

GEORDIE DRINKS, GAMBLING, AND RIGHT HOOKS!

Meltham CC Minutes Part 3: 1968-84

By Rob Hardie

In this, the last of my series on documenting some of the lighter sides of the cricket club, I take a look back on the 16-year period that spans from the beginning of the 1969 season up until the end of the 1984 campaign. The last four books from the club archives continue to document the run-of-the-mill occasions and events that make up a club such as Meltham. The books themselves still have a musky aroma - testament to their age and confinement to a box in a darkened room in the heart of the clubhouse.



The first of this set begins in January 1968 and straight away in its pages lies an interesting anecdote. The secretary of the club is requested to acquire a notice from the solicitors saying that the club is not responsible for damage to cars that are left in the club's car park. As the car was becoming a highly prominent aspect of life around this time, and the motor industry taking off, it would have been right for the club to cover legal issues that could potentially land them in difficulty. As money at local clubs is notoriously tight, this will have been a great relief to get this matter solved and also put to rest any legal ramifications that might arise. At the next meeting the minutes show that the solicitors fully support the idea and plans for a sign to be screwed to the pavilion are put in place.

A dark day came on 22nd April 1969 with so few people declaring an interest in catering for the 2nd XI; and so the club decides against the idea and scraps it altogether. So for the entirety of the 1969 season, the second string are treated to the refreshments of a nearby confectioner, based in Meltham village centre!

In May 1969 the league heaped scorn on the club after the 2nd XI failed to return for a rearranged match with Elland. After the match had been called off, the squad failed to turn up and compete the game at the rearranged time - and the club were fined 7/6 for their troubles.

In a situation similar to that of recent times, the Paddock Shield was sent to be engraved after the second XI brought the shield back to Mean Lane for the sixth time in the competition's history. However, the time taken to complete

the engraving of the shield took longer than expected and team captain K.Walker was asked by the committee to look into why this was.

The next book takes the club forward into a new decade. The 1970-73 seasons are covered in the next chapter of the minutes. In the early pages of this book, the club's darts and dominoes teams get special mention (these are now defunct), and as the club knockout tournament reaches its climax the finals date and prizes are set. The lucky winner of the competition is treated to prizes from the Butlins in Holmfirth, but unfortunately the names of the recipients of these prizes are undisclosed.

Mr Alfred Topp, the club's record-breaking wicket-taker with over 1,000 wickets, was approached with a proposal for the 1971 season. Topp was asked by the committee to help with the search for overseas professionals who would be suitable for the following season. Not only an outstanding wicket-taker, but a scout also!



It appears that the Christmas party season struck one hearty club member too hard. A letter sent to the committee told its own story. At the second meeting after Christmas, the committee received a letter from a Mr C.Midgley apologising for his absence and for his 'unfortunate conduct' in the clubhouse at the Christmas Eve party. Could his absence be down to the events of that night and just another drunken misdemeanour? Probably.

On a lighter note, the club trialled bottles of 'Newkie Broon' after being contacted by Newcastle and Scottish breweries. All were in favour so I'm sure that club members enjoyed its arrival. Oh, and later on, Websters beer was replaced by Newcastle Exhibition...good times!

On 4th September 1973 the decision was unanimously made to appoint Dilip Doshi for the forthcoming season and terms were agreed. Now it was just a case of the mad dash to the airport to sign the player - and in a year's time Doshi would have taken the league by storm and captured the league bowling prize.

The Meltham clubhouse is nowadays used for many kinds of sports, but perhaps for the first time in the lounge boxing was witnessed! No, not the competitive sport but the sparring of two gents who were arguing over a card game and the prize money on offer. Following a fight the previous week the meeting of November 9th 1976 saw the committee agree on new rules to prevent any further flare-ups over gambling. A sign notified any would-be card sharks that the maximum bet from this time on would be only 25p a stake. In

addition, there was to be no playing 30 minutes after time had been called, with side betting strictly prohibited.

1984 sees the club struggle financially. The treasurer's yearly report is badly misleading with the club in the black, but with unpaid bills looming the club would be plunged firmly into the red for the foreseeable future. The committee calls for fundraisers and a healthy revenue over the bar to be maintained. The plight of the club in the 1980s is in no small part down to the extensions, maintenance work and new building work during the 1960s and 1970s. The club were badly in debt because of this work and although there were brand new facilities to be had, the club suffered for its gain in the long term.

The minute books can be located at the Meltham CC clubhouse.