



Past and Present Nr. 8 - 1999

Robbie Fowler has one; so too, now, does Joe Gribble: a five-year extension to his contract - for Singles -, having won 15-6 at Number One against Theo Collier on the morning of the Past versus Present at Oundle School, thus setting the Past off towards eventual victory in the 50th match. Bill Townley, despite his eligibility to play for Oxford, did the decent thing and played for the Past this year, losing 7-15 with grace at Number Two to the Secretary, Jonathan Lee, while Andy Pringle won the tightest match, 15-11 against Captain Simon Maskell, at Number Three. Jonny Armitage sacrificed himself nobly at Number Four against James Richardson, who was subsequently to play at Number One in the Varsity Match; Jonny got a suitably small number of points to ensure that the Present retired to The Ship with their traditional lead - of seven points.

Eton Fives Trivia: Have we ever previously had an Eton Fives Half Blue in the VIII, let alone two!?

At the pub Joe passed on advice and experience before motoring off to a wedding in the South; Andy gave an unbiased opinion of the Ford Cougar; David Barnes held court with the young ones; and a variety of ageing dons, schoolmasters and other veterans contemplated the usual task of clawing back points in the Doubles. The Past brought in eight fresh players in an attempt to ensure that the youngsters, with three left-handers amongst them, got some real competition. The Past had none of their top-ranked players such as Hebden, d'Ancona or Taberner available, but Rob Cleave and Alan Matthews at First Pair looked pretty formidable and duly came out a few points ahead after their four games. Chris Caroe and Sam Jones had a topsy-turvy kind of afternoon, losing heavily to the alleged second pair of Ben Thomas and Jonathan Lee and winning comfortably against the first pair of Mark Tsang and Theo Collier. First Martin Wilkinson & Bob Dolby, then David Arnold & Tim Wilson displayed ancient skills at Fourth Pair, notching up a few more for the Past. The triumph of the day, though, belonged to the scratch pairing of Ed Hikmet and Martin Robinson, who won all four of their games and were a major factor in the eventual winning margin for the Past of 251-214. And the courts hardly sweated at all.

Some-Things-Never-Change Trivia: Which distinguished member of the 1949 team watched the whole Past versus Present Match and commented at the end on what a marvellous spirit the game was still played in?

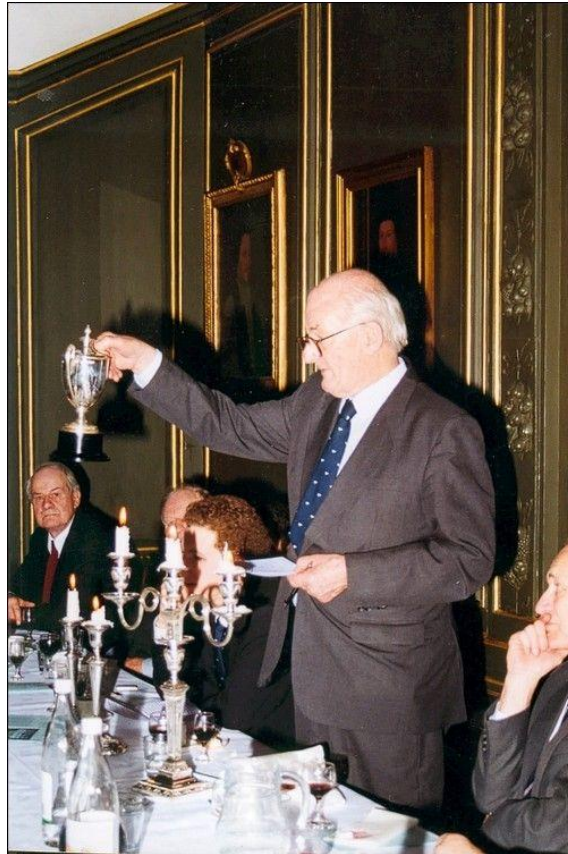
The Pickerel had been warned in advance of the event and, for once, had enough staff on duty to cope with the influx of Sparrows and their partners from 6.00 pm. Chris Caroe went round with camera recording faces for posterity and while they were sober; the match manager doled out ties to the new Sparrows and replaced gravy-stained ones from the 1960s. Elsewhere, at the Hawks Club and local hotels, other groups met and assessed the changes in

each other that the years had wrought. From 7.30 Benson Hall began to fill with the 100 people who would move on to eat in the candle-lit Hall of Magdalene.



Simon Maskell giving the captain's report on the 1999 Season

On top table sat all those who played in 1951 and before, plus the current Captain and Hon.Sec. and guest Peter Reynolds. Sadly neither Dick Knight nor Norman Reddaway were well enough to join us but in Barry Trapnell and Mike Mills we had representatives from the years before the first Past versus Present in 1949 and, extraordinarily, from the very first match there were Chris Metcalfe (played for the Past as an undergraduate, then for the VIII a week later), John Burton, Richard Thomas and Edward Pease-Watkin, plus Barry. But for a bizarre incident in the garden of a Suffolk cottage Tony Abrahams would have been there too. Others at the Dinner, with wives, partners and guests, were Tony Harlow, John Holroyd, Dickie Clarke, Hubert Doggart, Lionel Read, Brian Armitage, Dennis Silk, Raman Subba Row, David Norman, Alan Taylor, David Evans, Colin Hindson, Tony Tiffin, Mike Allen, Richard Jefferson, Mike Seymour, George Todd, David Hares, David Barnes, Christian Arnold, David Cameron, Andrew Lewis, Bob Dolby, Peter Cameron, Chris Bascombe, Don Ellwood, Chris Martin-Jenkins, Chris Hirst, Martin Wilkinson, George Baker, Simon Berry, Tony Dixon, Andrew Cowie, David Arnold, Robin Skinner, Martin Robinson, Rob Cleave, Chris Cates, Gareth Quarry, Tim Wilson, Alan Matthews, Jonathan Boulton, Graham Spensley, Ian Jackson, Andrew Cates, Andy Pringle, Andy Olliver, Jonny Armitage, Paddy d'Ancona, Charlie Scobie, Ed Hikmet, Chris Caroe, Bill Townley, Sam Jones and Olly Twinch. Our guest was Peter Reynolds of Magdalene who has kindly taken on the role of Senior Treasurer now that Barry has been 'disqualified' under the rules of the University from holding that office, though he, of course, remains our President.



Barry Trapnell with the Jock Burnet Trophy

After the meal Barry rose to speak and propose a toast to the memory of Jock Burnet, who initiated the Past versus Present. For the benefit of those ten years' worth of Sparrows who did not know Jock, who died in 1989, I have expanded those words in a later section of this letter. Simon Maskell also spoke, with great wit and immaculate timing, on the problems of being Captain in an institution with no courts and hardly any players. At the end of the evening Sparrows departed to the usual assortment of late night bars clutching their Wall Crest with a unique light blue sparrow adorning it, one of which will one day adorn the non-playing wall of the Cambridge Courts.

While for all those present at the Dinner this year in Magdalene Hall it was a time of celebration, for Barry Trapnell it was a very difficult evening. He had intended, like many of us, to come to the Dinner with his wife, Joan, but on the day before she had had to go into hospital and was diagnosed to have a blood clot in her leg. Barry was faced with the very distressing decision to allow an operation to go ahead to amputate the leg. The operation took place the day after the Dinner. I am delighted to say that it was a success and that Joan is now at home, being looked after by Barry and a full-time carer.

The 69th Varsity Match, 1999

Thanks to the continued flow of players to Cambridge from schools such as St. Paul's and Eastbourne, Simon was able in fact to field not only an VIII but also a Sparrows IV. Only late injury to our best player, Ben Thomas, prevented Cambridge from giving Oxford a decent run in the Varsity Match, but if that match wasn't close, the Sparrows v. Beavers Match was a real cliff-hanger. The highlight of the afternoon was the presentation by match umpire, David

Barnes, of the new Jock Burnet trophy, donated by the Jesters in memory of their founder. At last this contest, first played in 1925, has a worthy trophy, which will reside in the Display Cabinet at Jock's school, St. Paul's, once the record of past matches has been engraved on it.

The Past: We have suffered some particularly sad losses this year. Last month Lord Brandon of Oakbrook, who played in the first Past v. Present in 1949, died. **Henry Brandon** played in the Varsity Match in 1946, having gone up from Winchester to King's as a Scholar in Classics in 1939 but then having his studies interrupted by the Second World War. He rose to the rank of Major in the Royal Artillery, serving in India, Burma and Madagascar, where he was awarded the Military Cross in 1942 for leadership under fire. When he returned to Cambridge he read Law, was called to the Bar in 1946 and took silk in 1961. He was appointed to the Admiralty Division of the High Court in 1966 at the age of 46, to the Court of Appeal in 1978 and the House of Lords in 1981. As an Appeal Court judge he was involved in headline-grabbing judgements on 'Spycatcher', contraception, domestic rape and parental kidnapping. Previous to that we lost **Peter Ingram** (Bedford and St. Catharine's), who played in 1957. For many years Peter taught Chemistry, was Careers Master and ran Fives at Merchant Taylors'. He will be remembered with great affection by all our OMTs from the past four decades. His death from cancer only a year after retirement was particularly cruel. Surely best known to us all was **John Charlton**, who had attended perhaps more dinners than any other Sparrow and who died in October at the age of 58, likewise of cancer. Captain in 1962, a product of Winchester and Jock's adopted college, Magdalene, John entered publishing straight from Cambridge and rose to be chairman of Chatto and Windus. His greatest coup may well have been the recruiting of Dirk Bogarde, whose memoirs were such a considerable success for the firm. John was also chairman of the family gardening business, Great Gardens of England. It was one of Jock's great delights to sit undergraduate players next to John at the Dinner as he clearly held John in the greatest of affection and wanted them exposed to the great humanity and modesty of a man whom The Times referred to as "one of the last gentleman publishers".

Jock Burnet, founder of the Sparrows and the Jesters: In 1928, while still a schoolboy at St. Paul's, Jock Burnet founded the Jesters Cricket Club and later in that year the Jesters Squash Rackets and Fives Club, which played its first match, with Jock one of the players, against the Alleyn Old Boys in December 1928. The purpose of the club was "to play [fives] in a spirit not unworthy of the name of the Club." Jock's own 'Account of the Jesters Club 1928-1978' chronicles the rapid growth of the club, which came to have off-shoots in America, Canada and South Africa and to number among its thousands of members some of the most famous sporting names of the century. Qualities of unselfishness, modesty and friendliness were prerequisites of membership, not merely sporting prowess. After leaving Cambridge, where he gained his Half Blue for Fives in 1932, Jock became a schoolmaster and, in his spare time, an editor. In the war he served on the Air Crew Selection Board where he began to acquire his enormous knowledge of the schools of Britain. Thus in the late 1940s, after a period of work in the publishing world, Jock took on the freelance editorship of the 'Public Schools Yearbook', a task which he performed for 42 years, before becoming Bursar, and later Fellow, of Magdalene College in 1949. He was a governor of five major independent schools and gave most of his life to education and young people. On coming back to Cambridge Jock responded to the wishes of the undergraduates to organise a team representing the Past to play the Present - the first match took place, after an abortive attempt in 1948, on Saturday February 26th 1949 and was won by the Present 245-243 - and was soon after approached to become President of the Rugby Fives Club. From then on Jock

became mentor to generations of players. Words can hardly do justice to the good that he and his wife Pauline did for countless undergraduates, some of whom could be found squatting on the carpet at Jock's feet in their front room at Selwyn Gardens virtually any evening of the year and, during term time, every weekend. Dennis Silk captured the magic of Jock in the obituary he wrote for The Independent: "Each Sunday in term time Jock would sit in his armchair wearing his embroidered bedroom slippers and Marks and Spencer pullover, surrounded by a sea of undergraduates, looking like one of those benign and beaming archdeacons immortalised by Osbert Lancaster. He knew just who to introduce to whom, and took delight in friendships which sprang from his introductions." One of my own strongest memories is of taking a sixteen-year-old Andy Olliver after a match at Portugal Place between a Thames Valley (i.e. Radley) IV and the Sparrows to meet Jock. Andy was to go up to Pembroke two years later and Jock quizzed him gently about himself and Radley as he sat on the floor. Andy was to be in the last VIII that Jock presided over in 1989 and a regular visitor to Selwyn Gardens. Though there are now nearly ten years' worth of players for whom Jock is merely a name, those of us who knew him still feel his presence at the Dinner which now bears his name and which will surely celebrate 100 years in 2049. Hopefully some of those who played in 1999 will attend just as those who played in 1949 did this year.

Correspondence gratefully received and enthusiastically answered!
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Scorecard for Varsity Match 1999 on next page

CAMBRIDGE v. OXFORD 1999
Saturday, February 20th at St. Paul's School

Cambridge	Oxford	
<i>Singles</i>		
JAT Richardson (Eastbourne & Caius)	lost to PM Lord (Bradfield & LMH)	13-15
MPL Tsang (St. Paul's & Emmanuel)	lost to EW Brooke (Eastbourne & Magdalen)	13-15
TAJ Collier (St. Paul's & Trinity)	lost to T Stock (Captain) (St. Dunstan's & St. Peter's)	2-15
SR Maskell (Captain) (Malvern & Corpus Christi)	lost to MS Bate (Eastbourne & Brasenose)	4-15
		32-60
<i>Doubles</i>		
Collier and Tsang	v. Stock and Brooke	7-15 4-15
	v. Lord and Bate	3-15 6-15
Maskell and Richardson	v. Lord and Bate	7-15 8-15
	v. Stock and Brooke	4-15 3-15
JLC Lee (St. Paul's & Clare) and JEN Price (Bradfield & Fitzwilliam)	v. TJ Ambrose (Sherborne & Worcester) and J McManus (Tonbridge & Merton)	5-15 5-15
	v. RM Evans (Whitgift & Somerville) and DJC Monck (Radley & Wycliffe)	15-6 13-15
JS Birch (K.E.S., Birmingham & Corpus) and IA de Weymarn (Bloxham & St. John's)	v. Evans and Monck	15-8 11-15
	v. Ambrose and McManus	9-15 11-15
		127-224
		Cambridge lost by 158-284

In the **Sparrows versus Beavers match**, Oxford won 93-89. Cambridge were represented by JEN Price (Bradfield & Fitzwilliam) [Singles only], IO Steed (Nottingham H.S. & Jesus), SR King (Blundells & Magdalene) and MC Moon (Malvern & Clare) [Singles and Doubles].