

AGM MINUTES - 2008

The 35th AGM of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians was held in the Jackson and Gladwin Suite of the Lund Pavilion at Derbyshire CCC on Saturday 29 March 2008, starting at 11.30 am.

Present – W.D.Ambrose, D.J.Baggett, P.J.Bailey, C.J.Bartlett, R.W.Brooke, J.C.Bryant, G.M.du Sautoy, H.D.Garrod, K.T.Gerrish, R.A.Gibbons (Treasurer), P.Gilbert, B.J.Heald, J.A.Heald, R.Heavens, A.K.Hignell (Secretary), M.F.Hill, R.H.Holland, R.V.Isaacs, D.A.Jeater, D.Kendix, D.A.Lambert, E.H.Lawrence, B.M.Lawton, A.J.Ledbetter, J.E.Liddle, J.C.Lodge, M.G.Lorimer, A.J.Martin, T.J.McCann, D.H.Miller (Chairman), H.F.Monkhouse, R.P.C.Morgan, R.H.L.Moulton, D.B.L.Nathan, H.I.D.Nathan, J.T.Needham, C.R.J.Overson, A.B.Percival, R.R.Phipps, M.Pope, G.A.Potts, D.J.Pracy, N.W.Rogers, D.S.Roxburgh, B.K.Sanderson, J.Shawcroft, S.Sheen, M.J.K.Smith (President), P.G.Smith, J.F.Starbrook, K.W.Sugg, S.J.Sweetman, C.R.Waite, L.P.Walker, K.S.Walmsley, A.J.Webb, G.S.Wilde, R.C.Wilton and P.Wynne-Thomas.

1. Apologies for absence

After the President had welcomed the members, the Secretary reported that apologies had been received from the following members – Robin Abrahams, Stephen Baldwin, Ian Balfour, Derek Barnard, Paul Bolton, Mike Charman, Guy Curry, Neal Davies, Donal Donovan, Stephen Draper, Ric Finlay, Peter Griffiths, Alan Grove, Martin Howe, N.C.James, Neil Jenkinson, Ian Maun, Eric Midwinter, Andrew Scarlett, Richard Slater and Alan West.

2. Minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting were received and unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting held at Derby on 31 March 2007 (Proposed – Dennis Lambert; Seconded – Roger Heavens).

3. Minutes of the EGM

The Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting were received and unanimously approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting held at Derby on 14 July 2007 (Proposed – Mick Pope; Seconded – Richard Isaacs).

4. Election of Committee Members

The President reported that John Bryant was the only new candidate and was duly elected to serve on the committee until 2011. Existing committee members Philip Bailey, Ric Finlay, and David Kendix were re-elected for a further three years.

5. Annual Report of the Committee for 2006/07

In commenting on the Annual Report of the Committee, the Chairman looked back on a pivotal year for the Association. One major innovation had been the invitation to M.J.K.Smith to become the Association's President and to take office on a very different basis from previous incumbents, who had always chaired committee meetings and been very much more hands-on than one would expect in other comparable organisations.

The Chairman was delighted by the way that the President had always been available to talk and advise, and reported that he was now about to lead a major initiative by writing a personal letter to each of the First-Class and Minor Counties asking them to include in a future mailing to their members a copy of the Association's newly-designed recruitment leaflet.

The closure and sale of the Radcliffe Road shop had ushered in a new era, bringing an end to the cashflow crises that had plagued the Association and leading to a new distribution arrangement for our publications through Limlow Books in Lincolnshire. This had been the first year in which the Association had enjoyed the Limlow services for a full 12 months. The move had meant a sharp drop in overhead costs, together with considerable operational savings. The Chairman paid tribute to the ongoing efforts of Peter and Jenny Griffiths of Limlow for providing a first-class despatch service and maintaining records that now enabled our sales to be monitored with pinpoint accuracy and analyses to be undertaken of buyers for each of the different series.

The new Treasurer, Roger Gibbons, with a day job working with accounts, had added to the value of the Limlow record-keeping, enabling the committee to make better informed decisions on print-runs and pricing. As the year unfolded, Roger's regularly supplied figures had meant there were no great surprises when the final accounts came back from the independent accountant.

The accounts showed a rise in subscription income, but membership numbers were actually down on last year's figure. A major reason was that Huw Nathan, the Association's diligent Membership Secretary, had trawled through the membership lists and identified those who had failed to pay, whose standing orders were out of date or whose direct debits were not making their way through the system.

At the EGM, a change had been made whereby those members who had not paid by 1 March did not receive the Spring Journal or the AGM papers. Instead, 89 individuals had received a short letter informing them that their membership had lapsed – 25 of whom had subsequently renewed. Latest figures were: 1,051 paid-up members - 905 residing in the UK and 146 overseas. This compared with a reported figure of 1,165 in January 2007.

On the financial front, the Association's investments had suffered along with the rest of the market, but there was still a nest egg far above the Association's reasonably foreseeable needs. The investments were broadly based and should recover in the fullness of time. Therefore, with a six-figure sum behind us, the Association could start to take a different view of life, though it was still important to ensure that members' money was not wasted.

The Chairman said that the Association still adopted a parsimonious attitude to reimbursing committee members for expenses incurred. They received free books, whether they came to meetings or not, with a recently introduced alternative of a maximum of £20 available only to those who had attended, and paid only up to this maximum level regardless of how far an individual might have travelled.

Overall, the Association had made a surplus of over £6,500 and, in the light of this, the committee had decided that all members should receive a free copy of Martin Howe's book on Rockley Wilson in the new Lives in Cricket series. The Chairman saw Publications as one of the many areas where the Association could look back with satisfaction, a valuable innovation being the new full-colour order form majoring on the latest books, and largely ignoring old back numbers.

During 2007, the Association published the 100th and last of the Famous Cricketers series, and the Chairman thanked Kit Bartlett for his many years of editing this excellent series. With statistics so readily available online, the committee had decided to move to a series of short biographies. This represented a move away from the Association's historic roots as statisticians, but the committee's decision was supported by opinions expressed in the members' survey conducted a few years ago.

The new series allowed authors much greater freedom to choose their own mode of expression and, with a wide range of subjects in the hands of different styles of writer, five very distinctive books had been produced. All had gone through the hands of a dedicated editor in David Jeater, who brought to the task a deep and wide knowledge of the game, an enviable command of the English language and its grammar, and, perhaps most crucially, rare diplomatic skills that enabled him to repair omissions and re-shape original texts without losing the enthusiastic cooperation of authors.

The series had been proving a better seller than the Famous Cricketers, with some good titles in the pipeline. Another satisfying feature was that those who had bought the early titles had shown a high inclination to purchase the later books. However, many members had yet to buy any of the titles, and it therefore made good marketing sense that *Rockley Wilson* should be given to all members.

The Chairman added that the committee were still very keen to publish the occasional one-off book of special interest. In the past year there had been two excellent examples: *Clem Hill's Reminiscences*, which came out in June, and *Gubby Under Pressure*, brought out for Christmas. The take-up by members in both cases had been rather disappointing, but both books would cover their costs.

During the year, the Association's two hardy annuals were published: the *Year Book*, edited by the irreplaceable Philip Bailey, and the *Second Eleven Annual*, again edited by the redoubtable Keith Gerrish. Like the other mainly statistical books, the Match Scores and the Minor Counties series, there was a loyal hard core of members who could be relied on to buy these books. The *Second Eleven Annual* was also popular in several county shops, but the overall trend was at least marginally down for all these titles, as with the books of scores in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, which were now bought by no more than about 60 or 70 members.

The Chairman added that he knew many members were delighted that the Association had published another year of Jim Ledbetter's series of First-Class Match Scores, with further years are in preparation. He explained that this series had to be significantly subsidised, as was the case to a very much smaller degree with the Minor Counties Championship scores and the books of scores from the minnow countries. The Association could only break even on the *International Year Book* – hence the raised price for 2008 – and the most emphatic money-earner was the Match Scores series that had just produced 1912 and 1913, now priced at £18 a copy.

The Chairman felt that the Association was unlikely to make such a sizeable surplus in future years, as a result of four factors – the introduction of a grants scheme, offering up to four grants of up to £750 a year to assist members with research projects of value; the introduction of very modest royalties for our authors; allowing authors to buy 25 or more copies of their books at a margin of 40% against the previous 33%, and finally the fact that the Match Scores series was coming to its natural end with the forthcoming publication of 1914 and then the war years. However, a plea from some members for the series to continue beyond 1918 had been noted.

The Chairman then touched on the issue of marketing and sales. With books in the Lives in Cricket series having sales potential sales beyond the confines of membership, the lack of a sales set-up was a major problem. The committee would be delighted to hear from anybody who could provide assistance in this area.

Looking forward, the Chairman then outlined the plans for the A to Z biographies series for each county. These would hopefully carry full biographical details of all players, plus brief statistics, details of birth and death, highlights of their playing career, details of their life before and after cricket, as well as a photograph. The committee had hoped that Robert Brooke would be able to edit the series, but very sadly increasing problems with his eyes had made this impossible. Hopefully, an editor could be appointed shortly to start working with members from five different counties who had expressed a willingness to produce a book on their county.

The Chairman then spoke about the Journal – probably the Association’s most important publication, and one which, thanks to Simon Sweetman, had maintained a very high standard. An outstanding feature has been the book reviews, ably edited by Richard Lawrence. Whilst some members felt that too much space was devoted to reviews, they were wonderfully disciplined and, with the aid of the website, now covered a good number of titles, with books being reviewed more quickly after publication than was once the case.

The Obituaries section now had a more clearly defined aim of ensuring brief coverage of those cricket figures likely to be ignored by the wider media. Overall, the balance of the Journal reflected what members offered and, perhaps, the courage of the Editor in leaving some of the contributions on the spike. The tensions between statisticians and historians arose again in the Journal. Perhaps the availability of scores and records on the Internet had led to fewer statistical articles being submitted, but the very ease of access to the game’s stats should be increasing the opportunities for interesting articles with a statistical theme.

The Chairman finished his comments on Publications by outlining the steps the committee had taken to reduce the number of mistakes in publications. An appeal for more proof-readers had resulted in 24 people volunteering to help. He hoped that standards would rise.

During the course of the year, the Association had organised various meetings: in March 2007 there had been a repeat of our day at Lord’s; in October 2007 there was a day at Hambledon, where Roger Packham was the speaker; and then, in mid-March 2008 another gathering at Lord’s heard an excellent talk by MCC curator Adam Chadwick on ‘The Treasures of Lord’s’. The Chairman encouraged members to submit suggestions for places to visit and things that members could do.

The Chairman then updated members on the efforts of David Kendix in keeping the Association in touch with events at the ICC. David was now the statistical representative on the Cricket Committee – not, as the Chairman stressed, an ACS representative – helping to safeguard the interests of statisticians worldwide and trying to ensure that future decisions anticipate the knock-on effect for the game’s statistics and records. David had also instigated the Association’s initiative for Associate Membership, trying to extend the influence of the ACS into cricket’s heartland in the Indian subcontinent.

The Chairman also paid tribute to the work of Andrew Hignell, not only as the Association’s Secretary, but in his capacity as Glamorgan’s archivist and as editor of the Cricket Society journal. Andrew’s recent success in winning a significant grant for the Museum of Welsh Cricket from the Heritage Lottery Fund had meant him relinquishing management of the website, which had passed on to Richard Isaacs.

In his closing comments, the Chairman mentioned the recent resignation from the committee of Peter Griffiths, one of its longest-serving members. The Chairman paid tribute to his invaluable work in many areas, including the drafting of the Association’s rules; drawing up documents on the committee’s agreed procedures and working practices; planning and administering the publication schedules, as well as being the Association’s Internet expert. On a commercial basis, through Limlow Books, Peter had also provided a first-class book distribution service, as well as undertaking the typesetting of nearly all books, where he was always prepared to go the extra mile to get things right prior to printing.

The Chairman briefly outlined some of the issues which had led to Peter’s resignation on a point of principle because he believed the way in which decisions were being taken by the Executive Committee was not consistent with the Rules of the Association. Some committee members had shared his concerns (but without feeling it was a resigning matter) whilst others were equally convinced that no-one had behaved inappropriately and that nothing had been done wrong. It was however accepted that the concerns he had raised were genuine and therefore the new committee, under a new Chairman, would as a priority address them. The challenge for the new committee was to come up with a way of working that did not lead to such disagreements reoccurring.

The Chairman also reassured members that there was no suggestion that any inappropriate decisions had been taken, though the process followed in taking them may not have been right. He was pleased that Peter was still happy to support the Association in a number of important ways and that the Committee remained happy to accept his support.

The Chairman concluded by apologising for the fact that a parcel of books from Limlow Books had gone astray en route to Derby, and that some recent publications were not available for purchase.

Dennis Lambert then commented how pleased he was that Peter Griffiths would be continuing to support the Association. He felt that Peter and Philip Bailey should be congratulated for their work with CricketArchive, especially allowing the work by members on match scores to be available online.

Malcolm Lorimer paid tribute to the committee for the amount of work undertaken, especially at a time of transition following the sale of the shop in Radcliffe Road. He believed that the Association would continue to move forward.

Richard Isaacs commented on the shift towards historical and biographical publications, and he sought reassurance that statistical works would still be produced, thereby maintaining the harmonious balance between the Ss and the Hs.

Robert Brooke stressed the need to continue the Match Scores and the Jim Ledbetter series. Jim added that he was happy to continue, but that he would be looking for a helping pair of hands in the near future.

The report of the Committee was unanimously adopted (Proposed – Dennis Lambert; Seconded – David Jeater).

6. Annual Accounts for the Financial Year ending 30 November 2007

The Treasurer stressed that, having only taken over at the 2007 AGM, he had limited knowledge of the previous financial situation, yet he appreciated that his job was now less complex than in the past as a result of the Association's re-organisation. He reiterated the points made by the Chairman on the financial situation in the committee report, and commented on one situation relating to the finances since the end of the financial year, namely the investment with Legal and General which now stood at £126,000 – a reduction of 3% on the original investment made a year ago.

The report of the Treasurer was unanimously adopted (Proposed – Michael Hill; Seconded – Peter Wynne-Thomas).

7. Appointment of an external accountant to prepare the Annual Accounts

The Treasurer commented on the effectiveness of the switch from a full audit to a preparation of Accounts by an Independent Accountant, as agreed at the EGM. He proposed that Gerard and Co. of Stroud should continue to prepare the Accounts for the Association (Seconded – Dennis Lambert), and this was passed unanimously.

8. Rule Changes

David Kendix summarised the rationale behind the proposal to create an Associate Membership category who would receive an electronic version of the Journal and free books. He believed that, if adopted, it would act as a low-cost incentive for membership from the Indian subcontinent.

In response to a question from Kit Bartlett, David said he believed there were at present just nine members of the ACS residing in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

In response to a question from Jerry Lodge, David suggested that the cost of Associate Membership could be in the order of 10% of the current full overseas membership i.e. £2 instead of £20.

Don Ambrose asked about extending Associate Membership to universities and schools. David replied that, if adopted, Associate membership would initially be aimed at individuals, but that it could perhaps be extended in the future.

In response to a question from Patrick Walker, David explained that the proposed rule gave the committee scope subsequently to extend the range of countries covered e.g. the West Indies, Zimbabwe and ICC Associate countries.

Roy Morgan asked about methods of payment – David replied that electronic payment of subscription would be required e.g. Paypal, thereby keeping processing costs low.

In response to a question from John Bryant on publicity, David outlined a variety of pathways, including adverts and personal contacts/recommendations.

David concluded by proposing the introduction of an Associate Membership category (Seconded – Roger Heavens), and this was passed unanimously.

9. Subscription Rates

The Treasurer proposed that subscriptions remain unchanged (Seconded – Don Ambrose) and this was passed unanimously.

10. Statistician of the Year Award

The President reported Tony Percival had won the Award, and he paid tribute to his outstanding work on Minor County cricket. After receiving the Award, Tony briefly spoke about his work for the Association since joining in the mid-1970s, and he paid fulsome tribute to the assistance and support he had received over the years from Ken Trushell and Robert Brooke, as well as other members and officers of the Minor Counties Cricket Association.

11. Presentation to a Retiring Committee Member

A presentation was made to Steven Sheen who was retiring after ten years on the committee, which included work on the Marketing and Sales of the Association's publications. After receiving an engraved tankard, Steven spoke briefly about his time on the committee and thanked his fellow committee members for their support over the years.

12. Any other business

In response to a question from Robert Brooke about the absence of an attendance register being circulated, Huw Nathan confirmed that he had an accurate record of attendance. Robert then reminded everyone of the Association's tradition whereby members stood up and introduced themselves – the meeting concluded with this.

The President closed the AGM at 12.55 pm.

13. President's Forum

After lunch had been taken, the President spoke from 2.45 pm until 3.45 pm on a number of cricket-related topics, in addition to answering questions from members on a variety of topics.

Following the President's Forum, afternoon tea was served, and the members departed from 4 pm. The committee then held a short meeting in the Bob Taylor Suite from 4.15 pm until 5.15 pm.