**On Witnessing the First Running of a Mile in under Four Minutes**

[ In the style of William McGonagall]

‘T was in the month of May in Nineteen Fifty-four

That optimistic decade since the Second War

And PM Supermac sincerely felt he should

Tell us all that we had never had it so good

So, folk near Oxford with an athletic bent

To Iffley Road Athletic Ground they went.

On the card was not a Mill-Run ordinary mister

But England’s darling miler – Roger the Bannister

His aim – run a Four Minute Mile ; this modern wonder

[and, with a touch of luck, we’d like a wee bit under].

The competition looms from across the seas;

This prize they, also, are rather keen to seize.

 John Landy, a wizard from the land of Oz;

Santee, Wesley from the land of Presley.

Fierce opponents, as sure, as ever was.

Two Christophers, good friends, are there to help our man.

The three of them – they have devised a simple plan.

Chris one: - two laps at sixty seconds each, to set the pace

Chris two - take over – and a third lap at this rate;

The fourth lap - Bannister alone – pushing at an open gate.

Across the road and up the hill, behold, is

The Parish church of John the Evangelist.

St George’s Cross flies from the flagpole on the tower.

And shews the wind is far from lacking any power.

The West wind doth blow and we shall have no

Record attempts. But what is this? Lo,

The game’s back on – St Gorge’s standard droops;

Now, our men must be prepared to jump through hoops.

Indeed; at the gun they, quickly, set into a sandwich mode:

Brasher, Bannister, Chataway; the filling must be spared the load;

The crowd’s excitement starts to build, there‘s something in the air.

Lap one is run in under sixty seconds, the crowd thinks ‘Do we dare?’

The half mile clocks below two minutes; Brasher has excelled.

The sandwich is reversed; the crowd, fuelled by this drama, yelled and yelled.

Chataway delivers, at the bell, three minutes and a bit.

The world, for a moment, stops still – the crowd thinks: ‘Can this be it?

The hopes and fears for all these years will be revealed to us -

In our back yard, to students on the Iffley Omnibus?’

The noise is deafening at the tape; we know it must be close to four.

Norris McWhirter, of Guinness Record fame can sense an open door.

He whistles down the Tanoy to call us all to heel

Anticipation in the air is close enough to feel

He spins out the result as details are unfurled

Ground record, on and on up to the world;

The time he’s keeping up his sleeve,

He, clearly, wants us to believe

But, for those like me who want the stats for free,

**All we heard was ‘three’!**

*Roger Shakeshaft. January 2024.*