

THE HISTORY OF THE "IRON GAME"

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1913 - A YEAR OF GREAT ACTIVITY MANY NEW BRITISH RECORDS

Told by
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Famous Weightlifting Historian

HISTORY suffers from congestion at certain points in time. That is to say that whereas one particular decade will have scarcely anything of importance to record, another era will have so much that the events of the former will receive undue prominence whilst the latter will have equally as meritorious feats obscured; that, precisely, was the position with certain years in the annals of "The History of the Iron Game."

That is the difficulty with editors and journalists. A British record broken, for example, in 1918, at a time when Great Britain was just emerging from a long and wearisome war, would, because of the scarcity of weightlifting news, receive unusual prominence (a page could be splashed), whilst records broken during 1913 became so common that often they were relegated to the "news items" at the end of the journal. This, I suggest, epitomizes the importance of being born at the right moment, developing during the right era, and breaking records whilst the going is good.

Thus the records created and broken during 1913 are so numerous that it is impossible (except if written in the form of a diary) to describe them all. So injustice may be felt by certain old timers if, in their opinion, their contemporaries receive notice beyond their relative deserts. If this history is ever to see daylight in the form of an entire book, I suggest that all the records should be published in the form of an appendix at the end so that none will escape honourable mention—and those concerned will purchase copies in the knowledge that, however slight the notice may be, they will be "mentioned in despatches."

Aston continued his record breaking career—not confining himself to the two lifts in which he was financially concerned. Aston evidently believed in all-round training in order to assist him in spectacular results on specialists lifts—a contradiction in terms to some but understandable with certain reservations to those specially educated in such problems.

On Thursday, Dec. 19, 1912 (records published, of course, in 1913) Aston visited Hull during the course of his provincial tour, and created two British Records: "Two Hands Snatch"—193 lbs. and "Crucifix"—116 lbs. (60 lbs. Right and 56 lbs. Left). Aston, following this record breaking, concluded with an exhibition of posing and muscle control—an item which attracted as much, if not more, attention as his records. This took place at Mason's Street Adult School Gymnasium.

THE INCH CHALLENGE DUMB-BELL
Controversy has often raged regarding the secret of Inch's Challenge Dumb-bell which Inch alone, of all the people who attempted it, was ever able to lift it exactly as demonstrated by him.

I have seen lifters attempting it on several occasions but have never considered that I was justified in taking up time in the programme by making an effort personally to rush in where others better equipped had failed. I recall one particular incident on February 28, 1913, at the London Weightlifting Club, North Street, Kennington Road, London, S.E.1, when Inch produced his dumb-bell for the benefit of Edward Aston, who was present, with the declared intention of trying what so many others had failed to accomplish. Aston made his effort amidst a silence which could be felt. His supporters expected him to lift it easily and were stupefied when it defied his mightiest efforts.

Aston was distinctly and obviously annoyed, and made no secret of the fact. So much so that he declared that it was not the original challenge dumb-bell but one specially prepared by Inch for the particular occasion.

That, of course, may have been so—the fact remains, however, that Aston and many others failed to make any kind of impression upon it. It refused to leave the floor although, as soon as Inch made his onslaught, it seemed to obey his slightest behest.

It has been alleged over the years that there was some constructional peculiarity about the bell which made it impossible for another to lift it without knowing and being able to provide for that peculiarity. The secret, if there be a secret, still lies with Thomas Inch who, alive today at the age of 67 may, I hope, be persuaded to bequeath it to posterity or, better still, directly to me as the weightlifting historian! Inch, on that occasion, also made an effort to beat the record of 271½ lbs. Right Hand Bent Press accomplished by him at "The Rally of the Strong" in 1912. The weight of the ponderous looking bell was not announced, unfortunately, the M.C. stating that it would be disclosed in the event of success.

As advance notice had been published of Inch's hopes of lifting 300 lbs., and celebrities like Arthur Saxon had expressed confidence publicly in his so doing, we present felt certain that it weighed at least that terrific weight. Suffice to state that he certainly bent pressed it to arm's length at least

three times but, regrettably, failed to resume the erect position before it crashed to the floor. W. L. Carquest, at 9 st. 7 lbs., also followed in his master's footsteps that night by trying the, to him, colossal weight of 225 lbs. He, too, actually bent pressed it to arm's length perfectly straight with elbow locked several times but success also eluded him at the last and critical moments.

Others proved successful with British records. Chas. Maw, of Scarborough, a one-armed lifter, lifted 328 lbs. with the "Right Hand Dead Lift"—making a 10 st. British Professional Record—a lift to remain unbeaten for many years until Professor Croft himself exceeded it at W. A. Pullum's invitation on December 11, 1923, at the Camberwell Club, with a new poundage of 337½ lbs. Professor Croft himself, on Feb. 28, 1913, lifted 179½ lbs. "Left Hand Anyhow" to create a 10 st. British Professional Record. H. Dungey, Inch pupil, lifted 128 lbs., a British Record at 11 st. A. Ashdown, T.H. Cont. Push., 193½ lbs., a British Record.

Harold Wood commenced his very lengthy record-breaking career by establishing British Amateur records at 12 st. Those who recall the Battersea giant during his



RECORD BREAKERS OF 1913—ANOTHER HISTORIC PICTURE
Back row, left to right—J. G. Paine, S. B. Devls, H. P. Flint, E. E. Fairhall, H. Jackson, Stan Pullum, T. W. Clarke.
Front row—W. A. Pullum, Edward Aston, P.W. Arden.
Photo by kind permission of W. A. Pullum

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championship days between the two Great Wars will have great difficulty in believing him ever to be less than 18 stone. Yet he did, as I can certify, break 12 st. British records in 1913 and he really weighed in at less than 12 st. He curled 126½ lbs. and 228 lbs. Pull Over and Press on Back without Bridge.

This lifter was destined to become a truly famous figure in British Amateur & Olympic Championships—between 1924 and 1931 he became heavyweight British Amateur champion 8 times and heavyweight British Olympic champion 6 times. In addition, of course, to lifting in Amsterdam in the 1928 Olympic Games as our Heavyweight British representative.

Records, in fact, were so often broken that the disease termed "recorditis" was referred to frequently in reports of events of the year. One reporter suggested that The Camberwell Club should be called "Recordopolis." This success of the Camberwell Club as, perhaps, should be expected in this all too imperfect world, aroused envy in quarters where success in like measure failed to attend the efforts made and so, in between periods when records were frankly discounted or disbelieved, warnings appeared from sources not connected with the famous institution of the perils of "recorditis"—the accusers not knowing then, apparently, that what may be termed "recorditis" in one era, may well become the commonplace training efforts of the same institution during a later decade; such is the result of lack of appreciation of the immutable laws of mathematics.

30 records in one day

That this name for Camberwell was justified, however, can be realized from the fact that, on April 10, 1913, no less than 30 British and World's amateur records were broken during the course of one physical culture display—and all by amateur members of that club. A record which I cannot trace being exceeded or equalled elsewhere. Even to-day, after a lapse of 37 years, an examination of the records so accomplished proves them to be remarkable. So much so that I consider a recital will arouse interest as something worthy of inclusion in a permanent record for posterity. The records were:—

A. G. DAVIS (9-stone class) Actual bodyweight, 8-11. Two Hands Snatch—153½ lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Press F.B. Neck—144½ lbs.; Two Hands Slow Curl—115½ lbs.; Pull Over and Press on Back—188 lbs.

J. G. PAINE (9-stone class) Actual bodyweight 8-8. Right Hand Snatch—124 lbs.; Left Hand Snatch—120 lbs.

H. JACKSON (10-stone class) Actual bodyweight 9-8. Right Hand Swing—123½

lbs.; Two Hands Slow Curl—122½ lbs.; Right Hand Clean and Jerk—158 lbs.

H. P. FLINT (10-stone class) Actual bodyweight 9-12. Left Hand Clean and Bent Press—180½ lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Push, Barbell—182 lbs.; Left Hand Clean and Jerk—155½ lbs.; Left Hand Swing—118 lbs.

S. B. DEVIS (10-stone class) Actual bodyweight 9-4. Right Hand Clean and Bent Press—182½ lbs.; Right Hand Anyhow and Bent Press—193½ lbs.

T. W. CLARKE (11 stone class) Actual bodyweight 10-2½. Left Hand Snatch—138 lbs.; Right Hand Clean and Bent Press—193 lbs.

S. J. YOUNG (11-stone class) Actual bodyweight 10-7. Left Hand Swing—126 lbs.; Right Hand Swing—129½ lbs.

T. W. CRAWFORD (11-stone class) Actual bodyweight 10-6. Two Hands Snatch—165 lbs.

J. A. MONTGOMERY (12-stone class) Actual bodyweight 11-6. Right Hand Swing—137½ lbs.; Left Hand Swing—129½ lbs.

W. A. PULLUM (9-stone class) Actual bodyweight 8-9½. Right Hand Clean and Jerk—147½ lbs.; Left Hand Clean and Jerk—144½ lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Push, Dumb-bells—150 lbs.; Left Hand Clean and Bent Press—174½ lbs.; Left Hand Anyhow and Bent Press—180½ lbs.; Left Hand Bent Press, T.H. To Shoulder—188 lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Jerk, Barbell—224½ lbs.; Two Hands Continental Jerk, Barbell—233½ lbs.

In the January issue of *Health & Strength* 4/1/13, the Editor himself commented on the "Highlights" of 1912, and drew attention to the records established during the previous year. **Thomas Inch's** feat of 271½ lbs. Right Hand Bent Press, of course, received the highest praise; **Monte Saldo's** epic record of 150 lbs. Right Hand Swing at 10 st. 4 lbs. came next on the honours' list; whilst he focused light upon the fact that Inch, at the end of 1912, held the lead in the "Inch v. Aston Wager Contest."

This lead, however, was but slight, and gave neither cause for elation nor perturbation. After all, what was a lead or a setback of 1½ lbs. in a contest on two lifts with possible maximum of anything between 600 lbs. and, say, 700 lbs?

1913 opened, therefore, with an interesting situation so far as the wager was concerned. Herewith are the details of the contest as it stood on the 1st January, 1913:—

INCH	ASTON
326½ lbs. Two Hands Anyhow	332 lbs. Barbell & Ringweight
245½ lbs. Right Hand Anyhow	238½ lbs. and Bent Press

572 lbs.	570½ lbs.
Lead by THOMAS INCH of 1½ lbs.	

and cleaning without using . . . It is a these movements over a long period.

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At this point in time it was either's contest. Consequently the fact that an agreement was reached between these two antagonists to increase the sum wagered from £20 to £40 will not surprise anybody sufficiently interested to follow this epic contest closely. Thus, by the issue of *Health and Strength* of 22/2/1913, the two had met and had signed articles for the increase of the wager and had deposited the necessary amounts with the Editor of *H & S*—the stake holder mutually agreed upon by the principals.

By this time the contest had nearly six months to run, and much was to happen before then; indeed, much was to happen afterwards to all the principals concerned in this historic wager. Of that, however, more at a later date.

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