

ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 1991

PRESIDENT

It is with considerable trepidation that I take on the duties about which you were warned in my predecessor's notes last year. I feel most undeservedly honoured, and can only assure you that I shall do my best not to let standards slip.

I am delighted to be able to report that, after nearly a year when he was effectively out of circulation, John Hogg came to watch our Cricketer Cup team in action last summer, and that he attended the Committee Meeting in December (as a Trustee) and was able to stay for dinner afterwards.

RESULTS

The results on the field in 1991 could not quite match those of 1990, but we still recorded more wins than losses – 19 against 18. There were 11 draws and a further 11 matches not played, three due to rain and the rest 'scratched' for a variety of reasons, including the Gulf War. These results include a tour to Holland in June, arranged at short notice by David Bingham, to take part in a tournament in The Hague. The Ramblers were outgunned in their three matches, the standard turning out to be far higher than had been anticipated, but I am assured that they more than held their own off the field.

For (at least) the third year running the first three in the batting averages achieved more than 50; the Hon Treasurer, aided by several not outs, led the field with 78.00, followed by Rory Macleay, easily the top run-scorer, and William Robins.

Among the eight centuries scored for the Club, Victor Cazalet was responsible for two in his only two innings, and it was good to see Rupert Daniels back on that list after a gap of a year or two.

Rupert Ashe headed the bowling averages with 8 for 100, and the leading wicket takers, all with between 24 and 29 victims, were Tom Parnell, Rupert Gouriet, Andy Watt and Charlie Redmayne.

The matches against the School and the XXII on 29th May were played in the coldest weather that anyone could remember for a cricket match. Except for the merciful absence of fog it might more properly have been St Andrew's Day than the Fourth of June, and sensible Ramblers among the spectators wore thick tweed suits, heavy overcoats, scarves and gloves. It is reported that the sanatoria at Heathfield and Down House treated several cases of frostbite and pneumonia the following day.

The Yorkshire Week flourishes, thanks to John and Heather Consett who continue to house nearly all the Rambler team. I was delighted to be able to watch two of the matches, and to sample the Consett hospitality at the traditional party at Brawith after the Northallerton game. Thanks to the timely arrival of Julian Jenkinson in Yorkshire for an exhibition in Harrogate, and to the eagerness of my host, Richard Mountgarret, to revive the practice of fifteen years ago, the Hon Sec was hijacked from Brawith to Stanley one night to make up a four at bridge. It was good to see Kenneth Hedley, a former manager of the Yorkshire Week, watching at Northallerton from the vantage point of his wheel chair.

The fixture list for 1992 shows a reduction of six matches, partly due to the lack of any of our regular touring opponents next summer and partly because your Committee has, with some reluctance, decided to drop a couple of fixtures where we have, in recent years, had great difficulty in raising a side.

For at least 40 years to my knowledge, Ramblers have been very bad at applying to play in matches: our excellent Match Managers have a difficult enough job anyway, but it would be made far easier if playing members would read, and act upon, the first of the Notes which appear on the back of the fixture card each year: "Members who wish to play in any Match are particularly asked to WRITE or TELEPHONE to the Manager and not wait to be asked." Younger members should never feel shy about applying for matches and, if doing so to Managers to whom they may not be known, should give some indication of their prowess.

CRICKETER CUP

For the third time the Ramblers reached the semi-finals, but our first appearance in the final must wait at least one more year. In the first round we had a fairly easy victory against Stowe (275/5: 112), helped by William Robins, who scored what was only the second Rambler century in the 25 years of the competition. At Radley it rained all day, and neither side was able to field its strongest team on Agar's a week later. We must presume that this affected Radley more than us, as we won without too much difficulty (183/7: 78).

The third round produced an excellent match at Bradfield which, had the Waifs' middle order kept their heads, might have tested the Rambler captain's skills in field-placing and changing the bowling even further. As it was, he never doubted that we would win, but some Rambler hearts around the boundary, not normally considered faint, were delighted to settle for the final margin of 24 runs (189/8: 165). The Waifs' xiith man, who was distressed when all eleven selected ahead of him turned up on time, had, in his more youthful days, opened the innings for Woodcote House in 1945 and 46; I had not met him since then, and so cannot judge whether his view that an older head would have steadied the Bradfield innings was valid. But I do remember that wins for Woodcote in those days were rare.

To suggest that the result of the semi-final at Charterhouse depended on the toss would be ungracious and unworthy. But it would probably be true to say that, the Friars having won it and having scored 232 for 5 – built round a century of high quality by Macmillan – thereafter the Ramblers had little realistic chance, and that a total of 155 did our batsmen less than justice.

Next year we are hosts to them on Agar's in the first round on Sunday 31st May, and Johnnie Barclay, than whom there is no more enthusiastic or expert captain among the 32 schools in the Cricketer Cup, is determined, and confident, that the 1991 result will be reversed.

There is a small band of regular Rambler camp followers who thoroughly enjoy watching these matches, and I would commend it to others as a most agreeable way to spend a summer Sunday afternoon.

LORD'S

Eton reached 145 for 7 to win a hard-fought, low scoring match by three wickets in the last over of a day almost as cold as the Fourth of June. Whittington and Amies had bowled particularly well to dismiss Harrow for 142 in 66 overs, backed up by fielding which can not often have been bettered in schools cricket (although Harrow, later in the day, were not far behind). It was good to see that the first three in the Eton batting order on the scorecard were sons of Ramblers who had themselves played in this match, but if Anthony Wagg (1959/60), Michael Dunning (57/59) and Michael Sellar (49/50) had visions of a famous 9- or 10-wicket victory, these, sadly, perished when no. 4 on the card came to in to face the third ball of the innings, a wicket having fallen to the second and poor Sellar being in hospital with a broken nose sustained while fielding perilously close in at short leg. Although he courageously batted lower down the order, it was left largely to Morgan, who made an excellent 45, to swing the match Eton's way.

Never having played in this match myself, I can not speak from experience; but many Ramblers who have, and can, found it very strange that some of the Eton XI chose to wear caps of other than Eton blue.

You may have read in the press that the Eton & Harrow match had been played at Lord's for the last time; indeed such news appeared in the name of at least one distinguished (Harrovian) figure who should, perhaps, have done what he must have taught many a young journalist – "always check your references".

The truth is that the match will be played at Lord's on Wednesday 24th June 1992, but its whereabouts after that will depend on whether MCC are willing to offer the schools a more attractive date in future years.

Your Committee has reluctantly decided that the expense of a Rambler box can no longer be justified. The hire fee which MCC charged in 1991 was £800, and all food and drink must be purchased from MCC's appointed caterers. The box was better used last summer than ever before, and members were far from mean with their personal contributions but, even after a subsidy of £250 from the GHMC Legacy Fund Trustees and the continued support of John Farmer, the cost to the Club was still over £500.

It would be right here to record the Club's gratitude to John Farmer, who has supported the Rambler box since its inception in 1975 by personally paying a high percentage of its cost each year.

For 1992, and without any commitment thereafter, we have agreed, jointly with the Harrow Wanderers (who have come to the same decision about their box), to hire from MCC the top of Q Stand, entrance to which will be restricted to members of the two clubs and their guests. How many Ramblers will go to Lord's on a Wednesday is completely unpredictable, but we hope that those who do will support this venture. We shall charge a modest entry fee – probably £5 – and refreshments will be on sale from the normal Q Stand bar.

Assuming that MCC do offer an acceptable date for the future, the Committee will consider the continuation of this idea in the light of its success (or otherwise) this year.

OBITUARY

Mark Faber

The huge crowd at Chelsea Old Church just before Christmas was a measure of the affection in which Mark was held by all who knew him, and the obituaries which appeared in the papers, written by his friends John Woodcock and Jim Swanton, paid tribute to his exceptional gifts on the cricket field and the racquets court. We saw all too little of him on the Rambler field after he started to play regularly for Sussex, and his playing days were sadly curtailed by the injury to his leg, on which he was having another operation when complications set in.

Different Ramblers will have different memories of Mark; for me, one which will always remain happened in 1970 when, between playing for Oxford at Lord's and competing in the Swiss Open Golf Championship, he joined the first Rambler tour of Corfu; on non-cricket days the Ramblers used to try to find a relatively empty beach with a suitable taverna, to get full value from the sun and the Demestica. The danger came from the sea in the form of boatloads of Club Med – in those days almost exclusively monoglot French teenagers – whose noisy presence we found extremely disagreeable. Mark's method of sending them elsewhere was to run up to their boat, put on a beaming smile and, waving his hand in the direction of Albania, say "you miserable little grenouilles: go and spoil someone else's afternoon", or words to that effect. They would beam back at him and, as often as not, retreat to sea again.

Harold Tennyson, son of Lionel and great grandson of the Poet Laureate, had been a far better cricketer than those who knew him in recent years – complete with "pebble" lenses and girth at least the equal of mine – would have realised. He had lived for some years in South Africa and France, and was only an occasional visitor to England. It is reputed that he lived in Paris, because, as an enthusiastic bridge player, he was unable to persuade any club in London to play the 'grand goulash'.

Billy Rees-Davies QC was a considerable athlete at Eton (XI 34/5) and a Cambridge cricket blue in 38. In 1939 he joined the Welsh Guards but was badly wounded, losing an arm, and returned to the Bar, to which he had been called just before war broke out. He became MP for Thanet in 1953 and was for 30 years, as *The Times* put it, one of the most colourful members of the House of Commons.

Among other Rambler deaths were two whose distinctions came in other fields than cricket. **Major-General Richard Lloyd**, born of a long line of service to the Raj, started his career in the Bengal Sappers and Miners on the North West Frontier and ended it in the War Office as DMI in the aftermath of Suez; **Major Roger Mortimer** was a household name to generations of students of the Turf as a writer and broadcaster.

FINANCE

As was mentioned in these notes last year, the Club has had to lean too heavily on the Cartwright Legacy Fund to balance its books in recent years. Those of you who study the annual accounts, produced each year by our hard-working Hon Treasurer, Philip Remnant, will have noticed two areas where this particularly applies – the box at Lord's and the Cricketer Cup. I have already mentioned the former, and your Committee has taken steps to ensure that the latter more nearly pays its way in future: until now, the Ramblers, when drawn at home, have always entertained their visitors free of charge, partly because we felt it was the right thing to do and partly on the assumption that they would do likewise when we played away. This assumption has proved to be very wide of the mark, and it now

seems that we are the only school to do this. The Hon Treasurer hopes that the saving which will result from having changed that "are" into "were", combined with secretarial savings now that our addresses have been put on a word processor, and an increase in entry fees, will make the accounts look healthier.

May I remind those older members who used to enjoy their Rambler cricket – and those who did not do so will probably not be reading these notes – that the easiest way of ensuring that coming generations can do the same at reasonable cost is to leave the Club a modest bequest in their will. I see many Ramblers during the course of a year, and I warn those who fit into this category that I shall follow up this exhortation!

Our excellent Hon Assistant Secretary, William Russell, asks me to remind members that we have a stock of Rambler sweaters, for sale at £45 for long-sleeved and £40 for sleeveless. These prices represent a significant saving compared with those on sale elsewhere, and they are available either from himself or from the Hon Treasurer at the addresses and telephone numbers on the Fixture Card.

When a club such as ours changes its President, a lot of transitional work inevitably falls on the rest of the team. May I recommend to other organisations which may be contemplating such a change to make sure that they have a Hon Sec very much like Peter Lowndes?

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CEDRIC GUNNERY
President

January 1992