

CRICKET CAFÉ

The Newsletter of the Cricket Societies' Association

cricketsocietiesassociation.com

ISSUE 1 – November 2018



The Cricket Societies Association....

is a consortium of over 30 cricket societies mainly in the U.K. and exists to further the interests of cricket enthusiasts and societies during the winter. It provides a forum for the exchange of ideas to help its member societies develop and can also assist in the formation of new societies.

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Cricket Café. Issue 1 is to some extent experimental and I am very grateful to the contributors for the quality and diversity of the articles.

Talks from leading figures in the cricket world are at the heart of the events run by our cricket societies. These are well represented in this issue by articles on Andy Flower at Herefordshire Cricket Society and Mike Brearley at The Cricket Society. As you might expect, the former England and now Lions Coach, and the former England Captain both had interesting perspectives on the modern game.

The article from the Northern Cricket Society on the Gill cricketing family shows that cricket societies can also look back and treasure the heritage of the game. As we approach the centenary of the end of the First World War, the article is both poignant and appropriate. The new museum at Gloucestershire CCC is another initiative in preserving the heritage of cricket and will be much appreciated by cricket society members.

The Bassetlaw Umpires Association, who celebrate their 70th Anniversary, is a good example of a cricket society who contribute in a practical way to cricket in their local community.

Cricket societies contain many authors among their membership. Mark Rowe contributes an article on books he wished he had written. Chris O'Brien tells us about his ground-breaking research on Neville Cardus and his book which contains those findings.

Comments on the content of this first issue of Cricket Café, and how it might be developed are very welcome.

Stephen Retout

Editorial

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The season got off to a brilliant start with our guest Andy Flower, hotfoot from Lords and on his way to a selection meeting at Trent Bridge. He spoke about his upbringing in South Africa, then Zimbabwe, and the various political changes in Zimbabwe from white rule to black rule in 1980 under President Robert Mugabe. He first played for Zimbabwe test team in 1992, at a time when the team were amateurs, but were rich in life experience, being comprised mostly of ex soldiers and farmers. This mix of characters made for an interesting dressing room.

He commented that today's youngsters, privileged and protected, do not have the life experience of his former colleagues. As such he prepares them for the rigours of Test cricket by involving the military to provide physical and mental tasks, to challenge them and see how they cope under duress.

Before the 2003 World Cup, he was made aware of the hardships, bullying, land grabs and beatings that were being carried out by the thugs of the Mugabe regime. He was told that he had to make a statement that would create an impact. Together with fast bowler, Henry Olonga, Andy wore black armbands to show the corruption of the brutal regime they lived under. This they did, but the price was that they had to leave Zimbabwe immediately after the World Cup, for fear of their lives.

Zimbabwe's loss was England's gain, as Andy then pursued a stellar career, firstly as player with Essex CCC, then England coach in the highly successful Strauss years; more recently Andy has been Lions Coach. He was a very gritty and successful wicketkeeper/ batsman in his playing career, but, modestly, hardly mentioned this in his talk. His test batting average was over 50! He also spoke about the importance of good leadership in sport as in other walks of life.

A retired soldier from the local regiment gave the vote of thanks, and linked leadership in military to that in sport.

Andy Flower at Herefordshire Cricket Society

Bob Hall



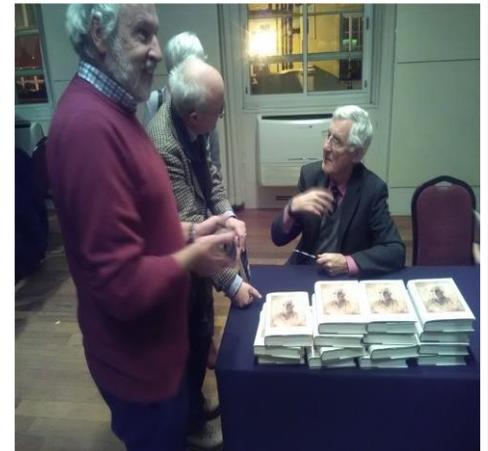
It is very pleasing to report that in the middle of February's "Beast From The East" snowfall some 60 hardy souls came to hear Mike Brearley at our London meeting. The star quality of the guest guaranteed an excellent attendance given the conditions. Phil Reeves started the evening by announcing the recent passing away of Hubert Doggart and the members attending duly stood for a minute's silence in his memory.

The first part of the evening was Mike Brearley in conversation with Vice-President and former BBC journalist/presenter Chris Lowe. He asked Mike how his book "On Form" came about. Mike explained that he had been asked to speak at an LSE event on form and also the sporting experience of "being in the zone". The deliberations and discussions at this event led to the book being written. In Mike's view "being in the zone" was something fleeting almost orgasmic where a player hit the perfectly timed and placed drive or took an inspired catch. It was a brief moment where everything suddenly falls into place. Form was a rather more long term sensation but not perhaps as intense – it was perhaps more like being in love. Cricket was Mike felt a unique game due its slow pace and lengthy duration. This meant the mind had much more time to "get in the way" and often cricketers found themselves in the words of Hamlet "sicklied o-er with the pale cast of thought". He found strangely that the more time he had to contemplate things the more difficult they became psychologically. For example although physically more troublesome he found facing Holding or Roberts much more straightforward mentally than a medium pacer.

Chris asked whether modern day captaincy was more difficult. Mike replied that the proliferation of coaches should make things easier for any captain but only if he had a good relationship with the coaches otherwise it could be very destructive. However the big problem was that most modern captains had almost no experience of captaining in county cricket which was a hindrance. Chris suggested that Mike even when captaining England would have played perhaps half Middlesex's county matches and he agreed. In contrast Joe Root would hardly ever turn out for Yorkshire today. Turning to his Middlesex career Mike reminded us that when he became captain at 29 he had not really played much cricket since the age of 25. He followed two "old pro" captains in Fred Titmus and Peter Parfitt and therefore was something of a new broom.

Mike Brearley at The Cricket Society

Phil Reeves



However he felt that the younger players in particular welcomed a new approach and less of a hierarchical structure at the club. On managing difficult players overall Mike felt that if the player was good enough then all efforts should be made to keep them in the side. He recalled one player who provided constant opposition in the dressing room at great length. However this behaviour was often evidence of the great passion the player had for the game and thus was positive in that respect. It also might be a symptom that the player was not quite as confident as he may have seemed. It was often necessary to look for the reasons why the players act the way they do.

After the break many questions were put and some of the matters discussed were as follows:

- Day/night tests were favoured by Mike as long as the ground conditions were acceptable as they seemed to promote bigger audiences
- Four day tests were generally not a good idea and Mike was concerned that they may be implemented to allow more one day cricket to be slotted into the schedules
- The changing skill requirements were mentioned not least wicketkeeping where keepers now tend to be stoppers and catchers who can bat rather than specialist glove-men
- Mike agreed with the audience that the position of 3rd man was seriously underused as he as a captain would never want to give a batsman a lucky boundary off the edge.

The final question concerned sledging and in particular the way it was used to engender “mental disintegration”. Mike commented that it was the job of the other team to make their opponents as uncomfortable as possible. This could be done in many legitimate ways by posting fields to batsman to choke off their favourite shots or by a word or two in their hearing indicating their place might be in jeopardy. All this was part of the game but clearly where it might go too far was in foul mouthed abuse. There are however many ways to discomfit a player and Mike referred to the Shane Warne “strut” which often intimidated batsmen. Also he felt that even a Viv Richards forward defensive could be played with such total confidence that it could petrify a bowler.

All too soon the evening had to be wound up so members could wend their way home through the snow. Phil Reeves in summing up thanked Chris Lowe for his professional hosting. He also thanked Mike for his insight and commented, a tad cheesily, that Mike’s Book was entitled “On Form” and he had certainly been “on form” for us tonight.

Mike Brearley at The Cricket Society continued.....

'keepers now tend to be stoppers and catchers who can bat rather than specialist glove-men.'

'...even a Viv Richards forward defensive could be played with such total confidence that it could petrify a bowler.'

It really was a pleasant surprise when I received a telephone call from Michael Pulford to tell me that the Northern Cricket Society (N.C.S.) was to hold a special event to mark the 100th anniversary of the death, on November 1st 1917, of my great uncle, Fairfax Gill. Michael also kindly sent me a copy of the 2017 edition of the N.C.S. booklet in which Brian Sanderson had written an excellent article outlining the cricketing career and the life and death of Fairfax.

I knew that the Gill family had made a big contribution to cricket in their hometown of Wakefield in the early nineteen hundreds, with four members playing for Wakefield C.C.. My great-grandfather, Thomas Gill, or 'Little Tommy' as he was known, was Wakefield's wicket-keeper and was joined in the team by his sons, George (my grandfather) and Fairfax (my great-uncle), and also by their cousin Fred. Fairfax, or 'Fairy' as he was popularly known, was an outstanding player. He joined Wakefield C.C. in 1900 and caught the eye of the county selectors with a number of impressive performances. As a result, he was selected to play for the Yorkshire Colts and then for the Yorkshire 1st eleven.

'Fairy' made his county debut at the age of 23 on June 7th 1906 against Derbyshire at Chesterfield in a team captained by Lord Hawke that included Yorkshire legends Rhodes, Denton, Hirst, Haigh and Hunter and he played in another match, against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge, a fortnight later. These were to be Fairfax's only county appearances and we will never really know why his career with Yorkshire was such a brief one but I have always understood that his job, working as a clerk in the West Riding Registry of Deeds office in Wakefield, provided him and his wife Ada with a more secure future than playing county cricket might have done. Fairfax continued to be a major force in local club cricket, playing as a highly successful professional, for Paddock, and then with Ossett. In May 1916, both Fairfax and his cousin Fred enlisted in Wakefield to fight for their country in the 1st World War. 144827 Gunner Fairfax Gill joined the Royal Horse Artillery and subsequently the Royal Field Artillery, in which he served with the 21st Mortar Battery. 94878 Gunner Fred Gill joined the Royal Garrison Artillery and served with 265th Siege Battery. Both of them fought at what was one of the most pitiless and iconic battles of the Great War - Third Ypres - or as it better known - Passchendaele. The fighting raged over three tortuous

The Cricketing Gills of Wakefield

Don Gill

months of 1917 in some of the worst physical conditions of the entire war, across battlefields collapsing into endless mud and blood, and resulting in over 500,000 casualties. Among those who made the supreme sacrifice were Fred, who was killed on October 11th 1917, and Fairfax, who was wounded in the head on October 25th and died in the Military Hospital at Boulogne on November 1st 1917. The body of Fred was never found in Flanders Fields and he is remembered on the memorial to the missing at Tyne Cot cemetery. Fairfax was buried in the communal cemetery at Wimereux. They were both aged 34 and had been in France for 14 months. Fred left a widow, Elizabeth, whilst Fairfax, left not just a wife, Ada, but also a two-year-old daughter, Brenda. So it was on Wednesday November 1st 2017 that N.C.S. members, Michael Pulford, Brian Sanderson and Brian Senior met at Headingley Cricket Ground by the black marble plaque which bears the names of the small band of five Yorkshire players who lost their lives serving their country, including that of Fairfax Gill. They went on to place white roses at the War Memorial plaque in St. Andrew's Parish Church, Wakefield which records the name of F. Gill.

It was a great honour for me to join them and two Ossett Cricket Club stalwarts, Martin Adamson and N.C.S. member Tony Ogden, in the Ossett pavilion to remember Fairfax exactly 100 years to the day that he died in France and to pay tribute to both him and to Fred. Thanks to the efforts of Tony and Martin, we were able to look at a selection of old Ossett C.C. photographs which included one of Fairfax. The pavilion has retained some of its features of over a century ago, including its long sloping roof, and it was touching to see the playing area that Fairfax knew so well and where he was so successful, notably helping them to a Heavy Woollen Cup victory in 1912.

Over thirty-five years ago I was fortunate to first meet Brenda, the daughter of Ada and Fairfax, and her husband George Andrassy, at their home in Sandal where they lived and brought up their three children, Judith, Charles and Angela. In 2017 it was also a great pleasure for me to meet Angela, the granddaughter of Fairfax, for the first time. Angela was unable to attend the commemoration as she was on holiday but she had written some moving words in tribute to her grandfather, which I shared with those present. I was also able to share my thoughts, photographs and memorabilia, so as to remember my great uncle Fairfax and his fellow war hero, cousin Fred, and also my great-grandfather, Thomas, and my grandfather George.

The Cricketing Gills of Wakefield Continued.....

It was a memorable and emotional day and a privilege for me to be invited to the 100th anniversary commemoration by the Northern Cricket Society and for us to enjoy a meal together in The Mews Hotel restaurant in Ossett. Whatever talent I had when I played for Wickersley Old Village Cricket Club first team at the age of 21 was undoubtedly inherited from Thomas, George, Fairfax and Fred - 'The Cricketing Gills of Wakefield' - who will always be remembered by their families and by all those interested in the history of Yorkshire cricket.

Postscript

I was born in 1948, a year that the Australians toured England, and my mum and dad named me after a member of the Australian team, Donald Bradman.

The Cricketing Gills of Wakefield Continued.....



THE Bassetlaw League first saw the light of day in 1904 and in those fledgling rules it was said that each club should provide its own umpires. Although there was nothing like the animosity that surrounds the game today there was still points of controversy and accusations of bias and part of that early law stated that 'In case an umpire shall of twice for giving unfair decisions and the League committee sustains such complaints, the offending umpire shall be suspended for the rest of the season'. In 1920 a motion was passed at the League A.G.M. that the system of neutral umpires be adopted was carried unanimously. Ten years on from that the Umpires were desirous of joining a union so as to be in direct communication with the League Management Committee with the intent that any difficulty in the administration of the rules, they would be able to seek a ruling and inform the members direct. They did not wish to dictate to the League but thought that an umpires union would be a failure if not recognised by the league. The League however thought that this would serve no useful service and turned down the proposal.

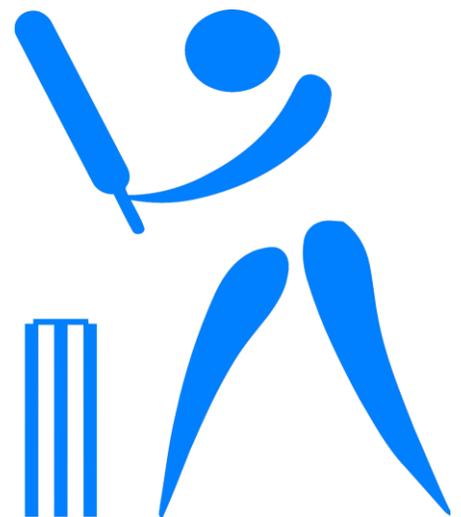
There was no further progress until a meeting of umpires at the Unicorn Hotel at Worksop under the chairmanship of Mr. Fred Blackburn the League Chairman gave an official blessing to the project. This meeting was held on October 6th 1948 and the Bassetlaw Umpires Association was formerly founded. The following officials were appointed . . . President – Mr. G. Biggin; Chairman - Mr. W. Evans; Secretary – H. Hind; Treasurer – V. Todd. The following year further official recognition when the Association was invited to send two delegates to the League A.G.M. Over the years since this innovation has reaped great dividends not only from proposals put forward by the Association but from informed and constructive criticism of other propositions which involved umpires. From 1957 the Association undertook the appointment of umpires and the first Appointments Secretary Mr. Charles Turner reported in 1961 that he had made 1666 such appointments.

The Bassetlaw Umpires Association Celebrates 70 Years!

Paul Barker



Bassetlaw & District Umpires Association



At lunchtime on Friday 21st April 2017, Mark Alleyne removed the bails from a set of stumps placed in the doorway inside the Stumps Café at the Ashley Down end of the Brightside County Ground to celebrate the official opening of the new Museum and Learning Centre.



Following the redevelopment of the ground, the old Museum, described by GCCC Heritage Trust Chairman Rex Body as “almost a small cupboard” was consigned to history, as was the Learning Centre in the former Jessop Stand.

After three years of fund raising and planning, the new facility which comprises themed displays based around various topics, England Cricketers, Overseas Stars, the “One-day Kings” successes, history of the grounds, bats and balls and W.G. Grace, was finally brought into existence. It also contains a memorial to the eighteen players who lost their lives in the Great War.

Our partners in the design and construction, Clip Exhibition and Display were of tremendous help to us and if you have already visited us, you will have seen how they have taken our basic thoughts and ideas and transformed them into something more than “just a museum”

As well as providing what would be expected of a museum, it is also the intention that it should be used as an educational facility for schools and we have already hosted visits by local historical groups and we have received good publicity on local radio. A couple of Cricket Societies have also expressed an interest in visiting.

Gloucestershire Cricket's New Museum and Learning Centre

Roger Gibbons



It is open on all County Match days before the start of play and in Championship games during the lunch interval. Where possible, but we hope not too often, it will be open during prolonged bad weather breaks.

Our 1000+ visitors have included current and former players as well as families of some from times past. The photograph below shows Richard Matthew (he's the one on the left!), grandson of T.G. Matthews who played with W. G. Grace in Gloucestershire's first ever game against Surrey in 1870 alongside his grandfather's friend and hero.



Incidentally, the bat that Richard is holding was used by his grandfather in 1872 when he scored 201 for the County against Surrey at Clifton College, the first double century both for Gloucestershire and in county cricket and features in the bats and balls display. You will spot in the background some coloured discs. That is our "Ball Wall". There is a frieze running round the room in the Club Colours and each of the displays is linked to one of the colours. As part of the Educational programme, each of the discs has a question relating to the display relevant to its colour. The premises are provided by the Club, but the facility is managed by GCCC Heritage Trust, a separate Independent Charity. Admission is free, but there is a donations box and we also have a Friends group. Membership costs £10 per annum (administratively £30 for a three year membership is much more convenient!) and, as a Registered Charity we are able to claim Gift Aid on such donations. The facility is situated on the ground floor of the four apartment blocks that comprise the redevelopment. The images on the outside reflect the names of each of the blocks

Gloucestershire Cricket's New Museum and Learning Centre continued

If anyone wants further information about the Trust, they should contact the Trust Secretary, Wendy Body,

wendybody254@btinternet.com or gcccht2014@gmail.com

You can see videos of the inside of the Museum on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SBrx8INcU0>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scQ_jgkdkqw

Rather than tell you more about my books – by now, either you know about them or you do not – I thought it more interesting to say what I wish I had written. The biggest changes would have been to my Brian Sellers book. As the Yorkshire captain of the 1930s, who won a never-bettered six county championships in eight seasons, those who played with and against him have died; but plenty of people still have stories of his blunt, often foul-mouthed wit. I heard several when I gave talks to societies in the winter of 2017-8. At Wombwell I even met the twin sons of Norman Yardley, the Yorkshire captain after Sellers. I learned from them what I would not have guessed; that the two men got on socially. Yet their styles of captaining were different. This autumn I am hoping to write *Tour de Farce: anti-apartheid protest and the cancelled South African tour of 1970*. I'd welcome the chance to speak at a society, hoping to hear from people who were around then. If you want to hear any more, you'll have to invite me; or of course wait for the book. As for the *Victory Tests* book, the story of the unofficial England-Australia series of 1945, I wish that I had done it sooner. I met Ross Stanford, the Australian *Victory Tests* batsman, a former *Dambusters Squadron* pilot, in 1998, but only began the book in 2009. Better still if I had had the idea for the book as a young man in the early 1990s, many of the players were still going and I would have had a far more vivid story. While I'm glad I did what I could, it remains a regret. Yet some stories only come to us when we are ready for them. To find Brian Sellers' story I had to gen up on Yorkshire from 1890 to 1980, for those were the years that Brian Sellers and his father Arthur spanned. I found myself identifying with Fred Trueman; when going around Yorkshire societies – so many, I even made a 'speaking tour' t-shirt - I was glad to hear even the slightest story from people who had spoken to him, or got his autograph. I cannot altogether account for this; Trueman reminds me in some ways of my father. In good ways, I should add. It goes to show that cricket is more than what happens on the field of play.

Books I Wish I Had Written

Mark Rowe, is the author of four cricket books, *The Victory Tests* (2010), *The Summer Field, a history of English cricket* (2016), *Yorkshire Tyrant, a biography of Brian Sellers* (2017) and *Young Bradman* (2018).



Neville Cardus was an amazing cricket writer: large numbers of cricket followers have read one or more of his books and he is still commonly quoted. He joined the *Manchester Guardian* in 1917, reported on Lancashire's first match after the War in 1919 and continued writing until his death in 1975 (and was senior music critic as well!). When his paper closed its Manchester office, he called it like the Pope leaving the Vatican.

Why did I write a book – *Cardus Uncovered* - on this extraordinary character? It wasn't something I planned. Instead, I was reading his autobiography (1947) and a biography published 10 years after his death; I was taken aback by the gaps, errors and contradictions. As a Mancunian and life member of Lancashire, now living in Nottingham and a member of the Derbyshire Cricket Society and Notts Cricket Lovers, I was keen to investigate.

Neville Cardus was a man of mystery, and my book uses new genealogical material, recently available archive sources, and Australian and British newspapers to investigate.

He didn't know who his father was. Or his birthdate. Previous researchers haven't worked out that both his birth and baptism certificates contain (different) deliberate mistakes; and they haven't used the court papers on his parents' divorce. I am now confident of the truth.

Why did he start writing on cricket? Supposedly it was an accident, although I cast doubt on this by looking carefully at what he wrote.

He coached cricket at Shrewsbury but was he a good cricketer himself? I traced scorecards of eight matches in which he played.

Why did he miss the end of the 1929 Leeds Test (yet still report on it)? Cardus gives two explanations: walking in the country and spending the day with his mistress. Which is true? Look at the evidence!

What was the controversy about his reporting on the 1953 Ashes Tests? The archives show the disagreement between the *Manchester Guardian* editor and his sports editor.

Cardus Uncovered

Christopher O'Brien



Neville Cardus was a man of mystery.'

The book (220 pages + 100 pages of appendices etc, £10 plus postage) is available online (google Cardus Uncovered Lancashire) or you can buy it at Old Trafford, Lord's and Trent Bridge. Or email me at whitethorn.range@gmail.com and pay by bank transfer or cheque (phone no. 0115 922 1481).

The book has plenty of other topics. For example, when Cardus wrote about himself and cricket's characters, was it the truth; was it his 'higher truth'? He had several years in Australia, praised for his cricket reports but criticised for his harsh music reviews. I found that his mistress's husband was a cricket journalist, reporting on Tests at the same time as Neville Cardus.

I had plenty of new material about Cardus's life and work, and felt I should publish it. A friend recommended a designer, who suggested a printer. It was great, if rather daunting, to see the parcels of books arriving at my front door.

I ran, for the first time, a Cricket Memorabilia Market, at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival in July. It was held, for one day, on a County Championship day and housed in a spacious marquee. There were about a dozen traders plus a book signing with Malcolm Nash regarding his recently published autobiography, "Not Only, But Also - My Life in Cricket".

Items for sale included Ashes mementoes, books, brochures, ceramics, cigarette and trade cards, paintings, photographs, prints, programmes and Wisdens. Prices ranged from 50 pence to hundreds of pounds. Eager cricket lovers came to inspect the varied cricket memorabilia. Plenty of items were bought and there was a good buzz.

I intend to run a similar event next summer at Cheltenham. I hope that it can be on the same day as the PCA Past Players' Day.

Cardus Uncovered Continued.....

'...his mistress's husband was a cricket journalist, reporting on Tests at the same time as Neville Cardus.'

Cheltenham Memorabilia Fair

Ken Burney