



Geoff Hales

1948–2020

A tribute from
Remnants Cricket Club







Published in May 2020
Copyright © Remnants Cricket Club 2020
www.remnantscc.net

Many thanks to all who contributed so promptly and thoughtfully. With apologies if any of the photos are blurry or low resolution

Copyright Faruk Kara photos on the front cover, front/rear endpapers, pages 6 and 27. The photograph on page 9 is from the *Cambridge Evening News*. The back cover photo is by John Richer



[Right] Geoff and Martin Law, Parker's Piece, on what looks like a nippy two-jumper day in (May?) 1985



Geoff Hales

1948–2020

A tribute from
Remnants Cricket Club



Introduction

It was a terrible shock to the whole Remnants family when we heard that Geoff had died. The club's response was immediate, with the Remnants WhatsApp group – set up just a few weeks earlier – suddenly filled with beautiful and moving tributes to the man who founded our club. In one of them Phil Watson had the brilliant idea of producing a book of memories of Geoff. Seeing as one of us (Dave) has been making books for nearly 40 years we were in a good position to make it happen. This is the result.

Remnants from all eras have contributed fantastic memories and photos. Mike Atherton made a kind contribution: an email reminding him that he once coached a Remnants net session (one of Geoff's

favourite anecdotes) brought a reply within five minutes. The number and generosity of the contributions is evidence of the nature of the club that Geoff created. When Christopher Wren died he was buried in the crypt right under the centre of the dome of his greatest work, St Paul's Cathedral; his inscription reads 'If monument you require, look around you.' The same can be said of Geoff's club.

The irony is that a hypothetical Geoff who could see all this would have baulked at the attention, shuffled a little, harrumphed and wished everyone would stop making such a fuss. This Geoff would prefer to be clutching a pint, reeling off a story about C. B. Fry, or quoting an elegant witticism

from P. G. Wodehouse or Rudyard Kipling. He'd rather be wrinkling up his face and playing up to one of his starring roles as technological refusenik/curmudgeon. In classic old-school English style this Geoff hated extravagant shows of emotion and the Twitter age of hearts on sleeves. Geoff loved wickedly deflating pompousness, something even better achieved by the savage but karmic disappointments of cricket itself. This Geoff most of all would rather be playing, something sadly none of us can do at the moment with all cricket cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. But we will play again, continuing the legacy of the club he loved, and that will be his best memorial.

David Williams and Daniel Mortlock





MIKE ATHERTON

Cricket, a game for everyone, should celebrate the unsung heroes as well as the giants. For forty years Geoff Hales was a giant for the club he founded. This book is a joyful recollection of his love for the game and his devotion to the Remnants. 🍷



FARUK KARA

I remember many rides back and forth to various cricket games in the Cotswolds. This is something Geoff told me one time that has always tickled me. His PhD, taken at King's

College London, was on George Orwell. As King's is part of the University of London, his tutor was able to arrange for Geoff's viva voce to be in George Orwell's actual office at Senate House on Malet Street. Senate House was used as the image of the Ministry of Love in the film 1984 starring John Hurt. Orwell's office was of course the basis of Room 101.

Geoff's grandfather was a butcher from Newmarket, which probably explained Geoff's love of porkie products. The FAS tour plays a game at Fladbury in Worcestershire, which has a butcher renowned for pork pies. We would both always put ourselves down for the game – ignoring the plum fixture at Temple Grafton (a 250-year-old ground set amongst borage fields surrounding the Manor House) which is played at the same time – in the full knowledge that the local pie would be served for tea. At the end of FAS tour we would often make the 45-minute detour via Fladbury to pick up pies to bring home. The photo of Geoff running the scoreboard [facing page] was one of the few times we were both at Temple Grafton. 🍷



PAUL JORDAN

I first met Geoff in 1985 when I was invited to play for Remnants through Les Collings, who was by then a regular. Geoff was polite and welcoming; I quickly got to play every week, looking forward to Geoff's dulcet tones on the phone confirming time and place.

In those days Fitzwilliam was never available until mid-June, which meant frequent trips to other college grounds as well as more out-of-the-way venues.

Geoff was also our regular keeper for the Sunday team, the Cambridge Arms. The overlap between Remnants players and the pub side was not dissimilar to the Romsey/Remnants relationship.

Geoff was always appreciative of good bowling – which didn't always include my erratic bowl-as-fast-as-you-can approach. On one occasion after a particularly hard day in the classroom I was pretty fired up and ready to take the new ball. On that day all

the elements celestial or otherwise were all in place and I bowled (by my standards at least) a blistering spell on a helpful pitch. Geoff wandered over at the end of my first over and said in his dry manner: 'Been on the red meat or have the children upset you?'

That was typical of Geoff and as close to a compliment as I ever got. When I took my 7 for 8 I believe Geoff was more withering about the four wides down the leg side, otherwise it would have been 7 for 4...

Geoff always expressed great loyalty to me in respect of my son Tom. He started his

apprenticeship with Remnants from an early age, and through Geoff's encouragement and kind fatherly approach developed into the player I could never be. Tom was very sad to hear the news and always had fond memories of Remnants, and of course Geoff.

One final memory of Geoff is my signed copy of *Cricket Rules* OK. As he stood there with pen in hand I wasn't sure what comment he might make, but was convinced it would have some cricket reference. Geoff didn't disappoint. 'For a season of leg side takes!' ... God bless you, Geoff. 🍷



CATHERINE OWEN

From as long as I can remember, my family and I shared countless birthday celebrations with Geoff and Sally. Often when I cycled home from school he would give me his signature nod and smile. At the age of 12 when I started Remnants cricket – and every season since – I have an abundance of memories of Geoff supporting me with my cricketing career. When I stepped up to the crease to bowl, Geoff would turn round to me and remind me to stay calm, but most importantly show all the men I played with just why women should play cricket too. Additionally, the morning after a game Geoff would post a copy of Sally's wonderful scoring through the letter box, letting me know he was impressed with my performance and that I should be too.

Back in 2016 when I was planning my first-ever cricket six-a-side event, inspired by so many enjoyable evenings at Remnants, Geoff



was first to offer to supply all the food – he insisted on it, even when I told him he was being too kind. To top that off, a few weeks before I headed off to university he gave dad a cheque for me. It was such a surprising and heart-warming gesture, one that to this day I am still so grateful for. Amongst the list of things it helped with, his gift removed financial barriers to playing sport, accessing courses and resources I needed or affording to come home when I needed some family time.

Geoff was one of the most generous, kind-hearted people I know. I never think of Sally without Geoff, so for this to be a reality still brings such shock and great sadness. However, I do find comfort in knowing that after I graduated, the family and I shared such a lovely evening at the Alex with Geoff and Sally celebrating a birthday like we often would, over good food, drink and even better company.

To all of the Owen family, Geoff was not just a neighbour or a legend at Remnants cricket, he was part of the family and will be missed greatly. Nevertheless, despite not being able to physically see him any more, we will always remember him and keep all the fond memories present with us. 🍷



MIKE SNEYD

Remarkably, there's an old photo of Geoff on Parker's Piece surrounded by about half a dozen of his foreign students from various

countries, together with three of his fellow teachers [*Mike is second from the left*] from Davies' School of English. Geoff is in the process of showing one of these foreigners the correct batting stance while waiting for a delivery. How or why this photographer was present I've no idea, but here you can see the photo in all its glory.

Geoff for some unknown reason had decided that as part of the students' English language learning experience they should be introduced to the mysteries of cricket. This may have been because foreign students



inevitably asked their teachers to 'explain cricket' to them. Geoff's idea of a hands-on approach was very sensible given the almost infinite amount of class time required to elucidate all the ins and outs of this most English of phenomena.

Having organised this event it seemed to awaken in Geoff a desire to maintain interest in cricket amongst the students and teachers of his language school. This period is now shrouded in the mists of time but I think he organised a couple of informal games on Parker's Piece. Having noticed that I had some ability at the game, when Geoff thought about forming a 'real team' he roped me in.

The very first proper games of cricket which 'Remnants' played (I don't know if we were yet called that) were memorable in various ways. I think the very first game was one Geoff organised against his old university. An away game at some obscure location, we lost, but Geoff enjoyed showing a straight bat, something he was formidably good at [*as the photo suggests*], for a considerable period of time. Another early game that really sticks in my mind involved playing against some sort of astronomical team at Herstmonceux in Sussex. We assembled early in the morning in Cambridge and then drove down the M11 in a minibus. As the M11 had just opened we met about three cars between Cambridge



and the junction with the M25. After a pleasant lunch in a country pub we made our way to Herstmonceux. When we arrived we discovered that through crossed wires or something there were only three members of the opposition. Most people would have

drawn stumps, but Geoff was determined to have a game; using his charm and persuasion he managed to round up more players for the opposition from people who were just enjoying a day out! These included a child of about 10, an old-age pensioner and one person who had a very bad leg.

Naturally as a group of super-fit, skilled cricketers [LOL] we felt almost embarrassed to have to crush such a motley crew. Little did we know. Having bowled out the opposition for some low score we then went confidently in to bat. When we had been reduced to something like 23 for 8 needing about 10 to win it looked like we were facing the most super humiliation of all time. However, we somehow managed to fall over the winning line.

That from such inauspicious beginnings Remnants were able to develop into one of the best-run clubs in Cambridge was due to Geoff's commitment, organisational skills and devotion to the club. If a club's genesis and establishment on firm foundations can be said to be the work of one man, then it is certainly the case with Remnants. 🍏



EVERTON FOX

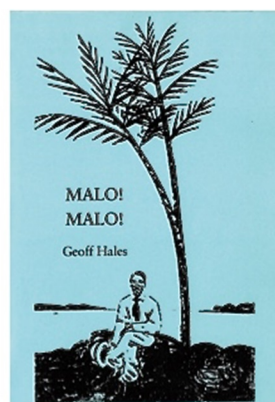
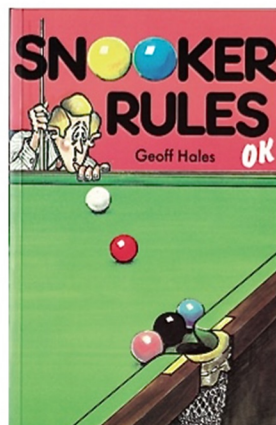
I've known Geoff since the early eighties when I first started playing for the club. I met Geoff through Tony Malik. It was the source of much amusement for us when Tony struck up a deal whereby Geoff would cover his match fees if Tony scored a 50, and in return Geoff would get a bunch of bananas along with his payment if he didn't. Needless to say Geoff often came up short on that one, but he was always more than happy with the fact that we usually won.

You couldn't hope to meet a kinder gentleman, whose wit and warmth made him such great fun to be around. And of course it was his joy and passion for the game that brought us together. What a legend. 🍌



LES COLLINGS

Geoff and I were umpiring once when a real quickie started short-balling the batsman (Bruce – also called Alex at the time, but that's another longish story). Like me, Bruce batted a long way down the wicket. He waited until the bowler was on his delivery stride, held up his hand and backed off. I signalled dead ball. The bowler was well p—d off and stood there, glaring at the batsman. Bruce slowly walked up to me, spat out his dentures and handed them to me (yukky or what?) and grunted in his thickest accent: 'Hold these, Les, I've only just finished paying for 'em and I'd hate for this a—hole to damage them.' What 'threw' the bowler was that Bruce gave a full madman's grin (all four front top gnashers being missing) to the onrushing nutter. It spooked him big time. The bowler continued... but bowling a line similar to that of Mr Jordan in his 'quickie' days! 'Game over'...



These are Geoff's three Amazon bestsellers. [Malo! Malo! is a memoir of Geoff's time in the Pacific Islands.] I helped on the cricket one, together with Ken Naylor (a genuine ump, late of Madingley). Strangely, whilst the cricket title has the inscription 'to Les, with many thanks, Geoff', the snooker one has the more personal dedication on the half-title: 'To Les, may your cue never droop, Geoff'. I've never understood what he meant by that. 🍌



PHIL WATSON

Like more than a few of you I have been playing cricket with and against Geoff for over forty years. Even after I moved away from Cambridge I stayed in irregular contact with Geoff and had many invitations to return to play in teams he put together. Our phone conversations often lasted a very long time. Dan informed me yesterday of his passing and last night I started to put words on paper to begin maybe a memorial book for Geoff. Cricket in Cambridge will be poorer without his presence.

I am sure we all have our own stories about Geoff. We were playing Fitzwilliam at Fitz many years ago and the college were pretty weak that time. We were around 180 or so with an over to go and Geoff was bouncing excitedly around as we were approaching the all-time record Remnants total. I was batting and going well, and with a couple of sweetly timed cover drives got us past the record. As

we walked off to the usual ripple of applause, Sally checked the scores to make sure it was a club record; in the process, it was realised that my contribution to the record was 102 not out! But Geoff was more excited that a club record had been broken . . . 🏏



MICHAEL McCANN

Geoff was, at the heart of it, just an amazingly lovely guy, who absolutely loved cricket. Always friendly, always welcoming, always around for a chat.

He was a selfless man, and had an infectious sense of very dry humour. It was always a pleasure to be in his company, either at Remnants games or Fenner's.

Midweek nights at Fitzwilliam will never be quite the same without him. Their continuation (after the current hiatus) will be exactly the legacy he'd be proud of leaving behind. RIP Geoff. 🏏



HUW DAVIES

Geoff was involved when I achieved my best bowling figures for Remnants – 4 for 8 in a game last season. I was pleased with how that game went, because I had been struggling for consistency with my bowling and it was a reminder that if you stick at it, things can change.

At the annual dinner, the 'Champagne moment' prize was awarded, and even though it only went to me because one or two centurions from the batting line-up couldn't attend the dinner, it was a real honour to be handed a bottle of champagne by none other than Geoff.

I went to a couple of Geoff's literary talks as well and thought that he did the readings brilliantly, bringing historical characters to life. 🏏



ALEX GAUNSON

What a very sad day this is – but huge thanks to you [*Les Collings, aka Boris*] for letting me know, and in a message worthy of our late cricketing gentleman.

Thanks too for reminder of the Remnants website, to which I turned, hoping for more info on Geoff, including his age. Didn't see that, but I saw a splendid photo of him at a fairly recent end-of-season Remnants dinner. He was on his feet delivering some suitable remarks, and was clearly enjoying the occasion, resplendent in his red-striped cricket club jacket, and evidently enjoying the wine. With his nicely crafted and understated wit, what he delivered would have been vintage Hales.

This also reminded me of one of those occasions which, in retrospect, you wished you'd somehow recorded. We were standing around enjoying a few pints in the Cambridge Arms, and for my benefit he launched into a hilarious account of his cultural

adventures in the South Pacific – and how (for sheer survival) he found himself having to teach 'History of the World' at some forgettable college worthy of Lord Jim. His pace never slackened . . . 'and then there was the French revolution, and then there was Napoleon' etc. I recall, at a subsequent occasion (was I in league with you in this matter?) getting him a copy of J. M. Roberts' *Penguin History of the World* as a memento of this and his hair-raising colonial experiences.

And above all we have great memories of

Geoff on the cricket field. First time I met him, I was astonished to learn that this big fella would be keeping wicket. And I was soon watching in amazement as Geoff hurled himself horizontally to prevent yet another four wides from a hopelessly loose bowler. (It wasn't either of us, Boris!)

So – as I've just done here – raise a glass, Boris, to our inimitable teammate, Geoff . . . until we can raise pint glasses together, in a Cambridge pub, and toast his memory again. 🍷





FERDI REX

I found two photos in the archives of my Facebook, and I really feel they show the impact Geoff had on the Rexes. Geoff and Remnants brought cricket into my family – at the start with just Dad, Olly and then me, but Remnants brought about so much more, like the six-a-side tournament (I know this is Romsey/Catherine but – come on! – it's the same) that we entered as a family.

Geoff was such a great man. He was always so kind to me, looking out for me, and it was such an honour when I realised aged around 15 that I was a regular in his President's XI! I cannot imagine Remnants without Geoff, and I wish I could see him again to say goodbye. He will never be forgotten by me. His impact on me personally and my family is huge – he helped me cultivate a true love of cricket, and it is not a coincidence that Olly and I carried on playing for Remnants regularly for so long. And in the same way Remnants introduced

us to Romsey – these two clubs are such a huge part of our lives and our family cricket history.

I am not great with words, but I hope this gives an idea of what Geoff meant to me, and I will definitely be making my way back to Cambridge for whatever ceremonial match or drinks we hold when this lockdown is over – Remnants is a huge, amazing family and Geoff reminds me of Mufasa from *Lion King*. We will always remember and celebrate him. 🏏





JEFF BEAUMONT

I first met Geoff – as, no doubt, many cricketers did – one sunny May evening at Fitz more than fifteen years ago. He was the towering figure with longish, white hair adjudicating my varyingly competent attempts to bat and bowl with great gravitas and a solemn, gravelly voice that would become very familiar over the following years.

The fact that there was an umpire at all for a social game was not to be taken for granted. I have always had some sympathy for referees and umpires in my amateur sporting career, not least because of my own horrible feelings of inadequacy when I have been in such a position myself. Geoff's presence meant that I could slink back to my safely useful role at the scorer's table when not on the field – where of course I quickly became acquainted with Sally and her immaculately kept scorebooks, in contrast to my own chickenscratch efforts.

When I finally joined Remnants as a player, I inevitably became better acquainted with Geoff, and learned of his formative role in setting up the club. It is notable for its good-natured and sporting approach to the game, something that makes it all the more enjoyable and is sadly becoming rarer in amateur sport. That the club has grown and flourished for over a thousand games is testament to the remarkable effort that Geoff and others have devoted to its organisation.

Even more remarkably, Geoff's involvement was not just confined to Remnants, and in fact he was absolutely devoted to the game at all levels, not just standing at our social level but umpiring and scoring right through the college game and at Fenner's as well. Such people are the absolute lifeblood of the game, and his loss leaves all of us very much the poorer.

We can take some solace in our memories of Geoff, both on and off the field. Geoff was a very capable cricketer in his own right, and I have a particularly fond memory of an evening at Girton College where Geoff made one of his periodic, temporary 'un-retirements' to permit us to field a full XI. Whilst fielding he took what was by any standards an extremely good catch to dismiss the batsman, characteristically shrugging off the praise, and yet he was one of the first to

offer commiserations when I managed to butcher a much more straightforward chance a couple of overs later.

His other passions for history and performance were embodied in his Travelling Theatre, and I particularly enjoyed the chance to sit with him over a post-match half-pint and talk about his upcoming projects. A few days after discussing Robert FitzRoy (Captain of Darwin's *Beagle* expedition and innovative meteorologist) with Geoff, a pair of tickets to his show appeared in the post, a very kind and thoughtful present from him. I wasn't often able to take up his generosity, but I will always remember his booming voice bringing to life the travails of men and women that Geoff felt had an important but overlooked role in shaping modern history.

Sporting activity is currently curtailed by the Covid-19 situation, but when it resumes, there is no doubt that Geoff will be very keenly missed. I know I will find myself looking for his familiar figure as warm-ups commence, and I will miss his grace and good humour, and, of course, the authoritative pronouncement of 'Not out!' to the LBW appeal that was probably *just* shaping away down leg, after all ...

Vale, Geoff. ●



CAMERON PETRIE

My participation in Remnants cricket over the years has been frustratingly stop-start, and I feel that I missed the golden years of Geoff and Sally being regulars.

Nonetheless, I often encountered Geoff in a range of situations away from Remnants, and I think the first time I met him was when he umpired for St John's Long Vac team against the Trinity College High Table CC, and he gave me out LBW to a ball pitching outside leg stump . . . As a batsman who hates getting out (not sure any *like* getting out), it was very irritating at the time, but with about 30 minutes' hindsight I found it pretty funny, and had chalked it up as 'one of those things'. I can't remember who won, but I can remember his very distinctive out signal.

Geoff would always give you time, he was always lovely to talk to; as captain, I felt he was always keen to offer his services for whatever random match might be on – just

so that he could be around cricket. It is the type of thing I would like to be doing when playing is less of an option.

I actually take a perverse delight in playing *against* Remnants, and this was always amplified when being asked to play for his President's XI – even if I couldn't come along that evening. To me, to be selected by Geoff was always something special.

In yet another context, it was with much delight that I also met Geoff and Sally at the Ancient India and Iran Trust, where they are Friends and often attended talks and the summer party. Their interests were clearly broad, and in the last six months it was a truly lovely to receive not one but two personal hand-written invitations to see Geoff's review of Kipling. Unfortunately I was unable to attend on either occasion, so I will just have to imagine what it would have been like.

This feels like a list of missed opportunities, but I think it reflects the fact that I wished I had known him longer and better, because there was a richness there worth savouring.

He is and will be deeply missed. 🍷



MIKE JONES

Geoff was so welcoming to me from my first match. I always enjoyed our conversations and his company. 🍷



JOHN MOORE

I will always remember Geoff as a gentleman, both courteous and witty. He walked like he didn't have a care in the world. But I'm sure in his head he was scoring a century at Lord's and winning the Ashes. 🍷



DANIEL MORTLOCK

An absolute highlight of my time living in the UK has been evening cricket in Cambridge, an activity that is synonymous with Remnants Cricket Club, and hence with Geoff. Growing up with shorter summer evenings in Australia, I had no idea evening cricket was even a possibility, but after moving to Cambridge I quickly became addicted, in particular to the unique and welcoming Remnants environment that Geoff nurtured.

That said, I probably first encountered Geoff as an opponent of Remnants, playing for the Royal Greenwich Observatory during a visit to Cambridge in 1997. Even though I can't be sure whether I met Geoff that evening, I did spend the second innings scoring with Sally, something we both remembered clearly many years later (primarily because I kept making mistakes which she patiently corrected).

My first real meeting with Geoff came in the spring of 2000, by which time I was living in Cambridge. One of my colleagues at the Cavendish Laboratory, one-time Remnants player Richard Wilson, had invited me along to a pre-season net session for something called Remnants Cricket Club. I duly found my way to The Leys School, where I was handed a ball and instructed to join the bowling queue. My first delivery was full and straight; the batsman missed; and there was the clang of leather on aluminium. I turned around to see Geoff nodding in considered approval, and I suspect he immediately made a mental note that I would be an acceptable addition to what I have since come to think of as the Remnants family.

From that first season Geoff made me feel incredibly welcome, and also very trusted. I can still remember when Geoff first invited me to captain a Remnants side, despite the fact I'd never captained a cricket team before in my life. And then Geoff placed the ultimate trust in me to take over the running of Remnants when he decided to step down after three decades of tireless service. The greatest tribute I can pay to Geoff is that my approach has simply been to ensure that the club continues as Geoff left it, being defined by love of cricket, friendly competition, and sporting integrity. In particular, Geoff made

sure that Remnants never fell into the 'win at all costs' trap that can so easily spoil amateur sport – although, much as he might have liked to pretend otherwise, we all knew that nothing satisfied him quite as much as hearing that Remnants had avenged an early-season defeat or comprehensively routed an old rival.

More broadly, I've always admired Geoff's approach to life, as he seemed to simultaneously live exactly how he wanted whilst being incredibly sensitive and generous to others. So many people find themselves drawn into all sorts of activities that they aren't really interested in, but aren't necessary either. My sense was that Geoff was remarkably successful at focussing on what he loved – cricket, English literature, performing, long friendships – and of course in Sally he'd found someone to share all this with. I feel very lucky to have spent the last two decades indulging my own love of cricket with Geoff, and I appreciate those sunny evenings even more now that we're facing a summer with no cricket and no Geoff – both seem entirely against the natural order of things. 🍓



GRAHAM HART

One of the joys of bumping into Geoff was that he always appeared pleased to see you – a marvellous characteristic in any man. ‘Sir Geoffrey,’ I would exclaim; ‘Dear Boy,’ he would reply. There would, of course, follow a conversation about cricket. Naturally you hoped to meet Geoff when you were in the company of somebody else; he was an impressive acquaintance to claim. One day, when showing an American friend around Cambridge we met Geoff near Parker’s Piece. After the normal pleasantries – Sir Geoffrey/ Dear Boy – we had a chat about cricket. Nothing else, just cricket. As we parted and continued our excursion my friend announced that Geoff was the first ‘Sir’ he had ever met. I didn’t disabuse him. And once, at Fenner’s, an elderly friend of mine and I spoke to Geoff for a while. My friend’s later comment: ‘What a remarkable man.’ I think Geoff would have been pleased with that.

Of course Geoff never went about seeking approval or, heaven forbid (one of Geoff’s words), praise. I think he hoped for very few things from those he knew . . . reliability, stemming from years of trying to get eleven men on a cricket field, and good-heartedness perhaps. I think he was largely rewarded in these respects. Of course, he possessed both attributes in abundance.

To my mind Geoff had great self-possession and self-awareness. This meant he largely avoided banana skins and the material for memorable anecdotes. But he was, in himself, a source of great amusement and joy. Although there might not be a fund of funny stories, the man was forever humorous . . . dryly, cleverly and often pithily.

As we know, he had a wonderful sense of fashion; his ‘sense’ was that anything appropriate for the 1950s was clearly fine for today. I think his cricket kit comprised the most modern clothes he owned, and this came from around 1960, although Sally will be able to put an exact date on it. But Geoff certainly did not live in the past (although I did meet him once on Cambridge station; he was dressed as Samuel Pepys!). How could he fall behind the times with the students he met in his daily work? And anybody who thought that Geoff was an anachronism, somebody out of their time, missed the man.

Geoff knew what was going on and, unlike so many of us, he was in control of his life and knew how and where to find happiness . . . with Sally (his helpmeet – another of Geoff’s words), with cricket, with his friends. Geoff knew mindfulness before anybody even thought of it.

But all this talk of Geoff, and Sally, sidesteps the one big feature in his life, the Remnants. There is such energy and tradition within the club that I am sure there is a successful future for it, but in many ways Geoff was the Remnants, and the Remnants was Geoff. His love of sport, his ironic humour, his loyalty, friendships, tolerance and kindness all found a home in the Remnants. I would like to add cavalier batting, nimble fielding and electric pace bowling but, hey, as Geoff would say, let the young’uns have the limelight.

In his organisation of the team, and its fixture list, Geoff achieved something that is very hard: a happy and stable club that was both competitive on the field and a joy off it. I was lucky to be captain for a couple of seasons and, from around 2000, brought our company team to play against the Remnants. It was always a pleasure, no matter what the result and no matter how resignedly tight-lipped Geoff remained when I introduced him to my ‘ringer’ for that year’s match. [Hart

McLeod were renowned for drafting in talented young cricketers, often with first-class averages. Graham is presenting the club the Ringer trophy below – I wonder why it's called that . . .]

Geoff loved everything about cricket and I think his love and respect for the game came to the fore in one particular and small way. Whenever we were short of players, particularly in the early years, Geoff would persuade one of his students to make up the number. Whoever it was normally fared badly with the bat and rarely did they bowl. But their efforts were faithfully recorded



by Sally, and the end-of-season stats were propped up by the likes of Jug Lutz, Kasun Kariyawasam and Anil Waduge – there were numerous others – who played one match but neither scored any runs nor accounted for any dismissals. But I bet they enjoyed their experience; Geoff would have made sure of it.

Many others will have stories to tell of a man who was always there, but sadly now isn't. I will miss the annual phone call, asking me to play in some new feature of the fixture list (past captains, Secretary's XI, players over 65, etc.). Geoffrey – the man who faced the prospect of a summer without cricket and decided to retire hurt – you will be seriously and sorely missed. Happily your name and reputation, and your cricket club, will certainly live on.

At times such as these there is a tendency to look to literature for the words you need. The natural quotation, so completely apt in Geoff's case, is the stanza from Grantland Rice that begins: 'When the One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name . . .' We know how it ends. In Geoffrey Hales' case, no need to ask what the One Great Scorer will mark. Reader, he married her. 🍷



JOE WHITE

I'm sure my experience of Geoff is very similar to many in the club, but it was none the less defining in my life. Having met Geoff several years earlier on the FAS cricket tour, I found myself fresh out of university and heading to Cambridgeshire to start a new job. I had grown up in Brussels and only ever lived in the UK when going to university, so I had no friends or family in the area, and was very much starting out on my own. Fortunately, I recalled that Geoff ran Remnants CC and, not knowing how the club worked, I gave him a call to ask if I might be able to come along to nets and try out for a place in the team. With typical enthusiasm he gathered me into the fold, and I was welcomed into the institution that the club has become.

It is hard to overstate the importance the club has played for me over the years. Geoff created and ran it as such a welcoming and

friendly place, it became a fixture in my life very fast, even to the extent that I would drive to the ground on nice days simply to watch games that I wasn't playing in! I know that, like myself, several club members have arrived in the Cambridge area from overseas, not knowing anyone or how anything worked, and really found a home in the club, giving them a sense of belonging. I would have been much worse off without it.

My favourite anecdote of Geoff is of the time we played together as a team in a double wicket competition on the FAS tour. The tour itself has a lot of members, many of whom at the time were very talented cricketers in the prime of life. On paper, Geoff and I were not destined to do very well against such opposition. However, through a combination of Geoff's wiles and my enthusiasm, we managed to beat all comers, even completing two stumpings of very talented batsmen off Geoff's rarely seen bowling! Geoff's unbridled glee at this achievement was infectious and became a story he revelled in for years to come!

And finally, my fondest memory of Geoff is simply the many sunny evenings we spent outside the Fitz bar chatting and joking after games, making light of the world and enjoying the unique environment that Geoff created in his beloved club. 🍷



TOM SERBY

In 2007 I moved back to Cambridge from Devon where I had enjoyed playing regular 'pub' cricket. A chance encounter on Parker's Piece led me to Oxford Road of a Tuesday evening where I met Geoff and Remnants for the first time. I quickly realised that Remnants were the Cambridge version of the West Country pub cricket I was missing – albeit with a far superior wicket, many more PhDs and no lowing animals beside the ground; and instead of the sun setting behind Dartmoor, the oft-quoted match report sunset of 'a nuclear explosion over Bedford'.

I like to imagine when I first met Geoff he was wearing a panama and blazer, but what I do remember for sure was his little notebook and pencil which he immediately flourished to put me down for some matches. I haven't looked back, and for me and my two sons Felix and Samuel (Geoff would always ask how the boys' cricket was progressing)

Remnants have been a major part of Cambridge summers since. And winters too, for perusing match reports and stats, and the club dinner (not quite the same in recent years with the removal of Geoff's typewritten question sheet). Geoff's overt friendliness and eccentricities (and of course Sally's scoring) no doubt have made Remnants CC what it continues to be – what a wonderful legacy! 🍷



NICK JOHNSON

I knew Sally first. I was a summer student in the Cavendish, 1980-ish, assigned to find the solar interference in the 6C tapes, so Sally could make maps out of the rest. I suspect I slowed the whole process down, to be honest. Pete Warner was there too, and it was summer, so cricket. I don't think I met Geoff then. I played a game that he couldn't make, but he was there in the background, semi-mythological. The founder of the Remnants.

I graduated and went off to do a PhD

in London, then found myself back in the Cavendish on a post-doc, building pre-amps for the new 5km. I think I slowed that whole process down too, but it was winter, so nets. 1986, I guess. 'Hi, you must be Nick.' I was waiting outside the projectile hall of the Kelsey Kerridge. 'Who are you?' I'm taken aback by this blond bearded giant towering over me, knowing my name. 'I'm Geoff.' Wholly mythological now, Thor-like, no one told me Geoff was so huge. I immediately pigeon-holed him as a fast bowler who slogged sixes for fun.

Not the case, as it turned out. The nets started, and it was clear God had not blessed him thus. But it didn't matter. God had blessed him otherwise, with a love of the game which, as I got to know him better, I realised was all of a piece. His real career – not the thing he was paid to do, which was teach English – but the thing he loved to do, was public readings of Dickens, Kipling and others of the era. He bore a curious resemblance to Dickens, notwithstanding the fair hair, and I'm sure the beard was an attempt to increase it. As the nineties rolled in, with mobile phones and emails, he would have none of them. You had to phone him on his landline, or write him a letter. Geoff was a Victorian born out of time. He embodied an age when the Corinthian ideal

was still alive, when being an artist was for its own sake, when being an amateur was to be admired and aspired to. He read Dickens and Kipling to sometimes bemused audiences because he loved them. He played cricket and tolerated the teasing of his, er, gazelle-like wicketkeeping because he loved it. He immersed himself in the game and its history and its records and its laws (don't ever call them rules) because he loved them. He loved hanging around cricket grounds and people. He got Mike Atherton to coach us just after he'd graduated. 'He's going to be England captain, you know.' With phone calls and handwritten notes he organised Remnants perfectly in his image, twice a week during the season, Sally keeping the score. We played and loved it, often well, often badly, sometimes hilariously badly.

When Daniel emailed news of Geoff's passing, coinciding with the country descending into the grip of the coronavirus, my first reaction was that civilisation really had just broken down. The virus could do what it liked, but without Geoff on the planet, what was to become of us? I shouldn't have worried. Geoff was out of step with the age, but in perfect synchrony with a better thing, a thing that he managed to transmit to generations of Remnants' players. He did it for the love of it, and we loved him back. ●



JOHN YOUNG

I have always thought that the best feature of Remnants Cricket Club is its inclusivity. The only prerequisites for membership are an enthusiasm for cricket and a willingness to embrace the club's values. In particular, cricketers of limited talent are not merely tolerated but given regular opportunities to bat or bowl, and their occasional achievements celebrated. I count myself in that category, being firmly in second place on the club's 'leaderboard' of lowest batting strike rates. Geoff led by his example, never failing to compliment me on the rare occasions when I played a good shot.

These compliments generally came from the vantage point of Geoff's umpiring position. Geoff was a skilled and knowledgeable umpire, but not above bending the rules now and again at our level of competition. I recall one time when I was batting, I had missed the ball and dragged my

back foot out of the crease. The opposition wicketkeeper fumbled the ball, allowing me to slide my foot back, but I could only stretch to the point where my toe was on the line, rather than over it. The wicketkeeper eventually took the bails off, but from his shouts of frustration it was clear that he thought I had regained my ground. Everyone else appealed, and Geoff gave it not out.

One of Geoff's many other contributions to Remnants life was the quiz, the centrepiece of the annual dinner. Written on an 'analogue' typewriter, the questions focussed on the statistical quirks and human stories of the past season. Geoff's warmth and wry sense of humour were always apparent. If I can sum up what I've learned from knowing Geoff for many years, it is that life can be much richer if not taken too seriously. 🍷

John Richer and Dave Green kindly provided photos



ANDY OWEN

At noon today [22 April 2020] the funeral of a great man will take place. He will be sadly missed by us all. But when we start playing again, as Geoff would want, we will play with pride that we knew him.

I first met Geoff during a Sunday friendly match between Romsey Town and Cricketers Arms at the Fitzwilliam playing field in the late eighties. During the early nineties Romsey Town used to play midweek evening games, including a game against Remnants organised through Geoff. When this came to an end in 1995 I was keen to play for a new midweek side. Specifically I wanted to play for Remnants having enjoyed their sporting spirit, but at the time you had to be proposed by a current player and then approved by the committee.

Happily I was kindly proposed by Geoff and was so glad to be accepted. I

started playing the following season. After many years of Romsey Town playing at Trumpington Rec I couldn't believe the facilities. Unsurprisingly the highlight of the early games was going into the bar to share a drink with Geoff and the regular players, many of whom always enjoyed a pint or two.

Geoff's cricket ethos was always a batter bats and a bowler bowls. One memory always stands out the most when I think of this: when Geoff dropped me as batsman during my most prolific scoring season for Remnants. Over the years, whilst sharing a beer or two, I would occasionally bring this up with Geoff. Amusingly it brought a solemn shake of the head, a small smile and then he would carry on drinking his beer!

During my involvement with Remnants, it was always an honour to be selected for a President's XI or Sally's team. Notably, Geoff without hesitation was the first to help out with any charity event like my six-a-side cricket competitions. He was a kind, generous and enthusiastic supporter of any fundraiser event, even more so if it had a hint of cricket associated with it.

As well as sharing a passion for Remnants cricket, Geoff loved to hear about Romsey Town Cricket Club matches, often meeting me at his front gate on my return from games to hear of our endeavours as soon as

he could. Furthermore, Geoff consistently asked where we were playing; he often came along undeterred by whether it was home or away. He never complained when he had to squeeze into sometimes the smallest of cars to get there. Admirably he was simply happy to watch us play!

Our family has spent so many happy times with Geoff and Sally going out for meals, watching Geoff's amazing plays or joining us for family parties. Geoff, like myself, really enjoyed visiting new pubs, and in particular we loved to see him enjoy his pint of IPA with a sausage and mash supper. He delighted in watching Michael enjoy his food too, as he had finally found someone who had a better appetite than himself. Denise shared his love of books, and Geoff regularly found delight when she found him a green Penguin classic crime novel to read on his long bus journeys. Sadly Michael never got to play that much-talked-about game of chess, but fortunately we all as a family will treasure those moments we did share in his company. 🍷



ROB HARVEY

Looking back now on the 35-odd years that I knew Geoff, and the 300 or so games of cricket we played in together, my abiding memory will be of a man born a century or so too late. He was built for slower times: the ages of steam, slow boats, of empire, and long books. His choice of material and characters for his productions for Travelling Theatre – Brunel, Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* and Gertrude Bell's exploits in Arabia – perhaps suggest where his heart lay too.

I remember with affection, and some pride, sharing a few beers with Geoff as I attempted to explain to him the principles underlying some Victorian engineer's innovations, so Geoff (as he developed his portrayal of the character) could be satisfied he had his facts right. Getting it right mattered.

His complete refusal to embrace modern technology, or even to acknowledge it, was always a source of wonder and amusement

for me, and only served to bolster the view that he was operating in the wrong era. How he managed to pull together teams of eleven players, twice a week, for more than a quarter of a century, using no more than a pen and paper and a landline telephone, was a truly remarkable achievement.

But most of all, he belonged to 'The Golden Age of Cricket', to the game played by W. G. Grace, Gilbert Jessop, Jack Hobbs and many others. It was called 'The Golden Age' for a reason, because it is said to have embodied 'the spirit of the game'. Geoff, too, truly embodied the spirit of the great game.

Geoff really hated losing. But if you won, you had to win well, and win fairly. And to be gracious in victory and defeat. I remember well going in to bat more than once for Remnants somewhere near the bottom of the order (where I rightly resided, although lacking talent with the ball either) and witnessing from close hand at the non-striker's end (Geoff was inevitably umpiring) his visceral relief as we limped past the crucial milestone of 38 runs – Remnants' lowest-ever total.

As cricketers, Geoff and I shared at least two things: a love of the game and – I'm sure he'd be happy to concede – only a modest talent. But every run counted. I can picture Geoff now, and feel his pain, shaking his head as yet another leg-side beamer went for four

into the undergrowth at Fitz, going down as byes against his name as keeper. As though it were his fault.

I remember him crouched over his bat in a declaration game, doggedly digging in and grimly batting out an unlikely draw, barely scoring a run. He really loved that. 'This is real cricket,' he told me.

Lastly, I shall always remember, with a weird mixture of guilt and relief, playing at Fitz the time I clipped a ball to midwicket; somehow it came right out of the screws. The ball sailed towards the pavilion, where sat the ever loyal and lovely Sally, scoring the game, surrounded by a bewildering assortment of plastic carrier bags. The ball cleared the boundary easily to give me one of the very few sixes of my career. And promptly hit Sally – having lost the ball in the sun – clean on the forehead. Which rather took the shine off my celebrations. I'm glad to say that she did recover, eventually, and she and Geoff apparently forgave me.

Geoff was unique. He refused to conform to fads and fashions. He was kind, generous and hard-working. He was also immensely well-read and witty. Unfortunately, he seemed to credit me with more erudition than was warranted, resulting too often in a good joke falling on fallow ground. He was always good and interesting company. A good and loyal friend. I'll miss him hugely. 🍷



DAVID WILLIAMS

I first met Geoff in about 1986. I used to come up to Cambridge from London with a team called Palm Tree, loosely based around Compendium Books in Camden but made up of journalists, bankers, normies (me) and the drummer from a punk band called The Vibrators. Back in those days Mrs Thatcher (long story short!) had personally sacked any of the long-serving council groundsmen who knew anything about looking after cricket pitches. Under 'compulsory competitive tendering' a winning score for a team batting on London municipal wickets on a Sunday afternoon could be 65; if the ball wasn't hurtling past your throat it would be skittling along by your ankles. Under such circumstances the lush and level Cambridge college grounds were a batsman's dream. It was one of the high points of my season to coax my rickety old VW campervan up the M11 and park up on the sward at Fitzwilliam,

eating up the sight of wickets the colour of digestive biscuits and as flat as snooker tables. I remember gazing in astonishment at the gleaming copper pipes, burnished by John Hill, of the toilets and showers, which actually had hot water! (Geoff, with characteristic sensitivity, asked John, post-retirement, to be the first Remnants President.)

Our opposition were the Cricketers Arms. Even the name seemed right. They had some very good players – Colin Anderson, Les Collings, Ev Fox, Paul Jordan, John Richer, Mike Sneyd – and a lanky wicketkeeper called Geoff with a scholarly mien and dry sense of humour. And over beers afterwards they were open and friendly too – the acid test of a truly enjoyable match.

When the secondary school crunch time came for our eldest (13% GCSE A*-C rates at the London school or 62% at Parkside, Cambridge?), the price of a house overlooking Parker's Piece was just about affordably more than my semi in Walthamstow, so the Williams family upped sticks to Cambridge, where (at the Christ's College ground at least) cricket teas really were served from a silver-plated urn, the groundsmen swept the creases with a hazel besom between innings, and the sun always shone.

Well, things aren't always the way we'd

like them, and before too long 'bumpy' was more descriptive of my marriage and the cricket team. The Cricketers Arms went down the pan in a classic study of how not to run a team. But I'd noticed Mike and John clutching some old-fashioned dark green caps with yellow cords along the seams, muttering in awed tones about a club that was *special*. When I asked John whether I could join he said I'd have to apply formally and might not



be accepted . . . crikey, it sounded like the Freemasons. I'm not sure what happened next but somehow the whole of my first season for Remnants I was waiting for Geoff to ask me to attend an interview.

In the pre-digital, pre-mobile era Geoff elegantly summoned most of his forces by asking availability for next week at the end of each match, all neatly recorded in pencil in an A6 hardback notebook [*held by Andy Brown in the photo from 1985*]. It was a model of minimalist efficiency that made Geoff's say-so all the more indisputable. Every week, miraculously and without any effort – or so I imagined – there was a fixture and side as a result of the force of will of one man. So on the rare occasions Geoff asked you to do something, you did it. I remember he asked me to be treasurer when Dave Green stood down; how could I refuse a request from someone who put so much dedication into building the club?

As years went by on the cricket field I felt I did more or less OK, with the failures making me want to do *better* next week, and the successes making me want to do *more* next week . . . Who knows how or why, but I am astonished to say that every so often something went right. A very few times, the game has given me some dopamine whirlwind moments of what felt like true

glory – how often can we say that about our lives? I admit I think about these moments quite a lot, maybe when some website asks me for some 'memorable information'. I dare to hope I'll even have them in my thoughts when I'm breathing my last few breaths. For this and more, I thank you, Geoff and my fellow teammates – you helped make this possible. 🍎



ANDREW LEA

My first memory of Geoff is actually not a cricketing but an examining one, as we met as ESL Writing examiners for Cambridge Assessment back in the year 2000 I think. This was at a time when instead of all the marking being online, examiner meetings were more social events, done in person at various sites in Cambridge including Netherhall and the Møller Centre. This was my first experience as an assistant examiner

and with Geoff as team leader. I have to say that Geoff in his team leader role appeared to be somewhat distracted, as though his mind was on higher things. He wasn't particularly impressed with my skills as a rookie examiner, but when he discovered that I shared his passion for cricket everything changed, and my examining efforts became less important. I think we were marking on a summer session and there was a test match going on in the background; regular updates on wickets and runs were passed on to me during the day, along with the occasional feedback on how I was marking – too lenient here, too strict there! In one of the breaks Geoff asked me if I played cricket and said that his team, the Remnants, were always on the lookout for new recruits. So I took him up on his offer and started playing quite regularly for them, with Geoff ringing me up in the traditional way always very politely.

More recently, last season in fact, a written invitation came in the post and I turned up for my now occasional game playing for Geoff's President's XI. When I went out to bat Geoff was umpiring and was very encouraging in what he said – as always. At one point, when I think I was probably out LBW to a fairly straight delivery, Geoff gave me the benefit of the doubt and I survived! Always generous at heart! 'Going down

leg' was his comment, much to the bowler's disgust and my relief! I will miss my chats with Geoff and seeing him riding on his bike around Cambridge. I like to think that Geoff will now be looking down on us from his cricketing paradise!

God bless you Geoff. May you rest in peace! 🙏



TONY MALIK

RIP The Professor, my true friend and mentor. This is how it went since 1982. Many thanks Geoff!

I'm standing at the non-striker's end, nine wickets down. The umpire/Geoff is telling me:

'Get the strike, we only need 40 runs from the last five overs. You can do it! Don't let number 11 get the strike.'

Me: 'Professor, I have to get the strike every ball.'

'Yes, you can do it. I have faith in you. I'll pay your match fee.'

These words ring in my ears all the time. Sure enough, the will he gave me and the determination to win made me able to make anything impossible possible easily. This is something my club coaches at premier league cricket could not instil in me – and they were paid to do that. They did not have that overpowering warm wealth of friendship and nagging that the Professor possessed.

Geoff: 'What are you doing today, batting or bowling?'

Me: 'Well, we're going to have a bat today and you're opening.'

'I haven't batted for years. I'm not opening.'

'Oh yes you are.'

'Oh no I'm not. I'm chairman of selectors.'

'Tough, I'm the captain.'

He went on to get one of his biggest scores plus we won.

I went through 13 innings of failure on the trot and getting out 11 times lbw. I said that was the end of my career. The Professor sat me down and had a long chat with me, telling me that I would miss the game plus I was

letting down ten other players by not playing. Next eight games after, his meaningful words took effect. In all divisions and formats I scored over 50 each time not out, and a 150 not out for my club side. All down to him.

When bowling against one of his or Sally's sides and he was umpiring, I would tell him if I was bowling leg breaks, googlies, flippers . . . His answer was: 'If I can't pick them, how can I give the batsman out?' When I was bowling for him he knew all the variations and could even pick the doosra.

Once I bowled him a fast ball on a yorker length and hit him straight and hard on the toe. I thought nothing of it. Three or four years later he said he was cleaning the bedroom and found the hit toenail under his bed.

Behind the stumps he was as elegant as a hippopotamus who was about to give birth.

What a kind, gentle, caring person! I will always have a very special place for him in my heart for bringing so many people together.

All my love to the lovely Sally – what a fantastic lady – and friends . . . 🍷



