

COMING OF AGE CELEBRATIONS 1932

A brief historical survey by Bernard Miller

In writing up this historical survey, it is found that in 1907, Mr.A.F.Angell wrote a letter to the Gazette drawing attention to the strength of District Associations in the North of England, and expressing surprise that nothing of the sort existed in the south. This undoubtedly gave rise to a desire on the part of members to start an association here.

However, the Association originated in 1911, its title then being "The Southampton District Association", its scope at that time limited to an area within a fifteen miles radius of the Bargate, Southampton.

The first step in the direction of its formation was a notice published in the "Gazette" for June 1911, inserted at the instigation of Mr.H.R.G.Aldridge, calling a meeting to be held at the Central Hotel, Southampton, on the 13th July of that year. The meeting was duly held, and attended by Messrs.R.D.Maddock (Councillor), A.E.Fletcher, J.Guyer and others. Little appears to have been settled but two runs were arranged. Arising out of that meeting a further meeting was held on 9th October 1911, at Lowman's Cafe, Southampton, under the chairmanship of Mr.H.R.G.Aldridge. Those present included: Mesdames Guyer and Hubbard, Miss Cartwright, Messrs.A.F.Angell, Barnaby, Bevis, Cronwell, A.E.Fletcher, J.Guyer, E.R.Marle and Richards.

At that meeting the Southampton District Association was formally brought into existence, and Mr.Fletcher was elected Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, which office he held until June, 1913. A committee was elected and a programme arranged.

It is evident, however, that little progress was made in the first two years of the Association's life, for in June 1913, a Special General Meeting was called, and mention was made by the Chairman (Rev.C.B.Lloyd) that the primary business was in connection with the resuscitation of the D.A. Mr.Fletcher resigned his office of Hon. Secretary, and Treasurer, and Mr.J.Guyer was elected in his place. Under his guidance, the Association certainly made definite progress.

These early days in the history of the D.A. were times of difficulty, and at a critical stage in its life the Great War intervened, so that for a period 1914-1918 the Association suffered - like all similar bodies devoted to sport - and did not make the progress it otherwise undoubtedly should have done. However, the Association was kept alive by the efforts of such members as the Rev.C.B.Lloyd (Chairman), Mesdames Hubbard and King, the Misses Cartright and Galtsmith, Messrs.A.F.Angell, G.Guyer, G.Leake, E.R.Marle, and C.B.Scott.

It was due to their keen interest and unflagging energy that there remained an organisation to concentrate upon immediately conditions permitted such activities to be recommenced. The addition of new members and the unbounded enthusiasm of the older members enabled good progress to be made and at the end of 1919 there was a reasonably live organisation.

In May, 1915, the Association lost the splendid services of Mr.Guyer who died after a short illness, and his place was taken in June by Mr.E.R.Marle, but unfortunately in the following month he had to resign on account of Government work and Mr.C.B.Scott was elected to the office. Although Mr.Scott only accepted the duty as a temporary measure, he did wonderful work and continued to carry out the duties until February 1920, when he resigned, and the present Hon. Secretary was appointed.

The development of the Association since its inception has resulted in a number of changes, both in name and area. The first of these alterations occurred in February 1916, when the title became the South Hants District Association. In January 1917, the area was extended to include an area within a radius of thirty miles from Bargate, Southampton. Early in 1920 an effort was made to form a section at Portsmouth, and a meeting was called under the chairmanship of the writer, but unfortunately there was little response. Later, however, thanks to the enthusiasm of several members, amongst whom Messrs.A.E.Hewlett and H.S.Milmer were most prominent, a Section was ultimately formed in August 1921. This Section rapidly increased in strength, and in January 1926, it seceded from this Association with a corresponding reduction in the area of this D.A.

The Western boundary of this new Section, then became the Eastern boundary of this Association. It was this Section which formed the nucleus of the existing Portsmouth District Association.

About the time of the formation of the Portsmouth Section various new features were introduced into the programme of events. The first organised tour was arranged and carried out in the Isle of Wight at Easter 1921. In February 1922, a Country Quarters was established at Brockenhurst, where members met one evening per week for social intercourse. The scheme was supported entirely by voluntary contributions but it did not attract much support and was abandoned in March 1923. The idea was again revived in November of the same year with Headquarters at first the Fleming Arms, and then at Brown's Restaurant, Romsey, but once again, lack of support led to the scheme being finally abandoned in February of the following year.

In 1923 a monthly magazine entitled "Notes of the Road" was produced, being a record of the activities of the Association and it continues popular amongst the membership. In February 1924, the Association adopted its present title of "Wessex", and extended its area to include that part of the counties of Dorset,

Hants, Wilts and Sussex, bounded by lines drawn through the towns of Littlehampton, Petworth, Alton, Andover, Amesbury, Shaftesbury and West Lulworth, and the coast on the south and including all places on those lines. This was undoubtedly a very wise move and it would be difficult to find a more appropriate title. Owing to the rapid growth in a Westerly direction, in June 1926, the area was again extended to embrace the whole of the County of Dorset, and it seems doubtful if any further extension will be found necessary.

The first President of the Association was the Rev.C.B.Lloyd elected in 1915, and he remained in office until 1921, when Mr.A.F.Angell was elected. In 1923 Mr.T.C.L.Holroyd was made President, which office he held for two years, Mr.R.D.Maddock being appointed in 1925, and he occupied the position until 1929, when Mr.A.B.Snell was elected to the office, which he still retains.

This report would not be complete without reference to the splendid work carried out by the Chairmen of Committee. The first to occupy this position was the Rev.C.B.Lloyd, appointed in October 1911, and he remained in office through many difficult years until February 1920, when Mr.W.R.Wells was elected. In 1923 Mr.A.F.Angell took over the duties until the present Chairman Mr.W.Howe was elected to the post in February 1925. Mr.Howe has done some wonderful work, and has attended every Committee Meeting with few exceptions.

The Association has been responsible for several important ideas which have been adopted by the Club. The first of these was the adoption of a Password by the Club, but this appears to have been allowed to lapse. Later the publication of a Club Diary was the result of a suggestion from this Association and the publication of Christmas Cards last year was the outcome of a further resolution from this Association. It is thought that the introduction of these developments and their introduction by the Club reflects some credit to the D.A.

On this occasion, the 21st anniversary of the formation of the District Association, it is very gratifying to be able to record such substantial progress. From these small beginnings on the District Association's birthday in 1911, has grown an organisation now represented by four main divisions covering Wessex, and centering on Salisbury in the North, Bournemouth in the South, Southampton in the East, and Weymouth in the West, with a present total membership of 474.

The Wessex District Association today undoubtedly occupies a proud position in the Club, and this position is a just reward to those who have laboured so diligently and painstakingly to accomplish this result. Under such circumstances, the outlook for the future appears certainly bright, and one can look forward with confidence that the growth and progress will be all that can be desired by the officers and members who have assisted in placing the Association in the strong position it now occupies.

Bernard Miller D.A. Secretary 1932