



FEBRUARY, 2018 NEWSLETTER

Danny Leech & Rick Moore are joint Cheshire skippers

WITH a greater number of matches to fulfil in 2018, Cheshire County Cricket Club have decided on a novel, twin approach to the captaincy following the decision of Lee Dixon to stand down.

Oulton Park's Danny Leech will skipper in the three-day county championship, with former colleague Rick Moore (Chester Boughton Hall), leading in the 50-overs Knock-out and the revived T20 competition.

Cheshire's communications officer Jim Law writes: "Danny Leech returned to the fold last season after eight years' absence and made a significant impact, opening the innings and adding some much-needed stability to the batting line-up. He scored 100 in the final game against Oxfordshire.

"The popular left-hander will also return to ECB Premier League cricket next summer with his beloved Oulton Park having secured promotion".

Danny, who is 36, says: "It's a great honour to lead Cheshire and I'm immensely proud. I was pleased to help out last season and I'm looking forward to working with a top group of lads".

The Oulton and former Winnington Park batsman, who made his county debut in 2001 and was in the 2007 title-winning team, has been involved in three of the top four batting partnerships in Cheshire's annals.

Top of the list is the all-time record 307 runs rattled up in 2007 for the first wicket when Leech scored 202 and Warren Goodwin 154 against Northumberland at Jesmond. Also in 2007 at Chester, 287 was added for the second wicket when Leech scored 119 not out and Andrew Hall 162 not out against Devon.

There was also 254 added for the fourth wicket when Leech hit 152 not out and Richard Hignett 183 against Cornwall at Alderley Edge in 2002.

Moore's pedigree

Rick Moore, who began his career at Bunbury, Christleton and Oulton Park, has a rich pedigree in all forms of cricket with Cheshire and the Chester batsman is equally enthusiastic about his new challenge.

He told Jim Law: "Winning the County T20 with Cheshire in 2015 was extra special. We did it in style and we've had to wait three years to defend our crown, so we will really be up for it. There's lots of cricket lined up next summer and Danny and I have had our work cut out pre-season to finalise our squads and plans. We know each other pretty well and it's an exciting opportunity for us both to take things forward".

Cheshire begin that T20 defence with a double-header in the new format against Cumberland at Toft on Sunday, May 6 and at Knypersley against Staffordshire the following day. Then they play Northumberland at Marple on Sunday, June 17 and Lincolnshire at Bourne two weeks later.

The 50 overs Trophy reverts to a straight knock out this year, Cheshire hosting Cumberland at Oxton on Sunday, May 20 in round one.

The three-day Western division championship drops back in the calendar with the first game against Shropshire at Shifnal, starting on Sunday, June 24.

In new fixtures arranged, Cheshire Academy are to play Zimbabwe Rising Stars at Bramhall on Tuesday, August 14, and there is to be a T20 double-header against Lancashire Academy at Urmston on a date to be fixed.

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It won't be long now

HERE is a reminder of the full list of 1st XI League fixtures to be played on the opening day of the 2018 season on Saturday, April 21:

ECB Premier League (12.30 p.m.): Alderley Edge v Nantwich; Bramhall v Grappenhall; Cheadle v Neston; Didsbury v Chester Boughton Hall (reigning champions); Marple v Toft; Oulton Park v Timperley.

Division 1 (1 p.m.): Barrow v Bollington; Davenham v Sale; Hyde v Stockport; Macclesfield v Bowdon; Upton v Widnes; Urmston v Oxtan.

Division 2 (1 p.m.): Christleton v Alvanley; Hale Barns v Runcorn (league debut); Lindow v Brooklands; Mobberley v Warrington; Northwich v Romiley; Tattenhall v Weaverham.

These fixtures, together with the full 2nd XI programme, will be repeated in the pre-season issue of *Newsletter* together with appointed umpires.

SUPERIOR BALL ON ORDER

THE League will be introducing an improved Reader Special Imperial Crown ball in all 1st XI matches next season. This ball, which underwent a successful Premier League trial in 2017, costs £17.75 plus VAT compared to the £15.50 plus VAT Reader Sovereign used in recent seasons.

To help cover the additional cost, the league will provide three boxes each containing six balls free to all clubs playing 1st XI cricket.

The league have placed a joint order with the UKFast Cheshire League for their supply from Readers, who have promised a discount totalling £5,000.

Clubs have been told to order their balls supply through treasurer Matt Beckley in the usual way. They will be distributed, together with handbooks, at the pre-season meeting at Warrington on April 11.

Next League Dinner @ Toft

THE League will break from tradition by staging their 2018 Presentation Dinner under canvas at Toft on Friday, October 5. Toft regularly stage successful events and plan a club function of their own the evening after the Dinner.

League chairman David Humpage says: "We are planning to put on a more informal event and bring the price down to about £25 as well as engaging a top-class speaker. We believe this will broaden the appeal of the event and raise attendance figures. I would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in promoting and formatting the event".

Trophy found

The Keith Belfield Memorial Trophy, awarded annually to the ECB Premier League Player of the Year and which is inscribed with the names of all past winners, has been unearthed after being lost in 2010, when the winner was Chester's Warren Goodwin.

A replacement trophy has been awarded annually in the past seven seasons.

Forties Finals Day @ Warrington

OVER Forties Finals Day next season will be on Sunday, September 2 at Warrington, starting at 12 noon.

Warm thanks are due to Warrington for putting their two grounds at the disposal of the league.

Thanks also go to Neston and Toft, who offered the use of their splendid facilities.

Founder members Hyde have returned to make up a 33-club format and will operate in the South East Division. Fixtures begin on Wednesday, May 2.

A full list of these fixtures is available on the league website (see details on back page of *Newsletter*).

FIFTIES SEEK PLAYERS

CHESHIRE Over Fifties hold their annual meeting at Grappenhall on Wednesday, March 17 at 7 p.m.

Team manager Tim Jackson (bollard66@icloud.com) and secretary Paul Freedman

(paulfreedmanifa@aol.com) would like to hear from anyone offering to stand for office and/or play in Cheshire's National 50 Plus representative team in 2018.

The Fifties meeting will be followed by the AGM of Cheshire Seniors, chaired by Garry Hambleton at 7.30 p.m.

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34 TEAMS IN 2nd XI T20

A TOTAL of 34 teams will be taking part in the **2nd XI Joseph Holt Brewery T20** competition in 2018.

Sale and Tattenhall return after being excluded in 2017, while Cheadle Hulme and Widnes, who both conceded games last season, are ruled out, reports Competition secretary Brian Boys.

Until the semi-finals, all games will be played on a regional basis.

Panel umpires are to be appointed for all games.

THE DRAW

Preliminary round on Tuesday, May 8:

Bramhall v Stockport Georgians;
Nantwich v Davenham.

First round: Tuesday, May 22:

Oxton v Neston 3;
Grappenhall v Chester Boughton Hall;
Warrington v Upton;
Alvanley v Neston 2;
Nantwich or Davenham v Northwich;
Congleton v Toft;
Tattenhall v Oulton Park;
Bowdon v Timperley;
Bramhall or Stockport Georgians v Cheadle.

Tuesday, May 29:

Romiley v Heaton Mersey;
Didsbury v Hyde;
Marple v Stockport.

Back to Tuesday, May 22:

Urmston v Sale;
Bollington v Macclesfield;
Brooklands v Alderley Edge;
Ashton on Mersey v Lindow.

Round 2 games are on Tuesdays, June 5 and 12 and **round 3** on Tuesday, June 26.

The full set out draw and further competition details are available on the league website.

CRICKET COMMITTEE MEETINGS

LEAGUE Cricket Committee meeting dates for 2018 (all Thursdays at Warrington and at 8 p.m. unless stated):
March 15 (7.30 p.m.); April 26; June 7; July 12; August 16; September 20; October 25.

UMPIRES' DATES

THE Cheshire County League Umpires and Scorers Association have arranged their 2018 meetings, starting with the pre-season gathering at Timperley on Wednesday, April 18.

The mid-season meeting is at Toft on Wednesday, July 4, followed by the end of season at Alvanley on Wednesday, September 26.

The AGM will be at Toft on Wednesday, November 7 at Toft. All meetings start at 8 p.m.

Cheshire ACO re-elect officers

CHESHIRE Cricket Umpires and Scorers Association - henceforth to be known as Cheshire ACO - re-elected their senior officers at the AGM at Winnington Park on February 5.

They were: President David Lawson; chairman Ian Greensmith; secretary Derek Bennett; treasurer Stuart Anderson. Geoff Wellsted stood down as vice chairman.

James Emmerson reported that a Scorers course will be held at Toft on Saturday, September 10 and Sunday, September 18.

A grant of £1,000 had been received from the Cheshire Cricket Trust

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Latest news from 36 clubs

ALDERLEY EDGE

NEW chairman at ALDERLEY EDGE is Simon Pooler, who succeeds Andy Fluck.

Robert Bredbury continues as secretary with 1st XI all-rounder Richard Wilkinson becoming treasurer.

Captains – 1st XI Adam Worrall; 2nd XI: Jon Usher; 3rd XI manager David Elms; Over 40s Bryce Brooks.

Opening batsman Alan Day works on as groundsman.

ALVANLEY

ORGANISED by the tireless Andy Bennion, ALVANLEY are staging a Sandstone Trail Walk through South-Cheshire to raise funds for an outfield motor early in March. A total of 39 stalwarts have already signed up, but anyone else who would like to take part or make a contribution should contact the man himself at andy.bennion@yahoo.co.uk

Popular Jonno Whitley is expected back from a stint in New Zealand in April.

There's little change in personnel after a good season on and off the field. Among those re-elected are: chairman Chris Fletcher; secretary David Jones; treasurer; 1st XI captain Chris Charles; 2nd XI captain David Summers; 3rd XI captain John Albuquerque. Groundsman is still Ian Charles.

BARROW

FORMER scorer Gill Barrow (nee Jeffery) continues as secretary for promoted BARROW.

Phil Noble remains chairman and Gareth Hughes treasurer. Alex Reid is re-elected 1st XI captain, with Mal Barrow in charge of maintaining the picturesque ground at The Croft.

BOLLINGTON

THERE have been few changes at BOLLINGTON: Chairman remains Rob Murdoch; secretary Rick Paterson; treasurer Tony Browne; 1st XI captain Rick Hough; 2nd XI Matt Dawson; 3rd XI Gary Collier; Over Forties Ged McKernan.

BOWDON

AT relegated BOWDON, Matt Tully becomes 1st XI captain in place of Simon Marshall. Other officers include chairman Dominic Ball; secretary Andy Marshall; treasurer Richard Malkin; 2nd XI captain Ollie Williams; 3rd XI captain Steve Townsley; Over 40s skipper Chris Kupusarevic; groundsman Keith Teasdale.

BRAMHALL

NO changes yet reported at BRAMHALL where Steve Driscoll is chairman; secretary Andy Reynolds; treasurer Iain Tittle. Captains: 1st XI Nick Cantello; 2nd XI Tom Drury; 3rd XI Dan Bridgeman; 4th XI Preyesh Patel; Over Forties Dave Robinson. Groundsman - and president - remains Richard (the One & Only) Cragg

BROOKLANDS

Jack Bagshaw takes over from A.J. Hart as 1st XI captain at BROOKLANDS. Other skippers: 2nd XI Alan Millington; 3rd XI James Robinson; Over Forties Mel Brookes. Chairman is Andrew Batty; secretary Chris Potter; treasurer Dave Garnett. Paul Heades becomes Groundsman.

CHEADLE

NEW CHEADLE chairman is Henry Appleyard who succeeds Tony Brady. Other officers: secretary Nick Reid; treasurer Mike Carswell; 1st XI captain Dan Brown; 2nd XI captain Aaron Will; 3rd XI vacant; 4th XI captain Richard Browne; Over Forties captain Ian Hall; groundsman Wayne Bailey.

New acquisition is Lindow all-rounder Ryan O'Brien who scored 584 runs and took 26 wickets for the Division Two club last season.

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Club news contd ...

CHESTER BOUGHTON HALL

ALL senior officers at CHESTER continue in office with Brian Gresty adding the chairmanship to the presidency. Secretary remains John Legry and treasurer Steve Greensill.

New 1st XI captain is to be former Glamorgan all-rounder Will Owen, with Dan Riley leading the twos, Chris Fleet the threes and David Atkin the Over Forties. Alex Kegg – who else? – remains groundsman.

Chester plan to register Lancashire all-rounder Jordan Clark as a county contracted player. Clark last season played for Alderley Edge, but has previously appeared for CBH.

CHRISTLETON

NEW captain at CHRISTLETON is Josh Morgan Jones, while Amanda Harding becomes secretary. Other officers include chairman Mike Hollindale; treasurer Phil Tidy; groundsman Terry Dandy.

DAVENHAM

NEW chairman at DAVENHAM is Martin Bentley, who takes over from Bob Floyd, while Anne Alderson becomes secretary.

Other appointments: treasurer Graham Beckett; 1st XI skipper Dan Hancock; 2nd XI John O'Sullivan; 3rd XI Elliot Alston; Over Forties Simon Freedman; groundsman Colin Day.

DIDSBURY

MATT GREGSON becomes 1st XI captain at DIDSBURY in the only major change of senior posts which include chairman / treasurer Duncan Anderson; secretary Tim Hughes; 2nd XI captain Shabaz Qasim; 3rd XI captain Ryan Wilson. Groundsman is Ian Barber.

GRAPPENHALL

IAN HAYES continues as chairman at GRAPPENHALL and others re-elected include secretary Paul Tyerman and treasurer Mervyn Roberts. Captains - 1st XI Adam Roylance; 2nd XI Ross Arrowsmith; 3rd XI David Seed; Over Forties Steve Newell. Dave Hill and Nick Sharp remain joint groundsman.

After a splendid farewell party, long-serving club member Will Sharp and his wife Angie emigrated to New Zealand in February.

HALE BARNS

NEWLY promoted HALE BARNS have Ade Mahon as chairman, while long-serving John Petch becomes president for a three-year term. Team captains have yet to be notified

HYDE

RELEGATED HYDE have two chairmen: Keith Duffy to run Club affairs while John Buckley looks after cricketing matters. Ron Williamson becomes treasurer.

Danny Berry again leads the 1st XI, Martin Coyle the 2nd XI; George Baker the 3rd XI and Lee Brown the fourths. Danny Berry remains groundsman.

In the planning stage is a pavilion extension, which will extend across part of the outfield.

LINDOW

RE-ELECTED chairman at LINDOW is David Kendrick, with Ian Park continuing as secretary and Andy Hume treasurer. Team captains: 1st XI Ben Tyler; 2nd XI Matt Ramsden; 3rd XI Hassan Mahmood; 4th XI Peter Hodge. Groundsman is Peter Hayes.

MACCLESFIELD

MACCLESFIELD are to be captained by Chris Moores, with Alex Griffiths running the twos, Miles Horner the threes, Adam **Mason** the fourths and Dan Ackerley the Over Forties. There will no overseas player engaged.

In his excellent February *Newsletter* chairman Simon Griffiths reports the impending retirement after 18 superb years' work of years of Head coach 'Alfie' Garnett, although he will still be running an age group team. Alfie was awarded the ECB Coach of the Year at Trent Bridge in 2017.

Club sponsor Simon Holding of GF Holding has offered to replace all the bench seats in the clubhouse; many other improvements round the ground are planned.

People living nearby during the winter have been interested to watch the RAF using the ground to train helicopter pilots

Groundsman Chris Moores was married in November to Anna Jordan.

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Club news contd.

MARPLE

SUCCEEDING Chris Lees as chairman at promoted MARPLE is James Crisall, while David Tomlinson continues as secretary and Martin Poynter as treasurer.

Team captains are: 1st XI Paul Wood; 2nd XI George Clarke; 3rd XI Greg Marsland; 4th XI TBA
Groundsman - who else but the wonderful Mike 'The Bear' Hibbert.

MOBBERLEY

NO notification of changes under chairman Rick Mountney.

NANTWICH

THE AGM has yet to be held, but indications are for little change at well-run NANTWICH, under the chairmanship of Wayne Morgan.

NESTON

ALL the senior posts at NESTON continue unchanged: chairman David Lewis; secretary Daniel Wakefield; 1st XI skipper Simon Stokes; 2nd XI Ian Gill; 3rd XI Sunday Richard Bourne; Over Forties Graeme Lea-Swain. Graeme Scurr will again tend both grounds

NORTHWICH

TIM WEBB becomes chairman at NORTHWICH, with Mark Phillips continuing as secretary and Simon James treasurer. There is a change in the 1st XI captaincy with James Plant taking over from long-serving former Alderley Edge batsman Mark Walker. Will Marsden will lead the twos and chairman Tom Webb the threes.

Dave Hill remains in charge of the improving Moss Farm ground.

OULTON PARK

WHILE Syd Williams continues to serve as chairman at promoted OULTON PARK, Lisa Ashwell becomes secretary in succession to Su Ramsbottom, who will continue with her welcoming presence on match days. Captains – 1st XI Pat Roberts; 2nd XI Mark Johnson; 3rd XI Mike Cook.

Plans to extend the size of the ground have been put on hold after the local authorities ruled that a large sett of badgers in an adjoining farmer's field cannot be disturbed.

OXTON

TAKING over the 1st XI captaincy at OXTON from Jack Smith, who has returned to live in Australia, is all-rounder Dane Williams. Other captains – 2nd XI Ian Gauntlett; 3rd XI Gunasekeran Kumar; Over Forties John Mitchell. Stuart Hirst remains secretary and Alan Richards treasurer, with Chris Prince continuing to tend the two splendid Townfield Lane grounds.

ROMILEY

THERE's little change at ROMILEY, who did well in their first season in the CCL. Mike Rowe remains in the chair with Robert Booker secretary and Andy Holt treasurer.

1st XI captain is Mark Flattley with Tom Roberts running the 2nd XI and Peter Stuart the thirds.

The very attractive ground at Birchvale Drive remains in the care of Andy Holt.

RUNCORN

THE League's newest club RUNCORN have spruced up their ground at Moughland Lane and believe first-time visitors will be impressed. Chairman is Rob Beecham, with Stewart Conway secretary and Stephen

Chapman treasurer. 1st and 2nd XI captains have yet to be named. Ian Cowan runs the thirds, while Jeremy King again looks after the ground.

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Club news contd ...

SALE

NO changes yet reported at SALE, with Paul Battersby remaining chairman. Captains last season were: 1st Keith Wellings; 2nd James Hall; 3rd Soans Preveen; 4th Nick Brooks; Over Forties Iain Harrop. Groundsman Sean Nichols has been hard at work again all winter.

STOCKPORT

PLAYING in Division One for the first time, STOCKPORT have yet to notify any major changes in administrative personnel.

Chairman in 2017 was Steve Allright, with Sam Edwards captaining the successful 1st XI.

TATTENHALL

ANOTHER club yet to notify any changes in officers is TATTENHALL, who had Alex Sandland in the chair last season and Stuart Sadler captaining the 1st XI.

One unshakeable figure is wonderful groundsman Brian Jarrard.

TIMPERLEY

AT TIMPERLEY, Nathan Brown takes over from Craig Grindley as 1st XI captain, Rob Matthews will lead the twos and Jurgees Hasan the threes while Mark Maddocks runs the Over Forties.

Bob Page is chairman, with Chris Page becoming secretary and David Twiney treasurer. Andy Horsfield remains groundsman and should have fewer problems than last season when the main pitch was unusable for most of the time after a major facelift.

TOFT

TOFT have elected Jimmy Lomas as 1st XI captain in succession to Toby Drummond.

Paul Ashley continues to lead the twos and Will Dunkerley the threes, while Dave Raffo skippers the fourths and Simon Hardstaff takes over the Forties.

Efficient and forward-looking chairman Nigel Muirhead continues in office as do secretary Simon Birley and treasurer Peter Watson. Mark Samuru has been appointed to run the ground alongside Bernard Manning, who was rewarded for his loyalty at the AGM by being made an honorary life membership to mark 50 years' wonderful service on and off the field. Other new lifers are Brian Coutts – another with 50 years' service – Jeff Tenner and Toby Drummond.

Toft expect to have Rob Jones available when not required by Lancashire, who have renewed his contract.

Graham Gooch will be guest speaker at the pre-season dinner on April 13.

UPTON

GO AHEAD Jez Lamb continues as chairman at UPTON, with Rob Chapman secretary and Richard Simcox treasurer.

Tom Marsland remains 1st XI skipper with Tom Maguire running the twos. The Forties captaincy has not yet been filled, while the ground will continue to be looked after by veteran Les Atwell.

URMSTON OLD BOYS IN NEWS

URMSTON-raised teenage left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson, now with Leicestershire, was pictured in the January issue of *The Cricketer* magazine after being included in the England Lions squad as a net bowler for the Aussie winter tour.

Callum was put forward as one of the UK's most promising spinners allowing him to meet up Down Under with his ex-Urmston twin brother Matthew, now at Lancashire, who is playing ECB- arranged grade cricket in Sydney.

Rob Arnold remains club chairman, with Nigel Maxfield secretary and Jackie Arnold treasurer. Captains – 1st XI Callum Turner; 2nd XI Steve Espley; 3rd XI Mark Luby; Over Forties Rob Tootell. John Morris is already hard at work as groundsman.

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Club news contd ...

WARRINGTON

WARRINGTON's new skipper is James Rudd, succeeding Richard Heaney. Others: 2nd XI Simon Swain; 3rd XI James Lewis; Over Forties Paul Dempster

Chairman remains Gary Musker and secretary Jon Burgess while Richard Heaney becomes treasurer. Groundsman – Paul Agar – who else?

WEAVERHAM

NO changes at WEAVERHAM, back in Division Two. The chairman continues to be former local football star Tony Woods, with Helen Butler secretary and Mark Emmerson treasurer.

Ian Eaton again leads the 1st XI; Rob Harrison the 2nd XI and Stuart Hayes the Over Forties. Dave Wilson carries on as groundsman.

Players who have moved on are wicket-keeper Alex Nash and promising seamer George McCormick, while James Lewis and long-serving left arm spinner Rob McMillan have both retired.

WIDNES

NO changes are yet notified at WIDNES. Last season's principal officers were: chairman Andy Atkin; treasurer Andy Woods; 1st XI captain Chris Kirby; 2nd XI captain Tim Wearden; groundsman Mike Cove.

OBITUARIES

Ex- Toft chairman Peter Hornsby dies in Ibiza

CHAIRMAN of Toft for the first 11 seasons of their County League membership from 1983 – 1993, Peter Hornsby died on August 24 last year at his home in Ibiza, aged 83.

Peter joined Toft in 1975, initially playing for the 1st XI, going on to become 2nd XI captain from 1977 – 1981 and 3rd XI skipper from 1987 - 1991.

On retiring from the chairmanship in 1993 he was made an honorary life member.

Club historian Jeff Tenner says Peter was a brilliant artist and wrote and produced many revues for Knutsford Operatic Society.

He split his retirement years between Knutsford and his home on the island of Ibiza where he welcomed the Toft Taverners touring side in 1990 and 1991. He was the organiser and designer of the successful fund - raising events including 'The Pub Olympics' and 'It's A Knock out' in the 80s.

Weaverham lose 'Chopper' Atherton

ONE of Weaverham's most colourful personalities, Keith Atherton, died from a heart attack while driving on the motorway. He was 56.

Keith, who revelled under the nickname of 'Chopper', last season kept wicket last season for Weaverham Over Forties and had been a club member most of his life, playing in the 1st XI until relatively recently. He was also a former well-known local amateur footballer.

A thanksgiving service at Weaverham Parish Church on December 8 was notably well attended.

Northwich's talented Albert Ashmore

THE death occurred suddenly at his Wincham home on February 18, aged 82, of Albert Ashmore, an outstandingly talented batsmen for Northwich and Winnington Park in the 1950s and 60s, before making an early retirement from the game to concentrate on family life. He leaves a wife Marjorie and three children, Michael, Robert and Lyndsey.

His funeral is at Rudheath Crematorium on Friday, March 2 at 10 a.m.

Former Chester president Roger Cash

THE death occurred on February 19 of Roger Cash, one of Chester Boughton Hall's longest-serving members and former officers. He was 86.

A former pupil at The King's School, Chester and one-time Capenhurst player, he was president at Boughton Hall in 2008 and a former secretary for 20 years before then. He was a regular spectators at home matches until the end of last season.

He and his wife had twin daughters. Roger was recently admitted to hospital with a complaint from which he never recovered.

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Obituaries contd ...

John Riley: captained Bowdon at Lord's

THE death occurred aged 89 on December 23 of John Riley, who captained Bowdon in the rain-affected National Club knock out final at Lord's and the replayed game at Edgbaston in 1977, which Southgate won.

John began his cricket career with Timperley before joining Bowdon along with David Webb, Roy Schofield and Ken Green in 1969. He was in the team that won the Manchester Association title in 1971 and which topped the County League in 1976, his first season as skipper..

Apologies are tendered for some incorrect biographical notes in the obituary which appeared in the January issue of *Newsletter*.

TOURING SOUTH AFRICA

AFTER enjoying the Millenium tour to South Africa so much, Wyn & I vowed to return, so off we ploughed on another journey to the Southern Cape in mid-December, 2004 to see the first three of five Tests. And this time we were rewarded, although at a distance.

Our first port of call was – literally – Port Elizabeth, which we hadn't seen in 1999-2000.

There was a goodly following of Brits for this section of the Gulliver's-organised tour and the capital of the Eastern Cape proved a fine, small city with many facilities including a lovely beach.

We stayed at the Courtyard Hotel by the sea where our tour rep. had – bless her heart - arranged a daily Happy Hour from 5 to 6 p.m. If this meant leaving the ground half an hour early each day to get back and take full advantage of the 'facilities' then so be it!

Things went well for England in Test One on a good batting pitch at St. George's Park. The scores were: South Africa 337 and 229 (Simon Jones 4-29); England 425 (Strauss 126) and 145-3 (man of match Strauss 94 not out)

I met Bowdon's Dominic Ball there. I believe he was thinking of emigrating to Oz at the time, but ultimately decided against it.

We had a day trip out to a brand new, mostly white-occupied lakeside township on the outskirts, while some colleagues went to a famous Elephant Orphanage.

For Christmas and New Year we flew to Durban on the Indian Ocean when rain ultimately prevented England from going 2-0 ahead. The scores at Kingsmead, where we met Sky tv's ex-Bowdonian Paul Allott for an extremely brief chat, were: England 139 (Pollock 4-32) and 570-7 dec. (Strauss 136, Trescothick 132, Thorpe 118); South Africa 332 (Kallis 162) and – after long rain delays - 290-8. It was heartening to see England batting so well.

We enjoyed a meal with league treasurer Brent Wilkinson and his wife Liz in our splendid Hilton Hotel which towers over the Kingsmead ground.

Next day, we trekked up to northern Natal for a couple of wonderful safaris at the Imfolozi Game Reserve, where the film *Out of Africa* was shot. After seeing many fabulous animals at close quarters, Wyn's lasting memory was watching a baboon snatch her handbag and shake everything onto the ground, including her purse, passport and cosmetics, before making off with a bag of sweets

Cape Town highlight

The highlight of our tour was a two-week stay in Cape Town, a magical place at the lower tip of the continent with Newlands the venue for third Test. This saw South Africa bite back and level the series. Scores: SA 441 (Kallis 149, Flintoff 4-79); and 228-8 dec. (MofM Kallis 66); England 163 (Charl Fransvelt 5-46) and 304 (Harmison top scoring with 42 and Pollock 4-65). The ground was packed and the heat hardly bearable, but the cricket was superb.

There's so much to see and do in and around Cape Town. We met Cheshire League chairman Peter Davies at the match. He was staying with an English friend who lived at the nearby town of Fishhoek, who kindly took us in his car for a day out at the fascinating university town of Stellenbosch. They went off on a long-planned trip, so we took the train back 70 miles to the city, an interesting two hour journey through the vineyards.

We enjoyed a day out at Newlands National park, then took another trip up Table Mountain which had had a brand new lift installed which offers panoramic views and whizzes you to the top in minutes, rather than half an hour.

We paid a return visit to Robben Island, situated two miles off shore, for 18 years the 'home' of Nelson Mandela and nowadays a well-visited tourist spot. It was heart-rending to see the cramped, impersonal

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Add touring

conditions in which this wonderful man was restricted for so many years. En route back to the harbour, we were nearly washed overboard where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans converge, but that's another story.

In our hotel, tour leader Mike Denness called a gathering to report on the tragedy which had drowned thousands in the Sri Lanka tsunami. A couple of years earlier, some of us had been aboard the Colombo – Galle train which had now been submerged in the flooding and Mike's collection raised a handy £1,500.

Our official tour ended on January 8, but Wyn and I had arranged to stay on at a pleasant B & B bungalow with wonderful views of Signal Hill and Table Mountain. Among other trips already briefly mentioned, we took a coach to the Cape itself, the southernmost point of the continent of Africa, with a much-visited lighthouse which points the way to all parts of the world. We also visited the Cape Town Fort where the early British settlers had set up camp 300 years earlier.

On the day of return, our plane to Heathrow was delayed by eight hours which spoiled the parting experience from the wonderful city we had got to know so well. Yet it didn't spoil our warm respect for the people hotel staffs and cricket ground stewards, who all treated us with great respect and fellowship throughout. Once again it had been an experience to savour.

We followed the rest of the tour at home on Sky television with intense interest: England won by 77 runs at Jo'burg, with Trescothick scoring 189 and magnificent Man of the series Strauss 147. The Fifth Test at Pretoria was spoiled by rain and drawn, leaving England 2-1 winners, their first in South Africa for 40 years.

● *Sad to learn of the death of Walter Nelson, a Liverpool Competition umpire of many years' standing, with whom Wyn & I had spent happy times on tours abroad.*

Walter, 78, died from a heart attack in Walton Hospital on January 30 and his funeral took place at Skelmersdale on February 23. He was the President of Merseyside Umpires Association.

The information comes from his bosom pal, fellow World tourist and ex-policeman Brian Garwood, another Liverpool umpire who, despite now living in Dorset, remains on the Competition panel.

● *Newsletter last month transgressed by describing correspondent John Burbidge as a former Cheadle Hulme player! John was, of course, a leading member at Bramhall before upping sticks to live and work in South Africa in 1976.*

LEAGUE WEBSITES

The League's Pitchero website administered by Richard Fennah contains pictures and documents, including all latest issues of *Newsletter*. It can be located on:

www.cheshirecountycl.org.uk

For other League news including 2017 averages and all 2018 fixtures including the latest cup draws, visit Darren Sutcliffe's website.

This facility is to be extended and improved in 2018. Contact address:

www.cheshirecountycl.play-cricket.com/

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NEXT ISSUE: EARLY-APRIL