

## **The Scarborough Cricket Festival.**

Since 1876, with only the exception of war years, there has been a Cricket Festival played at Scarborough at the end of the first class season.

Today it is a week of Yorkshire Cricket played at North Marine Road, which usually consists of a four day county championship match and a separate one day fixture, but it is still put on in a festival atmosphere with marquee and band music and a relaxed holiday feeling of Cricket by the sea.

Ted Lester, in a forward to an Images of Sport book on the Scarborough Festival and commenting on his early recollections of the Scarborough Festival in the 1930's, said "At this time it was an integral part of the cricket calendar. It was the end of term celebrations for players and acquaintances to make new friends and to reminisce, a time of conviviality, banter and above all for Yorkshire hospitality and generosity at it's best. Play always began at noon with stumps being drawn at 6.00pm. Lunch was taken at 2.00pm and tea on the field of play at 4.15 pm. The opening match was always Yorkshire v the MCC followed by either Mr H.D.G. Leveson-Gowers XI v the MCC or the outgoing Tourists, North v South or Gentlemen v Players. The closing fixture was Mr H.D.G. Leveson-Gowers XI v The Tourists, a splendid finale bringing together a display of quite unforgettable talent. The Festival itself closed with a rendition by the band of Auld Lang Syne followed by the National Anthem, both of which were traditionally observed".

In the early days it was effectively country house cricket put on by local patrons, initially by Lord Londesborough. He and C.I. (Charles Inglis) Thornton had first put on a match on Castle Hill in 1871, Scarborough Visitors organised by Thornton drawing some MCC players and other guests against Lord Londesborough's XI which was virtually the Yorkshire side of the time. The match ended in a draw and was thought to have been a "great success" according to the Scarborough CC annual report.

The Scarborough Cricket Club secretary, Robert Baker, approached Lord Londesborough again in 1875 and together they contacted C.I. Thornton to put together an MCC side. Thornton was successful in persuading the MCC and that year they played formally as the MCC against Yorkshire. The match was spoiled by the weather but the following year the cricket programme was extended to nine days and the main match was Yorkshire v The MCC again managed by C. I. Thornton. This year of 1876 was the start of the Scarborough Festival, often referred to as the Carnival of cricket in its early years.

Thornton was a good choice as organiser for the MCC team as he was a big crowd puller and even now he has the reputation of one of the biggest hitters in the game reputedly hitting a ball over 160 yards at Hove and is one of two players who has hit a six clean over the rooftops at Scarborough into Trafalgar Square. The other being Cec Pepper, seventy nine years later, in the first Festival after the Second World War. He was playing in an Australian Forces team and hit Hollies into Trafalgar Square completely clearing the roof and chimney pots.

Thornton had established the Festival as an established part of the English first class season and the Yorkshire v MCC fixture was played until 1971. Gentlemen v Players was established as a part of the festival in 1885 and was played at Scarborough, but not on a regular basis, until 1962 when the distinction between amateur and professional cricketers was ended.

Thornton's role as team organiser was taken over by "Shrimp" Leveson -Gower who remained associated with the festival for fifty years. He had played in some of Thornton's teams in the late 1890s but went on to become the person with whom the festival was associated in the years surrounding the two world wars. Scarborough owes a lot to him and in 1930 he was made a freeman of the Borough.

Another man not to be forgotten is T.N.Pearce, opening batsman and captain of Essex who went on to be an England selector and succeeded Leveson-Gower in 1950 and continued in the role until 1980. In 1971 he was honoured with the Presidency of the Scarborough Cricket Club.

At one time or another almost every great player in the game has taken part in the Scarborough Festival.

W.G.Grace has scored two centuries at the festival, the first of them being remarkable in that he scored 174 out of a team total of 263 for the Gentlemen's XI of 1885.

Don Bradman played his farewell to English cricket in 1948 with an innings of 153 for Australia against Leveson-Gowers XI and that with Freddie Brown, Alec Bedser and Jim Laker in the opposition. He had previously scored a hundred at Scarborough in 1934.

Jack Hobbs (266) and Len Hutton (241) both made double centuries for the Players in 1925.

Wilfred Rhodes took 9 for 24 for Thornton's XI against the Australians in 1899.

Barry Richards and Geoff Boycott both scored hundreds on the same day in the Fenner Trophy in 1975.

George Hirst took 8 for 35 in 13.4 overs for the Players in 1900 and in the same game F.S. Jackson scored 134.

Lord Hawke, Herbert Sutcliffe, Bill Bowes, Fred Truman, Brian Close, Ray Illingworth, Michael Vaughan and Darren Gough, they have all played in the festival

D.B. Close's XI, Michael Parkinson's XI and Sir Tim Rice's XI all helped build and sustain the Festival

Australia, South Africa, West Indies, New Zealand, India and Pakistan Touring sides have all played at the Scarborough Festival.

In 1995 against Worcestershire, Yorkshire was able to declare on 600 for 4 thanks to a double century from David Byas, our Director of Cricket at Scarborough, and an unbeaten hundred from Scarborough based Craig White.

In such a short piece it is difficult to mention let alone do justice to all the wonderful players and occasions that have been part of The Scarborough Festival. It is however still thriving in its 123<sup>rd</sup> Season and attendances in 2009 were excellent, there is still the relaxed holiday feel around the ground and players and spectators alike love to take part.