

Barry Trapnell (1924-2012)

Asked at a Past versus Present Dinner once just how good a player Barry was, John Pretlove, a multiple Amateur Singles and Doubles champion himself, replied simply: “Bloody good!” Barely anyone is now alive to attest to the quality of Barry’s play, but one imagines that, with his exceptional height and immense reach, he was in the same tradition as the legendary Kenneth Gandar Dower, winner of national titles in Rugby and Eton Fives and known – not entirely affectionately – as “the kangaroo”. Barry had the misfortune to be an undergraduate during the war years when there was no Varsity Match and, superb games-player that he was, he concentrated on cricket in the season following the cessation of hostilities: In 1946 he played for Cambridge, for the Gentleman versus the Players, and for Middlesex CC.



Jock Burnet, Alan Cocking, Edgar Cyriax and Barry Trapnell on Cyriax’s 75th birthday

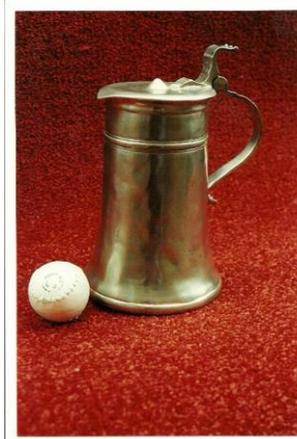
Over the next few years, however, Barry returned to Fives, playing regularly for the Jesters and winning three national titles: the Amateur Singles in 1949 and the Amateur Doubles with his Cambridge partner Edward Isaacs in the same year. He won the Doubles once more, this time with an Oxford partner in 1953.



(l) 1995 Barry with David Barnes at the closing of Portugal Place; (r) 1999 Barry holds aloft the Jock Burnet Trophy at the Past versus Present in Magdalene College

Barry's extraordinary career thereafter, as an academic, research chemist, public school headmaster (Denstone and Oundle) and businessman, gradually took him away from the world of Fives, but in 1989, on the death of Jock Burnet, Barry was delighted to become President of Cambridge University Rugby Fives Club, a post he held for 15 years. During this time Barry had the galling experience of seeing his own college, St. John's, demolish the fives and racquets courts at Portugal Place. He made many attempts to persuade the authorities at the university to provide the club with "a postage stamp of land" on which to build courts, but to no avail. With his mental health failing it is unlikely that Barry understood in 2011 that finally his dream of courts in Cambridge was to come true.

Bob Dolby



The Trapnell Tankard played for since 2005 for Past versus Present