

ETON RAMBLERS

NOTICE 2011

2011 SEASON

There is only one place to start my Notice this year and that is with a remarkable story. Our match against the Old Hurstjohnians is the oldest on our fixture list. It also, rather less remarkably, is where I was supposed to play my first Rambler match in 1966, but rain prevented any play. This year it was the scene of an extraordinary performance. They batted first and made 326 for 3. A formidable total in any circumstances and quite sufficient, one would think, for at least a draw. Step up Tom McCall who saw us home by 7 wickets and, in the process, making what I believe to be the highest individual Rambler score of all time – 244 not out. It is strange to report that his only other innings for the Club in 2011 did not add to his season's total!

Overall the season's performances could be described as average, but better than last year. Our fixture list comprised 44 matches of which we won 16, lost 13, and drew 3. Of the remainder 3 were abandoned to rain, 2 were totally rained off and a further 7 were cancelled. The last section of 7 is something that almost never happened 20 years ago, but, for reasons that I outlined in my Notice last year, is becoming all too common.

The wins were greatly enhanced by our excellent run in the Cricketer Cup and Ivo Hobson played his part in some of those games, as well as others, and was by far the highest overall scorer with 343 runs at 68.60.

I made the point last year that the number of overs bowled by individuals had become low. In 2011, with the exception of the hard working Rupert Stanning, nobody bowled over 50 overs for the Club. A far cry from 30 years ago when a dozen or so members would bowl over 100 overs and half of those would exceed 200 overs. Enough of that!"

The Club is, overall, in very good heart. Over 150 players turned out for us during the summer and this winter we have toured Sri Lanka with a very young side. Initially we were troubled by the variety and quality of spin that we encountered and lost the first three matches. However, with vigorous leadership by our opener Ed Farley, we overcame this and won our last four games. There is a separate report on the tour, but I must just mention Ed Farley's 118 off 55 balls in a T/20 game enabling us to reach a formidable 193. This proved sufficient, but only by 4 runs!

CRICKETER CUP

2011 is the first season in which we have lost in the final, having won on our previous two appearances. That can hardly be deemed a failure and we played some very good cricket through the earlier rounds.

I very much hope that you will have received the email reports on each round that the wonderfully efficient Jackie Tarrant-Barton sends round on my behalf as each round takes place. This means of keeping members updated seems to have proved enormously popular and I have had copious emails and letters in response, for which I am very grateful.

I am not going to expand on each round here as, for a number of reasons, this is a longer Notice than usual. Suffice it to say that, in many ways, our first round was the most troublesome, as we were rained off at Eton (in common with every other first round match, for, I believe, the first time in the competition's history) and it is never easy to assemble a team for the following Sunday. Our Captain, Alex Loudon, had to be abroad and Ben Thompson took over the reins and led the side with great skill to a notable win.

This was followed by wins against Wellington, Eastbourne and Sherborne to get us to the final. The bowling and fielding was of high class throughout and was most skilfully handled by Alex Loudon. Alex and Simon Hawk formed a formidable opening pair with Alex scoring a fluent hundred against the Old Eastbournians, who were playing in the competition for the first time. Their attack was led by the former Sussex and England bowler Ed Giddings.

The final was a disappointment. I was unable to be there, but have been told by players and spectators alike that we were not at our best. We batted first and were, perhaps, over suspicious of the pitch. Our total of 144 for 9 was never likely to be sufficient, and so it proved. The Old Malvernians made our assessment of the pitch look inaccurate and won very comfortably by 6 wickets.

The vagaries of the Cricketer Cup draw put us against our final opponents in next years first round. We were drawn away, but Malvern have a Prep School competition taking place that weekend. The match, therefore, will be played at Eton on Sunday, 17th June.

LORD'S

Harrow batted first and got off to a poor start losing White early to Warburton. Eton bowled steadily without looking very penetrative up to lunch. By then Harrow appeared to be in a dominant position at 130 for 2 with Cosens and last year's century maker, Sert, looking completely at ease. After lunch the introduction of Hayes' off spin from the

Nursery End (always presumed to be the wrong end for an off spinner!) changed the course of the match. It is difficult to tell from side on, however my impression was that he didn't turn the ball very much, but varied his pace beautifully, beating batsman after batsman in the air. He ended with figures of 5 for 19 in 8 overs, greatly impressing no less an authority than JRT Barclay, who commented in his inimitable way "reminded me of myself – hardly turned the ball at all"! Mention should also be made of Macdonagh who had most creditable figures of 3 for 29. Harrow were all out for 180.

Eton started well with Hayes and James looking very impressive until Hayes played at a ball that would have been better left alone. Shaw looked out of sorts and after much playing and missing touched one to the wicket keeper (how nice to see someone walk off without waiting for the umpire to give a decision). James' dismissal left Eton rather precariously placed at 40 for 3, but Senaratne and the Captain, Oram, played very calmly and with great assurance both completing their half centuries. It was sad, if irrelevant to the outcome, that Oram could not have been at the crease at the end, but, despite his dismissal, Eton won a deserved victory by 4 wickets.

This year's side was not full of world beaters, but knew what they wanted to do and did it rather well. Competent rather than spectacular, but most effective.

The match in 2012 will be at Lord's on Saturday, June 23rd.

FINANCES

I am delighted to report that this year's accounts continue to remain healthy. We had a high number of new members during the year, which is our principal source of income. Our expenses were up, but the major part of this was caused by the requirement of a reprinting of our stock of fixture cards, which will last us for a number of years.

It is good to report that those members who have just left school, or are in their first year after leaving, are enabled to play for the Club with no match fee thanks to the generosity of Patrick Croker whose donation to the Club was designated for that purpose and greatly appreciated.

Lastly under this heading I want to pay tribute to Rob Bruce's work as our Treasurer. As in any organisation it is a thankless task, which he performs with great skill and patience.

ETON RAMBLER FUND

We have about £40,000 still remaining in the fund after the assistance that we have given to the School for the irrigation system and all weather nets. We have also helped the coaching by assisting with the employment of an extra coach at the junior level.

I have been in touch with a number of members regarding the refurbishment of the Agars' Pavilion. For some years now the XI have played on Upper Club and Agar's is no longer considered the main ground. This led to a deterioration of the condition of both the square and the Pavilion. The condition of the square has been addressed and is now playing well. It is being used much more both by the School and the Ramblers. When buildings deteriorate they do so quickly and become expensive to restore and the Pavilion is no exception

We have been very fortunate that Johnnie Boden has taken this project to heart and is, in every respect, leading the way in its restoration. (You will have received a letter from in recent weeks). Plans have been drawn up which will bring the building back to its former glory, but at a cost. It is expected that the overall cost will amount to nearly £900,000. Johnnie has started the ball rolling with £300,000 and the School have agreed to contribute £200,000. By approaching a small number of members and parents (some not OEs) we have managed to push the total to date to £770,000 and, therefore, we are nearly there.

It is a fact of life nowadays that, if we are to continue to see excellence across the board at Eton (and all other schools), outside finance will be required. This is as true of cricket as of anything else. I will be continuing to keep the membership apprised of what we are doing, what needs to be done and how you can all help.

CLUB HISTORY

Christopher Horne tells me that we are nearly there. I mentioned last year that those who had been kind enough to make financial loans to assist would be repaid during the year and I trust that has been the case.

THE SESQUICENTENARY

The Eton Ramblers were founded in 1862 and we celebrate our 150 years of continuous existence this autumn. I have formed a Committee to oversee the celebrations. This Committee will cover a range of age groups with myself looking after the "oldies" and then followed by Will Russell, Rory Macleay, John Dunnington-Jefferson and Ed Bruce.

The arrangements so far are that we will field The President's XI v MCC on the Nursery Ground at Lord's on Monday, September 10th and this will be followed by a dinner in the Long Room that evening.

Members will have free entry to the Nursery Ground and refreshments, both solid and liquid, will be available or picnics can be brought. We will be arranging for there to be changing facilities for members who wish to come straight to the dinner from the cricket.

The Long Room has a capacity limited to 200 and may I suggest that you put this date in your diary now and are quick off the mark when the circulation of the application forms comes round during the summer.

As a further extension to our celebrations, Mervyn Dunnington-Jefferson and Will Russell have combined with one of our Rambler trainers, George Baker, in putting together a Rambler syndicate to run a race horse through our sesquicentennial year. You will have been circulated with this information and I am delighted to say that the "take up" was wonderful. Mervyn still has Buns Cartwright's racing silks in the Club colours and the horse will carry these colours. Wouldn't a victory be something special!

How appropriate, also, that in this important year we should have two of our members elected as new members of the MCC Committee. Both Johnnie Barclay and Hugo Loudon received a significant percentage of the vote and I am sure we would like to congratulate them.

OBITUARIES

If my records are correct we lost 17 members during the year, including our oldest member Maj JR Kynaston who left Eton in 1933. Space does not allow me to write about all the others and I will restrict this section to those who played a significant role for the Club.

Julian Jenkinson could hardly have done more for us over a large number of years. He left in 1944 having not made the XI. For the next 40 years he was involved with the Club as a Match Manager, Committee Member, organiser of Tours to South Africa as well as turning out on a regular basis during every season. He was a hard hitting batsmen, more than useful left arm spinner and, for someone of 6ft 7ins, a quite remarkably good fielder, particularly in the covers.

John Boys left in 1937 and like Julian Jenkinson, was a great servant of the Club as player, Match Manager and Committee Member. I seem to recall that he attended every one of our dinners for which he was eligible.

Almost certainly the best cricketer that we have lost was The Rev Peter Blake. Peter was in the XI from 1943 to 1945, captaining the side in 1945. He played in the same Public Schools side as Peter May and, after National Service, went up to Oxford winning a Blue in all three years, captaining the side in 1952 when his opposite number at Cambridge was David Sheppard. He won his County Cap with Sussex before being ordained, after which he still played a bit of cricket with his final match being for the Ramblers against Steyning.

Sir Timothy Raison was the Member of Parliament for Aylesbury from 1970 to 1992 serving as a Minister under both Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher. He left Eton in 1948 where he was in the XXII and for many years ran our match against his old college Christ Church.

David Watney was in the XI in 1950 and played a good deal of Rambler cricket and like John Boys was a loyal supporter of our dinners. Robert Strang Steel was in the XXII in 1952, failing to force his way into the very strong XI of that year. He spent much of his life in the Borders where he was a keen organiser and player in our Border Tours. James Wolfe Murray was from the same part of the world, although he worked for much of his life in London. He was in the 1954 XI and played a few games for Oxford in 1957 without gaining a Blue. He was a highly entertaining companion who played a lot of Rambler cricket over a number of years.

Lastly, Robin Christie, who played in the XI for 3 years, captaining the side in 1960. He went up to Oxford and was close to winning a Blue. Later he played more cricket for the Butterflies than the Ramblers, although he played a few Cricketer Cup matches in the 70s.

Floreat Etona

PG Lowndes
President