

AGM MINUTES - 2012

The 39th AGM of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians was held in the Gateway Centre at Derbyshire CCC on Saturday 31 March 2012, starting at 11.15 am.

Present - David Baggett, Philip Bailey, Kit Bartlett, Pelham Barton, Stephen Bilton, Nigel Bratton, Robert Brooke, John Bryant, Stan Dawson, Jim Gibb, Roger Gibbons (Treasurer), Peter Gilbert, Alan Grove, John Hawkins, Brian Heald, Jenny Heald, Roger Heavens, Martin Howe, David Jeater, David Kendix, Dennis Lambert, Brian Lawton, Julian Lawton Smith, Tony Martin, Ian Maun, Douglas Miller, Harriet Monkhouse, Jenny Moulton, Roger Moulton (Chairman), Bryn Nathan, Huw Nathan, Terry Needham, Chris O'Brien, Chris Overson, Tony Percival, Mick Pope, Alex Potts, Glyn Powell, Michael Ronayne, Douglas Roxburgh, Christopher Saunders, Richard Slater, M.J.K.Smith (President), Willie Sugg, Simon Sweetman, Cyril Waite, Garry Wallace, Keith Walmsley, Tony Webb, Geoff Wilde, Martin Wilson, Robby Wilton and Peter Wynne-Thomas.

1. Apologies for absence

Miss Monkhouse, standing in for the Secretary, reported that apologies had been received from the following members – Robin Abrahams, Ian Baker, Ian Balfour, Paul Bolton, John Brown, Kevin Campbell-Woodward, Philip Clare, Howard Clayton, Ric Finlay, Keith Gerrish, Peter Griffiths, Andrew Hignell (Secretary), Michael Hill, Iliyas Hussain, Richard Isaacs, Jim Ledbetter, Roy Morgan, Serena Nathan, David Pracy, Norman Rogers, J. Hugh Thomas and Alan West.

2. Late members

Members shared a few moments' silence in memory of the following ten members of the Association who had died during the course of the year – Raymond Crowther, Huw George, Ian Hogbin, Gary Lorimer, Michael Mellor, John Richards, Don Richmond, C.Stephens, Howard Wilson, Mike Witcomb.

3. Minutes of the 38th Annual General Meeting

Brian Heald explained that, under Item 8, he had not helped Don Ambrose on the pre-1864 Who's Who but on the *Statistical Surveys*. Subject to this correction, the minutes of the AGM held at Derby on 26 March 2011 were approved (Proposed – Dennis Lambert, Seconded – Richard Slater).

4. Election of Association President

M.J.K.Smith's five-year term had expired, but in response to the committee's invitation he expressed himself willing to serve another five years. This was overwhelmingly approved. Mr Smith said that he would be getting long in the tooth by 2017, and advised the Association to look for someone else at that time. He paid tribute to ACS members' contribution to the history of the game, especially in documenting the lives of its less famous characters.

5. Election of Committee Members

There were three vacancies on the committee, in addition to the Secretary's term having expired. All the incumbents had put themselves forward again and no further nominations had been received, so no election had taken place. Roger Moulton, Huw Nathan and Martin Wilson continued to serve on the committee and Andrew Hignell as Secretary.

6. The Annual Report of the Committee for 2010/11

The Annual Report contained in the AGM booklet had been circulated, and was adopted.

7. Annual Accounts for 2010/11

The Annual Accounts had been circulated in the AGM booklet. The Treasurer highlighted several points:

- a) At the 2011 AGM, Martin Wilson had picked up a reference to VAT paid on membership subs, and put the Treasurer in touch with Peter Perry, an accountant in Cheltenham, who thought that ACS subscriptions should be zero-rated. With Mr Perry's help the Treasurer had applied to HMRC and won a £7,186 repayment for the previous four years, as well as saving £1,460 on the current year. This had turned the year's shortfall into a surplus of £4,332. The one condition imposed by HMRC was that the refund must be used for the benefit of the membership. It had been decided to use it to reduce a rise in subscriptions, and to digitise back copies of *The Cricket Statistician* so that they could be accessible online. Mr Perry's firm had charged about a third of its usual rate for these services, so the Association had offered Mr Perry three years' complimentary membership, which he had accepted.
- b) On sales of publications, the Treasurer said that, despite a perception that there had been a shift from statistics to history in the Journal, the bias was still towards statistics, and there continued to be a range of statistically-based publications – the yearbooks, the Minor Counties series and the *Overseas First-Class Annual*. These tended to lose money, but the popularity of series such as *Lives in Cricket* subsidised them. He was comfortable with the fact that, overall, publications appeared to be self-supporting apart from the losses on *OFCA*.
- c) The Treasurer pointed out that committee expenses had risen by a significant percentage. This was due partly to the committee being back to full strength after some years, and partly to the fact that some members were significantly out of pocket on a straight mileage allowance so had been allowed to claim their actual travel costs. He considered the total paid was still small, and fair given the value of the work done by committee members.
- d) He encouraged members to consider applying for research grants. The scheme had been set up to pay out four grants of up to £750 a year, but in fact only £835 had been paid over the past two years.
- e) The Association had drawn £15,000 out of its investment with Legal & General in order to cover grants, royalties and cash flow issues; the value of the investment, originally £130,000, stood at £138,976 at 28 March.
- f) In response to a question, the Treasurer agreed that the Association would be affected by the dramatic rises in postal charges just announced. There was some discount from the use of a franking machine (a standard first-class letter currently cost 39p to post rather than 46p).

The Accounts were then approved.

8. Increase to annual subscriptions

The Treasurer said there was an understanding that membership fees should cover membership costs, but at present they patently failed to do this. There had been no increase over the past ten years, whereas to keep pace with inflation UK membership should have risen from £16 to £20. He said that the committee opposed using the investment to subsidise subscriptions, but thanks to the VAT refund he thought it would be reasonable to restrict the increase and proposed a figure of £18 for UK membership, with overseas membership rising from £20 to £24 to reflect steep rises in postage, and junior membership from £9 to £10.

Douglas Miller asked whether there was a risk of losing members who failed to update their standing orders. Huw Nathan explained that of the Association's 1,099 members (one down on the previous AGM) none currently paid by standing order; 283 had direct debits, which could be increased at the ACS's request (though the members would be informed that this was happening) and 627 members paid by cheque.

Ian Maun questioned the policy of not using the investment to subsidise subscriptions. The Treasurer said the policy was to use income from the investment to cover grants, royalties and projects such as digitising the journal. John Bryant added that having a significant reserve enabled the ACS to take some risks, whereas organisations lacking this sort of backing found it a hard slog just to keep going.

It was pointed out that many counties charged more than £18 for one day's cricket!

The increase in subscriptions was approved with two against (Proposed – Roger Heavens, Seconded – Richard Slater).

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

The Treasurer proposed the re-appointment of Ian Barwick of Gerard and Co. in Stroud. This was agreed unanimously.

10. Rule Changes

- a) **Rule 11.2** – It was agreed that the deadline for written nominations for officers and other committee members should be brought forward from 30 November to 15 November, in order to ensure the prompt despatch of the December mailing.
- b) **Rule 12.6** – It was agreed to reinstate the requirement for minutes to be taken of all proceedings at all general committee meetings. Minutes were always taken, but the formal requirement had been inadvertently omitted during an earlier rule change.

11. Statistician of the Year Award

The Chairman announced that Robert Brooke had been recognised as the Association's Statistician and Historian of the Year following the publication during 2011 of his work *F.R.Foster – The Fields Were Sudden Bare*. He reminded members that Mr Brooke and Dennis Lambert had first mooted the idea of the ACS in 1972, and that Mr Brooke had served as Chair and Journal Editor for many years. He had previously won the award in 1989, but the committee had felt that the outstanding candidate of the year should not be barred on this account (only Philip Bailey had previously won twice, once jointly and once on his own). *F.R.Foster* was an outstanding publication, the best of the Lives in Cricket series to date, with its analysis of a fascinating career on and off the field. It would have had little appeal to

commercial publishers, but had been short-listed by the Cricket Society for its prestigious Book of the Year Award.

On being presented with the Statistician of the Year Trophy, Mr Brooke said he was humbled to receive it again. He thought that *Lives in Cricket* was one of the ACS's best series, with almost unlimited potential. It could cover ancient and modern players, and he suggested that it might be extended to non-playing figures such as Irving Rosenwater, if anyone dared to risk being haunted by his ghost.

The President also praised Mr Brooke's work, commenting that he had never met F.R.Foster, who was banned from Edgbaston when he was playing there, and he regretted that he had never sat down to question Tiger Smith, who had kept to Foster, about his memories of him.

12. Don Ambrose Memorial Prize

The Chairman announced that the inaugural Don Ambrose Memorial Prize was being awarded jointly to Douglas Miller and Mick Pope. The prize had been established in memory of assiduous researcher and ACS member Don Ambrose, who died in 2010, and was for the best article published in *The Cricket Statistician* during the year. The committee had not planned a joint award, but could not separate Mr Miller and Mr Pope on a vote. As it happened, their articles reflected the two facets of the Association, history and statistics. Mr Pope had written about the scandalous life of 19th-century player C.F.Buller, which featured three divorce trials, two bankruptcies and another 'financial irregularity'. Mr Miller had analysed trends in lbw decisions from 1919 to 2010, uncovering the career rewards for habitual 'not-outers' and the bias shown towards county captains.

Dennis Lambert presented cheques for £125 each to Mr Miller and Mr Pope. He commented on the topicality of Mr Miller's research in the light of recent developments in the Decision Review System, and on Charlie Buller's further escapade in clearing off to the US in 1895 with another woman by whom he had four children before returning and marrying her in 1902, four years before his death.

Mr Miller said that, when he first joined the ACS and was afraid of the word 'statistical', no one had been more helpful than Mr Ambrose, who showered him with information. Mr Ambrose had been one of life's warmest and most dedicated cricket lovers, and it was wonderful to remember his name in this way. He also thought it a healthy move to divide the award. He greatly admired Mr Pope's work and couldn't have imagined doing his research. He remarked that some articles were fascinating, but at the end left him wondering "So what?" He hoped that the award would encourage more articles which had a point to make.

Mr Pope thanked Mr Lambert and Mr Miller for their kind words, and reciprocated Mr Miller's congratulations. He had not known Mr Ambrose as well as he would have liked, but was well aware of his work, especially his *Statistical Surveys*. He had been inspired to research Buller by a comment in *Wisden's* 1907 obituary: 'Into the scandals that marred Mr. Buller's private life and caused his social eclipse, this is obviously not the place to enter.' Mr Pope assured those present that his cheque would be wisely invested in cricket publications.

13. Election of Honorary Life Member

The committee proposed the award of Honorary Life Membership to Tony Webb, the mastermind of the Minor Counties project since its inception in 1999 until he was forced to step down because of ill health in 2011. This was approved.

Julian Lawton Smith, a member of the project, paid tribute to the huge amount of work done by Mr Webb on producing authoritative scores for Minor County matches between 1895 and 1914, an under-researched period. These were further embellished by valuable information on administrative meetings and player biographies. Mr Webb had left no stone unturned in his attempts to resolve discrepancies and fill gaps, and had encouraged, cajoled and supported other statisticians to bring their research into the public arena. He had set a standard which others should aspire to follow.

14. Any other business

a) Dennis Lambert raised the County A-Z series. He had been working on Leicestershire, and was surprised that the guidelines appeared to restrict the players included to those appearing in first-class, List A and Twenty20 cricket (ie 1894 onwards). He would prefer to go back to the foundation of the present club in 1879, though he acknowledged that this might push the book into two volumes, and that it might be a hard sell within Leicestershire.

The Chairman, who was co-ordinating the series in the absence of an editor, said it was still somewhat fluid, as no county was yet close to publication (though Kent was closest). It would be desirable to cover as many players as possible with as much detail as possible, but the financial implications were considerable. It might be that the solution was to publish online rather than on paper. David Jeater explained that the guidelines had been written with a view to making the books practical to publish without subsidy (he had not at that point considered digital publication) and not frightening off authors by an over-demanding specification of what was required.

Robert Brooke said that he had originally agreed to edit the series but had had to withdraw because of eye trouble. He said it was a long-term project but he thought it important to impose uniformity and to demand high standards, citing the model of Steven Sheen, who was contacting the families of Warwickshire players to obtain further details.

Huw Nathan suggested that pre-first-class and post-first-class players should be separated into different sections.

Douglas Miller remarked that Buckinghamshire CCC had been very supportive of his history, committing to buy 250 copies, almost enough to pay for printing costs; counties might be able to support the series by committing to sales rather than direct subsidy. But counties varied wildly in their helpfulness; he had found Leicestershire very poor and Lancashire very keen.

b) Nigel Bratton suggested that a breakdown of membership statistics by category should be included in the Annual Report. It was agreed that this would be a good idea.

c) Kit Bartlett asked whether the 40th AGM in 2013 might return to Edgbaston, the venue of the first ACS meeting. The Chairman said that the committee would discuss this.

d) Julian Lawton Smith appealed for volunteers to help the Minor Counties project to get the scores completed up to 1914.

e) Christopher Saunders pointed out that this meeting was clashing with a Cricket Memorabilia Society auction at Headingley, and wondered whether the overlap could be avoided in future. The Chairman said the committee was aware of the problem, and that the timing of the AGM was also complicated by ever earlier starts to the cricket season.

f) The President closed the meeting by thanking all officers of the Association, and pointing out that, in addition to lunch, they had managed to lay on cricket, in the shape of a friendly between Derbyshire and Yorkshire taking place outside.

15. End of meeting and annual lunch

After the Annual Lunch at 1 pm, the President made a short address on the lessons to be learned from the previous week's Test in Galle, including the England batsmen's lack of expertise on turning pitches, the role of the Decision Review System in making umpires more positive in their verdicts, and the future of Andrew Strauss.

16. Afternoon session

In an informal session from 3 pm, Peter Wynne-Thomas addressed members on how he had come to write his recent book on *Cricket's Historians*. Malcolm Lorimer had originally suggested he should write his memoirs, but he felt unable to follow in the steps of Don Mosey, David Frith or Bill Frindall; he then considered writing about the history of the ACS and its interesting characters, such as Les Hatton and his clarinet, Brian Croudy and his buses, and Ken Trushell with his ballroom dancing and ping pong. But this had led him to analyse the reasons for founding the Association in 1973, to address the statistical deficiencies of the Cricket Society, which had led him to consider the origins of the Cricket Society, and magazines such as *Cricket* and *The Cricketer*, and thus he moved backwards to the 19th-century statisticians and historians, going back to Joseph Strutt. He had eventually researched 600-odd authors, and found that he had written a sort of history of cricket in that it reflected how cricket historians had picked up ideas, how cricket's history and myths had built up, and how the use of statistics had changed.