

**Welcome!**

It's a rare and genuine pleasure to announce the formation of a new cricket society – especially one in a county that has one of the longest associations with the game, yet has never, to the best of my limited knowledge – fielded a cricket society.

The North Kent Cricket Lovers' Society will meet monthly at Bexley Cricket Club, Manor Way, Bexley on the 2nd Tuesday between October and March.

The inaugural meeting will be held on 10th October when Errol Valentine from the Kent Cricket League will be their first guest speaker.

For further information, contact [steven.thomas.crawley58@outlook.com](mailto:steven.thomas.crawley58@outlook.com) or phone Steven Crawley on 01322 865441.

[A serendipity moment is related later in this newsletter.]

**The Season Past**

As the late football legend, Jimmy Greaves might have said, "Saint, It's a funny old game – cricket!" No sooner had the West Indies suffered the ignominy of a serious innings defeat – and the scorn of Geoff Boycott's pen - than they came storming back only days later at Headingley.

The first so-called Pink Test in England ended in a resounding victory for England by a staggering innings and 209 runs. To put matters into perspective, the West Indies two innings lasted a total of 392 minutes – compared to Alastair Cook who occupied the crease for 583 minutes and scored 243 in the process.

In half a century of watching Test cricket, I have never seen a worse Test side, wrote Boycott in the *Daily Telegraph*. "They can't bat and can't bowl. To see a once-dominant Test team reduced to this is a 'tragedy'," he added.

But slow-forward a week and the men from the Caribbean, stung by their lamentable performance, bounced back at Leeds to defeat England by an impressive five wickets when they scored an unlikely 322 (as was generally thought) to force Boycott to reconsider his earlier pronouncement. Added to which Shai Hope not only scored his maiden Test century but, astonishingly, became the first cricketer ever to score a hundred in each innings of any first-class match at Headingley. Not even Boycott apparently achieved that at his spiritual home.

**Congratulations to**

Essex who stormed through the season unbeaten to win the County Championship.

Worcestershire, who came up on the rails to pip long-term leaders Nottinghamshire, secured the 2nd division title and return to the top tier for the sixth time in 15 seasons. To use another football analogy – Worcestershire now have to throw off the shackles that used to apply to West Bromwich Albion (and may yet still do) – too good for the second tier but not strong enough to mix it with the so-called bigger boys.

Talking of the latter, it will be interesting to see if relegated Middlesex win their appeal against the two points penalty which seems to have coincided with the crossbow incident. Somerset are likely to take legal action if they are relegated instead. That said the two division format provided another exciting finale to the season with Northants rueing a 5 points penalty which proved sufficient to deprive them of a spell in the first division.

The decision of Durham's bowler, Paul Coughlin to seek pitches new at Nottinghamshire would have backfired but for the Cobblers' penalty.

**The Cricket Paper**

By the time you read this newsletter, we will know whether The Cricket Paper has published a pre-season awareness article of our movement, which I submitted to the editorial team in

August. [It's now mid-October and no sign of any article yet, nor even any acknowledgement or letter of regret. Such response – or lack thereof – reminds me of my job-hunting days. *Plus ça change ...*]

### **Response to the Wisden announcement**

It will be interesting also to ascertain the level of interest that may have been generated by the announcement of the generic cricket society movement in the current edition of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*. (See page 1514 – hidden away under the heading of Cricket Trade Suppliers).

Cricket Societies are not suppliers, much less trade! Not so long ago all cricket societies were listed with contact details free of charge. My predecessor, Murray Hedgcock gave up trying to get them to include a report of the cricket society movement. I know there are only so many pages, but I wonder just how many Wisden purchasers would rue the loss of thirty-odd pages devoted to T20 Blast.

It would therefore be helpful and encouraging if each society asks new recruits to say how or where they came to hear about their particular society.

The announcement in Wisden is not free so it would be useful to know if the money is being well spent – or not – as the case may be.

### **CCS – Societies Fixture Calendar**

The listing of cricket society meetings on the calendar of the CCS website recently proved its worth. I was checking our society's dates to find that our November guest, Phil DeFreitas had not only double-booked himself, but to all intents and purposes, triple-booked himself! Instead of appearing at Stourbridge, I found that Phil would be opening the bowling that same evening at Merseyside and following-on next night at Southport Cricket Society. Understandably, he was not going to give up two engagements to fulfil our need and we were able to obtain the services of Andy Murtagh as his replacement. The moral of the story is to check the CCS calendar to make sure your society is not similarly affected. Special thanks to Phil Veasey for the work that he puts in.

An interesting article about the cricket society movement was circulated recently by Stephen Chalke, which I think is worth sharing with all affiliated societies. He writes:

### **Cricket Lovers' Societies**

Up and down the country, through the winter months, there are Cricket Lovers' Societies which meet regularly, usually with a guest speaker.

Twelve of these groups, gathering one evening each month, hold their meetings at county grounds: Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Chester-le-Street, Derby, Hove, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Southampton and Worcester.

There are also groups in Barnsley, Barton-under-Needwood, Bath, Chelmsford, Cheltenham, Chesterfield, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hereford, High Peak, Hull, Liverpool, London, Norwich, Sheffield, Stourbridge, Southport, West Norfolk and near Bournemouth. The last of these groups – the Dorset Cricket Society at the Hurn Bridge Sports Club – is exceptional in that it meets every Thursday afternoon through winter, with those in the mood staying on for a cricket net in the adjoining building!

All rely on volunteers, and the enthusiastic dedication of those volunteers can be most impressive. Fifteen years ago the Stourbridge group attracted an audience of about 30; now they get 80 or 90, and they also organise a Christmas lunch, an annual outing and a regular newsletter. West Norfolk, where Peter Parfitt recruits the speakers, fills a pavilion at North Runcton; Sheffield, where David Drabble is still in charge 57 years on from setting up the society with his father, stages top-drawer events such as the 2009 dinner for the 1959 Yorkshire team;

and High Peak, where the tireless Bob Wood knows in advance how many to expect for its mid-evening hot-pot, always has as good a programme as any, with speakers such as Geoff Miller, Henry Olunga and Michael Holding. Then there is Cheltenham where, till his death, the President Tom Graveney could always be spotted in the audience; the Wombwell at Barnsley where you will often see Dickie Bird; and Leicester which, for all its Cinderella status on the field, draws in the biggest crowd on the circuit.

The Cricket Society, which stages the London meetings, has branches in the Midlands (at Edgbaston), in the North-East (at the Riverside) and also here in the West of England where we at Fairfield Books have been closely involved in the recent revival of the group. We meet on Tuesday afternoons at Bath Cricket Club, attracting an audience of sixty. Speakers in the past year – every one of them a joy – were Fred Rumsey, Mark Alleyne, Matt Maynard, David Leatherdale, Ralph Dellor, Vic Marks and Mike Procter. Most were interviewed by Stephen Chalke, though the wonderfully entertaining Fred Rumsey needed just the one question to set him off.

So much stays fresh in the memory: from Mark Alleyne's description of the ordeal of facing a Shane Warne over to Fred Rumsey's hilarious tale of the time he shared a hotel room with Geoffrey Boycott. They are great meetings, they brim with a love of cricket and, with the Bath club close to the railway station, we have been attracting cricket lovers from as far afield as Weymouth, Witney and Weston-super-Mare.

*Thanks Stephen for permitting us to reproduce your article.*

### **Should Tests be cut to four days?**

For almost seven decades, the five-day Test has been a beloved "feature of the English summer" said Nick Hoult in the *Daily Telegraph*. But that will end in three years, if the England & Wales Cricket Board gets its way. It is leading the push for Tests to be reduced to four days, and will "put its weight behind the switch" at the International Cricket Council's meeting next month. In England, four-day Tests would start half-an-hour earlier, allowing for more overs in a day, and making it easier to balance the Test schedule with domestic Twenty20.

This is really about money, said Tristan Holme on *Cricketbuzz*. In rich countries, shorter tests would "maximise" board's corporate income; in poorer ones, such as Zimbabwe, they could cut costs. But it shouldn't disturb us overmuch. There is a long tradition of four-day Tests: 134 were played between 1906 and 1973. And in an unplanned way, they're now becoming the norm: this year, for the first time, "more Tests have finished inside four days than have gone to five", which is sad, said Mike Atherton in *The Times*. Five-day matches tend to be the most exciting ones. The "best day's cricket this year" came last month, when the West Indies won a "nail-biting" Test on the final day. Shortening Tests won't address the real problem — the "brutal schedule" that will soon force players and fans to choose between Tests and T20. Unless and until that is resolved, Test cricket is doomed to "slide into irrelevance".

*[Reprinted from The Week: 30 September 2017]*

### **That Serendipity Moment**

When I tried to contact Stephen Crawley (NKCLS), I started to leave a message on the ansafone only to be interrupted by a young lady called Katrina, who said no one by the name of Crawley was known at that number. I persevered and mentioned Bexley Cricket Club, to which Katrina responded "we arrange audio visuals and did one for a cricket dinner last night in Derbyshire". What are the chances of dialling the wrong STD code, but getting through on a Saturday afternoon, in heaven knows where, to someone connected with cricket. I thought it too much of a coincidence to ignore and have asked Katrina to send some details of their business – it may not be of interest to individual societies, but maybe your county club might be receptive to an approach from someone new. In my business experience, the main reasons for companies to

change operators is either another business can provide a better or a less expensive service. I have no vested interest in Katrina's company, but also I feel that such a chance 'meeting' is worthy of more than passing interest.

Katrina emailed some information about The Conference Works Ltd, based in Derbyshire. They provide a comprehensive one-stop audio visual solution for various conferences, events, exhibitions and sporting events. Derbyshire CCC is one of their clients and TCW provided the stage set and audio visuals for their player of the year Gala Dinner on Friday – plus managing the sound for the Twenty20 matches. *Oh dear, it was all going so well...* For more information visit <http://theconferenceworks.co.uk>, or contact Katrina Johnson, Business Development Manager on 01332 865441 – compare that number with that of Bexley CC at the start of this newsletter! *Is that spooky? Or, is that really spooky?*

### **Just a Minute!**

In September, I took my wife to see a one man stand-up show at the delightful Regal Theatre in Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire. For readers unfamiliar with the picturesque Teme Valley area, the town is situated where three counties meet – Herefordshire and Shropshire being the other two.

It was a delight to enjoy a show without a single f-word or any other obscenity being uttered throughout the entire two hour solo performance (minus a 15-minutes interval). But of course the star was a consummate professional who did not have to resort to coarseness and spoke without hesitation, deviation or repetition. It was of course, Nicholas Parsons, chairman of the long-running radio programme immortalised by Messrs Nimmo, Williams, and the now-disgraced Freud. But what has Parsons to do with cricket, you may ask? Well, he was President of Lord's Taverners in the 1990s and played the game to a reasonable standard.

After the show, he kindly signed my copy of the LT's Sticky Wicket Book (1979) in which his article was graced by a cartoon of him, depicted as an umpire, drawn by the late Willie Rushton.

In case you are wondering, Nicholas Parsons is now 93 years-old – and *Just a Minute* this year will celebrate its 50th anniversary! Added to my enjoyment was the fact that the Regal Theatre at Tenbury Wells permits theatre-goers to enjoy drinks from the bar in the comfort of their seats!

### **Coming to a Club near you – possibly...**

Former Kent & Gloucestershire wicketkeeper Geraint Jones has become the fourth member of England's 2005 Ashes-winning squad to sign up for Big Bike Ride 3 which will raise money for the PCA Benevolent Fund and the Tom Maynard Trust.

He will join Marcus Trescothick, who will also ride all five days, Michael Vaughan, England's captain in 2005, and Ashley Giles on Big Bike Ride 3. Vaughan will ride only the second day from his hometown of Sheffield to Nantwich while Giles has signed up for the fourth day from Worcestershire's New Road headquarters to Monmouth School.

The full Big Ride 3 route is:

October 13: **Edgbaston to Sheffield Collegiate CC** via Atherstone CC and South Wingfield CC

October 14: **Sheffield Collegiate to Crewe Vagrants CC** via Buxton CC and Middlewich CC.

October 15: **Crewe to Worcestershire CCC** via Calverhall CC, Broseley CC, Cleobury Mortimer CC

October 16: **Worcester to Monmouth School** via Ledbury CC, Ruardean Hill CC, Lydney CC

October 17: **Monmouth to SSE SWALEC Stadium** via Abergavenny CC, Newbridge CC, St Fagans CC

**Further details** may be found on <http://www.thepca.co.uk/8360.html>