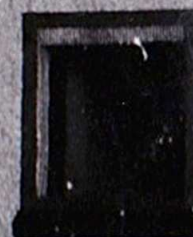


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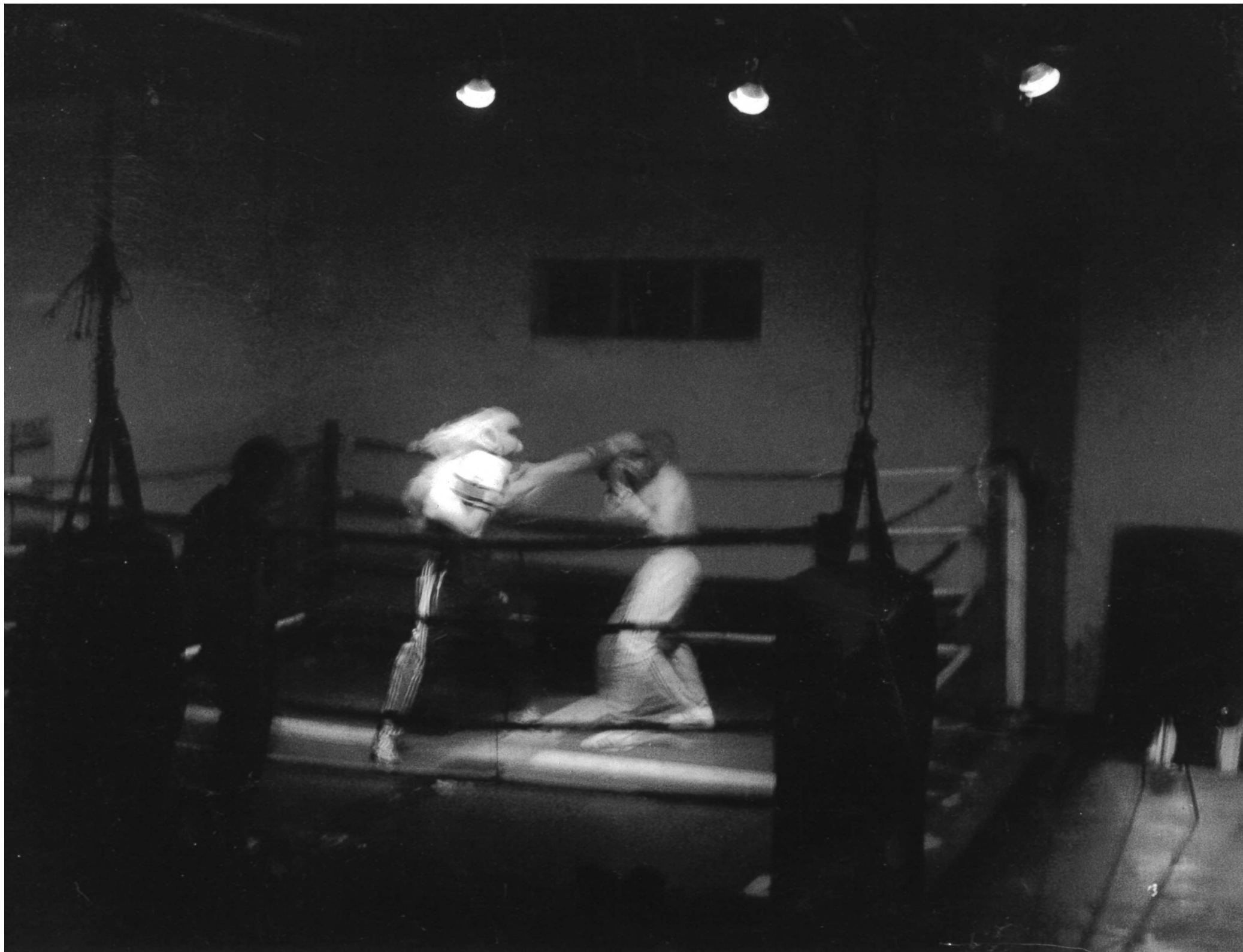


BOXING
APOLLO SELECT
BONDY & DARRIES

G698 RMY



In memory of Derek Thompson, Trevelyan Conyon and Alan Brightman



'With a handful of friends we formed the Apollo Sports Club and together we chose the name from a list of Greek Gods, Apollo symbolising a young man of perfect physique'

Eddie White (1928)



Foreword

At the age of 18, I first walked through the heavy metal door of the Apollo Amateur Boxing Club in Barton, Torquay. Like many others there I was missing something in my life and desperately needed some stability. The building was basic, there was no heating and when it rained the roof leaked, still it had a charm and safety that warms me to this day.

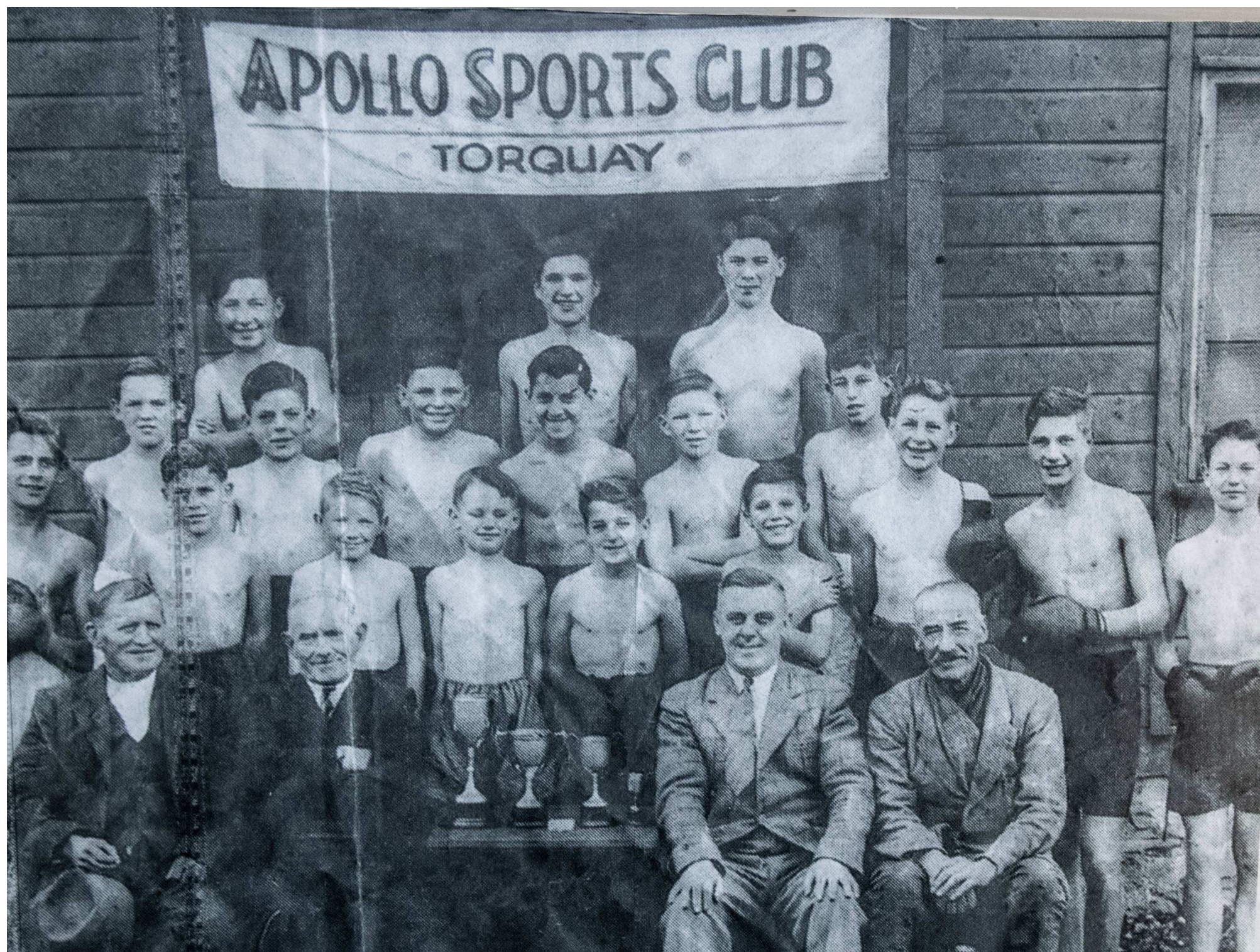
Like many young people who take up the sport, I had big dreams. I idolised Muhammed Ali and had the lofty goal of becoming the heavyweight champion of the world, the supreme symbol of the ultimate masculine ideal. I was fascinated by the history of boxing, the noble art as it's known. It transcended the sport, for example, the fight between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling in 1938 symbolised the battle between democracy and the fascism of the Nazis and the impact Ali had on the civil rights movement was immeasurable.

Several mentors at the club positively influenced my life and have been a considerable support to countless others who trained there. I have maintained a connection to the club and the sport for 25 years both as a competitor, but also through the lens of a camera. Being a combatant allowed me the close access of an insider. The purpose of this project has been to preserve a legacy and is a testament to the influence that the boxing club has had on the lives of those involved.

Over the past year, I have been reconnecting with those associated with the club by capturing a set of environmental portraits. This is our story, it may seem brash and bloody in places, yet scratch the surface and there exists a community and fraternity that has extended far beyond the confines of a boxing ring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris' followed by a stylized surname.

Chris 'Buzz' Matthews

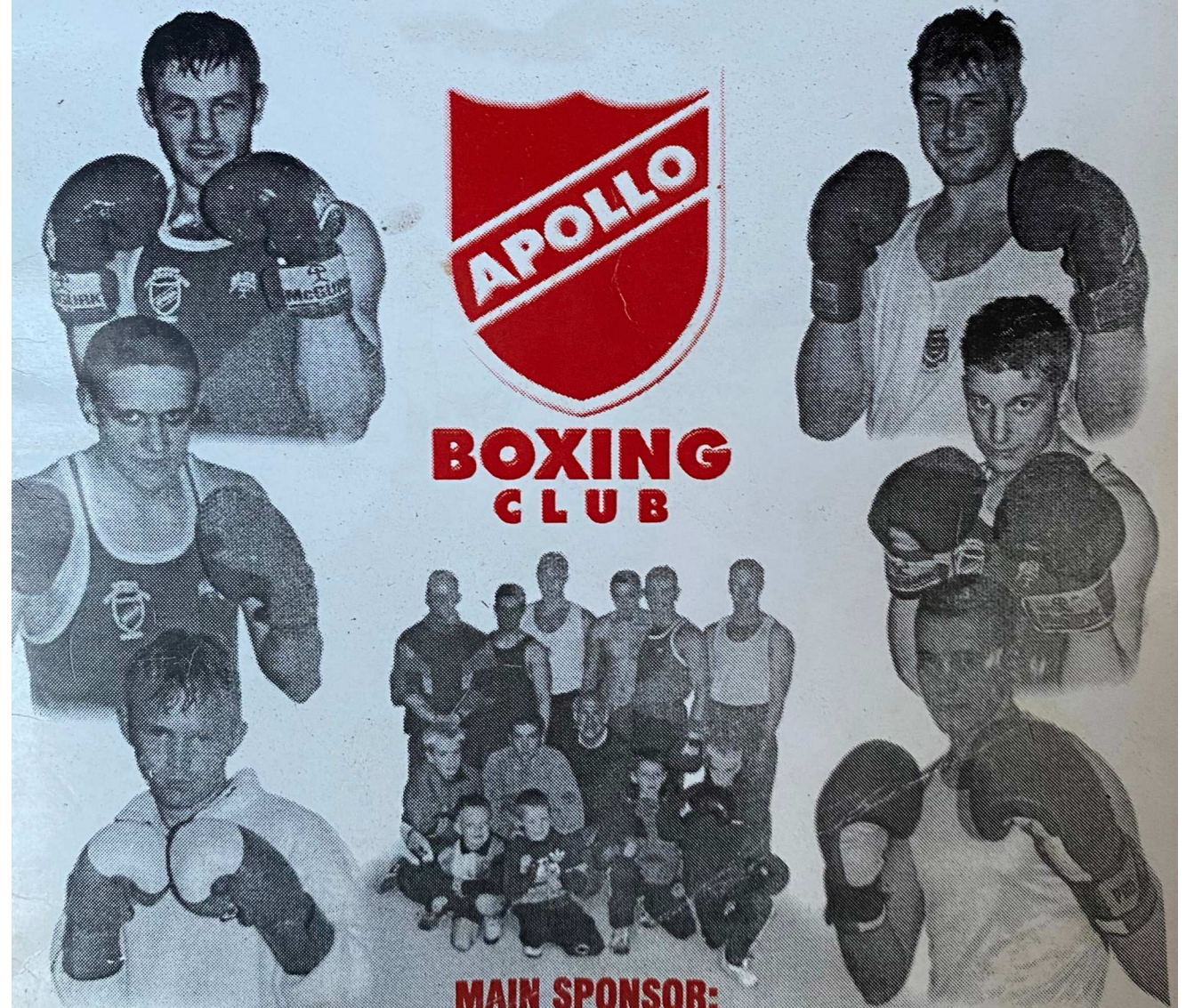


Apollo Boxers in 1943

As we were in 1998. Derek Thompson (centre) had been the club manager/ builder/matchmaker and head coach for many years. Prior to running the club he served as a Royal Engineer Soldier or 'Sapper' as they are known. He boxed in the army and his fearless come forward style earned him the nickname 'The Black Panther'.

Derek was based at Christmas Island when Great Britain conducted atom bomb tests in 1958. Derek would sometimes mention his experience there of seeing through his hand during the blast. As a result of the radiation, he suffered from Leukaemia for many years and this led to his death at the age of 63 in 2001. His life was honoured at a boxing show where the traditional tolling of the bell ten times was observed with over a 1000 people in attendance.

TORQUAY TOWN HALL BOXING REVIVAL BOXING PROGRAMME



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My first trophy won at a boxing show in Plymouth 1997. The venue was a primary school with the classrooms being used as dressing rooms. It was a steep learning curve. I boxed a very tall opponent called Rick Carlyle and tried to knock him out in the first round. I was warned for slamming his gloves down before the first bell and for pushing during the opening minute. By the end of the first round I was exhausted and had learnt, boxing above all is a discipline.

Calmly, I went out in the 2nd round and cut my opponent over the eye and a mask of blood ended the contest in my favour.

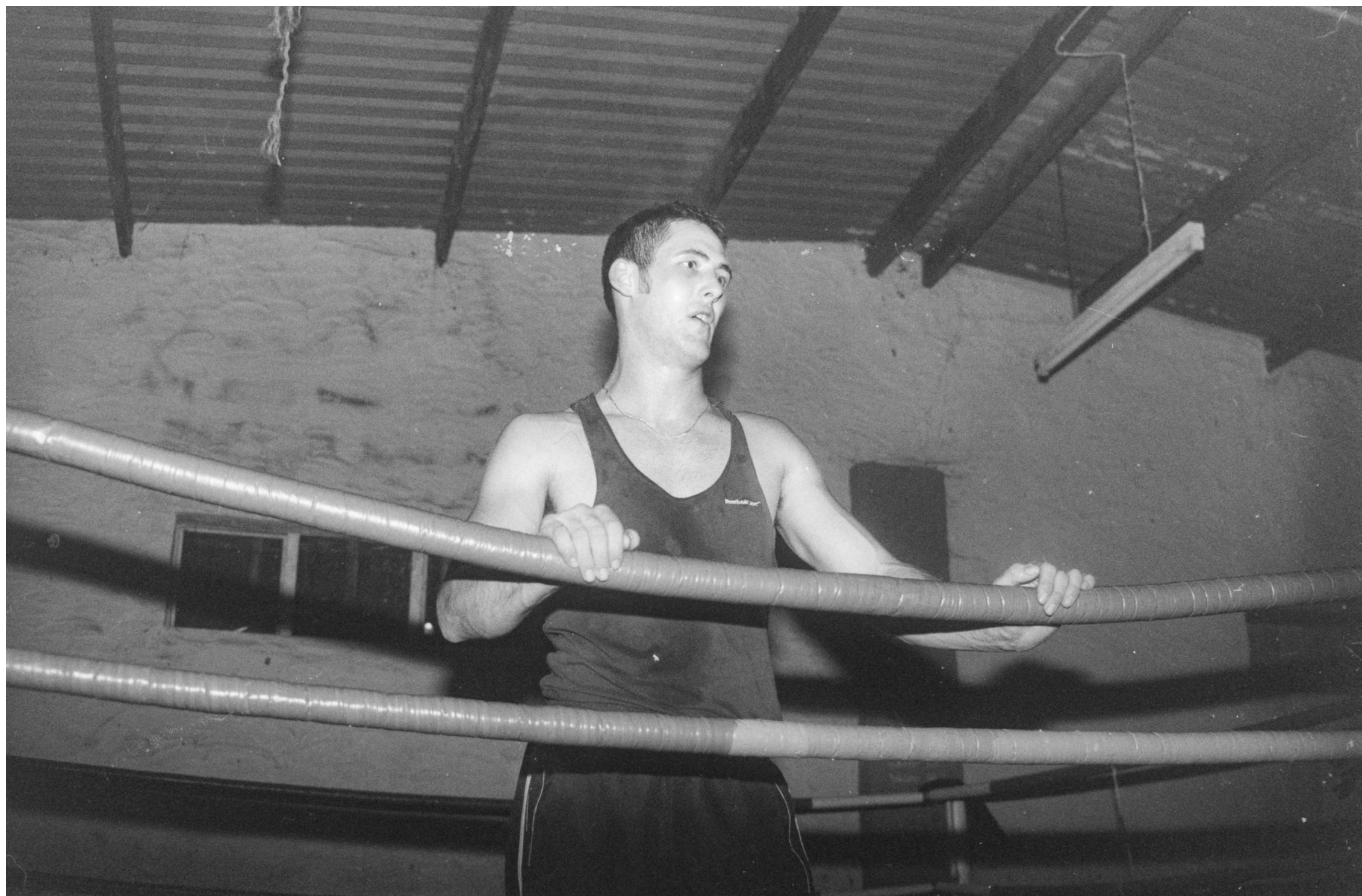
Following the fight we were given a pasty for dinner. On the way home we stopped at a pay phone and I rang Derek Thompson who owned the club to tell him I'd won. For the first time in my life I felt noticed.



After winning the Light Heavyweight Western Counties Championship in my class I went on to the 1/4 finals of the ABA Championships. I had struggled to make the weight limit in the previous round and had to strip to make the weight on a set of jockey scales at Newton Abbot Racecourse where the contests were held. It was my first experience of boxing humour, a rumour spread from a veteran trainer that performing hand stands against a wall would reduce your weight on the scales. Some young boxers were taken in by this.

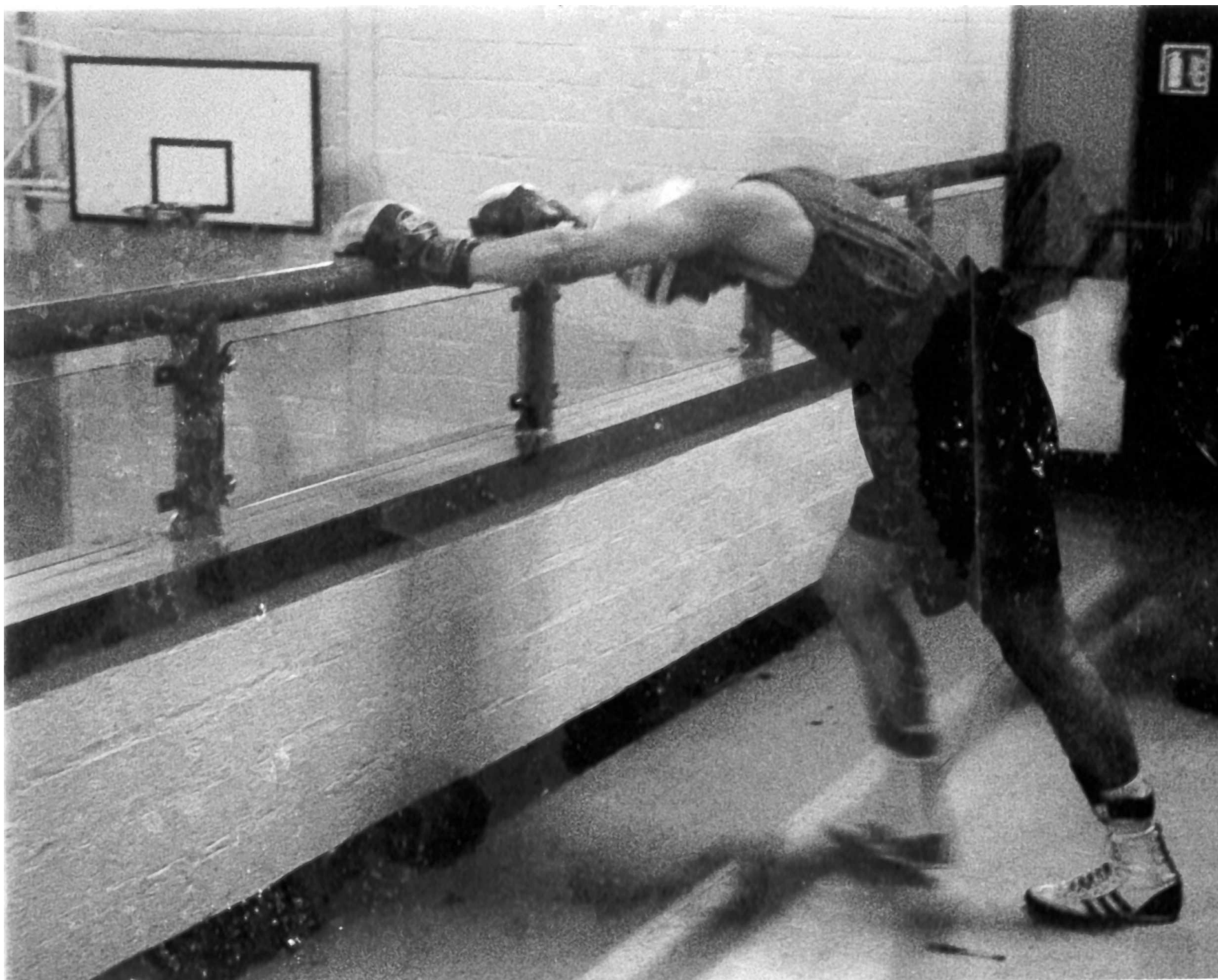
I spent the week before the 1/4 finals eating just boiled potatoes and fruit to make the weight by several pounds. Weakened by this and carrying a hand injury I was no match for the Southern Counties Champion and was pulled out by the referee in the 2nd round. It was the first and only time I was ever 'stopped' inside the distance.





Luke Wayne was an ABA semi-finalist who boxed future Super Middleweight world champion George Groves.











The final pair of boots I boxed in April 2013 at the age of 34. I travelled to Weymouth with my trainer Alan Brightman who was 77 at the time. He was no longer able to climb up into the ring with a stool, so between rounds I had to stand as he shouted up instructions. He served in the RAF and as a boxer won the NATO forces title in 1956 & 1957. Before he became the main trainer at the Apollo ABC he coached the England team and trained future world champions such as Frank Bruno and Glenn Catley. Alan passed away at the age of 85. He was a tremendous teacher, valued mentor to many and was hugely respected by all who knew him.





The Apollo as it appears today. It's no longer an Amateur Boxing Club, but continues its tradition of being a sports club for the local community.





F.A.O TONY CONYON APOLLO ABC

Hello, I'm try to get in contact with Tony Conyon as lost contact with him a few years ago. He trained me as an amateur boxer and contacted my family via phone but didn't leave a contact number.

My name is Chris (Buzz) Matthews and my contact number is 07590832640, im on facebook to under

Buzz Matthews

I know he lived in Stoke Gabriel but its been so long I can't remember his address.

Would love to hear from him

Thank you;

I had lost contact with one of my former trainers. I tried to find him by leaving a note at the post office in the village where he used to live. Two days later he called me and a voice said 'i'm going to tell you something that will break your heart Chris' I was shocked to hear his son Trevelyan had died 2 years ago. Trev and I sparred together and boxed on many of the same shows.

Tony was too frail to sit for a portrait during the making of this Photobook. Searching through my archives I found a precious fragment from a VHS tape. Most of the footage was unrecoverable. Fortunately I was able to retrieve an image of him watching over me at a boxing show (centre in red).

He taught me the importance of honour and keeping boxing in the ring. When I was first learning to box, Tony realising I was left handed, converted me to a southpaw stance that served me well for the rest of my amateur career.



22nd November 2001



Chris 'Buzz' Matthews

Apollo Boxer competing from 1997-2013



Brett White is the club's longest serving amateur and went on to train boxers there for many years. His trophies dating back to the 80's still reside at the club.

Jamie 'The Genius' Speight boxed as an amateur for the club, then turned professional and had over 60 fights. A skilled technical boxer, he won southern area championships in three different weights as a professional and competed against two future world champions including the current IBF Featherweight Champion Josh Warrington.

This photograph was taken on his first visit back to the club in over a decade since turning professional in 2009.



Ryan Little boxed for the club for many years starting in 1997 and still lives near the gym in Barton where he grew up. He continues to be involved with the sport to this day and can often be seen working in the corner at White Collar boxing shows.





Peter May was brought in to help train boxers at the club in 1997 just before Nick Kendall fought future Olympic Gold Medallist Audley Harrison in the ABA Super Heavyweight final that year. Prior to this he served in the army where he boxed, compiling an impressive 18- 1 record and winning the Army Light Heavyweight Championship in 1991. He runs his own business producing boxes for fresh produce from farms and fish markets to be sent all over Europe. He still trains fighters at local clubs and occasionally still works corners at White Collar boxing shows.



Jamie Cree served in the Royal Air Force Police 2000-2004. Whilst working for the Police in Brixham, Jamie and a former boxer Olly Hall-Green decided they wanted to open a boxing club for young people in an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour. They were put in touch with Alan Brightman who helped them set up a club at the then abandoned Brixham boxing gym next to a pub. Later, Alan asked Jamie to train the juniors at the Apollo Boxing Club (2010-13) He is now a head teacher at a local secondary school.

Daniel Marcheggiani moved to Torbay from Venezuela when he was 18 with his wife where they both found work at the Imperial Hotel. He was a fan of professional wrestling and wanted to pursue it as a competitor. Discovering it was choreographed he decided to take up boxing and trained at the Apollo boxing club from 2008. He went on to take part in semi-professional White Collar Boxing shows and has ambitions to become a bare knuckle fighter.

Danny has had ups and downs in his life, his home burned down a few years ago and recently he has been in hospital leaving him unable to work. Despite this he maintains his great fighting spirit and he is a proud father to three sons.



Matt Allard was a highly skilled amateur boxer at the Apollo Boxing Club. He works in care with the elderly. In his spare time he coaches boxers and is also a personal trainer.



Tim Moran with his son Benjamin.

Tim served in the Army from 18 and was stationed in West Germany at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. He never boxed competitively, but sparred frequently. He was a permanent fixture at shows and often served as a bouncer at home shows.

His son is now learning to box at the Torquay Community Gym run by former professional boxer Gareth Hogg.



Harry Armstrong was one of the last amateurs to box for the club and has now turned professional with the dream of being World Heavyweight Champion one day. He has sparred with many of the worlds best fighters including Tyson Fury. He currently holds an undefeated professional record of 3-0.



Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Apollo Boxing Club for allowing access to the gym and archival material

Thank you to all within the boxing fraternity that made this book possible

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BOXING