

# Past and Present Nr. 14

*Put it in your diary! Next Year's Past v. Present: Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup> 2006*

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While the Match Manager was in the early stages of planning for this year's 56<sup>th</sup> gathering of Sparrows at Magdalene, he received news from Australia of the first Branch (no pun intended?) Dinner held in South Yarra, Victoria. It was hosted by Anthony Jannink and attended by another resident Australian Sparrow, Mike Parkinson, OBE, and a migrant bird, Michael Seymour. Given that there are more Sparrows in Australia than there are in my back garden, namely four in all (the other two are Stuart Tovey in Victoria and Nick Mount in New South Wales), we can, I hope, look forward to many more Dinners Down Under in years to come. In these times of globalisation, why not more such foreign affairs, given that we have six Sparrows in the United States, two in Canada, three in France and one each in Spain, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and the United Arab Emirates? We might even think of regional dinners in this country, though the thought of a dinner in Oxford goes against the grain. Luckily the one Sparrow who lives in Oxford is currently "somewhere in S.E. Asia" and might therefore have to hold a dinner for himself in Bali (or Fives Bali, as some wit would have it). Think about it, chaps. And then, of course, there's the Sparrow in Uganda studying the Banded Mongoose (!).

## **Serious Matters: Both Finalists in this year's National Singles Championship are ex-Oxford. What has gone wrong?**

This year's Dinner nearly went seriously wrong as the Royal Mail failed to deliver 20-30 invitations posted in Beeston on January 1<sup>st</sup>. It is likely they were shredded by some local postie to bed his daughter's rabbit. I immediately determined to vote in the General Election for any political party that promised to "sort out the Mail", though that was more likely to mean the tabloid rag than what passes for a postal delivery service. Luckily eagle-eyed Sparrows noted the non-appearance in their nesting-boxes of the annual envelope and alerted the organiser by e-mail. Contact was quickly made with the 81 Sparrows who have vouchsafed him their e-mail address and the situation was retrieved. This is yet another reason for David Barnes to abandon the snail mail in favour of modern methods of communication, but, as he says, "Someone has to keep the rural post offices open."

## **Reason for Joy: Charlie Brooks and Brian Elfick successfully defended their BUSA Doubles title. Charlie again got to the Singles Final but lost to a very good player "from another place".**

So many fleet-footed and twinkle-toed youngsters (including David Hebden) volunteered to play in this year's Past versus Present that the Manager left himself on the bench ("After all, you don't see Mourinho chasing Wright-Philips, do you?"). However, it was hard for him to sit in the stands and he was soon down in the Technical Area questioning the referee's eyesight and lineage. The Present were at full strength: Brian Elfick, Charlie Brooks, Alan Beverly and Niraj Patel, a formidable combination of height, youth and power. The Past fielded Paddy d'Ancona, Jez Fabes, Simon Maskell and Joe Gribble, as fine an array of legal, financial and academic firepower as a man could hire. Paddy, currently ranked Number 5 in the country, had a bit too much skill for Brian; Jez, after a year's lay-off in pursuit of his Ph.D., gave Charlie as tough an examination as this friendly event allows; Simon pushed the Freshman Alan to the

absolute limit of his immense hitting; and newly non-smoking Joe timed his late surge to perfection, losing narrowly and with impeccable judgement to the dogged Niraj. Somehow or other the Past amassed a lead of 12 points in the course of these contests, not the customary way of things, and retired to The Ship to link up with the reinforcements.

**The Trapnell Tankard. Past and Present now have some silverware to play for. The fourteen Captains who had served under Barry Trapnell's Presidency from 1990 to 2004 clubbed together to provide a trophy, a capacious pewter tankard, bearing Barry's name. This handsome vessel was presented to Barry at the Dinner to mark his 15 years as President; he was then required to hand it to the captain of the winning team. Would that be Brian Elfick or Joe Gribble? Read on for enlightenment.**

Things got tighter in the initial Doubles, with Brian and Charlie demolishing Paddy and Jez 15-2 in the first game, though the latter pair did come back to win a much closer second game. David Hebden and Ian Jackson got slightly the better of their contest with Jeremy Dickens and Alan Beverly, who hits the ball almost as hard as national doubles champion Robin Perry. James Birch and Iain de Weymarn did a lot of damage in the back courts, beating James Paul and Niraj Patel to love and 10, a situation which was definitely not to reoccur in the Varsity Match a week later. Simon Maskell and Mick d'Ancona were much more generous in their treatment of Jon Abecassis and Anish Bhuva. By the end of the first round of Doubles the Past had a lead of 20 points and thought victory was in the bag.

Brian Elfick had other ideas. Flourishing the Trapnell Tankard ("This is what you're playing for!") he harangued his team with churchillian fervour on Court Two, promising them only blood, sweat and bruises. Brian then went out to play a captain's innings with Charlie, beating David Hebden and Ian Jackson heavily; Jeremy and Alan picked up a further clutch of points against James and Iain; while James Paul and Niraj demolished the scratch pairing of Mick d'Ancona and Richard Kemp. Suddenly the Present were 30 points ahead. All eyes turned to Court 4 where Martin Robinson and Martin Wilkinson were showing their young opponents skills learned in the 60s and 70s. Too late, however, their victory by 15-5, 15-6. The Present had pulled off a notable close win by 233-221. Such resilience and determination augured well for the Varsity Match. Secretly very pleased, the Match Manager went through the motions of grumpiness with his team ("This is what happens when I don't play." etc.). He was largely ignored.

**The Hebden Hundred: On April 24<sup>th</sup> at Horsham David Hebden won the Vintage Doubles, for the first time, with Keith Puckle. This was David's one hundredth national or regional title. He promptly followed it up by winning the Vintage Singles as well. Only Wayne Enstone has won more titles and only Neil Roberts is ever likely to match this extraordinary feat in our lifetime. Anyone who has ever watched or played with David will know what a wonderful player he is; all who have come in contact with him will know what an exemplary influence he has had on the game. We have been very privileged to have such a player among the ranks of the Sparrows.**

It was an unusually large group who gathered in The Pickerel and then in Benson Hall. In addition to the players there were our guest, Barry Trapnell, and our Acting President, Gordon Florence (perhaps the only Half Blue for Discus in the ranks of the Sparrows?), plus John Holroyd, Dickie Clarke, Alan Taylor, Mike Skliros, David Hares, David Barnes, Richard Dyer-Smith, Andrew Lewis, Bob Dolby, Chris Bascombe, Chris Hirst, David Arnold, Rob Cleave, Tim Wilson, Graeme Denison and Ian Steed. At the

ensuing Dinner there were few surprises on the menu, no speeches (“just a few words” from Bob Dolby and Brian Elfick) and the informal presentation of a Sparrows tie to Gordon Florence. Barry Trapnell awarded the Tankard to Brian Elfick, the only requirement being that a lot of beer pass through it during the coming year! We wished the VIII good luck against Oxford.

**Forty Years On: Richard Dyer-Smith came to watch the Past play the Present at Oundle this year and then attended the Dinner. He last played Fives in the Varsity Match on the Albyn’s courts on Saturday, 27th February 1965 when he was Captain and since then had never again even watched a game. In conversation with your editor Richard professed himself delighted to have returned to the fold. Can anyone match this touching tale of the redemptive power of Fives?**

**The Varsity Match:** Many will already know that Cambridge won the match this year, for only the second time since the Portugal Place courts were demolished. What always promised to be an exciting contest between two evenly matched and particularly gifted teams turned out to be one of the most memorable. Charlie Brooks, our Secretary and Number One, was so poorly with the flu that he had to withdraw from the Singles, leaving freshman Alan Beverly, last year’s Schools champion, to play Oxford’s Captain, James Bristow, the BUSA champion and national Under 25 title-holder. Anish Bhuva had to step in to play Number 4. Not surprisingly we were down after the Singles, but only by 10 points. Charlie did play in the Doubles, as did James Paul, who was suffering the effects of glandular fever. The efforts of the team in the Doubles under Brian Elfick’s inspirational leadership were herculean, as were the counter-endeavours of the Oxford team. The overall score see-sawed tantalisingly, but Cambridge finally came out winners by 19 points (see overleaf for scores). I have never in many years of watching this fixture seen a victorious team so drained and so exhausted, mentally and physically, at the end of the contest as this year. It was a victory to be proud of.

**Brit Insurance:** The Club was lucky enough this year to have sponsorship from Brit Insurance. We thus had the unusual sight on the St. Paul’s courts of the company’s name worn on the kit of some of the team, plus an advertising board displayed in the team photo. Our thanks go to the father of Lyn Graham-Taylor for this support.

**Cambridge Successes: David Hebden:** Winner of South-West Doubles 2004, Winchester Doubles 2004 and 2005, Veterans Singles and Doubles, Vintage Singles and Doubles, member of AOBs team winning the Wood (Club Knockout) Cup, Finalist in the Scottish Doubles. **Patrick d’Ancona:** Finalist London Singles, Finalist with **Ben Taberner** in the National Doubles, captain of the Old Dunstonians team winning the Owers Trophy. **Brian Elfick** and **Charlie Brooks** second-time Winners of the BUSA Doubles 2005, with **Charlie** a Finalist in the Singles. **Bob Dolby** and **Bernard Atkinson:** Finalists in the Vintage Doubles, with **Bernard** a Finalist in the Veterans Doubles and Winner of the Masters Doubles and **Bob** second-time Winner of the Mixed Doubles. **Alan Beverly:** Winner of National Schools Singles 2004.

**The Sparrows website: [www.cu-sparrows.org.uk](http://www.cu-sparrows.org.uk).** This is now up-to-date for the season. It was conceived as a largely archival site where we can record the history of Fives at Cambridge. I plan to expand the pictorial side of the website. If anyone has any photographs other than team photos (these are complete since 1935) which show fives players etc, I would be delighted to receive them.

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**CAMBRIDGE v. OXFORD 2005**  
 Saturday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at St. Paul's School

<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>Oxford</b>	
<i>Singles</i>		
A Beverly (St. Paul's & Girton)	lost to JAO Bristow (Captain) (Winchester & Worcester)	6-15
BR Elfick (Captain) (Bradfield & Selwyn)	beat WR Hardyment (Radley & St. Hugh's)	15-5
N Patel (St. Paul's & Trinity)	lost to EO Ronan (Bradfield & St. Hugh's)	6-15
AN Bhuva (St. Paul's & St. John's)	lost to NP Warrillow (St. Paul's & Pembroke)	13-15
		<b>40-50</b>
<i>Doubles</i>		
Elfick and CG Brooks (Hon. Sec.) (St. Paul's & Gonville and Caius)	v. Bristow and Ronan	15-3
		16-15
	v. Warrillow and JC Furness (St. Paul's & St. Edmund Hall)	15-4 15-2
Beverly and JM Dickens (Bedford & Emmanuel)	v. Warrillow and Furness	15-9 15-2
	v. Bristow and Ronan	12-15 15-7
Patel and JCD Paul (St. Paul's & St. John's)	v. Hardyment and J Heath (Radley & Exeter)	9-15 10-15
	v. LI Jamieson (St. Paul's & Christ Church) and STP Ranasinghe (St. Olave's & St. John's)	15-4 6-15
Bhuva and J Abecassis (Clifton & St. John's)	v. Jamieson (Hon. Sec.) and Ranasinghe	15-11 10-15
	v. Hardyment and Heath	8-15 0-15 <b>191-162</b>

**Cambridge won by 231-212**

Cambridge now boasts 49 wins against 26 by Oxford.

In the **Sparrows versus Beavers** match Oxford won comfortably, by 180-45. Representing Cambridge were: MT Hanney (St. Paul's & Jesus), LG Graham-Taylor (Merchant Taylors' & Downing), JWW Stevens (Tonbridge & Christ's) and CJ Wright (Oundle & Homerton).