

FESTIVAL TIME AGAIN

Christopher Martin-Jenkins, the Test Match Special commentator and former cricket correspondent of The Times and the Daily Telegraph, outlines why he is passionate in his support of the county cricket festival week

All the talk in official cricket circles recently was cutting down the amount of County Championship cricket. To my mind it is foolish talk, for a number of reasons that include the uncertainty of the weather and the danger that festival cricket, the very essence of the county game, will become even rarer than it already is. Oh my Harrogate and my Burton long ago.

There was a time, and still is in the more enlightened counties, when the county coming to town was a big event, anticipated long in advance, relished while the cricket was in progress and reviewed with pleasure months later. Sometimes games are never forgotten, such as the one started and finished after a thunderstorm on the extraordinary opening day of the Tumbleidge Wells week, in 1960, for four by lunch before being bowled out for 187 at 3.40pm.

The left-handed Peter Jones made 73, very neatly as many as Worcestershire managed for their two innings of 23 and 61, much to the liking of Dave Haldor and Alan Brown, who took nine cheap wickets each, by 7.15 it was all over.

Every now and then frisk wickets occur and pitches are not what they should be for top-class cricketers. They are the exceptions to the general rule that county cricket is better suited to small, intimate grounds than to big international occasions. Edgbaston, places that come alive on the big international occasion but that too often seem glum and empty when they play host to the homegrown atmosphere of the County Championship game at Arundel and Abingdon, Bath and Burton-on-Trent, Colchester and Chelmsford, Dover and Dudley, Epsom and Ebbw Vale I shall not try to get to the end of the alphabet but there would not be many letters missing if I did. Many of the places that no longer get the chance to stage county cricket have quite beautiful grounds, and those that remain generally do so still.

The cricket is characterised by a strong local spirit, while players and spectators are brought close together by the privilege of light and shade, the seclusion of a church or one of the many invariable identified by old and beautiful trees that help the ball to

swing, not to mention, sports, boundaries that encourage bats to do the same. Good weather, usually guarantees good-sized crowds and a pleasant amalgam of tension and relaxation.

We all know the reasons for the decrease in the number of festival games: all counties have more or less developed their main grounds, at an accelerated rate in recent years. Some of them have got into serious financial difficulties as a result. Once there has been investment in a county's headquarters it makes sense to use that ground as often as the number of pitches will readily allow.

Overheads are less expensive that way. The strong counter-arguments are that festival matches spread the gospel around the county, encourage local cricketers and cricketers' wives, make everyone feel part of the family of the game and give a

focal point to the season for those clubs on whose grounds the county team comes to play. I know from the experience of my own local club, Horsham, how much that means to the members, many of whom get involved even after years in the city, quiet of preparing the pitches, making the teas, watching the howlers at the

ground, for dealing with an invasion of cars and spectators more than the matches on ground can still the great events for the town in question, I suppose. I have been to one of these games without seeing the local Mayor or in attendance on one or other of the days but, if so I cannot remember it. There always seems to be a large black car with a prominent blower out from the bonnet parked in a position of prominence with a driver at the ready (about with an eye and a hair on the cricket) to whisk the VIP back to the town hall after a good lunch.

At one match in Wales, in the glorious parkland setting of Porthorland one wet day after play had been called off for the day and everyone had gone home, I promise you that the Mayor went ahead with the prepared unadvised speech from the balcony, like Hitler at the Nuremberg rally, even though the field in front of him was empty and the handful of people who could actually hear him were sitting and standing behind him, most of them invited journalists anxious not to waste the chance of a drink and some

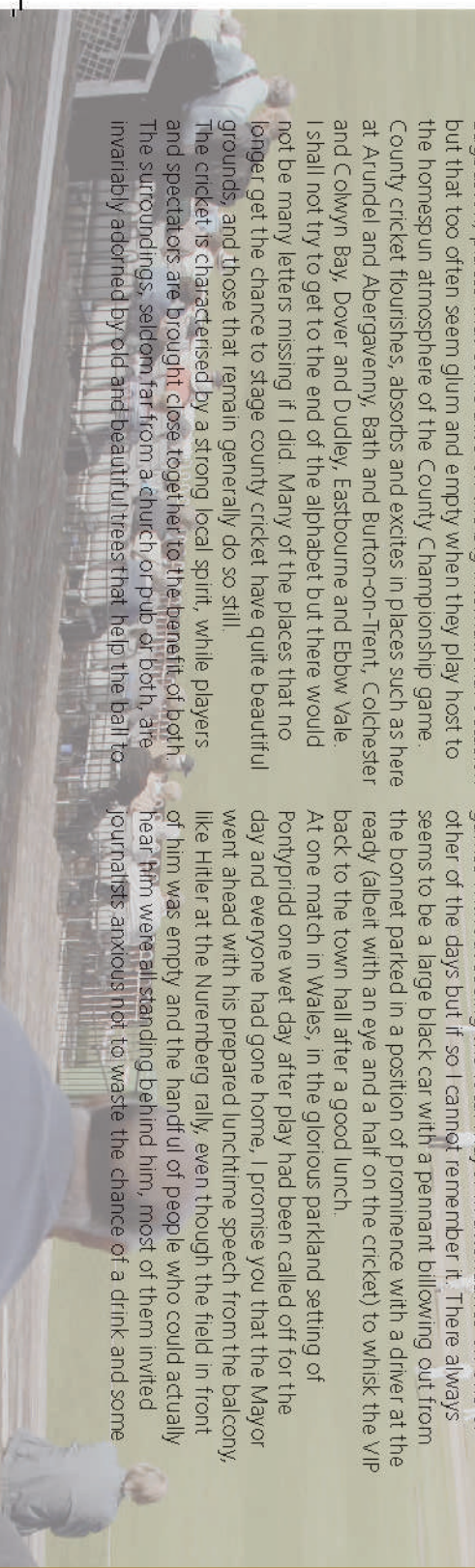


Photo: Chris Rogers. He wasn't wrong

of the assessment of county cricket. It was, as the saying is, 'not wrong'. The third day, the day of the assessment of county cricket, was the day of the assessment of county cricket. The day of the assessment of county cricket was the day of the assessment of county cricket. The day of the assessment of county cricket was the day of the assessment of county cricket.

2010

One of the great things about the festival is that it gives us a chance to see some of the best players in the world. It is a privilege to be able to watch them play and to see them in action. It is a great experience and one that we should all cherish.

2004

History was made when Sussex all-rounder Kevin Innes (a coach in Northamptonshire's academy these days) became the first 12th man in first-class cricket to score a century. Under new ECB regulations, counts are now allowed to nominate a replacement for England players and before James Kirtley, who had been released from the Test squad, could return to play, Innes had become one of three batsmen alongside Richard Montgomerie and Matt Prior to score centuries as Sussex made 619, a new ground record. Prior went from 98 to 133 in ten balls while

for opener Monty it was his third successive ton at Horsham. Mustaq Ahmed then took centre stage, although Kevin Petersen briefly threatened to upstage him with a 75-ball hundred. Musty finished with match figures of 12 for 244, the best return by a Sussex spinner since Hammings wrought havoc on the same ground a decade earlier.



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SIX GREAT GAMES AT HORSHAM

Bruce Talbot remembers six of the best games in the long history of first-class cricket at Horsham



1934

Jack Hobbs, acknowledged by many as the finest batsman in the history of the game, was in search of his 200th first-class hundred when he arrived at Cricketfield Road but at 51 age had finally caught up with The Master. Sussex beat Hobbs' Surrey by nine wickets and Hobbs made 34 and 79 in the second innings before he was run out. The Times' journalist Dudley Cave noted: "While before everything had been free and meretricious, there was now an indelible sense of strain and frustration. For the man that was made for greatness, greatness that day was not in him." Two centuries were scored, though, by Sussex openers John Langridge and Jim Parks senior.

1983

After a gap of 27 years Championship cricket returned to Horsham with a bang as Lancashire won a thrilling three-day tussle by 54 runs. Frank Hayes made 149 as Lancashire scored 312 for 6 and then Mike Watkinson took six wickets as Sussex plunged to 38 for 5 before recovering to make 230. Lancashire built on their lead by making 172 despite five wickets for Tony Pigott, leaving Sussex's chase 255 to win. They came up well short despite 75 from Paul Farmer and were dismissed for 200 in 48.2 overs. Sussex captain John Barclay took his 250th first-class wicket in the game

Top left: Milestone, Joe Vine Bottom left: The Master, Jack Hobbs Top right: Spin wizard, Eddie Hemmings Bottom right: History maker, Kevin Innes

MADE IN SUSSEX

On April 11, 1973 Sussex and Barbados opening batsman Geoff Greenidge set an unwanted record by becoming the last white, Caribbean-born player to appear for the West Indies - some 38 years on the softly-spoken Bajan is still hoping to see an end to the trend. He spoke about West Indies' cricket and his eight seasons with The Martlets to Mark Pennell

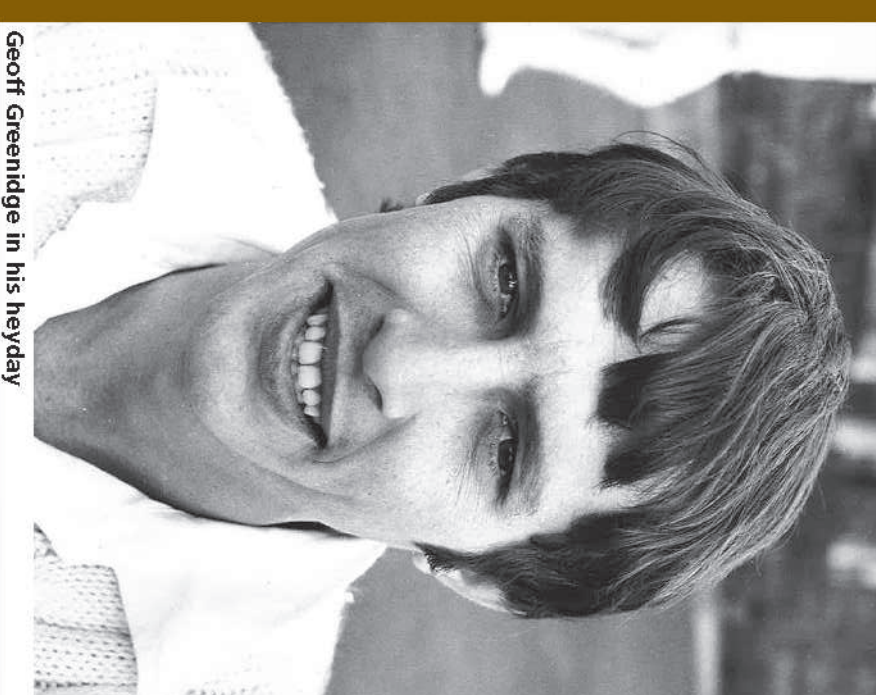
Geoff Greenidge gets to enjoy the best view in the ground whenever cricket is played at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown.

As a former Test player he merits a seat right behind the arm in the CCB's corporate hospitality box on the top tier of the 3MWS stand.

As a Cricket legend of Barbados' indicture, the 63-year-old appears right at home sipping a rum and coke, staring bawler with former teammates and casting an eye over proceedings. It all seems a million miles away from a blustery spring day in Hove, yet Greenidge recalls the time on the south coast, fondly, and with a smile accentuated by his Barbadosian Parks. "He recalled, England were over in Bridgetown in early 1968 and Jim was keeping cricket open for Barbados against the MCC, as they were to fly, and he obviously knew what the saw, Jim and a couple of Sussex committee men later approached me and asked if I'd like to play county cricket. I decided to love to give it a go, it would be a new experience and, as it turned out, they were a wonderful club to play for, fast friendly.

The adjustment the first week or so was incredible. It was much, much colder than I imagined but the ball did so much more and I struggled a bit that first season. The travelling and the sheer number of matches took me aback, it was a real learning experience, but the players made me feel really welcome.

Over the end of that first summer I spent a lot of time in the indoor school with Les Lenthall trying to change my technique to suit the English conditions and after that, things went pretty good.



Geoff Greenidge in his heyday

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CB40 UPDATE

Three successive wins have kept Sharks on course for the semi-finals

These successive wins since Sussex Sharks returned to CB40 action three weeks ago has put us on course to reach the knockout stages of the competition.

We missed out last year after winning the title for two successive years and with only the group winners guaranteed to go through there is still work to do.

The first of those victories came against today's opponents at New Road when we eased to an eight-wicket win after restricting **Worcestershire** to 217 for 7 which was still their highest total at New Road so far this season.

Ed Joyce and Chris Nash launched our reply with a stand of 153 and although Nash was dismissed for 61 Joyce reached his hundred from 89 balls with his tenth boundary. It was our third successive CB40 win and

CB40 Group A	Match	Won	Lost	Tied	N/R	Pts	NetRR
Sussex	8	7	1	0	0	14	+1.530
Worcestershire	8	6	2	0	0	12	+0.234
Netherlands	10	4	4	1	1	10	-0.383
Derbyshire	8	4	3	1	0	9	-0.050
Kent	8	3	5	0	0	6	-0.142
Yorkshire	8	2	6	0	0	4	-0.312
Worcestershire	8	1	6	0	1	3	-0.821

CB40 UPDATE

Three successive wins have kept Sharks on course for the semi-finals

we were able to make it four the following Wednesday with a 76 runs win over **Yorkshire**, details and pictures of which can be found elsewhere in this brochure.

On Friday July 29 the players and staff flew to Amsterdam to take on a **Netherlands** side who have caused one or two upsets this season.

As expected, the pitch at Amstelveen was slow but a decent contingent of Sussex supporters enjoyed the trip as we raked up 271 for 2 after being stuck in by the Dutch. Centuries from Chris Nash and Lou Vincent set Sussex up for a comfortable win. Nash hit an unbeaten 116 and Vincent scored 102 before Chris Liddle claimed an impressive 5 for 18 as the home side were bowled out for 123.

Only four of the Dutch batsmen reached double figures as they were defeated by 148 runs with nearly the overs remaining. Nash's knock came from 135 balls and included five fours and two sixes, Vincent making his 102 from 91 balls with five fours and a six.

Liddle quickly got to work with the home side's batsmen and wickets fell at regular intervals as the hosts slumped to 32 for 5. It was also a good day for Luke Wells who mopped up at the end with 3 for 19.

The Dutch were clearly saving themselves. The following day they defeated Yorkshire to end their slim hopes of qualification. It now looks like a straight fight between ourselves and **Middlesex Panthers** for top spot in the group and remember that the best of the three group runners-up also qualifies for next month's semi-finals.

