

Off the beaten track

Three Men and a Cricket Season

Diary 2006

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This book is dedicated to all the many people with whom we enjoyed watching cricket throughout the year

Inspirations

Three gentlemen in whose footsteps we have followed:
The late Peter Snape, League Cricket Correspondent, *Yorkshire Post*
The late Tony Woodhouse, Yorkshire C.C.C. Historian
The late John Featherstone, editor *White Rose Magazine*

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Front-cover photo: Tony, Mick and Brian at Arthington, Wharfedale, Oct 2006

Preface

A few years ago I happened to make the acquaintance of three amazing chaps from Leeds. They seemed to spend every waking hour watching cricket – schools cricket, village cricket, league cricket, minor counties cricket, and county cricket (both 1st and 2nd XI). They had the perfect lifestyle and I was extremely envious (my Dad will confirm that at a very early stage in my own life I said to him: ‘Dad, I just want to be retired so I can watch cricket all the time’). I thought to myself: I must get to know these guys better – they are my kind of people. Eventually I got to know their names: Brian, Mick and Tony. Then I was lucky enough to get to know them even better. I became involved in a big project looking into the heritage and social history of cricket in Calderdale and Kirklees, and like the good troopers they are, they came and supported all our major events – an impressive feat given that none of them actually lived in our research area. Gradually they were becoming friends rather than acquaintances.

Then I started to bump into them at games and I would always make a point of sending them special, personal invitations to our project events. Again, they would always come and enjoy meeting other like-minded cricket folk. In January 2006 Brian, Mick and Tony all enrolled on the special evening course we put on at the University of Huddersfield about the history of local cricket. With other cricketing friends we had a wonderful time on this course. I christened Brian, Mick and Tony the ‘Three Musketeers’ because they always seemed to sit together in the classroom. I found out more about their extraordinary cricket-watching exploits and thought to myself: this is an amazing story that needs to be told. I could feel my old journalistic instincts coming to the fore. This was a book that was waiting to happen.

Reading and re-reading their diary entries for 2006 I am struck by many things. First, their passion and enthusiasm for cricket as a sport. Their love for the game is deep and they find so many things to get enthusiastic about: a new ground, an eccentric umpire, a particularly delicious piece of chocolate cake. The joy on their faces when they re-tell some of their favourite cricketing tales is a sight to behold. And their Brian Johnston-esque sense of humour is always guaranteed to make me laugh and giggle. Second, I think this diary will become a wonderful historical source. Want to know what life was like in Pennine country at the start of the twenty-first century? Consult your Bourne, Hutton & Senior! It is a chronicle of the ordinary and the extraordinary, a book of social observation about people and places. It is about cricket but also, more broadly, about villages and communities.

I also know that they value the friendship and camaraderie that they find in cricket-watching. I have lost count of the number of ‘friends’, ‘mates’ and ‘pals’ they have on the local cricket circuit. I’ve been to a number of local grounds in their company and I always seem to ‘lose’ one, two or all three of them as we take a tour round the boundary’s edge. Their capacity for friendly cricketing banter is unlimited. Players, ex-players, coaches, groundsmen,

scorers, tea ladies, parents of players, friends they know from the cricket societies they attend...you name them, they know them!

Over the years Brian, Mick and Tony seem to have acquired an encyclopaedic knowledge of towns and villages in the North of England. A place is only a place if it has a cricket ground. Mick and Tony gain their knowledge by driving to and from various cricket club car parks; Brian seems to have spent half his life waiting for buses and trains, like myself in fact, and, as we have often said to each other, travelling around by public transport does give you unique insights into the geography of local cricket, such as the clubs that are actually impossible to get to by bus and train. I have Cartworth Moor CC (Holmfirth) in mind here! More than that, though, as you flick through the pages of this book I'm sure that you, like me, will be struck by something else. England as a country comes alive. The beautiful towns and villages, the charming and idiosyncratic characters who frequent each and every cricket club, the gorgeous cricket teas put on almost everywhere, and the idyllic rural landscapes. Together, the Musketeers' diary entries paint a vivid picture of contemporary Britain. One minute they are in inner-city Bradford or in the shadow of the Drax power stations. Next, they are in the Yorkshire Dales or listening to brass bands and watching old fashioned village cricket by the river in Saddleworth. The contrasts could not be greater.

I also realise that I share many of their views on cricket. For example, all three Musketeers seem to have a growing dislike of going to watch international cricket. Go to Headingley or Old Trafford for a Test match, discover that you're seated in between five grown men dressed as nuns or clowns, and then watch as they consume 86 cans of lager during the day, while at the same time getting louder and louder in their boisterous singing and joke-telling. Yes, not exactly where the discerning cricket-watcher wishes to find himself! Hence their love of the quiet, unspoilt village grounds, where you can say hello to the tea lady, pick up a sandwich, and watch the dying overs of the match as the sun sets on the horizon. Brian, Mick and Tony are, truly, connoisseurs of the beautiful game.

When I meet up with Brian, Mick and Tony – and I tend to do so intermittently during the season - I always notice how healthy and happy they look (see the photo on the front cover of this book, for example). They are a wonderful advert for being retired and for indulging, totally and completely, in your passion. I clock up my fair share of local league cricket matches in a typical summer, but I'm not in the Musketeers' league. I am, however, in training. I see myself as a student, learning the ropes from three past masters at the art of professional cricket-watching. As I said to my Dad that time, many years ago, I can't wait to be retired.

Through the pages of this book, I hope you enjoy re-living the summer of 2006 in the company of my friends Brian, Mick and Tony. And watch out: there is every chance that you will bump into them on a cricket ground near you in 2007 and in summers to come.

Peter Davies

Introduction I – Mick Bourne

Although by the age of ten I was scoring for a local club (four shillings for a weekend match) and had an uncle and a cousin who played some minor counties cricket, I very much preferred, in my younger days, to play football - a proper team game. Now and again I played club cricket, occasionally as an opening bat and, if given the chance, a leg-spinner.

My involvement with the game in the past 25 years came via a path familiar to many people. When my son started playing for a club in Leeds, I was asked to help out with the coaching and then with the umpiring and then with the managing of teams and then to serve on committees in various capacities, and so on. The last position I got talked into was that of Secretary of the Leeds and District Junior Cricket League for a five-year spell.

Four years ago I quit my association with leagues and clubs. Deep down I was uneasy, and still am, about the politicisation of the recreational game - a process that derives, believe or not, from a faraway alien quarter in Europe. As an independent, I am able more freely to support and speak up for the game and all that goes with it at local club level, for it's here that true ownership of the game lies. For me, what goes on off the field of play at clubs appeals as much as what happens on it, as this book will show. I spend a fair bit of time writing letters to the press, MPs and others at the top end who profess to support the game, but not without a touch of pessimism. And then there are all those interesting characters I meet on my travels and the fascinating tales each one has to tell.

As a result of all this, I claim to be able to speak on the topic of recreational cricket from now until midnight - midnight tomorrow night, that is. But nobody yet has been inclined to test me.



Introduction II - Tony Hutton

The first time I heard the expression 'professional cricket watcher' was more than ten years ago in a story about Ted Kilhourey, known throughout the north of England as 'Wigan Ted'. Ted sadly died some five years ago, but stories about him still circulate in cricket-watching circles. At one time he was on the dole, or drawing unemployment benefit. The Radio Lancashire league cricket correspondent referred to him on air one Saturday night as 'that well known professional cricket watcher - Wigan Ted'. One of the listeners was a social security official, who seemed to be lacking a sense of humour or any knowledge of cricket. He promptly phoned Ted and said: 'We've got you this time - how much are you earning from this professional cricket-watching?'

Unfortunately there are no wages for being an obsessive watcher of cricket at all levels, which I have become since my enforced early retirement some 15 years ago. Initially I watched Yorkshire at Headingley as a Hospital Radio commentator during the 1980s and 1990s, but soon after retirement I began to travel much further afield and also began photographing all the grounds I visited. When I achieved my first target of watching cricket on every first-class ground in England, I began to turn my attention to minor counties and league cricket and have now watched cricket in every county of England as well as making winter trips to Australia, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates. Despite all this travelling, I still enjoy finding new village grounds off the beaten track and there are still well over 200 of these to go at in Yorkshire alone!

So something started by my Grandad when he took me to Roundhay Park on summer Sundays during and immediately after the Second World War to see Jack Appleyard's charity games continues to this day. For three years as a boy I lived in the historic cricket village of Lascelles Hall, near Huddersfield, before my father's job took us to the Midlands, where I spent all of my cricket-playing career and also watched Warwickshire and Worcestershire, although my first loyalty was always to Yorkshire. When I eventually worked my ticket back to Yorkshire some 20 years later, in the 1970s, I was only good enough to play evening league cricket, but delighted to reacquaint myself with my native county and its cricket grounds.

Last winter the opportunity to join Peter Davies's ground-breaking cricket evening course at the University of Huddersfield was a great delight and made me feel I had come full circle as we re-visited Fartown and Lascelles Hall, where I had watched my first county and league cricket matches all those years ago.



Introduction III – Brian Senior

As I lived quite close to Pudsey as a boy, my earliest recollections of league cricket were at Pudsey St. Lawrence and Pudsey Britannia (as it then was) - now, of course, Pudsey Congs. Like Tony, I remember well the Jack Appleyard XI matches at the huge Roundhay Oval in Leeds where top county and league players attracted huge crowds. I remember sitting on the packed 'Hill Sixty' and then joining the long queues for the trams which took people back into the city centre. I also enjoyed going to watch Holbeck in the immediate post-war years at their ground in Lowfields Road next to the Elland Road football ground, when they had a very successful side full of great players.

I did play some cricket at West Leeds High School where one of the outstanding features was a tree on the edge of the square. If you hit the ball against the tree you could be out if the fielder caught a ricochet one-handed! I continued to play, as a middle-order batsman, and as a fielder well hidden away on the boundary, for the *Yorkshire Evening News* evening league side. The *Evening News* cricket correspondent at that time was the great ex-Yorkshire and England fast bowler Bill Bowes, a real gentleman, who became one of my early heroes along, of course, with Leonard Hutton.

Early memories of watching county cricket at Headingley are still strong in the memory and apart from all the great names of Yorkshire at that time, I can well remember some of the stalwart senior professionals of the other counties, like Reg Perks of Worcester and Les Berry of Leicestershire. There was also great excitement each year with the arrival of overseas touring teams, who then played Yorkshire twice. It was a rare treat to see these great stars from the other side of the world, who, of course, were not otherwise seen before the days of television.

It seems a long time now since the glory years of Yorkshire cricket in the 1960s and now my major enjoyment comes from doing the rounds of the many cricket leagues in Yorkshire. I can usually find someone I know wherever I turn up! I often have my back to the play when chatting away - my catch-phrase has become: 'That's another wicket I've missed' – and I do enjoy the social side of the game and swapping stories and experiences with other cricket people. The recent course at the University of Huddersfield was another real source of enjoyment. We met many like-minded people and our knowledge of the history of the game at local level has improved considerably.

My 'home ground' of Headingley obviously plays a major part in my life every summer. Indeed, it used to be a personal joke that games at HQ gave me a rest from perpetual travelling around the north of England! Here I must acknowledge the debt I owe to my car-owning travelling companions, without whom my season of 200+ cricket trips would be impossible. Especially in the last eight years, when I have been retired, my summers of professional

cricket-watching have expanded enormously, and I have made more and more friends and contacts in this part of my life.

My main chauffeurs, of course, are my two partners-in-crime and co-authors, Mick and Tony. I would also like to thank Brian Sanderson, with whom I have undertaken some epic journeys, especially for minor counties fixtures. Brian and his lifts are truly a treasure for me. Geoff Wilson too – a friend of many years, with whom I plan a summer campaign every March when we meet up in Thirsk along with Geoff Raw (now Pickering) and Dave Spilsbury (Harrogate). We mainly visit county grounds from Durham to Leicester, with minor counties and 2nd XI trips thrown in, too – for example, Sedbergh School and Oakham, Rutland. Another friend, Keith Walker (Mirfield) joins us on these trips.

Memories also abound of travels with Mike Norman (sadly departed) and Brian Cobb. Brian is as passionate as myself about league cricket and goes on many country-wide trips with his wife (Sandy) in search of new grounds and friends. I must make mention of George Abbey, now in his 80s. He could be called the ‘curator’ of Park Avenue. He visits the ground every week and has many memories of its glorious past. I used to travel with him in Bradford’s minor leagues. He now has a passion for schools cricket, and can always be seen at the St. Peter’s Festival, York.

I must apologise if I have missed anybody out, because this book is in part a thank you to all my travelling helpers and understanding friends. To put my memories and reminiscences down in written form is an honour and a pleasure not previously envisaged. I hope my scribblings are of interest to my fellow travellers and cricket-lovers. See you in 2007!



april



Pudseys and Pennines

Monday 10 April

Brian: The season started for me on the other side of the Pennines: a one-day friendly between Lancashire and Yorkshire. Tony was going to come as well but was put off by the forecast. Good decision! Only half a day's play was possible – it was chilly and rainy all day. I sat with my usual posse – the Jim the Dog crowd at the Brian Statham End.

Friday 14 April

Tony: A full Easter weekend. Friday 14 April - Adel practice match; Saturday 15 April and Sunday 16 April - Yorkshire v Leeds/Bradford UCCE (Headingley); Sunday 16 April - Jer Lane v Sheffield Collegiate (Yorkshire Champions Black Sheep Trophy); Monday 17 April - Adel v Horsforth (friendly). For the first time in living memory I saw cricket played on all four days of the Easter weekend. On Good Friday my local club had a practice match between mixed teams of first eleven and second eleven players. They managed to contrive an exciting finish with club captain Tim Grey's XI winning by one wicket off the last ball with the captain himself seeing them home with the top score of 40. Left-arm spinner Tim made his name in the Leeds Junior League. Incidentally, Tim's father is still playing locally with Old Mods.

On Saturday (with Brian) the first cricket of the season at Headingley saw the county side take on the students of Leeds/Bradford University Centre of Cricketing Excellence. These early-season games between counties and universities usually provide the county men with easy runs and wickets to break them into the season. What value it is to the students I am not so sure as they are usually on a hiding to nothing. So it proved as three Yorkshire batsmen got centuries. A steady 116 by former Oxford captain Joe Sayers being followed by fireworks from Anthony McGrath between lunch and tea

with 151 and finally skipper Craig White with 103. The final total was a daunting 576-7 declared.

On Sunday when the University side batted they were bowled out for 169. The main attention centred on the Australian-born, but English-qualified, quick bowler Mitch Claydon. He did not impress with the 2nd XI last season, but reports suggest he has put on a yard of pace in the winter. He did bowl quickly and took 5-37 to help dismiss the students for 169. Yorkshire predictably did not enforce the follow-on and chose to give the batsmen more practice. This time Michael Lumb helped himself to 109 and Matthew Wood to 98 before they again declared on 266-5, thus leaving the University the daunting task of scoring 644 to win. This was not put to the test, however, as rain prevented any play on the scheduled third day on Monday. However, play was possible a couple of miles up the road where Adel started promptly at 2pm to play a full 40-over-a-side pre-season friendly with neighbouring Horsforth. Surprisingly, the lower-division visitors won comfortably by four wickets. What was not surprising was the fact that county cricketers with all the expensive ground facilities available were unable to play - not for the first time either.

I took a break from Headingley on Sunday afternoon to see Jer Lane, former champions of the Bradford Central League, but now playing in the Halifax League, take on Yorkshire Premier League champions Sheffield Collegiate in the Yorkshire Champions Trophy first round. This David v Goliath encounter appealed to me particularly as I had played on this long thin ground on a hilltop to the west of Bradford many years ago. There was to be no giant-killing as the visitors, who might be regarded as 'southern softies' in these parts, racked up 311-8 in their 50 overs. They then bowled the home team out for 122, avoiding the risk of hypothermia in the process.

Saturday 15 April

Brian: Tony stayed at Headingley but I nipped off to Pudsey Congs for their Bradford League encounter with Cleckheaton. Pudsey won the game easily – Cleck were very disappointing.

Sunday 16 April

Brian: I started at Headingley again but went on to Farsley for their tie against Keighley in the Heavy Woollen Cup. It was a good game, with the visitors scoring 160-odd and Farsley knocking them off pretty quickly with ex-Yorkshire batsman Ashley Metcalfe getting a half-century. Met my old friend Richard Robinson, the Keighley groundsman. Ray Illingworth was there too. He is 'Mr Farsley' and basically does everything on matchdays, including the raffle! For a former England captain and manager, he puts a lot back into the game at a local level – and I wonder how many people appreciate this.



Rain, rain, go away!

Monday 17 April

Brian & Tony: Easter Monday. To Headingley but more rain! So we moved on to Adel v Horsforth, a pre-season friendly. Adel showed up Yorkshire because they did manage to get onto the field! Bumped into Reg Parker, 'Mr Adel', a guy who is *a/ways* present at Adel home games. Horsforth overhauled the Adel 40-over score of 128-7 with four wickets in hand.

Tuesday 18 April

Brian: Across the Pennines again to Old Trafford for Lancashire v a Warneless Hampshire. Cold and wet.

Thursday 20 April

Brian: Old Trafford again and Hampshire. More rain interruptions, so me and a pal wandered into the city centre for a cultural interlude – we took in the art gallery and Chinatown among other things.

Saturday 22 April

Brian: Busy day. Started at St. Chad's against Church Fenton, who included ex-Yorkshire star Jim Love and his son and brother in their line-up. Then on to Leeds Sikhs' Dales Council game at Lawnswood against New Wortley. Lawnswood is a big open field with a tiny scoreboard with good old-fashioned 'tins'. Then to the Yorkshire Academy game at Weetwood, where I bumped into Tony. The fourth match was New Rover v Skipton – an easy win for the home side. Met pub landlord Bob and Janet at the game – two Skipton stalwarts. Finally, a lift from Mick and we finished off the day at Alwoodley v Woodhouse – a tight finish and a winning draw for the home side.

Mick: Local tour. A strong Kirkstall beat Green Lane, New Rover easily disposed of a very weak Skipton, and Woodhouse had a rare away win against Alwoodley.

Tony: The first Saturday of league cricket is usually not one for sitting in one place for too long because of the weather. A 12 noon start at Weetwood for

the Yorkshire Academy game against Appleby Frodingham, where I saw Brian. This season the Academy have moved across the Leeds Ring Road from their former home at New Rover CC to the Leeds University ground at Weetwood, which they are to share with the Leeds/Bradford UCCE team. Although New Rover has consistently produced very good wickets and facilities, it appears that the playing area was considered a little too small, which is certainly not the case at Weetwood. The Academy struggled on a lively wicket, but thanks mainly to the tail-enders they eventually managed a creditable 154-9 in their 55 overs. I managed to get back for the finish to find that the Academy bowlers had bowled out Appleby Frodingham for only 99. Two of the successful bowlers, James Lee and Ajmal Shahzad, probably did not dream that by the end of the season they would appear for the first team.

So off to the outer reaches of the Halifax League, which is full of attractive cricket grounds and strong inter-village rivalry still prevails. Queensbury, which I had last visited many years ago when they were still in the Bradford League and still playing in the centre of the village, now play at Old Guy Road, some way outside the built-up area. It is probably the highest cricket ground in Yorkshire and I immediately became aware of the song of a skylark, something I had not heard for a long time. Visitors Triangle, a valley-bottom team, did not seem to be suffering from altitude sickness and put the home side to the sword with a score of 219-3. I did not stay for the second innings but Queensbury were bowled out for 186. Great views across the moors and obviously a place to linger on a warmer day.

Downhill now to nearby Bradshaw, another pleasant if sloping ground, where it soon became apparent that rain earlier in the week had left the bottom boundary very muddy and one or two fielders were soon more like 'muddied oafs' than 'flannelled fools'. Thornton started well, but a late-order collapse saw them all out for 156. Not enough for Bradshaw who won by three wickets. Then off across Halifax to the ground of Old Crossleyans in Broomfield Avenue, not far from Savile Park. The main feature here on the ground, shared with the rugby union club, is the old stone house used as a pavilion. The home side failed to impress, being all out for 117 and losing to Mytholmroyd by five wickets. So a good start as far as visiting new grounds is concerned, the only one remaining in the Halifax League for me now is Augustinians, actually in Huddersfield, which I must try and fit in some time.

Sunday 23 April

Brian, Mick & Tony: The preliminary round of the Waddilove Cup: North Leeds (283-3) v Horsforth Hall Park (197-7). Sensation! On his way to 126, J.Hughes blasts 44 off an over (that included two no balls). A world record – or so we thought. Ceefax claims it as such, but Cricinfo says not. We bump into Peter Kempton, captain of the visitors, and Neville Kempton, Peter's dad, who is a legendary umpire in the Airedale & Wharfedale League. We pop into Headingley late on to see ex-Yorkshire batsman Chris Taylor crack a

wonderful hundred. Wild celebrations, not unnaturally, from Chris! Yorkshire fall 21 runs short in their run chase.



Durham overdose

Monday 24 April

Brian & Tony: Lancashire II v Nottinghamshire II at Old Trafford – first day of three. Notts score 333-6, with Alleyne hitting 122. No interruptions for rain, strangely.

Tuesday 25 April

Brian and Tony: Yorkshire II v Durham II at Stamford Bridge, just outside York – one of our favourite venues. It is always a pleasure to follow the Yorkshire 2nd XI around the county and particularly at Stamford Bridge where everything is well organised and the wicket is usually good for batting. The weather in the Vale of York is also much drier than the rest of Yorkshire. Yorkshire batted first and after the loss of Richard Pyrah with the total on 54, Andrew Gale and Adam Lyth batted for most of the rest of the day. Their partnership put on 299 before Gale was out for a splendid 183. Yorkshire eventually declared on 403-2 with the youngster from Whitby, Adam Lyth, on 165 not out. He was to make his mark for England Under 19s later in the season. So lots of hope for the future from these two batsmen, but perhaps of greater concern at present is where the bowlers for the future are.

On day two Durham understandably batted with somewhat more caution. Their top scorer was Ben Harmison, younger brother of the England fast bowler. He made 76 before being run out. With a four-man pace attack, Thornicroft, Gilbert and Patterson all bowled tidily although Gilbert had the best figures with 3-37. Leg-spinner Mark Lawson also took three wickets and there was one for the youngest member of the team, off-spinner James Finch. Durham were all out for 259, thus avoiding the follow-on and were able to bat out for a draw on day three. Nevertheless an encouraging game for the Yorkshire youngsters and a good start for Kevin Sharp who is running the second XI this season. A big crowd had gathered as usual. It's a very pleasant ground with fine teas. We sometimes pop into the village centre when we're at Stamford Bridge – there's a great chippy and a couple of nice pubs.

Wednesday 26 April

Brian and Tony: Ditto – Durham reach 147-5, way behind Yorkshire on first innings.

Thursday 27 April

Brian: The Racecourse Ground, Durham, for Durham University v Nottinghamshire. We found a nice working men's club in the town centre to watch some racing on TV – that was the highlight of the day because the cricket was a waste of time, a real mismatch.

Tony: This sort of day travelling between different matches is not normally to be recommended, as you can spend more time travelling than actually watching cricket. However, today's expedition, with two bonus games thrown in, proved very enjoyable. My attachment to Durham cricket started shortly before they became a first-class county in 1992. I was travelling to Durham on business once a week at that stage and became a Durham member from the outset of their first-class adventure. At that time, before the Riverside ground was built, they played many games at the delightful university ground in Durham. So it is always good to return and watch cricket on this ground next to the River Wear with the dominating cathedral in the background. On this occasion Nottinghamshire, the county champions from 2005, were being entertained. However, the usually strong university side provided rather poor opposition, as well before lunch they were bowled out for a meagre 46. Chief destroyer was the tall Cornishman, Charlie Shreck, with figures of 5-6.

The morning was not without incident all round as the university has pushed the boat out, providing scorecards, public address system and refreshments not normally associated with their games. The well meaning gentleman on the PA got off to a bad start. As the Notts team took the field he announced: 'Here come the Notts team led by their captain James Morris.' The Notts players all looked at each other and said in unison 'Who?'. Not surprising as Morris was the Durham captain. Not long after that the PA started making long shrieking noises just as the bowler was running in and eventually gave up the ghost altogether. The entertainment was not over. Shortly afterwards an attractive young lady entered the field and walked slowly down the road towards the pavilion. Her appearance led to an immediate well synchronised round of applause from the entire Notts team. She seemed unaware of this until asked by a young man whether she had enjoyed her welcome. This must obviously be a regular part of the county champions' repertoire.

The early break in play at the end of the innings saw the appearance of several young men walking behind the scoreboard in whites lugging cricket bags. So off I went to follow them the few hundred yards to Durham City's ground, where the college sides of St. Mary's and St. Chad's were about to

play. I had been to the City ground many years ago to see Durham in their minor counties days and it was a pleasure to watch a few overs in this bowl-like ground with a raised pavilion looking across towards the river.

Then it was time to travel a few miles up the road for the more serious stuff of county championship cricket at the Riverside, where Durham had started their game with Lancashire the previous day. Lancashire had been bowled out for 421 that morning and Durham were making their reply. Durham lost wickets at regular intervals but were sustained by one of their younger players, Gordon Muchall, who made a century. This reminded me I had first seen him playing for Durham School some years ago. I was also able to catch up with a former business colleague of mine who is exactly ten years to the day younger than me and who had recently retired. This made me feel even older than usual. After tea on the way home I re-traced my steps back to the university where Notts were piling up the runs, Samit Patel well on his way to a century. Then on the way back to the A1, travelling past the university sports complex at Maiden Castle, I called in for a while to see another inter-college game in progress. A long but enjoyable day.

Friday 28 April

Brian, Mick & Tony: Adel Under 11s v Kirkstall Under 11s and Adel Under 13s v Addingham Under 13s on adjoining pitches.

Saturday 29 April

Brian: To Guiseley for the 1st XI Aire & Wharfe clash with Adel. Guiseley scored 130 for 5 in 90 minutes. One ball was hit into the scoreboard and the scorer caught the ball! Then on to Tong Park v Steeton, who made a massive 376-4 – the veteran bowler Mick Scott was really bashed around. From there on to Baildon – Matthew Hoggard's home club – versus Woodlands, who recorded an easy win. A bonus to finish off with. Got a lift with David Markham to Howarth Road v Bingley Congs – just in time to see three or four overs there.

Mick: Local tour. Ilkley going well at Woodhouse; didn't stay long. Hardly got out of the car at Adel: saw two balls bowled and Adel had beaten Pool in a very low-scoring game. On to Kirkstall for a second-team game against Bilton. Dave Wonfer notched yet another ton for the home team. It was nice to see the Bilton players coming over to congratulate him. For many years, Dave, who is highly respected in all quarters, has travelled up from Northants each weekend to turn out for Kirkstall. Despite a big Kirkstall total, Bilton won.

Tony: Harrogate v Sheffield Collegiate – a high-scoring match with the home side winning by four wickets, Simon Mason scoring 135 not out. The new junior ground was in use at the back of the pavilion - they don't allow sixes as the new housing development, of which this ground is part, is in close

proximity. Saw a little of Harrogate Strays (3rd XI) playing Burton Leonard in the Nidderdale League. Came back to Adel v Pool: a low-scoring affair that finished with a seven-wicket victory for Adel.

Sunday 30 April

Brian & Tony: A new ground for minor counties cricket and a carload of us from Leeds set off with great expectations to meet our friends from Cumberland and the many other professional cricket-watchers who will be there. We also had a Plan 'B' – the Staffordshire game at Leek – if the weather intervened in Cheshire.

Grappenhall turned out to be a very attractive Cheshire village just south of Warrington with a partly cobbled main street, an attractive church, a canal and two pubs. However, after fine weather nearly all the way from Leeds we ran into drizzle nearing the ground and sadly this persisted all morning, preventing a prompt start. But, after a good long chat in the pavilion we set off for the village pub. Just as we were leaving the ground a gentleman put his head out of his car window and said if we were off to the pub to go to the second one not the first one. We weren't sure why but the advice certainly paid off. The Parr Anns, next to the church, proved to be a very comfortable dining pub, but as we had already demolished our packed lunches, we went into the back bar. This was adorned with lots of sporting photographs and memorabilia, mainly rugby league and boxing. It soon became apparent that much of this related to St. Helens Rugby League Club and it turned out that the landlord was former Saints legend Harry Pinner. Harry himself joined us for over half an hour and we greatly enjoyed his stories of the good old days and the players he played with and against. By this time the weather seemed to have improved somewhat and play in fact did start in early afternoon with overs reduced from 50 to 35 for each side. It was still grey and overcast but Cheshire made a good effort in the conditions, making 204-9. However, after only three overs of the Cumberland reply, with the score 16-0, the rains returned and the game was eventually abandoned. No question of a bowl-out or tossing a coin as, though this is a knockout competition, the new format this season is for four group games with the winners of each group going into the semi-finals. So more of this competition later.

We found time to talk to a great many people such as Gilbert Johnston, the Cumberland committee man, who keeps us informed of all that goes on with Cumberland cricket. Also the legendary 'Blackpool Ken' (Ken Hickin) who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of cricket grounds, as well as bus and train timetables throughout the north of England. We were able to introduce him to a soulmate in Nigel Pullan, who also travelled from Leeds, and who compiled the impressive list of grounds contained in the minor counties annual. Finally we were delighted to see Bob Davies, the father of our university tutor Peter Davies, with whom we had shared our cricket course at

Huddersfield University during the winter months. So a great day for meeting people but not so good for the cricket.

may



Scoreboard problems

Monday 1 May

Brian & Tony: May Day Bank Holiday brought Yorkshire Academy a rare day's cricket at Headingley, but it proved to be one of their old boys who held centre stage. The Academy batted first in front of a handful of spectators, which is the norm for such games played at this unwelcoming venue. Early hopes of a big score seemed to have evaporated when they lost the first three wickets for only 31 runs. However, one young man stuck bravely to the task. Previously better known for his leg-spin bowling, Adil Rashid opened the batting and made a fine 81. He was helped in a partnership of 59 by Jonathan Bairstow, son of the great Yorkshire wicketkeeper David Bairstow, who also looks a great hope for the future, although still a schoolboy. The home side batted through the allotted 55 overs for a respectable 214-7.

In previous seasons this might have been enough as Driffield have not been one of the stronger teams in this league. However, things have taken a turn for the better with Yorkshire left-hand bat Andrew Gale being allocated to them as professional for the season. He played a most responsible innings, batting through almost to the end for another century, which virtually won the match. After he went there was a late flurry of wickets and Driffield eventually got home by three wickets with only two balls remaining. An excellent day's cricket for the favoured few loyalists present. Gale must come into first-team contention after a week with the following scores: 45 last Saturday, 163 not out yesterday and 123 today for Driffield, together with 183 and 9 for Yorkshire 2nd XI at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday and Thursday. Quite a week.

Mick: Yorkshire Schools Under 15s 2nd XI v Manchester Schools at Illingworth. No more than two or three useful players in the visiting side, so an easy seven-wicket win for the home team.

Wednesday 3 May

Brian: 'Easy day' as I call them – down the road to county HQ. Attractive visitors in Sussex. Yorkshire made a poor start and were 24-3. But Lehmann scored well with 64 and McGrath also did well. But it all subsided to 272 all out. Naved Rana, as all Pudsey Congs people knew him, took 4-86 and the mercurial Mushtaq 3-68. Sussex ended on 37-1 as we Kirkstall Lane regulars moaned our way out. Finished the day at New Rover: a glorious evening for their 20-over game against Follifoot.

Tony: Leeds/Bradford UCCE v Worcestershire (Harrogate), Yorkshire v Sussex (Headingley). Today was a classic example of lack of fixture planning. As with my visit to Durham last week, two games were scheduled within a few miles of each other, both involving first-class counties. It could be argued of course that the Harrogate game was not classed as a first-class match and that Worcester played two or three second-team players, but it is a symptom of the sort of planning which goes on in some back office of the ECB. However, not to worry, a little commuting saw the best bits of both. Taking the view that Worcester would probably bat initially, I went to Harrogate first, where the crowd literally did consist of three men and a dog. The man without the dog was my friend Ian Cockerill who had travelled from Lancaster and is guaranteed to be there for the most obscure matches in the north of England.

Worcester opened with Stephen Moore, yet another South African, who has become a county regular in the last two seasons, and Daryl Mitchell a 22-year-old local boy. They rather enjoyed some friendly bowling on a good wicket and proceeded to put on a partnership of 345. Captain Vikram Solanki then joined the fun, scoring 69 off only 46 balls and young Mitchell went on his way to finish with 210 not out when Worcester finally declared on no less than 500-2. The electronic scoreboard managed to keep up with all this, although it is obviously not programmed to cope with double centuries! For the record, the students did quite well, totalling 232 in the first innings. Worcester did not enforce the follow-on and hit a further 261-5 declared. Facing a target of 530 to win, the University put up a creditable performance in making 279 with Reddish scoring 148 on day three.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch Yorkshire were making heavy weather of the county championship game with Sussex. They batted first but were soon in trouble, losing three wickets for only 24. The rescue act was in full swing when I made my first appearance. Lehmann and McGrath provided the backbone in a partnership of 126. They both made half-centuries but wickets then fell steadily and Yorkshire were all out for 272. Not a good first-day score. The Sussex bowlers who did the damage were the two Pakistani stars Rana Naved-ul-Hasan and Mushtaq Ahmed. Rana, in the first half of the season before he was injured, and Mushtaq, for all the season, were major contributors to Sussex's eventual championship title. Sussex also lost quick wickets but thanks to a century from wicketkeeper Matt Prior they batted all

the way down to total 301. Yorkshire capitulated completely in the second innings when Rana Naved destroyed them with 7-62. A large number of those present who had watched Rana's progress for several seasons with Pudsey Congs in the Bradford League wondered why Yorkshire were scouring the globe for an overseas professional when this man was right under their noses. However, full marks to Sussex who completed a professional performance to win the game, but already things are not looking too good for Yorkshire. Why was the prolific Andrew Gale not selected, one wonders?

In and amongst I also popped over to Alwoodley Gates, Harrogate Road, for Leeds Grammar School v MCC. Mick was there at the game and also Harjit Ryatt watching his son, Harpal, a Leeds Sikhs CC player, making 92 for the school side. Then on to Weetwood for two games going on on adjacent pitches: Leeds University v Durham University on the No.1 Ground and Leeds University II v Teesside University II on the No.2. Both were BUSA games.

Brian & Tony: Rounded off the day at New Rover v Follifoot in the Harrogate Evening League at the Richmond Oval, Smithy Mills Lane. Follifoot won by six wickets, easily overhauling New Rover's 128-4 with time to spare.

Thursday 4 May

Brian: Caught the train to Hornbeam Park and took a nice walk up to St. George's Road, Harrogate. Here, with about a score of other spectators, I saw the Leeds/Bradford UCCE side take on Worcestershire. Whether these gross mismatches help to boost the playing abilities of the student teams is open to debate. However, I had a pleasant chat with one of my old Park Avenue protégés, Gareth Batty – another ex-Yorkshire player made good! Managed a lift (thanks again) back to HQ after lunch to see Sussex secure a small first-innings lead due to 124 from England discard Matt Prior. Another Yorkshire malady resurfaced again: 115-5 was allowed to become 301 all out. The international opening attack of Gillespie and Hoggard toiled for five wickets in 58 overs. Surprise, surprise – Yorkshire finished on 3 for 2!

Tony: To Weetwood for Leeds University v Leeds Metropolitan University. On the adjacent square Leeds University II were playing Bradford University 1st XI – with the visitors eventually coming out on top.

Friday 5 May

Brian: Yorkshire v Sussex at Headingley. After recovering to 176-4, thanks again to Lehmann (87) and Lumb (69), Yorkshire succumbed to 221 all out. According to local gossip, Rana was thought not to be up to county class...before being snapped up by Sussex. His analysis today was 22-5-62-7. Sussex closed needing 46 to win with five wickets in hand and with no real alarms.

Tony: Nottinghamshire v Warwickshire. My first weekend away of the season got off to a good start with a visit to Trent Bridge in the morning while my wife enjoyed the shops of Nottingham. This was day three of a four-day game and 2005 county champions Notts were not having a good match, having been bowled out on the second day for only 157 in reply to Warwickshire's 248. Warwickshire piled on the runs in their second innings and I was particularly impressed with Ian Bell's splendid 84.

The strange thing about this game was the tale of seven wicketkeepers. Before the game started, Chris Read was not available for Notts as he was selected for England 'A' against Sri Lanka. Warwickshire's first choice Tim Ambrose was missing with a broken thumb. Read's deputy, David Alleyne, was probably the man of the match with five catches in the first innings and two catches and two stumpings in the second. He also managed to score 57 and 109 not out with the bat. This all followed a stomach upset which meant Alleyne missed the first half-hour of the match during which Russell Warren deputised. This was nothing to compare with the visitors' problems. Ambrose's deputy Tony Frost sprained a finger the day before and could not take the field. Initially Mike Powell took over the gloves, until permission was given to bring in third-choice Freddie Klokker, a Dane, who was playing for Notts seconds against Derby seconds at Belper, just a few miles away. He was actually batting at the time of his call-up. After having digested all that you may be too exhausted to bother about the fact that Warwickshire won the game the day after by 50 runs, having set Notts 367 to win. No further wicketkeepers were required!

At lunchtime we left Nottingham to get down the motorway to Worcester before the Friday afternoon traffic congestion and made surprisingly good time. This was day two of a scheduled four-day game and the England hopefuls, having bowled Sri Lanka out for 179 the previous day, were batting. A lot of new names, not easy to pronounce, in the Sri Lankan team. Possibly the most striking being the quick bowler, Malinga, with a round-arm slinging action. He failed to get a wicket but looked a bit quick. However, from a position of strength at 225-4 on our arrival, wickets began to fall rather quickly. One of these being none other than Chris Read, one of the magnificent seven wicketkeepers from Trent Bridge, who was promptly lbw for a duck. Alistair Cook also made a duck and it was left to Robert Key with 61 and Ed Joyce, the Irishman from Middlesex, with 49 to score the majority of the runs, but England subsided to 259 all out. Wickets continued to fall when Sri Lanka batted again and at close of play they were 68-5, leaving England within sight of an easy win, which they duly accomplished the next day by 10 wickets. Jon Lewis and Stuart Broad were the pick of the bowlers and already some pundits are talking of Broad as an outside bet for Australia next winter.

It was sad to see the enthusiastic Sri Lankans struggling, but this was just the start of their tour and they had time to improve. It is always a pleasure to

visit Worcester with the unchanging view of the cathedral from the pavilion, although there have been other changes with new terracing increasing the capacity for big games. I first visited Worcester way back in the 1950s as a schoolboy and recall the great characters of the team at the time like Reg Perks, Roley Jenkins and Dick Howarth. The characters have gone but the memories remain.

The Authors

MICHAEL BOURNE, who has been a widower for 26 years, managed to get early retirement from teaching in the early 1990s. When asked, 'What did you teach?', his stock answer is 'monsters' (with a bit of history and careers advice thrown in). He was born and brought up in the Fen district of Lincolnshire. For the past 40 years he has lived in Leeds. He has a son and a daughter who are both married to Australians. Of his two grandchildren (with a third on the way), he says that if none of them is able to bat, bowl, run, jump or swim for Australia, they should all be good enough for England. He is something of an expert at being a jack of all trades and master of none. He does have other interests outside cricket, too many, in fact, and too boring to list. (Well, he asks, who cares to know about daily study of Latin, selling second-hand books for charity, photographing churches, contemporary serious music, moths and collecting autographs of dead composers?).



TONY HUTTON was born in Headingley, Leeds and was educated at schools in Leeds, Lepton (Huddersfield), Mirfield and Walsall (West Midlands). He played cricket for his school 1st XI as a quick bowler, but soon became an off-spinner after leaving school and played for several clubs in the West Midlands area. He was a natural no.11 batsman whose only claim to fame was being the tenth dismissal when an opposing bowler took all ten wickets. His business career was spent mostly with a large insurance company which, after several years based in Birmingham, helped him achieve his ambition of moving back to Yorkshire, first to Bradford, then Sheffield and finally to Leeds. He spent 20 years as a Hospital Radio commentator on both cricket and rugby league and was also a committee member and booklet editor for the Northern Cricket Society. Tony enjoys travel both at home and abroad and since early retirement has been able to combine this with his cricket-watching activities thanks to the support of his wife Diana who, when not travelling with him, runs a conveyor-belt system of packed lunches. They are both very proud of the achievements of their son, Peter, in his career as a sports broadcaster and now television executive based in Dubai, as well as their three-year-old grandson who features at the end of the book.



BRIAN SENIOR was born in Wortley, Leeds, and was educated in Wortley and at West Leeds High School, apart from one year when he lived in the Isle of Man. His first job was as a proof-reader with the *Yorkshire Evening News* until it merged with the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in 1963. He never achieved his ambition of becoming a sports writer, until now that is. He subsequently had jobs with the Leeds Meter Company and Kirkstall Forge before becoming an insurance agent, mainly due to the amount of time off he could have in midweek to watch county cricket. After retirement from full-time employment he took a part-time job working nights for a local taxi company, again with the ulterior motive of being free to watch cricket during the day. He has been a member of Yorkshire County Cricket Club, with one or two short breaks, since the 1970s, but these days he gets more enjoyment from watching league cricket at all levels throughout Yorkshire. His other main sporting interests are horse racing and rugby league, although the advent of summer rugby means that he now mainly enjoys the lower levels of the game, including amateur rugby league.

