

ARTHUR BAILEY RIP - Founder Member and Vice-Chairman



Some Members knew Arthur very well indeed. Others may not appreciate how much he did behind the scenes for our society. Arthur, Vice-Chairman of the Cheltenham Cricket Society since its establishment 35 years ago, attended virtually every speaker meeting, up to his last few months, sitting quietly at the back. He was always a wise counsel and fount of ideas in Committee meetings, and highly influential in the development of our Society which has gone from strength to strength - a steady membership of 200+ has been treated to a 'Who's Who' speaker list of cricketers, officials and other cricket-mad luminaries such as Sir John Major, Sir Tim Rice and Sir Michael Parkinson.

Arthur, a family man, rejoiced in the successes of his wife Jo, his four sons, their partners and his grandchildren. He enjoyed a very successful career as an engineer, working mostly at Smiths Industries, Bishops Cleeve. Family and career would be sufficient for most people - not so Arthur. He also had an enduring passion for cricket (and sport in general), and worked tirelessly to foster and promote the game locally.

A man of vision, Arthur was never happier than with his teeth in some venture or other that would have daunted most of us from even starting. His calm, persuasive diplomacy, determination and conviction turned the highly desirable but well nigh impossible into something achievable and practical. It helped that he seemed to know everyone who was anyone around Cheltenham and was extraordinarily adept at drawing in just the right people to get the job done.

Back in 1983, Arthur and our first Chairman, George Beckley, gathered the initial six Founder Members together to establish the Cheltenham Cricket Society. Arthur arranged the Society's association with the Victory Club, where all but two of our meetings have been held over that last 35 years. Some Members will remember the rather ramshackle former premises of the Victory Club in Trafalgar Street. Arthur, as Secretary of the Club, master-minded the sale of that site and the purchase and wholesale refurbishment of the present Lypiatt Road site that has surely guaranteed the Victory Club's future.

Until recently, Arthur and his wife Jo spent much of every Cricket Society meeting day shopping for refreshments and then setting out furniture and equipment. Jo and her sous chef Arthur also set out our post-meeting cheese, onions and homemade Christmas mince pies. We owe them our gratitude.

Arthur, no mean cricketer himself in his day, had an enormous influence on the local cricket scene. In 1978, he established the Cheltenham & District Cricket Association (now amalgamated to form the Cheltenham & Gloucester Cricket Association) that provides an organisational structure and competitions (particularly at the vital youth level) for local clubs. He was also one of the moving spirits behind the establishment of the Gloucestershire Cricket League, in which most clubs in the county now participate at weekends. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the dedicated Cricket Hall at Cheltenham Leisure Centre, which, like our Society, is now 35 years old. Few areas have vital indoor halls specifically for cricket practice, coaching, and indoor competitions. Fewer still are run by a local authority. It may have helped that the Borough Treasurer at the time was an ardent cricket enthusiast but Arthur single-handedly persuaded the Borough Council to develop this facility and he had a guiding hand in the design of this invaluable asset.

Arthur also filled what we might amusingly call his "spare time" by arranging fund-raising events such as golf days and celebrity dinners. For many years, there was a Victory Club tent at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival – now much missed by many but once a Mecca for local cricketers and the very epitome of civilisation for the true cricket lover. Just one fortnight in the year perhaps but an immense undertaking, as Jo will surely testify. It involved transferring a large chunk of the Victory Club lock, stock, and literally barrel after barrel to the College Ground. Undaunted Arthur and Jo just got on with it.

Arthur was a valued friend and colleague to many, and we extend our condolences to Jo and the family and to all who knew him. He will be sorely missed. We will need to keep up his standards or he will surely be gently chiding us from on high. His legacy hopefully will never be forgotten - Arthur Bailey was a true local hero.

May he rest, deservedly, in peace.

Malcolm Brown



Arthur with the Committee at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival in 2017

L to R - Robin, Paddy, Chris, President Cally, Ken, Martin, Malcolm, Pat and Arthur