

Autumn 2016.

Backspin Magazine

The fate of Backspin is still to be determined, though it looks very much as if issue 12 will be the last. This is a great pity as previous issues were chock full, cover to cover, with items of cricket interest of yesteryear, which, ironically, may be one of the reasons for its demise. I offer the following observations. The retro title was launched in 2013 as the sister publication to Backpass, which was founded in 2007. Both titles were published by a small group of enthusiasts, which has now dwindled to just the founder. Backspin is probably unique in that it carries absolutely no advertising, which is crucial for survival. The editor told me that he has to pay a crippling £10k just to put the title on the shelves of WH Smith. Probably one of the biggest causes of failure was that the obvious target market of older cricket followers is largely unaware of the magazine's existence. I would have thought a mailshot plus a complimentary copy should have been sent to all cricket societies – perhaps it was. Did any society ever receive any mailshots? To quote John Simons, the editor of The Cricket Society News Bulletin, "Backspin packs far more interest in a single issue than in a year's worth of the competition." The potentially farewell issue #12 was planned to appear in June (originally May), and actually arrived in July! If you go to Smith's you'll have to hunt for it in the larger branches. £10k does not guarantee prominent display space; my local branch hides it on the back row, obscured by the shelf above it. I do my bit, by moving the copies to the front, whenever I go in for a browse! Back copies, except issues 1 & 2 (sold out), may be obtained at £4.50 each (postage paid), from the publisher at: www.backpassmagazine.co.uk.

Cricket at Buckingham Palace

The Daily Mail contains a regular feature entitled 'An Inspector Calls'. The item is a critique of a hotel or inn by the anonymous inspector who, on 26 March 2016, focused on No. 11 Cadogan Gardens in the poshest area of London. It was so upper class that the report included a reference to the hotel being built 'on a site that once upon a time was Buckingham Palace's cricket ground'. My curiosity was aroused. Was this a ground, hitherto unknown to the general populace, where royalty played in total privacy? I sent off an email to the powers that be and received a reply from a curator who thought my appeal 'very interesting', but could offer no further help. Undaunted, I decided to go for broke and posted a letter to the top man, sensing that if any member of the present day royal family had such knowledge, it would be the Lord's Taverners' permanent Twelfth Man. I think the inspector mixed up his princes, for I am sure that the site referred to in the article was Princes' Cricket Ground, situated close by and named after the two brothers who developed it. Does any reader have any other thoughts on the subject? I fielded a phone call from Prince Philip's private secretary, who said that the Prince does not comment on press items and added that he had no knowledge of a cricket ground being located in the grounds of Buck House. So, Princes' Square it must have been.

Plea for Early Film Material

Mike Fiddler is a film producer is on a mission to track down the earliest examples of cricket on moving film. In its infancy, early film depicted matches in the great expanse with barely recognisable individuals [W.G. Grace's rotund appearance is identifiable from any distance] Mike, who is the great-grandson of R.E. Foster, harbours the notion that if any such film is be found it may well be in the archives and libraries of private families. Members are kindly requested to look in their attics, contact the archivist of any stately residences in their vicinity and check with their local public records office. In the event of any successful outcome, please contact the editor and I will pass on the information.

Around the Societies

Cheltenham CS – Ken Burney reports: To increase our profile locally in order to retain and recruit members, we promote each monthly meeting via BBC Radio Gloucestershire (at no charge) via their What's On Guide; we have flyers at our local library and did a three month trial of advertising in "The Local Answer" (£25 per insertion) – a Gloucestershire monthly publication with a 200,000 circulation. We considered it worthwhile as it generated several enquiries which resulted in five new members. We also have a cricket quiz in January. We continue to use our website and group e-mail facilities to keep members informed. I aim to have our 2016/17 programme of eight speakers finalised before our AGM in May 2016 so that members are informed and, hopefully, will renew!

Essex CS – Sally Scroggs reports: Due to the rising cost of hiring facilities for meetings at the County Ground in Chelmsford, the Society has been forced to find a new venue. Henceforth, meetings of Essex Cricket Society will be held out of town at Chelmer Park, the home of Chelmsford CC. The address is Beehive Lane, Galleywood, Chelmsford CM2 8RL.

Leicestershire CS – Phil Veasey reports: On 22 November this year the Professional Cricketers' Association along with Leicestershire CCC are jointly hosting a play detailing the life of England cricketer. Colin Milburn. 'When the Eye Has Gone' is a one-man show that has been written by James Graham-Brown, the former Kent and Derbyshire all-rounder turned playwright, and is being produced by Live Wire/Roughhouse Theatre in association with the Professional Cricketers' Association. The play is set in the 'North Briton' pub in Newton Aycliffe in County Durham on February 28 1990, the last day of Milburn's life, during his cabaret performance as 'Jolly Ollie', the character he had developed to conceal his insecurities and suffering. Milburn, whose brilliant career was cut short by the loss of the sight in his left eye in a car accident in May 1969, died in the pub's car park, aged 48, after he drifted into chronic alcoholism. Tickets for the performance at Fischer County Ground, Leicester (otherwise known as Grace Road) are priced at £10 and £8 for concessions (booking fee is included in this price). Tickets can be purchased at: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-professional-cricketers-association> All money raised from the ticket sales goes to the PCA Benevolent Fund.

Worcestershire Memorabilia Day

Stallholders numbering a baker's dozen attended the sixth annual WCCC Memorabilia Day held in the Chestnut marquee on Oak Apple Day. The date coincided with the first day of the Championship match against Gloucestershire. Most of the arrangements had been made by Mike Niccoll, who sadly died in April. However, Tim Jones, Chairman of the Heritage Trust, ensured all went smoothly on the day. The weather was perfect for cricket, which meant that business was confined to the hour before play began plus the lunch and tea intervals. This was the third year I had attended as a seller and on each occasion, I was very pleased with the outcome. The day provided an ideal opportunity to show and sell items to genuine collectors of cricketana. This was not a day to sell books by Bird, Botham, Flintoff, Parkinson and the like. Modern-day Wisdens too were shunned, as interested customers had want lists of mainly pre- WW2 copies. I was particularly pleased to contact beforehand a past purchaser of cricket prints, who bought on the day another Victorian print for his 'cricket room'!

Gloucestershire Memorabilia Day

Ken Burney sent this report about the second GCCC Cricket Memorabilia Day held on Sunday 22 May 2016. The particular date was chosen because it coincided with the GCCC former players' Reunion Day and was the first day of the Championship match versus Northants. The event was organised by Sarah Blowen of the Gloucestershire Exiles and the proceeds were in aid of the GCCC Heritage Trust. I left Cheltenham at 8am, in broad sunshine and the weather was the same on arrival at Bristol. It took me about 45 minutes to set up my stall which included books, brochures, cigarette cards, DVD's, FDC's, photographs, porcelain, postcards, pictures, prints and programmes. There were about half a dozen stallholders all of whom were familiar to me. There was a wide range of memorabilia being sold. Unfortunately, rain arrived around 10am and cricket wasn't possible until 2.30pm, which was good for business as frustrated cricket followers bought memorabilia! Some interesting questions and conversations were had with it being clear that there were some serious cricket enthusiasts around. I sold a wide range of my items and even had some time to buy some memorabilia which included a 1933 annual which had some amazing information and news from the Bodyline tour, a couple of books and two lovely Gilbert Jessop pictures. I have already put my name down for next year's Memorabilia Day! Memorabilia Sale raises huge sum for Gloucs Heritage Trust Further to Ken's report, Sarah Blowen tells how the Gloucestershire Memorabilia Day came about: Following in the footsteps of our neighbours at Worcestershire, Gloucestershire CCC hosted an annual memorabilia sale at the Brightside County Ground in Bristol. The idea stemmed from the Gloucestershire Exiles' organisation, as chairperson Sarah explains: The Exiles was founded in the 1970s to bring together supporters living outside the county and to raise funds for the club. We were left an extensive collection of memorabilia by our founding chairman the late Vincent Coronel and decided that the best way to make it available to Gloucestershire fans and collectors was to hold a sale. Other sellers and dealers joined us and we had a hugely successful day. Now in its second year, the sales have made over £3,000 for the GCCC Heritage Trust, which is in the process of creating a new Museum & Learning Centre at the County Ground.

Save Our Counties Petition

I hope that all societies are aware of the changes proposed by the ECB which are planned to come into effect in 2018. The main point of concern is the plan to restructure T20 as a group of eight regional teams, which are likely to play at the Test venue in the respective areas. It doesn't take a genius to take the idea further and envisage the same format applying to other parts of the game, not least of which would be the threat to four-day cricket. What can be done? Nothing perhaps as far as T20 cricket, because the die has been cast. However, it is opportune for lovers of the traditional county game to express their views and sign the petition which has been set up and is now attracting support – but at present, it is nowhere near enough. The views of members of individual societies are most important and are needed urgently to make those money men in suits realise the strength of feeling that the traditional game attracts – even if it is not entirely obvious by attendance levels! To join the petition, simply go to <http://www.saveourcounties.com>

Where Are They Now?

In an attempt to trace the whereabouts of certain cricketers of yesteryear, I shall be pleased if anyone can inform me of the present location of three former England cricketers. One is pace bowler David Larter, formerly of Northamptonshire. I am also keen to trace the whereabouts of the two Richardson brothers, Peter (who left Worcestershire to play for Kent) and his brother Derek, better-known as Dick. If anyone knows the location of any of the trio, I shall be pleased to receive the relevant contact details. After he stopped playing, David returned to Inverness to run the family transport business. Recent enquiries indicate that he sold the business and is thought to have moved to the Yorkshire area. Can anyone help? He is one of fifteen cricketers who played in the Birmingham League for Stourbridge CC and also won Test honours. The club celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2017 and our Society intends to honour the cricketers by way of donating a framed photograph of each man to the club, in order to create a Test Gallery, and will publish a commemorative booklet with a pen portrait of each individual. * David Larter is one of eight Scottish-born cricketers to have played at Test level. Who are the other seven? The answers are on the end page together with Stourbridge's famous XV. D'Oliveira – three generations, Brett D'Oliveira is the third generation of the family to represent Worcestershire at first-class level. He is clearly not overawed by the burden of expectation placed upon him, as in May 2016 he emulated his father and grandfather by scoring a double hundred. Although instances of three generations of a family playing first-class cricket are not uncommon (think Compton, Cowdrey*, Hutton, Pollock et al), the triple double hundred feat of the D'Oliveira family is thought to be unique. The respective innings, all for Worcestershire are: Grandfather Basil 227 v Yorkshire 1974 at Hull, Father Damian 237 v Oxford University 1991 at Oxford, Grandson Brett 202* v Glamorgan 2016 at Cardiff. Four generations of Cowdreys played first-class cricket

Can I Speak?

The following persons have informed me that they are interested in speaking to cricket societies:

Mark Rowe is the author Brian Sellers – Yorkshire Tyrant. The biography is due to be published next year and Mark is available in autumn 2017. He has also written The Victory Tests and is based in Burton- on-Trent, Staffordshire. His email address is chiprowe@hotmail.com

Scott Reeves is the author of The Champion Band: The First English Cricket Tour. It's about the tour of 1859 to Canada and the United States. Scott also runs Chequered Flag Publishing. He is based in Sheffield and can be contacted via s.g.reeves@outlook.com.

Please mention the Council of Cricket Societies if and when making contact.

Book Reviews

FOREVER CHANGES by Dave Allen ISBN 9 781905 597680

The author has set out to express his views that many supporters of the longer format of county cricket definitely will share. As Hon. Archivist of Hampshire, and a life member of the county club, he is well- placed to enumerate the numerous changes that have been introduced since 1959, which was the year when he attended his first match – against Surrey in his hometown of Portsmouth. Like many other 'out grounds', the venue is now surplus to requirements. The book is not a release of pent-up frustrations, but a reasoned, structured review, with each decade allocated its own chapter. Forever Changes thus also serves as a handy, though not exhaustive, overview of each season. Nowadays the word 'reorganisation' generally involves a reduction in the County Championship. Allen is not alone in wondering what lies in store for red ball cricket. He cannot provide the answers, but that does not stop him asking the questions. This is a recommended read for those who care passionately about cricket. All profits generated will be donated to the Cage4All cricket charity. The softback book (249 pages), is available from Amazon or direct from www.moyhill.com/fc.

LAHORE TO LONDON by Younis Ahmed ISBN 9 780993 215261

Books related to Pakistan cricket are not often available in English shops. Hence, Younis's autobiography, published in Sheffield, is warmly welcomed. It is a pity that his career is remembered more for his run-ins with his various counties (which he does not duck) rather than the runs he scored, which included 46 first-class centuries. He writes candidly about his experiences and describes the hierarchy of Pakistani cricket, in which sport and politics most definitely are entwined. Constitutionally, the President of the country is Patron of the Pakistan Cricket Board, and can and does take an active interest, often intervening when they feel the need to do so. Thus the power struggles of politics are reflected in abrupt changes in the leadership in the administration of cricket. The hardback book is a fascinating read, but with a price tag of £20, it is let down by the quality of the photographs. The book is available from retailers or order direct: chequeredflagpublishing.co.uk

Appeal for Future Content

News items from societies are most welcome as a six monthly newsletter is very difficult to compile. Ideally, the newsletter should be issued more frequently because this issue, like the previous edition, has had to be rewritten as items originally thought to be of possible interest lost their relevance and importance six months later. I would appreciate receiving the views of the huge silent majority as to how they wish to see the newsletter presented in the future. Three issues a year is probably the ideal answer, but only if content is forthcoming. Therefore, I reiterate my plea for material from your society for inclusion in future issues. Please submit contributions (photographs welcome if relevant) by email to: adcollis@blueyonder.co.uk By the same token, individual societies are at liberty to circulate this newsletter amongst their membership if they so wish.

Scottish-born Test Cricketers

The eight England players, born north of the border are: Mike Denness, Gavin Hamilton, Alex Kennedy, David Larner, Gregor McGregor, Ian Peebles, Eric Russell and Peter Such.

Stourbridge's famous XV are:

Ted Arnold, Tip Foster, Dick Howorth, Roly Jenkins, Don Kenyon, Martin Horton, Peter Richardson, Derek Richardson, Jack Flavell, Glenn Turner and Imran Khan – all of whom played for Worcestershire. Although lacking a wicket-keeper, it's a pretty decent team! Other Stourbridge players who played at Test level, but for other counties are: W.G. Quaife (Warwickshire), David Larner, Philip DeFreitas (Leicestershire, Lancashire & Derbyshire) and Simon O'Donnell (Northumberland & Australia)

The Last Word

We look forward to another excellent winter programme of interesting speakers up and down the country. Sincere thanks are owed to the various individuals who are tasked with making contact, negotiating terms, possibly arranging accommodation, confirming arrangements, reminding speakers of the event, finding eleventh-hour replacements, reserving a parking spot, providing a meal, welcoming, hosting, introducing and, ultimately, making sure they get paid. And after that's all done, there are usually at least five more months to repeat the exercise. To the Speaker Secretaries throughout the land, on behalf of the societies' 3,000-odd members – thank you!