
ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 2001

All members will wish to congratulate Rory MacLeay and his team on our second Cricketer Cup success, 9 years after the first. Then, in 1992, the Ramblers were probably ante-post favourites and John Barclay had at his disposal by some way the best bowling side in the competition. 4 of that team remained (5, counting Daphne Frost, our indefatigable scorer): MacLeay, Brooks, Chetwood and Lane, and 2 others, Redmayne *ma* and Gouriet (XIIth man in 1992), answered a late call in one of the early rounds. We were in the weaker half of the draw but, last out of the hat, we would have no home fixture. Hopes were high (see last year's Notice) but it was felt that we would need a bit of luck in the later rounds. In the event we had two large slices of luck during the last wicket stand in the semi-final (when the ball was in the air above an opposition fielder), but it was resolution combined with strength in depth which brought wins in the last three games with 6, 5 and 3 balls to spare.

RESULTS

Overall the results were a little disappointing with only 6 wins in addition to the 5 in the Cricketer Cup against 13 losses. Huntington retained his position at the top of the batting averages and MacLeay was the leading run scorer. St George took most wickets but was narrowly headed by Cowen in the bowling averages. Chetwood was third in both sets of averages.

A few years ago John Farmer became the first Rambler since the war to score a century for the Club when over the age of 50. This year Peter Lowndes came close to emulating this with a 99, thought to be the highest score ever made by a Trustee.

CRICKETER CUP

1st Round - Highgate, 10th June

Eton Ramblers 290/6 - Old Cholmeleians 86/9

In the past Highgate have produced many distinguished cricketers, from RWV Robins to P Tufnell, but at present they are going through a lean period and this was evident off the field as well as on, when the 7 Rambler supporters who braved the elements easily outnumbered the home crowd.

The Old Cholmeleians put the Ramblers in to bat and, to their credit, stayed out in really dreadful weather while the Ramblers scored more or less at will, Chetwood contributing a century. At about tea time the north-east wind moved round a few points and the sleet softened to rain, but the home team's batting was no better than their bowling and the spectators headed homewards for a hot bath.

2nd Round - Stowe, 24th June

Stowe Templars 192 - Eton Ramblers 193/4

The lovely setting of the Stowe ground and a glorious summer day combined to provide a welcome contrast to conditions a fortnight earlier. The Templars won the toss, but accurate Rambler bowling restricted them to 81/4 off 33 overs at lunch. An extraordinary

spate of wides - 26 in all - helped to raise the scoring rate, but the Templars were all out for 192 in the last over. When the Ramblers batted MacLeay's cover driving was as good as one could wish to see and the 50 came up in the 6th over. There was a minor scare after tea, when 132/1 became 144/4, but A Loudon, Morgan and Chetwood saw the Ramblers home safely.

3rd Round - Brighton, 8th July Old Brightonians 218 - Eton Ramblers 219/5

Overnight rain had seeped under the covers and a delayed start reduced the match to 50 overs; MacLeay's decision to field did not look to be working too well after 15 overs when the score was 85/0; it was at about that stage that the home supporters were reminding us that Brighton had scored 456/8 against Haileybury in the first round, but as soon as Chetwood came on the situation changed completely: he took 6 for 23 and the innings ended 3 overs early at 218.

MacLeay again batted well, ably supported in turn by the Loudon brothers and St George, and the Ramblers seemed to be heading for a comfortable win when 3 wickets fell rapidly with the overs beginning to run out; but Redmayne *mi* kept his head and Brooks's 6 and 4 in the penultimate over - the massive 6 reminded us of Jenkins 9 years earlier - brought victory with 6 balls to spare.

Ralph Oliphant-Callum, the cricket beak who does much valuable work on the Committee and who was among the spectators, had made top score for the Old Brightonians on that high-scoring day in 1992. A regular member of their team for some years, he had asked not to be considered in 2000, when he played very little cricket. Some Brighton supporters felt that their selectors might have been wise to check whether he was playing again in 2001. They would have found that he was.

Semi-final - Wellington, 22nd July Old Wellingtonians 179/9 - Eton Ramblers 180/9

Before the match started on an overcast day the Wellington cricket beak, who was playing against us and who knew the ground and the skills of nearly all the 22 players, said that 180 would be a winning score and advised anyone who could get 5 to 4 against either side to take the bet. It was the most accurate prediction I have ever heard about a cricket match: for a few balls after Wellington lost their 8th wicket at 138 the odds might have been 11 to 10 on Eton, and twice during the final partnership, when the ball was in the air with a fielder underneath, perhaps 11 to 10 on Wellington, but for the other 108 overs the outcome of the match was exactly an even chance.

Wellington won the toss and batted; R Bruce knocked a stump out in the first over but Wellington then made steady progress until St George took 3 wickets in 2 overs to make the score 68/4. Chetwood again bowled superbly, finishing with the remarkable figures of 3 for 13 in his 12 overs, including 4 consecutive maidens. A flourish from Bishop who made 41 not out at number 9 brought the score to 179/9.

The Rambler innings followed much the same pattern with neither bat nor ball ever establishing a clear superiority. Useful contributions from Lightfoot, H Loudon and Morgan - with 49 the top scorer of the day - set the scene for the last wicket stand between the Rambler opening bowlers, the Bruce brothers. They came together needing 13 to make Dyer's prediction come precisely true - and 13 they made, bringing victory off the first ball of the last over.

Final - Roehampton, 12th August Oundle Rovers 204/8 - Eton Ramblers 206/5

No doubt there was a good reason why the Final of the Cricketer Cup was moved from

Vincent Square, but the Bank of England ground, well-appointed though it is, seemed rather a grim place and is not at all easy to get to by public transport. This was reflected in the attendance; in 1992 at Vincent Square there were 60 Ramblers among a crowd of about 1200. Here there were 31 Ramblers and I doubt whether the total gate was much more than 300. The most senior Rambler spectators were Gavin Doyle and Bay Hodgson, and the others, about half of whom had played in the competition in earlier years, included Tim Usher, who had played in our defeat by the Oundle Rovers in 1974 and who had come down from Scotland for the day, and George Francis, the Beachcroft Stanleys partner who had entertained us so well in 1992.

I had never visited the ground before, but on the mile and a half walk from the station (an extra half-mile because the gate which we were assured would be open remained firmly locked) I began to fear that Childe Roland's Dark Tower would lie within the heavily fenced perimeter and that a blast on the slug-horn might be a prerequisite for admission.

Heavy cloud and drizzle delayed the start and reduced the match to 50 overs. MacLeay prefers to chase a target and he put Oundle Rovers in to bat even though the ball was sure to be wet for the first hour. The Oundle openers took advantage of this and brought the 50 up in the tenth over. J Bruce broke the opening stand, after which the accurate slower bowling of St George, A Loudon and Chetwood kept the scoring rate for the middle 30 overs of the innings below 3 per over, during which time 5 wickets fell. A final flourish by the Rovers' two most experienced campaigners, scoring at better than a run a ball, left the Ramblers with 205 to win.

After the openers had gone cheaply, A Loudon played the best innings of the match, putting on 63 with Lightfoot and 76 with St George and setting the scene for one of the most exciting finishes seen at a Cricketer Cup Final. Such a situation is tailor-made for Morgan who, with the overs running out, scored 38 off 30 balls. When Brooks came to the wicket 25 were still required; Morgan only allowed him to face 2 balls and, at 7.45 pm in the gathering gloom, with 9 needed from the final over, struck the first three balls in the mid-wicket direction for 2,4,4. After the luxuries of 6 and 5 ball cushions in the previous 2 rounds, it was perhaps fitting that the margin in the Final should have been reduced to 3.

The skills of wicketkeepers who bat down the order often go largely unsung; Ollie Lane, who provided that service for the Ramblers for more than ten years, decided after the final to hang up his Cricketer Cup gloves. His expertise behind the stumps played no small part in both our successful campaigns and the team will miss his infectious enthusiasm and cheerfulness. Some members will have seen an excellent action-photograph of him in the Times.

There is no sponsor at the moment and the arrangements at the Final did not come close to matching those made by Beachcroft Stanleys 9 years ago at Vincent Square, nor was there any official celebration dinner - so we arranged our own at Queen's in December when the winning team and 5 others who had played in earlier rounds were guests of the Club to hear John Barclay's congratulation of the victors and Rory MacLeay's reply, during which he announced his retirement as Captain (he is to be replaced by Chris St George) - but not from availability for selection. An excellent dinner, arranged by Peter Lowndes and Mervyn Dunnington-Jefferson, was enjoyed by 73 Ramblers varying downwards in age from the Captain of the 1942 XI and including 9 other Captains XI and 33 members who had played in the competition in the past.

If any member who has such matters at his disposal would like to consider sponsoring the Cricketer Cup, I should be very pleased to hear from him. The outlay, I am assured, is very modest by modern "corporate hospitality" standards.

Christopher Home has produced a very full Historical & Statistical Summary of the Ramblers' achievements in the Cricketer Cup to date which I commend to members, particularly those who have played in the competition. Copies are available from the Hon. Sec.. Christopher's son Richard has played a few games for the team and seems to be, with Henry Dixon, joint XIIth man/first reserve.

Next year we are at home to Wellington in the first round on Sunday 2nd June - when, no doubt, they will be keen to exact their revenge for this year's defeat. Plenty of Rambler support will be very welcome.

LORD'S

For the first 161 years of this fixture, until 1996, rain never succeeded in washing play out completely; whether Global Warming, disapproval from above of limited overs cricket for schoolboys or MCC mucking around with the dates was responsible is a matter for conjecture, but in the 5 years since then it has washed out 3 matches, including last summer's.

A replacement match was arranged at Eton a few days later, which Eton won by 13 runs, but news of this did not reach the Ramblers until afterwards. The XI had a disappointing season, winning 7 matches but losing 10.

This year the date is Saturday 25th May.

OBITUARY

FG Mann OBE DSO MC (XI 1934-36: Captain 36). Much was written in the national press about his deeds with the Scots Guards during the war and about his exploits on the cricket field for Eton, Cambridge, Middlesex and England. I met him only once, but I believe that this brief tribute from Henry Hely-Hutchinson (Captain XI 1944) will summarise many people's memories: "Dear George Mann: everybody's favourite, everybody's hero. What an exemplary life. If I were mapping out a life-agenda for any young man, it would depart very little from his example".

FINANCE

New members continue to be elected in good numbers (this year's batch included one who, at the age of 49, scored a hundred against Tim Rice's team touring in Cornwall). The Hon. Treas., who has, after many years of distinguished service, announced his retirement from the Cricketer Cup team - but not, I am glad to say, from the treasury - assures us that the finances remain in a healthy state.

For technical reasons connected with the Golden Jubilee Year, which I did not fully understand when they were explained to me, there is to be no Fourth of June in 2002, but the matches against the School and the XXII will take place on Thursday 9 May and Saturday 15 June respectively.

Our thanks, as always, to Rory MacLeay, Michael Brooks and Piers Inkin for all the work they do behind the scenes for the Club, and our best wishes to Chris St George: the winners on Upper Club on 2nd June will be fancied to go far in next year's Cricketer Cup: would it not be good if the Ramblers could become the fourth club to defend their title?

FLOREAT ETONA

Cedric Gunnery
President

January 2001.