

ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 2004

The Rambler cricket records have been kept carefully over the years of the Club's existence. However, the same cannot be said of the records of the memberships' ownership of Thoroughbred Racehorses. For this reason I am unable to ascertain when a Rambler last owned and bred a Classic winner. Nonetheless, how nice it was to see Guy Roxburghe's Attraction winning the 1,000 Guineas at Newmarket almost before the cricket season had started.

2004 SEASON

John Hogg, in his Notices, remarked frequently that the summer had been better for Salmon fishing than for cricket. This has not been the case in recent years, but 2004 reverted to type, somewhat. Despite this we only lost 5 of our 39 matches to rain.

Our results were not quite what one would hope for, winning and losing the same number of games (13). However, amongst our losses were a number of close finishes, perhaps, most notably, when we lost to Sir Paul Getty's very strong side by 1 run.

Four centuries were made for the club and none against. For the first time since 1998, when Ben Cowen performed the feat at Winchester, we had a Rambler Hat Trick by Max Remington-Hobbs in the match against the Lords and Commons, which was, played at Eton, for the first time.

Both sets of averages were headed by new names, which is a healthy sign. Charlie Nissen headed the batting and Lochie Rankin the bowling. It is satisfying to note that the Captain of the 2003 XI, Ben Thompson, played the most games for the club.

CRICKETER CUP

Hugo Loudon's first year as captain was mixed. After a good start at Uppingham, we played at our worst in the second round at Bradfield.

I arrived at Uppingham rather late and was alarmed to find that our opponents were running amok. Hugo kept a calm head, however, and the slower bowlers brought back a measure of control. In addition the fielding held up well and the captain seemed to get his men into the right places. This resulted in Uppingham being bowled out for 237. A decent, but not frightening, target.

We won with rather more ease than at some points seemed likely. This was due, very largely, to a wonderful effort by Mansur Ali Ahmed, who, on debut, carried his bat for 135.

I try not to miss many of our Cricketer Cup matches. They are good fun, usually in nice surroundings and our team deserves support. There is a small nucleus of members who turn up - how nice it would be to see larger numbers. The first round in 2005 is at Eton on Sunday June 12th against the Old Cheltonians.

I did miss our second round at Bradfield. In some ways I was fortunate, but it does mean that my comments are hearsay.

We won the toss and batted first on a decent pitch and after a steady start, lost our way completely. The cause was a Bradfield hat trick by their captain. The Bradfield supporters' comments were that no other player on the pitch would have allowed their Captain to bowl, even in a house match at school! I believe the term occasional bowler to be an overstatement. Nevertheless, this inspired captaincy worked and thereafter, despite the efforts of the lower order, there was no salvation.

We made 98 and lost easily by 8 wickets, albeit the rain nearly saved us.

A lesson that we might learn is to keep some older heads in the middle order to stabilise things in such circumstances. We have some very talented younger batsman, but a few grey hairs around them may be advisable.

LORD'S

It is always nice to report on an Eton victory and a deserved one, even if there were moments when things did not seem to be going entirely according to plan. The Eton Captain, Edward Nissen, played, what many present felt to be one of the outstanding innings for many years. His 127 was made at a run a minute, and was the primary reason that a competitive total was achieved.

The much vaunted Harrow early order seemed to be going along serenely, if a little on the slow side. An excellent catch by Ed Bruce, an even better stumping by Guy George and some persistent bowling from Harry Franks (a third generation Franks to play at Lord's) pulled things back Eton's way and they kept a firm hold on proceedings for the rest of the match..

The 2005 match will take place on Saturday, June 18th. This will be the 200th anniversary of the first Eton v Harrow match at Lord's. Those of you who were in the XI will have received the Vice-Provost's letter outlining the plans for a celebration dinner the night before, This is an event organised by the two Schools and the space available necessarily limits numbers.

There is a select band of 12th men, who may wonder about their entitlement to attend. The XI boards in the Pavilion on Agar's Plough, from 1946 record the 12th men, and they should have been circulated. If there are any members who fall into the pre 1946, era, and who have not been notified, please let me know and I will pass the information to the Vice-Provost.

I would hope that Ramblers will make a special effort to attend the Eton v Harrow match itself, even if they do not qualify for the dinner. The Varsity match takes place during the day of the dinner (Friday, June 17th) and perhaps this combination will encourage those from far afield to visit Headquarters.

FINANCES

Those observant amongst you will spot that we have had an 11 month financial year and the new Treasurer did very well to get the accounts ready in time. The reason for the change was to enable the Club to have the Committee Meeting in November, when attendance for the Committee Members is easier.

The Committee agreed to the Treasurer's request for an increase in Match Fees to £20, but overall the Finances are healthy. There were no donations received last year, but one was due and this has now been paid, but comes into the current financial year.

We are very fortunate to have our investments and legacies. In addition we keep stocks of ties and sweaters. Members wishing to buy these items can do so through the treasurer, at a price somewhat lower than certain retail outlets.

CLUB HISTORY

Christopher Horne has spent a huge amount of time and effort in compiling a new History of the Club. Two volumes, both long since out of print, have been written previously covering the period 1862 to 1914. Buns Cartwright wrote a lengthy set of articles for the Cricketer Magazine. These articles brought the history up to date to 1939. It is most surprising that Buns, in his latter years, never seems to have let on to anyone about his work.

John Farmer has been assisting Christopher and keeping a watching brief. My predecessor, a renowned proof reader, also has helped. The membership will be kept informed on the timing of the publication, which it is hoped will be during this summer.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

The club has traditionally been reluctant to confer Honorary Memberships. This year the Committee decided to make Patrick Croker an Honorary Member. Patrick worked tirelessly for Eton cricket during his many years teaching at Eton, in particular with the juniors, and often the less talented boys. He has also been a near permanent Cricketer Cup supporter for over 10 years. He never shows his divided loyalty on the occasions when we have played the Old Wellingtonians.

OBITUARIES

We seem to have had a bad year losing a large number of distinguished members.

There is no doubt that the most enthusiastic Rambler amongst those we have lost was Bay Hodgson. Few people can have been more loyal to the club for so many years. We will all have our favourite memories of Bay. Everything was done slowly and methodically and one of the few things that agitated him was young Ramblers throwing the ball back to him at an awkward height, when he was bowling, often he would just kick it back to them disdainfully, to try again. It must have been one of his very last Rambler appearances when he bowled Colin Cowdrey second ball at Arundel. The great man had played and missed at the first ball and admitted afterwards that it was clearly a mistake to have played for the turn.

Three of our oldest members Col JA Sperling DSO, HRM Farmer CB and GN Capel Cure left Eton in 1925, 26 and 27 respectively. Only the last named was in the XI, but both the other two were fine Ramblers. Hugh Farmer was a most distinguished Parliamentarian and also sired Tim who has played so much for the club.

Algeron Marsham was a mere youngster in comparison. He was in the XI from 1936 to 1938 and got an Oxford Blue in 1939. He was very highly rated as a leg spinner and was the last survivor of the Rambler side that beat the Australian POWs in Camp Oflag VIIB in 1943.

GH Dixon (XI 1932/3) had the most unusual experience of seeing his son (Mark) make a pair and his Grandson (Henry) make a 100 at Lords.

HM Chinnery was captain of the XI in 1941 and subsequently ADC to Prince Phillip.

Clem Gibson was Captain in 1955 and, after the Eton victory at Lord's, found the time to seek out and thank the Groundsman for his work. I wonder how many other Captains from either school have done the same. He taught at Eton briefly in the 1960's and in recent years had become something of a recluse.

Julian Ayer was in Henry Blofeld's 1957 XI and was lost most unfortunately killed in the Tsunami in Sri Lanka, where he was watching his stepson play cricket on the Harrow School tour. His near contemporary John Baskervyle-Clegg (XI 1957 to 1959) was a very fine wicket keeper batsman who played a lot of cricket for the Army and the Combined Services.

Last, but by no means least, except perhaps in cricketing prowess, was Sir David Gore-Booth KCMG, KCVO. He was a distinguished diplomat, being well known for his political incorrectness.

Floreat Etona

PG Lowndes
President