FOUR MINUTE MILE

Cross , at Oxford, Magdalen Bridge then cycle round,

To reach, tucked in the river Cherwell’s basin,

The, now fabled, Iffley Road Athletic Ground.

Here, a year on from Everest and her Coronation,

Three Achilles meet to plan and carve their notch.

One of them will run four circuits of the track

Against the second hand’s four circuits of a watch.

Is it on? The wind has dropped, we can’t go back.

Saint George’s flag is dipped; don’t waste a sec.

Three laps on time, then Bannister’s let free;

The second hand is breathing down his neck;

The tape, the wait and then McWhirter’s “three”.

Fated, we thank the gods for Iffley Meadow,

And I can claim: “Et in arcadia ego”.

*©Roger Shakeshaft*

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