

## NOSTALGIA

### EXCERPTS FROM PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS (1)

#### From Newsletter No 60 – January 1983

Thanks to the conscientious work of our webmaster, Andy Ray, copies of previous Hampshire Cricket Society Newsletters, for the period from September 2002 (No. 229) until the current month (No. 413), can be found on the Society's website. Andy posts them on the website each month, nowadays just prior to each of our meetings. That means, of course, that there are 228 Newsletters (the first was in January 1976), which can't be found on the website. Most members will not have kept copies of those Newsletters and to post them in their entirety would be a mammoth task.

However, at the suggestion of a few members, the editor will be publishing, with Andy's kind co-operation, periodic articles from previous Newsletters on the Society's website, which may be of interest. The first is an interview with the legendary Harold Larwood, conducted by Ray Cook (see Newsletter No. 413), when the latter was touring Australia in 1982/83.

#### RAY COOK MEETS HAROLD LARWOOD

To every cricket lover the name of Harold Larwood is the name of a living legend in the game. All I have ever seen of the great man is a small piece of film taken during that eventful 32/3 tour of Australia, but the name is one which was told to me in awe over and over again by my father as he talked about pre 1939 cricket.

While in Sydney recently I mentioned to a good friend, David Moore, that Mr. Larwood lived in the city. "Oh yes", said David, "I know his son-in-law very well – would you like to meet Harold Larwood if I can arrange it?"

There is no need to tell you my answer and at mid-day on November 18, we arrived at that now all familiar, beautifully kept, green and white house quite close to the SCG. As it was to be a working lunch I carried with me a case of cool 'Tooheys'.

When the door opened there was this small, spry gentleman of 78 greeting us with a very firm handshake and an invitation into his house and further introductions to his wife, Lois.

Much has been said and written about Harold Larwood and his home, by people far more qualified than I, but I must comment on all the memorabilia which fills the hall and living room. I could have spent all day just looking at the posters, pictures, inscribed balls and plaques.

I called the great man 'Mr Larwood' once only to be told "My name's Harold, Ray". Drinking beer Aussie style we chatted for a few moments about the tennis in progress on the TV watching Sue Barker. Meanwhile my brain was racing to remember those questions I had planned – during a hurried telephone conversation

with a surprised Frank Bailey – to ask the man who brought the world ‘bodyline’ into the cricket vocabulary.

We spoke of the old days and I asked Harold if he had any particular memories of playing against Hampshire as I would like to do a piece for this Newsletter. “Yes, he said, “June 13 1928 at Trent Bridge, on the day my first daughter was born. I left ‘Mum’ at home that morning knowing the birth was very close.

“During the morning session Hampshire batted well and produced quite a good score. I did not take a wicket. Just after lunch a telegram was delivered on the pitch to me. It read ‘Congratulations a daughter. Both fine’.

I put the cable in my pocket, just as my captain Mr Car came over and asked what was in it. I replied ‘Nothing Captain’, and started to bowl again.

I took five wickets very quickly. The Captain came over again and demanded to know what was in the cable. I showed him and Phil Mead who was standing at the non-strikers’ end with us said, ‘Thank God it wasn’t twins’.

Harold also spoke about that famous Hants v Notts match (at the County Ground in 1930) when they had to come back on the third morning for just one ball. He remembered the night before as Len Creese, he thought, played back ball after ball of the last over, which had been tossed up for him to hit.

“We arrived on the third morning and took the field dressed as we were. I remember I have a picture of it somewhere of me going out with a cigarette in my mouth” said Harold with a twinkle in his eye.

I asked if he could remember playing at Basingstoke and he said he could, just as he could apparently remember all of the events of his cricketing career.

“I don’t remember much of the match, but I remember the pretty little tree-lined ground. Just after the match I remember getting a letter from a man in Basingstoke who heard that I kept ‘chicks’. He told me he had these special chickens and sent a dozen eggs”.

Harold recalled his first trip to Australia in 28/29 when he received a sum of £400 for the tour and a list of the items that had to be purchased, including a cabin trunk.

“When we had purchased all the items we had spent more than £100 of the money, but it didn’t matter for I was going to Australia to play for England. We played for our country, not the money,” he said. He recalled the great fun they had and how the last event of that tour was a football match in Perth. He remembered Phil Mead playing and said “After the match we rushed back to the boat with our kit just as she was sailing. The next morning we counted out the money and as a result got £9 each but it took us a long time to spend it as all of us could hardly walk”.

By now the case of Tooheys was diminishing quite rapidly and my lunch time was nearly over, but before we left I asked this proud gentleman what he thought of the present cricketers. He summed it all up by telling me how Colin Cowdrey phoned

him and asked him to go to the SCG to see this young fast bowler Bob Willis. By the time Harold arrived, Willis had finished his stint in the nets but one G Boycott was standing by the nets. The conversation went like this:-

HL – Hello, I'm Harold Larwood. How is the tour going?

GB – Hello. What do you mean?

HL – Forget the cricket side of the tour. How are you enjoying the social side?

GB – (puffed out his chest) I came here to play cricket, not to enjoy myself.

Harold laughed as he told me this and summed it all up by saying, "That's the difference. We played cricket and enjoyed it".

There was still time for one more example of his sharp humour when I said "What brought you to Australia in 1950?"

"A boat", came the swift reply with another chuckle.

As David and I walked back to our car I could not but marvel as I looked at the small man waving goodbye to us. I only hope that at 68, let alone 78, I am as alert as Harold Larwood and that I will look back on my life and say as he did: "I would do it all again and wouldn't change a thing"

Thank you Harold and Lois for making one cricket lover's dream become a reality.

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