



## Past and Present Nr. 10 - 2001

I wonder what Jock would have made of grown fives players replenishing their energies after the Past versus Present on *nachos*, wild mushroom *bruschettas* and Thai sea salad? Worse, what emotions would he have experienced on learning that the Magdalene kitchens had experienced a fire in the week prior to the Dinner and had had to cancel all provision of food, not only for the undergraduates but also for the Sparrows? With a gaping hole in the kitchen ceiling caused by a toppled halogen light installed to illuminate some architectural splendour of the College there was nothing for it but to repair to a local feeding station, Henry's Café Bar, next to Magdalene and only a slightly longer step across the road from The Pickerel than The Parlour.

***Record Breaking Trivia:*** *One Sparrow has now attended three Dinners as an undergraduate and, if his memory serves him right, forty-nine as a Sparrow. Who can that be?*

The Dinner began, of course, in 1949 in 'The Dorothy', so perhaps there is some neatness of nomenclature in the first Dinner of the new Millennium taking place at Henry's. We do hope, however, to return to Ramsay Hall next year. **The date for the Match and Dinner is Saturday 16th February, 2002.** Do please put it in your diary now and ensure a really good turn-out for 2002, when we shall take on, and then entertain, the Present for the 53rd time. Such is the standard of play being achieved by the undergraduates under captain James Birch, even without fives courts in Cambridge, that they have now managed to defeat the Past two years in a row and came very close once more to beating a strong Oxford side with the inestimable advantage of fine courts to practise on. A report on the Varsity Match follows at the end of the newsletter.

***Journalistic Trivia:*** *Among the very few newspaper cuttings which I have is an account of the CURFC's "Successful Rugby Fives Tour" to Scotland in the season 1955-56. It ends: "The University gained valuable experience in playing on courts varying in pace and size, although they have yet to find playing conditions worse than at Cambridge." Which of Messrs Skliros, Evans, Ingram J., Ingram P., Tiffin, Eckert, Farrer-Brown and Hindson supplied that report to 'The Times', I wonder?*

This year's Past versus Present began in predictable style. Sam Jones and Joe Gribble arrived late at Oundle and found themselves playing Singles at One and Two, Iain de Weymarn and Andy Pringle having arrived more punctually and opting for gentler games at Three and Four. Iain and Andy also opted to play only up to 11, hoping perhaps to limit the Present's traditional points advantage at lunch. Since Joe had given Sam a lift from London, Sam obviously felt duty-bound to play the top singles and duly lost to Jez Fabes in heavy style, 11-1. Joe, though, in his eleventh P. v. P. singles has a feel for the history of the event and insisted on playing up to the proper score of 15 against freshman Giles Corner. By the time

the Match Manager arrived at The Ship shortly before 2 o'clock, the Present's lead was indeed traditionally large, 28 points, all four matches having gone their way!

***Calligraphic Trivia:** Perusal of the ledger covering the years 1925-1969 reveals that only one Captain of CURFC has written the season's records in biro. A large cheque made out to the CU Courts Appeal Fund is required for me not to name the culprit in the next Newsletter.*

The big guns went on court at 2.15 pm. David Hebden and Joe Gribble took on the 1st Pair, Mick and Paddy d'Ancona the 2nd. There was some heroism in these appearances: David was nursing a calf muscle torn representing the RFA against the BUSA VIII, and Mick was playing from memory. Joe and Mick were called upon to emerge from the shadow of their illustrious partners and turn in performances of great athleticism in coping with the onslaught unleashed on them by the young lions. Sadly, all our top four players could do, in the first half of the Doubles, was allow the Present to increase their lead by another sixteen points: Jez Fabes & Giles Corner and James Birch & Simon Maskell were certainly "up for it" and won three of the four top games. Fortunately, however, Andy Pringle and Ian Jackson at 3rd Pair and Martin Wilkinson and Bob Dolby at 4th Pair were able to claw back 35 points against a Present team lacking Mark Tsang. So at the 'turn' the Present's lead was only single figures.

**Team Photographs:** May I, at this point, repeat my request for the loan of past team photos? If you look at the Team Photos section, you will see that the missing years are: 1925-1934, 1939, 1947, 1960, 1961, 1964, 1970, 1978-88, 1992, 1994-1999. Can anyone fill these gaps for me? It would be reassuring to have all of them safely stored in digital form.

For the second half of the Doubles there was some tweaking of personnel. The Match Manager partnered Paddy for one game to give Mick an extended fag break. Iain de Weymarn relieved Joe, Sam Jones substituted for Andy, and David Arnold paired up with Martin Wilkinson. Though Jackson and Jones proved a formidable coupling, far too strong for débutants Tim Bromfield and Mike Pinna, elsewhere those coming off the bench could not get into gear quick enough and were caught cold by the young lads, particularly by James and Simon and, in the back courts, by Jonathan Lee and Phil Caroe. Somehow the match slipped away from the Past, and the Present recorded a second win in a row, this time by 228-199. And so it was that the players retired to The Pickerel and then to Henry's, to be joined by Barry Trapnell, John Holroyd, David Barnes and Charlie Scobie for a unique, one-off 'Dinner'.

**The 71st Varsity Match, 2001:** Match Referee David Barnes has, as usual, written up the events of the Varsity Match for the RFA Handbook, which I commend to you. The match was gratifyingly close in the end, but the massive advantage gained by Oxford in the Singles was bound to tell. Until Cambridge get home courts on which to practise singles play this is liable to be the pattern of future matches. However, the fact that our lads actually won the Doubles is a tribute to their fighting spirit. There were some unusual aspects to the match: James Birch captained the Cambridge side for the second year in a row, which has never happened before; Oxford had joint captains for the first time ever; James Birch and Oxford's co-captain, James Toop, then went off to play next day in the Varsity Eton Fives Match. And in the Sparrows versus Beavers Match Cambridge had their own version of Serena and Venus, Williams and Williams (both of Christ's but unrelated!).

**The Season:** The undergraduates no longer divide their fixtures into University and Sparrows. Having to play all their matches either away or at Bedford Modern, which brings

with its problems of transport, they have a smaller fixture list than in the past. It is a credit to Captain and Secretary that so many matches are played at all. This season they have played 12, winning eight of them. At BUSA in November it was not quite the success of the previous year, but Jeremy Fabes got to the Semi-Final of the Singles. James Birch and Simon Maskell lost in the Quarter-Final 2-1 to the eventual winners from Oxford. James, who lost in the Singles Plate Final, subsequently played in the BUSA representative VIII against the RFA. Old Cambridge players have continued to make their mark. Paddy d'Ancona won his first senior title in October, winning the West of England Singles Final. He and Ben Taberner have been a force to reckon with in Doubles competitions, reaching the Semi-Final of the South West (last July), and the London and the National Doubles this year. Their day will come. David Hebden won the Winchester Fives Doubles Tournament at Malvern with his regular partner Ian Fuller - his sixth consecutive win in that competition. More remarkably, 2001 is the first year since 1978 that David has not been involved in the Final of the National Doubles (Cyriax Cup) which he and Ian Fuller have won 10 times. John Denison won the Vintage Singles (over 55) at Manchester for the third year in a row, while Bernard Atkinson (third time) and Bob Dolby (first time) paired up to win the Vintage Doubles. Bernard, Bob, David and John will all be involved in the Veterans (over 45) in late April at Horsham along with new boy Rob Cleave.

Finally, we bid our farewells. **David Beardsmore** (Denstone and Caius) was one of those who played their fives at Cambridge during the war years, thus never figuring in a proper Varsity Match. He worked all his professional life as a GP in Cheshire. Much younger, at fifty, was **Robin Skinner** (Rugby and Fitzwilliam), a regular attender at the Dinner and an occasional player. Tragically he took his own life last year. Our loss of this lovely man who had a very soft spot for the Past versus Present is small by comparison with the loss suffered by his wife and children, but we shall greatly miss his presence at the Jock Burnet Dinner. At a Memorial Service held at Southwark Cathedral Chris Martin-Jenkins spoke of the force of Robin's personality and of his unimpeachable integrity as a London solicitor. In his younger days Robin had been a rugby player of great success, playing for Fitzwilliam, Cambridge, Rosslyn Park, Middlesex and in the England squad. He was an immensely strong prop forward, a squash and tennis player of striking power, latterly an accomplished golfer, and of course a rugby fives player who represented Cambridge in 1972, partnering Andrew Cowie. The mighty power of his right hand matched the breadth of his smile. We are much the poorer without him.

**Dick Knight** (Dulwich and Trinity) first played Fives for Cambridge against Oxford in 1935. He was Hon. Sec. the next year, Captain in 1937 and played a fourth time in 1938. He learnt his Fives at Dulwich College and went on to be National Singles Champion in 1948, having twelve years previously, as an undergraduate, reached the final, where he lost to Jack Davies (Tonbridge and St. John's). That year he also reached the final of the National Doubles, partnering his fellow Old Alleynian Basil Gough (Dulwich and Corpus), and in 1937 he again lost in the final, partnering F.K. Truman. Dick was a regular attender at the Past v. Present and was present in 2000, still sad that a bout of flu had robbed him and his wife Hilary of the opportunity to attend the 50th Dinner the year before. He kindly donated to me his team photos from the 1930's, which can be seen on the website and are a wonderful reminder of Jock Burnet's own undergraduate era before the Second World War. The obituaries of Dick which appeared in The Times and The Telegraph speak of a man of immense ability and achievement. Having won a Scholarship to Cambridge, Dick became President of the Christian Union and gained a double starred First in Classics. A teacher at Fettes before the

war, he served as an officer in the Gordon Highlanders during the war. After the war he became a Housemaster at Marlborough (during which time he played cricket for Wiltshire), and then successively Headmaster of Oundle and of Monckton Combe. During these years he served as a magistrate and later as a lay reader in the diocese of Bath and Wells. His deep religious convictions pervaded his life. In retirement he completed an OU degree in Mathematics, governed several schools and saw his children all enter careers in teaching (his fives-playing son Richard is currently headmaster of a school in Kenya). I believe his last game of Fives was played in the early 1970s at The Perse, in one of those little social games that went on while the Past took on the Present at Portugal Place. If my memory serves me right, he played on court with Tony Tiffin, Simon Bevan and myself, and in his knee-length stockings and long shorts he gave a glimpse, for all his modest manner, of what a magnificent player he must have been in his heyday. Dick's death last September leaves our President, Barry Trapnell, the oldest living Singles Champion!

Finally, on a positive note, there has been progress regarding new Fives Courts at Cambridge. A number of committees have been negotiated successfully, and approval for a Sports Development in West Cambridge has now been given by the University. Within the next six months there will be detailed planning submitted for approval, including the structuring of fund-raising. I shall post any news here on the website. Please give me some feedback on what you think can be developed.

Correspondence gratefully received and enthusiastically answered!  
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Last year's trivia: Answers freely given to those who send a sae to the above address!

**See next page for Scorecard for the Varsity Match 2001**

CAMBRIDGE v. OXFORD 2001  
Saturday, February 24th at St. Paul's School

<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>Oxford</b>	
<i>Singles</i>		
JFabes (Clifton & Magdalene)	losttoEWBrooke (Eastbourne & Magdalen)	1-15
EGRCorner (St. Paul's & Trinity)	losttoJPToop( <i>JointCaptain</i> ) (St. Olave's & Jesus)	5-15
MPLTsang (St. Paul's & Emmanuel)	losttoMSBate( <i>JointCaptain</i> ) (Eastbourne & Brasenose)	5-15
JSBirch( <i>Captain</i> ) (K.E.S., Birmingham & Corpus)	losttoSMudd (Whitgift & Hertford)	9-15
		<b>20-60</b>
<i>Doubles</i>		
Fabes and Corner	v. Bate and Toop	15-10
		15-16
	v. Brooke and Evans	15-4
		15-7
Birch and SR Maskell (Malvern & Corpus)	v. Brooke and RM Evans (Whitgift & Somerville)	12-15
		5-15
	v. Bate and Toop	10-15
		2-15
Tsang and TBromfield (St. Paul's and Emmanuel)	v. Mudd and BA Brookes (Tonbridge & New College)	15-6
		15-12
	v. Roche and Hillier	15-13
		15-7
JLC Lee (St. Paul's & Clare)	and v. PTO'G Roche (Oundle & Worcester)	9-15
PJ Caroe (Eastbourne & Christ's)	and NJ Hillier (Whitgift & Mansfield)	7-15
	v. Mudd and Brookes	15-5
		15-16
		<b>195-186</b>
		<b>Cambridge lost by 215-246</b>

Oxford now boast 24 wins against 47 wins to Cambridge.

In the **Sparrows versus Beavers match** on the adjoining courts, Cambridge won 156-108. Cambridge were represented by MA Pinna (Oundle & Gonville and Caius), JM Dickens (Bedford & Emmanuel), SGP Williams (St. Dunstan's & Christ's) and J Williams (Winchester and Christ's).