

Minutes of the 51st AGM of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians held virtually via Zoom on Saturday, 16 March 2024

Members present (44): Philip Bailey, Ian Baker, Philip Banham, Pelham Barton, Martin Briggs, John Bryant (Committee Chair), Mark Chaloner, Paul Dyson, Jonathan Farmer, Ric Finlay, Roger Gibbons, Peter Gilbert, Peter Griffiths, Alan Grove, Peter Handford, Peter Hardy, Andrew Hignell (Secretary), Andrew Ives, Sreeram Iyer, Pranav Kalidindi, David Kendix (President), Julian Lawton Smith, Jeremy Lonsdale, Rev Malcolm Lorimer, Harriet Monkhouse, Jonathan Myles, Bryn Nathan, Huw Nathan, Serena Nathan, Jonathan Northall, Chris O'Brien, Brian O'Sullivan, Mick Pope, Angus Rodger, Vijitha Senaratne, Paul G Smith, Simon Sweetman, Rodney Ulyate, Garry Wallace (Treasurer), Keith Walmsley, Martyn Webster, Brian Weir, Geoff Wellsted and John Winniffrith.

1. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

After the Secretary had explained the voting process, the meeting began at 10.05am with the President welcoming everyone joining from the UK as well as members resident in Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, India and the United States. He commented on the healthy attendance and added that it was pleasing to see, once again, a number of members who had been present at the Golden Jubilee Lunch at the Grace Road ground in Leicester in mid-October. He concluded by saying that the success of that lunch had prompted the committee to consider other face-to-face meetings and that, after the formal close of the AGM, there would be an opportunity for the officers and committee to briefly talk about the potential for future social meetings.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Secretary reported that apologies had been received from the following members: Robert Brooke, Chris Burgess, Annie Chave, Allan Cutts, Jenny Griffiths, Jenny Heald, Martin Howe, Philip Hulme, David Jeater, Kevin Jones, Neil Leitch, Douglas Miller, Stephen Musk, Chris Overson, Norman Rogers, Andrew Samson, John Ward and David Whittingham.

3. REMEMBERING OUR DECEASED MEMBERS

It was reported that during the year the following members had died: Mike Barnett, Keith Booth, Peter Brooke, Mervyn Carson, Adrian Collier, Malcolm Ferguson, Ray Gaiger, Paul Hughes, Chris Larkin, Jim Ledbetter, Peter Matthews, Alan E Moore, Kevin Motley, Peter Roberts, Rev Robert Spaight and Ken Woolfe. The meeting duly observed a period of silence in memory of all deceased ACS members.

4. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE 2023 AGM

The President reminded everyone that the minutes of the 50th AGM had been published in the August 2023 Journal. No corrections or amendments were requested so, following a show of hands, the Secretary announced that the motion (proposed by Peter Griffiths and seconded by Peter Hardy) for the approval of the AGM minutes had been passed unanimously.

5. TO RECEIVE AND, IF APPROVED, ADOPT THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30/11/2023

Having referred to the documentation, including the Annual Report which had been sent electronically and by post to members, the Committee Chair made a small number of summative comments about the year which had ended on 30 November 2023. He highlighted that the Auctions, prompted by the disposal of the Tony Webb collection, had been a huge success and had prompted further auctions, one of which had begun that morning and had already attracted over 150 bids. After a show of hands, the Secretary announced that the motion (proposed by Philip Banham and seconded by Peter Hardy) for the Annual Report of the committee to be adopted had been passed unanimously.

6. TO RECEIVE AND, IF APPROVED, ADOPT THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30/11/2023

The Treasurer began by saying that this was the eighth occasion on which he had been called upon to present the Treasurer's Report and he added that this year's report continues the favourable trend of recent years. In the year ending 30 November 2023, ACS operations generated a net profit after tax of £12,532 and a positive cash flow of £8,792. The balance sheet remains robust, and liquidity will meet all foreseeable obligations without any recourse to our financial reserves.

He then focussed on a few major issues, noting that the first four of his reports had been provided to face-to-face AGM meetings and that the financial results were fairly mediocre. In contrast, the last four reports had been communicated at virtual AGMs and the financial results were materially better. He believed that this was not entirely due to chance. One major factor supporting the improved financial performance of the Association over the past four years has been the range of initiatives taken by the committee to improve business performance both in administrative processes and in managing publications.

The other factor is that the Covid pandemic forced and accelerated a change to electronic communications and virtual meetings which have contributed materially to reducing administrative costs. Whilst a majority of members have embraced and supported these changes, he added that the officers and committee would encourage those who have not yet done so to provide email addresses, as well as purchasing books through the Association's online shop and, where possible, to sign up to the Direct Debit scheme for paying their annual subscriptions.

The year which had ended on 30 November 2023 had not been without challenges. The main ones were a drop of 3.9% in membership numbers contributing to a reduction of £1,215 in membership income, and the effect of double-digit inflation on some areas of our cost structure. These impacts were offset by three significant factors. First, the committee continued to exercise iron discipline on its costs, which in some cases involved moving business to alternative, lower-cost suppliers. Secondly, we were fortunate in being able to expand our offering of new publications to 13, compared with nine in the previous year. This meant that our fixed sales and distribution costs could be spread over a wider base, reducing the average cost per book, with a consequent positive effect on profitability. Thirdly, and from a financial viewpoint most significantly, the Association had been able to resume its auction activity, previously started in 2021, thanks to the extremely generous bequest of Tony Webb's collection of cricket books and memorabilia. The auctions had been well received and supported by ACS members and contributed a profit of over £5,000 to the final results.

The Treasurer reminded everyone that proceeds from auctions are not a certain source of income on which to base future financial plans. Nevertheless, we have (thanks largely to the efforts and ingenuity of Peter Griffiths) developed an auction software and process that means that future auctions can be carried out efficiently and with limited administrative effort. There was still a lot of material remaining from Tony Webb, and the Association has also accepted donations from other sources, all of which will be offered in future auctions.

Another change made by the committee to improve the experience for members was to cease offering books for sale in advance of their physical availability. This means that when a book is advertised, it will be available for despatch immediately upon receipt of payment. This will avoid delays, sometimes of several months, between submitting and paying for an order and its delivery.

The Treasurer then answered a couple of questions – one from Chris O'Brien about *OFCA*, and the other from Paul Smith about the discount voucher. Following a show of hands, the Annual Accounts, as proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Rodney Ulyate, were then unanimously adopted by those members present.

7. TO APPOINT, AND AGREE THE REMUNERATION OF, AN INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTANT

The Treasurer commented that the sound financial position of the Association has been buttressed by the efficient support of our Accountant, Judy Leng, who in addition to preparing the monthly accounts and annual financial statements also prepares and submits the VAT and Corporation Tax returns to HMRC on behalf of ACS on a timely basis. After a show of hands, the motion (as proposed by the committee and seconded by Bryn Nathan) for the re-appointment of the accountant for the next 12 months at her present annual fee of £3,230 was unanimously approved.

8. TO APPROVE THE MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR THE YEAR 2024/25

The Treasurer concluded his Financial Report by saying that, based on the current positive cash position and the anticipated continued stability of cash flow in the immediate future, the committee considered there is no need to raise membership subscriptions for the 2024/25 membership year starting 1 December 2024. Following another show of hands, the motion (proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Peter Hardy) that there should be no change in the membership subscription rates for 2024/25 was unanimously approved.

9. COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The Secretary said that three nominations had been received for four places on the Association committee and so there was no requirement for an election. The following would therefore continue to serve on the committee –

Peter Hardy	Proposer – Norman Croucher	Seconders – Scott Anderson
Andrew Hignell	Proposer – Mick Pope	Seconders – Jenny Heald
Huw Nathan	Proposer – Philip Banham	Seconders – Alan Stainer

He also thanked Andrew Samson, who had retired from the committee, for his efforts over the past few years. He also reminded the meeting that a vacancy existed and that the committee, at its next full meeting, would be discussing the topic of co-option. He added that he would be delighted to receive an email from anyone who was interested in acting in this capacity.

10. PRESENTATION OF THE BROOKE-LAMBERT TROPHY FOR 2023

The President then called upon Ric Finlay to deliver the following citation, announcing the winner of the Statistician of the Year Award for 2023.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Stephen Musk had been awarded the Brooke-Lambert Trophy. Stephen was born in Norfolk in 1961 and was educated locally in Norwich and later at Cambridge University, where in 1987 he obtained his PhD in cell biology. Working briefly in London he then moved back to Norwich but was forced to retire in 1996 when persistent mental health issues interrupted his professional life.

Shortly after, he joined the ACS and, prompted by a Douglas Miller article on Tony Webb's Minor Counties project, he immediately volunteered himself as the Norfolk statistician. His entry into this space has precipitated a wealth of research leading to publications around his native county, commencing with the ACS publication on the life of Michael Falcon in 2010.

Deliberately confining himself to studies of Norfolk-based cricket, owing to what he describes as 'imposter syndrome', he eventually plucked up the courage to look further afield for subjects of his scrutiny, commencing with his 2022 book on Francis Terry, a Somerset and Canadian cricketer of the late 19th-century. This was followed very shortly after by what is arguably to date his finest triumph, his study (alongside Roger Mann) of Bart King, the American bowler.

Last year it has been my privilege to work with him on his latest ACS offering, Outside the Tent, a fascinating appraisal of 'free enterprise in Australian cricket' where he in a most entertaining fashion details the struggle for economic independence between Australian cricketers and the overarching administration of cricket in my country, which sought to tightly control the lives of the players. At last count, he has 18 titles to his name (some shared), though I am open to correction on this – he is such a prolific writer now (with nine of these books being published in the last 18 months) that I wouldn't be at all surprised to find he's added another two or three in the last week or so!

In my editorial role with Outside the Tent, I had many opportunities for contact with Stephen, even though we are half a world away from each other, and I found him to be totally professional, very scholarly, and pleasantly open to new ideas and contrary views. His writing style almost belies his scholarship, being highly entertaining (read for example, his withering denigration of Australia's Cricket Board of Control in Outside the Tent), but never allowing his assessments to contradict the undeniable facts.

Stephen is also openly a resounding success story for triumph of the human mind over the vicissitudes of mental illness. He is quite honest in his assessment that writing has kept him sane these past few years. If there is ever an upside to poor mental health, then Stephen's output over the last 13 years provides it, and we in the ACS are truly thankful that he has settled upon us to live out his extended convalescence. I congratulate Stephen and commend him to you all as a highly deserving recipient of this award.

Stephen was unable to be present, but he had sent a few words of thanks which the Secretary read out on his behalf:

I feel chuffed to bits (and somewhat surprised) to be awarded the Robert Brooke/Dennis Lambert Award. I was lucky enough to meet both Robert and Dennis. Their visionary role in the creation of the ACS, and the depth and thoroughness of their research in olden days, always leaves me both astonished and inspired. We are indeed all standing on the shoulders of giants.

There are so many people to thank, starting with Douglas Miller for pointing me in the right direction in the first place. Tony Webb, Julian Lawton Smith, Colin Munford, and Peter Griffiths all made working on the ACS Minor Counties Project a pleasure rather than a chore.

Thanks also to the late Mike Davage for his tremendous work in researching the two volumes of 'Who's Who' of Norfolk cricket, as well as all those who have cast a critical but gentle eye over my manuscripts. Particularly David Jeater, who edited my first book – a biography of Michael Falcon – Ric Finlay, and Willie Sugg, who is now my main 'go to' editor.

Above all, many thanks are due to Martin Tebay and the late Roger Mann. Martin is currently involved in publishing my tenth book with Red Rose Books. His willingness to publish my manuscripts means that he has played more of a role in maintaining my mental good health over a significant period of time than any psychiatrist has ever achieved. Roger did not just provide the photographs for our biography of Bart King; he was every bit an equal co-author. I feel certain that our book will remain my best and Roger played an absolutely vital role in its creation.

Finally, thanks to all who have dug deep in their pockets and invested in my works on cricket in Norfolk – an arcane subject if ever there was one.

11. PRESENTATION OF THE PETER WYNNE-THOMAS AWARD

The President then handed over to Keith Walmsley for the announcement of the next Award.

The Peter Wynne-Thomas Award is an occasional award made by the committee in memory of our late long-serving Secretary. Under the agreed spec for the award, its aim is to acknowledge the activities of a member 'who by their contributions over a period of at least 12 months has contributed significantly to the operation of particular projects run by the Association, and/or has in some other way provided particular benefit to its members'.

With this in mind, the committee has decided this year to make an award to Kevin Jones. Born in Wales but now living in Gloucestershire, Kevin has been an ACS member since 1976. In recent years, his name has come to members' notice principally through his frequent contributions of answers to statistical questions and conundrums posed on our email forum. These answers derive from a cricket statistics database that he began planning in the early 1980s, and which – after various interruptions when, as he himself has put it, real life got in the way – finally came to full fruition around five years ago. His database now covers both men's and women's cricket in all forms and formats and can be used – and is used – to produce quick and accurate answers to just about any statistical query or conundrum posed by our members.

We acknowledge that a small number of other members have also developed their own databases which can be, and are, used to similar effect – and I know we're all grateful to them for their similar contributions. But can I take you back to the 'and/or' component of the spec for this award, for Kevin's contributions have not just been limited to his direct help with members' queries.

Over the past year and more he has also contributed significantly but more 'behind the scenes' to two of our specific projects – firstly, by providing many of the statistics for the Northamptonshire book which helped to complete our 'Grounds' series; and second, by developing a program for coming up with most of the 'Team v Team' records that, over the past year, have formed a significant new contribution to the offerings on our website.

This Award does not bring with it any great riches or trophies, though in recognition of Kevin's contributions the committee has decided to make him an award of £40-worth of ACS books, of his choice, over the coming year. So, ladies and gentlemen, I invite you by waving your hands to show your appreciation of the many and much-appreciated contributions made to us all by the recipient this year of the Peter Wynne-Thomas Award – Kevin Jones.

A family commitment in Wales meant that Kevin could not be present at the meeting, but he had sent the following words of thanks which were read out by the Secretary:

Since I joined the ACS in 1977, I've been one of the many silent members. I think it was during the pandemic that the ACS asked if anyone with an IT background could give some time on the website. I was happy to help.

This introduced me to Peter Griffiths. While helping him, he learned about the database I'd built. I had all this data which I wasn't really doing anything with. Working with Pete we started using that data to expand the website and I was also able to use that data to help other members of the association.

When Keith emailed me in December to tell me I'd been nominated for this award, to say I was stunned would be an understatement and I feel very honoured to get this recognition from the ACS.

I'd like to thank Peter Griffiths in particular as without him I don't think I'd be doing any work with the ACS and I'd also like to thank Keith and the rest of the committee for the award, it means a huge amount to me.

12. AWARD OF LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The President then called upon Jeremy Lonsdale to make the following proposal for the award of Life Membership to Simon Sweetman.

Simon Sweetman has had a life-long love of cricket and numbers. A Hampshire supporter by birth, Simon attended the same school as John Arlott (albeit some years later) and remembers fondly the great days of the 1961 Championship-winning side. In his own words, he was 'useless at sport but numerate' and so was drawn into scoring, a not uncommon route for distinguished chroniclers of cricket I suspect.

Simon joined the ACS in 1980 and was a committee member from 2009 to 2022. He took over as Editor of The Cricket Statistician from the Winter 2006 edition (no. 136) and signed off with the Spring 2023 edition (no. 201), a total of 66 magazines. His term as editor is the second-longest in the fifty years of the Journal. In his first editorial, he reflected on the impact of technology on cricket statistics and history, contemplating the possibility that the Journal might not survive in hard copy, but assuring readers he did not want to be the editor who decimated the membership by 'taking us off into cyberspace.' Far from doing that, Simon nurtured a vibrant and varied Journal (available in both hard copy and online) up to, and past, its double-century, ensuring it was full of rigorous articles to maintain the interest of members.

Over the years, Simon's editorials touched on the changing nature of the game as well as ACS activities: the rise of T20 and the IPL, the expansion of women's cricket, technical developments which helped cricket historians and also led to a shift of statistics online, and the declining place of the game in the national culture, to name just a few topics. He improved the Journal's presentation and layout, innovated (for example, a whole edition on Sachin Tendulkar and one on women's cricket), worked hard to offer a mixed bag of historical and statistical pieces despite the trend towards the former, and was not afraid to comment on the challenges facing the game or express his (sometimes sceptical and concerned) views on how it was developing. He even managed to find a place in 2009 for a photograph of himself standing on

the 'fourth plinth' in Trafalgar Square, sporting a T-shirt urging us to 'Make Runs not War'. At the end of his tenure, he was able to report that at no time had there ever been a scramble for material to fill the pages of the Journal, a telling measure of the success of his editorship.

In parallel with his editorial role, Simon authored three ACS publications, each very different in terms of subject matter. In 2012, he produced a biography of the remarkable explorer, soldier, writer and Hampshire cricketer, HV Hesketh-Prichard, a veritable 'ripping yarn' of a story and probably the only cricket book to include a drawing of an extinct gigantic sloth. Three years later, he authored a review of the 1914 season. The book's blurb called it an attempt 'to challenge the common but lazy notion that the war brought a dramatic end to the era of sweetness, light and eternal sunshine that was the golden age of amateur cricket.' And in 2018, ACS published Simon's ground-breaking biography of the great Enid Bakewell, described as 'the first serious biography of a woman cricketer', and one which benefited from the subject's full cooperation. A fourth ACS book, on the history of cricket in Suffolk, his home county, is due for publication in 2024.

Simon's writing (including pieces for The Cricket Paper), editorial duties and other contributions (including on the initiative to digitise the magazine Cricket for the ACS website) have run in parallel with a long professional career in the world of tax, both as an inspector with HMRC and later as an accountancy firm tax partner and tax consultant. His expertise has also been called upon for many specialist reviews. Both his tax work and his interest in cricket's history and statistics – which at times have come together, for example, in an article on tax and the IPL for accountingweb.co.uk – have demonstrated an eye for detail and clarity of expression, attributes which the ACS has benefited from enormously.

Simon has made significant contributions to the Association over many years, and I am very pleased to recommend to members that he receives life membership.

Following a show of hands, the proposal was unanimously approved, with Simon then saying a few words, as follows:

I was amazed when I was first told, in confidence by the Secretary, about this nomination, as I didn't think I had deserved it. I suppose it all began when I had a meeting in London with Douglas Miller and agreed to take over the editorship of the Journal after it had gone through a rather awkward phase. I'm happy that I picked it up and I'm very happy that the recent handover to Jonathan Northall has worked well and that the Journal is continuing to thrive. My thanks to the committee for their nomination and thanks to everyone who voted. I really do appreciate this award.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Secretary reported that no items of Any Other Business had been submitted by members by the due date. However, the committee wished to raise a couple of items, with the Treasurer briefly outlining plans for future auctions and Jeremy Lonsdale speaking about the Members Survey which would be taking place with the May mailing.

The President formally closed the meeting at 11.05am, after which a short and informal discussion took place with Peter Hardy outlining the plans for a face-to-face meeting in London on 12 October.

There was a question as well from Malcolm Lorimer about the potential for a similar meeting focussing on talks about cricket history, whilst Jonathan Myles asked about other online talks, especially from authors of forthcoming books. As no further matters were raised, the Chair duly ended these discussions at 11.12am.