

# The SABR UK Examiner

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## 1998 SABR UK AGM

by Martin Hoerchner

The Seventh Annual Society for American Baseball Research UK Annual General Meeting took place at its spiritual home, the Kings of Clerkenwell Public House, on Saturday April 25. That's a mouthful, so I'll just say that the '98 SABR UK AGM was held at the "Kings".

I think it was our best meeting yet, not only in the numbers attending, but in the quality of the presentations given.

Hugh Robinson opened the meeting, explaining that we were going to do things backwards. We would have the presentations first, and the Chapter business second. He introduced Graham Winterbone the Secretary, Patrick Morley the Chair of the British Baseball Historical Committee, Harvey Sahker the Assistant Chair of the BBHC, Andy Parkes the Treasurer, and Martin Hoerchner the Examiner Editor, who was suffering from the worst non-fatal case of laryngitis in history.

He then introduced Chapter Chairman Mike Ross. Mike started off by reading messages of greeting from Major League Baseball International, who donated two baseball jackets to auction for the Chapter coffers. Then a greeting

from Honourary President Norman Macht, and then a message from the big enchilada, SABR President Larry Gerlach, who expressed his regret at being unable to attend and his appreciation for SABR UK's accomplishments. Mike then



*Clark Griffith regales the crowd with his history of baseball labour relations.*

read apologies from SABR UK members scattered around the island.

Mike then introduced our featured speaker, Clark Griffith, the namesake of his great-uncle and Hall of Fame pitcher, and the son of Calvin Griffith, former owner of the Washington Senators and

Minnesota Twins. Clark is an attorney and the Major League representative for the owners in labour negotiations, and was a negotiator in the strikes of 1980 and '81.

That was the subject of his main presentation, the history of labour negotiations in baseball, which he presented with insight and humour. Clark noted that the constant conflict of players vs. owners is as old as the game itself, or at least the professional game, which came into play in 1869. He noted the implementation of the reserve rule in 1879 as a major point of conflict with the players, but one that the owners felt was necessary to avoid plunging the game into chaos. The first counterattack by the players was the formation of the Players' League in 1890, which split baseball attendance three ways and was bound to failure.

The next players' union was the League Protective Players' Association, which lasted from 1900-1902. Clark noted with dismay that his grandfather and namesake was a players' representative in that union. Then the American League was formed, which also had a reserve rule, but the inter-league competition and contract-jumping opened up a new era of freedom for the players on the job market, until the two leagues made peace and agreed to

*continued on page 12*

# VIEW FROM THE CHAIR by Mike Ross

Martin the editor says I got to do this, even though I am rushing off to catch a jet plane to the promised land to attend my first ever main SABR event. This is the symposium for Joe Jackson inspired by Ted Williams.

Ted is appealing for Jackson's entry into the Hall of Fame. It is about time. While there I will attend an 80th birthday party for Williams at Crystal River, Florida. His birthday is in August, so I say "an 80th" because it is certain the queue to honour him is a long one.

Ted as my first hero, not for his home runs so much as that he refused to wear a necktie. And he got away with it; up until now that is.

Leaving town with the SABR UK AGM in the bank is a joy, knowing that I don't have to help organise another such event for the foreseeable future. Six years we have been going and we are still standing. We've battled with the Philistines and held ground. Well, that cricket crowd can get mighty rough. Let me thank everyone who attended and all the ones who couldn't who wrote in

states, and certainly bigger than the membership of some states. North Dakota is one we beat out for sure.

Clark Griffith was entertaining and enlightening as we knew he would be. Allen Synge, a mad cricket fan and a writer, managed to entertain as well despite his passion for that other bat and ball game.

Our host John Eichler and his son in law have joined the membership.



*This photograph was discovered by Chairman Mike Ross, in a photo shop in London. It is dated 1936.*

*On the back of the photograph are two handwritten titles. The first, confusingly, reads "Streatham Mitcham Rugby League Team leaving for their match with Hull Kingston Rovers on Saturday". The second, more appropriately, reads "The Streatham Mitcham team (with Napier at Captain, centre) going out for baseball practice". Is there anyone out there that can shed more light on this photograph?*

I am bringing along the sculpture of Ted swinging the bat which I made with British artist Tim Taylor. I am told it is to be placed atop his birthday cake. As it is in bronze, I fear it will sink into the cake up to the bat handle. I have nightmares about it. One such nightmare had the sculpture going through the cake, the table, the floor into the basement function rooms of the Ramada Inn where the do is being done.

Nonetheless, I grew up with

with their hello's and regrets. It was nice hearing from Cliff Kachline, one of the original founders of the great society. He signed me up in a St Louis bar, as I often mention, mainly because it shows the kind of dedication and enthusiasm possessed by the early SABR-ites.

There were around 1200 members in '82 and now we have nearly 7,000. I venture to say that our Chapter will never reach that amount but I believe we are the largest Chapter outside the 50 US

Actually they came in after the fifth meeting; that shows what attrition can do. I am heading out now, and will leave the density of the meeting to the other scribblers herein contained.

Mike Ross

PS We have pretty much promised to have an interim meeting before the next AGM, so that we can offer more opportunities for other members to make presentations.



# THIS SABR'D ISLE

by Martin Hoerchner

In my darkest moments, I sit alone in my room and stare into the void and ask myself, "Are we really just eggheads?" Isn't what we call "research" just a cold collection of facts, neatly arranged and collated to make some sort of story or argument? My own personal area is the origins and ancestry of baseball. Does it really matter? Isn't collecting these facts a mere mental exercise, maybe along the lines of trainspotting?

The answer comes back. No. What we're doing here is more a spiritual journey than an academic exercise. It's the search for the past, the search for your origins, a social family tree. It's no coincidence that the beginning of baseball is like the beginning of the Bible - Genesis, Exodus and Numbers.

It's a question of "how did we get here from there"? This what the spiritual journey means. It's no coincidence that another one of my interests is genealogy. My four grandparents were descended and/or emigrated from four European countries - Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Spain. My father's father was born in a tiny village at the foot of the mountains in what used to be East Germany. He emigrated in 1911 and immigrated in 1912, so I can't be blamed for either war. I've visited his birthplace. It's a beautiful setting. I saw the record of his birth in 1888, the year the Giants first won the National League pennant, recorded in ink in the church register. This is what the spiritual journey means. Last year I went to Austria, and visited the village where my father's mother was born. She was born in Austria but the area was transferred to Italy after the Treaty of Versailles. Her family's house would have been right underneath a rocky ridge of the Alps. It was gorgeous. It's hard to explain how moving these discoveries can be.

The birthplace of my mother's parents' families I haven't been able to trace exactly - except for

the countries. But I will find out. Four European families moved to America, and here I am! Why did they move? What dream were they following? I won't be satisfied until I find out why. Will it help me understand myself? Like them, I emigrated, searching a dream.

Not that understanding the 1904 Giants will help me with my neuroses. But comparing the 1904 Giants with the 1998 Giants, and the 1888 team, and 1921, 1951, 1985 is a reflection of the changes in society throughout those years. But with a lot more detail.

I think the bottom line is that I've always felt that understanding the past can help you understand the present. In a world searching for answers, following the progression from the past to the present and discovering how styles, ideas and attitudes have evolved is a good key to understanding the present. We don't know it all in 1998, just as we didn't know it all in 1967 or 1491.

Maybe that last essay should have been a separate article, because I don't quite know how to make the transition to my usual light banter. If you want, you can go make a cup of tea now, and when you get back, I'll be in a different style.

I've been whingeing for two years plus about this horrible commute I've been doing daily, from Land's End to John O'Groats. So it ends last April Fool's Eve, and immediately I come down with the worst case of flu turning into the worst laryngitis in history. I'm sure it was a delayed reaction to Snodgrass' muff in the last game of the 1912 World Series. I hope all of you who heard me croak at the last AGM have as much pity for me as I did for myself. Actually, I'm still a Shetland Pony - "only a little hoarse"...

All this is meant to be a lame excuse for being late for writing World Series observations. Last year's, not this year's. And gener-

ally being late with this Examiner. Last October I started out not having a great passion for either team. But as the series went on, I started getting more and more angry. We have on one side a team from a working class town next to a flammable lake, with some of the most long-suffering fans in history. Only three teams have won their last World Series before the Indians' last win in 1948. The TV coverage showed grandfathers with grandsons, hoping for their last chance to see a World Series champion together. The team, the city, the people, have known what suffering means.

So against them we have the upstart Florida team. One put together with a chequebook. The only suffering the residents of Miami know is when they don't squirt enough suntan oil on their bodies. The team's five years old. If they lose, you've always got the sun and the beach and baseball fades into the distance. In Cleveland, the team means much more.

It was a great series, coming down to extra innings in the seventh game. Cleveland started with Jared Wright, a young pitcher with a very old baseball name. But in the ninth a blown save took the game into extra innings, to be finally won by Florida with a sacrifice fly in the bottom of the 10th. So the hard-working residents of Cleveland have to wait at least one more year for that elusive championship. There is no justice in the world.

That's one thing about baseball, and you'd better get used to it. It's essentially amoral. The guy in white doesn't always win, and might doesn't always make right. The guy that's beating you might be Ty Cobb, Hal Chase, or Chick Gandil. Then again he might be Christy Mathewson, Walter Johnson or Lou Gehrig. I believe there is a levelling factor, and that injustices even out in time. At least, I'd like to think so.

It's just longer for others than for some. And besides, teal isn't really a baseball colour.

# Baseball and Cricket - Cross Currents

## Failure of a mission

In the year 1859, rather like General Howe's redcoats nearly a century earlier, a party of 'all-star' English professionals set out to retain America - in this instance for Cricket.

The mission can be adjudged a failure, largely on account of a certain misplaced commercialism. The players wanted the best of both worlds. They were anxious not to lose their English summer-time salaries.

At the same time they were keen to avail themselves of the handsome £50 per man offered by the American sponsors. As a result, the tour was undertaken in the late Fall when the side would be bound to face adverse weather conditions. Indeed, the tour concluded with the no-

torious 'Frosty Match' played at Rochester, NY, on October 21st, 24th, and 25th between Eleven of England and Twenty-two of the United States and Canada. The home side was wrecked by the round-arm bowling of John Wisden (of the Cricket Almanack). But dismissal appeared to come as relief to the half frozen batsmen. 'Shiver my timbers, I'm out!' was the relieved cry as they made a dash for the warmth of the pavilion. The home side was beaten, early on the third day, by an innings and 70 runs, but in fact, it was Cricket that was defeated on the fields of Rochester. Lillywhite tells us:

*'The remainder of the day was spent in a match at base-ball, which was got up to lessen the severe loss of the promoters of the cricket match.'*

*'According to good judges, the English cricketers played remarkably well, and (wicket keeper) Lockyer's playing behind the bat could not have been surpassed.'*



*A rough crossing - Lillywhite's Tour takes the Atlantic route.*

## The Cricket Field, U.S. edition

In fact, Cricket was reasonably well established in the US at the time of Lillywhite's tour. As it happens, I have a copy of the American edition of the classic manual, *The Cricket Field* by James Pycroft published in Boston in the same year. You wouldn't find Simon Schuster, for example, bringing out Mike Atherton's hints on batting these days! The book's original owner, a Mr Charles Jackson of the Chelsea (Mass) Cricket Club, records in his own hand a busy cricket season with challenges from Bunker Hill and most of the other Boston suburbs.

Despite all this heartening activity, you get the impression that the book's publishers may just have sensed that they were backing the wrong horse; they are certainly in the process of changing horses in mid-stream, or perhaps, like Lillywhite's promoters, are looking to Baseball to recoup their expenses. The back of volume is an extensive, and lavishly illustrated advertisement for the *Base Ball Player's Pocket Companion*

with vital 'directions for playing the Massachusetts Game and the New York Game' which, of course, had nothing to do with the St John's Wood Game.

In other words, we may be looking at a turning point when Cricket would begin to give ground (and even grounds) to

Baseball in America, a process which we are told the Civil War would hasten and nearly complete. With 'nearly' all America won for Baseball - I will deal with the exception in due course - the time would have seemed right for the conquest of England. Why didn't England yield?

## The cult of the 'Straight Bat'

Just when Baseball was in a position to begin to make inroads on Cricket on its home ground, England's summer game underwent a fundamental administrative change. The management was removed from the hands of



## by Allan Syngé

mercenary professionals like William Clarke and Fred Lillywhite and came under the control of the upper-class idealists of the Marylebone Cricket Club at Lord's. These gentlemen made it their business to stamp their approval or disapproval on the various strokes available to the batsman. They came down heavily on the 'hook' and the 'pull', indeed any stroke that savoured of the Baseball batter's cross-the-body swing,

in his book of *Reminiscences*.

In fact, such was the great man's fear of straying from the straight and narrow path that, according to C.B. Fry, he would even contrive, by an extraordinary rotation of the body, a straight batted drive to a ball wide of the leg stump. In this context, it will be seen how the principles of Baseball would be regarded with any amount of raised eyebrows.

We are looking back at a cul-

ture the utmost severity for fear that the whole cricket castle could come tumbling down.

Thus it can be said that the twin precepts of the 'straight bat' and the 'straight arm' have formed a barrier through which Baseball has not found it easy to pass.

### Further attempts to bowl out Baseball

Meanwhile, England didn't abandon her efforts to turn back



CRICKET MATCH BETWEEN THE NEW ENGLAND AND ST. GEORGE CLUBS.

The 'straight bat', aimed towards the off, was enshrined as the epitome of style and even as the hallmark of moral rectitude.

Again, cricket had suddenly acquired a giant champion in the person of W.G. Grace, who between the mid-1860s to the end of the century would bring crowds flocking to the broader bat and ball game. Grace's formidable bat was as straight as any Lord's purist could wish and he himself was a vigorous upholder of orthodoxy.

*'Young batsmen should not be allowed to practice the stroke; indeed they should be severely reprimanded if they show any tendency towards pulling!'* he wrote

ture which saw the young B.J.T. Bosanquet, the inventor of the 'googly', threatened with expulsion from Eton if he attempted any more 'uneducated shots'.

It's perhaps significant, too, that the beginning of this century saw a concerted attempt to eliminate 'throwing' from cricket. A number of famous careers were ruined and the fast bowler and batsman C.B. Fry was compelled to concentrate exclusively on batting, which he did to memorable effect. From time to time, notably in the late '50s, the spectre of throwing has reappeared, causing the authorities to react with

the tide of Baseball in the US. In late August 1872, for instance, the Secretary of the M.C.C. himself, a Mr R.A. Fitzgerald, led a touring party to Canada and the US with W.G. Grace as the star attraction. While Fred Lillywhite's overriding aim had been to market his patented scoring machine, Fitzgerald's purpose was purely missionary. The tour saw some exciting cricket but could not be described as a diplomatic triumph. W. G. Grace was ridiculed for making the same speech at every port of call:

*'Gentlemen, I thank you for the honour you have done me. I*

# Baseball and Cricket (con't)

have never tasted better oysters than I have tasted here today, and I hope I shall get as good wherever I go.'

Then the team got into double trouble - first from the Philadelphians for rushing off to catch the train to Boston and from the Bostonians for missing the train and arriving a day late, too late to play a crucial match with influential Harvard. The remaining Boston match was played, significantly, on a Baseball ground which heavy rain, or the god of Baseball, soon turned into a quagmire. A delicate hint was dropped by a local sports hero when he presented each member of the England team with a baseball, a gift dismissed by Grace in his memoirs as 'an interesting relic'. The hardships involved in travelling back to Canada may have helped to decide W.G. not to tour the New World again. 'As we passed through Maine we came under the veto of the famous Prohibition Laws and had the curious experience of being absolutely unable to get, for love or money, anything stronger by way of refreshment than thick soup washed down by tea!'

## Wartime opportunities for Baseball in Britain

The two World Wars saw Baseball and Softball played in England on an unprecedented scale in and around the camps of the Doughboys and GIs. There is a nice Baseball scene in the British wartime movie *The Way to the Stars* which has an RAF officer, played by Basil Radford, scamp-ering with bat in hand straight for the pitcher to the merriment of his US Army Air Corp allies. As I remember, the local lads around the base were always generously

encouraged to join in. Indeed, Robin Marlar, the former Sussex spinner, writing in *The Cricketer* in August 1957, recalled post-War attempts at outright bribery on the game's behalf:

*'The lure of unlimited popcorns, ice cream and candy floss has enticed children and their parents away from the cricket grounds of West London to the American base at Ruislip where these nourishing foods are handed*

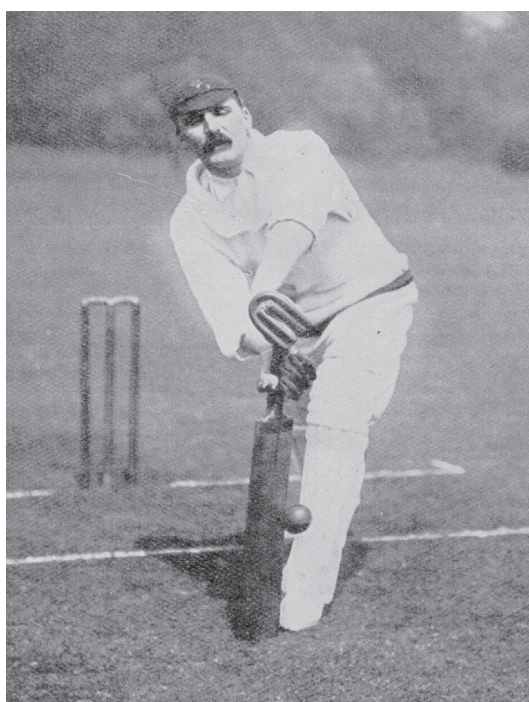
mind the quaint local game of Stoolball, which is chiefly worth watching because it is played by lithe young country girls and is, interestingly, said to have derived from a ball game played by milkmaids using their milking stools for bases. We can appease the fairer sex here by claiming that this generally feminine pastime is, in fact, a father of both the games under discussion.

## Baseball influences on Cricket's development

Baseball may have failed to conquer Cricket but it has exercised significant influences on the English game's development. Let me turn first, or rather at last, to the 'Gentleman of Philadelphia' who continued to play Cricket long after the rest of America had turned to the other game and who in their tours of England in 1897, 1903 and 1908 showed they could give most English first-class counties as good as they got.

The 'gentlemen' of the various elite Philadelphia clubs were, it has to be faced, a bunch of moneyed snobs. Indeed, I sometimes think that it was the snobbishness of

Philadelphia which was largely responsible for branding Cricket as a 'stuck-up' game in popular American perception. In any event, as they prepared to set out for England in the summer of 1897, the Gentlemen of Philadelphia found they were short of a really penetrative bowler. A non-'gentleman', in that his trip had to be subsidised, was recruited by the name of John Barton King (1873 - 1965). King had a lethal delivery which he called 'the angler', a product of his experience as a



A.C. McClaren demonstrates the "stroke of moral rectitude"

out with typical largesse. This generosity reminds me of a summer's day when an exhibition match was played at Harrow in 1945. After the game, bats, balls and gloves were given away *ad lib.*

Marlar reckoned, perhaps a little patronisingly, that the reason Baseball has failed to take root here was that it is 'too much akin to the kindergarten or girlish pastime of rounders'. Marlar, as a Sussex man, may also have had in



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Baseball pitcher, which, time and again, would prove the ruin of English batsmen. On his last tour in 1908 'Bart' King topped the England bowling averages with the extraordinary figure of 11.01 which was not to be bettered until 1958 by Les Jackson of Derbyshire with a figure 10.99.

You may be the judge of 'Bart' King's impact on the English game when I tell you it was confidently rumoured that he was offered the hand of a rich widow in order to enable him to play regularly as an amateur in County Cricket. Technically, the impact was altogether more far-reaching. England's faster bowlers, who had hitherto depended on sheer pace with perhaps a last second application of spin, suddenly became 'complete anglers' in the Barton King mould. A former trundler like Yorkshire's George Hirst started to shatter stumps with balls that ducked in,

some said, with the force of a hard throw in from mid-off. The 'swing-ers' multiplied through the decades to the near-extinction of the Lord's purists' beloved off-side play.

By and large England continued not to play Baseball, but Australians did. And this fact alone began to reflect adversely on England's performance in Test matches. Good fielding was not traditionally a great feature of

English cricket. Even in 'The Golden Age' (the first decade of this century) we find a statistician calculating that a total of 1,439 surplus runs had been scored in one week in July by batsmen who should have been safely caught by the fielding side. Since the beginning of the 'Ashes' Test

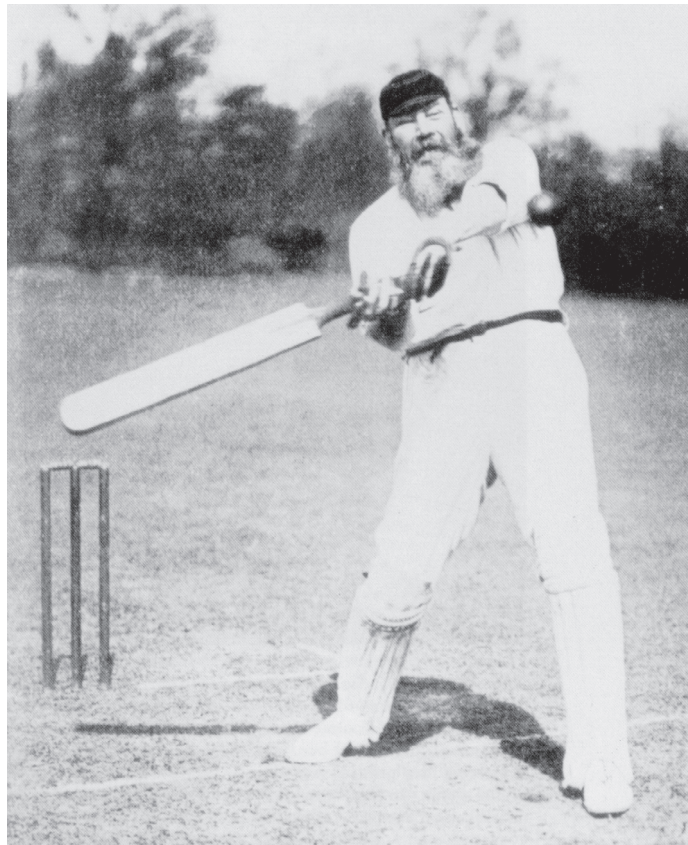
many baseball-cricketers still use the same technique with bare hands. Neil Harvey was an arch exponent of this and that wonderfully safe catcher Victor Richardson always took the ball as high as possible."

With the advent of One Day Cricket English fielding has improved immeasurably, even though we still seem to drop the vital catches. But it can reasonably be claimed that the improvement began with Englishmen imitating Australians who played American Baseball.

## Summary

It's nearly the year 2000 and the two nations still seem set on keeping their national games to themselves. In the US, Cricket has crept in through the back door with the Caribbean leagues. But I am not aware that many new converts have been won, although an Indian New York taxi driver told my son the other weekend that he was proud to have seen Ted Dexter bat at Hove. Certainly Philadelphian

cricket is today a series of disused temples. I visited the Philadelphia Cricket Club itself in 1989. Now an elite country club, it keeps the name and the snobbery and an actual cricket bat still hangs over the bar. However, the barman was unable to offer any explanation as to what the curious instrument might be. Here your distinguished body continues the fight to win English hearts and minds for your cherished game.



*The great W.G. Grace breaks his own rules by using a baseball-like stroke*

matches, Australians have tended to produce safer pairs of hands. In his book *The Art of Cricket* the great Sir Donald Bradman suggests an explanation - Australian cricketers play Baseball, at least their finest fieldsmen tended to have. To quote:

*"Those who have watched crack baseball teams know how they get under a catch and never seem likely to miss. The glove is a tremendous help of course, but*

# PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL IN DEWSBURY

by Ian Smyth

Dewsbury witnessed a fleeting visit from professional baseball during the summer of 1936, when Crown Flatt became the home of Dewsbury Royals Professional Baseball Club.

Dewsbury Royals were founder members of the Yorkshire Baseball League. Other teams in the league included Bradford City Sox, Greenfield Giants, Hull Baseball Club, Leeds Oaks, Scarborough Seagulls, Sheffield Dons and Wakefield Cubs.

The league was established by John Moores of Littlewoods Pools, who was also President of the National Baseball Association, in an attempt to establish baseball as a major summer sport in England. All of the teams played either at the local Rugby League or Greyhound Racing stadia.

The first professional game to be held in Dewsbury was on Saturday May 9th, 1936. The Dewsbury Reporter noted that,

*"Local sportsmen will have their first opportunity to see the game that is all the rage in America at Crown Flatt this weekend when Dewsbury Royals, the newly formed baseball team, will play their first Game with Hull in the Yorkshire League. Players have been busily practicing all week under the direction of WT Graham who has played the game in Canada, and until more local players have learnt the game, Dewsbury will have the assistance of Jack Pomerantz, an American professional pitcher, Sam Berman, an American professional catcher, Towler Cox of Settle, who has experience of the American game in Canada, and Graham."*

Unfortunately for the Dewsbury team, neither the weather or the opposition were particularly kind. Despite this a large crowd turned out to watch the game. The Reporter noted,

*"Probably eighty percent of the those who visited Crown Flatt*

*last Saturday to see Dewsbury Royals play their first League baseball game out of curiosity. It was a pity, therefore, that conditions were so miserable, or by now there might be many more baseball fans in the Heavy Woollen District. Even as things turned out, a bitterly raw afternoon, with an icy wind with rain at times, most people would have their appetites whetted, for there was no doubt about it, the game made some appeal. Compared with the usual sporting spectacles at Crown Flatt, bad as they were last season I do not think baseball is as thrilling as Rugby League football, but when Heavy Woollen District people are sufficiently versed in the laws as to appreciate the finer points of the game, and, more important still, when some of the Dewsbury players themselves understand its possibilities better, the game should command a good following."* (16 May 1936).

The inexperience of the team, allied to the fact that Dewsbury's foreign professionals were not always available, led to the team struggling. Whereas other clubs in the league had imported professionals, Dewsbury in the main had to field local players who were new to the game. Dewsbury did compete with most teams; however, when it came to the crunch, the greater experience of the various opponents invariably won through.

In fact, Dewsbury lost their first nine league games, and as of the morning of July 11th they were firmly rooted at the bottom of the league table.

## YORKSHIRE BASEBALL LEAGUE

	P	W	L	D	PTS
GREENFIELD	9	9	0	0	18
HULL	9	7	2	0	14
SHEFFIELD	9	7	2	0	14
WAKEFIELD	8	6	2	0	12
BRADFORD	9	5	4	0	10
LEEDS	9	2	7	0	4
SCARBOROUGH	8	1	7	0	2
DEWSBURY	9	0	9	0	0

However all of this was to change, when on July 11th Dewsbury met Scarborough Seagulls.

## DEWSBURY'S RECORD WIN

*"Dewsbury Royals gained their first victim in the Yorkshire League on Saturday when they overwhelmed Scarborough Seagulls 54-6. The score, a record for the league, was a true reflection on the game. From the start it was apparent that Dewsbury were easily the stronger team. The Dewsbury fielding showed a marked improvement. Cox was again in good form as the Royal's pitcher, and the brothers Graham also showed up well in the field."* (Dewsbury Reporter 18 July 1936)

This record victory was quickly followed by a second league win over Bradford City Sox.

*"A somewhat tame opening between City Sox and Royals in a Yorkshire League game at Legrams Lane Bradford on Tuesday developed into one of the closest struggles so far this season with the Royals winning 10-9. After scoring a single each in the first inning, both teams retired in the next four without a score, but in the sixth frame Dewsbury, who were batting first, scored three runs while their opponents were pointless, and followed this with another three to the Sox one. A fine rally by the Sox gave them four runs in the eighth frame after the Royals had scored a single, and the last innings opened with the home team only two behind. Dewsbury scored twice and the Sox failed by one run to draw."*

However, despite improved performances, crowds at Crown Flatt were disappointing, and without the financial backing, which other clubs were receiving, Dewsbury found it difficult to attract quality foreign players. Subsequently the Royals struggled to compete with the bigger clubs,



## **PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL IN DEWSBURY (con't)**

which in turn affected the club's viability, which sadly forced the club out of business.

The summer of 1936 was the first and last for professional baseball in Dewsbury. The Royals finished the league season in seventh place with a record of three wins and eleven losses, defeating Bradford, Scarborough and Sheffield, while Greenfield Giants won the league. Dewsbury Royals dropped out of the Yorkshire League at the end of 1936, being replaced by York Maroons.

Despite the demise of Dewsbury Royals, professional baseball thrived in the region. The league expanded in 1938 to include teams from Lancashire. Also in 1938, players from the Yorkshire-Lancashire Major League beat the United States Olympic Baseball team under the management of Leslie Mann (of the 1914 Miracle Braves), Secretary of the International Baseball Federation, and could lay claim to being World Amateur Champions.

Sadly for professional baseball, World War Two brought about a sudden halt to proceedings after the 1939 season. Unfortunately the game had not fully established itself, therefore after the war it only resurfaced in areas such as Hull, London and Liverpool where the game had firmly established roots in the pre-war era.

It is true to say that professional baseball did not set Dewsbury alight, and that its existence is all but forgotten. However the sport *did* exist in Dewsbury, and for that one short summer in 1936 local players from the Heavy Woollen District became the boys of summer. Their exploits deserve recognition, and their story should be told.

*- Ian Smyth is an official of the British Baseball Federation and head of Youth Development.*

## **REPORT OF THE SABR UK HISTORICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE FOR 1998**

This past year has been one of steady digging into the past of British baseball by the SABR UK Historical Research Committee. Unlike the previous year's discovery of one of the long-lost Spalding traphies, 1998 has yielded no spectacular finds. But from the yellowing files of old newspapers and a variety of other sources, a picture is slowly emerging of over a century of organised baseball in the United Kingdom. Thanks largely to SABR UK, more researchers are now delving into that past than ever before. So much so, that we have now reached the stage where we can at least draft the chapter headings for our projected HISTORY OF BASEBALL IN BRITAIN.

Chapter One: THE ORIGINS OF BASEBALL. From medieval times to the late 19th century. A wealth of fascinating and often conflicting material has come to light, including the development of the sport from such games as stoolball, town ball and rounders.

Chapter Two: THE BASEBALL BOOK OF THE 1890s. Following the Spalding world tours, baseball boomed in Britain with the formation of a National Baseball Association and gains in the Midlands, the North West and the North East attended by several thousand spectators. After a brief hiatus, the British Baseball Association was formed in 1906 and flourished for a time almost entirely in the South of England. But by the start of the First World War, the sport's popularity had largely faded away.

Chapter Three: BETWEEN THE WARS. In some respects

this period rivalled the heyday of the 1890s with the formation of a national Baseball Association, baseball played widely in the Home Counties, a northern league which attracted commercial sponsorship as well as crowds of up to 10,000 spectators and a determined effort to persuade schools to include baseball in their sports activities.

Chapter Four: FROM THE POST WAR ERA TO THE PRESENT DAY. A succession of baseball leagues or federations came and went embracing different parts of the country until the foundation of the British Baseball Federation and the present day organisation of the sport with leagues covering much of the country.

Additional chapters or appendices would cover WAR TIME BASEBALL, BRITISH BORN MAJOR LEAGUERS, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BASEBALL AND WELSH BASEBALL, CRICKET v. BASEBALL, WHY BASEBALL HAS NEVER TAKEN OFF IN BRITAIN, and THE FUTURE OF BASEBALL IN THE UK.

Our colleagues in the States have not so far been able to trace any of the Spalding papers which could throw light on the Derby connection, mentioned in the last report. A propos of that, we are still trying to persuade Derby City Council to commemorate the game's historic links with the city now that the Baseball Ground is no more. Finally, the Committee no longer includes Europe in its title, since the history of baseball on the continent calls for more resources than are presently to hand.

*Patrick Morley, Chairman*

## ***Feeding the Habit - Additions to a SABRite's bookshelf***

*by Barry Winetrobe*

One of the benefits of full SABR membership is the receipt of interesting publications from the States. These comprise the regular (generally annual) periodicals, such as The Baseball Research Journal and The National Pastime, and one-off specials, the most recent being "Baseball for the fun of it". The BRJ is a treasure house

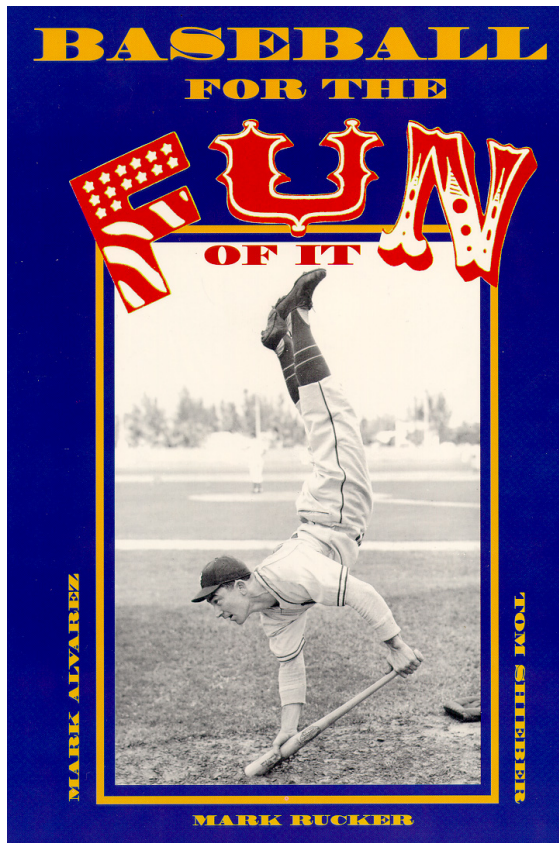
offascinating articles, and, t h a n k - fully, not too many of them are the sort of statistical pieces which require an Einstein to read and understand them. The latest issue (No. 26), which arrived at the New Year, has 142 pages containing 41 items on a wide range of

subjects from an article on baseball's perfect (ie 1.000) hitters to an analysis of the 50-home run club. There are, of course, the usual items on new ways of measuring and evaluating performance, such as 'percentage of extra-base hits' (PXBH), 'RBI efficiency', and pitchers' 'wins above average'. Personally, not being terribly mathematically minded, I enjoy the more historical, anecdotal or 'trivia' pieces, such as the 1996 'cost-effective' All Star team,

Jackie Robinson's performance in the Dodgers' last day defeat of the Phillies in 1951 which led to the legendary Bobby Thomson Giants/Dodgers play-off series, and spring training in Indiana during WWII. So, whatever your baseball interests are, you're bound to find something to your tastes. The one-off publications are equally enjoyable. The 1996 offering, "Baseball's First Stars", for example, was a massive and invaluable work

of reference, providing biographies of over 150 nineteenth century stars, including the Hall of Famers. Read about the superstars (on and off the field) such as Cap Anson, Charles Comiskey, Al Spalding and King Kelly to the lesser-known or unknown

(to me at least!) Frank Fennelly, the Ipswich-born Richard Higham and Bill Shindle. This year's publication is totally different but equally enjoyable. Entitled "Baseball for the fun of it", it is full of humorous, fascinating anecdotes and quirky old photos, cards, posters and the like. Like all such SABR books, it is ideal for dipping into at odd moments, especially in that lonnngng baseball-less desert in between the World Series and spring training. Superb stuff!



## ***MONTE IRVIN***



Monte Irvin has been named and has accepted the position of Honourary Vice-President of our Chapter. This was presented in recognition of his services since the Chapter has been formed, and it was the highest available honour we could give him. He joins Chapter namesake Bobby Thompson as the second member of the National League Champion 1951 Giants to come on board. Irvin is pictured at home with his trophy for being elected MVP for that great '51 squad. Though Bobby Thomson finished off the year, it was Monte Irvin who lead the team through the tough comeback from 13 1/2 games behind the Dodgers. And during the year he also found the time to show the ropes to a young rookie named Willie Mays. Welcome aboard, Monte!



# Why Baseball?

by *Graham Winterbone*

Some recent correspondence with SABR members has got me thinking anew about my interest in baseball. For a start, the learning of a completely new sport was exciting, particularly when coupled with some American razzmatazz. This formed "the bait". However this alone was not enough. Once I swallowed the bait, what got me hooked? The bottom line was that Baseball managed to bring together practically all my interests, of travel, history and sport, in one single hobby.

Thanks to my Dad I've always been a sports fan, and I have some very early memories of watching football and boxing in particular with him on the TV. He gave me a good sense of occasion and a of fair play, while still having a competitive spirit. Unfortunately I was never very good at sport, so I became a spectator. I have also been watching Luton Town matches since 1971 and I am now approaching my 700th game. This certainly has got me used to the ups and downs of following a small town team. Luckily though, I fell in love with a big market baseball team (the Blue Jays) who had a certain amount of success in the 90's though they are now in a rebuilding phase.

History has always been of great interest to me. And Baseball history is incredibly well researched and makes great reading. My favourite books are biographies on the major stars which as well as being fascinating from a baseball point of view, they also serve as histories of the relevant eras. Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth and Jackie Robinson, for example, are products of their particular eras, in more than just a baseball sense. A good biography can bring these players, and the time they live in, to life.

I got off to a bit of a slow start with travel; I did not go abroad until I was 18. However in 1978, a friend and I took advantage of

Freddie Laker's Skytrain and flew to LA at budget prices. We then spent five weeks travelling around California. Unfortunately I knew nothing of baseball at the time.

What better way is there to spend your summer holidays than to travel around America visiting various cities and taking in the ballparks while you are there? So far I have managed to visit Anaheim Stadium, Candlestick Park, Oakland Coliseum, Jack Murphy Stadium and Coors Field as well as Yankee Stadium and Shea Stadium last September. I've got around a bit but here is still a long way to go. I know it's strange but I still haven't been to the SkyDome! My wife and I just can't get excited about going anywhere other than North America.

My other interest is beer — oops — how did that get in here! Anyway I guess I have to admit to taking a few beers at the ballpark from time to time as well! So you can see that baseball covers all my interests and apart from that you most certainly meet some friendly and interesting people through the game - that's you, the SABR members.

You all have a story to tell about how you got into the game, and what particular aspect interests you or an interesting game you have seen. Send it in! Your Examiner needs you!

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boats lurked outside the Portland harbour, looking for a kill. Some were destroyed as I slept soundly at home feeling safe in the knowledge that the war was 3000 miles away. How little we know.

Gallagher was primed to enter the Dodger's minor league chain until he hurt his shoulder and was knocked out of business. He later worked for the Dodgers in an admin capacity. Here he is seen with wife and daughter following a brief ceremony which involved throwing out the first ball, and the first dog.

*Mike Ross*

**Gerry Gallagher**



SABR member Gerry Gallagher spoke to me over the telephone about constructing his own field of dreams on a property adjacent to his home. Gallagher, a former L A Dodgers prospect, and his family live in a place called Millport on the remote Isle of Cumbrae off the coast of Scotland, a short ferry boat ride from the remote town of Largs. Largs is one hour by train west of Glasgow.

I journeyed north from London with the main purpose of breaking ground for the field's home plate. The plate is arguably the westernmost home plate in Europe.

However, the journey was a double-dip of pleasure and nostalgia. When I first sailed to Europe, from Montreal, nearly 40 years ago, I disembarked at Greenock which is a short distance north of Gallagher's field. This fact was highlighted when I recently learned that the North Atlantic convoys carrying supplies to the beleaguered British Isles, setting sail from my home town of Portland and its great protected harbour. The destination was the safe channel leading up to Greenock, passing by Cumbrae.

Many secrets have started to emerge such as the less comforting knowledge that German U-

*continued at left*

# SABR AGM Report (con't)

recognise each other's contracts. The Baseball Players' Fraternity



*Alan Chell - a green thumb for growing baseball teams*

judgement long enough to see the Federal League fold. For this service to baseball he was made commissioner six years later.

In 1915 the Federal League folded, ending with an agreement that two Major League teams be bought by Federal League owners. With all but two teams left out, the Baltimore Feds sued, citing baseball's exemption from the Sherman Anti-Trust Act as illegal. In the Supreme Court, Justice Smyth defended the exemption, stating that a particular baseball game is a unique product and cannot be duplicated, and hence baseball isn't an interstate business.

Then followed a long period of no union activity. Then the American Baseball Guild was formed in 1946, and lasted into the 60's. They came within two votes of striking the 1954 All Star Game. This was the first union to have a player representative on each team.

Then Marvin Miller came on the scene, in 1966, as the head

as the most difficult. The problem was that there was a single issue



*Allen Synge on Cricket and Baseball*

left unresolved after the 1980 negotiations, and a single issue left no scope for bargaining.

was formed in 1912, in reaction to the Ty Cobb strike. It lasted until 1918. During that time the Federal League was formed as a reaction to the reserve rule. The league raided players from the other two leagues, and caused a tremendous uproar when they signed, among others, the great Walter Johnson. When the Federal League sued Major League Baseball for antitrust violation, the case was heard by Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis, who delayed the



*John Eichler's Kings of Clerkenwell pub - SABR UK's spiritual home*

negotiation for the players. Clark cited strikes in 1972, '76, '81, and '85, and mentioned the 1981 strike

He then changed tack, and talked for a while about the importance of Jackie Robinson. He

Clark predicted that labour turmoil would continue, and that the union would more and more take business decisions that were once the sole realm of management. He restated that the same dynamics exist today that existed from the start of professional baseball.



# SABR AGM Report (con't)

said Jackie Robinson didn't just integrate baseball, he integrated

no doubt Clark had an excellent view of the happenings. Towards

tours of cricket teams from the Britain in the 19th century. The



*Bill Rubenstein explains new statistics for rating player performance.*

the end of the game, it was calculated that Vernon would win the title if he didn't bat again. There were two innings to go, and Vernon was the seventh hitter, so no batter must get on base. In a hilarious account, a couple of players got on base by accident, and then did their best to get picked off. But the final result was that Mickey Vernon of the Senators won the batting title, depriving Al



*Bernard Day shows off new discoveries from baseball's British past.*

America. From the Civil War till 1954, no civil rights legislation had been enacted, and "separate but equal" was the law of the land. The significance of Jackie's debut was to open up other avenues for integration.

As a final anecdote, Clark talked about the best game he'd ever seen. It was the final game of the 1953 season, and he was eleven years old. Al Rosen of the Indians and Mickey Vernon of the Senators were locked into a close

Rosen of the Triple Crown.

The next presentation was from Allen Synge, who spoke on "Baseball and Cricket - Cross Cur-

full text of Allen's article is printed elsewhere in this journal.

Allan Chell then spoke. This

man seems to have the baseball equivalent of a green thumb when it comes to forming baseball teams. After developing Little League teams in South Africa for years, in 1992 he moved to Maidstone, Kent. When he discovered there was no baseball being played there, he



*Only a portion of the capacity crowd.*

battle for the batting championship going into the last day. The game took place at Griffith Stadium, and being the owner's son,

rents" about why baseball never made it in Britain and cricket never made it in America. He recounted different proselytizing

started an adult team and a Little League team; now he has two Little League teams and a senior team, with about 50 players. Allan

# SABR AGM Report (con't)

showed us a handsome translucent trophy given to him "for Meritorious Service". An interesting sidelight to his story was that when local cricket coaches found out Allan coached baseball, they recruited him to coach the cricketers how to throw the ball.

John Gaustad, owner of SportsPages bookstore, gave his list of his top ten baseball books. The list was, in no particular order, Thomas Boswell's "How Life Imitates the World Series" and "Why Time Begins on Opening Day", Roger Angell's "The Summer Game", George Plimpton's "Out of My League", David Halberstam's "The Summer of '49", Pat Jordan's "A False Spring", Jim Brosnan's "The Long Season", Jim Bouton's "Ball Four", Robert Coover's "The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop." and Eliot Asinof's "Men On Spikes".

Then Bill Rubenstein, Professor of History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, spoke about new statistics in baseball. The groundwork was laid by Bill James and Pete Palmer in "Total Baseball". Bill cited the problems with the typical ways we know of evaluating player performance - batting average, runs batted in, and home runs. He said the problems were 1) they were situation-dependent, meaning players from better teams would intrinsically have better stats; 2) they were effected by the player's home ballpark (e.g. the Coors Field factor for offense and the Astrodome for pitchers); 3) the era the player played in makes a big difference (e.g. 1930 as an explosion of offense, and 1968 dominated by

pitching).

He then introduced Bill James' concept of "runs created". The formula, which Bill was unfortunately unable to write on the blackboard because of the disappearance of the chalk, was

$(hits + walks) \times total\ bases / (at\ bats + walks)$

or, more succinctly:

$$(H + W) \times TB / (AB + W).$$



*Guest of Honour Clark Griffith*

After that, you need to adjust for the home park and era, which is too involved to list here.

Career "runs created" statistics for have calculated for all major league players, and the big surprise here is that Babe Ruth is 30% better than the number two player. We knew he was good, but we didn't know he was *that* good! After number two, the players are about 1/4 - 1/2% percent below each other, but Ruth is in another league by himself.

He also talked the distance of Ruth's shots. He said there have been eight 500 foot homeruns since 1990. When Pete Palmer read that in one year alone Ruth hit a 500 foot homerun in each park, he decided to investigate it by correlating different newspa-

per accounts. Pete not only confirmed it, but found 500 foot homeruns by Ruth that no one had ever known about! And, to top it off, Ruth was a great pitcher, too - the best lefthander in the second half of the teens.

After Ruth, the next player according to runs created was Nap Lajoie, followed by Ty Cobb, Willie Mays, and Ted Williams. The best recent player is Mike Schmidt, who combined power, average, and brilliant defence so well, that he was actually two players in one. He is the only player since 1920 who was best at offence and defence at the same time.

The last speaker was Bernard Day, who was our featured speaker at the last meeting, having discovered the Albert Spalding Cleveland District Trophy. Since the last time he spoke, he has come up with new discoveries, including a fixture list of the 1893 and 1894 Cleveland and South Durham League. He has been concentrating on the Derby district, and has identified the players in the famous photo of the Derby Baseball team, with Sir Francis Ley. He has discovered a baseball belt worn by that team, plus a cap and belt of the Stockton club. He also located a photo of the 1893 Everton Baseball team. Bernard said that the photo shows a flat bat, and hence it was the game known as Welsh baseball that they played.

After that we were served a excellent meal by the Governor, John Eichler. After that the business part of the meeting took place, which will be reported in Examiner 11. Suffice it to say as a parting shot that an excellent time was had by all.



## ***Members of 1890 Derby Team Identified***



Bernard Day of Middlesborough has come up with an identification of the players of the photograph of the Derby Base Ball Club, which was published in Examiner No. 8. Mr. Day dates this photograph as 1890. He identifies the players as follows, from left to right: T. Presbury (left field), E. Booth (center field), D. Allsopp (third base), J.P. Reidenbach (pitcher), Francis Ley (President), S.D. Bullas (catcher), H.M. Middleton (second base), W. North (right field), and J. Mellors (shortstop). The identity of the tenth man should be revealed soon.

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**Next issue** - Chairman Mike Ross files his report from Florida after attending a SABR Symposium on Joe Jackson's right to be in the Hall of Fame, inspired by Ted Williams. As a side treat, Mike attended Teddy Ballgame's 80th birthday celebration, which was a star-studded affair.

# ***TROPHY FOUND!***



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**Circulation Manager:** Graham Winterbone

**Research Submissions:** Patrick Morley

## ***Stoolball is alive and well in Sussex***



## ***Details next issue***

**Check out colour photos of this year's AGM at [www.sabr.org.uk](http://www.sabr.org.uk)**

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