

## Jimmy Adams

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Jimmy Adams was an Aberdeen man who had been heavily involved in athletics in the city between 1919 and 1960 and who kindly provided me with interesting material and information when I began researching the history of athletics in Aberdeen. The material included one of the two S.A.A.A. championship medals which he had won, programmes of annual sports meetings which he had helped to organise and press cuttings. The information was contained in several letters which he wrote to me. Everything which he sent to me is now contained within the Special Collections held in Aberdeen University's library.

According to the club's first minutes book, at the AGM of Aberdeen AAC of March 1960 it was reported that Jimmy Adams had written stating that, due to ill-health, he had found it necessary to resign his active interest in the club. Once it eventually became known that he was unable to continue with his involvement in athletics, the Evening Express (the Green Final) devoted almost a full page to an article about him. The following is some of what was contained in that article:

Spectators at the Sports meeting at Linksfield Stadium were entertained by a very informative commentary broadcast over the loudspeaker. The man behind the "mike" was Mr J.C. Adams of the City Chamberlains office. ... For 30 years Mr Adams has been an official of the Scottish Amateur Athletics Association. Much of his spare time is devoted to the newly formed Aberdeen Athletic Club (sic) - he coaches youngsters in sprint starts and the high jump. ... "Over forty years in athletics and I have enjoyed every minute of it." That is how Jimmy Adams, one of Aberdeen's most popular personalities, sums up his career in the sport. Only ill-health forced him to sever his long connection with athletics last year. ... After early experience in other branches of athletics, he concentrated on high jumping and in the course of more than a hundred meetings, including two internationals, he was never outwith the top three.

Jimmy Adams had himself previously contributed articles to the Green Final of the Evening Express. One, dated 4 October 1947, was entitled "Aberdeen Athletes used to hold a high place in Scotland". In that article he contrasted the healthy state of athletics in Aberdeen before the Second World War with its sorry state in the postwar period. A follow-up article appeared in the Green Final on 11 October 1947. This one was entitled "A way out of the slump of athletics in the North-East". In that article he stated "I suggest that as a means of encouragement, and perhaps as the first step to the real remedy, that Linksfield Stadium be utilised for more than football."

In one of his letters to me Jimmy Adams stated that Linksfield Stadium had been built to supply the needs of two Junior football clubs, Hawthorn and East End. It seems that these clubs had once played their matches at Advocates Park which Jimmy Adams stated "now is the Transport Dept. Bus Depot". Jimmy Adams also informed me that the Aberdeen Y.M.C.A. Harriers had once built their own cinder running track on the opposite side of Linksfield Road from where the stadium came to be situated and that, after that area had to be vacated so that houses could be built on it, the club was allowed to use the new stadium. It is not surprising, therefore, that he later recommended that Linksfield Stadium should be used for more than football.

It is possible that among those who read that article which Jimmy Adams had written on 11 October 1947 was a man called Bill Angus. It was he who was responsible for convening the 1952 meeting that led to the formation of a new athletics club in Aberdeen, namely Aberdeen AAC. As the first of the Aberdeen AAC minutes books make clear, prior to convening that meeting Bill Angus had made enquiries about the possibility of making use of Linksfield Stadium for athletics. Permission to use that stadium was granted and it has been used by Aberdeen AAC ever since its inception in 1952.

An Aberdeen AAC membership card for season 1954 - 55 was donated to me by a Robert Miles who was then club secretary. That card showed that Jas. C. Adams (Jimmy Adams) was club president at that time and I had wrongly assumed that he had been the club's first president. However, as recounted in my paper "Club Athletics in Aberdeen", that was not the case. A meeting of people who were prepared to found a new athletics club in Aberdeen was held

on 7 May 1952. Jimmy Adams had been invited to chair that meeting and that he did. However, those present decided that the man who had convened the previous meeting, namely Bill Angus, should be the first president of the club which was to be established. Jimmy Adams only became president of that new club at its first AGM of Aberdeen AAC on 6 April 1953. By then it had been given the name Aberdeen AAC and had been properly constituted. The membership card for 1954 - 55 reveals that W. G. Angus, i.e. Bill Angus, was then a committee member. A letter written by Bill Angus and dated 7 May 1966 suggests that at the AGM of 6 April 1953 he might have stood down as president in order to make way for the highly respected Jimmy Adams.

Jimmy Adams, was a man who had been involved with athletics in Aberdeen in the years preceding the Second World War: he had been Vice-President of both the Aberdeen Y.M.C.A. Harriers and the North Eastern Harriers Association. The latter body organised competitions for members in the athletic clubs which had existed in Aberdeen prior to the Second World War. For example, it organised the six stage Round the Town Relay, the 5 Mile Championship and, in conjunction with Aberdeen Football Club, the annual Athletic Sports Meeting which was held at Pittodrie. Jimmy Adams seemed to have played a major part in the organisation of that sports meeting because in a letter to me he made clear that doing so was a somewhat time consuming chore.

Jimmy Adams letters to me contain much interesting information about him, some of which is detailed below.

Jimmy Adams had joined Aberdeen Y.M.C.A. Harriers when he was discharged from the navy at the end of the First World War. For a time that club used a hut in Viewfield Road opposite Rubislaw Quarry as a base for training. To get there, members took the tram to what was then its terminus at Bayview and then walked the rest of the way. (It was only later that this tramcar route was extended to Hazlehead Park. Tramcars were once a popular means of public transport: according to the booklet "Aberdeen's Trams 1874 – 1958", in 1946 69 million passengers were carried by tram and only 39 million by bus).

Jimmy Adams had been a pupil at Robert Gordon's College. He left that school in 1911 and found employment in an office. However, he found that work rather boring so joined a merchant ship (a deep sea tramp) which took him round the world. Unfortunately, soon after the UK's declaration of war on Germany on 4 August 1914 the ship that Jimmy Adams was on was in the Indian Ocean as was the German light cruiser, the Emden. The Emden caught up with the merchant ship and sunk it. However, the policy of the captain of the Emden was to save the crews of the ships which his ship sank and to land them in a neutral port or to transfer them to a non-belligerent ship. Jimmy Adams was eventually put ashore at Pondicherry. From there he made his way back to Aberdeen and joined the Royal Navy. He was serving with the Grand Fleet at Scapa Flow when it was announced in daily orders that anyone interested in athletics would be allowed ashore to train for the Fleet championships. Jimmy, who had taken part in athletics while in the Boys Brigade, expressed an interest and went on to win the high jump title in those championships which were held at Rosyth. Later, in 1918 he was chosen to represent the Grand Fleet against the American Fleet.

Jimmy Adams also represented Scotland in the high jump in two Triangular Internationals, one of which was held at Stoke in 1923. As is well known, Scotland was victorious in that International largely because Eric Liddell won three events: the 100 yards, the 220 yards and the 440 yards. What is not generally known is that when Eric Liddell accomplished that feat he was wearing Jimmy Adams' spikes; he had left his own at the hotel in which he had been staying when competing at the White City. Jimmy Adams provided me with that information in one of the letters which he sent me. These, and the other materials which he sent me, are well worth studying. The programmes of the annual sports meetings which were held at Pittodrie during the 1930s are particularly worthy of study since they provide information about the clubs that existed in Aberdeen during the prewar period as well as information about athletes who competed then. I personally was interested to observe that one of those athletes was a man called Alex Hewet, a former colleague of mine at the Aberdeen College of Education.

