

## **The History of the Bampton Weight lifting Club**

It was in the summer of 1954 that I first showed an interest in Weight lifting when I came across a part of an old farm elevator that resembled a barbell. I had no idea what I was doing but I enjoyed lifting it above my head like I had seen pictures of weightlifters doing it. As I got stronger and needed something heavier I progressed onto using 2 buckets of water tied to an iron bar, then as I got stronger still I could increase the amount of water in the buckets, my spirit was never dampened by the amount of water that was splashing about as I endeavoured to put more weight above my head. I then came across what were to me the ultimate, 10lb iron strakes off of a tractor, they were known as Bower Strakes, which when attached to the Tractor wheel assisted traction through deep mud. So I tied these with baler twine to an Iron bar to create my own Barbell which allowed me a degree of accuracy to measure the weight that I was handling. I still had no idea what I was doing or how best to do it, all I know is that I enjoyed lifting heavy weights above my head.

In December 1955 I met up with Albert Woodley a friend from the village, after telling him what I was doing in my spare time he then regaled me with stories of a work colleague of his who was a weightlifter and was capable of great feats of strength. His name was Brian Crewe and Albert helped arrange a meeting with him at his training quarters in a loft at the back of the Bakers Arms in Faringdon, at the last minute Brian was unable to make the

meeting so he sent his training partner Jeff Manley to meet me. Jeff drew up a training programme and showed me how to do the exercises to give me all-over body strength, something he said that was necessary if I was going to make it as a weight lifter, he also taught me to record everything that I did with the weights, including my best lifts so that I could measure my progress. I still have these records to this day! Yes every single workout. With this increasing enthusiasm I was able to convince my Father that I was serious about what I was doing and was able to persuade him to buy me a Barbell Set for Christmas and let me have the use of a disused loft to train in.

Every three weeks or so I would visit Brian & Jeff so that they could keep an eye on my technique and devise new training schedules when necessary.



Bampton WLC 1956- 1959



Bampton WLC 1959 - 2003



Bampton WLC 2003 - Now  
With Showers AND proper toilets. Which is just as well as they now have a strong membership of ladies

May 1956 the loft had become too small and unsafe for the amount of weights that I was handling, also other youngsters in the village had begun to take an interest in what I was doing and there was just not enough room for us all. So it was back to Father to

persuade him to let us have a Chicken House that he was no longer using to convert into a Gym, the house was about 10 foot by 8 foot so still not particularly large. Out of my wages of £1.00 per week I saved up enough to put a window in and purchase some iron bars and a purpose built platform from the Blacksmith at Clanfield. I also purchased more weights including some 18 inch discs that brought the barbell up to the correct height for weightlifting. I must say that these youngsters appreciated my father's input and rewarded him by doing voluntary work on the farm during their school holidays, loading sacks of corn and Bales of straw.

At about this time I wanted to find out more about the sport of Weightlifting, so Brian, Jeff and myself headed for the Witney Weightlifting Club to meet up with Tony Medley who was their Coach, secretary & trainer. He was also an official Referee and Instructor of the British Amateur Weight Lifting Association indeed a good "find" for us country bumpkins, when Tony learned of my training quarters he nicknamed me "Chicken House Charlie." Tony gave us a crash course on the three Olympic movements that were in those days used in competitions, this was just what I needed, I was now well and truly hooked on to the sport of 'Olympic Weight Lifting.'

I have always been interested in Sport, up to then I had played Rugby and Cricket for Burford Grammar School and Soccer for our village youth team. But my Father's need for me to help build up the family farm business prevented me participating in team sports at the weekends, so weightlifting being an individual sport was absolutely ideal. I was able to train whenever I was able to, and for as long as I wanted. There was no need for anybody to be with me during training, though this did give rise to some occasional hairy moments with me getting stuck under a bar that I couldn't get off! It is the quickest way to learn Safety First, it is also surprising how resourceful one becomes when self-preservation is needed. I learnt to slide the disc on to the bar without collars, so that when I got stuck, all I had to do was to tip the bar one way and all the weights would shoot off from the one side quickly pursued by the other!

Though I must admit that training was more fun when Mary would come along to my training sessions to encourage and assist. It is surprising how much a very pretty and shapely young sixteen year old girl can inspire and encourage an eighteen year old lad with aspirations of becoming a champion. Sometimes to improve my fitness (something that not many weight lifters would do) I would go for runs in the dark around Clanfield, Black Bourton and back. Mary would accompany me on her bike to light up the way for me, in fact you could say that she was carrying a torch for me even then!

By 1957, word had got around about the activities in the Chicken House and there were five or six local youngsters training with me, as there were no youth activities in Bampton at the time it was for them quite a novelty. One of the great things about weightlifting is the fact that the improvements in performance are noticeable on a daily basis, certainly in the beginning stages. In those days we used a strict programme for training whereby you would



keep to the same schedule for some four to six weeks, by recording every workout it was possible to see the difference in weight that was managed at the beginning of the schedule compared to the end, it was amazing what some of the lads achieved.

With the membership growing so fast, we had outgrown the Chicken House, so my Father let us use one of his Barns. With so much enthusiasm amongst the boys it was decided to affiliate to the British Amateur Weight Lifting Association, the National body that controlled the Sport. This enabled us to take part in competitions and with the help of Tony Medley refereeing we were able to get certificated acknowledgement of our achievements. I have always been a believer in using the local Press to our advantage, so any of the lads achievements were always mentioned in the local Newspapers. This had a double effect, one, the lads had their name in the paper which gave them a 'feel good ' factor and the other was that it made people aware of what was happening in Bampton.

To help publicise our activities, we would enter a Float into Bampton's annual Carnival, and then put on Weight Lifting Displays at the Fêtes that would follow, inviting members of the public to try out their strength against our youngsters, this always resulted in more people wanting to join the club. At these Fêtes I would do odd feats of strength like Skipping with a heavy tractor chain, or putting a 56 pound Block weight above my head twenty times in twenty seconds. The finale of the show was me breaking a six inch nail in twenty seconds. The naughty bit of fun that I had with this was to immediately offer the broken end of the nail to the members of the audience for inspection, when they took the ends that were offered to them they were red hot (I used a yellow duster to protect my hands) and they would drop them with a yelp pretty quick. No health and safety in those days. Nowadays owing to the ravages of ageing, it takes me ages just to undo a packet of biscuits; my coffee has gone cold by the time I've done it!



Our first Carnival Float. With many family members, Mary, Brother Colin, Sister Lynne and just a peek of my father between my legs. 1958



Demonstrating different lifts at the Bampton Fête

Perfect opportunity for good publicity and recruiting new members.

By making full use of all the publicity that we could, we soon had loads of invitations to perform at village Fêtes around the area, wherever possible we would use this to publicise our activities. On one occasion at a show in Carterton, I broke the South Midland Middleweight record for the Two Hands Clean and Jerk. The performance was witnessed by an Official Referee; all that was needed was an approved set of scales to verify my weight and that of the Barbell. In the audience was Lester Giles of Giles Sport Shop and he assisted us to his shop where I had to 'strip off' to be weighed in along with the Bar. I was under eleven stones and the Bar weighed in at 270lbs, a new South Midland Record. The Newspapers loved the story.

We enjoyed all the publicity that we could get and used it to increase our membership as

well as getting the public informed of what Weightlifting was all about. One way that was a lot of fun and did increase the membership, was to challenge the local Pubs to a Weight lifting / darts competition. They had to allow us concessions at Darts as we did them at lifting. Always great fun and after a few Beers no one was worried about the result!

I got married in 1959 and moved to University Farm, Lew, taking the Club with me. To start with we trained in one of the Barns, with a little bit of persuading my Father let us use the old Chapel that was part of the Farm Buildings and convert it into a Gymnasium. We insisted that he charge us a rent so that we could secure our investments. We agreed on a 'Peppercorn Rent' which was for the Club to invite him and our Mum to the annual Club Dinner. This was always a big event with over 40 people in attendance and my dad was honoured to be part of the celebrations. We now felt that there was a need for us to get set up with proper rules, a constitution complete with an operative committee and a Bank account. Mr Sidney Pickard, a local well respected businessman was invited to help us get it all together and he was elected to be our President. He was fantastic and we really felt that we were now a force to be reckoned with.

The Wives and Girl friends of club members formed an organisation called Lew Ladies; they ran events like Jumble Sales and Dances in Bampton WI Hall to raise funds for the conversion and equipment in the club. One of the conditions for hiring the WI was that it had to have proper Stewards at all times. You would think that with the club having very strong and fearless men amongst the membership that this was no problem, well it wasn't for the Dances, but the Jumble sales, where a load of women anxious to get their hands on the Bargains were queuing up waiting for the Doors to open were a whole different Ball game. When the Stewards eventually opened the doors they had to move out of the way quickly or be flattened as the women barged in. We had to draw 'lots' to choose who would act as Stewards and the losers got the job!

The conversion of the Chapel was a major job, carried out by the members. The wooden floor was completely wrecked by the dropping of heavy weights on it so it all had to be cleared out and a new concrete floor put in. The windows were replaced and the ceiling lowered to make it heat wise, more efficient. Thank goodness that in a rural setting like ours many of the members were in the building trade and skilled in this kind of work. The morning that we laid the new floor with 6 cubic meters of concrete we had a Fête at Appleton to perform one of our demonstration shows. Considering the tiredness of the team from their morning's work, they put on an extremely good show that was well received by the public.

With the renovations completed we decided once again, to create as much publicity as we could, so as to get more members. An opening ceremony of the Club room with Mr Pickard doing the Honours was planned, to give the whole event more 'oomph' we challenged the Northampton County Weightlifting team to a competition, their team included the famous British and Commonwealth Champion Precious Mackenzie. Our President's wife Mrs Hilda



Pickard was the local Press representative and arranged for a Press photographer to be in attendance, so it was all set for a big story and we were not disappointed. The Press gave us a massive coverage with photos and stories in abundance. But it all backfired!! of the Planning Department of our local Council also read the story and they wanted to know how long we had been training there, did we have 'change of use' and Planning permission? They then proceeded to charge us Rates!



Club President Sidney Pickard with Mrs Pickard at the opening of the refurbished Club room. With them is Precious Mackenzie one of the most famous weight lifters in the UK at the time who lifted for Northampton against Bampton. Another win for Bampton.



Some of the members who also attended the official opening and competed against Northampton. L – R. Mike Cox. Robin Adair. Michael Sanders. Sid Pickard. Alan Winterbourne. Peter Chivers. Colin Fitzgerald. Don Rouse. Nigel Chivers



Bampton A v Bristol A  
L – R. Don Rouse. Mike Dowsett.  
Dave Prowse. Dave Headford.  
Mitch Fields. Nigel Chivers

Bampton won

In the 1960s the Bampton Weightlifting Club really took off. Challenging teams from Bristol, Northampton, Birmingham and London, many of these teams had International Lifters representing them, People like Bristol's Dave Prowse who later became famous as Darth Vader in the Star War films as well as the Green Cross Code man, yet Bampton would still beat them. These big competitions were usually held on a 'Home and Away' basis. To give the local public a chance to see what we were all about, we would often organise these competitions in the WI Hall or the School in Bampton. Then after the match, to make full use of the Hire Fees, we would have a social evening followed by a Dance with local Pop Groups supplying the music, this was the 'swinging' sixties when there was an abundance of very good local Pop Groups like the '5 J's' .and 'Ali and the Kondors.' The evening event was always open to the public enabling us to make a bit of money as well as making the Bampton Weightlifting Club known. At one of the annual Bristol v Bampton events we were fairly sure that Bristol had cheated about the age of one of their 'Juniors.' The rules state that a Junior had to be under the age of 18 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January in the current year. I had known this lad for quite a few years and questioned their leader, who was adamant that the lad qualified. At the Social / Dance in the Evening one of our Girl supporters, very bravely allowed herself to be 'chatted up' by him and went outside with him. After about an hour or so she came back into the hall to report that he was indeed a cheat and that he was 25! I really was impressed by her bravery and determination to seek out the truth for her Town's Team and that she was so willing to put herself in danger for so long. Or am I missing something here?

Regarding these Dances in the WI Hall, Bampton, I have a little confession to make. You see there was a limit of 125 people allowed in the Hall for dances, now these Dances were so popular and profitable that we were often faced with the problem of over booking. On closer inspection of the 'letting Rules' at the time, the statement read "For Dances, there



shall be a *minimum* of five Stewards on duty at all times.” So we just made twenty of our members ‘stewards’ for the evening and managed to get 145 people in there. With so many strong young men from the Bampton Weightlifting Club on duty there was no fear of any trouble.

The return matches were always great fun, especially the Bristol ones. With the help of Len Hughes a local Coach operator, we would organise a Coach full of family supporters to make a whole Day-trip. The children, who would not be interested in the actual competition would be taken on to Bristol Zoo for the day, then rejoin us for the evening social. Den Welch the Bristol secretary worked for Spillers the giant Food company in Bristol and we were able to enjoy the superb facilities offered by them. An amusing tale of one of these trips was when one of the Bampton Lifters started to get off with a girl from one of our sister clubs. It was a real clash of the ‘classes.’ She was definitely upper class, the daughter of a business man and having been educated at the Elms Grammar School, Faringdon. Whereas being a Carpenter and coming from a working class family from Carterton he definitely was not! He had consumed quite a few beers as was his way, on the journey home, he found the young lady sat near to him on the bus was acceptable to his approaches and was quite enjoying the attention he was giving her. His problem was that because of the alcohol, he could not remember her name, at least six times during the journey home, he would come up to the front of the Coach where I was sitting and enquire “Don what’s the name of that Girl that I am sitting with?” “Claire” I would reply, “Ah yes” he would say and return to enjoy the success that he was getting. Would you believe it? They married, had a family and are still very happy together to this day, all be it in Australia!



Don Rouse enjoying his 23 years of teaching Schoolboys at the Faringdon Youth Club

I set up and nurtured sister clubs in Shrivenham and Faringdon in 1962 and 63 respectively. As there were still no youth facilities in Bampton I would take a whole load of youngsters from Bampton, pile them into the back of a big Land Rover, both Boys and Girls and take them to these Clubs. The practice of having so many people on board one vehicle would have been highly illegal by today’s standards with no proper seats or seat belts in the back.

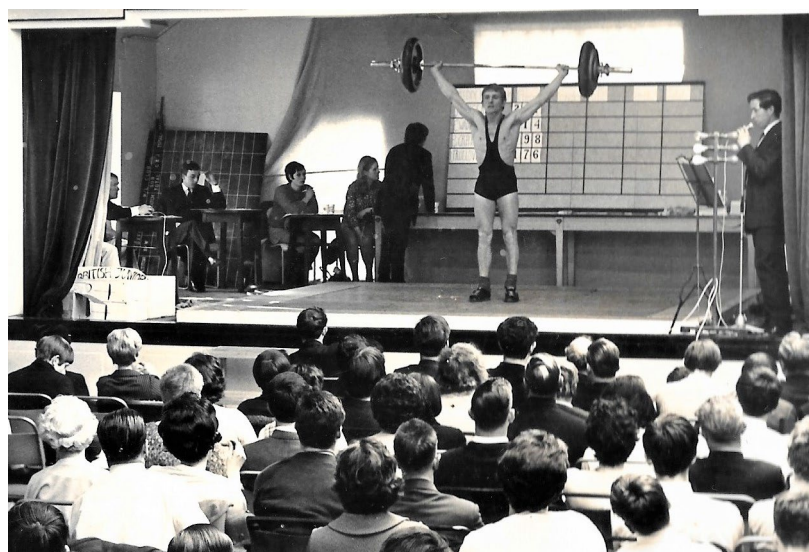
Whilst I taught Lifting, many of these youngsters used the opportunity to mix with the established members. In fact a Bampton Girl actually married one of the Faringdon Boys that she met as a result of these trips. Sorry to say though, it didn't last.

The forming of our sister Clubs were a result of me trying to earn extra money. With two young growing children and an enormous house to keep, I was finding things very difficult. In those days we were using Artificial Insemination as a means of getting our Cows pregnant, when one Sunday morning the Ministry of Agriculture Inseminator visited the Farm he observed some twenty youngsters all dressed in their smart Royal Blue Bampton Track suits congregating on my lawn. "What's going on here?" he enquired. So we took him around and showed him the Gym, he was extremely impressed and wondered if we would put on a display at the Shrivenham Youth Club. The Berkshire Education Authorities; Shrivenham was in Berkshire before the boundary changes of the 1970s, were so impressed that they took me on as a Peripatetic Instructor, paying me seventeen shillings and sixpence an hour (87.5 pence) for a guaranteed two hours a night, with travelling costs. I thought that all my Birthdays had come at once! Once I had got established and the authorities could see the value of Weight Lifting in the Youth Service, I was inundated with requests to teach at other youth clubs in the area. At one time I was teaching weekly at Shrivenham, Faringdon, Buckland and Bourton on the Water in Gloucestershire, there was such a demand that we had to get a Bampton Club member to pass the Coaching exam so that he could also teach in Gloucestershire.

One of the problems that were experienced in Youth Clubs at this time was marauding groups of young men visiting youth clubs purely with the intention of causing trouble and intimidating the members. You could spot them the moment they walked through the door, usually a group of six to ten people with 'attitude' who would swagger over to the Weight lifting section making ribald comments. I just relished the opportunity to bring them down like I had done on many occasions before. To start with it was quite easy to pick out the leaders and chat to them; my next move was to acknowledge their potential, size, strength and fitness to encourage them to have a go. This approach never failed and soon I had them hooked, giving advice on how they could pick up more weight above their heads if they took my training advice. Persuading them to keep trying till they reached their maximum weight. I would then pick on the two strongest ones and challenge them to a competition, two of them together on one bar against me. Now I knew that together they would be stronger than me, but not at weightlifting. So I would start at a weight that I knew they could handle, they lifted and I would then do the same weight, we would continue to increase the weight each time by increasingly large amounts to shake their confidence. Very soon they would experience problems whereby one would lift his end faster than the other which would cause the point of balance to shift towards the slower lifter, this is when my 'coaching' would cease as I watched them struggle. The next lift I would increase the weight by quite an amount knowing that this would beat them. I would let them keep trying as they were always sure that the next time they would do it, but of course they were just getting very tired and weak. I was still fresh as I was teaching, i.e. telling people what to do rather than doing it,

not training. When they finally gave up I just put some more weight on the bar and lifted it a couple of times straight off! Respect all round, though their swagger had disappeared by the time they left.

1963 I was invited by the Oxford Leiden Twinning Association to take a group of weightlifters to Holland for a competition with the Leiden team. As we were the most organised and competitive club in the area the Oxford Team was made up of mainly Bampton lifters with one youngster from our Shrivenham club. This was an exciting event as not one of us had been abroad or flown before. We were soundly beaten by the Dutch team who had several National champions amongst their members. Seven years later when the Bampton club was in its prime and had its own National champions in their membership, we made a return trip to Leiden and this time we showed them who was the best! The great thing about these exchanges was the involvement of the people of Bampton with the citizens of Leiden. Many folk musicians, Dancers and Sportsmen have visited, whilst Dutch Marching Bands, Singers and competitors in the Shirt Race have visited from Leiden.



The first ever Official British Schoolboy Championships held in Oxford.

The two official recorders are Cherrie Mayall who helped me train at Faringdon and Buckland and Margaret Winterbourne of the Bampton Club with me as M.C.

The Bampton Weightlifting Club along with the Empire Club of Bristol, supported by Tony Medley, the General Secretary of the South Midlands weightlifting association was the instigators of the setting up of Schoolboy Weightlifting in the United Kingdom. This group staged the first ever (unofficial) British Schoolboy Championship in Bristol, Bampton and its Sister Clubs winning five National Titles. Needless to say this stimulated the Weightlifting hierarchy to support the second British Schoolboy Championship in Oxford that was organised by the same group. The Bampton Club enjoyed a very high profile amongst the hierarchy of the National Governing Body and like all organisations there were some fantastic and helpful people amongst them. A group of them actually came to Lew for Breakfast one Sunday to discuss our views and the strategy for Schoolboy Championships. Naturally these included quite a few Londoners who did not like the idea of a powerful village club being in the limelight and promoting National. There was always a lot of friendly banter about our different accents, one, a chap called Hymie Binder, was so sarcastic towards us that I decided that at my first opportunity, I would teach him a lesson. Like all



things that we promoted, to help out financially we would always run a Raffle, it was so easy to get local people to support us, so there was always a few bottles of wine, boxes of chocolates etc, but I always liked to do something different. What did I have of value on the Farm in abundance that cost very little yet might appeal to these Cockney Weightlifting Aristocrats? Yes, you've guessed it! Loads of well-rotted manure for their window boxes. So at the British Schoolboy Championships in Oxford, I knew that they would all be there in abundance, that's when I got my chance to get back at them. One of my stewards at this event was the Policeman's daughter from Stanford in the Vale, who was the official Recorder for the event and always up for a laugh. When she sold Hymie his Raffle tickets, she surreptitiously took out the Counterfoil as well. At the end of the evening who better than our attractive official Recorder, who by this time had earned the respect of the audience, could we ask to do the Draw. When it came to the Bag of well-rotted manure, she 'palmed' Hymie's counterfoil ticket into her hand and Voila. Hymie had won a lovely smelly prize from Bampton. It 'brought the house down' though it did not have quite the effect on him that I thought it would have. After over forty years later, I met up with the Caretaker of the Hall where the Championships were held and he told me a story about a lovely bag of well-rotted manure that he had found in the car park that evening and how he had put it to good use. Well at least one of them would have carried it out to the car!!

The Bampton Club organised many Championship competitions, probably the most important being the South Midland Junior Championships in the WI Hall. Bampton had never seen such an array of leading Junior weightlifters. The afternoon activities started with a one minute silence for Winston Churchill as that was the day of his Funeral, 15 Miles away at Bladon.

Our prowess at putting on good shows became respected by the National Lifting Authority. In 1968 when the British Paraplegic Olympic team gathered at Stoke Mandeville Hospital for their final team session it was noted that there were no International Bars or Weights at the Hospital. A quick call from the National Secretary who was a keen supporter of the Bampton Club had it all sorted in a very short time. My seven year old son and I soon loaded our Morris 1000 van with all the weights that were needed from the Club and delivered them to Stoke Mandeville Hospital. For me it was the experience of a lifetime as we watched these athletes with horrendous disabilities, lift themselves on to Bench to compete in the Bench Press lift. That was the one manoeuvre where you did not dare offer help as they were so independent; you could help load the Bar or hand it over for them, but not to assist them getting to the Bench. The spirited rivalry and threats that went between them all, was so amazingly positive. It was certainly a humbling yet inspiring experience for us. The rapport and camaraderie within the team so impressed me that I still remember it to this day.

They say that nothing breeds success like success and as a result of our Youth programme we had youngsters from afar wanting to join us. Two very interesting ones were Colin Fitzgerald and Barry Craft. Colin was from Jersey in the Channel Isles, a very promising Junior Champion who came and lodged with Mary and I whilst getting work at RAF Brize

Norton. He blended in well with the other members and represented the Bampton Club in many of their big matches as well as winning area titles. Barry was from Bletchley in Buckinghamshire. He felt the same as Colin and I did, that if you belong to a club where the standard is very high, then your standard will rise to those around you. Barry lived in a Tent where my house has now been built, winter and summer. He wanted not only to be a Champion Weightlifter, but also to go Trekking and Camp inside the Arctic Circle, during his two years with us he achieved both. He was also one of our 'star' lifters during our successful defeat of the Leiden team in Holland in 1970.

Weightlifting had become very popular in Prisons, Young Offenders Institutions and Borstals. By using weights to improve their physiques through Body Building exercises, they would begin to take a pride in themselves and build some 'self-respect:' to this end the Bampton Club played quite a part. We have taken teams to the Young Offenders Prison in Aylesbury known as Bierton, it was quite an experience for our lads to see lads of their own age locked up 24/7, seeing them escorted from room to room with absolutely no freedom, some of the offences that they were in there for did include Murder! Whilst we were in there we were treated the same way as the inmates. A warder would usher us into a locked room, lock the door behind us then proceed to the next door, to let us through to the next chamber and so on, until we got to the Hall where the lifting competition was going to be held. One of our lads who was coloured, was almost as white as me by the time we got there! It was that frightening. By the time of our last visit to Bierton the strict discipline regime had slackened off no end, with more access to other rooms.

On a couple of occasions we actually hosted matches at Lew, where the Teams included Prisoners from the jail at Southampton. Everything was fine until one of them wanted to go to the toilet which was around in my house, then two Warders would have to accompany them and watch over them while they did their 'business'. Fascinating! Another Young Offenders Institution that we visited was in Dorset; this was a more relaxed Institution, but none the less strict security rules were imposed. Our Vehicles had to be securely locked in a compound, but we were allowed to walk about without escort. When we got to the Gymnasium I realised that I had left my brief case with all the books that I needed, in the Mini bus. As I made my way back to the compound, I heard a voice call out "Hi ya Don. What are you doing in here?" It was a lad that I used to teach from Shrivenham. Evidently he had got caught breaking into the Shrivenham Golf Club shop and as a result ended up 'inside.'

A down side of these Prison visits was the fact they always entertained us with a meal after the competition, with nice big mugs of adulterated Tea which had a peculiar taste, the effect of which was to ruin the lads' sex life for a few days! Which often caused comment from the marital bed!

Talking of which, in those days it was very embarrassing for teenage lads to acquire Condoms to give them a healthy and safe sex life. So with the help of Den Welch the leader

of the Empire Sports Club in Bristol, I was able to get a constant supply. I was able to offer these as a service to our boys. I must admit that in the early days without Den Welch's help, I myself would have been too embarrassed to go to chemists to get them. So the Club was very grateful to him. I remember my first attempt to restock when Den was unable to help me, like an idiot I went into the Chemist in Faringdon. Behind the counter was one of the young girls who attended the Faringdon Club, in fact two of her brothers were in the team that I taught and we knew each other well. "Hello Don, what can I get you?" she cheerfully enquired; well it was too late for me to run back out of the shop and as it had thrown me completely by seeing her there, I could not think straight or quick enough to change my mind to a packet of Aspirins. "A packet of Durex" I spluttered. "Large or small?" she enquired without so much as a blinking of the eye-lid. Well I had never heard of such a thing. I thought that they were 'one size fits all.' My confused brain was now in a sort of panic 'overdrive.' We are Weight lifters, I was thinking through the haze - got to be large. "Oh, large please" I stuttered, trying to make out that I had been buying 'Large' for years. With that she went out to the store room and came back with the biggest box of Condoms I had ever seen in my life, all 144 of them! I have met up with her recently and related to her the story of which she was totally unaware and we had a good laugh. Things are so different nowadays; some Youth Clubs are even giving them away as part of the Youth Service!

After this embarrassment, which I related to Den, he decided to 'set me up.' In my next consignment from him he sent me a box of 144 (a Gross) but he had gone to the trouble of taking them all out of their packets so that they were in the box singularly. A note inserted into the box read "One of these contains Ink. If you can't come - write!" Yes he did have a warped sense of humour.

During the 60s we assisted in the fitness training of the Bampton Football Club, using the facilities at the Royal Corps of Signals based at Weald one year, and then the new school building the next.

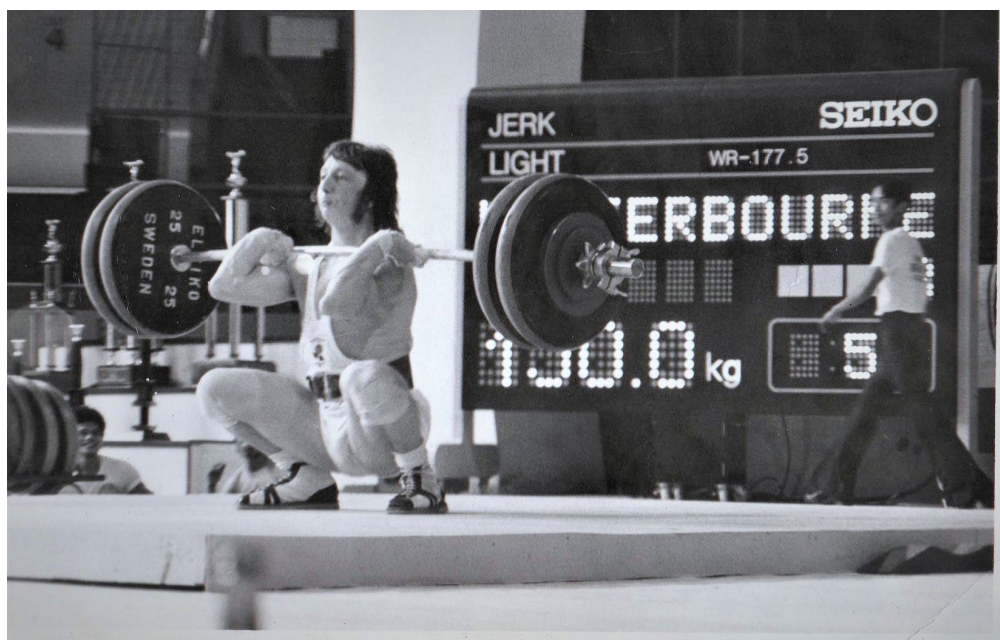


Five Bampton Lifters are joined by two from Oxford to compete against the Leiden team. L- R. Dave Richens. Don Rouse. Jim Clarke (Oxford). Rod Burke. Keith Smith. John Gristwood. Robin Crouch (Oxford)



In the 60s and early 70s I led the Oxford Weightlifting teams to Leiden in Holland. The Oxford teams consisted mainly of members of Bampton and its sister Clubs which was not surprising as Bampton had won seven of the eight different weight categories at the South Midland Championships. The Leiden team consisted of 3 Dutch National Champions so we took quite a ‘pasting’ from them on this occasion, then in 1970 with the 2 Winterbourne brothers who had gained National Champion status we took our revenge and ‘hammered’ them!! The involvement with Leiden was a big boost for the town of Bampton resulting in two of its Morris Dancing teams visiting Leiden on more than two occasions. The Bampton Barn Dance Band of which I was a member took part in several exchanges with similar Dutch groups. Leiden reciprocated with the visit of two large Brass bands to play at Bampton’s Great Shirt race event culminating in the European Champion Marching Band marching through our Streets in the pouring rain in 2007.

The high Media profile that we created, led to the Bampton Weightlifting Club bringing Television Cameras to Bampton for the first time, I think Mrs Pickard our Presidents wife had some very good contacts in the TV world, which led to us featuring on the News programme ATV Today. They were amazed that such a small place could have such a phenomenal team, containing British Champions and record holders. In all five Bampton Club members have represented their Country in International Matches. The top lifter of the Bampton Club has got to have been Alan Winterbourne who represented his country on numerous occasions which included a trip to China as one of the first UK sports teams to visit China. He competed in the Montreal and Moscow Olympic Games, as well as Edmonton, Canada. Christchurch New Zealand and Edinburgh Scotland for the British Commonwealth Games.



Alan performing on the International Stage. On this occasion he swapped his Bampton T Shirt for the British one!

Alan joined the club at the age of thirteen. He used to cycle all the way from Aston to Lew to train as often as he could. He had the wonderful ability to adapt to what his coach told him instantly. Soon he was winning lots of titles, his first being South Midland Junior

Featherweight Champion then all the way up to British Featherweight Champion. Following Alan would be his Brother Colin, Colin won his first National title as British School boy Champion and went on to win several championships all the way up to English Native.

Another family that has done us proud is the Chivers Family. At the top is Nigel. He won the English Native Title as well as breaking several British all comers records on such lifts as the 'Press behind the Neck' and the 'Two hands Curl.' Nigel was always the chief caretaker of the team when we visited the big Cities. As you can imagine, when us country bumpkins would take part in big matches at places like London, Birmingham and Bristol and would then celebrate our successes as we toured the night life areas, could get quite tricky! Nigel always kept a firm hand on the situation. Pete and Jimmy Chivers were also great lifters and hard workers for the cub providing us with a great support and a lot of fun. Garry Langford also trained at our club though he was officially registered with the Oxford Club actually became British Commonwealth Champion at Edmonton.

One more lifter that achieved national fame was Philip Brunt, he represented Great Britain against Sweden and was awarded the 'Most improved lifter' title.



Three Bampton Lifters.  
All British Champions, at the Clubs  
Annual Dinner.

L – R. Garry Langford. Alan  
Winterbourne and Colin Winterbourne.

With so many top lifters in our club we were involved in a lot of travelling to National Championships throughout the UK. These trips would mean that we would often travel up the night before so that we were fresh on the day of the competition. As top lifters would always train at a slightly heavier weight than the class that they would compete in it was vital that at the weigh-in for them to be within the class limit. This situation would always lead to a lot of last minute panicking. On one occasion the Championships were held in Leeds, we decided not to go the night before but get an early morning start with a 'weigh-in' before we left. Alan was a whole pound over the limit which we were confident that

with the heater on full, four people in a little Sunbeam Stiletto (a glorified Hillman Imp) that he would be under the limit by the time we got there. Would you believe it? He was still half a pound over! The rest of us were well under, trouble was we weren't lifting! With a little help of some Diuretics Alan made the weight.

We once attended a Championship contest at a school in Boreham Wood. Our mode of transport on this occasion was a Morris 1000 van, when we got there the car park was full and we noticed that someone with a Triumph Herald was taking up two spaces. No problems we are members of one on the best clubs in the South of England so the four hefty occupants of the van get out pick up the Triumph and move it bodily into its correct space. The only problem being that nobody realised the Herald had a unique type of suspension whereby when you pick it up bodily all the four wheels drop down and almost go under the car so that when you lower it down the wheels remain under the car at a peculiar angle! We then all panicked and ran off to find somewhere else to park!

I stopped teaching weightlifting at Faringdon Youth Club in 1985 after 23 years of wonderful experiences; I had reached the stage where I was teaching the children of the lads that I had originally taught in 1962. They gave me a wonderful farewell party with many of my past pupils in attendance. They presented me with a Shield appropriately engraved. Whilst this was going on I saw lurking in the background a rather attractive Model and I started to panic, whilst I am the first person to indulge in a bit of raucous fun, I did not want to be set up with a Stripper! So I quickly questioned the organiser as to what this person was doing, if she was a Stripper then I was off! Panic over! I was pleasantly surprised that she was there to read some appreciative personal letters and poems that my pupils had prepared for me. A most enjoyable evening.

As I was approaching my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday I was finding it increasingly difficult to carry on teaching, I had diversified on to other things like Barn Dancing, so I severed my links with the coaching side of weightlifting and left it in the capable hands of people like Brian Willoughby, Hugh Thomas and then John Davies who is still doing a tremendous job in keeping the club going. By then things were beginning to change dramatically. The competitive sport was rapidly becoming replaced by members training more for personal fitness and physical enhancement. There was a great influx of members training for other sports especially the Martial Arts. The competitive weightlifting sport known as Power Lifting is still practiced in the Club with Bampton still being able to boast of having a British Champion.

The Club still promotes competitions on the Power Set Lifts as well as indulging in the vein of the 'World's Strongest Man' competitions. Such tests as pulling a Heavy Vehicle, carrying and lifting unusual heavy objects, of course they call it Bampton's Strongest Man. Mainly to raise funds for local Charities.





Members taking part in a Charity Strength competition In aid of the Thames and Chiltern Air Ambulance Fund

In 2004 it was necessary for me to sell the Club Room at Lew. So with John Davies, our Secretary and trainer at the time, we sought to find new premises, it was a very difficult task to find suitable alternative premises. We managed to find a few alternatives, including an offer from Bampton Football Club to build on their site, but we settled for a room at the Old Bampton School site.

This served us well for a few years until the Oxfordshire Education authorities who owned the site, decided to sell the sight for housing. This involved many Cubs and Groups that shared these premises all having to move out. It caused uproar in the Town and led to a tremendous amount of meetings with the local authorities. Bampton Parish Council really came good in these meetings and fought very hard not to lose these facilities, not only just for the Weightlifting club but the Youth Club, Boxing Club and the Bush Club which provides meals for the old folk of Bampton. To have lost these wonderful facilities that they enjoyed would have been a tragedy for the Town. The outcome being that County Council would carry out extensive alterations to enable these groups to still function, then they let the whole building to the Parish Council. We were given the use of a purpose built building, built to our requirements on the site of the old school. We now work in conjunction with the Parish Council to offer a facility for Bampton where they can train as often as they like at an affordable price. The club now enjoys one of the best equipped Gyms in the County. Their new Landlords, Bampton Parish Council have been extremely helpful in assisting the Club to get established. Special mention must be made to the Chairman of the Parish Council Jackie Allinson. She has always been so encouraging and helpful in maintaining a good relationship between the club and the Council. All the equipment in the Gym has been purchased by the club and is of an extremely high standard, as one of the girls who has been with the club for a long time was heard to say when they moved into the new premises, "even the toilet has got a seat on it".

Training hours are flexible within the letting conditions so it is very popular with members who do shift work. Which is probably just as well, considering the membership is currently around the 50 mark.

When you have registered for membership you will be issued with a 'photo key.' That will last for the duration of your membership which is renewable every six months. With the inbuilt safety of CCTV for members' benefit, one has to admit the Club has come a very long way. From a Chicken House with no electricity and a Broomstick with 2 buckets of water for a Barbell to a Luxury Club Gymnasium with modern equipment a shower and toilet with a seat in just over Sixty Years. Brilliant.

Special mention must be made to our current Secretary Candice Chivers. She is in charge of all the membership registration and subscriptions. New members are assured of a very warm and instructive welcome, the likes of which I have never witnessed before. Her personality is reflected in the great atmosphere that is the Bampton Weightlifting Club.

One of the most amazing things that's happened over the sixty years is the public's attitude to training with weights. In the 1950s, athletes and other sporting enthusiasts could not bring themselves to train with weights for fear that it would make them 'muscle-bound' and slow. Now it's a case that if you don't train with weights you will not get to the top.

During the club's sixty years many top Footballers including Bampton's England under 23 player Jason Seacole, who was also a credible weightlifter trained at the club. August and September were always very interesting times as all the top local club Football managers would visit the club as they came 'touting' our Footballers to sign up for them. Bicester, Witney and Clanfield would annually make an appearance. In retrospect I suppose I should have been an Agent.

The Club is run by a hard working band of volunteers, everyone enthusiastically working to maintain its reputation. The club has its own annually elected committee and I am so proud to say that they have kept me on as their President.



Don the Founder chats to John the Chairman over their 60 + years of running the Bampton Weightlifting Club



Mary Cooper performing at the Bampton Carnival Fête in 1958.

Showing that even smart ladies can lift weights. That's why I married her.

They say "Behind every good man is an even better woman!"

Mine was Mary





The 'A' Team that is currently running the Club in 2021

L-R Pete Weller, Competition Secretary  
John Davies, Chairman  
Candice Chivers, Secretary & Membership

### **August 2023**

The A Team sadly announces the untimely death of John the Chairman and club leader to Cancer. He first took control in the 1980s when it was evident that a new leader was desperately needed to secure the clubs future. He served this role for nearly 20 years, then took a small break and returned to the roll as we went into the new premises in the old Bampton School. Whist we knew of his battle with Cancer he was determined to serve the club right to the end. Here follows the Eulogy that the club put together to be read at the funeral showing their appreciation of him. It was the first time that the club had ever suffered such a loss of a great serving Officer.

### **JOHN DAVIES**

John Davies was a devoted family man. We know this because of his unrelenting commitment to his second family, the members of the Bampton Weightlifting Club.

He was a father figure to many; young and old, always there to chat to for advice or just to off load. He led by example and was a firm believer in the expression, only the best will do. This was never more evident than during our trip to one of the best equipment manufacturers in the country,

It was on this trip that John laid eyes on a massive 150 kilo dumbbell. He just couldn't help himself and had to see if he could lift it. The boyish smile he cracked after lifting that weight will stay with us forever. He always seemed surprised with his own strength and would often ask, "Was that all me?" after lifting a near impossible lift.

Always up for a challenge at the competitions, nights out and other venues John was game. Last man standing. Somewhat of a dark horse with the club's supplier of Protein bars! He rewarded you with one if you worked hard. I think we can safely say the gym was his second home. Improvements large and small, he was the elf from the shoemaker always supplying.

John had a fine sense of humour and it wouldn't be fair to remember him without mentioning his co-dependent relationship with WD-40. He used it like a man possessed, or perhaps had

shares in the company, which wouldn't surprise us. We are reminded of John every time we walk through the door of our club, or as John called it 'The Temple.' He built so much of our equipment, all of which has beaten the test of time and continues to do so. A lifelong member and respectful and respected leader. He will forever occupy many pages of the BWC history book.

John, with his curly head of hair and boyish charm, was the man who took us all into the fold of the club. This legend rocked the metal, was a known petrol head with his flashy blue car, and his distinctive gym pants made sure he was a head turner in Bampton for sure.

These are only some of the words that spring to mind when we think of John; Strong, motivated, kind, generous, classy, helpful, compassionate, committed, prolific and unyielding. There are no doubt many more. Thank you so very much for all you have done for us. Rest well Viking.

All I can say is "John, you served us well, we shall miss all that you did to maintain a good relationship with our landlords, the Bampton Parish Council, all the work in maintaining our equipment and most of all your wonderfully kind and helpful nature which boosted the membership of our club well beyond our wildest dreams."

