

Manuscript of the Month
December 2013

Photograph of the Eton Ramblers cricket team, July 1912



In these days, when in some quarters there is a tendency to decry the grand old game and to try to tinker with the laws, in order to pander to the taste of a public vitiated by spectacular games, any movement in this direction of true amateur sport will be welcomed by lovers of cricket, and such a game as that played at Basingstoke on Wednesday and Thursday, though probably only witnessed by a limited number of favoured spectators, would have been worth going far to see. (The Sportsman, 26th July 1912)

As the second Ashes Test gets underway at Adelaide, this photograph conjures up memories of another cricket match, one played over a century earlier. During two days in July 1912, the Eton Ramblers, a team made up entirely of members of the Hoare family, all of whom had attended Eton College, took on and defeated a Basingstoke & North Hants XI in a game of friendly rivalry. Among those taking part were Harry Hoare (standing fifth from right), a partner at the bank from 1894, Arthur Hervey Hoare (standing third from right), partner from 1908, Geoffrey Lennard Hoare (standing second from right), partner from 1932 and Reginald Hervey (Rex) Hoare (standing far right), partner from 1944. The family's love of cricket, however, can be traced back much further, to the early years of the nineteenth century.

Cricket has been played in England for hundreds of years. But it was during the eighteenth century that the game really took off, with wealthy aristocrats funding their own clubs and staking huge sums on the outcome of matches. One of the most famous of these early clubs was known to be playing matches at White Conduit Fields, Islington, by the mid 1780s. But as the number of onlookers spiralled, the White Conduit Club began to crave a more secluded venue. In 1787, therefore, several members, including the Club's treasurer, bank customer and avid cricketer Lord Winchilsea, offered to underwrite vintner and WCC bowler Thomas Lord's effort to establish a private cricket ground. Lord duly leased a piece of land in Dorset Fields, Marylebone (now Dorset Square) and a new club, the Marylebone Cricket Club, was born. In 1814, Lord moved his cricket ground to a new base in St John's Wood, where it remains to this day.

Twenty years after the Marylebone Cricket Club was established, George Matthew Hoare (1779-1852), son of bank partner Henry Hoare (Mitcham), made the first of five appearances for the Club, playing at Lord's against a Middlesex XI in May 1807. He was later followed by his nephew, Arthur Malortie Hoare; two sons, Henry James Hoare and Charles Hugh Hoare; and a grandson, Charles Twysden Hoare, who between them played nearly 70 first class matches, mostly for Surrey or Middlesex, in a period spanning from the 1830s to the 1870s.

Besides these first class outings, the Hoares could be found occupying the crease in all manner of local contests. In September 1845, for example, the Morning Chronicle reported that a team of Eight Gentlemen of Surrey with Three Players took on The Mitcham Club: *It has seldom been our*

lot to witness a match of which the interest has gone on increasing...till at its close it had become "intense". As the match reached its climax, Mitcham found themselves requiring just two runs to tie, but without any wickets in hand: It chanced that young Sherman hit a ball for two, and off they set, and as was supposed, accomplished the feat, but it is somewhat difficult to describe the disappointment which was depleted on the countenances of the supporters of Mitcham upon one of the umpires calling out "one short"...The next ball took Mr Hoare's wicket and thus they lost the match by one run.

Some of the most popular matches of the nineteenth century were those played between the various public schools. Cricket had become an established part of the curriculum by 1800, resulting in a number of inter-school rivalries being forged across the country. The Eton v Harrow match, one of the oldest sporting fixtures in the world, was first played at Lord's in 1805, with future bank customer and poet Lord Byron among those selected for Harrow, and became an annual event from 1822. Matches between Eton and Winchester, meanwhile, began in 1826. Both were regarded as great social occasions, ranking alongside the likes of Royal Ascot or the Henley Regatta and attracting shoals of spectators as well as substantial newspaper column inches.

In 1861, Caroline Hoare, daughter of Henry Hoare (Staplehurst), described an outing to the Eton v Winchester match in her diary. On 27th June, she travelled up to London with her mother, sister Sophy and brother Walter, arriving at the family banking house on Fleet Street soon after midday. As their cab clattered over London Bridge Caroline noted: *we could see smoke still rising from the ruins caused by the terrible fire that began last Saturday. Millions of property has been lost – more than one can conceive of oil & hemp & pepper & such like...* The Tooley Street Fire, one of the biggest conflagrations since the Great Fire of 1666, took two weeks to vanquish and resulted not only in the destruction of several Thames-side warehouses and losses of £2M+, but ultimately in the establishment of the Metropolitan (later London) Fire Brigade. At the bank, Caroline and her siblings helped their brother Henry with the coupons until lunch, then sallied forth with an aunt and various cousins in the carriage: *our main object was to find a band for tonight [dance], Mr Festing [cousin] having only engaged a lady pianist & a fiddle; so we put them off & then had a fine hunt; went to about 6 music publishers, but till the 6th (Cramer) their men were either engaged or they asked too much; because it was such a short notice 4 men at £1-1-0 each we engaged at last.*

Next day, the party travelled on to Eton. After depositing their luggage at the Christopher they walked to the playing fields, where the match was already well underway. Eton were fielding, which meant that Caroline was able to chat to her cousin 'Willy Oak' [Henry William Hoare of Oakfield Lodge, Sussex], who had been stationed on the boundary. Not for long, however, as the Wykehamists were dismissed by 1pm, having scored just 78 runs. *At 1½ Eton went in & we were more interested, wrote Caroline, but disappointment awaited us; the first went out first ball actually & 3 others with nothing, Willy among them; he was caught out – such a bore for us; they [Eton] too were out in an 1½ [for 112] & then we went in to dinner; when we went to the field again in an hour or so Winchester had gone in & was not playing much better, much to Walter's & all our boys' joy; they went out so fast that about 5 the stumps were drawn in order that the Winchester boys who will come in large numbers tomorrow, & other visitors, might see more of the game. Eton were eventually set a target of 66 to win, which they achieved with eight wickets to spare. And 'Willy Oak' did better this time too, batting third and scoring 14. It was grand play. There were a great many people looking on, much more than yesterday & when there was a good hit, the clapping was tremendous...The match was over about 2 & then they chaired the two captains; it was such fun seeing them...*

A fortnight later 'Willy Oak' was back in action, having been selected for the Eton v Harrow match at Lord's. Caroline did not go to watch this time, but her mother, Walter and Sophy joined nearly 6,000 other spectators in cheering the boys on. So enormous were the crowds, in fact, that 600 carriages had to be parked in double and triple file all round the ground. *Throughout the game the excitement was intense, the usual shouts from the boys, of "well hit", "well bowled" and "well fielded", as the case may be, were continuous,* reported the Morning Chronicle. Eton scored 135 in their first innings, while Harrow managed 164. But in their second innings, Eton mustered an impressive 229. Even a succession of sharp showers failed to dampen their form. And much to the Hoares' delight, 'Willy Oak' was top scorer: *H W Hoare batted in a masterly style, and headed the score with 51, which comprised a six, two fives, two fours, two threes, and two twos.* (The Times, 15 July 1861) Soon after Harrow began their second innings, however, the rain set in once more and the match was declared a draw, an outcome that Caroline deemed most unsatisfactory, although she observed that *Both parties of course claim the victory.*

Closer to home, there were several matches played in and around Staplehurst that summer, with Caroline's sisters generally being called upon to act as scorers. The scorers' book from this period gives a full account of each and every match, not least Married v Single Members of the 40th Kent Rifle Volunteer Corps, Past & Present Etonians v All Comers, All England v Staplehurst and the bizarrely named Boiled Potatoes v Fried Potatoes. This last featured four of Caroline's brothers alongside 'Willy Oak' (Boiled Potatoes) as well as her uncle William (Fried). After much to-ing and fro-ing, the Boiled Potatoes emerged victorious by two runs.

While the Hoare family remained keen cricketers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cricket at the bank is a more recent innovation. Accounts show that Messrs Hoare donated 5 guineas per annum to the Private Banks' Cricket Club during the 1880s, but there is no evidence to suggest that they ever fielded a team. Indeed, the first sign of sporting life does not appear until June 1947, when a Staff Sports Club was formed. But by December that year a Cricket Club was up and running, with 20 members paying weekly dues (1/-) to the Head Porter. And before long the bank was playing regular Saturday matches against the likes of Booth's Distillers, Kleinwort Benson, Standard Bank, the Griffin Brewery and the Royal College of Surgeons. There were also occasional home-grown matches, including one between Mr Quintin's XI and Mr Bertram's XI in September 1959, which resulted in a win for the former by 19 runs. Although keen, however, the bank's team often struggled to compete effectively. In 1972, for example, it won just 3 matches out of 20. But by the 1980s, things had improved considerably. The annual report for 1983 noted: *A very successful season, with 23 matches, winning 14, the highest number of wins for years. Especially pleased at "doing the double" over Coutts.* A year later, the bank won 12 games out of 22, although: *It was disappointing that on quite a few occasions members of our club were to be found fielding for our opposition as they had arrived short of players. Even more frustrating to watch were the brilliant catches and superb fielding of these surrogate fielders against their own side...*



Today Hoare's still retains its own cricket team, which each summer turns out for matches in and around the London area.