

WHAT THE CAMERA DID NOT FORESEE

Each photograph captures a moment in time, which can be preserved for generations. However, it cannot look back in time nor can it predict the future.

Over the lockdown period I have been working with a few friends to set up a website to act as an archive to preserve old images of the sport of tug of war. The website is initially being built using my own personal collection and even in these early days others in the sport are offering their collections for inclusion. We are planning for the site to go live in the New Year, by which time we hope to have collected a comprehensive range of images.



As part of this project I have been sorting out my old photographs and was overjoyed to find two small black and white images of tug of war teams in action. I sat and looked at each one in turn, attempting to cast my mind back.....who were they and where was that photo taken? I made my best guess that they were the Bata and Loughton tug of war clubs competing at an athletics meeting in Bishops Stortford. What year? Well my guess was 1960.

To my dismay they were both firmly stuck in the album. However, I did eventually manage to lift them out of the album by scraping the glue from the page to protect the photograph. I became excited as I began to see that I had actually written on the back of the photographs. I was correct on virtually all counts apart from the year which was 1959.

I had been 14 years old with a Box Brownie camera and had the foresight to write on the back. What I and the camera could not have foreseen was the fact that I would still be involved in the sport some sixty years later.



On reflection this may not have been such a big surprise in that my grandfather Edmond Mulcahy had pulled tug-of-war in Ireland for Watergrasshill and a generation later my father Patrick Mulcahy had pulled for the same team and numerous teams in England and in the Royal Navy between the 1930s-1960s. In turn my two sons have also competed in the sport.

Despite the sport being in my DNA, I could not have foreseen myself competing in County, National and European Championships between 15yrs and 45yrs old. This was to be followed by a further 30 years as a supporter and official.

As I stood in that field in Bishops Stortford in 1959 it would have been impossible to imagine the future path and friendships this minority sport would map out for me. Sixty years later my interest and passion has not diminished and with the website is growing in new directions.

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