentially shapeless and defeminized. The large, round-necked vests, with sleeves down to the elbows were worn outside of voluminous
shorts. Athletes were not allowed to tuck their vests into their shorts, which would have emphasised their figures: to do that, says Vera Searle, 'was immoral' (Adventurous Eyes, 1990). This contrasted with the dress code of several other countries. For example, the Canadian athletes at the 1928 Olympics had the option of sleeveless v-necked vests (Tyler 1976:31), and an Austrian club team of the same year wore similar vests, tucked into small, tight-fitting shorts (Martin 1989:78). But the English dress did not deter men who were attracted to the female form. 'I can assure you,' said Vera Searle, 'we had our admirers!' (Daily Mail, 6 July 1978:31).

The need for modesty was maintained in England throughout the period of study, although democratization of the sport was such that athletes themselves sometimes had a vote on the dress code. For example, in 1938, new athletic kit was approved at the AGM, which allowed the option of a sleeveless tunic or blouse - but to retain decorum it had to, 'fit to the edge of the shoulder, and closely around the arm and neck' (WAAA AGM Minutes, 26 November 1938). In 1948, the rules still advocated that black shorts be worn, and that any competitor who wore white shorts would not be allowed to compete (Athletics, July 1948:16). In 1951, at the WAAA AGM, the clothing rules were redefined to read that, 'A competitor's clothing must be clean and so designed and worn as not to make an indecent display of the competitor's person' (Athletics Weekly, 24 March 1951:10). Even in 1982, when athletic kit had been a fashion item for several years, the rules still stressed that, 'In all events competitors must wear clothing which is clean and so designed and worn as not to be objectionable. The clothing must be made of a material which is non-transparent even if wet' (Women's Amateur Athletic Association 1982:36).
Paradoxically, it was men who eventually regarded women's athletic dress as too sensational. In 1967, when figure-hugging shorts appeared made of stretch nylon, rather than cotton, a few male race starters felt embarrassed and complained to the WAAA that some athletes were wearing shorts that were too revealing. However, the shorts were very popular with the athletes for several reasons. Sprinter Janet Simpson commented that, 'These new shorts give us a wonderful freedom of movement for our running.' Lillian Board, who was always meticulous over her appearance, argued that the new shorts were 'rather feminine [and were] much better than the baggy things we used to wear. I am jolly sure there are plenty of men who must envy the starters' (Undated newspaper article by Roy Moor, WAAA archives). Vera Searle disliked the new shorts and commented that:

We were young ladies in my day....We didn't even like showing our knees. But I much prefer them to the tight shorts the girls wear these days. They would cut your throat (Daily Mirror, 6 July 1978:27).

WAAA Secretary, Marea Hartman, remained concerned that English athletes were decorous in appearance, and banned bare midriffs from the WAAA Championships during a heatwave two years later (Evening Standard, 17 July 1969:34).

There was one well-publicised occasion when an item of clothing was used as an aid to running. In 1970 some athletes wore padded bras to gives themselves an extra few inches advantage over their rivals when crossing the finishing line. In an attempt to stop this practice, Marea Hartman even toured the changing rooms at the WAAA Championships to check what the athletes were wearing. As she reasoned, 'We want to be quite sure that the real girls and not the padded ones win in any tight finish....We think it is high time that built-up curves are ruled out of international women's racing.' She admitted that the ruling did not please all the athletes and commented that, 'Some of our more flat-chested girls
have not been too pleased with some of the photo-finish decisions which have gone against them.' Valerie Peat even argued that a bigger bust would have given her second place, instead of third, in the European Championships 200 metres the year before (Undated newspaper article by Graeme McLagan, 1970, WAAA archives). Lillian Board argued that a bra was necessary for running, 'unless', she said, 'you want to finish with two black eyes' (Emery 1971:86).

Eventually, as running kit became skimpier, and body-hugging lycra became the norm, it was clear that many spectators did not view athletics for sporting reasons, although the opportunity to express a positive self-image, it is argued, also attracted women into the sport. One letter-writer to Athletics Today commented that:

> From the point of view of attracting youngsters into the sport the recent crop (progressively since the 1970s in fact) of superbly bodied and attractively dressed athletes are an excellent advertisement. Young people these days look good, like to look good and know they look good. The fact that they can take those attitudes unselfconsciously into the sport with them is a healthy one (6 August 1992:32).

The selection of team uniforms for major championships also created problems. Sandy Duncan, who was a member of the BOA management on many occasions recognised the particular difficulties in dressing women:

> As for the girls, who would like to design one hat style suitable for about fifty girls and lady managers, of all age groups, sizes, shapes, hair styles and complexions. A well-equipped team feels good and that is an important thing. Furthermore, a country is judged on the turn-out of its team (1960:104).

The importance of attractive and feminine team uniforms was stressed by successive generations of athletes, whose clothes for each major championship were closely scrutinised by the media. For example, Sylvia Disley commented that she, 'wouldn't be
seen dead' in her Olympic dresses of 1948 and 1952 (Evening News, 29 October 1962). However, the English uniforms for the 1962 Commonwealth Games in Perth were highly regarded, and the importance placed upon appearance was highlighted by Dorothy Hyman, who commented that, 'We will be able to hold our heads proudly dressed like this,' although Marea Hartman admitted that she 'looked a bit like a barrage balloon in [hers]' (Daily Express, 30 October 1962:5). Satisfaction was also expressed by the 1966 Commonwealth Games' team whose clothes were designed by Hardy Amies, since for athletes 'representing the most swinging place in the world, clothes count almost as much as performance' (Daily Mail, 1 July 1966:3). Poorly designed uniforms, however, were characterized as a stumbling block to good performances on the track. For example, Jean Rook commented that the women's uniform for the Munich Olympics in 1972 was 'no winner. It's not even a good also-ran. And it's certainly no sight to send the spirits soaring over the pole' (Uncredited newspaper cutting, WAAA archives).

The attention given to women's athletic clothing by sports-goods' manufacturers has been uneven. Manufacturers proved keen to promote athletic clothing styles for women, particularly as a fashion accessory during the later years of this study. However, female-specific running shoes were not so readily available. It was said that in 1980, 'Britain's women had only eight running shoes to choose from and some of those were of dubious pedigree, being cheap trainers painted pink' (Running: Supplement, October 1985:16). It was to be several years before women were treated as seriously as men over some of their requirements.
GENDER VERIFICATION TESTING

As has already been discussed in Chapter Three, there were instances of men posing as women in smock races during the early nineteenth century in order to win lucrative prizes. This also occurred during the early years of organized women's athletics, during the inter-war years. However, it is argued by Cowe (1985:3) that during the formative years of women's athletics the issues were more complex than mere posing in races. He claims that during the early years of the twentieth century in England, when the majority of the early athletes were born, the lack of knowledge regarding sexual ambiguity sometimes led to a child being assigned the wrong sexual identity. James Coote, writing in The Sunday Telegraph (4 September 1966:11), believed that this was still the case during the 1960s in Eastern Europe. Additionally, Cowe cites evidence that during the 1930s several transvestites posed as women. Because there were no changing facilities, and loose-fitting athletic costume was designed specifically to desexualize and hide the female figure, the disguise of male sex organs was a simple matter. Cowe mentions several Czechoslovakian, German and Polish men competing in women's events - athletes that English women competed against. For example, the only athlete who ever defeated Gladys Lunn in the 800 metres in international competition, Zdeňka Koubková, later changed her identity to that of a man and then got married (Lunn 1983). Amongst English athletes, Cowe mentions the case of Nellie Halstead's 'sister' who threw the javelin during the early 1930s as a woman, and then assumed a male identity (1985:34).

Katharine Connal states that the call for sex testing was made as a result of the 1936 Olympics, where, she says, even a male German official was heard to remark that only half the 100 metres runners were women. She strongly implies that the governing bodies in England were aware of the situation and is clear that:

292
There were a number of these men-women in international athletics, mostly holding records. There were several competing in England, but none had been selected for our Olympic team.

Many young girl competitors wouldn't use the same changerooms. Others doted on them. They had hairy legs, flat chests, shaved their beards, or had broken or husky voices...they had an enormous physical advantage over the rest of us (The Australian Women's Weekly, 17 May 1972:7).

Two international examples are particularly notorious. Polish athlete, Stella Walsh, who is credited as the most prolific world record holder in history, won the 1932 Olympic 100 metres with 'long man-like strides' (Wallechinsky 1991:143). Four years later she was defeated in the same event by Helen Stephens, who one Polish journalist accused of being a man. Forty-four years later an autopsy on Stella Walsh (then Mrs Stella Olsen) revealed that it was she who had 'primary male characteristics' (Greenberg 1991:191; also Blackman 1988:188; Wallechinsky 1991:145). The other example involves an hermaphrodite, the German, Dora Ratjen. In the 1936 Olympic high jump, where Dorothy Tyler won her first silver medal, Dora Ratjen finished fourth, but in 1938 was barred from competition when her real identity was discovered to be that of Hermann Ratjen, who claimed to have been forced into transvestite service by Hitler Youth leaders (Mandell 1971:173). Coote claimed that the Soviets utilised hermaphrodites in their post-war sports programmes, since, he said, they retained 'boyish, lithe and agile figures', and did not suffer the effects of periods (The Sunday Telegraph, 4 September 1966:11).

The need to regularise the problems surrounding athletes of 'doubtful sexuality' was discussed by both the FSFI and the IOC before the Second World War, and the possibility of mandatory testing was considered for the proposed Olympics in 1940. The 1946 IAAF Congress established a Commission for Women's Sports, and one of their immediate

293
recommendations was that all women entering the Olympic Games and the European Championships must produce a certificate confirming their female identity, and that this certificate was necessary for formal recognition of world records (Daily Mirror, 10 August 1936; Pallett 1955:68).

Early sex testing was based simply on observation, and the lack of clinical evidence, allied to the test being conducted by doctors from the athlete's own country, raised doubts as to the reliability and honesty of the system utilised. Sylvia Cheeseman (later Disley) remains convinced that she ran against men, pointing out that a French sprinter refused to submit to a test prior to the 1948 Olympics (Disley 1986). She recalls her test for the 1952 Olympics, where two male doctors carried out the examination:

[One doctor] pointed to me and said 'man or woman' and the other doctor looked appalled and then this doctor said 'This is ridiculous, I'm not going to examine you,' and he signed [the certificate]. Now it makes me realise how easy it must have been for the Russians to get some of their women into the team (The Olympic Years: 1952, 1992).

Even during the early 1960s, suspicions were still raised. Sprinter Jenny Pawsey (née Taylor) cites the case of the Soviet Press sisters, who she passed at the White City and greeted with a cheery wave. She was, she claims, met with a bass grunt in response. Jenny also expressed surprise that the sisters did not use the changing facilities at the stadium (1997). In 1966 matters came to a head when the IAAF insisted that examinations at the European Championships should be conducted by three independent female gynaecologists, rather than a doctor from the athlete's own country. Four Soviet athletes, all reigning European champions (including the Press sisters), promptly withdrew from the competition, as did the Romanian, Iolanda Balas, which fuelled already
inquisitive media speculation as to their true sexual identities. The leader of the Soviet
delegation added to the conjecture by commenting that the athletes were 'borderline cases.
We want to save them any embarrassment' (Cited in The Sunday Telegraph, 4 September
1966:11; also The Daily Telegraph, 6 September 1966).

In 1968, the IOC instituted the more clinical sex chromatin test (where a swab is taken
from the inside of the mouth) to determine the sex of female competitors (Tyler 1984:58).
In an effort to counter the accusation that the tests would not be conducted honestly, the
IOC appointed the testing doctors, instead of each country's National Olympic Committee
(The Daily Telegraph, 9 May 1967). Several more leading athletes soon retired
(Wallechinsky 1991:142). Paradoxically, by the end of the period of study, increasing
numbers of female athletes were beginning to wear revealing, body-hugging lycra
costumes (which made any examination other than a visual one perfunctory). As Dr
Malcolm Brown, the British team doctor commented, when he refused to carry out sex
tests: 'I can tell the difference between a man and a woman just by seeing them in their kit
on television' (Cited in Engel and Morrison 1991:59).

Sex testing is now regarded by many as a controversial and unwarranted intrusion into the
lives of women, as inaccurate and discriminatory, as serving little purpose, and which has
the potential to cause deep psychological harm to women who unknowingly carry a sexual
differentiation disorder (Peak Performance, September 1996:10-11). Hargreaves
(1994a:222) describes the femininity control test, which has been an obligatory feature of
Olympic competition for women since 1968, as 'the most potent symbol of the concern to
prove that there is an absolute distinction between the sexes'. There were also political
and nationalistic overtones to the sex chromatin test, which was introduced by the all-male
IOC at the height of the Cold War, when East European women were winning the
majority of Olympic medals and setting new standards of excellence in most events,
standards that many believed could not be accomplished by real women. Whilst this test
from a saliva sample is less physically demeaning than the previously adopted system of
physical examination, it is, according to Hargreaves, 'stereotyping femininity according to
heterosexual standards [and] particularly threatening to those women who are naturally
flat-chested and heavily muscled', and unfair to those who have abnormal chromosomal
arrangements which do not give advantages (Ibid).

Helen Lenskyj claims that the procedure was designed to provide fairer competition
between women but that it 'only added to the stigmatization of the female athlete'
(1986:93). Adrienne Blue states that no man has been found impersonating a woman in
Olympic competition since the chromatin test was introduced, which she regards as 'an
embodiment of all the antiquated prejudices and suspicions against women in sport'
(1988:159), and Dr Daniel Hanley, the USA representative to the IOC's medical
commission, claims it is 'an expensive overreaction to a remote possibility' (Ibid:161).

Elizabeth Ferris argues strongly that sex testing 'is more likely to exclude athletes [who
have no innate advantage] than to detect those who cheat' (1991:19). She cites the case of
the Olympic gold medallist, the Pole, Eva Klobukowska. She had originally passed a
physical examination, but in 1967 'failed' a close-up visual inspection of the external
genitalia. Although she was born with a small physical defect, it had been corrected and
treated, and conferred no physical advantage. Ferris stresses that 'the trap set to catch
males cheating by masquerading as females had instead caught a "genuine" woman with a medical condition receiving appropriate treatment' (Ferris 1992:686-7). Eva's tests ruined her life and she was publicly vilified. She is still trying to get reinstated.

Nevertheless, the rush of retirements which marked the beginning of chromosome testing is believed by some to have rooted out men masquerading as women and to have resulted in fairer competition for women. Indeed, the introduction of sex testing was welcomed by many women competitors. Sylvia Disley (nee Cheeseman), in an unrecorded conversation with me in 1994, remains convinced that some of her opponents were men. Equally anecdotal were the comments of Christina Boxer, who claims that during the 1970s she heard stories about several Soviet women becoming mothers, but that the athletes themselves never discussed their children, nor produced pictures of them, behaviour which she regards as uncharacteristic of a mother (Running. February 1987:63; Athletics Today. 14 November 1991:6).

CONCLUSION

The involvement of English women in athletics has always been hampered by pervasive theories of overstrain and damage to the female body. Nevertheless, women have competed in athletics within the medical and ideological constraints set by society. Gradually, as the supposed 'scientific' evidence was progressively exposed as little more than ideology, greater freedom was secured over the events which could be competed in. As men trained harder, so did women, and the jogging boom of the late 1970s at last released women from the residual preconceptions regarding their perceived frailty.
However, by the end of the period under investigation, in many respects women were still hampered in their search for equality with men, being expected to be at all times feminine, in both appearance and demeanour.
CHAPTER EIGHT

POWER AND CONTROL: PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

INTRODUCTION

Sport occupies a major place in English cultural life, and Messner and Sabo (1990:9) argue that sport 'is an institution created by and for men'. As a result, claims Dunning (1986:79-80), it has, throughout history, often acted as an exclusive arena for male experiences and relations. This has resulted in women receiving unfavourable treatment on the grounds of their sex. In the previous chapter we have seen how the sexuality and femininity of female athletes have been questioned and examined in ways that have had a detrimental effect on the nature and extent of their involvement - a practice that was part of a structure of gender relations of power. Athletics has also played a significant role in other ways in the construction and maintenance of unequal gender relations in athletics which will be examined in this chapter.

Bryson (1990:197) observes that, 'to be better at sport....is symbolically translatable into being better or more capable in other areas of life,' whereas, she says, women 'who are culturally defined and perceived as incapable of equalling man at sport, are rendered inferior and, by inference, less capable in many areas of life'. Thus, through sport, women's 'inferiority' and men's 'superiority' in society is reinforced. This view is given added credence if the differences are based on a biological ideology, since, as Willis (1982:130) claims, it displays a 'naturalness that denies challenge'. It is based on a popular assumption that, 'of course women are different and inferior.'
Margaret Talbot (1986:56-72) argues that sport is an 'institutionalized game' whose organizational, educational, technological and symbolic features tend to reinforce its masculine character which resists female challenges. She also notes that sport is dominated by men in participative, coaching, administrative and executive levels.

The evidence shows clearly that athletics throughout the world has always been a patriarchal sport in which men have wielded far greater power than women. But whereas men have always featured prominently in the administration and control of international women's athletics, domestically, the situation is far more complex. During the formative years of the WAAA, men held key positions of authority and were highly influential. Then, gradually, women took greater control of the sport and the WAAA became an all-female, outwardly autonomous organization. However, at no time does there seem to have been a struggle between men and women for control of the WAAA: the men who held authority did so to help and encourage the growing numbers of female athletes, rather than to direct the growth and development of women's athletics. But men continued to have a powerful influence because they had greater financial and practical resources and more experience. Unequal gender relations of power between men and women were a marked feature of joint enterprises between the AAA and the WAAA - for example men controlled large mixed track meetings.

Patriarchal relations alone, reasons Hargreaves (1994a:288), do not explain the complexities of women's subordination in sports. She uses the concept of male hegemony to reveal the incomplete and changing nature of male leadership and domination of sports - characteristics which athletics has shared with other sports. At no time have male
administrators been unanimously opposed to the advance of the sport for women; in fact the development of women’s athletics has depended on the support and energies of male protagonists. Those who have been consistently reactionary and resistant to opportunities for women have had to listen to, and deal with, the concerted efforts of men as well as women who have struggled for improved opportunities and resources for women (See Hargreaves 1986). It has also been the case that women in athletics have not always held the same views - some, and in particular English women, have been radical in their demands whilst others have been more cautious. The evidence shows that the history of English women's athletics has not been a straightforward struggle between men and women, but has been a struggle involving different groups of men and different groups of women in a process of advances and set-backs. And it has not always occurred in the most obvious ways through official and public channels. For example, many of those who have championed women's athletics in England - both male and female - have not been in formal positions of power and authority, but have worked behind the scenes in quiet and unassuming ways. They have made teas for small club meetings; have worked as fundraisers to enable the sport to survive in local organisations; have been unqualified 'coaches' who have sparked the interest of many female athletes; and, importantly, have taken for granted that women could and should be able to enjoy the sport as much as men. These people, as much as female athletes themselves, have helped to change previously uneven and discriminatory gender relations of power in the sport.

In this chapter a number of features relating to gender relations of power in English women's athletics are examined, including the influence of men; familial and peer group pressures; inequalities of opportunity; problems of access to facilities and other resources;
and the significance of media intervention.

THE BATTLE FOR WOMEN'S CONTINUED PLACE IN THE OLYMPIADES

As already discussed in Chapter Four, the struggle to gain admission of women's athletics into the Olympic movement was a protracted process, made possible only by the intervention of several enlightened men. Success was marred, however, by the limited five event inaugural programme at the 1928 Olympics, followed by the seemingly final decision to retain a contracted programme of events. Even more backward-looking moves to exclude women once again from Olympic competition followed, although at an IOC meeting in 1931, there was an overwhelming vote of confidence for a continued programme of women's athletics in future Olympic Games. Throughout the period of struggle and negotiation surrounding Olympic participation, the sport was growing rapidly and successfully in other contexts: women were competing in domestic competitions in different countries around the world, organised by all-women athletic associations, and were taking part in international events, the most successful of which was the Women's World Games. English women continued to play a central role in the negotiations with the IOC about the number of events on the Olympic programme.

Women's athletics in the Olympics was on the agenda of the IAAF Congress which met both before and after the 1932 Olympics. Alice Milliat, President of the FSFI, was unable to attend and instead of substituting a replacement from the female membership of the Federation, she elected to send Mr Messerli of Switzerland as her deputy. He seemed to be fully in support of the women's sport, pressing for a complete programme of events at future Olympics. It was known that the next Women's World Games in 1934 would have
a wide and well-contested programme and Mr Messerli passed on the FSFI's position that if a full Olympic programme was not implemented 'it was better to have no women's events at all' (Pallett 1955:47). However, despite the obvious success of the women's programme of athletics in Los Angeles, the debate centred on whether or not women's athletics should even remain in the Olympics and the vote to continue with women's track and field was passed by only eleven votes to nine (Leigh 1974:191-2).

England's Muriel Cornell, who was a WAAA representative on the FSFI, recognised that the battle was far from won. The narrow vote placed women's participation at the Olympics in jeopardy. Consequently, she made the following proposal, which was accepted unanimously by the members of the FSFI:

The FSFI will agree to give up the Women's World Games when a complete programme for women's athletics is included in the Olympic Games, and under the condition to have a direct representative on the International Olympic Committee. The FSFI note that the IOC is more and more reluctant to have women take part in the Olympic Games in every kind of sport. Under such circumstances the FSFI think that we must take up again the idea of organising women's Olympic Games including every kind of women's sport ('Report on the IAAF Congress' p12, in AAU Minutes, 1935, cited in Leigh 1974:193-4).

Events took a further retrograde step on 28 and 29 August 1934, when, at the twelfth IAAF Congress, the German representative on the IAAF suggested that the Special Committee\(^1\) for women's sport should be abandoned, that the IAAF should control women's track and field athletics, and that they should allow women's events only within the IAAF umbrella. The FSFI, it was noted, had no direct representation on the IOC, women being represented only through the IAAF. It was also observed that world

\(^1\)This was set up in 1926. See 'The Fight for Inclusion In The Olympiades;' Chapter Four.
meetings held every two years (Olympics and Women's World Games) doubled the administrative responsibilities of the two governing bodies and laid heavy financial and manpower burdens on national associations. The German representative also recommended that members of the IAAF leave the FSFI.

The FSFI was forewarned of Germany's tactics and Alice Milliat spoke at length to the IAAF Congress, stressing that the demise of the FSFI depended upon women gaining a complete programme of events in the Olympics. She was quick to remind delegates that the FSFI had been formed following the original refusal of the IAAF to accommodate women. Paradoxically, the German representative claimed that his federation's aim was not to harm the FSFI, but merely to obtain the complete programme for women, since they could be better represented on the IOC by the IAAF than by the FSFI (Leigh 1974:193). It would seem then that Germany, who had one combined men's and women's federation, wished to see women succeed.

Whatever the motives of the Germans, the central issue for women's athletics was whether the sport would be served better by amalgamating into a single-sex organisation, in which case, it was feared, men would take control, or, as the Germans were arguing, women

---

2This contrasts with the crowded calendar of today, when English women are expected to compete to the highest standards every year with a combination of Olympic, World, European, Commonwealth, Europa Cup, World Cup, European Indoor, World Indoor and Grand Prix events - as well as cross-country and road championships.

3Only Belgium, Canada, England and France had separate men's and women's associations (WAAA Committee Minutes, 11 August 1934).

4Reifenstahl's film of the 1936 Olympics opens with a lengthy elegiac section devoted to celebratory images of young athletic bodies - of both sexes.
would be able to secure better opportunities if they were supported by men in a mixed association.

The position that women should retain autonomy and control of their own international federation was the one strongly favoured by Alice Milliat and supported by the English representatives on the IAAF, Harold Abrahams and E.J. (Billy) Holt. Presumably, they would have been speaking on behalf of English women athletes, who from the start of the controversy about Olympic participation, had argued that assimilation into a male-dominated organisation would be detrimental to the women's sport. They had foreseen some of the problems when they had argued for separate development prior to the 1928 Olympics. Vera Searle, one of the key women's administrators in England, was adamant that women should retain their own autonomy in the world context:

We strongly object to the mixing up of men and women in the Olympic Games or at any other meeting. If this actually happened it would kill our movement, and we should be absorbed by men as in other countries (Cited in Hargreaves 1994a:214).

A decision was deferred until 1936, to allow time for a joint committee of both organisations to consider the matter further (Pallett 1955:48).

Alice Milliat was clearly upset by Germany's proposal that the IAAF take complete control of women's athletics. In a last attempt to preserve all she had worked for, she wrote directly to the IOC who, in February 1935, considered her proposal that they exclude all women's competition from the Olympics. This, she said, would then allow women to organise their own quadrennial celebrations, involving the wide range of sports the FSFI regulated (Bulletin Officiel du C.I.O., April 1935:14-15, cited in Leigh 305).
1974:202). The IOC said it was unable to consider her request, since it had not been submitted through the relevant channels of the FSFI and IAAF, and it tried further to undermine the advances of women's athletics by rejecting the proposals of the IAAF's Technical Committee for the inclusion in the 1936 Games of the women's discus and further running events.

In 1936, the thirteenth Congress of the IAAF met after the Olympic Games in Berlin to consider the proposals of the joint committee. The eventual outcome was a negotiated demise of the FSFI, provided all existing world records were accepted,\(^5\) and that an extended programme of nine events be included in future Olympics, namely: 100 and 200 metres, 4 × 100 metres relay, 80 metres hurdles, high jump, long jump, discus, javelin and shot.\(^6\) The Council of the IAAF accepted this report and it was subsequently passed by Congress by nineteen votes to five (Pallett 1955:55-6).\(^7\)

The FSFI were thus disbanded after a period of continuous growth and improvement in women's athletic standards. The bitterness expressed by some of the supporters of the movement, including English athletes, was summed up by Marie Therèse Eyquem:

\(^5\)The fourteenth Congress of the IAAF was held in February 1938, where it was decided to accept women's world records in 19 events. This was not a grand gesture, since even in the early days of the FSFI 49 records were recognised (The New York Times, 3 December 1922:2). Of the 19 records in 1938 six of these were for relays, and the 100, 200 and 800 metres were endorsed, as well as their imperial equivalents.

\(^6\)The WAAA had already, in 1933, converted championship distances to metric, thus allowing direct comparison to the rest of the world's performances - and the possibility to gain familiarity with international competition distances. This progressive move lasted until 1951 (Watman 1968:231).

\(^7\)From an original membership of five nations at its inauguration in 1921, the FSFI had a membership of 30 at its demise (Leigh 1974:157).
Those who had not wanted to assume the rites of a hazardous beginning showed themselves eager to gather the fruits of the labour of others (1944:507, cited in Leigh 1974:204).

Alice Milliat, representing the FSFI, had forced women's athletics onto the world stage and pushed the male bastions of power at the IAAF and IOC into acceptance of a new, vigorous and widely practised women's sport, but in so doing she had also allowed a vibrant all-female association to become assimilated into a male-oriented system of power and control. By establishing their own organisation, female athletes had initially gained a foothold on the world stage. An organisation administered by women and with an exclusively female membership had been a powerful tool and allowed for a greater degree of autonomy over the progress of the sport internationally. But the interventions of the IAAF and the IOC had broken the momentum and continuity of development, and once the FSFI allowed the transfer of authority to the male-administered IAAF, the development of women's athletics was severely slowed. On the other hand, it could be argued, had the FSFI remained a separate organisation, it would have become isolated and women's athletics would have developed along separate lines.8

Paradoxically, in the English domestic context, men and women were working together relatively co-operatively. Following the establishment in 1932 of the British Amateur Athletic Board (BAAB),9 which released the AAA from the organisation and management

---

8The AAA noted that the IAAF had assumed control of women's athletics - but interpreted this to be 'an arrangement whereby both bodies preserved autonomy' (AAA General Committee Minutes, 1936).

9Domestic disagreements between the men of England, who were affiliated to the IAAF, and Ireland and Scotland, who were not affiliated, came to a head in 1931. An acceptable solution was the formation of an International Board, to represent the four home
of international teams, the WAAA created formal collaborations with the AAA. In the same year the AAA officially recognised women's athletics, and finally, in 1934, the WAAA was given representation on the BOA, where Muriel Cornell was the first delegate (WAAA AGM Minutes, 22 October 1932; BOA Council Minutes, 8 November 1933; WAAA Committee Minutes, 24 February 1934). Further representation for English women relating to the international context occurred in 1937. Following the demise of the FSFI, the BAAB signed an agreement with the WAAA, whereby two of its representatives were co-opted onto the Board, although with only one vote. A full infrastructure, similar to the AAA, at last existed for women, although they did not enjoy equal rights with men. They had, for example, no voting rights on financial questions, which alone could severely limit their international activities. Indeed, of the thirteen available votes, women eventually had only two. But a close relationship between the AAA and WAAA was finally established. In contrast to the demise of the FSFI, the WAAA retained full domestic autonomy, the agreements with the male organisations relating only to international affairs (Athletics Weekly, 6 March 1965:8).

KEY ADMINISTRATORS

In contrast to the all-female administration of the FSFI, the WAAA, particularly during its formative years, included many men in key positions of authority. Despite the original antipathy towards women by the AAA, where, Crump maintains, some of the older members viewed women's athletics 'with thinly-veiled contempt' (World Sports, September 1948:22), several key administrators from the men's organisation were invited to hold countries, which was elected to be affiliated to the IAAF. The BAAB, as it became known in 1937, was a major innovation.
office in the WAAA. However, it is significant that whilst many men were keen to support women, they were not prepared to do this at the expense of relinquishing any authority they held in the AAA. It is argued by Hargreaves (1994a:207) that all-female institutions have greater autonomy and can be 'an effective form of positive discrimination when there is an overall gender bias in favour of males in the distribution of scarce sports resources'. However, this does not seem to have been the case with the WAAA during the inter-war years, when it relied heavily on the direct intervention of men. Indeed, throughout the whole period of study, men have played a significant role in English women's athletics.

I have already mentioned the part played by men who were responsible for the first international team that travelled to Monte Carlo in 1921, and were involved later in the formation of the WAAA. Ironically, only a few of the early officers of the WAAA were women, making the notion of female autonomy and female control somewhat spurious. For example, in 1925, the President was Lord Hawke; there were six patrons, all men, and eleven Vice-Presidents, of whom only four were women. The two key offices of Secretary and Treasurer were held by men (Programme for the Women's Amateur Athletic International, 1 August 1925:24). At large international meetings it would have been impossible to function without men taking key roles. For example, at the International Meeting on 1 August 1925, at Stamford Bridge, both the referees were men and of the fifteen judges only one was a woman (Ibid:3). However, it was encouraging that the British team manager was the recently retired Mary Lines, whose involvement as a competitor gave her an understanding of the problems faced by athletes.
As the years passed women filled more key positions in the WAAA, and took on more of the organisation of major meetings. For example, in 1934, whilst the President, Lord Decies, was a man, there were now six female names amongst the seventeen patrons, and six of the sixteen Vice-Presidents were women. But, more importantly, the positions of Secretary and Treasurer were filled by women, and the medical adviser was Dame Professor Louise McIlroy. Since there were no administrative offices, and the posts were purely honorary, much of the work of the WAAA was carried out at the homes of the secretary and treasurer (Programme for the Fourth Women's World Games, 9 and 11 August 1934:2-4).

However, although in smaller numbers than during the formative years, in different ways, men continued to make a significant contribution to the development of women's athletics in England. In joint initiatives the help of men and the necessity for co-operation was readily acknowledged. For example, after the 1946 European Championships, Winifred Hughes commented that:

'Mr [Jack] Crump [the men's team manager] did everything possible to make things comfortable and smooth for us before we left and whilst we were in Oslo. His great help in getting passports and visas I alone can appreciate as I know how much time he spent over this. All the arrangements for the journey were excellent and, whilst in Oslo, men and women got together as one team and I know did all they could to help one another over any little difficulties which arose (WAAA Committee Minutes, 12 October 1946).

The WAAA was never an all-female organisation and although, throughout the period of study, men progressively held fewer and fewer key positions, their help continued to be utilised. In more recent years men's roles have tended to be supporting ones in different organizational capacities - for example, as administrators, executives, coaches, and
One of the pleasing aspects of the early years of women's athletics in England was the continuing involvement of retired athletes in the administration. For example, Muriel Cornell and Vera Searle both devoted many years to the Association. Muriel was a founder member of the ladies' section of her club, Mitcham, AC. She organised the Women's World Games in London, in 1934, was the women’s team manager at the 1936 Olympics, and held the post of Honorary Secretary of the WAAA for eleven years (The Newsletter of Sutton & District Athletics Club, August 1996:4). Many other former athletes made significant contributions over many years to English Women's athletics at national and local levels. For example, 1960s' international Margaret Whitbread became national event coach for the javelin, and 1974 Commonwealth sprint hurdles champion, Judy Vernon, today occupies the same coaching position for her event.

The longevity of service of many of the sports administrators may have led to the accusation that women's athletics failed to be progressive, as older officials gradually lost touch with new generations of athletes. However, there is, as already discussed, significant contradictory evidence. For example, the WAAA were forward-thinking in introducing new events into the sport, often several years in advance of international acceptance. Against this the WAAA retained a reputation for clinging to tradition and a refusal to accept many changes, particularly professionalism. But there can be no doubting the dedication and commitment of many women, who were not only powerful administrators, but also acted as officials at small unprestigious meetings. For example, at the Middlesex County Women's championships in 1963, Marea Hartman, the Secretary of
the WAAA, was one of the announcers and the programme noted that Vera Searle, the Deputy President of the WAAA, was the county's secretary (Programme for Middlesex County WAAA Annual County Track and Field Championships: Senior Intermediate & Junior, 25 May 1963).

But the vast majority of helpers were not noted competitors with national and international reputations, but women simply with an instinctive love of women's athletics and a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. For example, Tallie Swallow formed Shaftesbury Ladies AC in 1947, and continued in a variety of posts for club, county and region until her retirement in the mid 1980s (Athletics Today, 26 September 1991:7). Helen Wright was a long-serving official in the Midlands, of whom, it was said, 'one only had to ring...and, in all weathers, she was a willing official for cross-country or road races' (Athletics Today, 12 October 1989:27). Some international athletes also made important contributions. Doris Roden, for example, was content, upon retirement, to run the catering for her club, Birchfield (Alexander and Morgan 1988:39).

Gender relations of power were not static and invincible. In many situations men and women worked together to further the cause of women's athletics and the significance of gender was less important than the common concern for the athletes. Sometimes, the contribution was a family affair. For example, Percy Pope was associated with Yorkshire Women's AAA since its formation in 1932, as was his wife, who was, in turn, Secretary, Treasurer and President of the Association. Percy also qualified as a Chief Timekeeper, officiating for WAAA competitions throughout the North of England (Athletics Today, 14 March 1996:27). Bryan Smith was one of the founders of London Road Runners Club.
He coached many female athletes, including his wife, Joyce. Both worked hard for local athletics, helping out in any way they could (Today's Runner, February 1989:4-5). One of the most important husband and wife teams was Mabel and Alf Cotton, at LOAC. Alf was the senior club coach, and Mabel was, for many years, Club Secretary. Her contribution to athletics was characterized as a lifetime 'of unstinting work without which British athletics as we know it...just would not exist' (Athletics Today, 26 September 1991:7). Diane Charles (née Leather) recognised the couple's importance and in her obituary to Mabel in Athletics Today observed that 'the closeness of the couple provided surrogate parents for many of the girls [of LOAC]....most of whom continue to regard themselves as part of an extended family' (Ibid).

But the person who had the greatest influence over the longest period of time, who was 'married to athletics', was Marea Hartman. From 1950 she variously held the posts of Treasurer and Secretary of the WAAA, and instrumental positions with the BAAB, the IAAF, the National Olympic Committee, the CCPR, and the Commonwealth Games Council for England. For her services to athletics she was honoured with an MBE, a CBE, and, shortly before her death in 1994, was made a DBE. She negotiated most of the post-war sponsorship deals which kept English women's athletics functioning during austere times. She was often a lone, but significant, female voice on key committees. She ensured that women were not marginalized, and spoke eloquently to the press in an effort to keep the sport in the public eye. Marea was a strong personality, whom Judy Vernon characterized as 'a very progressive lady in certain respects and it was her who fought [for example] to have the 400 metres hurdles brought on as an event' (Vernon 1997). Vera Searle, who worked closely with her for many years, is adamant that English successes
were mainly due to Marea Hartman's tireless efforts and that she was the most important person in the history of English women's athletics (Searle 1994).

In 1936 Marea's athletics involvement began as a sprinter in Surrey. She saw women's athletics change immeasurably when she moved over to administration after the war. She witnessed the expansion of the sport, the successes of Tokyo, sex testing, drug testing, political interventions, and athletics as a livelihood. She remained a traditionalist and felt that athletes in the 1980s did not enjoy the sport as members of her generation once had. She argued that:

I don't think they have the fun that we had. Athletes today live in a tough world. They've got to be dedicated with seven days a week training. To us it was just a hobby (Running, May 1986:72).

Her abilities were often recognised in the press, where she was once described as 'Go-ahead' and 'our top administrator' (Evening News, 3 June 1963). These plaudits came at a time when the leading officers of the AAA, Harold Abrahams and Jack Crump, were often vilified by the same press. She once noted that her 'ex-boss' at the Bowater Corporation later worked as her subordinate at the WAAA (Sport and Leisure, July-August 1985:36).

FAMILY AND PEERS

White (1989) argues that it is more likely for girls from middle-class homes to be encouraged to participate in sports, rather than girls from working-class backgrounds. However, in athletics there is considerable evidence to challenge this theory. There were wealthy and middle-class girls who took to athletics, but many of England's most
successful athletes have come from poor backgrounds. For example, Mary Lines was a Lyons Corner house waitress, both of Marjorie Alderman's parents were in domestic service (Ferris 1995), Nellie Halstead was a Lancashire mill worker (Pallett 1955:128). Dorothy Hyman's father was a Yorkshire miner (Hyman and Pilley 1964), Mary Rand's father was a chimney sweep and window cleaner (Rand 1969:17), and Fatima Whitbread was abandoned as a baby and grew up in children's homes (Whitbread and Blue 1988).

Numerous athletes, both men and women, have openly acknowledged the help and encouragement of their family and friends in enabling them to become successful. However, dominant ideologies concerning motherhood and domesticity, with an uneven division of labour in the home, have hindered the progress of several leading women, so the issue is a complex one. Women have faced particular sex-specific problems, and men have traditionally enjoyed greater freedom to enjoy leisure pursuits. Nevertheless, the strongest location of influence which has encouraged female athletes has been the family. For example, Both Audrey Court and 400 metres runner, Linda Keough, came from athletic families. Audrey's brother was an Olympic gold medallist. Linda's father was a successful marathon runner, her mother came second in the English Schools Championships, and her uncle was a miler (Matthews 1990:229). Sprinter Stephanie Douglas states that her parents influenced her career from the age of seven, and Debbi Marti is clear that her 'parents and family have encouraged and pushed me all the way' (Athletics Weekly, 15 November 1995:38-9). Pat Healey is more specific, mentioning that her mother accompanied her on a bicycle during her training runs (Sharlott 1994:35), and sprinter Kathy Cook cites the cost and effort expended by her parents in ferrying her to and from training sessions (Athletics Monthly, February 1981:6). Many other women
speak of similar sacrifices made by their parents.

Some athletes, like Suzanne Allday, Joy Jordan, Judy Farr, Joyce Smith and Christine Benning were coached by their husbands, and others, like Elaine Burton, Ruth Christmas and Lillian Board were coached by their fathers (Eriksen 1962:25; Athletics Weekly, 10 July 1954:11; Benning 1984). Dorothy Hyman enjoyed a close relationship with her father and attributed much of her success to his efforts. She said that:

My father was the real and original driving force behind me. A hard man, yes. Perhaps at times he drove me too hard. But he had such overwhelming pride in me. Dad always wanted boys, you see, but his boys weren't keen on sport. I was - so he trained me at sport almost as though I were the boy. He did it all for me, and I in turn always ran for him (Hyman and Pilley 1964:86).

During the formative years of women's athletics patriarchal relations in the home ensured that invariably women retired from the sport upon marriage, and this seemed to apply irrespective of class. For example, Marjorie Alderman met her future husband, Sam Ferris, when she was still competing and he gave her every encouragement in her running. But when she married she stopped running immediately. She says that 'It was just the done thing. I don't know why' (Ferris 1995). Vera Searle confirmed this, commenting that, 'When women got married at the time, they just retired and became housewives and mothers' (Adventurous Eves, 1990). She turned to coaching, which she continued even after the birth of her first daughter. Although she felt she could run faster than ever, she did not wish to defy conventional practices and upset her husband by competing again. It was even recorded that several women were not allowed to continue as athletes by their new husbands (Cornell 1988) and it was quite typical for female athletes to struggle against parents, husbands and fiancés who held stereotyped and backward-looking ideas

316
about femininity, marriage and motherhood. Chris Brett, the Track Secretary of the all-women's club, Selsonia, highlighted the problems of relationships for female athletes:

It seems such a great pity to me that, having once persuaded Mum and Dad that athletics will not harm her, a girl then has to face the derision of any boy friend she may have, who treats the whole matter as a huge joke - "Never mind, she'll soon get over it" (Athletics Weekly, 21 January 1956:4).

Olympic sprinter Margaret Walker married in 1950 and announced that she would no longer run on the track, as she would be 'far too busy running a home' (Undated newspaper clipping, 1950, WAAA archives). Maureen Dyson found that running a ballet school and a home, and organising her husband, the AAA's chief coach, left little time for athletics (Pallett 1955:150).

But this was not always the case. Whilst all of the athletes who competed in the Monte Carlo international were single, Sophie Eliott-Lynn was married when she co-founded the WAAA in 1922, and she continued to compete for several years. Muriel Gunn (later Cornell) was encouraged by her brother and her fiancé to try athletics. After marriage she continued to compete, even when pregnant, and her career only came to an end when she tore her Achilles' tendon (The Daily Telegraph, 14 March 1996). In 1934, When Winnie Easter became Winnie Hayward she retired, but later returned to competitive athletics after childbirth (Hayward 1988). High jumper, Mary Dumbrill, retired in 1936 after her marriage, but her successor, Dorothy Odam (later Tyler), continued her career up to 1956, after many years as a wife and mother. It was no longer necessary to remain single to enjoy a long association with the sport.

Conventional ideas about gender were not necessarily imposed on female athletes, but were frequently internalised by them to influence their decisions about participation in
athletics. After winning the silver medal at the London Olympics in 1948, Maureen Gardner was said to be 'more excited about September 11 than about her record-breaking run. It is her wedding day' (Blue 1988:53). But increasingly, after the war, it became quite commonplace for women to develop relationships within the context of athletics, to continue as athletes after marriage,\(^{10}\) and for men to support their wives and daughters (Athletics Weekly, 14 July 1956:11). Diane Charles (née Leather) regarded it as 'fortunate that from the outset my husband never expected me to give up athletics...far from thinking that this might come between us, he has helped and encouraged me all the way' (Leather 1960:93). When Mary Bignal became Mary Rand her marriage was followed closely. Attractive, personable and successful, she was a very public figure and there were accusations that the wedding would mark the end of her career. After giving birth to her first daughter she defied accepted 'wisdom' to become even more successful. Mary's subsequent career, which included England's first women's athletics Olympic gold medal, challenged perceived ideologies of family and motherhood and helped to change the face of the sport. Her influence is highlighted by Marea Hartman, who says:

Mary did something else for the sport, the significance of which hasn't yet been properly realized. When she fell in love with Sid Rand, the Olympic sculler, the cynics regarded their engagement as the end for Mary the athlete.

They shook their knowing heads and muttered: "Marriage and athletics just don't mix."

Well, they didn't know Mary and I don't think they really knew a lot about women. I remember her telling me that once and for all she meant to give the lie to that old wives' story that marriage, children and athletics were an impossible mixture.

Marriage wrought a psychological change in her and set her off on the most brilliant phase of her career (Undated magazine article, 'The Girls Who Dream Of Gold').

\(^{10}\)I have illustrated several examples in the period after the Second World War in Chapter Five.
There were also fewer married women than single women who played an active role in the administration of women's athletics - particularly in the early years. During the 1920s, for example, the composition of club committees was formed almost exclusively of single women. For example, the 1924 AGM of LOAC was attended exclusively by single women and one man. That year, only one married woman was elected, the President. During the next ten years, whilst single women continued to predominate proceedings, there was a marked increase of married women who filled important posts in the club, so that by 1934, two of the vice presidents and two of the captains were married (LOAC AGM Minutes, 1924 to 1934).

The evidence suggests that the ideology of domesticity restricted the part many married women played in athletics, and it is significant that the woman who made the most outstanding contribution to the sport, Marea Hartman, never married. In 1955, Jimmy Green complained of the lack of results sent to his magazine, Athletics Weekly, and attributed this to the fact that most women officials were married because, he reasoned, 'having the Sunday dinner to cook and husbands to look after makes it difficult for them' (8 January 1955:3).

Domestic obligations remained different between the sexes and were frequently commented on by the press. Neil Allen entitled one of his athletics reports in The Times, 'Washing and Shopping before [athletic] titles' (17 July 1971), and Peter Beacham mentioned that his wife Margaret, who had just set her fourth world indoor record, was 'just as efficient at cooking and needlework' (Daily Mail, 15 March 1971:1). The
dominant practice of women taking the major domestic role was highlighted by Joan Allison, who ran in the Olympics of 1968 and 1972. She said:

At grassroots level, it is harder for women to pursue their running to the same degree [as men] because of the way society is. Most men have a woman looking after them, whether it's a wife, girlfriend or mother, whereas a woman invariably has to fit in her training around the cooking and housework. There seems to be something in a woman's psyche that says she has to look after her partner. I certainly used to feel that way even when I was competing internationally or had been abroad with the team. I used to envy Les Jones, who could go home to dinner and put his feet up. I'd arrive home shattered and then cook a meal and do the housework (Runner's World, November 1993:34).

But towards the end of the period of study several women argued that not only were their husbands integral to their successes, but other members of the family were as well. For Joyce Smith, for example, running was a family affair, and her husband, who was also her coach, was an ever-present source of advice and encouragement. He also babysat when she trained, as did her eldest daughter, Lisa, who looked after their youngest daughter when both parents were at the track. 'Without Lisa's help,' says Joyce, 'and her appreciation of what I'm doing, running would be quite impossible' (Running, September/October 1980:15). More usually, however, for athletes who were mothers, athletic careers became secondary to childcare. Judy Vernon commented that:

My children come first as far as I am concerned. I'm not one of those heartless mothers who neglects her kids to train for the major meets. I take care of their needs first and foremost and fit in the training and racing around them. I wouldn't go away for more than one night and leave them (Athletics Monthly, August 1980:36).

There is considerable evidence to suggest that marriage to another athlete helped women in their sporting careers. For example, Donna Hartley attributed much of her success to her husband, Bill, a 400 metres hurdler. 'Because of him,' she says, 'I'm much more mature now and he has made me think more about my racing' (Athletics Weekly, 19
August 1978:28), and Glynis Penny reflected on the advantages of living and training with her husband:

Being married to another runner helps a great deal. Ninety per cent of our time at home is spent discussing running in one form or another, and in the evenings we do all our long, steady runs together. It certainly helps the motivation, particularly on a really cold icy winter night (Emery and Temple 1978).

'You must,' emphasises Joyce Smith, 'have a husband who understands your needs' (Jogging, May 1979:14).

COACHES

During the early years of the WAAA what little coaching there was was conducted entirely by men, whether it was at a mixed-sex club or an exclusively female club. Thus, before some former female athletes turned their attentions to coaching, the support and encouragement of men was crucial to the performances women achieved (Alexander and Morgan 1988: 81). Vera Searle recalls that during her days as an athlete 'there wasn't such a thing as coaching. The nearest approach, of course, was Sam Mussabini' (Searle 1989).

At this time, good coaching in England was 'as hard to come by as spring water in the Sahara Desert', particularly, argued Webster, in the field events (1934:7), and he bemoaned the lack of professional coaching in England. The amateur coaches were often akin to masseurs and he felt that he could point to only three good ones in the whole of England; the professionals, Bill Thomas and Alec Nelson, at Oxford and Cambridge, (1938a:7), and the most notable men's coach during the 1920s, Sam Mussabini, who also assisted women, such as Vera Searle. Together with Webster, he assisted the 1925 Canadian women's team.
who visited England for the International at Stamford Bridge. Webster commented that they both found women 'a great deal easier to teach....than men' (1930: 52).

At the same time, Muriel Gunn (later Cornell) remembers watching male athletes to see what they did. Walter George, the greatest of Victorian athletes, who coached at her club, Mitcham, didn't, according to Muriel, know anything about long jumping, and finding advice proved difficult. 'Nobody knew anything', she complained years later (Cornell 1988). Even Webster, who was the most noted field events coach in the country, stated that there was nothing he could teach her. He commented that she had 'got it naturally. You can't improve on the perfect' (Ibid). The WAAA did make a claim to give 'advice and training help gratis' (Programme for the Women's Amateur Athletic International. 1 August 1925), but in view of the preceding comments this could not have been either widespread, or effective. Katharine Connal said, I had received a letter from the WAAA early in 1936 saying I was considered a "possible" for the Olympic team and asking if I needed help with my training. Flabbergasted, I hastily replied, "Yes, please" - and still [in 1972] await an answer' (The Australian Women's Weekly. 17 May 1972:6).

The annual Loughborough Summer School, in Leicester, provided the best-known coaching course in the country. Although it was exclusively for males, it was attended by coaches who later took an interest in coaching women. For example, Sandy Duncan, who attended the course every year, coached Dorothy Manley who won a silver medal in the 100 metres at the 1948 Olympics and Sylvia Cheeseman (later Disley) who won a bronze medal in the 1952 Olympics (Disley 1986; Duncan 1996). Because women had no

---

11This began in 1934.
equivalent course to the Loughborough one, in 1947 Maureen Gardner and Sylvia Cheeseman 'gatecrashed' the school, watching from a distance during the day, and putting what they had learnt into practice in the evenings when the track was clear of male students (Pallett 1955:132).

During the Second World War the WAAA considered the possibility of giving some recognition to coaches by issuing certificates to those able to lecture on athletics, or coach women. Nothing came of this, so that women remained dependent on the work of the men of the AAA (WAAA AGM Minutes, 31 October 1942). Coaching in England was not put on a formal footing until 1947, when the AAA appointed Geoff Dyson as their Chief National Coach. He was a complete revelation to the sport, advocating hard work and a scientific approach to training. His brief was to produce highly qualified coaches but also, in his own time, he formed a squad of athletes and concentrated on the disciplines England had traditionally been poor at, particularly the field events. This coaching was at his own expense and the squad included several women, including his future wife, hurdler Maureen Gardner, and long jumper, Shirley Cawley, both of whom became Olympic Medallists under his tuition.

But in the period preceding the 1948 Olympics, although Geoff Dyson was coaching several of the athletes who would be competing at the Games, the BAAB, who were responsible for international athletes, failed to appreciate the role of coaches in preparing athletes for major championships, and declined to use him as a coach for the British team (Running, April 1987: 74).
The WAAA were therefore thrown on their own devices and made their own arrangements
by setting up a training sub-committee to give coaching to 'promising girls' (WAAA
Committee Minutes. 29 November 1947). However, the process was haphazard and by
Olympic year Muriel Cornell, who had written several articles on coaching, was merely
'hopeful of being able to come to some arrangement to work with the CCPR as regards
coaching'. However, there was no method of selecting prospective Olympians who would
benefit. She commented that the WAAA would simply 'rely on clubs putting [the] best
girls forward' (WAAA Committee Minutes. 17 January 1948).

But in the position of Honorary Coaching Organiser, Muriel worked hard to establish a
coaching scheme specifically for female athletes:

....not simply to train for the coming Olympic Games but to build up a good team
of athletes from whom our future teams for international and other events may be
drawn (WAAA AGM Minutes. 7 February 1948).

By the following year the coaching scheme had advanced by 'leaps and bounds' and the
WAAA reported having received numerous enquiries for coaching which, they said,
indicated 'how much this branch of work is welcomed by individuals and clubs' (WAAA
AGM Minutes. 5 February 1949).

However, many of the problems associated with pre-war coaching continued and George
Pallett complained of the proliferation of ill-informed 'pseudo-coaches' involved in
women's athletics (Athletics Weekly. 17 February 1951:11). Women's coaching was put
on a more formal basis in 1950, when the WAAA introduced a new scheme with its own
set of awards, distinct from those of the AAA, where prospective coaches were examined
on both practical and theoretical skills. Each Region was assigned a coaching co-
ordinator, and Len Ward was appointed Honorary National Coach to the WAAA (Athletics
Weekly, 15 April 1950:10). Several initiatives were instigated, such as annual national
coaching courses, held at Bisham Abbey during the early 1950s. Also, in 1950, the Devon
and Cornwall WAAA ran a coaching course, and in the winters of 1951 and 1952 two
courses were held in the North, where one of the helpers was Marjorie Harris (née O’Kell)
who was a prominent pre-war high jumper (Pallett 1955: 141, 155).

The initial response to the coaching scheme was very encouraging. In 1957, for example,
there were 231 qualified WAAA coaches, of whom only 43 were men - and, of these,
twelve men and ten women had passed the Senior coaches' examinations. The coaches
were located mainly in the South, but the numbers involved suggest a keen interest in
coaching by women around the country (Women's Amateur Athletic Association 1957:30-
36).

This system of qualifying twice - for the WAAA and the AAA - to coach the same event
was not corrected until 1959, when the Joint AAA and WAAA Coaching Committee was
formed (Athletics Weekly, 7 March 1959:9). However, from that time the number of
women who applied to be coaches declined, and the number of male Senior AAA coaches
who applied to take the equivalent WAAA examinations was lower than anticipated
(Athletics Weekly, 24 November 1962:17). Dorothy Tyler was the only woman who ever
qualified as a Senior AAA coach (Tyler 1967:3). By 1980 there were many calls to
attract more women into coaching, but although there were considerable numbers of
women coaching beginners, it was men who invariably took over the training of
established female athletes. Nevertheless, joint initiatives were common. For example, Senior Coaches' conferences were held annually, and middle-distance training weekends for athletes were common (Athletics Weekly, 23 January 1965:13-14; 20 February 1965:8-9).

The issue of male hegemony in athletics coaching is complex. Although the figures show more men than women who were qualified coaches, it is also clear that there have been several initiatives to encourage women to take courses and become established coaches and that many women have done so. Coaching has generally been amenable to cooperative arrangements - for example, both the Southern Counties and the Kent County Association had joint coaching committees many years before the single sex administrations combined (Running, July 1986:20), and the influential Essex Federation of Athletics Coaches was formed in 1970 to cater for both men and women in clubs, as well as schoolchildren of both sexes (Havell 1983:16). The reasons for lower numbers of female coaches may relate in part to contexts outside athletics itself - for example, the problems of travel and childcare which have been shown to be more relevant to women than to men (Deem 1984; Hargreaves 1989). This has been confirmed by Judy Vernon who wonders 'how do [women] find time to coach in the evenings? Too many women have to work in the day and look after the home in the evening' (Athletics Today, 30 August 1990:25). The discrepancies between the numbers of male and female coaches is not so significant among those who have basic qualifications, but, in common with the situation in other mixed sports (White and Brackenridge 1985), very few women during the period of investigation have achieved appointments within the coaching hierarchy - for example, as Event or National coaches - a situation which is more likely to be linked to
discriminatory practices.

Part of the problem lay with female athletes and related to the popular idea that men are intrinsically better coaches than women. Although there were numerous female coaches in the mid-1950s, it was noted that women preferred to have men as their coaches. Whilst Vera Searle agreed that there were 'several qualified women coaches', she also remarked that:

The trouble is that women athletes show marked apathy to women coaches and seem to prefer the opposite sex (Athletics Weekly, 17 September 1955:13).

Judy Vernon is adamant that there remains considerable prejudice against female coaches and that a forceful personality is a prerequisite for a woman. She argues that:

I think for most women who go into coaching it is hard and women coaches ring me all the time and I'm always there to give them support. In fact, women have to be better as a coach than a man if they're going to succeed as a coach....I think a lot of male coaches think there's no place for a woman on the track, which is very sad, because women have so much to offer....No one has dared discriminate against me because I just stand up for myself (Vernon 1997).

Exceptionally, there have been a few leading women who have been coached by women. One of the most notable was Diane Leather, who was coached at Birchfield by Dorette Nelson Neal. Dorette continued to coach women for many years, but, in 1978, she was the subject of an acrimonious debate over whether she should go to Canada as the English coach to the Commonwealth Games' team. She was then 'well into her seventies' and despite the fact that she was still coaching international athletes, it was felt by many that she was too old to be in touch with the athletes. Sue Reeve (a member of the same club, Birchfield), commented:
I don't think she should go as a team coach both because of her age and because in international athletics it is always a matter of keeping up to date. It could be very demanding out there and other members of the England team are not at all happy about this appointment (Evening Standard, 3 July 1978:48).

Paradoxically, there was no criticism of Fred Housden who, ten years before, was a similar age when he coached David Hemery to an Olympic gold medal.

There was an attempt to install Dorothy Hyman as a national athletics coach shortly after her competitive retirement in 1964. The WAAA applied for direct cash aid from the Government to fund her salary (Undated, uncredited newspaper clipping, WAAA archives). This funding did not materialize, but, undeterred, Dorothy formed the Dorothy Hyman Track Club and produced a string of international sprinters throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Over the years, several other leading athletes have returned to athletics as coaches after the end of their competitive careers.

The established pattern of male coaches to female athletics, however, continued to be the dominant one throughout the period of this study. For example, Geoff Dyson made a huge contribution to women's athletics which is often forgotten. He wrote extensively and toured the country 'coaching coaches and teaching teachers' the fundamentals of athletics and coaching. Pragmatic and dogmatic he raised the status of coaches from the pre-war 'rubbers' [masseurs] to that of highly competent individuals who were able to guide athletes through their careers confidently and capably. Most coaches remained amateur but Dyson preached the philosophy of professionalism. Two of his protegees, Denis Watts and John Le Masurier, who jointly succeeded him, were responsible for the successes of many leading female athletes, particularly Dorothy Hyman, Mary Rand, Ann Packer, Lillian Board and Christine Benning.
Wilf Paish was also involved in coaching women in his own time. For example, he helped Christine Perrera become the first world record holder at both 100 and 200 metres hurdles, and coached many female athletes in a wide variety of disciplines, including Tessa Sanderson in the javelin.

Wilf Paish's philosophy towards his women athletes was that he expected them to train just as hard as men. He argued that:

There is very little difference in the training they do. Physiologically there isn't that much difference, so I see no real reason the two shouldn't train similarly. The women don't lift as heavy weights but they do the same number of repetitions and proportionally to their strength they are working at exactly the same level (Athletes' World, January 1984:59).

Wilf had identified a problem which he believed was affecting English women in every sport - the underestimation of their capabilities - and reasoned that this stemmed from our culture. As he said:

When our girls start to become athletic we tend to think, 'Well they're young girls. Let's stop them doing a lot of training. Let's let them play at it almost'. In the formative years we don't give them enough hard training, a hard enough background of endurance training. It's almost a philosophy of physical education teachers. 'Girls it's cold today, it's snowing. Let's not go for a run, let's go into the hall and dance' (Ibid).

Some of the most notable male coaches of women were also involved in administration. For example, in 1952, George Stratford joined Wigmore Harriers and formed a women's section. When he moved to South London he took his club with him and many of the women he coached travelled across London to continue receiving his advice. He became one of the most respected hurdles coaches in the country, guiding Lorna Boothe to a Commonwealth title in 1978. He helped launch the national hurdles squad and ran
monthly hurdles clinics in the winter. He coached until a few months before he died at the age of 84, and was credited with laying the foundations for the successes that came to English athletes in the hurdles during the 1980s (Athletics Today, 31 August 1989:4; 7 September 1989:6).

But the importance of coaches remained largely unrecognised for many years by the governing bodies, which disadvantaged both sexes. The low esteem coaches were held in was displayed in several ways. Some leading administrators were accused of describing coaching as '99 per cent kidology', and of attempting to undermine the influence of professional coaches with their athletes. The AAA officials were, according to Jim Alford, another professional coach who resigned at the same time as Geoff Dyson, 'bullying and dogmatic' (Athletics Weekly, 24 February 1962:6-7). These powerful and entrenched officials had persistently refused to grant professional coaches status within the sport, thus holding back the development of men's and women's athletics for many years.12 13

It was also frequently the case that coaches were not taken to major championships, which led to the extraordinary position of some coaches even being refused accreditation and access to training sites, despite travelling to venues at their own expense (Athletics Weekly, 27 January 1962:8). This situation persisted. John Anderson, for example, who advised six athletes - including women - who were in the Olympic team in Munich in 1972, had no access to them, and in Montreal, in 1976, he had to shout instructions to his

---

12 National Coaches were not even represented on the National Coaching Committee (Athletics Weekly, 6 January 1962:3).

13 In an attempt to secure their standing, and form closer links with the AAA, 30 senior coaches formed the Athletics Coaches Association in November 1961 (Athletics Weekly, 2 December 1961:9).
Despite the vast majority of women being coached by men, there was one occasion when all male coaches were totally excluded from a team. At the 1974 Commonwealth Games in New Zealand, English team manager, Marea Hartman was characterized as 'despotic' by banning all male coaches from advising their athletes in the Games Village. Tom McNab, for example, who coached four of the athletes, including Judy Vernon and Andrea Lynch, travelled to the Games at his own expense and was refused accreditation; he was not even allowed to watch training sessions. A few of his athletes, like Madeleine Cobb, felt they needed his help in New Zealand and suffered in his absence. None of the athletes were given any reason for this decision (Vernon 1997). Even Denis Watts, who was one of the official coaches travelling with England, was denied the opportunity to advise 1,500 metres runner Norine Braithwaite, even though he had access to the training facilities and could continue to coach the male athletes of the English team. This extraordinary situation, which was announced as the competitors boarded the plane to Christchurch, removed athletes from the security of known and trusted figures, and they were forced to make their final preparations with Dorette Nelson Neal, the only coach they were allowed contact with. James Coote, writing in The Daily Telegraph, was saddened by this decision, since both the AAA and the WAAA had been attempting to work closer together. He argued that:

We have an anomalous situation, whereby a newly inaugurated British coaching scheme encompassing men's and women's athletics is being frustrated at a time when it could be most helpful (Undated newspaper clipping, WAAA archives).
THE MYTH OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND FINANCIAL EQUALITY
Throughout its history, the wealth of the WAAA has been uneven, caused by fluctuating revenue and disbursements, but it has in general been less financially secure than the AAA and at times there have been huge discrepancies of income between the two associations. During the early years, the major source of revenue for both associations was from public subscription at major championships, and the AAA received more income from this means than the WAAA. On the few occasions that government money was injected into the sport it was directed to the AAA rather than to the WAAA. For example, in 1947, during the sport's reconstruction, the AAA obtained a grant of £2,250 from the Ministry of Education to cover the cost of essential equipment and the new coaching scheme. The WAAA received no such support - at the end of the war, the WAAA had just £6 14s 5d (£6.73) in its bank account (WAAA AGM Minutes, 3 March 1945; The Times, 24 July 1947). Sometimes, after the war, officials were selected for long trips abroad based on their ability to pay their own fares (Disley 1986). Sponsorship for both sexes at that time was rare, and there was a natural reluctance by companies to inject money into athletics, since the advertising of such support was carefully controlled. This was the case when gifts were donated to the British team at the 1948 Olympics.

Even when sponsorship deals were available, they invariably favoured men. For example, in 1962, the brewers, Courage, put £10,000 into field events, but it was not evenly distributed. The funding took the form of four annual awards, of which 'at least one' was to go to a woman. Male shot putter, Arthur Rowe, justified this discrepancy - despite the persistently poor record of English women throwers - by arguing that 'the proportion...[was] fair, because, judging from my observations, our girls are less in need
of special attention in field events than our men' (Rowe 1963:117-9). Other funding often did not reach a large number of athletes. For example, in 1980, the Sports Aid Foundation made grants for up to three athletes per event. The grants were aimed at the athletes most likely to succeed in international competition, which at the time were mainly men (Athletics Monthly, October 1980:39). Several women thus lost funding which went, instead, to known 'professional-amateur' male athletes who were already financially secure.

The prominence of athletics by the end of the 1970s allowed the sport to seek sponsorship from industry (now freer of the restrictions previously hindering overt investment) and television, which reduced the reliance on government funding - which had always been limited. But sponsors were attracted to big names and their funding was rarely altruistic. Since the most visible athletes of the period were men it was they who received the vast majority of the available income. But most athletes, men as well as women, have benefitted from the largesse of local authorities, who have built expensive facilities and provided them for evening and weekend use at modest cost to the individual. This has enabled those with limited means to experience athletics.

The WAAA always adhered strictly to the ideology of amateurism, insisting that prizes were limited in value and were not to include cash or cheques. (On only one occasion did they come close to providing a cash alternative, when War Savings Stamps were considered as prizes (WAAA AGM Minutes, 3 March 1945; Women's Amateur Athletic Association 1977:18)). Although it is undocumented, it is generally acknowledged that the AAA were less rigid, that leading male athletes were receiving substantial prizes, and that 'brown envelopes' containing considerably more than legitimate travel expenses were
surreptitiously being handed to male athletes who could attract spectators to a meeting (For example, see Rowe 1963:15-21). Female athletes, it seems, were not accorded the same status. For example, Phyllis Perkins, a leading middle-distance athlete of the period, was invited to run in the North of England. She was advised to see the man 'behind the shed' for her expenses. She returned with only her train fare. She claims it was her naivety that deterred her from not asking for more money (Perkins 1997). Phyllis also noticed that many male athletes ran in the latest kit, but her sponsorship was limited to three pairs of Puma shoes quietly given to her by Derek Ibbotson in the car park of Tooting Bec stadium (Ibid). In the 1970s Derek and Puma had become more openly supportive of women. Judy Vernon, who received their help when she was an unknown athlete, describes the company as 'brilliant to me, in terms of kit. I used to have about 20 track suits at one time.' Adidas, however, refused assistance at this point in her career, but became interested when she became successful. 'I felt really angry with them', she says, 'that they didn't want to know me when I was an up and coming....I thought Puma were really good to me, so I'm not about to wear Adidas kit' (Vernon 1997).

More overt attempts to pass money on to women were met with a negative response from the WAAA. For example, during the 1962 Commonwealth Games in Perth, Gordon Pirie, who was then working for commercial television, offered sixteen year-old high jumper, Linda Knowles, what he characterized as 'pocket money' for her to appear on television. Team manager, Marea Hartman, responded by attempting to remove his press accreditation (Daily Mail, 19 November 1962). Dorothy Hyman, who had completed a ghosted biography prior to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, was forced to defer publication until after
the Games, as otherwise she would have been regarded as a professional.\textsuperscript{14} She retired immediately after the Olympics and published her book, which precluded the possibility of her return to the sport. However, in 1968, she was allowed to return to domestic competition because, asserted Marea Hartman, the WAAA secretary, 'We have now decided this [book] did not contravene the amateur rules as far as home meetings are concerned' (The Evening News, 6 May 1968).\textsuperscript{15} Very few women of the period were able to capitalise on their athletic successes. One notable exception was Ann Packer, who for a brief time endorsed baked beans - 'golden protein for a golden girl' - and, many years later, was an uncredited model promoting athletic wear (Daily Mail, 4 and 5 November 1964; The Evening News, 5 November 1964:10).

Some leading female athletes were asked to fulfil public engagements because they had become well-known and popular, but were forbidden by the WAAA to accept remunerations of any sort. Dorothy Hyman speaks strongly of being \textit{humiliated} through being an amateur, not a professional', because she was earning only a small income and wanted to help her mother support a large family following the death of her father. She quotes examples of professional sports stars being well paid to appear at public engagements when she received no fee and had to pay her own fares. She also cites other occasions when 'I know I've been invited along by some organisation or other in preference to a professional just \textit{because} I was cheap....and the people concerned have

\textsuperscript{14}This contrasted with Derek Ibbotson, whose autobiography was brought out by the same publishers a few years previously. He waived his fees, which clarified his amateur status to the satisfaction of the AAA (Daily Mirror, 17 December 1963:18).

\textsuperscript{15}Ironically, male shot putter, Arthur Rowe, who wrote his autobiography in 1963 (Rowe 1963), was not reinstated by the AAA, although he made his application at the same time as Dorothy.
hidden behind the laws of amateurism to achieve their ends' (Hyman and Pilley 1964:122).

Many female athletes had to struggle to hold on to jobs whilst pursuing athletic careers. For example, when Sylvia Cheeseman's employers discovered that she might be selected for the 1950 Empire Games they attempted immediately to dismiss her (Disley 1986). After Phyllis Perkins had broken a world record her employer said, 'I want you to promise me that you will never run again, otherwise you cannot work here. We want people to come here who will have energy to do their work.' Phyllis later found it easier to take temporary ('temp') work to fit around her athletic career (Perkins 1997). During the 1970s Jane Furniss received little help from her employers, the National Health Service. She complained that:

They've not been very understanding about me running internationally. It was getting ridiculous. I was having so much time off and using up all my holidays. I was getting invites to races and I was worrying all weekend because I knew I had to ask the boss if I could have time off and I couldn't tell the race organisers whether I'd be able to go...I thought well if I want to do anything next year I'm not going to be able to work full time (Athlete's World, December 1983:38-9).

Professionalism formally became part of athletics in 1981. Athletes were then able to earn money openly, which would be held in a trust fund on their behalf. This system replaced the blatant 'shamateurism' which had become a feature of athletics during the 1970s. However, at the end of the period under investigation, the practice of earning a living from athletics remained an essential difference between male and female athletes who were under the jurisdiction respectively of the AAA and the WAAA. Whilst the WAAA saw no problem in athletes earning money from the sport, unlike the men's association, they did not pay subventions, even at joint meetings. The WAAA could not afford to pay athletes since their income was restricted to a small Sports Council administration grant, a
small percentage of the television fees, and limited sponsorship money. Additionally, Sports Aid Foundation grants very much favoured male athletes (Running, May 1986:72).

As prizes and prize money became regular features of athletics, particularly in road races, inequalities in the prizes offered became apparent. There were frequent complaints that 'women were treated as second class citizens'. One marathon organiser, for example, was shocked that the male winner of a road race won a colour television, whilst the leading woman won only a black and white set. He argued that the differentials were inexcusable, and offered identical prizes for the first three men and first three women, maintaining that it was 'The only way we are going to encourage ladies to run marathons and other long distance events after barring them for so long' (Running, March 1982:33). Other race organisers felt the opposite, stating that men usually formed around 90 per cent of a field, and so contributed far more money towards the prize list. Additionally, extensive prize lists invariably resulted in a woman who returned a poor performance being able to gain a prize, whereas men finishing proportionally very high up their field received nothing (Athletics Today, 17 March 1993:29; Runner's World, May 1995:39). Several race organisers experienced problems with male runners who completed courses with numbers specific to women in order to claim their prizes. In large, computer-generated finishes, it was an easy ploy to adopt (Running, May 1985:61). The cheating apparent in smock races some two hundred years before was now being repeated.

During the 1970s the rise of athletics specturals - large international invitation meetings
took place in England to match those already established in Europe. Throughout the
decade these meetings became increasingly popular and were invariably organised by
Andy Norman, who had been the team manager of the Metropolitan Police AC, and held
several key positions within the SCAA. His enthusiasm was directed towards providing
the public with athletic contests he felt they wanted, including events for women. Joan
Allison, who has had a continuous involvement with athletics since her days as a
competitor, and was the women's international team manager during the 1980s and 1990s,
feels that 'He could have done more for women' (Allison 1996). Shot putter, Judy Oakes,
was more blunt about his contribution to English women's athletics, saying that, 'he hated
women's athletics and he hated women's field events even more...but then I used to give
him such a hard time and stood up to him so much that he respected me for that and gave
me some due' (Oakes 1997).

But Andy Norman maintains that the fault was with the women who failed to respond
positively to his help:

One of the reasons for the success of the British men athletes is opportunities. Our
women have been given the same opportunities but they always seem to have a
problem in the last 24 hours [before a big meeting]. The gold fish has drowned, or
the budgie's died or their coach says they've got to save themselves for the British
League the following weekend! (Athletics Today, 30 May 1991:25).

Andy had a stranglehold on the promotion of events which generated revenue for athletes,
and, for whatever reason, his lack of attention to women increased the already large
discrepancies between the financial opportunities for male and female athletes.

16For many years invitations for individuals to compete at these events had been sent
direct to the BAAB, who rarely passed them on to the athletes concerned (Athletics Today,
Shot putter and coach, Mike Winch, who was strongly supportive of minority women's events like the shot putt, recognised that all women's events were characterized as relatively unimportant in relation to men's events and that increased revenue to the sport therefore did little to benefit female athletes overall. In 1980 he observed that:

The men who promote televised bonanzas are not interested in most track and field events featuring women. Women athletes do not bring in the sponsors and the TV fees, and they don't get the turnstiles clicking, so they are of no interest to international promoters.

....The public do not flock to women-only track meetings. They will go to major invitational meetings which include some women's events, but basically they go to watch the best men compete - the women are a secondary attraction; a sort of glamorous side show.

....It's a financial reality that most of our women athletes will not get a look into international track and field when the sport goes Open. Only a handful of current stars will still be attractive in terms of gate money (Athletics Monthly. July 1980:28).

Some athletes felt isolated by their events. For example, long jumper, Sue Reeve, recognised that in certain events women at the end of the period under investigation could win good prizes, particularly in road running, but that for those in 'an event that is unpopular and therefore isn't seen to be worth backing you're not going to make anything' (Herrington 1988). Women had fewer opportunities than men and those women competing in minority events were even further marginalized. Andy Norman confirmed Sue's and Judy's impressions by arguing:

You can't make your living as a discus thrower or shot putter. It's like in soccer; you make a very good living if you score a lot of goals but you don't make such a good living if you're a right back (Cited in Athletics Today. 30 December 1992:4).

Judy Oakes, feels marginalized as a woman, and by her event, which she characterizes as unglamorous. She maintains that:
If I was a middle-distance runner and achieved what I've achieved, I'd be probably close to being a millionaire by now, but I'm not. I mean, you get people who can pace-make [races] so they're not even good enough to make their event and complete it, but they can pace-make and get $2,000 for doing so - and if it's a world record they get extra, and I can do my event and get $200. You know it doesn't equate. Also, women in the past have been treated as lower athletes than the men. We're not saying we're going to do as well as the men in time and distance, because we're physically different, but we still give you value for money, because it's competition that the public want to see (Oakes 1997).

The opening up of athletics created increasing opportunities for male athletes, but women in general found it hard to get sponsorship. While agents were handling male athletes for the first time, female athletes were left to their own devices. For example, Wendy Sly (née Smith), who was looking for fast races outside major championships contacted international meeting promoters directly and arranged her own flights and accommodation. Taking the initiative, she argued, was 'my only chance to get such experience'. She later felt that if she had not done this she 'would have been no more than a good county athlete who occasionally made the British team'. In 1984 she won an Olympic silver medal in the 3,000 metres (Athletics Today. 13 September 1990:7). Most female athletes were in a 'catch 22' situation. As Jane Furniss recounted, she could not get into top races until she was known, but she was not known until she had appeared in some top races (Athlete's World, December 1983:38). Even when trips were organised for women, often the rewards were not commensurate with those enjoyed by men. For example, Christine Benning ran in a cross-country meeting in France in the late 1970s. She shared the trip with several male athletes. Despite being the only member of the party to win her race, no accommodation had been arranged for her, and she was forced to spend the night sleeping in the toilet (Benning 1984).
Already by the 1970s, the commodification of the female body was typically tied to the limited sponsorship secured by female athletes. For example, several sponsors of women's athletics in England were companies with products that were identifiable with popular images of femininity. The sponsor of the WAAA Championships in the late 1970s was Sunsilk, the shampoo and hair conditioner manufacturer. Pre-event publicity featured several of the sport's most attractive athletes, who posed for pictures with impeccable hair dos (The Daily Telegraph, 22 April 1977; The Guardian, 22 April 1977; Athletics Weekly, 20 August 1977:1). A less typical example of sponsorship which benefited English athletes during the late 1970s and early 1980s was linked to feminist principles and the concern for women's physical liberation. Through the Avon International Running Circuit, Avon Cosmetics sponsored a series of women-only races throughout the world, which catered for runners of all abilities. The benefits were not intended to be purely monetary for the elite athletes, but also a means of attracting lesser athletes. The circuit director, Kathrine Switzer, reasoned that:

For the first time in thousands of years, through running, women are realizing their full physical potential. They're beginning to take joy in their own movement, in the feelings of strength and freedom that physical accomplishment can give (Athlete's World, September 1980:50).

In general, however, female athletes had far less financial support from public and voluntary bodies than men, and from the first time that the amateur status of athletes was officially discarded, there were vast discrepancies in the amounts of sponsorship they could secure in relation to male athletes.

**FACILITIES**

Throughout the period of study there have been frequent complaints that England has been
'woefully short of sports grounds' (British Olympic Journal, September 1930:66; Crump 1947:26) compared to other countries, and that this has been a major factor in the declining fortunes of English women. During the 1950s, attention was drawn to the mere 'two dozen' running tracks in Britain, compared to Finland's five hundred, and Sweden's eight hundred (Curtis-Bennett 1950:30-32; Glendenning 1953:168).

Tracks are an important resource. Apart from providing a surface on which to train, they provide a location where athletes can meet and where club identities can be established. Top quality facilities are also necessary to enable meetings to be organized. Early tracks were unevenly distributed around the country. There were only four cinder tracks, all in and around London. Elsewhere the tracks were grass ones (Searle 1989). The south of England was the focus for the most successful women's clubs, and where all the major meetings were staged, so it can be argued that the development of women's athletics has been closely allied to the availability of athletic facilities. In some areas clubs struggled for many years with poor facilities, and this may have deterred many women from considering athletics as a recreation. For example, in 1924, there was no cinder track in Leicester, and athletes were not even able to train in the local park. A visit to London by a club official in the same year made him 'seethe with vexatious envy' (Sharlott 1994:59) when he saw the track at Battersea Park. Later, there was only a grass track, opened in 1952, so there was nowhere in Leicester which could adequately host top class meetings, until 1967, when one of the first all-weather tracks in the country was laid in the city (Ibid:65). During the 1920s, Croydon Harriers, in Surrey, rented facilities from the local football club, where changing was in an old converted army hut, with one bath. This was shared by both men and women 'in two separate sessions' (James 1970:8). After the war
they made use of a local grass track with a poor surface, and it was not until 1953 that Croydon Council provided a cinder track (Ibid:11-12). Abrahams and Crump (1951:37) who said that 'in the main there is an appalling lack of facilities for women', which was a nationwide problem.

Sometimes the initiative to improve conditions was made by local athletes, and in mixed-sex clubs the necessary work was carried out by both men and women. For example, during the inter-war period there was only one athletic track in Manchester, used by Manchester AC, where 'baths, showers, and adequate toilet facilities were undreamed of luxuries' (Scott and Bent 1984:26). After the war, Manchester's Sale Harriers applied to Sale Borough Council for the rent of a piece of land suitable for an athletic track, and, in 1951, they were granted a summer track in a children's play area. Club members were liable for cutting the grass, and marking out the track. Two years later the Council granted the club permission to construct a cinder track on another site. It was club members, both men and women, who laid this track (Wilson 1986:21, 28, 33).

The majority of tracks in England are owned by Local Authorities and historically their availability and quality has invariably depended on the attitude to leisure adopted by individual councils. Many school facilities have been poor. Just after the war, Jean Desforges, in Stratford, East London, practised hurdling in the school corridor, for 'there wasn't a blade of grass anywhere' (Athletics Today, 10 May 1990:18), and even in the late 1970s, Diane Edwards (later Modahl), in Manchester, used a 400 metre concrete track which doubled as the school car park (Modahl 1995:17).
In 1947, the WAAA tried to move their track championships out of London for the first time, but the selected Region, the Midlands, were unable to find a 'suitable ground' so the championships reverted back to the White City, in London (Athletics, March 1947:16). Thus the bias towards the South continued.

Throughout the country the equipment often belonged to individual clubs, who were responsible for its purchase and upkeep. During the inter-war years even large clubs struggled to maintain their equipment with limited income. LOAC, for example, could not justify the cost of buying a replacement javelin for practice (LOAC Committee Minutes, 18 May 1934). Facilities remained poor at many tracks in the South 30 years later. When considering a joint men's and women's County Track and Field Championship in Surrey in 1964 it was reported that:

Epsom is quite unsuitable for throwing events, has no stand and difficulties of transport from all areas of the County; Woking has accommodation for two football teams only, no high jump fan and a centre area not up to standard (Private correspondence, Doug Goodman to Jim Braben, 30 June 1964).

A joint meeting would have benefitted women considerably, with a saving, for example, on the cost of track hire and officials' expenses. Also, the women's championships were not well supported and a joint meeting would have attracted a larger crowd and created a better atmosphere in which to compete.

Even with equal access to facilities, women have been expected to utilise equipment designed for men, illustrating the gendered character of practical arrangements. One of the principal reasons the steeplechase for women remains under discussion is that the barriers are fixed in height for the men's race and cannot be adjusted to a height at which women may compete safely. Equally, throwing circles have remained constant since Joseph
Chambers fixed their size for Victorian gentlemen. There are no alternative sizes for women.

The location of training venues has added to the problems faced by athletes. The lack of tracks was still considered a problem after the 1964 Olympics, when it was pointed out that many athletes had 'to travel long distances at considerable expense and with consequent waste of time' (*Athletics Weekly*, 28 November 1964:3). This still hindered athletes in the late 1970s. For example, Diana Elliott (later Davies), a Leicester high jumper had to travel 40 miles to train (Sharlott 1994:97).

Finding adequate facilities for training, once a track has been located, has often been a problem. Phyllis Perkins recounts that during the 1950s no tracks were floodlit. She remembers Tooting Bec having small tilly lamps set out on the grass verges to guide the runners (Perkins 1997) and Mary Rand trained at Alperton, in West London, with little oil lamps burning around the track (Rand 1969:44). Dorothy Hyman, in Yorkshire, had no access to an indoor arena, and also found it almost impossible to find a training track with floodlights, so in 1959 she resorted to doing some of her running on Barnsley Football Club's training pitch - but on one occasion the lights were turned off early and she sprinted straight into a goal post. There were no changing facilities at the tracks she used and, since the family had no bathroom, she often had to rely on the generosity of her neighbours to keep clean. Whilst she acknowledged these disadvantages, she felt more acutely the lack of training partners to work her harder, 'particularly in winter when ordinary club girls just won't bother'. As she was so much faster than any local woman she reasoned that: 'Really, only boys could help, but even they usually came only when
the sun shone' (Hyman and Pilley 1964:64-5).

Several parts of the country have always lacked facilities, and for an athlete to succeed in such an area makes her achievements all the more remarkable. Jane Colebrook lived in a Lincolnshire village with no street lighting, and on winter evenings she only had her mother's bicycle lamp to follow, yet she surmounted the challenge to win the 1977 European Indoor 800 metres title in a world record time. No male runners in the area approached her levels of success. She reasoned that it was necessary to make the most of what was available, arguing that:

Obviously it would be nice to have a track nearby. But you've got to adapt and make the most of your environment, haven't you? Sometimes it's very pleasant, running through snow-covered woods, or on a summer's evening.

Sometimes it can be unpleasant, when you run in a soggy field and get your feet soaking wet, for instance, but running is the most natural of all exercises. If you were a pole vaulter or a sprinter it would be impossible for you to train for international competition here. But as a middle distance runner, I enjoy the closeness to nature (Emery and Temple 1978).

Some athletes managed to make adaptations at home to train. High jumper, Brenda Gibbs, from Leicester, trained in her own back garden. She made a high jump landing area from five old mattresses, which was good enough to help her win the WAAA title (Daily Mirror, 22 August 1977). But for those competing in technical events, the absence of facilities sometimes seemed to be an unsurmountable problem. Geoff Dyson, the AAA Chief Coach, reasoned that athletes were 'made in the winter', and that the lack of floodlights and covered areas seriously hampered the progress of field events specialists (Athletics Weekly, 25 September 1954:6). By the end of the 1970s, the two best groups of English throwers were based at the National Sports Centre, at Crystal Palace, where
they were able to utilise the country's only indoor training area. One of the two coaches, John Hillier, said:

It's excellent for us even though there are a few problems with shots flying around and pole vaulters ducking under the arc of the shot.

You've got to realise how others in the rest of the country are suffering. [In the winter] They walk outside with a shot in a bucket of hot water because that's the only way they can throw. And it's no surprise that probably the two best squads in the country are mine and Mike's [Winch]. We may not be the best two coaches in the country although we tend to have the largest majority of the top athletes but we have the facility of the Palace and we can do a lot of work indoors the others can't (Athletics Today. 9 February 1989:20).

Sometimes the athletes themselves assisted in initiatives for establishing training camps. The sand dunes at Merthyr Mawr, in South Wales, have been utilised since the early 1960s for training, particularly by elite middle-distance runners, and many male and female athletes were responsible for the building of the accommodation close by (Athletics Weekly. 8 December 1962:8-10, and 28 November 1964:11-12). Also, Timsbury Manor, near the New Forest, was used as a training centre for several years in the early 1960s. Again, much of the work required to make it suitable as a training venue was carried out by athletes, and the resident wardens were international throwers, Suzanne Allday, and her husband (Athletics Weekly. 25 February 1961:5, and 7 April 1962:8-9).

Although many of the difficulties that women experienced in relation to access and use of facilities were common to both sexes, there is considerable evidence to suggest that chauvinism and sexism was commonplace. For example, an early request by the WAAA to be allowed to use the White City and Crystal Palace for training was ignored by the BOA. They directed their attentions instead to male athletes, granting funds for the provision of a coach and lighting at both venues for the AAA only (British Olympic
Association General Minutes, 12 November 1923 and 14 September 1923). Sometimes the objections to sharing did not come from official sources. Sophie Eliott-Lynn reported that 'parents were adversely disposed towards....men-and-women meetings' (Cited in Webster 1930:102).

At a personal level, male-female relationships were mixed. None of the athletes interviewed for this study claimed to have experienced hostility from men while sharing facilities. Both Vera Searle (1994) and Marjorie Ferris (1995), who both competed in the 1920s, said that they were warmly welcomed by the men; Phyllis Perkins (1997) in the 1950s, and Judy Vernon (1997) in the 1970s, both trained with men, and Christine Benning (1984) ran with her husband. But there were problems. In 1956, for example, in a letter to Athletics Weekly, Chris Brett, the Track Secretary of Selsonia AC, claimed that the majority of men believed 'that all women [were] a nuisance and should never have been allowed to train there in the first place' (21 January 1956:4-5). This letter brought to the surface a stream of virulent correspondence in the same magazine, which indicated that many male athletes were antagonistic to women and wanted to monopolise facilities for themselves. A.H. Morris of Polytechnic Harriers complained about women runners being incapable of using the track properly. He stated that:

Training....is arduous enough without the hazard of avoiding members of the female sex, who persistently cause annoyance by cluttering up the inside lanes, using them for warming-up and general jogging (28 January 1956:5).

However, it was clear that many women reciprocated the feelings. Two female members of Highgate Harriers immediately responded to the effect that they had experienced similar behaviour from men, and that 'usually we are training harder than some men' (4 February
1956:5). It was not uncommon for men to commandeer dedicated ladies' facilities. Club athlete, Marian Hesketh, at her first race, found men using the ladies' changing room and refusing to move out. She had a similar experience when she found the toilet. As her running career progressed she realised that, almost without exception, women's changing and toilet accommodation were markedly inferior to those of the men (Running Review, March 1983:18). Male chauvinism frequently caused women to feel marginalized and denigrated.

On occasions women were even made to feel unequal on the roads. For example, Lillian Board was frightened of being seen training in public and attracting verbal abuse, so on her road runs she adopted the tactic of appearing in a jumper and slacks, rather than a tracksuit, and she carried a letter in her hand. Then, if anyone passed her, she would stop and pretend that she was out to post the letter and happened to be running (R.A.C.E., September/October 1979:25). More sinisterly, several women have been subjected to verbal and sexual harassment, particularly during the 1970s when increased numbers of women took up running (Running, September/October 1981:78). One woman, who had been molested by a man, found the implied criticism of friends and relatives that she should not have been out alone and in shorts particularly wounding. She was made to feel that exercising in public was still not a legitimate activity for a woman (Running, February 1985: 23).

At major championships women were often housed at separate, inferior locations to the men. Sometimes, women were given the impression that they were not welcome. At the 1932 Olympics, Ethel Johnson recalls that, 'No-one wanted us; we were a bit of a
nuisance' (Athletics Weekly, 14 December 1963:3). It was noted that the women were housed 'too far away from the men, thus leaving them more or less stranded' (WAAA Committee Minutes, 12 November 1932). In Helsinki, in 1952, the men stayed in a 'very nice village' with 'lovely facilities', whilst the women were allocated the local nurses' home. However, to ensure that they enjoyed the best of what was available, Sylvia Cheeseman (later Disley), together with the other English athletes, spent the first afternoon replacing all the straw mattresses with rubber ones from other nations' dormitories (The Olympic Years: 1952, 1992). In later years the separation of the sexes sometimes led to ingenious methods of communication. At the 1956 Olympics, for example, one athlete pole vaulted into the women's accommodation, but at the Tokyo Olympics a high wire fence was erected and a guard was on permanent duty outside the female quarters, although this was apparently to prevent the women interfering with the men! (The Olympic Years: 1956, and 1964, 1992). Even during long journeys a paternalistic approach was adopted by the male officials. On the flight to Melbourne in 1956 all the women were segregated from the men, thus precluding close team cohesion (Crump 1966:169).

Male-female distinctions formed the basis for discrimination against female athletes in a number of different ways. They were both institutionalised and personalised. In order to survive and advance their sport, women had by different methods to negotiate difficulties seldom faced by men.

PRESS AND MEDIA COVERAGE

The press and media have helped to maintain gender differences in athletics. Lee
(1990:197-219) claims that the mass media is integral to the reproduction of gender inequality in sport by reinforcing existing gender roles and presenting idealized images of femininity. One of the very earliest confirmations of this concerns Emma Sharp, who met physical resistance during her completion of the Barclay feat in 1865 (discussed in Chapter Three). Her performance was dismissed by the contemporary *Bell's Life* (4 July 1874), which expressed the 'conviction that no one but Captain Barclay Allardice ever accomplished the feat in this or any other country'. The reporter regarded the task as impossible for a woman, due to the 'arduous nature of the undertaking for a man in the prime of youth, and of exceptional strength and staying powers, as the gallant officer proved repeatedly in every branch of pedestrianism'. The emphasis that only an officer and a gentleman was capable of such a task reinforced ideological assumptions regarding female frailty and class distinctions. Reports like this in the most influential sporting journal of the day did much to hinder the acceptance and progress of women's athletics.

However, newspaper coverage that I have studied from the inception of the WAAA has often conflicted with Lee's arguments. Inter-war reporting in the national and local press was almost universally supportive of women's athletics. Joe Binks in the *News of the World*, in particular provided insightful reporting of women's events. But it could be argued that since several of the national newspapers sponsored some of the events they had a vested interest in positive writing. Newspapers often lent support in practical ways. For example, the first Monte Carlo team was sponsored by the *Sporting Life*, the *Daily Sketch* financed a meeting in 1928 with £300 (*WAAA International Committee Minutes, 25 June 1928*), and the *Daily Mirror* donated the trophy to the premier inter-club meeting which bore its name. The *News of the World*, which backed many major meetings, was
enthusiastically in favour of women's athletics during the early years of the WAAA: it
took a full page advertisement for the paper in the British Olympic Journal (Spring 1926),
which featured action pictures of female athletes in each corner. There were no pictures
of men.

Several journalists attended early women's athletics meetings with preconceptions that they
would not enjoy the sport nor be able to treat it seriously. Even an ardent supporter like
Webster coloured his reports with patronising comments, and an affirmation that women
were inferior to men as athletes. For example, he described the winning high jump in the
1932 Olympics as 'good a Western Roll as any man could produce' (1933:81). But many
journalists revised their ideas as they watched women's competitions. One of these was
Harold Abrahams, whose early reports consisted mainly of unflattering comparisons with
men's performances. However, after he attended the 1930 WAAA Championships he
admitted that he:

Enjoyed the sports yesterday very much indeed. The women competitors (many of
them seem quite children) are dead keen, and you get the impression right through
that they are really enjoying what they are doing. The tense atmosphere of men's
championships has not yet crept into women's athletics (though I feel it soon will),
and consequently there is something more attractive about it (Uncredited newspaper
cutting, 17 August 1930, H.M. Abrahams scrapbook).

In more recent years women's performances have more typically been treated as secondary
to those of men. For example, in 1977, John Rodda's column in The Guardian, on the
European Cup semi-final, which involved English men and women in two separate
competitions, carried the headline: 'No howlers as Britain reach Helsinki.' He reported in
detail on the men's match and then, in what appeared as an afterthought, headed a section:
'Girls through too' - and followed this with a report a fifth of the size of the one on the
Athletics was competing with other sports for a share of the finite space or time available for publications and broadcasts, and women were invariably under-represented and marginalized in the resultant competition with men for their allocation of coverage (Boutilier and San-Giovanni 1983). Too often press and media representations served to reinforce gender relations by subordinating women and promoting athletics as the natural domain of men (Hall 1982:82-103; Willis 1982:117-135). Subordination by the press influenced female performances. One female athlete commented that, 'The lack of press coverage for the women [affected] the way I feel about racing. It [made] you feel less competitive, a second class citizen' (Athletics Today, 12 December 1991:18).

If women received less attention than men on the sports pages, this had a direct effect on other aspects of athletics, such as sponsorship, explained here by Birchfield's middle-distance athlete, Gillian Dainty:

Both men and women's teams at Birchfield won the [county] cross-country championships and in the Birmingham Mail the women got a paragraph and the men got a whole page. Men get more attention, more of the sponsor's money, new kit, trips abroad. Women get very little and what they do get they have to fight for (Dainty 1988).

Regrettably, all too often reporting displayed an obsession with the sexuality of women, and reflected what male journalists considered to be newsworthy, rather than commenting on the intrinsic value of a performance. Two pictures of walker Carol Tyson illustrate this point. The Sun showed a picture of her in tight shorts and a t-shirt, from the back, which emphasised her legs and bottom. The Sunday Express concentrated on the
difficulties associated with training in crowded London streets and showed her, in a tracksuit, from the front, weaving her way through pedestrians (R.A.C.E., June 1978:27).

The Radio Times provides another example. In 1978, to promote interest in the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, one cover showed three English athletes, Tessa Sanderson, Sharon Colyear and Sonia Lannaman, clothed in bikinis splashing through surf on a tropical beach. The sub-heading was 'Fun and Games' and Whannel (1992:132) suggests that this image implies that 'this is not really serious competition as far as the "girls" are concerned.'

Because the denigration of heavily muscled women was commonplace in press reports, the unconventional body became marginalized and, as Willis contends, 'In such ways the female athlete [was] rendered a sex object - a body which may excel in sport, but which is primarily an object of pleasure for men' (1982:122). Over the years representations of female athletes have symbolized traditional femininity, which has the effect of trivialising the sport and withdrawing attention away from athletic achievement.

In exceptional cases, female athletes received press coverage out of proportion to their performance on the track. One example is Lillian Board, who, in 1970 attracted 'virtually the entire band of Fleet Street athletics correspondents', to a small club meeting with a few dozen spectators, simply because she was making her debut at the mile (Foster and Temple 1978:42). However, some of the reports on Lillian were critical of her perceived failure when she won an Olympic silver medal in Mexico in 1968, and of her relationship

\[17\]For example, see 'Images Of Femininity' and 'Gender Verification Testing' in Chapter Seven.
with her father, who supervised her coaching. Both she and her father found it particularly frustrating that they had no control over how the press chose to interpret events, or over the printing of inaccurate stories. Her father, George, argued that the press had their minds 'fixed on a certain theme and tried to justify it' (Emery 1971:79-81).

Women appeared to be less entrepreneurial than men in promoting their own sport, and the WAAA was particularly lax in its efforts to ensure that women's athletics got good media coverage. Race and meeting organisers were apparently reluctant to submit results to the athletic press. Jimmy Green, the editor of Athletics Weekly, frequently made this complaint, stating that women seemed 'to enjoy a cloak of anonymity and silence' (8 January 1955:3). He reasoned that if volunteers at men's meetings could submit results, then so should women, whom, he claimed were often uncooperative in their attitude to the press (17 September 1955:3; 13 July 1963:3). According to him, his magazine, the 'Official Organ of Athletics in Great Britain', received:

....practically no co-operation from the WAAA at all, except that Miss Hartman always sends us tickets for their Championships and Mrs Leslie is always most helpful. We get far more co-operation from the Midlands and North, in fact, and like Norman Easlea, their Publicity Officer, we seldom know what is taking place in the future (Ibid 13 July 1957).

The magazine did have a regular feature, 'With the Ladies', but this was complained about by male readers as lacking in serious athletic content. It was characterized by one reader as a 'Ladies' Gossip Column'. He argued that:

Surely a gossip column is out of place in a serious athletic journal? The last...broke all records for irrelevant information. We are told of the births of sons to various ladies; we learn with awe that several ladies plan to run faster this season and that one young lady is going to reduce her weight in order to do this; finally we read with bated breath a list of no fewer than nineteen ladies who have birthdays in the month of April.
One can argue that all of this takes only one page out of twenty-eight, but where will it all end?...if the ladies have nothing better to write about than vague plans and birthdays, then send their articles to the Daily Express for William Hickey to print and let your readers read more about athletics (20 April 1963:4).

In his editorial Jimmy Green was forced to admit that this view was similar to his own, but he pointed out that the column described was requested by the female readers (Ibid). In this case the trivialisation of female athletics was in effect self-induced. Women were themselves reproducing stereotypes of their own sex, and prioritizing femaleness above athleticism. They also attracted scathing criticism from Jimmy Green for the way in which they organised meetings, which did little to foster confidence in the administration of the sport. He described the 1956 Kent County Championships at Crystal Palace as:

The same old "garden party" type of affair, enjoyable if one cares little about times of events or whether officials turn up late, if at all! Why do they tolerate these inefficiencies!...It was no surprise to find the meeting starting half-an-hour late - in fact, it would be surprising if it didn't (Athletics Weekly, 2 June 1956:3).

There were, in fact, some excellent performances at this meeting, but they were, as was often the case, negated by the apparent inability of the women's authorities to organise a major meeting worthy of public presentation, adding to the argument that women's athletics was not a serious sport. Other reporters remained convinced that poor organization affected athletic performances, which could be significantly improved if the officiating was of the same standard enjoyed by men (The Times, 9 July 1956). Jean Desforges was convinced that Sheila Lerwill had lost several chances of breaking a world record by thoughtless announcers who interrupted her whilst she was jumping (Athletics Weekly, 1 May 1954:14).

Some commentators criticised the handling and presentation of women's athletics. For example, one of the strongest advocates of English women's athletics was George Pallett,
who characterized the 1951 National Junior Cross country as chaotic, and a race that should have been declared void (Athletics Weekly, 17 February 1951:6). Mel Watman, in 1960, was more generous in reviewing the track and field championships, merely characterizing them as 'uninspired' (Athletics Weekly, 9 July 1960:15). The 1964 WAAA Championships, which received scant media coverage, was also criticized by spectators. Whilst it was accepted that the performances were world class, disappointment was expressed at the 'puerile announcing and absolute lack of information'. Races were started when officials were still drinking their tea, and there were no indications as to what was happening in the arena, which prompted one of the crowd to complain that the spectators were made to feel like 'interlopers there on sufferance only' (Athletics Weekly, 18 July 1964:4). Vera Searle, a regular announcer and leading WAAA official, admitted that the championships were run for the athletes and not for the spectators. However, this approach was criticised as being one that would leave sponsors dissatisfied and less keen to subsidise women's athletics if spectators stayed away (Athletics Weekly, 11 August 1962:3, 6). However, the WAAA were not alone in being criticised; there were also complaints that the AAA and the BAAB promoted events at the White City which were described as 'disorganised chaos' (Athletics Weekly, 2 September 1961:17).

Crowds at inter-war athletic meetings for both sexes, as already discussed, were often large. For women's fixtures this may, in part, have been due to the novelty value of a new sport. Post-war male and female spectaculars at the White City often attracted capacity attendances of 40-50,000, sharing the boom in spectator sports enjoyed by cricket and football (Crump 1989:48). However, by the late 1950s, spectator levels began to decline - no doubt in part prompted by the negative reporting of women's meetings, which was
accompanied by a fall in gate money, one of the most important incomes for all branches of the sport. The WAAA Championships, in particular, failed to attract significant crowds and women performed to largely vacant terraces in the large White City stadium. Other events often competed for attention. For example, the 1957 Championships was forced to compete with events at Wimbledon, Henley and Trent Bridge, which were all broadcast live on television and radio (Athletics Weekly, 13 July 1957:10). When athletics meetings moved to Crystal Palace in 1971 spectators usually numbered no more than 2,000 (Daily Express, 13 November 1970). Some fixtures were totally dependent on gate receipts to survive, and it was noted in 1962 that several events in the North of England had disappeared from the calendar because of this trend (Athletics Weekly, 1 September 1962:4-5). The reduced revenue resulted in a financial crisis for the sport in England and was one of the major factors in the call for unification propounded by the Byers Report in 1968.\(^\text{18}\)

Whilst joint athletic meetings with men provided additional opportunities for competition, and before larger audiences, they also embodied problems. At some meetings, whilst a full programme was contested by men, women were restricted to just one or two events. In such situations female athletes were rendered almost invisible, and those taking note of proceedings were given the erroneous impression that this was the full extent of women's involvement in the sport. Also, with fewer events to record, less space was allocated in the press. Some events attracted almost no public interest. For example, the Southern

\(^{18}\)Lord Byers headed an independent inquiry, commissioned by the AAA and the BAAB to look into athletics under their jurisdiction. The report, published in May, 1968, recommended the establishment of a single governing body, 'The British Athletic Federation', to govern all of British athletics, including women (Lovesey 1979:132).
WAAA pentathlon championship, where Mary Rand 'put up one of the greatest displays in British track and field history, and in doing so set two national records', was contested in front of a crowd of less than 50 (Athletics Weekly, 27 July 1963:20).

On the rare occasions that women's athletics did appear on television in the 1950s, the presentation by the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) was often regarded as unsatisfactory. One viewer claimed that:

The only information I gleaned was that there were a large number of starters and that Joan Briggs won. Rex Alston has been criticised by readers in the past, but if he does say a few words about the weather and the stadium, he can usually be depended upon to give us the names and positions of quite a few of the runners. Such a thought did not, apparently, occur to the commentator of the WAAA mile (Athletics Weekly, 18 July 1959).

Since the Second World War, radio coverage of major women's athletic meetings was consistently poor compared to other sports, which lessened the potential of women's athletics to become a spectator sport. For example, the 1964 WAAA Championships, which was a precursor to what was expected to be a successful Olympic campaign, was allotted a mere four minutes (0.6 per cent) of the 655 minutes of sports' air time on the Home Service on the radio. The majority of time was spent on a Test Match, rowing, and 90 minutes of ladies' singles tennis from Wimbledon. There was no television coverage (Athletics Weekly, 11 July 1964:4).

Sometimes television coverage became an inconvenience. At one WAAA championships in the early 1960s, the relay sprinters were made to stand on the starting line, without tracksuits, for almost five minutes. It was a cold day and the delay was at the insistence of the television producers, whose cameras were not ready. Marea Hartman was not
prepared to see an important meeting's timetable dictated to by television schedulers. As she said, 'This is outrageous. We can't hold up an international trial just for television. These girls could easily pull a muscle in this cold and ruin their chances for the rest of the season' (Undated, uncredited newspaper cutting, WAAA archives).

Even at the end of the period under scrutiny, the two main BBC commentators, Ron Pickering and David Coleman, continued to characterize female athletes by the patronizing term 'girls', rather than 'women' or 'athletes' (Running, October 1984:23). Nevertheless, during the 1960s, BBC's David Coleman emerged as the voice of athletics and his enthusiasm and appreciation for athletics generally, coupled with the rise of technical excellence and colour transmissions, helped to boost audience enthusiasm for the sport. 'It was Coleman's commentaries from Tokyo (especially on Ann Packer's triumph)', asserts Tony Ward, 'that convinced the Corporation [BBC] that here was a mediagenic sport. It has remained so ever since' (Running, April 1985:82). Tony Ward also argues that presentation of athletics on BBC has played a significant role in changing British track and field into a major sport, and made 'even the women's championships seem gripping' (Ibid). Whannel argues that the successes of top English athletic stars now draws audiences to television by providing 'a point of identification around national interest' (1992:151). However, whilst major meetings featured both male and female athletes, television focused on the outstanding Englishmen of the 1960s and 1970s, at the expense of less successful women. It was the growing rivalry between Steve Ovett and Sebastian Coe during the late 1970s that, more than any other factor, made athletics a major televised sport. Where women have featured it has often been to display images of sexuality, rather than athletic ability (Coe et al 1992:163). The inequality in television
coverage was commented on by the athletes themselves. Judy Oakes argued that the television companies were unaware of the true value of the whole range of athletic events, and had made many athletes invisible. She complained that:

People don't know who I am half the time....I think the fact that TV figures have gone down as they have shows that the public are fed up of seeing ring-a-ring-a-roses with the same people, or sprints with the same people, and they want to see some field events, see some variety of competition, because that's what it's all about - competition (Oakes 1997).

Kathryn Binns complained of media discrimination in the presentation of cross-country races. She pointed out that:

On TV they showed all the men's race at the Philips International cross-country but only a snatch of the women's. I'm not saying the time ought to be split 50-50 but women's events deserve a bigger share (Jogging, July 1979:44).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on relations of inequality between men and women throughout the history of athletics and on other features of the sport that have presented particular problems for women. Women received tremendous support from many men during the whole period of this study, particularly in many aspects of domestic administration and coaching. However, despite the concerted efforts of men and women, there were significant differences between athletics for women, and athletics for men. Press and media treatment was uneven. Opportunities for competition, and access to prizes, sponsorship and other income continued to be differentiated between the sexes, so that female athletes were frequently marginalized. But the issue of gender inequalities and male hegemony was not straightforward or inevitable. It could be argued that in many instances women themselves lacked the insight and political consciousness to break down
traditional gender relations of power.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION: THE SPREAD AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

INTRODUCTION

In many respects English women's athletics followed a rather different pattern of development than other sports. From the first international meeting in Monte Carlo it attracted women from varied social backgrounds, who took part for a range of different reasons - both social and competitive. Whereas, for both schoolboys and schoolgirls, the games' movement in particular was associated with middle-class education, that was not the case for athletics. The establishment and spread of athletics for women was most closely tied to the Polytechnics, and to clubs which were located throughout the country. The broad democratic character of the sport was also linked to its place in the curricula of state schools. Many well-known athletes from working-class backgrounds had their first taste of athletics while they were at school.

SCHOOLGIRL ATHLETICS

Holt argues that during the nineteenth century athletics was seldom taught in elite girl's schools since it was 'regarded as quite unsuitable for girls from "good homes"' (1989:129). When there was an emphasis on sport it was on team games. For example, girls' boarding schools, such as St. Leonards and Wycombe Abbey included cricket and hockey on the curriculum (Holt 1989:120), although by the turn of the century a wide-ranging physical education programme was established at Roedean which included walking 'as a useful supplement or alternative to more vigorous forms of exercise, and running a set distance of a little over a mile while being timed' (Bell 1978: 41, 56). Apparently these athletic
activities were included as a means of physical training, not for competition (Smith 1974:26). In the public schools for boys the situation was different and they provided the context for the first schools' athletic championships, probably in 1897, although Joe Binks believed competitions could have begun as early as 1869 (Young 1981:12).

The major impetus for girls' athletics occurred in the state school sector. However, boys had more opportunities for athletics than girls, and schools' organisations and competitions prioritized boys' athletics. Although a report on elementary schools in 1898 noted the girls had 'opportunities of being trained to a freer and more healthy use of their limbs than at one time seemed probable' (Cited in Gill 1950:52) and running was recommended for this purpose, the South London Sports in 1903, with 2,800 entries, had no competitions for girls (Philpott 1904:115).

It was the London Schools' Athletic Association which afforded English schoolgirls their first opportunity of championship competition. The agreement that 'girls be catered for in the championships' was made in October 1920, the year before Alice Milliat's inaugural international meeting in Monte Carlo. It was a cautious beginning, with just the 100 yards and a relay race for girls included alongside the existing boys' programme in the 1921 championships (Gosling 1950:4). The following year the newly formed Middlesex County Schools' Athletic Association included events for both boys and girls in their first championships.

The democratization of women's athletics became linked to the education system, and was particularly affected by the formation of the national body, the Schools' Athletic
Association (SAA),¹ in 1925. Girls under the age of 14 were offered a good range of events: 100 yards, 150 yards, both jumps, a hurdles race, and a relay race. Boys contested the same events, except that the 220 yards was substituted for the 150 yards, and they also had the 440 yards, the half mile, and the tug-of-war. Significantly, there were no throws for either sex. The formation of the SAA had taken place without a single woman attending any of the meetings, no positions of authority were granted to women, and there were no women officials nominated for the first championships (Young 1981:33-37). Nevertheless, the WAAA, who at the time only catered for females aged 15 and above, were pleased to see athletics extended to younger age groups, and recognised in the schools' movement a prerequisite for the broader growth of athletics. Mrs V.M. Cambridge, one of the WAAA officers, wrote in the 1925 SAA Handbook that she applauded the 'efforts to get organised athletics taken up by the schools' (Cited in Young 1981:48).

However, even this limited range of events for girls was to raise opposition. One headmistress had already, in 1922, voiced the opinion that 'any form of athletics would cause [girls] to have breakdowns, heart trouble, rheumatism and difficult child-birth' (Braben 1991:27). The reaction in 1925 to the formation of the SAA was immediate, and it also came from the physical education profession. Elizabeth Terry, the Physical Training Organiser for Oxford City, argued that the new movement could become very popular and widespread 'and may have a tremendous effect on the physical welfare of the rising generation' (Journal of School Hygiene and Physical Education. 1925-1926:254).

But she expressed concern that the events selected were based on men's competitions.

¹In 1962 the SAA became the ESSA (English Schools' Athletic Association).
Girls' events, she argued, needed special consideration to avoid the possibility of injury through overstrain when attempting complex technical movements. Terry was particularly worried that the children involved in the SAA competitions would be drawn mainly from the public elementary schools where, she claimed, the children 'often suffer malnutrition and they labour under great disadvantages as regards clothing and equipment' (Ibid:254-5). She deplored elitism in athletics with its intensive and individualized training, and the resultant neglect of 'non-competitors'. Her conservatism extended to advocating the removal of the hurdles race, contesting only standing jumps, and replacing the 100 yards with a sprint of 95 yards. She concluded that:

School athletics - particularly for girls - should, in short, be based on lines differing from those of adult meetings; they should not rest on individual competition only, should not require intensive technical training, and the object should not be the reaching or beating of records (Ibid:256).

The influential Ling Association now joined in the debate, and opposed children competing in public. The members passed a resolution at the AGM in 1926, that:

...sufficient athletics for children may be provided by means of expertly organised school sports having due regard to team events and that the specialised training of children for individual competitions for public display is detrimental to their interests (Ibid:256).

The Ling Association also had the support of a young Harold Abrahams, who at the time had strong reservations regarding women's athletics - a position he later changed. In a lecture to the Association in 1927, he stressed that women should 'stick to those forms of exercise best suited to their physique and not ape men' (Cited in Young 1981:46). Mrs G. Mackie doubted that facilities were adequate for girls, arguing that the jarring caused by

---

2The Ling Association was founded in 1899. It combined with the Bergman Österberg Union in 1915 to 'advance the cause of Swedish Gymnastics' (Ling Association 1919, cited in Hargreaves 1994a:82).
landing on poor surfaces in the jumps could damage the reproductive organs (Ibid:46).

Terry stressed that there were few teachers in the elementary schools with sufficient knowledge and skill to teach athletic events, and neither were there any female officers on the SAA. In the *Journal of School Hygiene and Physical Education* it was also observed that there was no doctor or physiologist among the Vice Presidents of the SAA. The National Union of Women Teachers also expressed their dissatisfaction to the SAA that there were no women on the Executive committee (Ibid:45-7). By 1929, the Ling Association, together with the Headmistresses' Association, jointly petitioned the SAA to discourage girls from the SAA championships.

The 1933 Syllabus of Physical Training was ambivalent in its approach to athletics. Whilst the Board of Education recommended a school sports day every term in the state sector, they were at pains to stress the 'risk of promising young children being exploited in the interests of the house, school or district team' (Board of Education 1933:66). Also, they noted marked differences between schoolgirl athletics and athletics for adults, and regarded the two as incompatible:

> Sports meetings for children are often organised on lines identical with those adopted for adults, and many of the same events are included, the result being that large numbers of boys and girls take part in athletic competitions without due consideration of the fact that impaired health may result from these efforts in later life, irrespective of the risk of any immediate physical or mental strain (Ibid:65).

The WAAA was also concerned about the possible detrimental effects of athletic exercise on the growing bodies of young children and sought to ban competition for girls under the age of 11, and although the SAA gradually expanded its brief for girls during the period
up to the Second World War (the number of events was increased and a 16 to 18 year-old age group was introduced), the Association was not immune to the controversy surrounding exercise for girls and expressed concern that certain events might be unsuitable for them. In 1937, the SAA continued to omit the throws for girls from the programme, and set up a sub-committee specifically to examine the suitability of events for girls (Ibid:73). It was to be 1950 before the discus and javelin were included for Senior girls, and the following year before they were offered to Junior girls. The shot, which was included in the 1948 Olympics, was not introduced into the schools' championships until 1962, because of the uneven development of the throwing arm associated with putting a heavy metal ball. The 880 yards, however, was included in the programme in 1955, five years before it was reintroduced into the Olympics (Ibid:131-2).

For some schoolgirls, their exposure to athletics remained limited to competing at the annual school sports days, without the benefit of any training or event practice. It was observed at one school in 1951, for example, where the 440 yards and 880 yards were included in the programme, that:

....these young ladies were being called upon to attempt what is tantamount to a mild form of possible suicide in full view of parents and friends and the responsible teachers....Enthusiasm and ignorance are dangerous partners and never more so than in the promotion of athletics in schools, where life-long damage may easily result from over-strain (Athletics Weekly, 16 June 1951:15).

However, after the war, the development of athletics in many schools was encouraging, particularly in the state sector of education. In 1954 Athletics Weekly spotlighted a particularly successful school, the mixed-sex Hamble County Secondary School, in Hampshire. Only three years before athletics had consisted of a 'Sports Day', which
involved a variety of events which were not on the athletic calendar. By 1953 every pupil
was doing some athletics, and the non-athletic events were removed from the programme.
Coaching started in the Easter holidays, and several inter-school fixtures were contested

Nevertheless, disputes with sections of the Physical Education profession continued. For
example, in 1947, the Cumberland Schools' AA unilaterally decided to delete the girls' 150
yards and long jump from their county championships, based on the advice they had
received from their women physical training organisers (Young 1981:95). However, good
relations were forged with the WAAA, who granted a seat to the SAA on their executive
in 1949, and in 1951 agreed on the specifications of girls' hurdles races (Ibid:98).

The different organisations and agencies that were in one way or another associated with
athletics in schools did not always work co-operatively together. For example, in 1962,
the SAA altered the qualifying date for age groups resulting in athletes simultaneously
being eligible for one age group in school competitions (1 April) and another in club
competitions (1 September). The stalemate was broken a year later by the WAAA, who, it
was argued:

....set their male counterparts an excellent example by falling into line with the
Schools AA on the question of the age group qualifying dates, and distances for
the junior and intermediate hurdle races.3 This means that from now on, all girls
will be competing under similar conditions, whether they are in schools events or
open events under WAAA Laws (Athletics Weekly, 29 February 1964:3).

3An anomaly which had existed for several years was that SAA hurdles races were
over 80 yards, and WAAA races over 80 metres, which involved different stride lengths
between hurdles.
Whilst the SAA provided the umbrella under which schoolchildren could compete, it was the school teachers and athletics coaches who advised and prepared children for competition. During the inter-war period A.M.A. Williams had undertaken summer lectures at Scarborough, in Yorkshire, addressing school teachers on girls' athletics (British Olympic Journal, October 1933:17) and, in 1945, Muriel Cornell had given demonstrations of athletic events to schoolgirls in Littlehampton, in West Sussex (WAAA AGM Minutes, 1 December 1945). However, the AAA's formal coaching scheme was not organised until after the Second World War, and the work of Geoff Dyson in 'teaching the teachers' to coach was recognised by the Ministry of Education, who agreed to pay 80 per cent of the salaries of National coaches (Lovesey 1979:122). Geoff Dyson also appreciated that training for schools athletics was not necessarily compatible with club competition, so he wrote Athletics For Schools (1951) with Joseph Edmundson. Although the AAA took the lead in school coaching, girls as well as boys were the beneficiaries of visiting coaches. In the fee-paying girls' schools and in the elite state grammar schools, athletics was still secondary to team games, and most schoolgirl athletics took place in Secondary Modern Schools where there was a predominance of working-class pupils (Fletcher 1984; Berlandina 1995; Hargreaves 1996) but where there was less chance of good teaching from physical education specialists. The problems for schoolgirl athletics in Surrey, outlined in the following quotation, were similar in schools throughout the country:

The grammar schools....get the output from the P.E. Colleges and the other schools get the rest, those who have done a spot of P.E. at the non-P.E. colleges. Those are the teachers and what about the millions of schoolgirls? I would say that about 99 girls out of every 100 who find their way into athletic clubs do so as a direct result of minor achievements in sports in either inter-class, inter-house, inter-school competitions. The schools are the cradles of women's athletics; school girls of

4Further books directed specifically at schoolchildren followed, such as Schoolgirl Athletics (1966) by Peggy Woodeson and Denis Watts.
today are the club athletes of tomorrow. Yet the know-how about athletics among those who rock the cradles, the teachers, is so little as to be almost non-existent. I don't know how many hundreds of schools we have in Surrey but you can count on the fingers of one hand the number of teachers who are also WAAA coaches. The vast majority of teachers who are coaching girls in athletics in the schools have had no previous P.E. training....the blind leading the blind (Braben 21 May 1962).

Whilst several schools showed antipathy towards club athletics, and many promising athletes were lost to the sport on leaving school (Athletics Weekly, 24 October 1964:8; Running, July 1983:52), others were gradually forging closer links with clubs 'so that any promising boy or girl [could] have the chance to develop' (Nankeville 1956:17).

However, there were several attacks on schools' athletics from outside the educational context. Some accusations were made that schools offering athletics on their physical education curriculum were restricted to those with staff who had an interest in the sport. As a result, claimed Brendan Foster, many promising athletes were lost to athletics:

....the athletes at the top of the pile in Britain are not necessarily the best, but just the best of those who have been given the opportunity to get to the top, through favourable circumstances (Foster and Temple 1978:10).

This discussion was continued by Ron Pickering, who was even more emphatic in his condemnation of the teaching of athletics in schools, and hopeful that schools and clubs could form closer relationships and cater for all levels of athlete. He said:

I don't think the basic teaching of track and field is done well in schools....I therefore think that the responsibility must be handed over to the clubs, but only if they are interested in providing opportunities of self-realisation for the physical illiterates and the fat freddies as well as the gifted kids (Athletics Monthly, January 1981:34).

Thanks to sponsorship from the News Chronicle, special coaching courses were arranged
for particularly promising schoolchildren. The first to benefit were chosen on the basis of the results from the 1949 SAA Championships. The bias was in favour of the boys, who were given 12 places to the girls' eight. The girls' course was held separately at Bisham Abbey, in Buckinghamshire - although in future years a mixed-sex course took place every Easter at Lilleshall Hall, in Shropshire (Young 1981:106-7).

A close relationship between the SAA and the BAAB was forged in 1952, when it was decided to hold the final Olympic trials for Helsinki in conjunction with the SAA championships. In 1954 the place of women in schools' athletics received a considerable boost with the appointment of Miss Kitty Austick as SAA Chairman (Young 1981:125). It was the first time that in a mixed-sex athletic environment a woman held the key administrative position. However, caution was still stressed in the development of new activities for girls, such as cross-country races ('advisedly discountenanced under any circumstances' (Athletics Weekly, 10 November 1951:5)), race-walking, and the range of field events.

The organisation of schools' championships was criticised on several occasions. For example, during the 1970s the influential coach, Wilf Paish, based his attack on elitism, and the early specialisation of events. Since schools' athletics was a summer sport, and the national championships restricted schoolchildren to entering one event, they spent the whole of that term specialising in their chosen discipline. He argued that growing children should, instead, try a range of events, otherwise the boredom and heavy training programme which could result from early specialisation might deter pupils from athletics in later life. Equally, he condemned the 'humiliation of defeat' as being too much for
young children to bear, which, again, might lead to rejection of the sport (Athletics Coach, June 1976:25).

However, schools were at the heart of the democratization of women's athletics - although in many elite girls' schools athletics was not on the physical education curriculum at all or was only part of the annual school sports days; for the majority of schoolgirls who came from less privileged backgrounds, athletics was an integral part of the physical education curriculum. For example, Audrey Brown (later Court), whose brother became an Olympic gold medallist, did no athletics until she attended Birmingham University in 1932 (Court 1988). Pam Davies, who won the National Cross-Country title five times in the 1960s, also became interested at university, where, she discovered, 'there were races further than 100 yards' (Athletics Weekly, 29 August 1964:19). Mary Bignal (later Rand) was unusual because, although from a working-class home, she won a sports scholarship at Millfield school, in Somerset (a private boarding school with a special reputation for sports), where athletics was a compulsory part of the physical education curriculum, and she tried all events (Buchanan, 1991:110; Athletics Weekly, 21 December 1963:13). Mary Wixey, who attended a grammar school in Cheltenham, in Gloucestershire, during the 1930s, enjoyed only team games (Wixey 1997). Sylvia Cheeseman was at a grammar school in West London at the end of the war which had a strong tradition of producing international athletes, yet only trained girls to be part of a relay team (Disley 1986). Liz Joyce also did no athletics just after the war at a grammar school in Hampshire (Joyce 1997), and the same was true for Diane Leather who attended Harrogate College, a private boarding school in Yorkshire (Charles 1988). Sarah Springman, who became an international triathlete in the 1980s, remembers 'a once-a-year relay for which [she] was never picked'
(Running, September 1984:36). In the 1970s, walker Carol Tyson volunteered at school to take part in a local running meeting (R.A.C.E., June 1978:26).

In comparison, the children from working-class families enjoyed greater opportunities for athletics. Lily Hill (later Kager) was introduced to athletics at school in the early 1930s when it was discovered by her school mistress that her father was an Olympic champion (Kager 1993). In the 1940s Joyce Smith (née Byatt), who tried a range of events, was encouraged by her games teacher (Running Review, April 1983:18; Smith 1981), as was sprint hurdler Shirley Strong (Athlete's World, April 1984:35). Twins Iris and Rita Lincoln excelled at several sports at school, including some athletics (R.A.C.E., February 1978:20). At the age of ten Wendy Smith (later Sly) had been allowed to compete in the 60 yards and skipping at school. She waited impatiently for nine months until her eleventh birthday when her parents allowed her to join Feltham AC, in West London (Athletics Today, 28 February 1991:26).

However, there are exceptions. For example, in the 1950s, Dorothy Hyman, whose father was a coal miner from Yorkshire, attended Cudworth Secondary School and 'just ran each year in the school sports and that was as far as it went'. Her school was not even affiliated to the district Schools Athletic Association (Cited in Athletics Weekly, 5 January 1963:14; Hyman and Pilley 1964:14). At the same time, Ann Packer attended Wallingford Grammar School, in Berkshire, which was 'a strong athletic and hockey school' (Brightwell and Packer 1965:119).
THE ATTRACTION OF ATHLETICS

Athletics has always had a broad appeal and the first exposure to the sport for some athletes occurred outside the context of education. For example, Elaine Burton's 100 yards race in 1919, when she was sixteen, was arranged by her father in a men's athletic meeting (World Sports. July 1956:26). Gladys Lunn, also sixteen, was introduced to athletics at her work's sports day, in Birmingham, in 1924, as was Norma Blaine, in 1951 (Lunn 1983, 1988; Blaine 1988). Maureen Gardner (later Dyson) decided to join Oxford Ladies after being taken to the club track in 1945, simply for some fresh air (World Sports. August 1952:12). In 1949, when aged eleven, sprinter June Foulds (later Paul) was spotted playing street games, where natural speed was essential, by a member of London's Spartan Ladies (Athletics Today. 10 February 1993:28). Diane Leather was inspired to start running after watching the 1952 Olympics on television (Charles 1988). Mary Tagg raced in the village sports in Norfolk, aged ten (Athletics Weekly. 22 February 1964:15). Debbi Marti, competed in the high jump for the Surrey club, Redhill AC, when only eleven (Athlete's World. January 1984:32). Christina Boxer (the first British athlete to break two minutes for 800 metres), joined the Hampshire club, Aldershot, at the age of twelve (R.A.C.E. December 1977:31), and Jane Furniss joined Sheffield AC, in Yorkshire, when one year older (Athlete's World. December 1983:38). High jumper Louise Miller was sent to the Chelmsford AC high jump coach by her school PE teacher because, she says, 'I was tall, skinny, asthmatic and couldn't run' (Athletics Monthly. March 1981:6).

Some entered the sport much later in life. For example, Wendy Feldmanis began throwing the discus at the age of 45, in 1978, simply as something to do when accompanying her husband to veterans' competitions (Athletics Monthly. January 1981:50). Sue Tulloh,
whose husband was European 5,000 metres champion in 1962, did not start running until
she had become a mother, and quickly became a good cross-country competitor (Athletics
her career well into her twenties (Runner's World, April 1994:58). 800 metres runner, Liz
Barnes, who was a schoolgirl athlete, dropped out of the sport for four years and returned
to secure an Olympic place in 1976. She started again, she said, 'because I felt I was
missing out on something...I felt that I would regret it in later years if I didn't at least try
to see how far up the athletics world I could go' (Emery and Temple 1978). Libby
Pfeiffer was a teenage runner with Middlesex Ladies and returned in 1980, at the age of
35, to successfully run marathons (Running, July 1982:34).

By the late 1970s, to encourage older women to retain an interest in athletics, veteran
competition began at the age of 35, whereas for men it was 40. This form of positive
discrimination resulted in an increase in the number of women who deferred their
retirement from the sport. For example, Margaret Critchley, who won a Commonwealth
Games bronze medal in 1970, regarded the European Veterans' Championships in
Brighton, in 1984, as 'a good incentive' to return to the levels of training she enjoyed in

Some athletes started their competitive careers for unusual and personal reasons. For
example, Janet Kelly, of Gloucester AC, began running in 1980 because, she says, 'It
became easier to run with [the dog] rather than take her for a walk' (Today's Runner,
January 1992:78), and Yolanda Nolan took up running to combat depression (Running,
January 1987:59). But the greatest expansion of interest in the sport, and the chief reason
for re-establishing careers and late starts was linked to the jogging boom of the late 1970s which generated a new fitness and health philosophy in athletics. Women began to link the chance of an improved body with running (Running, September/October 1981:77). Radical-style health- and fitness-related athletics, and the accompanying lack of elitism and competitive ethos, resulted in the establishment of a new form of club geared specifically to meet the interests of new-style athletes. For example, in 1976, an advertisement in a local paper suggesting fitness training in the form of running resulted in the attendance of 500 people 'of all shapes and sizes' and the subsequent formation of Portsmouth Joggers Club - with more female than male members (Today's Runner, January 1987:38). London Road Runners Club was soon established as the largest athletic club in the country (Athletics Today, 28 December 1989:23). Ipswich JAFFA Club (Jogging And Fitness For All), Blyth Running Club and Notfast Road Running Club all incorporated strong social and charitable elements in their activities, as well as giving full encouragement and support to beginners and slow runners, many of whom were women. The attention now afforded the social athlete was reflected in the proliferation of new magazines, such as Jogging (founded in 1979) and a less elitist emphasis in other publications. For example, one of the slowest runners in the inaugural London Marathon, 64 year-old Madge Sharples, was given her own column in Running. In some situations, the increasing democratization of women's athletics incorporated disparate groups of women. For example, Bournemouth AC, in Dorset, which fielded several elite veteran women athletes, also ran successful blind and disabled sections (Evening Echo: Bournemouth, 16 November 1983:2).

5Madge used subsequent London marathons to raise money for the Fawcett Library, Britain's only national archive of suffrage material (Running, May 1986:97).
The Avon International Running Circuit, which was set up in 1978, and was well supported in England, had, within two years, introduced over half a million women to running races in 49 countries. Other initiatives, such as the Sports Council's 1976 'Sport For All' campaign, the formation, in 1978, of the National Jogging Association (Running, April 1989:58), and 'The Sunday Times National Fun Run' culminated in 1981 in the revolutionary concept of a London Marathon which incorporated a fast, elite race but with the majority of competitors entering merely for the challenge of the event.

It was also argued that some of the old conventional athletic clubs were introverted, elitist and unsupportive of non-competitive athletes, particularly women, which resulted in the establishment of several women-only running groups (Today's Runner, November 1991:25). The best known, The Reebok Sisters Network, was formulated by Alison Turnbull, a journalist with the popular magazine, Running. In this scheme experienced runners took responsibility for a newcomer, a 'sister'. The benefits and joys of exercise were stressed, and women-only training schedules, training days, and races were organised, which greatly assisted in the establishment and growth of a new activity for many thousands of women.

During the formative years of competitive athletics the sport was regarded as a diversion for young women to enjoy before they settled down to married life. But few female athletes competed after marriage, and even fewer after childbirth. In comparison, veterans' athletics and the jogging boom - which added non-elitist dimensions - opened up new horizons and attracted a far wider range of women. For example, Olympic marathoner, Priscilla Welch, was 34 when she started running, and club athlete, Alice Bilson, was 66
when she first took part in the National Fun Run in 1976 (Runner's World, October 1993:106). Josie Waller began her running career at the age of 62; one of her many records was to become the first woman over the age of 70 to complete a marathon in under four hours (Athletics Today, 28 October 1992:22). Many women were now drawn to athletics, particularly running, as a leisure activity in its own right. As Bryan Smith (Joyce Smith's husband and coach), who worked with athletes of all abilities, explains:

A lot of the people coming into running today are bringing with them the value judgements of other leisure activities. They expect running to be more than just exercise. It must also be fun and be the basis of a social life...as a form of relaxation to get away from the competitive pressures of daily life. And, although they are happy to have the 'glamour' of a race occasionally, competition is not their main motivation (Running, November/December 1981:40).

This philosophy was important, as well, to former international athletes, who continued at a lower level after they had retired from top-class competition simply because they loved the sport. For example, Joan Allison explains why she continued to run, but not compete:

I kept running all the time because I love it. It's a way of expressing myself, it's a part of me, and a way of being at one with myself.

Sometimes I'll get up at 7am and run in the park, to look at the birds, and the trees, and the flowers. But if I tell anybody that, they tend to think I'm crazy, or else they think "she really must be keen to make a comeback".

But I'm not. I enjoy running for its own sake (Emery and Temple 1978).

Judy Vernon is saddened by former international athletes who are unable to enjoy athletics as a means of relaxation and cannot appreciate the thrill of competition at a lower level. She argues:

I think [it is a pity that] a lot of international athletes, particularly ones like me who were quite good, can't accept that once they give up international level [competition], that they are not going to be as good. The way I look at it is we all can run at the level we want to run at and if I enjoy running for the club - which I did do well into my 40s I might add - and I could still win a lot of races and enjoy myself and not have to travel - that was the main thing. And John [my husband]
and I used to work around the children and we both trained and we both enjoyed ourselves and we brought the kids up, and that, to us, was very important (Vernon 1997).

Many of the women who competed in major televised events at the end of the 1970s did not conform to the accepted stereotype of the young fit athlete. Many were middle-aged and overweight and their efforts encouraged inactive women into the sport. For example, journalist Alison Turnbull began a serious training schedule this way and argued for other women to join her:

If you think you're too fat, too old or too slow to start running... just get yourself out to watch one of these big events. You're sure to find some courageous old dear who is fatter, older and slower than you. Does she look ridiculous? Well yes, perhaps her bottom or boobs are a bit wobbly - but does she look as though she cares? I'll bet she doesn't. In fact, even if she is tagging along behind a field of serious competitors I'll bet she is the one with the widest smile and the warmest heart (Running, July 1985:58).

The wide range of reasons women give for entering the sport, and the response of the athletic community to cater for those athletes who seek alternatives to elite competition, are clear evidence of the increasing democratisation of English women's athletics. The encouragement now given to veteran and disabled athletics, which are both growth areas, allow women the opportunity for displays of physicality that only a few years ago would have been difficult. Today, the growth of competitive athletics is able to coexist comfortably with recreational sport.

CLASS DISTINCTIONS

I have referred on several occasions to the class distinctions which have affected women's access to athletics. It is difficult to determine which class of woman has participated in
athletics, since this has never been studied, and many female athletes do not belong to any 
athletic club, the obvious source of statistics. It is the case, however, that athletics has 
favoured English working-class women more than other sports. Indeed, in the context of 
secondary education, it was the middle classes who were often denied access to athletics. 
Hargreaves (1994a) cites several studies in recent years which indicate that women's 
access to sports is 'mediated by social class'. The issue of athletics is complex, which is 
often affected, as we have seen, by work, familial relationships, motherhood, and domestic 
labour.

Winter (1977, Vol 2:35) indicates that in 1911 many of the women attached to the Regent 
Street Polytechnic were shop assistants in large West End stores, or worked in schools and 
offices nearby, but Mary Lines, the first international captain, was a waitress. Several of 
the early pioneers of athletics had low-paid jobs, such as Gladys Lunn, who was employed 
by a Midland's brewery (Lunn 1983), and happily mingled with middle-class women like 
Vera Searle and Muriel Cornell, and particularly wealthy women like Dorette Nelson Neal, 
who, in 1929, arrived at her first training session at Birchfield Harriers in a chauffeur-
driven Rolls Royce (Alexander and Morgan 1988:82). Today, some of the most successful 
clubs can be found in areas of economic depression scattered around the country.

International athletics favoured wealthier women during the early years, because they were 
able to afford the costs of travel. When the sport was rigidly amateur women tended to 
have short athletic careers and retire comparatively early to become housewives and 
mothers. But remaining single at that time had it's problems; there were still financial 
considerations to be taken into account and many athletes retired before reaching their full 
potential (Hyman and Pilley 1964:118). Today, a few leading athletes are able to enjoy
longer careers with the freedom gained by becoming financially independent through earnings on the track. Generally speaking, the more successful athletes have stayed in the sport longer, as have single women, but it is difficult to pick out any firm tendencies; the evidence is contradictory. Athletics for women is generally a cheap sport. The most expensive event, the pole vault, was denied to women throughout the period of study, and the cheapest, running, can be practised from home. It is traditional that coaches are amateur, and training facilities are available at nominal cost. Athletics is probably the cheapest and most accessible sport for women to follow.

In some contexts participation was class specific. For example, university athletics and international student competition was originally middle-class in nature, since the route into higher education was class-related. This position has changed through time as access to universities has become more open. In contrast, between the wars, workers' sports - which included women's athletics - were well supported. The politically-inspired British Workers' Sports Federation, which existed from 1923 to 1935, and was then re-named the National Workers' Sports Association, sent teams to two Workers' Olympics, in 1925 and 1931. Some of the competing athletes were leading internationals, such as Ivy Walker, the British 100 yards record holder and a member of the Woolwich Labour Party, who competed in 1931, setting records in both the 100 metres and 200 metres (Jones 1985; Hargreaves 1994b:136-7). It is significant that at a time when the IOC were resisting women's efforts to enter their movement, the international workers' sports movement opposed all forms of sexism and racism.

Working-class characteristics were sometimes highlighted to exemplify English
characteristics, such as triumph over adversity. Throughout her career Dorothy Hyman
was characterized as a hard-working Yorkshire girl from a poor background. The Daily
Mirror (6 September 1960), for example, carried the headline 'Miner's Lass Does Us
Proud' and reported positively of the success of 'true amateurism' emanating from working-
class communities. Two years later, her main rival in the European Championships was
the German, Jutta Heine. The comparisons between the two athletes extended beyond
their achievements on the track as reporters emphasised that Dorothy's performances were
all the more significant because of her background. One reporter argued:

No two athletes could be less alike than Dorothy Hyman and Jutta Heine. Their
differences extend far beyond the contrast in physique, colouring or even
nationality. Jutta has enjoyed an easy life as the daughter of a wealthy
industrialist; she has no need to work and has few worries outside keeping fit for
racing. Dorothy, on the other hand, has had to struggle all her life....whose father -
a coalminer - died some months ago, is a working girl....helping to support the rest
of her family. Fame has not spoiled the simple charm of the Yorkshire girl who
has sacrificed so much in her efforts to become a great sprinter (Athletics Weekly,

The regional split between the north and the south of the country, which typically reflected
differences between working-class and middle-class athletes, became an important focus of
distinction and division. The manager of the 1950 English Empire Games team was Mrs
Ruth Taylor, who had difficulties handling the athletes during the long sea trip to New
Zealand, caused, Sylvia Disley is convinced, by a 'northern chip on [Mrs Taylor's]
shoulder' (Disley 1986). More money was invested in athletic infrastructures in the south
of the country (discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six), and the best competitions and
the administration were in the South, which led to feelings of isolation and marginalization
in the other Regions. Dorothy Hyman claims she was ostracised during the early part of
her career because, she says:


...I got the impression that certain girls didn’t really want me, the outsider, the girl from a northern factory in the team if there was a chance of working in clubmates or accepted friends (Hyman and Pilley 1964:43).

In an attempt to correct the southern bias, on occasion the WAAA used affirmative action in favour of northern athletes - for example, in 1969, Jenny Pawsey, a southern athlete, was dropped from the British 4x400 metres relay team in Athens at the European Championships. She had to watch the British team win in world record time. She was not injured, she had run her fastest-ever time for the 400 metres in the individual semi-final, and she had been part of the team which had set a world record for the same event earlier in the year. The reason, she says, was because there was pressure placed on the selectors by the Northern Region to include one of their athletes - who was slower than Jenny (Pawsey 1997).

ETHNIC EXPANSION

Democratisation of athletics has also related to its spread to other social groups, most notably black Afro-Caribbeans. In 1969 Anita Neil became the first black female English international athlete and progressively from that time black women have formed an ever-larger part of the English and British teams. In 1980 the British Olympic women’s team comprised of 10 blacks (all English) and 16 others (Athletics Weekly, 12 July 1980:23-42). But the spread to other ethnic groups has not been so marked. For example, at the same Olympics, there were no female athletes in the British team originating from the Indian sub-continent, nor any from Chinese backgrounds.

Both athletes and administrators have consistently denied that there has been any racism in
English athletics. I have mentioned the case of Marilyn Neufville in Chapter Six, where I argue that most cases remain unreported. However, given the high numbers of black athletes, their absence during the period under scrutiny from any positions of coaching or administrative authority constitutes a form of institutionalized racism.\(^6\) On occasion, racism has been more openly displayed. For example, in 1957, a London athletic club was questioned by Jimmy Green about an accusation of racism. He reported that:

....whilst not confirming or denying that this was club policy and not knowing anything of this particular instance, the official told me that it was entirely a domestic matter for the club and that they could refuse admission to anyone they choose, adding that the club had a strong social section.

....I was told that this club had a number of very influential members and that...his club would fight to the last gasp for the principle that such a matter was entirely their own business (Athletics Weekly. 19 January 1957:3).

More sinister was the treatment received by Marilyn Neufville, who said that she had been called:

....a black bastard and a nigger. White people here have actually asked me if I live in trees and exist on bananas and nuts.

Say what you like, there is still a lot of hypocrisy in England when it comes to accepting people of a different colour. Stay here a lifetime and you still would not be accepted.


However, the experiences Marilyn was describing were away from athletics. She said of her club in south east London, Cambridge Harriers, 'My loyalty to them is 100 per cent. They always stuck by me. But they're not England' (Ibid). The response by other sections

---

\(^6\)The first black administrator in English athletics was Wilbert Greaves, who was appointed as the assistant to the Promotions Officer. He argued that 'My position opens the way for other black people though it is not a major issue with me' (Athletics Today, 23 January 1992:5).
of the press was to stress that, 'Athletics has been less colour conscious for longer than any other sport' (Evening Standard, 12 July 1971:35).

Athletes themselves, who are aware of racism in English society, have made little mention of it within athletics. It is 'not in athletics', according to Sonia Lannaman (Athletics Today, 19 November 1989:16), and Tessa Sanderson argues that:

At present...you would have to grub around very hard to find any prejudices in British team selections and even harder among the athletes who know that when they are on the starting line waiting to go all considerations other than who is fastest are forgotten (Sanderson and Hickman 1986:142).

The WAAA has consistently rejected the idea that racism has been endemic to women's athletics in England. Over the years, it has been promoted as a sport that is colour-blind - one which welcomes all athletes regardless of ethnic differences. Talking about Sonia Lannaman, a second-generation black athlete, Marea Hartman gave a representative statement of the WAAA's open-door policy:

....[She] always fits in happily with our girls. We never think about a runner's colour in women's athletics. We are all competitors and that is one reason why the British women's team is such a happy one (Undated newspaper article by R. Moor, WAAA archives).

CONCLUSION

The earliest opportunities for women to try some form of athletics in England were limited almost exclusively to the lower-classes. Smock races were followed by professional pedestrianism, both of which were important sources of income. Smock races appeared to be highly organised and centred around traditional occasions, such as village fairs. Female pedestrianism, like its male counterpart, lacked any administration, and events were run on
a casual, ad hoc basis.

From 1921, when women's athletics began in the form known today, it was immediately highly structured. However, there have been marked differences between the international and domestic contexts for English women. The international women's governing body, the FSFI, met with considerable opposition from the male-controlled IAAF and IOC. Following the demise of the FSFI, and the loss of direct representation by women, both bodies have continued to impede the progress of the sport in major competitions. Even today there are several key events which are not open to women in major championships.

Whilst the domestic growth and development of English women's athletics have not been even, the sport has been relatively free from gender-related constraints. Significantly, men have been central to the establishment and growth of the WAAA, particularly before the war, and throughout the period under investigation their support and encouragement at all levels has been integral to women's athletics. Together with women they have fought against restricting cultural and physical ideologies to establish athletics as a female activity to which women should have equal access with men at all levels.

After the First World War, there was already in place a highly developed infrastructure of men's clubs, facilities and rules for competition, so the establishment of women's athletics was eased considerably, as they were welcomed into many of these clubs, even before the formation of the WAAA. Consequently, English women's athletics was not a new sport, but the extension of an existing one.
But there have been marked regional differences, and the development around the country has been uneven. Equally uneven has been the development of each event. For example, in the 1920s England boasted superb sprinters, but for many years after this was not the case. Throughout the period under investigation there were constant complaints that England lacked any world-class throwers, but during the 1980s Tessa Sanderson and Fatima Whitbread dominated the world scene in the javelin.

Athletic clubs have not been locations exclusively for sporting endeavour; they have also fulfilled essential social functions. It is clear, from studying club histories and minute books, that they have also been centres of leisure, relaxation and informal gatherings. As the emphasis for many of the women who took to athletics in the jogging boom was not on elitism, but on health and relaxation, the social impact of clubs has become even more significant. Today, athletics is a sport which numerous women utilise as a tool to lose weight, firm up their bodies, and improve their appearance. Thus, cultural ideologies still pervade English women's athletics.

The pioneers of the WAAA were invariably athletes who had retired from the sport upon marriage, and the medical profession clung to the belief that strenuous exercise was a contra-indication for the safe and healthy procreation of children. But progressively, women trained harder and more often, challenging cultural constraints and leading the way for others to enjoy greater control over their own bodies. In many cases athletics became a family affair, with both parents and children enjoying the benefits (and pains) of exercise, competition, new associations and travel. Nevertheless, some cultural ideologies were still resistant to change, as one female runner explains:
At the beginning of the really hot weather I ran a half marathon with the temperature in the upper 70s and I ran part of the way with a lady who, like me, is married with young children. At the end of the run when we were all hot and exhausted she said that she was now going home to cook a roast and two veg for her family because that was what they always had on a Sunday and if she didn’t produce it she would be accused of neglect! Her husband had also done the same run and he was going home to eat the roast and two veg. As well as practise jogging, women have to practise training the family to make allowances for mother and her jogging (Running Review. September 1983:7).

Much of this study has focused on differences and inequalities between men and women which have been intrinsic to women's athletics throughout its history. Women have struggled to change these inequalities which have always impeded progress, but they have needed the help and support of men along the way and continue to do so.

But inequalities relate not only to gender, but to other factors as well. Very little is known about the social composition of women's athletics in England and research is urgently needed about the relationships between gender and other divisions, such as ethnicity and race; disability; and age. Problems which are endemic to athletics as a whole need also to be explored - such as drug abuse and sexual harassment.

This study is not complete. It is hoped that others will explore and expand some of the topics I have discussed and will look as well at issues and developments that I have not had the time or resources to tackle.

Only when full equality with men has been achieved throughout the sport - in performance, administration and coaching - and there is a move to eliminate bad practices and make athletics more ethical, will we see a new dawn rising on English women's
athletics.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS


391


Board of Education (1933), Syllabus Of Physical Training For Schools. London: HMSO.


Bryson, L. (1990), 'Challenges to Male Hegemony in Sport', in M. Messner and D. Sabo (eds.) Sport, Men and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives. Champaign:
Human Kinetics.


McIntosh, P.C. (1968), Physical Education in England since 1800. London: Bell and Hyman.


Mills, C.Wright (1959), The Sociological Imagination, New York: Oxford University.


Newsham, G.J. (1994), In a League of Their Own!, Chorley, Lancashire: Pride of Place.


Whyte, W. F. 'Interviewing in Field Research', in Burgess (1982).


Wilson, G. (1815b), *A Sketch of the Life of George Wilson, the Blackheath Pedestrian who undertook to Walk One Thousand Miles in Twenty Days, but was Interrupted by a Warrant from certain Magistrates of the District on the Morning of the Sixteenth Day, after having completed 750 miles*. London: privately published.


**PERIODICALS**


DISSERATIONS


Gill, B.J. (1950), A Comparative Review Of Physical Education For Women In England And Germany With Special Emphasis Upon The Period From 1933 To 1940. PhD dissertation, Graduate College of the State University of Iowa.


UNPUBLISHED PAPERS


MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

The Advertiser

Annals of Sporting

**Athlete's World (Formerly R.A.C.E.)**


**Athletic News**

26 August 1929.

**Athletics (Subsequently Athletics Weekly)**


**Athletics Coach**


**Athletics Monthly**


Athletics Today


Commonwealth Games', pp12-27.
21, 34.


The Australian Women's Weekly

17 May 1972. K. Connal, 'Girls were Lonely in Her German Olympics', pp6-7.

Bell's Life

8 August 1852.

22 May 1853.

29 May 1853.


Bristol Mirror

cited in The Times. 25 September 1854.

British Olympic Journal


Autumn 1926. Vol 1, No 3 p59.


October 1933. Vol 3, No 3. 'Women's Athletics In 1933', p17.

Bulletin Officiel du C.I.O.

Czechoslovak Life

Daily Dispatch
17 December 1926. H.M. Abrahams, 'Training Youth In Sport'.

Daily Express
2 September 1960.
6 September 1960.
30 October 1962. P. Robinson, 'Off the starting block...Britain's top athletes step into the world of fashion', p5.
28 October 1964. 'Cheers! Mary's home'.
19 July 1965. S. Hulls, 'Ann, 15, Seeks Top 4 Spot'.
11 July 1967. S. Hulls, 'It's over for Anne - Pirie'.
13 November 1970. D. Hackett, 'Farewell to White City's track of greatness.'
5 December 1970. 'Get Well Soon Lillian...' p2.
28 May 1973. S. Hulls, 'Mary beats target by 300 points'.
29 July 1980.

Daily Graphic
20 August 1949
2 May 1950

Daily Mail
19 November 1962. J.L. Manning, 'Pirie cash clash'.
4 October 1963. 'Dorothy Heads For Tokio Gold'.
4 November 1964. R. Moor, 'Ann Packer quits to sell beans', p18
5 July 1965. T. O'Connor, 'Snell chases old mile magic'.
6 July 1966. R. Moor, 'Games team to receive ten shillings a day'.
26 November 1969. R. Moor, 'Stunt Girl Cyd Really Throws Them Now'.
7 November 1970. (Daily Mail Reporter), 'Lillian Board is seriously ill'.

Daily Mirror
5 August 1924.
9 August 1934.
10 August 1936.
2 May 1950
2 September 1960.
6 September 1960. 'Miner's Lass Does Us Proud'.
8 September 1960.
28 May 1973. F. Taylor, 'Sad Judy Puts Her Foot In It'.
22 August 1977. F. Taylor, 'Record puts Verona into driving seat'.

**Daily Sketch**


**The Daily Telegraph**

18 October 1963.
6 September 1966. J. Coote, 'European Championships To Be Held Biennially'.
9 May 1967.
14 March 1977. J. Coote, 'Three Golds & Two Silvers For Britain'.
22 April 1977. J. Coote, 'WAAA Find New Backer'.
4 March 1980. B. O'Brien, 'Athletes to defy Olympics boycott.'
19 September 1996. J. Clare, 'The 'betrayal' of Britain's history'.

**English Women's Journal**


**Evening Echo: Bournemouth**

16 November 1983. 'Another good year for Bournemouth Athletic Club', p2

**The Evening News**

29 October 1962. E. Teague, 'Oh Dear! Boaters For Our Girls In Perth'.
3 June 1963. B. Trevor, 'Five Out To Break Barrier'.
18 October 1963. J. Coote, 'Miss Hyman Could Win Two Gold Medals'.
26 October 1964. F. Page, 'The race that shook the world and thrilled Britain', p1.
5 November 1964. 'Now back to netball for golden girl Ann Packer', p10.
6 May 1968. R. Trevor, 'Sprint ace Dorothy is reinstated'.

**Evening Standard**

2 July 1965. H. Palmer, 'How much has Snell saved?'
3 July 1965. D. Hackett, "I'll win" insists weary Snell'.
17 July 1969. W. Bartleman, 'The Middle And Leg - and I don't mean cricket!' p34.

3 December 1970. 'Lillian - sportswoman of the year', p1.
4 June 1975. M. Hart, 'Broken time and the millions we don't have', p39.
3 July 1978. N. Allen, 'Should a coach, in her 70s, go to Canada?' p45.
The Guardian
22 April 1977. J. Rodda, 'Mary aims for 1980'.
20 August 1977. J. Rodda, 'Sonia Lannaman goes all out'.
22 August 1977. J. Rodda, 'Fighting for the sprint spots'.

Harper's Monthly

Jogging (Subsequently Running)

Journal of School Hygiene and Physical Education

The Lady's Newspaper

The Listener

Liverpool Standard
cited in The Times, 13 July 1854.

London Chronicle
31 January 1807.

London Packet

Middlesex County Times: Ealing Edition
22 December 1923.
12 January 1924.
23 February 1924.
15 November 1924.
24 October 1925.

Modern Athletics

Running (Formerly Jogging; Subsequently Runner's World)
February 1987. No 70. A. Turnbull, 'When is a woman not a woman?' p63.

Running Review
Scottish Daily Express  
17 May 1962. S. Munro, 'World Stars For A.A.A. Meeting'. p27.

South Wales Echo  

Sport and Leisure  

Sporting Magazine  
June 1811.

The Sun  
28 October 1964.

The Sun (Australian)  
3 December 1956. p33.

Sunday Citizen  
23 June 1963. K. Hawkes, 'All-star billing by girls'.

Sunday Mirror  

Sunday People  
21 August 1977. J. Bowman, 'We're On Top Of The World'.

The Sunday Telegraph  
7 July 1963. P. Hildreth, 'Miss Hyman's Sprint Double'.  
4 September 1966. J. Coote, 'When is a woman not a woman?'

The Sunday Times  
7 November 1926. H.M. Abrahams, 'Field Events. Are They Wanted?'  
1 May 1927.  
11 May 1969.  
21 August 1977. C. Temple, 'Sonia scoops double with world record'.  

The Times  
18 March 1816.  
23 April 1923.  
24 July 1947.  
9 July 1956.  
6 July 1966. 'Miss Board in Games team'.  
16 July 1971. N. Allen, 'German girl's fast run spurs Mrs Ridley'.

419
17 July 1971. N. Allen, 'Washing and shopping before titles'.
4 August 1977. C. Temple, 'Miss Lannaman hopes to be back at her best'.
2 February 1980. 'Letters To The Editor' - from S. Lerwill.
27 August 1997. J. Goodbody, 'Fighting a running battle against anorexia', Sport
p41

The Times (Sunbury, Pennsylvania, USA)

Today's Runner
February 1989. No 42. 'In The Running', pp4-5.

World Sports
Sport', p3.
January 1955. Vol 21, No 1. N. McWhirter, 'Zybina...Strongest Woman In The
World', p27.
pp19-23.
pp8-10.

PROCEEDINGS. MINUTES OF MEETINGS. OFFICIAL REPORTS

Amateur Athletic Association, General Committee Minutes.

British Olympic Association, General Minutes.
London Olympiades Athletic Club, AGM Minutes.
London Olympiades Athletic Club, Committee Minutes.
Midland Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Committee Minutes.
Southern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association, AGM Minutes.
Southern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Committee Minutes.
Surrey County Women's Amateur Athletic Association, AGM Minutes.
Surrey County Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Committee Minutes.
Women's Amateur Athletic Association, AGM Minutes.
Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Committee Minutes.
Women's Amateur Athletic Association, International Committee Minutes.
Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Track Championships Sub-Committee Minutes.
Women's Amateur Athletic Association, War Emergency Committee Minutes.

PROGRAMMES

18 July 1922. LOAC Meeting.

4 August 1924. Womens International and British Games.

1924. Jeux Olympiques Feminins.

1 August 1925. Women's Amateur Athletic International.


9 and 11 August 1934. Fourth Women's World Games.

15 February 1936. Southern Counties Women's Amateur Athletic Association, Fifth...
Annual Cross Country and Second 3 Mile Individual Road Championships.


INTERVIEWS

Audrey Court (née Brown) (1988).
Sylvia Disley (1986).
Sandy Duncan (1996).
Jennifer Hargreaves (1986).
Winnie Hayward (née Easter) 1988.
Sue Herrington (formerly Reeve, née Scott) (1988).
Phyllis Perkins (née Green) (1997)
Vera Searle (née Palmer) and (1989) and (1994).
Judy Vernon (1997).
Mary Wixey (1997).

TELEVISION. RADIO. FILMS

Olympia, (1938).
People's Century: Half the People, BBC1 (1997).

PAMPHLETS. CORRESPONDENCE. MISCELLANEOUS

Abrahams, H.M. Scrapbooks (three).
Hartman, M. (unknown date), 'The Girls Who Dream Of Gold', magazine article - source
unknown.

Lily B League Circular, September 1986.

Lovesey, P. Letter to the author, undated.

Report: Second International Ladies' Games, Gothenburg, 27-29 August 1926.

SCWAAA. Circular, undated.

Searle, V. (unknown date), 'Some Early Memories', photocopied article - source unknown.

WAAA. Circular, undated.

WAAA. Uncredited note on the formation of the WAAA.

WAAA. Summary 1921-6.