

THE GROWTH OF THE JESTERS.

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The growth of a club is always a thing of interest and to one who has watched it from its earliest days sometimes a thing of passing strangeness. There is a force in contrast between the appearance of four schoolboys covering on a platform at Dulwich on almost the last day of December, 1928, and the likely departure to America of a team of international standard some five years later. The product has advanced far from the conception.

The Jesters Cricket Club had just completed a thoroughly enjoyable first season (of mainly village cricket) when it was decided—I am not sure how—that in winter Fives should be added to its activities. The idea, I think, arose from two things: the first was the difficulty and yet the desirability of being able to play Fives when we (then the St. Paul's School Fives team in the making) had left school and secondly, the fun of travelling about together to strange places and playing on any number of even stranger courts: this plan was being practised in a small way too by P. A. Malt and his friends before the days of greatness of the Alleyn Old Boys. At St. Paul's, I remember, we played his team more than once.

But we decided to keep the Fives Club separate; not all our cricketers, though still mainly Pauline, were Fives players, and the first committee was a small one.

G. Richards was the secretary (though shortly afterwards he and I transferred the Cricket and Fives secretarial duties), and S. M. Mischler, now captain of the Old Pauline Rugby football club, made up the committee. The first meetings were always held in the Walker Library, at St. Paul's, which is the home and original inspiration of the club. It was essentially a Pauline Rugby Fives Club at this time (for there was no Old Pauline Cricket or Fives Club then—the school team did not even play the Old Boys at Fives!), and it was not until the end of a fairly successful season on the part of the School IV., who were all Jesters, that either squash rackets was ventured upon or a non-Pauline player recruited (it would be nearer the truth to say collected).

K. Prout, then one of the best of the Cambridge University team, was the first who was not a Pauline and the four varied throughout the Easter holidays of 1929 being made up of the original committee and Prout another Cambridge, but Pauline player in C. J. Patterson, R. Colville, K. R. R. Readhead and a further member who was not a Pauline in H. N. Harcourt, the Oxford captain. P. G. E. Nash and G. M. Smith had played in the Christmas holidays only. Success was not measured by victory, and the bare results (7 matches played, 3 won and 4 lost) give no idea of the amount of enjoyment we obtained from the matches.

The first squash match was of an adventurous and an impertinent nature—against the Bank of England, at Hampton: the Jesters were represented by three of us who had known the game but a month, if that (I forget how many points we got between us and prefer not to look it up). The important thing was a new member who really could play the game in D. P. Henry and that we had begun as a squash club.

A few members were collected during the summer, among whom was the present Fives champion, P. A. Malt, but nothing much further was done until October. It is the belief that if you have enough fixtures you will

soon acquire the members we produced a reasonably ambitious card. Two of the committee were now freshmen at Oxford and Cambridge respectively and we were able to recruit members at a rapid rate. A number of good Fives matches were played and the first real achievement was a victory over Cambridge University on the St. Paul's courts. The Bank of England were again formidable squash opponents and we won but one match out of seven: the importance of it was that it was won on his first appearance for the club by F. M. Strawson, a former international player, whose services



Two Prominent Jesters:
Commander W. J. A. DAVIS and F. M. STRAWSON.

to the club since that date cannot possibly be adequately described in cold print. It is almost entirely due to him that the subsequent success of the Club's squash rackets section is due. He joined the committee soon afterwards as did the present Hon. Treasurer, T. C. S. Haywood, who was like myself in his first year at Cambridge, and the committee meetings were now usually held over an evening meal at Hammersmith. The acquisition of such an excellent Treasurer was another great stroke of fortune for the Club.

At the end of this season also the first Public Schools Rugby Fives Championship was held under the club's auspices—the doubles were fittingly won by St. Paul's, and R. de W. K. Winlaw, of Winchester, walked away with the singles. During the summer the number of new members increased and Commander W. J. A. Davies and J. D. P. Wheatley joined the committee. The fixtures were largely increased for the coming season, a few Eton Fives matches were added and the match-manager system established.

It was the good fortune of the club to have sprung into a larger sphere of activity just when there was the most demand for it: first-class players were glad of matches from which the grimness of the competitive spirit was withdrawn and the other members were equally glad of the chance of the valuable experience provided by what was, if not too deadly serious, at least genuine match play. Clubs and schools were on the whole happy to entertain our teams, since often these contained first-class players against whom it was a great advantage and often a lesson to play, and at the same time the opposition was fresh: they could obtain a change from the continual playing among themselves without having to travel from their own club to obtain it. The Jesters were essentially a wandering club and of course depended on the hospitality of those who owned courts which was given with an unparalleled generosity for which we can never be too grateful.

The committee was further strengthened by the addition of C. L. Stubbs, who was always ready with aid and advice and was responsible for the Royal Air Force element among the members and the warm welcome given by the R.A.F. Club, in London, both to the committee for its increasingly frequent committee meetings

and to those who attended the first two annual dinners. At the same time A. G. Hazlerigg, the Cambridge cricketer, joined the committee to take charge of the Eton Fives, about which none of the existing committee had much knowledge, and this he did admirably until he had to give it up on taking over the Old Etonian Fives. Since then it has also prospered under the able management of W. M. Welch, a former holder of the Kinnaird Cup.

It was a happy day for the Jesters when the Earl of Kimberley (then Lord Wodehouse) (the President of the Squash Rackets Association) became the Club's President. His enthusiasm and tactful piloting of the committee through any difficulties it encounters are among the most valuable assets of the club to-day.

The Assistant Hon. Secretary, J. A. Gillies, replaced J. G. Richards in this position about two years ago, and has taken a tremendous amount of the inevitable work attached to the organisation of the club upon his shoulders, and J. Armitage, who became a member of the committee this year, has been entirely responsible for the Rugby Fives section. Tennis was successfully added to the list of games played and though obviously only a few matches could be arranged they have been much enjoyed under the careful management of Col. A. H. C. Kearsley and later L. H. Crispe. It is the willingness of such members of the committee and of the club in general (nearly fifty members are taking part in match-managing this season) to do all in their power to help the club's interests that has been responsible for the contrast offered in the first paragraph. Such good fortune could hardly have been anticipated at the club's inception not quite five years ago.