

IN MEMORIAM

DENNIS HENRY EASBY (SOUTH HOUSE 1934-42)



Dennis Easby, who has died aged 92, was one of that unbroken line of Old Redingensians who chose to pursue a career in the town of Reading and became prominent local citizens.

School

He entered Form 1A at Reading School in September 1934 with his elder twin brother, Tom. They were boarders in South House of which in his last year Dennis was Vice-Captain and his brother Captain.

Along the way they both had outstanding sporting careers, commencing in the Junior School where Dennis was a '*consistently good*' football half back and won his JS colours for cricket.

After he had moved up the drive Dennis continued to make his mark and it was cricket that dominated. He held Boarders House Colours for three years, became Vice-Captain of the Boarders House Team, gained School 2nd XI Colours in 1940 and was awarded 1st XI Colours in 1941 after taking 8 for 30 against Bedford Modern School. In 1942, the year in which Dennis was Hon Sec of School Cricket, Lt Col G H M Cartwright, writing in *Wisden* on *The Public Schools 1942*, reported that Reading School (see image below) was unbeaten that year in school matches and '*there were many good boy bowlers in 1942...D H Easby (Reading) 73 wickets for 531 runs*'. MCC and Berkshire Gentlemen were also beaten that season and Dennis won the B S Lewis Fielding Cup.

Dennis also held Boarders House Rugby Colours for three years and gained 2nd XV Colours for play in the 1st XV in 1941-42. He was a School Athletic Colour, on the 1942 School Shooting VIII, Junior Middle Weight Boxing Champion in 1939 and Senior Featherweight Boxing Champion in 1940. He gained the Royal Life Saving Society's Elementary Award in 1938 and the Intermediate Award in 1939.

It was not all sport. Dennis played Chess for his House throughout his time at School, holding House Chess Initials in his last two years. He was a member of the Debating Society, the Dramatic Society and the Operatic Society. Having been a L/Corporal in the Junior Training Corps, he transferred to the Air Training Corps and reached the rank of Sergeant.

War Service, Career and Local Life

Dennis left School with his O and S Cs and by July 1943 both he and his brother were in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as A/C2's. They finished the War as Pilot Officers and Dennis remained on the Reserve until 1960 when he relinquished his commission as Flight Lieutenant.

In 1950 he passed the final examination of the Law Society; in 1957 he was taken into partnership with Brain & Brain and eventually became Senior Partner gaining a high reputation in his profession. Rodney Huggins recalls him as '*a very good court lawyer*'. (Field Seymour Parkes absorbed Brain & Brain, Reading in 1997 and, incidentally, the Basingstoke office of Brain & Brain was bought out by Nick Massey-Chase and two others in 1995 to establish Brain Chase Coles. Nick (1962-69) is a former Captain of School).

Dennis had many interests. He was Master of the Old Rectory Lodge, No.665 in 1965, one of several ORs who have held that office. Dennis's own father had been the first Master of the Lodge, which was consecrated in 1948.

He played a major role at Reading Golf Club, guiding the Committee of Management as Chairman for many years. He was Captain of the Club in 1975 and President 1995-97.

Public Profile

A wider public will remember Dennis for his outstanding contribution to Berkshire and England Rugby. The Berkshire Society of Rugby Football Referees was formed in 1948 (Gwyn Francis, forty years on the School Staff and a former Welsh International was Chairman from 1948-63). Dennis became a County Championship Referee, then Appointments Secretary for the Society from 1964-67 (he was succeeded by his brother) and represented Berkshire on the RFU Committee. He became an international touch judge, Chairman of the Laws Committee and one of England's representatives on the International Board. He was a Vice President of Berkshire County RFU and in 1994-95 was elected Chairman of the Rugby Football Union (the first Berkshire man in the post since formation in 1871).

However, his year was to be blighted. For Dennis the amateur ethos of Rugby Union was a thing to be admired. For others the promotion of professionalism was the way, as they saw it, to overthrow elitist and undemocratic attitudes to the game. History can judge whether the baby was thrown out with the bathwater, though perhaps the baby has already been forgotten. An off-air remark by Will Carling, after an interview with

Greg Dyke, was picked up and exploited mercilessly by the Press. Carling was sacked as England's Captain but 'public outrage' brought his reinstatement within days. Dennis suffered, with dignity, the jibes of the media scenting blood. What was particularly ironic was that, whilst certain England players did have individual members of the RFU Committee in their sights, Dennis was not necessarily amongst their number; but he was the man who took the flak being the incumbent President.

The Old Redingensians

To return to the local scene, Dennis was one of those who identified the site at Sonning which became the OR Sports Ground. At the same time he was drawing up the Articles which saw a reformed Old Boys Club registered as a Committee limited by Guarantee. He was on the Council of the reconstituted Club and so in every way a founder member; indeed he was Secretary of the Sub-Committee which finally formulated the Rules of the Club.

In the early years he oversaw the bar at the Club House, garnering votes of thanks from the Committee for the significant profits generated, which were so important to the Club. With his brother, he was a leading light in running the Berkshire 7 a side competition which was held at the Club ground from 1954-70.

Dennis's support of the Old Redingensians Club (now The Old Redingensians Association) and its sporting sections was immense. He first served on the OR Council in 1947 and when he finally stepped down in 1974, he had twice been Chairman and had twice held the post of Assistant Hon Treasurer of the Club. He had been Hon Treasurer for the Cricket Section, Fixture Secretary for the Rugby Section and a long-standing player who captained both the 1st XV and the 1st XI in his time.

Over the years Dennis attended many annual dinners of the Club and in '*a witty and entertaining speech*' it was he who proposed the toast of 'The School' in 1953. Thirty years later, in 1983 he was invited to again propose that very toast. In 1960 he presided at the dinner as Chairman in the absence of the President and Vice-President of the day.

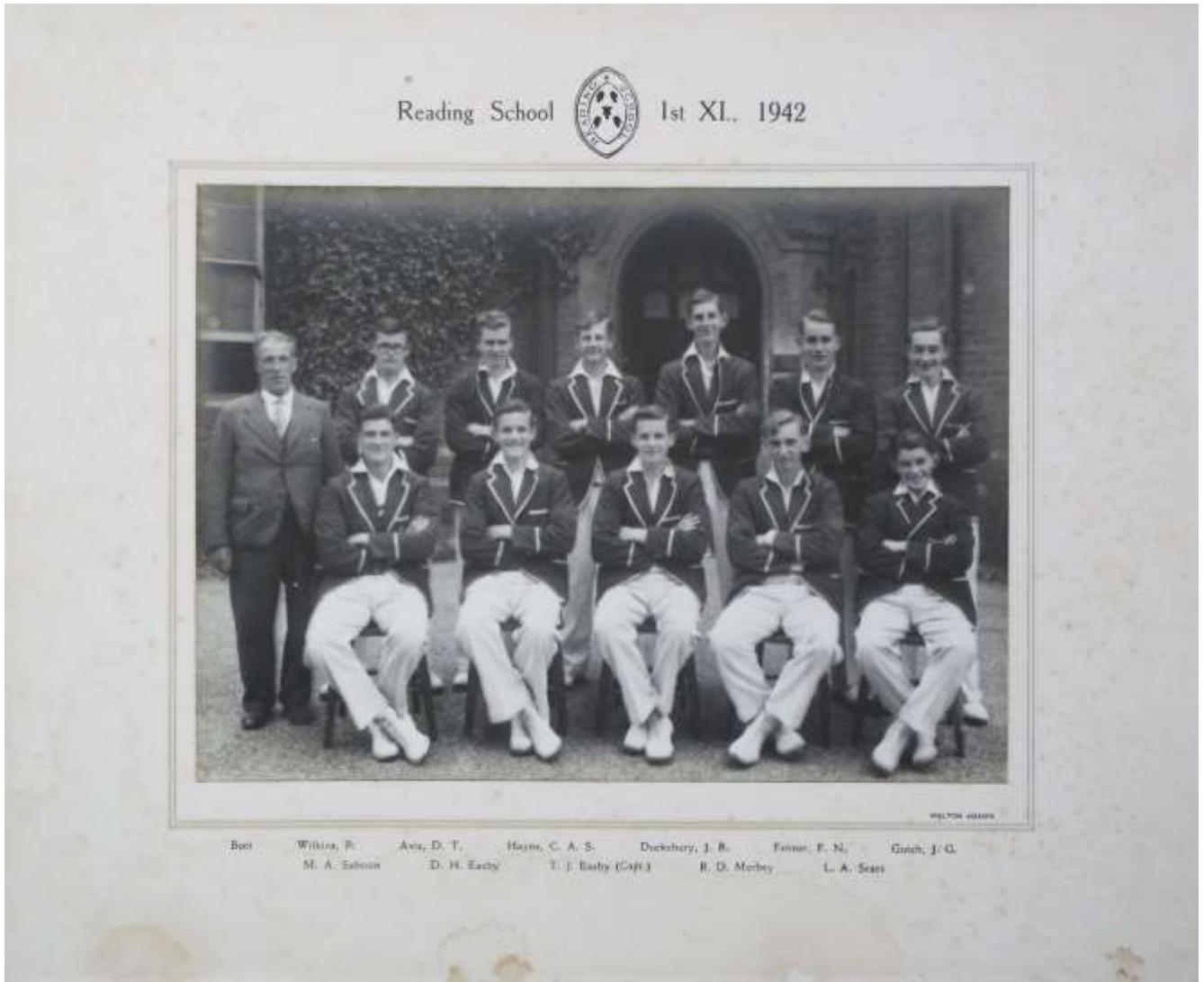
His appearance for the cricket and rugby sides which annually competed against the School stretched over decades, as did his cricket and rugby for OR Club sides. He retired from playing rugby in 1960 but continued to figure consistently at or near the top of the bowling averages for the OR Cricket Club.

Family Life

Dennis was twice married and a father of three, including David (Reading

School 1966-71): step-father of two: a grandfather of three: step-grandfather of five and step-great grandfather of five. KCB

D H Easby, born 15 February 1925 died 31 July 2017 aged 92.



AN APPENDIX: D H EASBY - A LIFE IN RUGBY

As Player	Reading School Invitation XV's Old Redingensians RUFC
As Referee	Berkshire Referees Society London Referees Society County Championship Referee International Touch Judge

As Local Administrator	Berkshire County RFU
As Divisional Administrator	RFU South West Division
As National Administrator	<i>Sometime:</i> Chairman International Referees Selection Committee Chairman RFU Laws Sub- Committee Chairman International Board's Laws Committee Chairman IRFB Amateurism Committee Member International Rugby Football Board Member Five Nations Committee Member Four Home Unions Committee

PRESIDENT OF THE RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION 1994-95

Dennis also served on a Players Safety Working Party for five years and became a Twickenham Stadium Tour Guide. He was a life member of Redingensians Rugby Football Club. Former RFU President, Jonathan Dance, has paid the following tribute:

“Dennis was a man of the highest integrity and principle. He was deeply respected by the whole rugby community in Berkshire as player, referee and administrator at every level of the game which he served for so long and selflessly with such distinction. He will be long remembered and sorely missed.”