

ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 1992

All members will wish to congratulate John Barclay and his team on winning the Cricketer Cup, a result which many will feel was long overdue. I hope that they will not think my priorities too badly wrong if other matters are given less coverage than usual in these notes.

RESULTS

Victories in the five rounds of the Cricketer Cup certainly did the statistics no harm, but the overall ratio of 32 wins to 8 losses is the best for many years – maybe ever. Rory Macleay was again the leading run-scorer and headed the batting averages, and Rupert Gouriet, despite missing five days of bowling when on Cricketer Cup XIIth man duties, took most wickets; the bowling averages were headed by Geoffrey Dean, which reflects his considerable success in the Cup matches.

CRICKETER CUP

Until 1987 one of the Champagne Houses had sponsored the Cricketer Cup; since then Beachcroft Stanleys, an old-established City firm of solicitors, have generously assumed the mantle. Their sponsorship consists of a pre-season reception for the presidents, secretaries and captains of the 32 old school clubs in the competition; the presentation of 2 magnums of champagne to the winners of each match, where possible by a partner in the firm who had been at one of the two schools concerned; and a magnificent day at Vincent Square for the final, at which the two teams, plus wives or girl-friends, and a similar number of other supporters nominated by the two clubs, are their guests at a reception at the close of play. A lucky few are also entertained to lunch, and throughout the day, in their marquee. The last event is a celebration dinner at the House of Commons in the autumn, at which the Captain of the winning team has to follow two 'professional' speakers. It will come as no surprise to those who know John Barclay that he more than held his own in the company of the Secretary of State for Wales and the Daily Telegraph Cricket Correspondent.

George Francis, the Beachcroft Stanleys partner who attends many of our matches and who looked after us so well at Vincent Square, although more skilled with *remus* than with *pila* when at Eton, was elected a Rambler at the December committee meeting.

1st Round – Agar's, 31st May

Eton Ramblers 173 – Charterhouse Friars 143

On a slow wicket (Agar's had been under water 24 hours earlier) Eton lost 4 wickets cheaply, at least two to shots which showed a measure of impatience. The innings was rescued by a partnership of 50 between the Ramblers' two most experienced batsmen, Barclay and Rudd, who showed that runs can still be scored at a decent rate when the ball is not coming onto the bat by judicious placing and the quick judgement of a single. This was followed by an exactly equal partnership of a quite different kind between Redmayne and Jenkins. It cannot often have happened that Redmayne has scored less than ten in a partnership of 50, but he was happy to watch for half an hour while Jenkins put Charterhouse's (more than respectable) bowlers to the sword – often, in the case of the faster ones, from three and more yards down the wicket.

173 looked about par for the course but when, shortly after tea, Bristowe, Charterhouse's most dangerous batsman, was missed three times in two overs, you could hear 6 to 4 being called in the vicinity of the Barn. However, with the ball after the third of these misses Dean (unaided by the fielders) accounted for Bristowe, and thereafter was too fast for the Friars' tail, which seemed to start surprisingly high up the order. The 1991 semi-final defeat had, as the Captain had then predicted (see last year's Notice), been avenged.

2nd Round – Brighton, 21st June

Eton Ramblers 307/4 – Old Brightonians 201

On the same day that 17 wickets fell at Lord's in the second Test and that the Harrow Wanderers somehow contrived to lose to the Old Cliftonians, with 9 balls to spare, having made 334, the Ramblers won the toss at Brighton and, on a glorious day, made their highest score in the 26 years of the Cricketer Cup. The first wicket put on 88 and Macleay went on to reach an excellent century. The captain made some inspired changes in the batting order and a remarkable partnership between Redmayne and Jenkins produced 73 runs in the last 6½ overs; Brighton's senior games master, whose two sons were playing against us and who was sharing the scoring duties with me at the time, said that, in 15 years of watching cricket on that ground, he had never seen the ball hit so hard; the best Brighton bowler, whose first five overs had yielded 10 runs, went for a further 68; the final over saw Redmayne's 50, 18 runs in all, and Jenkins putting the last ball onto the roof of a (not all that) nearby three-storey block of classrooms. Brighton started at a faster rate than we had, but once Redmayne had come on as first change, they lost wickets steadily. He added 5 wickets to his 50 runs, and the Ramblers ran out

easy winners.

As a footnote, the same Brighton bowler had, not many years before, won the Gold Award in a Benson & Hedges match when he conceded only two runs in his 11 overs against Kent, and had made a hundred batting for Suffolk in a Minor Counties match. Here he made 11 batting at no. 10.

3rd Round – Agar's, 5th July

Eton Ramblers 193 – Uppingham Rovers 143

On a grey day Uppingham won the toss and, to the disbelief of the Rambler Captain and Hon. Sec., put Eton in to bat. After two early wickets Brooks, who made an excellent 50, and Rudd took the score past 80. It was not the right sort of day for the big hitters, but Barclay held the second half of the innings together assisted, particularly, by Lane at no. 10, and we were all out to the last ball of the 55 overs.

The consensus of opinion at the start had been that 180 would be a winning score, but when the fourth over went for 20, and Uppingham rapidly advanced to 45 without loss, we began to wonder. However, an hour's high-quality spin bowling by Barclay and Whittington brought five wickets for 40 runs. By then Uppingham were behind on scoring rate and, in the gathering gloom, many batsmen of far greater skill than the second half of their order would have found Dean, Redmayne and Rudd less than an attractive proposition. It is unlikely that the Uppingham captain will again surrender first innings in this competition on that sort of a day. Barclay had pulled a muscle while bowling and had to leave the field; happily this mended in time for the next round, but it gave Brooks an hour to display his captaincy skills and brought Gouriet, who discharged the duties of XIIIth man in exemplary fashion throughout the year, onto the field for the only time.

Semi-final – Agar's, 19th July

Eton Ramblers 208/9 – Shrewsbury Saracens 181/9

On a cloudy, but much brighter day, Barclay won the toss and a sound start by Macleay and Robins paved the way for Brooks to play the best innings of the match; he reached his 50 shortly before lunch, when the score was 134/2 from 38 overs. Whether the excellent cold roast beef from the Lomax ovens had a bad effect on the Rambler batsmen or a good one on the Saracen bowlers must remain a mystery, but ten minutes after the resumption our score was 141/5 and it all began to look very different. In the years to come Chetwood will probably make many higher scores in the Cricketer Cup, but few will be more valuable than the 21 he scored that afternoon: his innings ensured that we reached 200 and used all the 55 available overs.

Shrewsbury also made a sound start, and at tea – fixed in this competition at 25 overs – they were very much in contention at 78/2. The Robins tea did not have the same effect on the Saracens that the Lomax lunch had had on the Ramblers, and the score climbed past 100, but just when Hobson, who had made 59, was threatening to cut loose he received a short, sharply rising ball from Dean, which would assuredly have been adjudged a wide had he left it alone, and, with a sort of smash more often seen at Wimbledon than on Agar's Plough, just managed to get a touch. At this point the Salopian President, an old friend and a shrewd judge of one-day cricket, who had observed Barclay's field placings and the accuracy of the Rambler bowlers, conceded defeat; although the innings had nearly twenty overs still to run (and in the end we failed to bowl them out) it was soon apparent that he was right and the Rambler supporters started work on changing their holiday arrangements to get them to Vincent Square on 9th August. The players had always suspected that they would be there and had kept the date free.

Final – Vincent Square, 9th August

Eton Ramblers 199/9 – Repton Pilgrims 84

Barclay again won the toss and after the openers had each been given an early 'life' – Macleay's a straightforward chance behind the wicket in the first over and Robins's a harder one in the slips twenty minutes later – there were no further preprandial alarms and at lunch the Ramblers' score was 115/0. Once again the interval caused a collapse: if the lunch in the pavilion was anything like as good as that which Beachcroft Stanleys gave to their guests in the tent it could hardly have been otherwise. This time it was Whittington's turn to hold the end of the innings together, and 14 runs from the final over left Repton with exactly 200 to win.

The story of their innings is quickly told; after an early Redmayne wicket, Barclay took over from Dean after four overs and Whittington from Redmayne after nine; when Dean returned on the completion of Barclay's allotted spell there were only three wickets left for him, the two spinners having taken 6 for 40 in 23 overs. It was probably the finest exhibition of slow bowling seen at a Cricketer Cup Final, and it certainly ruined any chance of an exciting finish. I can not speak for the other thousand-odd spectators, but the 60 or so Ramblers present did not mind at all.

The two slow bowlers generally acknowledged as the best in the first 25 years of the Cricketer Cup were Andrew Barker of Charterhouse, for all those 25 years, and maybe a few more to come (his plane this year got him to Agar's an hour too late) and Richard Gracey of Tonbridge, for at least the first 20. They must each have played more than 50 matches, but seldom can either have bowled as well as Barclay and Whittington did in the 1992 final.

Among Ramblers, headed by the Lord Lieutenant and including all our surviving Cricketer Cup

Captains, who had come to Vincent Square to support John Barclay and his team, were a number who had seen little Rambler cricket since their own playing days. Many of these found the standard of fielding hard to believe (to be fair, and apart from the two early misses, Repton's was almost as good as Eton's), nor could they recall a match when ten other Ramblers had seemed entirely happy to leave the captaincy unchallenged in the appointed hands. I am delighted to report that the same hands will be available next year.

It would be wrong to finish this account of the Final without mentioning Daphne Frost, the Rambler Scorer. A Solicitor in her spare time, she has been scoring for the Ramblers in this competition for over 10 years and was as delighted by our success as anyone present.

In 1993 we have been drawn away to Bradfield in the first round on Sunday 30th May. I hope that many of those who enjoyed their day at Vincent Square will come along. It is unlikely that the Trustees of the GHMC Legacy will again underwrite the cost of a complete mailing when next we reach the final, and we may of course lose in the first round next year – we only just beat Bradfield in 1991. But for those members who like to follow the fortunes of our team, particularly with a view to attending the next round – and I hope this year's success will have increased that number – the results generally appear in the Daily Telegraph, and sometimes in the Times, on the Tuesday or Wednesday; or a telephone call to the Hon. Sec. or to me will provide the answer – usually, I hope, a satisfactory one.

For many years the catering at our home matches has been in the charge of Ian and Joanna Lomax, assisted by a number of other Ramblers and Rambler wives and still including, I am delighted to say, the Immediate Past President, who has lost none of his skills with the drying-up cloth. [He and his successor have never been trusted to play any part in the catering operation which requires a wider knowledge of the art than that.] As well as providing by far the best lunches we have met on the 'circuit' – with the possible exception of that rainy day at Ampleforth long ago, when the Abbot dipped quite deep into his port cellar – their support has been tremendous, and John Barclay has asked me to say how much it has meant to him and his team – particularly as they turn up just as faithfully at away matches.

The Hon. Sec. arranged that the usual Match Managers' Dinner after the December Committee Meeting should be turned into a celebration of our victory. The winning team were guests of the Club, and we also invited the Head Master and a few others from Eton, from the Sponsors and from the Cricketer Magazine. We sent notices to all who had played in our Cricketer Cup team over the 26 years and to all who had come to Vincent Square for the final. The result was that 80 people had a splendid evening and enjoyed Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie's proposal of the toast to the team and John Barclay's reply.

LORD'S 1992

All those who played last year having left, Eton inevitably had an inexperienced XI: the bowling was steady but not very penetrating, and the batting sound but rather one-paced. They fielded almost as well as their predecessors, and came to Lord's undefeated – but neither had they won a match.

The general feeling was that Harrow had their best chance for years of winning. Against the odds Eton took three quick wickets, but thereafter, except for one difficult chance in the slips, they never looked very likely to take another. It made little sense to either Ramblers or Wanderers in Q Stand that Harrow spent the next three hours scoring at exactly 2 runs per over; or that, having accelerated a little towards the end, they decided to bat for a total of 87 overs and to leave Eton a target of 210 in 44. It was very much to Trusted's, and his bowlers', credit that, during nearly four and a half hours in the field, Eton's over rate was above 19.5 per hour. Had Harrow bowled Eton out (and for a few minutes either side of 7.00pm some normally talkative Ramblers seemed to become surprisingly quiet) there would have been nothing more to say; as it was, Eton happily settled for a draw at 137 for 7 and we were left to guess what might have happened if Harrow had declared half an hour earlier.

Dull though most of the events on the field were, the Q Stand experiment was voted a great success by Ramblers and Wanderers alike, and the Wednesday attendance was hardly less than on recent Saturdays. It was Brian Johnston's 80th birthday and the date of the publication of his latest book. During what I believe is called a 'photo-opportunity' associated with this, the Ramblers presented him with a magnum of champagne to mark the occasion.

Two last thoughts: several Ramblers remarked on how good it was to see eleven fielders coming out after lunch wearing Eton blue caps (see last year's Notice) – but not many marks to the Times sports editor for allowing his reporter's solecism “. . . against Eton in their traditional fixture, which was played at Lord's for the first time yesterday.” to appear uncorrected.

In 1993 the match will be played on Tuesday 29th June, and the Q Stand experiment will be repeated.

FINANCE

The measures which we introduced a year ago seem to have proved successful, and the Hon. Treasurer is not ringing any alarm bells at present.

OBITUARY

Kenneth Hedley was one of those Ramblers who became a far better cricketer after he had left Eton. The Ramblers played a large part in his life for many years: when he was an instructor at Sandhurst he introduced many a young Etonian to Rambler cricket; while still in the Army he ran Rambler matches or weekends wherever he happened to be stationed; when he moved to Yorkshire he restarted that Week and ran it for eight years, latterly jointly with John Consett. His last years were not very happy, particularly after Lucy's death, and he found it difficult to come to terms with life in a wheel chair; so it was probably for the best that the final chapter, spent between hospital and nursing home, was not longer. Kenneth had played in more Rambler matches and scored more runs than anyone else had done when he retired. Although one member still playing has now overtaken the former and two the latter, one record remains – the 1,192 runs he scored in 1961 is still the most anyone has achieved in a season. John Farmer paid tribute to all these things in the address he gave at the funeral – held on a lovely September day in his step-son's parish in Yorkshire with the coffin draped, at his step-daughter Kate's request, in a Rambler flag (removed at the last moment: not even Ken could keep that).

Charles Impey (XI 1947/48). His friend the Vice-Provost (for some reason not then a Rambler: the error was corrected in December) arranged a splendid Memorial Service in College Chapel, where there were many Ramblers among the large congregation; a worse-than-usual traffic jam on the M4 had made road travel from London very hazardous that day, and there were a number of late arrivals who were only allowed in by the Holy Poker in batches and then only to sit on the knife-boards; David Buchan, amongst others, found them less comfortable than in his schooldays. The Service was followed by what I am sure should not be called a Reception in School Hall; but the gathering, whatever it should be called, was, as Charles's brother Hugh (XI 1951) had hoped it would be, a happy rather than a sad occasion and completed a fitting farewell to a devoted supporter of Eton and the Ramblers, who may well have served more terms on the Committee than anyone else.

There was no more loyal Rambler than Sir Charles Mott-Radclyffe, whose last appearances, both for and against, were in the second half of his seventh decade. He was almost always to be seen at the Fourth of June and Lord's, and never missed a Rambler Dinner; indeed he had bought a ticket for the Cricketer Cup celebration dinner in December, but to our great regret died suddenly a week before it.

Among other Rambler deaths were several whose distinctions came in fields other than cricket, and to whom tribute has been paid in more widely-read obituary columns than this: the Earl of Southesk, believed, at 98, to have been the oldest living Rambler; the Lords Lieutenant of Gloucestershire and of Cambridgeshire, the latter a generous host for many years to Rambler sides at Longstowe; Earl Spencer, another host to Rambler sides playing his son's XI at Althorp; Lord Roborough, Lord Lieutenant of Devon for over twenty years, and his Vice-Lieutenant for most of that time, Brigadier P B E Acland, the only Rambler, and possibly the only man, ever to have been present at the induction of his son (not yet a Rambler) as Provost; Sir Maynard Jenour, big in South Wales and cement; Lance Aubrey-Fletcher, sometime Metropolitan Magistrate and a regular player until the early 1960s; Quinny Hoare, formidable at the bridge table and Captain of St. George's in the run-up to their first Open after the war; William Douglas Home, who made that brilliant speech at the Rambler dinner in 1982, but whose reputation for iconoclasm was such that his brother asked for – and was given – the right of reply.

It has long been the policy to have a resident Rambler beak on the Committee. Sadly, this species is becoming endangered, and it was decided, when Tim Young was appointed Headmaster of Royal Grammar School, Guildford at the end of the summer, to ask the Master-in-Charge to join the Committee, as a co-opted member, to take his place. I am glad to say that John Cloughton, the present incumbent, accepted and got off to a good start by being the first to arrive for the December Committee Meeting.

The Hon. Sec., Peter Lowndes, was one of only three or four to have taken the field for his school in at least one match in each of the first 25 years of the Cricketer Cup. (Another is mentioned above: the Cricketer statisticians are still not confident beyond that). Not everyone would have ruled him out for this year, but he made the selectors' job easier by declaring himself unavailable and, as Manager, taking care of the many off-the-field duties, leaving the Captain only the one job – that of winning the matches. This combination seems to have proved successful: long may it continue.

FLOREAT ETONA

CEDRIC GUNNERY
President

January 1993