

## Spring 2018

Welcome to what is hopefully the last issue of CCS News! Henceforth the Council of Cricket Societies will adopt a new name – that of Cricket Societies Alliance. The change was proposed by Essex Cricket Society, who suggested that the word ‘cricket’ should be accorded greater prominence. Personally, I have long held the view that the word ‘council’ did little for the image of the organisation. Unless delegates have a better suggestion, future editions of the newsletter may be named CSA News – but on second thoughts that could be construed as being the bulletin of the Child Support Agency! Let’s have your ideas at Edgbaston for a new name for the newsletter!

Congratulations to author, publisher and popular speaker, Stephen Chalke on becoming the CSA’s inaugural patron. It is great to see the West of England branch of the Cricket Society flourishing under Stephen’s enthusiastic chairmanship. Their current season at the home of Bath CC kicked off with Farokh Engineer. Among those following in his wake were Geoff Cope, Richard Ellison, John Holder and John Barclay.

We welcome the North Kent Cricket Society as a new affiliate. They opened their innings in October 2017 with Errol Valentine from the Kent Cricket League as their inaugural speaker. The society’s recent speakers included first-class umpire Neil Bainton and Kent’s recently appointed Community Cricket Officer, Mark Dekker. The Society meets at Bexley CC. It appears that Essex Cricket Society have overcome their venue problem as, according to the CCS website, they are continuing to operate from the County pavilion at Chelmsford. Recent guests include author Andrew Murtagh; John Childs; first-

class umpire Martin Bodenham; Alan Butcher and Nasser Hussain. An Essex supporter recently wrote to me. I was particularly struck by the attractive notelet which depicted six delightful sketches of Essex pavilions – Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester, Ilford, Leyton and Southend. Delegates may recall a couple of years back that I mentioned a similar initiative by the late Alan Saywood who sketched and published a limited number of prints of pavilions for the Essex Society’s 25th anniversary in 1999.

It would be very interesting – and helpful – to learn of other initiatives undertaken by societies and / or individual members that have been tried and tested. Did my eyes deceive me? During the recent series of Strictly Come Dancing, did Sue Grainger, the secretary of both Lancashire & Cheshire Society and Merseyside Cricket Society, make a cameo appearance? I’ll wager it was her – perhaps we’ll find out more at Edgbaston! Stourbridge & District Cricket Society’s season began with Mushtaq Mohammad, who was followed in turn by former Hampshire cricketer/retired Malvern College master now author of five biographies, Andrew Murtagh; first-class umpire David Millns; Geoff Cope and Lester; Dean Allen (author of the splendid *Empire, War and Cricket*); Norman Gifford was due to speak in March, but is now unavailable; however John Holder will appear instead. The Society’s current programme will conclude with Worcestershire’s recent interim CEO, Tom Scott. The S&D CS has adopted the slogan “Supporting cricket is as important as playing cricket”. It is thought that these words succinctly express the *raison d’être* of any cricket society and could even reflect the ethos of the newly-

named Cricket Societies Alliance. The Society not only has a new website, but a new internet address – [www.sdcs.cricket](http://www.sdcs.cricket). The suffix ‘.cricket’ seems far more apt than the likes of ‘.com’, ‘.org’, ‘.co.uk’ etc. Membership of Worcestershire Cricket Society now stands at 160, after a phenomenal influx of 51 members following a recruitment drive. We trust their delegate will tell those present at Edgbaston how it was achieved!

This year's Cricket Memorabilia Market at New Road is being held on Saturday 12 May – the second day of the Worcestershire v Essex championship fixture. Last year's event brought many more people to the market and the cricket when the County offered free admission via the website. Their initiative is to be applauded. It proved doubly effective as it boosted the Club's mailing list. The Chestnut Marquee houses twenty 'stalls' that are hired at £20 each and most stall-holders return each year. A similar project has been introduced by Gloucestershire and is set also to become a regular event. I was recently invited to sort out several cricket books that were unwanted by the owner. Unfortunately, there was little of great interest – the names Bird, Botham, Flintoff, Parkinson and Pietersen provide some indication of the general content. However, amongst the titles, I spotted a group that stood out from the rest – four bound volumes of The Cricketer magazine. Three were from the 1950s, but the other was for the year 1946. As a recompense for my labours (?), I was allowed to take them home for closer inspection, whereupon I skimmed through the earliest volume, bound with the fortnightly issues, and noted the following article which may interest Sussex members. Old Sussex Score Books The opening of a disused safe in a Brighton office has brought to light the whole of the Sussex CCC score books for the years 1858 to 1887. The books have been returned to the County Club on whose behalf they were gratefully accepted by the then hon. secretary, Sir Home Gordon, Bart. One of the most interesting scores is that of the last match played on the Brunswick ground between Eleven Players of Sussex and Twenty-two Gentlemen of Sussex. The later volumes contain short updates by individual cricket societies, notably The Cricket Society, Northern CS and Wombwell CS. It is interesting to read some of their contributions: In the 1955 annual, The Wombwell Cricket Lovers Society's recent speakers included DR Jardine, LN Constantine, Roy Webber, JC Laker, NWD Yardley, Fred Trueman, Ted Lester, WHH Sutcliffe, Gerald Brodribb, AA Thompson and Denzil Bachelor! A new venture was pursued by The Cricket Society when a meeting devoted to Women's Cricket was held at the Shaftesbury Hotel in May 1955. The Northern Cricket Society held a most successful dinner in Leeds to honour the South African cricketers. More than 220 members and friends attended. All the guests received souvenir napkins embossed with the Springbok head, while the chief guests and committee received specially made tumblers engraved in similar fashion. A plaque commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Lord, founder of Lord's cricket ground was unveiled in July 1955 by the President of the MCC, Lord Cobham. The ceremony took place in the pavilion of the Thirsk CC, a few hundred yards away from the cottage where Thomas Lord was born. In the same year a letter appeared in the issue (18 May) from Roy Webber in which he invited support for his proposal to form a Cricket Book Society [CBS]. He realised that many small booklets of interest written by cricket lovers would never reach a wider audience due to lack of support by publishing companies. Webber aimed to enrol 500 to ensure viability for the project. Two months later, he reported that "although short of the target, there was sufficient interest to warrant the society's formation. For the subscription amount of one guinea, members will receive up to eight books in the first year". The 1946/47 annual announced that the CBS had made "a capital start" and that it had been decided to increase the first year's series of booklets to ten. The Cricketer's editor, Sir Pelham Warner, commented, "The book society deserves sincere congratulations on an auspicious beginning. We look forward to future issues." Can any present-day member provide any further information about the CBS?

Among the small-ads (3d a word, minimum charge 2/6) in the same annual, there appeared an advertisement which, for me, was close to home. It read: Stourbridge Cricket Club (Birmingham League) require first-class professional for season 1947, bowler preferred. Reply with details of experience etc.



To close this selected overview of the magazines, I include an extract of a full page article, penned by my predecessor, Murray Hedgcock, which appeared in the 21st June 1958 edition of *The Cricketer*. Murray wrote about 'Collecting Cricketana' or more accurately his perennial search for cricket books in both Australia and England. The outlook of the average Australian to the collector of cricket books was epitomised by a bookshop salesman when Murray once bought three or four *Wisden*s. "I play cricket, but I'm blown if I could ever read books like these," the salesman told Murray with a fine disregard for the principles of making a sale. Murray recalled that his most notable purchase in Australia was a 1916 *Wisden* for an unbelievable seven shillings and sixpence!

Incidentally it is hoped that the present day editor of *Wisden* might welcome an article about the newly named Cricket Societies Alliance. However, the article must include some points of interest other than a list of speakers, interesting though they might be.

I think it is a great shame – and a lost opportunity – that meetings are seldom, if ever, held in the summer. I believe a regional group of cricket societies, under the auspices of [the] Cricket Societies Alliance, might combine forces to arrange and host a gathering in the form of a luncheon on a day preceding a Test at, or near, the match venue. In years gone by, such events were fairly common and often were attended by members of the participating teams and occasionally by the entire team! It is accepted that today's touring teams are unlikely to attend such an event, but former players often accompany the touring party as part of the media or public relations contingent. For interest, the venues of headline tours to be undertaken to England in 2019 are: Australia Tests (5) Edgbaston, Headingley, Lord's, Old Trafford, The Oval ICC Cricket World Cup Lord's (final), Edgbaston & Old Trafford (semi-finals), The Oval (opening game), Bristol, Cardiff, Chester-le-Street, Headingley, Southampton, Taunton, Trent Bridge (group games)

I would be interested to know the views of societies. Please email: [adcollis@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:adcollis@blueyonder.co.uk)

A while ago, I received a tribute in recognition of the service performed by Ken Thomas to the cricket society to which he belonged. The complete text was deemed too long for the newsletter, but I feel the extract below serves admirably as a belated obituary notice – not that was what his brother, the writer, had intended. A Life Member - in Every Sense By Geoff Thomas Whilst some of the older Lancashire members undoubtedly go back a long way, it would be difficult to think of anyone whose cricket-

watching stretches back as far as that of veteran life member Ken Thomas, from Stockport, who at 92 years young, still faithfully attends nearly every Lancashire County Championship home game. His earliest memory of Old Trafford is of watching the great Frank Woolley batting for a Kent side that included such inter-

war greats as Percy Chapman, Leslie Ames and “Tich” Freeman. When you consider that Frank’s first-class career began in 1906, it puts Ken’s life of cricket-

watching into perspective. My brother has seen virtually everyone who has played for Lancashire since his demobilisation in 1947 – he saw action in Italy and Greece.

If asked to name his favourite player, he would reply “Brian Statham” (with honourable mention to Wasim Akram). He is very proud of a photo I took of him standing alongside Brian, a framed copy of which adorns his shelves at home. Few things in cricket have delighted him more than Lancashire finally winning the Championship outright in 2011 – something he had despaired of ever seeing. What does he think of the refurbished Emirates Old Trafford? Something of a nostalgia freak, he yearns (unaccountably) for the old long benches of yore in the Hornby stand, and the Art Deco-style scoreboard which faced it. He does, however, generally approve of the current pavilion, especially the new-

style Long Room. Whilst generally of a jovial and ebullient demeanour, a ‘glass half-full man’, as he is wont to say, he can be plunged into the depths of despair when things are not going well for his beloved club. He is known by many for his forthright views, which he is not afraid to voice to those around him, on numerous aspects of life today as well as on cricket and its continuing ‘evolution’, although he would doubtless use a less complimentary term. Another string to his bow is his long-standing chairmanship (and more recently presidency) of the Lancashire & Cheshire Cricket Society, at whose meetings he introduces the speakers with their full career statistics – without recourse to any written notes. He will be a hard act to follow in that capacity. A widower since 2007, Ken has two sons, five grandchildren and is now starting to add great-

grandchildren to that number, and still purveys his particular brand of raffish charm in the presence of attractive ladies (or any ladies, for that matter). He leads a busy life, is never bored, and attributes his longevity in part to a regular but modest intake of decent red wine (although being partial to Robinson’s best bitter too) and above all keeping his brain alert with plenty of mental activity – plus, of course, following the fortunes of Lancashire CC, and those of England as well, thanks to Sky Television’s coverage. May he long continue to frequent Emirates Old Trafford, sporting the cap which bears the proud legend “World War Two Veteran”. Otherwise, the eclectic chat, the reminiscences of days long gone and the cricket trivia quiz questions to which he treats those around him would be sorely missed – although things might well be a tad quieter! He so dearly wished to complete 50 years as Chair, but stalled at 49 years, a magnificent achievement by any standards. [The death of Ken Thomas occurred on 15 May 2017, a few days before his 93rd birthday. He served as cha

irman of Lancashire & Cheshire Cricket Society from 1968 until his health forced hi  
m to retire five months before.]