

John Pretlove 1932-2018

The RFA is sad to report the death on Easter Sunday of John Pretlove, Alleyn Old Boy and multiple National Rugby Fives Champion.

While at Alleyn's John Pretlove won the Public Schools Singles, as it was then known, in 1950 and 1951, and the Doubles in 1951 with JST Fletcher.

He represented Cambridge University in the Varsity Match in 1954, 1955 and 1956, each time playing at number one. He won Blues for football and cricket while an undergraduate at Gonville and Caius College. He was a loyal supporter of Cambridge fives, regularly attending the Past versus Present and playing in the last match at Portugal Place in 1995. He was also a stalwart of the Alleyn Old Boys and coached fives at Alleyn's School

A superb left-handed striker of the Jefferies Malings and Slazenger balls John won the Amateur Singles four times, in 1953, 1955, 1956 and 1958 and was runner-up on three later occasions. He, Andrew Cowie and John East remain the only players to have won the National title while undergraduates.

Between 1952 and 1967 John won the Amateur Doubles Championships 7 times in all, with four different partners — 'Bill' Bailey, Dennis Silk (four years in a row), Roy Birmingham and Bob Smith — , and was runner-up twice.

His cricketing commitments largely precluded participation in any regional tournaments but he did win the Vintage Doubles in 1993 with fellow AOB, Roy Birmingham.

John served as General Secretary of the RFA in the 1990s and previously as President (1985-87).



John at the Cambridge Past versus Present in 2003

From the Kent County Cricket Club's website on April 2nd 2018: [A] left-handed batsman and slow left-arm bowler [John Pretlove] played for Kent from 1955 to 1959 while serving as Assistant Secretary from 1955 to 1957.

Pretlove scored ten first class centuries including four for Kent with his best bowling return for Kent of 4/59 against Gloucestershire at Tunbridge Wells in 1958.

His best season with the bat came in 1957 when he scored 1,191 runs and earned his county cap.

From The Independent 12.05.2018 : John Pretlove, who has died aged 85, was one of the last of that illustrious band of scholars/sportsmen to whom success in both sport and scholarship seemed to come so effortlessly during the 1950s. Having won multiple sporting blues while an undergraduate at Cambridge University, he went on to play first-class cricket for Kent and MCC. In addition, such was his total domination of the ancient and historic game of Rugby Fives that his numerous achievements were felt worthy of inclusion in *The Guinness Book of Records*.

Born in south London, the eldest son of a Camberwell shopkeeper, John Frederick Pretlove was educated at Alleyn's School in Dulwich. There, his prodigious talents, both academic and sporting, rapidly came to the fore. In the company of fellow pupil, the future Surrey and England cricketer Micky Stewart, Pretlove not only excelled at the summer game, but in the winter both played soccer for the Public Schools XI. Pretlove also starred at Rugby Fives (a handball game resembling squash without the rackets), winning the Public Schools Singles title in 1950 and 1951, and taking the doubles title that latter year with JST Fletcher.

Having completed his National Service in the Intelligence Corps in 1953, Pretlove took up a place to read English and Russian at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Here again, academic life was supplemented by a richly varied diet of sporting activity that, in 1953 and 1954, culminated in two football blues. A nippy outside-left, he captained the university in both his Varsity matches. He later went on to play for the combined Oxford and Cambridge side, Pegasus, before enjoying particular success in the FA Amateur Cup with Corinthian-Casuals.

A superb left handed striker, Pretlove dominated the Rugby Fives scene throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Having represented Cambridge University in the Varsity matches of 1954, 1955 and 1956, between 1953 and 1958 Pretlove won the Jesters Club Cup (the national singles title) four times and finished runner-up three times between 1960 and 1963. Partnered by his great friend and fellow cricketer Dennis Silk, Pretlove won the national doubles titles each year between 1956 and 1959, and went on to lift the title on a further three occasions, each time with different partners.

Having been elected president of the Rugby Fives Association in 1985, during the 1990s he served as the association's general secretary. Long remaining active within the game, he took the 1993 vintage doubles title alongside Roy Birmingham. When returning to his old school

as a member of the governing council, he also took the opportunity to pass on his court craft and skills, successfully coaching and mentoring a whole new generation of emerging players. In 2002, Alleyn's main fives courts were renamed in his honour.

Cricket remained an equally enduring sporting passion. An aggressive left-handed middle-order batsman and slow left-arm bowler, he was also an occasional wicket keeper. He made his first-class debut for Cambridge University against Warwickshire at Fenner's in April 1954, the year he was also selected for the Gentleman against the Players. He played in three Varsity matches, hitting a chanceless 114 at Lord's in 1955. Against Middlesex later that season, in his finest performance, he took five wickets in the first innings and four in the second, while also scoring 111 with the bat.

Playing for Surrey second XI in 1954, the following season he moved to Kent as an amateur, initially appointed assistant secretary and second XI captain. Capped in 1957, that year his total of 1,191 runs included a first century for the county, 101 made against Leicestershire at Gravesend. His most memorable game came against Micky Stewart's Surrey at Blackheath the following season. Facing the might of Loader, Bedser, Lock and Laker, Pretlove top-scored with 79. Though Lock took 15 wickets in the match and scored 57, Kent won a famous game by 29 runs with only minutes to spare.

Pretlove took his leave of Kent at the end of the 1959 season and undertook a memorable trip to Canada with MCC, where he scored some 556 runs and signed off with an unbeaten century in the final encounter with British Columbia. Until his retirement in 1968, he remained one of the key figures around whom, in a day-to-day sense, MCC revolved. Compiling ten centuries in all first-class cricket, he totalled 5,115 runs, took 43 wickets and held 70 catches, not forgetting the occasional stumping. He later played club cricket for Brentwood and Bromley.

Away from the sporting arena, Pretlove made his mark in the construction industry. After five years with Blue Circle, he spent 20 years with Ready Mixed Concrete before being made a director of Hall and Co, where he ran two of their four operating companies. Joining Costain in 1986, from 1992 onwards he ran his own consultancy company. As a long-standing member of the Kent committee, he brought his undoubted business acumen to bear on the club's affairs. Elected Kent president in 1999, needless to say it was yet another in a long list of roles he fulfilled with great distinction.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, daughter Sally, and son, David.

John Pretlove, sportsman, born 23 November 1932, died 1 April 2018