

***IMPORTANT...IMPORTANT...IMPORTANT***

## **PRODUCT RECALL ANNOUNCEMENT**

It has come to our attention that a major fault has been discovered with your product. Despite the enormous expenditure on development and research, the recruitment of the best analysts available, the most sophisticated technology, unprecedented care and support, purchasing of the highest grade cotton-wool known to mankind...it is with sadness that we have to admit that your product is no longer fit for purpose.

Therefore your product, the England Cricket Team, needs to be recalled immediately to the factory for a serious and thorough re-boot. It is pointless the product being continuously used as it cannot perform the basic functions it was designed to perform, hence the need for an immediate recall.

We have to be honest and state that it is unknown if the problem can be fixed, or how long it will take - decades some of our team have said, and if it cannot we will replace your product with one from either Australia, India or New Zealand.

**W**elcome to the last edition of The Wisdener for 2021, a year that in all honesty has been rather similar to 2020. Another year of massive uncertainty and worry and in a lot of cases fear and immense trepidation, we look to 2022 with possibly more hope than expectation.

Forgive the front page - but I would like to hear from anyone who actually feels any optimism when they look at the England Test side, or even in the state of the first-class game in England.

In conversations this week I have asked the question - why do England never win a series 3-0, 4-0 or 5-0? You may think that is a rather stupid question, it may be an irrelevant question, but for me it sort of sums up the pitiful state that we find ourselves in now and indeed, the state we have been in probably for decades.

Successive England teams have no hunger, they have no desire to inflict cricketing humiliation on any side, no urge to, in the words of a former England captain, make the opposition 'grovel' (I know that back-fired on Tony Greig's, but has any England player or captain voiced such a war-cry since?).

When Australia play England they openly talk about thrashing England, they do not hold back. England are incapable of such aggression.

I have said this many times and I take no pride in saying it but I want England to lose 5-0. I want the team of so-called 'professional' cricketers who have three people per team member to look after their every need on the current tour, to be trounced so that someone somewhere actually thinks, 'why is this happening?'

No doubt once the question is asked they will come up with a new form of cricket called The Eighty which will encourage highly-paid overseas players to come here in the summer for four weeks and show English players how to hit a six whilst singing 'Sweet Caroline' - as we know invaluable experience for Test cricket.

I read recently that sixteen members of the Yorkshire coaching staff had left the county and I am not going to comment on the reasons, or why etc...but sixteen! So the Yorkshire coaching set-up must have a lot more than sixteen. I did some digging and three counties who in 2019 when a full 'normal' county season took place each had between 22 and 28 people on their coaching staff averaged between 325 and 640 spectators on each day of their county championship matches.

How can counties afford the wages? The same three counties (It could be a mini-quiz to ask you to guess them) did not have a single full-house for any one day game, but apparently they each received in excess of £1.2 million each from the ECB. Why?

We all knew what was going to happen in Australia,

only the most optimistic England supporters possibly believed that Burns and Hameed were good enough against Australia's bowlers, that Pope, Woakes and Butler would get runs, that Anderson and Broad would defy past Australian-tour performance and take lots of wickets and that Wood, Leach and Robinson would have the Aussies shaking and that Stokes who last played cricket when the sun was shining would slide back into his glorious Headingley 2019 days....get real, England are very very poor. Yes the ball is different, yes there has been no preparation, yes there is COVID...as I said, get real.

So, my various rants and very very opinionated points draw me to the following conclusions.

Please can we bring the first class game into the 21st century and make those counties who are not supported by the people who they are supposed to represent be demoted to minor county level. More people attended Bury Football Club matches in its final two years than went to watch Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Worcestershire (drat, no point in making it a quiz question now) in the same period and Bury FC was allowed to fall into administration. Cricket needs to stop pumping money into lost causes.

The county game needs to be a season long competition. Not crammed into April, May, August and December (you think I am joking, just you wait)

Test players need to play for their county. How the hell can you attract anyone to a Durham or Yorkshire county match if they know Stokes or Root won't be playing? How can players on the county circuit become better if they never get the chance to impress in a real game against real Test players.

Jimmy Anderson was 'rested' for the first Test, why? It wasn't because he was still getting over bowling 500+ overs in the 2021 domestic season. Anderson is up with the best but taking both him and Broad to Australia was a risk, but no one else was knocking on the door.

There is no quality in the England county game. Honestly, it is an average competition that is developing average players and the moment someone is seen as even slightly above average he is hurriedly put into cotton wool and given 82 personal trainers, advisers, nutritionalists, dieticians, an optician, an expert on herbal tea flavours from 14th century Persia...and then told to rest.

Again, forgive my flippant attitude, but surely to goodness someone somewhere needs to take cricket by the scruff of the neck and drag it back to reality and the reality is that Test cricket and the longer game is dying, not just because a team is being thrashed by Australia but because that team is England and the world of cricket needs a strong England.

Please feel free to disagree with me.

Bill

## A Case For Change

*Manchester v Leeds instead of Lancashire v Yorkshire... transfer fees and ever-increasing player power. These are some of the contentious views expressed by Cedric Rhoades, the Lancashire chairman and a member of the Test and County Cricket Board, in the interview below with John Kay*

**Transfer fees and the abolition of county titles in favour of big city names and clubs are two of the revolutionary trends cricket may have to face in the future. These are the dangers foreshadowed by Lancashire chairman Cedric Rhoades (Pictured, below, right), a 56-year-old Manchester textile merchant, who has made a telling impact upon the game at administrative level since coming to the fore when challenging the Lancashire committee to mend their ways in 1964 .... ironically the club's centenary year.**

Cedric Rhoades believed then that Lancashire were living in the past. He was willing to pay tribute to the men who had brought honour, including a hat-trick of championship successes in the 1920's, but he considered the future more important than the past. He rallied support from the popular side as well as the pavilion enclosure, calling for a special general meeting and proposing a vote of no confidence in the powers that be.

He did not make it a personal vendetta. He wanted nothing for himself but a better and prouder Lancashire and he marshalled his forces so successfully that when the showdown came his vote of censure was passed by an overwhelming majority and the committee resigned en bloc. Having achieved his first objective, Rhoades had then to translate words into action. He fought for a place on the new committee and came top of the poll in an election that gave six new men and six of the old regime power to start a new deal.

For four years Cedric Rhoades took stock, finding his way and gathering his facts until, in 1969, he became chairman. Captaincy was a problem and finance a worrying concern as the new chairman threw himself into the struggle to win through. He was not the instigator but he gave full support to hiving off part of Old Trafford to the property developers and his fighting speech at an annual meeting proposing the building of office blocks on club ground swung opinion round. The first step on the road back had been taken. Next came a partnership with a commercial catering company providing food and drink for members and spectators in the summer and making Old Trafford a busy and viable social centre throughout the winter months.

Cedric Rhoades was one of the most formidable men to have had an influence on cricket and back in 1980, John Kay interviewed him. Over 40 years ago the views of the Lancashire chairman are worth reading today. He may well have been 'years' ahead of his time.

The club's finances secured, next came the halting of the playing decline. Again Cedric Rhoades led the way. He campaigned first for the appointment of Brian Statham and then Jack Bond as captains in the belief that Lancashire's cricketing future could best be served with Lancastrians at the helm. He also fully supported the signing of Farokh Engineer and Clive Lloyd to introduce flair and drive into a team lacking personality. Three successive Gillette Cup victories and two John Player League titles took Lancashire into the 70's with a new lease of life . . . and Rhoades had made his mark as a go-ahead chairman.

The good times did not last but Lancashire regained respect and

began to exert their influence at Lord's where their chairman had become a member of the Test and County Cricket Board determined to be heard. He is now the longest-serving member of the Chairman's Advisory Committee and



respected, if not always popular. Eyebrows were raised last September when he told a Lancashire meeting, demanded again to stir the committee into action, that transfer fees in cricket of the future could not be ruled out and that the present system of county clubs and a seldom-changing fixture formula might have to give way to a more modern presentation.

He envisaged Manchester v Leeds instead of Lancashire v Yorkshire and North London v South London replacing Middlesex v Surrey. Outrageous was one of the expressions used by the die-hards in opposition. But can cricket afford to ignore such

suggestion? Cedric Rhoades thinks not. He makes it clear his views are entirely his own, neither welcomed nor accepted by some of his colleagues at Lord's and Old Trafford. He says: "Transfer fees, big-city clubs instead of county titles now abolished, and ever-increasing player-power are three vital factors first-class cricket may have to consider in the years ahead.

"The arrival of Kerry Packer proved cricket is not and never can be immune from change and commercial exploitation. Surely it is better to talk about these vital matters now and plan for their introduction in moderation and step by step instead of being presented with a fait accompli in 10 or perhaps 20 years' time?

"Player power can be channelled into moderate and polite requests instead of aggressive demands, through the Cricketers' Association, given good will and a spirit of compromise. A transfer system may become inevitable when overseas players are eliminated from championship cricket. I do not want to see the arrival of the first £1m. cricketer and do not think such a position will ever arise but it would be better to plan control now and ensure moderation with dignity. Switching from county clashes to inter-city derby games may also be a long way off but the public and the sponsors demanded one-day cricket and gave it impressive support.

"Our county grounds are costly to maintain and thinly populated for the three-day game and the presentation of it costs a lot of money. Clubs need the income and must meet the demands to match the cut-and-thrust of Cup and John Player League cricket. We must harness the two together and couple it with still more sponsorship and commercial backing. It is for these very reasons that I visualise a case for changing the traditional way of cricketing life.

"Already there is evidence of new trends towards the major innovations outlined and we must certainly examine them and plan accordingly. Cricket administration at the top is still 25 years behind the times. It was wide open two years ago and is still wide open to-day. The most energetic action appears to be far too often concerned with the avoidance of as much change as possible and maintaining the position of those who consider they have a divine right to rule. It is better by far that cricket should be prepared and not caught out a second time. Remember that man Packer".

*JOHN KAY was one of the most experienced cricket writers in the north of England. He also played a leading part in introducing many distinguished players to the county game, including Frank Tyson, Keith Andrew and Basil D'Oliveira.*

## The Joy of The Ashes

### Don Bradman to his team-mates, Trent Bridge, 1938

The 29-year-old Donald Bradman was as giddy and restless as a newborn pup. Stanley Joseph McCabe, his Australia team-mate, was giving a demonstration of rare genius in the first Ashes Test at Trent Bridge, and Bradman urgently implored the rest of the team to take the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to watch his innings. It was almost too much for Bradman. "Towards the end I could scarcely watch the play," he said. "My eyes were filled as I drank in the glory of his shots."

Australia were in significant trouble after slipping to 194 for six, still 464 runs behind, but McCabe was easing into the innings that would define him. He scored 232 out of 300 while at the

wicket, including 72 in the final 28 minutes and 44 off three overs from the leg-spinner Doug Wright. Neville Cardus said he "batted with the ease of a man using a master key ... McCabe demolished the English attack with aristocratic politeness, good taste and reserve. Claude Duval never took possession of a stagecoach with more charm of manner than this." McCabe scored 127 runs in a single session, still an Ashes record



"I gripped his hand, wet with perspiration," said Bradman. "He was trembling like a thoroughbred racehorse. I can recall saying to him after expressing my congratulations:

'I would give a great deal to be able to play another innings like that.' No skipper was ever more sincere in his adulation of another's skill." Bradman was still raving about it over a decade later. "I firmly believe it to be the greatest innings ever played," he said in Farewell to Cricket. "Such cricket I shall never see again."

# The Silver Fern

## Part 1 - The Canterbury Tale

*At Waimate there are three large houses...On the adjoining slope, fine crops of barley and wheat were standing in full ear; and in another part fields of potatoes and clover... there were large gardens, with every fruit and vegetable which England produces; and many belonging to a warmer clime...All this is very surprising, when it is considered that five years ago nothing but the fern flourished here...Several young men, redeemed by the missionaries from slavery were employed on the farm...In the evening I saw a party of them at cricket: when I thought of the austerity of which the missionaries have been accused, I was amused by observing one of their own sons taking an active part in the game.*

Charles Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle

**In this way the great evolutionist provided the first evidence of cricket being played in New Zealand - by Maori slaves and the son of a missionary in the Bay of Islands in 1835. And so it was for around 130 years when out of the blue a retired salesman and amateur genealogist, Ken Nobbs, discovered a reference in the journal of the Reverend Henry Williams to a game of cricket played some three years earlier on Thursday, December 20, 1832, at Paihia. More significantly for the modern era, in his researches Nobbs unearthed that one of the boys involved, the 14-year-old James Davis, was the great-great-grandfather of Jeremy Coney, who in the course of his 52 Test matches led New Zealand to their only series win against England 150 years later in the most successful period of the country's 100-year history.**

Reference was made to cricket as a part of the Christmas festivities in the Wellington Spectator of December 28, 1842, but the first report of a cricket match in New Zealand appeared in the Nelson Examiner of March 1844. There was cricket in Auckland by 1845, Scottish Presbyterians were playing in Dunedin in 1848, and the first

In 1995 as New Zealand were about to embark on their centennial celebrations Dave Crowe in a three-part history traced the development of the game on the other side of the world in the islands of The Silver Fern.

anniversary of the founding of the settlement of Canterbury was celebrated with a match between the Working Men's Club and Canterbury CC in 1851.

But it was not until 1860 that the first inter-provincial game took place - when Auckland travelled to Wellington, in a pre-railway age requiring two days by steamer for the teams to meet. Over 30 years were to elapse before, in a smoke-filled bar in Christchurch on the day after Boxing Day of 1894, gathered 12 good cricketers and true.

From Auckland came E.C.J. Stevens; from Hawke's Bay Heathcote Williams (the first President) and C.R. Smith (the first Secretary); from Taranaki W.J. Cotterill and R.D. Harman; from Wellington A.M. Ollivier and R. Gore; from Nelson J.H. Wood; from Canterbury T.D. Harman (the first Treasurer) and L.A. Cuff; from Otago J. Smythe; and from Southland G.A.U. Tapper. Their

mission was to form the New Zealand Cricket Council. They came from the provinces to widen the game's administration, for Canterbury seemed to be running the show, and to develop international contact.

Now, 100 years later, the venue is only a few yards across the river Avon, and the smoking is discouraged, but otherwise the emphasis is still Cantabrian, for is not Christchurch the most English city outside England and therefore the likely place for the most English of all games?

Of course there have been ructions, but Canterbury enthusiasts have always taken the initiative in organising international play for the remote colony, a



*The Basin Reserve in Wellington, originally a drained swamp and reputedly the windiest Test venue in the world, on a calm day during New Zealand's match against an Australian XI in 1921 with St Patrick's College in the background.*





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huge task when travel was protracted. From the first game, reputed to be held at Waimate North in 1835 when New Zealand was still a spillover of convict Sydney, the Australian influence persisted through the 19th century, for itinerant gold-seekers swelled the population of Otago in mid-century, whereas previously settlement had collected around the many natural ports of the two main islands as trade opened up new frontiers.

The 'first four ships' of 1850 brought the respectable immigrants, people from pious, hard-working families whose proximity to the upper-middle class in England wasn't enough to keep them. They established icons of the home they so deeply missed, by building churches and soon cathedrals and public schools, and by clearing the bush for cricket. It was to Christchurch they came, across the tortuous Bridal Path on the port hills from Lyttelton, itself a truly cricketing name and later to be proudly represented as Governor-General by Viscount Cobham.

By 1894 James Lillywhite, George Parr, 'Round-the-corner' Smith and others had brought teams, and it was not all prim and proper. Poor Ted Pooley, 'keeper and gambler supreme, bet the locals he could forecast the score of each of the 22 home players in the match at Lancaster Park, and then he put down a duck, for everyone! Since at least 12 noughts were scored he claimed his wager, but the dim locals said they were cheated and after the ensuing fight Ted dallied in jail while the rest of Parr's team continued to Australia.

The hard-grafting pioneers had graduated into men of stature, once the economic reforms of Sir Julius Vogel had taken the colony into a partly developed, nearly civilised community. There was prosperity and optimism by 1894, and it was time to

address the matter of New Zealand's cricketing immaturity. For so long it had been in the hands of Christchurch. It is still there.

Australian states toured, as did Lord Hawke's XI under Plum Warner, and then the mighty Australian team stopped off on the way to England in 1905. They were far too strong, but when MCC sent a side of 16 amateurs two years later, they were to lose the first 'Test' before winning the second. When Australia came again in 1910, Armstrong dominated as he had

four years earlier. Then Trumper was also outstanding, and he was again in 1914 for Arthur Sims' XI, only a year before he died.

Joyously Sims and Trumper compiled 433 for the eighth wicket against Canterbury, still the first-class record. New Zealand had enjoyed two decades of prosperity under the jovial premiership of 'King Dick' Seddon, then the less charismatic William Massey, during which it had been recognised as a dominion, had introduced women's suffrage, enjoyed strike-free industry for more than 10 years and had set forth on its self-appointed chore of world recognition.

For a new nation with no European heritage it was natural to turn to sports, especially those cross-pollinated by the immigrant Australians and Englishmen, rugby and cricket.

What better way to make the world take notice than to beat the masters at the British sublimation of war: organised battles disguised as games.

It took a great many years for cricket to achieve this desire. Australians had long maintained a patronising attitude to New Zealand, already calling it the 'Shaky Isles'. Despite the popularity of inward tours they were frequently bedevilled with lack of funds and financial shortfalls. 'All-Australia' ceased dropping by on the way home and after a few sporadic visits from

some of their state sides they even stopped writing letters, let alone playing games.

England were also inconspicuous, on account of the Great War, and this horrendous global event had its consequences until well into the following decade.

In the meantime the domestic game was seen to be suffering from a lack of competitive edge. After the 1906/07 visit by

MCC and following the success of the introduction of the Ranfurly Shield for rugby football, the Governor-General, Lord Plunket, was prevailed upon to institute a shield to be challenged for by the four main provincial associations. At the end of the 1906/07 season the Plunket Shield was awarded to Canterbury to the disgust of Auckland.

The trophy was to be competed for on a challenge basis between the four main provinces.



*The first representative New Zealand team against New South Wales at Lancaster Park, Christchurch in 1894. Back row: (1 to r) A.M. Ollivier (selector), I. Mills, H.S. De Maus, J.C. Lawton, T.D. Condell (umpire); middle: R.W. Barry (scorer), J.D. Lawrence, A.R. Holdship, L.A. Cuff (captain), J.N. Fowke, C. St G. Gore, W.H. Wynn-Williams (Canterbury CA President); front: A.B.M. Labatt, E.V. Palmer, W. Robertson.*

In the following season Auckland successfully challenged for it and these two provinces dominated until 1921 when the nature of the competition was altered to a round-robin to allow all the associations to compete annually.

Since then Canterbury have won more matches than any other province, even since the Shell Trophy replaced the Plunket Shield in 1975. Now it is played for between North and South Islands, sporadically. Another cup, donated by Lord Hawke in 1910, encouraged the 23 minor associations to compete.

The Hawke Cup, renamed the U-Bix Cup in 1975, has remained on a challenge basis ever since the original tournaments of 1910/11 and 1912/13.

New Zealand's early efforts to establish itself internationally were largely due to the determination and energy of those great friends and cricketers, Arthur Sims and Dan Reese, both of Christchurch. An all-rounder, Reese was the first of New Zealand's indigenous crop of outstanding cricketers. He played for Canterbury at 16. In 1913, 17 years later, and by then a marine engineer, he took a side, in which he was the outstanding performer, to Australia that suffered humiliating defeats against New South Wales and Victoria. Sims, who made a fortune from wool and timber and whose subsequent altruistic endowments earned him a knighthood in 1950, had already captained New Zealand when he led an unofficial Australian side to New Zealand in 1914, with equally disastrous results for the hosts.

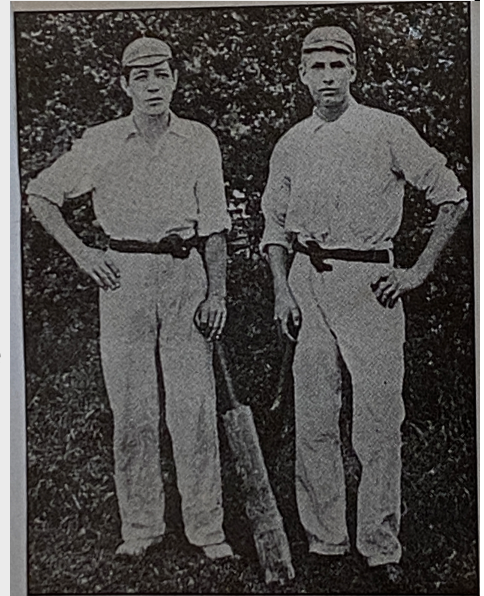
In the 1920s unemployment became rife and fear of job losses restrained many from venturing afar to play cricket. Eventually and after much negotiation an Australian 2nd XI came and conquered in 1921, and

visits by MCC, New South Wales and Victoria in following years indicated little improvement. But three draws from four first-class matches on the Australian tour of 1925/26 marked a turning point. The presence of Cyril Allcott, Roger Blunt and Tom Lowry brought a long overdue resolution to the batting.

Encouraged by these results the Council entrusted to Reese, then Chairman of the Management Committee, and Sims, embarking on a business trip to England, plans for its most ambitious expedition - a comprehensive tour of the 'Home Country'. These two mercantile characters proposed to finance it by floating a public company to raise £10,000.

Subscribers received back only half their investment but without their generosity New Zealand would have been unable to launch itself into international cricket.

Part 2 - Innocents Abroad will appear in the next Wisden, in January 2022.



Two of New Zealand's cricketing pioneers: the Cantabrians Dan Reese (left) and Arthur Sims.

## Wisden Collectors' Club Auction

The next Auction will be beginning shortly and full details will be sent out soon.

As always every Wisden listed is from collectors and every item begins at 0.99p with NO reserve or Buy-It-Now price.

Happy Bidding

## The Joy of The Ashes

**D**ennis Lillee didn't have a face like thunder; he had a face like the apocalypse. Seconds earlier he had been on his backside on the Brisbane pitch, having lost both his wicket and his dignity when he fell over as he top-edged a Tony Greig (Pictured, below, left) bouncer.

As Lillee started to stomp off, a picture of affronted pride, Greig reminded him where the facilities were and how appropriate a refreshing shower might be in the circumstances. Lillee looked at him and barked: "Just remember who started this."

For the next few minutes Lillee (Pictured, opposite, right) was like a stuck record. "Just remember who started this," he hissed repeatedly at his captain, Ian Chappell, who had no idea what Lillee was talking

about. It became clearer when Lillee announced: "Just remember who started this: those bastards. But we'll finish it."

Lillee has always been keen to point out that England started the bouncer war of 1974–75. "It's like the song We Didn't Start the Fire," he later said,

continuing a long line of Billy Joel references in Ashes cricket. "People often remember who did the damage, not who started the fire."

In the first Test of the series at Brisbane, more than half the Australia team were out hooking in the home side's first innings of 309, though it was Greig's decision to bounce Lillee, a lower-order batsman, that really stirred the hornets' nest.

Lillee, who had clearly been intending to diligently bowl line and length until then, took the first ball of the England innings, and his run-up began from somewhere inside the sightscreen. "Mate, it was full-on war," said Jeff Thomson (Pictured, bottom, centre), "and we gave it to them."

The original plan was for Lillee to share the new ball with Max Walker, so that the tearaway Thomson could bowl with the wind after Lillee. But Chappell, sensing something in the air, decided at the last second to let Thomson share

the new ball. "For the next few overs," said Chappell, "I looked on in awe." When Rodney Marsh leapt to claim a Thomson bouncer, the wicketkeeper started wringing his hand in pain before realising the implications for England. "Hell, that hurt," he said to Chappell, "but I love it."

England were soon 57 for four and in trouble; the captain, Mike Denness, upon being dismissed, took off his shirt and discovered that a bouncer had actually embedded his St Christopher medallion in his chest. Dennis Amiss had a thumb cracked by Thomson and John Edrich a hand broken by Lillee.

As would happen in 2013–14, a group of experienced batsmen never recovered from the shock of being assaulted so savagely in the first innings of the series at Brisbane.

"Thommo was by far the quickest bowler I've ever seen or opposed," said his future team-mate Kim Hughes. "Thommo didn't go to any academy, he just grabbed the ball and wanted to kill some prick ... he was as far ahead of any other bowler for sheer speed as [Don] Bradman was for runs."



With his mustachioed fellow-assassin Lillee, Thommo simply brutalised England in 1974–75. "Lillee and Thomson remain a combination to conjure with, as sinister in England as Burke and Hare, or Bismarck and Tirpitz," Gideon Haigh has written. They will always tell you they didn't start the fire, but they sure as hell poured industrial quantities of petrol on to it.

First Test:  
Brisbane, Nov 29,30. Dec 1,3,4.

Australia 309 and 288-5 declared  
England 265 and 166.

Australia won by 166 Runs

## Dennis Compton

**O**f all the great English batsmen I have bowled against Denis Compton was the most unorthodox and the most brilliant. When he was in his prime, and in the mood, he was not only very difficult to dismiss, but his wide and often unconventional range of strokes, combined with his ability to extemporise, made him hard to contain. An outstanding example of his capacity to ad lib when at the crease occurred when he was playing for Middlesex against the Rest. Denis, as was so often his wont, had advanced down the wicket to that fine off spinner, Tom Goddard. He slipped and fell. Quite unperturbed by this mishap, he was not merely content to make contact, but proceeded to hit the ball to the boundary from his prone position much to the indignation of the understandably incensed bowler.

Against the faster bowling the initial movement of Denis was the same as that of the majority of overseas players, back and across. No doubt that this was to some extent due to the fact that he was brought up on the fast, true pitches which prevailed at Lord's before the war. He also had the good fortune that in his formative years the net wickets at Headquarters were outstandingly good, and almost lived up to the ideal of being better than the middle. When he

became established, nets had little appeal for him, except as looseners, after all he did spend a not inconsiderable portion of his life at the crease, but they helped originally.

His initial movement back and across, combined with his wonderful eye, quick reactions, backlift towards third man, and physical courage meant that he was an exceptionally good hooker and a fine player of really fast bowling. It is interesting to note that today when there is not all that amount of genuine pace about most batsmen wear one and often two thigh pads, but Denis never bothered with one even when facing Lindwall and Miller at their peak.

Like all great players Denis used his feet and he was never happier than when gaily trotting down the track to some unfortunate spinner. Conversely when he played back he gave himself the maximum time by going right back to the stumps, and indeed this did on occasions lead to him treading on his own wicket.

Denis used rather more right hand in his batting than a classical stylist, but this did not prevent him from being able to cover drive with ferocity as I know to my cost. Young and naive, I allowed myself to be stationed at silly mid-off with Denis batting and the eight stitches I

In the 1960s Trevor Bailey was a major contributor to the cricketing press and in a series of articles in *Playfair Cricket Monthly* he featured players he had played with or against during his own career. This article on Dennis Compton was first published in February 1967.

had to have inserted in the webbing between my fingers are a permanent reminder of the power of his drive.

Although he had all the shots, both defensive and offensive, the stroke that will for ever be associated with his name is the sweep. This can be a dangerous shot if a fieldsmen is stationed at deepish backward short leg for the top edge and the South Africans did, rather optimistically, plan to trap him in this way. However, Denis overcame the problem as a result of his own interpretation of the sweep. He played the shot later and hit the ball down with the blade of his bat slanting and not parallel to the ground. In addition he had an almost uncanny ability to place this very difficult stroke. On one occasion at Lord's I watched him sweep three successive boundaries off Peter Smith. I was stationed at deep square leg and the first one went to fine. I was

moved there, only for the next to go to the exact spot I had vacated. This was the signal for another fieldsmen to join me, but it made no difference as he smote the final delivery to very fine leg.

Denis had a long career which would have been even longer, but for the famous 'knee' which was to restrict his mobility in his later years. Despite a handicap that would have caused a less determined individual to retire, he did still make runs, because he could afford to forget about quick singles and rely on boundaries, but it could make batting with him for ordinary, limited players like myself rather difficult. However, there is no doubt that the golden year for the golden boy was 1947 when he scored more runs and made more centuries than anyone in the history of the game, records likely to stand for eternity. At the close of that summer when it was 'roses, roses all the way' I found myself batting with Denis against the South Africans in the Hastings Festival. Thousands turned up mainly in the hope of seeing him break the record. My one fear was that I should run him out which seemed to be the only thing likely to prevent him achieving this feat. I was also aware that an event of this nature was by no means improbable as the 'golden boy's' calling was unpredictable in the extreme, and it had been



remarked, with every justification, that his first call merely meant that he was prepared to open negotiations. Fortunately we managed to avoid this calamity largely through some unexpected cooperation from the South African fieldsmen. It was a less satisfactory story some years later in a Test match at Old Trafford, when Denis had me half-way down the wicket after his first affirmative halted me there with a frantic 'wait', and had me slightly puzzled as he passed me at full speed saying 'no'. On my way back to the pavilion I realized that I had merely become yet another victim of the Compton three call trick!

Denis was infinitely more than just a great batsman. He was an entertainer and one of the biggest box office draws ever to have played the game. Some of the more dour of the Northerners may have regarded with suspicion the lighthearted way he tackled the serious business of amassing runs, but in general he was a source of delight to crowds all over the world. The feature of his play I most admired was its essential gaiety. He not only made batting look easy, he also made it look fun. It contained a mixture of genius, mirth, and more than a suggestion of schoolboy impishness.

Like all entertainers he thrived on situation and a large audience. These brought the very best out of him, so that he tended to sparkle more brightly in a tense Test match at Melbourne than in a comparatively unimportant, badly attended county match in the Midlands.

Although it is sometimes forgotten, Denis was a useful 'chinaman' and googly bowler. He spun the ball considerably, but lacked the discipline and singleness of purpose necessary to reach the heights in this department. He might produce the unplayable delivery, but his length and direction tended to be wayward. Until increasing age and the handicap of the 'knee' took their inevitable toll, Denis was also a brilliant and decidedly unpredictable fieldsmen. Away from the bat and when the game was proving somewhat dull he had a tendency to wander both mentally and physically which somewhat increased the problems of captaincy. Close to the wicket he liked to stand nearer to the batsman than most fieldsmen. His theory was that it was better to run the risk of putting down a possible chance through being too close than not to have the opportunity because the chance did not carry.

Quite apart from his ability as a cricketer Denis would always be one of my first selections for an overseas tour, because so much of the charm of his batting is reflected in an essentially sunny disposition. In consequence he is a pleasant and easy companion. It is easy to disagree with him on occasions, but I find it difficult to believe that anyone, who knows him well, could dislike him as an individual. Few people have possessed so much charm, a charm moreover that

appealed to young and old, male and female, friend and foe.

Of course Denis has never been famed for his punctuality, reliability, and sense of responsibility and these have from time to time led to minor disagreements with the authorities, but even these august bodies have always been content with the mildest of rebukes. As one perplexed official once remarked to me, 'You can't be cross with Denis for long.'

There is a certain amount of truth in the idea that it is comparatively easy to be a good tourist if you yourself are enjoying a successful trip, but I was with Denis in Australia during one of his very rare periods of cricketing failure. It is almost unbelievable, but in 1950/1 he had a Test batting average of 7.5, yet despite the disappointments he still retained both his sense of fun and his perspective.

My own affection for Denis was increased by the fact that we are both kindred spirits in the virtue of being thoroughly untidy. Changing next to either of us is a well-known cricketing hazard, but I did not appreciate the full extent of his aptitude in this direction until I shared a room with him in the West Indies. It was a quite unforgettable experience for both of us.

Not only did Denis possess the golden touch on the cricket and football fields, but it tended to remain with him on other occasions. He just happens to be one of those people who automatically pick up good cards, who receives tips that really come home, and whose putts wobble on the lip and then drop in. I shall always remember the day I went racing with him at Sydney and provided a classic example of his luck. For once the magic failed to work and in an effort to recoup his losses Denis decided to have a 'tenner' on the final race. The bookmaker first advised him against his bet, suggested horse number 7, scrawled out a quite indecipherable ticket, and handed it to him. A few pre-race enquiries elicited the information that mysterious number 7 was merely a country hack without a hope, needless to say it romped home at ten to one.

After the race Denis approached the bookmaker a trifle circumspectly as he really was not certain whether he was on the winner or not. He need not have worried as the friendly bookie paid out £100 with a smile and a 'didn't I tell you so'. We were on our way back to the car when suddenly there was a shout of 'Denis'. We turned and saw in the distance a short, fat man sprinting towards us. On reaching us he apologised profusely for having omitted to pay the stake money and handed Denis a further 'tenner'.

When a professional bookmaker does not take your money for your original choice, gives you the winner, accepts the bet, pays out contentedly, and then chases half a mile to give you more, you rightly deserve the tag of golden, eighteen carat!

# The BIGGEST ASHES COMPETITION YOU WILL EVER SEE

(on the pages of The Wisdener on December 23rd 2021)

**England have a chance over the next three Tests to make some positive cricketing memories and let us hope that in the interests of cricket they come out fighting...let both sides bring Christmas cheer at a time when we are all worn down by the continued impact of the pandemic.**

In the spirit of Christmas, with the tinsel glistening, the Furmedge tree shining brightly and the bank balance shrinking, I am delighted to bring you the BIGGEST EVER ASHES in AUSTRALIA Competition seen in The Wisdener (the cynics amongst you may well say it is the first Ashes in Australia competition we have ever had, but that is why you are cynics).

There are prizes but the deadline is close, so stop wrapping, put the peeling to one side ( 'thank you Bill' for the break, I hear you gleefully shout from the kitchen/cellar/shed - delete as applicable), pause from letting the mid-drift out on your Santa costume ('It was lockdown - my diet went to pot') and take part in this little challenge.

Please send all your answers by email to [furmedgefamily@btinternet.com](mailto:furmedgefamily@btinternet.com) TO arrive before the official Start of play on Day One of the Third Test - so for anyone in the UK that is 11.30pm on December 25th.

All the questions relate to the Third Test at the MCG.

- 1: How many England batsmen will be out 'LBW' in the match? (Correct answer 5 points)
- 2: How many Australian batsmen will be out 'bowled' in the match? (5 points)
- 3: Malan, Head or Pope - which one of these players will score the most runs in the match? (5 points)
- 4: Hazlewood, Cummins, Lyon or Boland - Which one of these Australian bowlers will concede the most runs in the match? (5 points)
- 5: How many scores of between 20 and 40 will be scored in the match? (5 points)
- 6: Harris, Warner, Hameed or Burns, which one of these players will score the least runs? (5 points)
- 7: How many maidens will the Australian bowlers bowl in England's first innings (one point for each **up to** the number bowled, a bonus of 5 for a spot-on answer. If you forecast more than the actual number bowled, you receive no points)
- 8: How many run-outs will there be in the match? (5 points)
- 9: Anderson, Broad, Wood or Stokes, who will take the most wickets in the match? (5 points)
- 10: Which Australian batsman will score most runs in the match? (5 points)
- 11: Here are three sets of players - Root/Head, Labuschagne/Pope and Smith/Stokes - which set will score the most number of runs? (5 points - if a player is not selected he will receive 0 runs)
- 12: Here are three sets of players - Hameed/Hazlewood, Harris/Butler and Carey/Broad - which set will score the least number of runs (5 points - if a player is not selected he will receive 0 runs).
- 13: Which batsman will score the most runs in the match? 95 points)
- 14: What will the result of the match be? An Australian win, an England win, a draw or a tie (5 points).

First Prize - £150

Second Prize - £100

Third prize x 3 - A 2022 Wisden

Fourth Prize x 4 - A £20 Wisdenworld Gift Voucher

Last place - A Sprout (uncooked, possibly)

## BODYLINE and the Mystery of the hoax photograph

On Sunday, December 4 1932, the Sydney daily newspaper, The Sun, published a picture of a young man wearing what the paper declared to be 'reinforced padding to protect them (the Australian batsmen) from knocks by the English bowlers.' The same picture, minus three boxed insets appearing in the newspaper version, has been reproduced on several occasions since then in books by reputable authors and in at least one newspaper.

It is a fascinating sidelight to the Bodyline Test series, and also an indication of the passions it aroused in Australia, that this picture is a fake. It is also a reflection of the appalling standards of the Sydney press that a prominent newspaper should be prepared to fool the public — and by means of a picture published on the front page no less.

Interest in the origins of the picture has been aroused in Australia by its reproduction on the dustjacket of a recent book, The Bodyline Controversy, by English history teacher Laurence Le Quesne. The caption on the dustjacket made the claim that the figure in the protective gear was the Test batsman and journalist Jack Fingleton. The caption read in part: j. Fingleton in "armour" (First Test)'.

One of Jack's sons, Mr Jim Fingleton, wrote an angry letter to the Canberra Times after my review on The Bodyline Controversy appeared, saying that on many occasions his late father had declared the picture to be a fake.

Jim Fingleton's letter prompted me to investigate the picture's origins and I found that its publication in The Sun did seem to be the first use made of it. I also found a letter from Jack Fingleton to the Melbourne Age after that august publication had printed the picture on February 31981 and stated that it showed Fingleton in 'heavy body padding'.

Fingleton wrote: 'Will you please, please, please destroy that foolish picture reputing to be me in full rig against the body line bowling which you printed with an article, which referred to the 1932-33 Test series.

'In the first instance, no batsman would ever wear such an outfit, he would never be able to move. In the second, it is not me but a Sydney Sun copy-boy of the day. Arthur Mailey thought up the idea and I imagined I had denied it so often that the story and the picture

I am grateful to Ian Birkenshaw for sending in this article, which I hope readers find as amusing as I did. Apparently it first appeared in Australia in 1985 and was written by Graeme Barlow. May I apologise for the poor photograph used of the image that appeared in the Sydney Sun.

would never appear again. Please do your best to see that it doesn't.'

Fingleton's comments have been supported in letters to me by Sir Donald Bradman and Bill O'Reilly, and also by the Reuter correspondent on the tour, Gilbert Mant.

Sir Donald wrote: 'I do not know when or where that picture first surfaced but I have seen it many times over a long period of years. It is definitely not a picture of Jack Fingleton, nor in my view is it authentic at all in that no player ever wore padding.

'The padding most of us used consisted of a thigh pad on the left leg and a piece of sponge rubber covering the left ribs and heart area. The latter was held in place by a piece of elastic round the waist and was suspended from the throat by another piece.



'Most players tried to avoid being hit but Ponsford, on occasions, would turn his body and take the blow on his left side or back. Nature endowed him with more padding than most of us but he did at times add to his bulk by wrapping a towel round the target area and under his shirt.' Bill O'Reilly was even more forthright than The Don about the picture, saying: 'The only recognisable feature in it is the bat in hand.... The straps (on the pads) are loose and on the outside, showing that no Australian player donned them as they are shown...you can take it from me that the picture is not of "Fingo", but I can assure you that I, the only living Australian to play in all

five of the Bodyline Tests, never laid eyes at any time during the whole of my career on protective gear similar to that shown on the figure.

Author Le Quesne tells me he obtained the picture for his dustjacket from Jardine Justified, a book about the 1932-33 tour written by the London Evening Standard's correspondent, Bruce Harris. In this book, published about June 1933, the picture, minus the

three boxed insets of the Sydney Sun version, appears facing page seven. The caption reads: 'J. Fingleton in "armour" (First Test.) Note: The jacket and thigh guard were worn under his clothing.'

In view of this unequivocal assertion it pays to study closely the wording of the actual caption published in The Sun. It states: 'Hidden from view by their flannels, members of the Australian XI in the Test were garbed chest and thigh, with reinforced padding to protect them from knocks by the English bowlers. Fingleton, who received many cracks in the NSW v England match, wore the exact breast pad as shown in the illustration.'

Several points can be made about this caption:

- Nowhere does The Sun state that the photograph reproduced is actually Fingleton himself.
- The second sentence is confusing. The reference to the wearing of the 'exact breast pad' could be taken as having occurred in the NSW game or the Test.
- The caption does not say that Fingleton wore the other items of padding as shown.

It can be safely assumed that Harris, knowing he was going to publish a book of the tour, obtained a print of the photograph from The Sun. Did he then try to reproduce the caption from memory? Or did he have the cutting from The Sun and in his haste to prepare the book for publication and cash in on the intense interest in the tour simply misread the caption?

Anyone who observed Fingleton closely in 1932-33, as Harris must have done, should have realised apart from anything else that the person in 'armour' was not Fingleton. Yet Harris states in his book that 'It was disclosed that members of the Australian XI had garbed themselves under their flannels with reinforced padding. Fingleton's photograph (reproduced in this volume) was published, showing his thigh, chest, side and elbow pads.

Harris and Le Quesne are not alone in having been fooled by the hoax picture. Perhaps the oddest circumstances, in view of O'Reilly's blunt comments, is that it appears in Richard Whittington's *Time of the Tiger*, a biography of O'Reilly no less. It is printed between pages 192-193 and bears the caption: 'Jack Fingleton in the armour worn against the terror of Bodyline.'

The picture is also reproduced in Ray Robinson's *Between Wickets* although Fingleton is not mentioned in the caption which reads: 'Foundation garments which well-turned-out batsmen wore under their flannels when they faced the bodyline attack.' One certainty is that dressed in that clobber they would not have sprinted between wickets.

The picture also crops up in the encyclopaedic *Australian Cricket: The Game and the Players*, by Jack

Pollard. Again, the person is not said to be Fingleton. The caption reads: 'Some of the padding designed to combat bowlers who attacked the batsman's body, including instep pads which would be handy against the modern "sandshoe ball". Curiously the model has no helmet.' Curiouser still, Pollard could have added that the model appears to be wearing patent leather shoes.

Did Jack Hobbs also have this picture in his mind when preparing *The Fight for the Ashes 1932-33*? He wrote, commenting on the First Test: 'Some of the Australian batsmen used spongy rubber thigh — and chest-protectors for the first time.'

Those who created this myth have much to answer for. But how did it all begin?

As mentioned earlier, Jack Fingleton in his letter to the Melbourne Age put the blame for the stunt on Arthur Mailey, described by Pollard as 'impish' and 'whimsical'. Mailey, the former Test spin bowler, reported the Bodyline series for the Sydney Sun and its stablemate, the Daily Telegraph. Fingleton himself worked for the Daily Telegraph.

Mailey is a shadowy figure in the hoax saga. Jack Fingleton's statement apart, my research has failed to turn up anything to connect the slow bowler with the hoax. If he did organise the stunt then what was his motive? He must have known that the Australian camp for a start would know the picture was a fake. Even in the Bohemian world of the Sydney press of the 1930s such a stunt, if denounced, surely would have caused a few red faces among The Sun's hierarchy.

And who constructed the 'protective gear'? Was the young Fingleton himself involved in the hoax, only to decide in later years that he had had enough of the prank? This hardly seems likely when it is understood that Fingleton was a Test player and journalist still trying to make his way in both careers. Would he have risked his job and possibly his Test place to help out with a prank? But perhaps the newspaper's executives were involved. Could they have seen the picture as a means to sensationalise even more what already was shaping up as a fiery summer, thus advancing the paper's sales? Remember, it was printed prominently on the front page.

Could Arthur Mailey, who often wrote humourously about the game and who was described by R. C. Robertson-Glasgow as an enemy of pomposity and push', have fallen victim to a joke himself and been fed the 'armour' line?

Gilbert Mant, the Reuter representative with the Englishmen, has told me: 'I can't recall anything about Mailey doing it for laughs, although he was an inveterate practical joker.' He said he had checked the picture with Tom Goodman, the Sydney Morning

Herald representative on the tour, who recalled the picture as being taken as a joke, but could not remember the circumstances.

Mailey actually wrote a book on Body line and perhaps it is significant that the hoax picture does not appear in it. But Mailey did draw a cartoon for the endpapers showing a heavily padded batsman wearing the helmet of a medieval knight tramping out to the crease.

Possibly this cartoon was inspired by a picture and report in The Sun of March 2 1933 showing an armour-clad 'batsman' and quoting the Gloucestershire captain B. H. Lyon as saying he would wear 'thin steel body armour ... also a steel-lined and visored "crash" helmet' if captains and bowlers persisted with Bodyline.

Bruce Harris, who has led one author into error about Bodyline and possibly others as well, was fortunate to be chosen by the Evening Standard to report the 1932-33 tour. He was sent to Australia instead of E. W. Swanton, later to become the doyen of cricket writers. At this time Swanton was a tender 25 (about the same age as Jack Fingleton) and earlier in the English summer had committed what he calls in his autobiography, Sort of a Cricket Person, the 'unforgivable crime' of missing an edition with his report of a record opening stand of 555 by Holmes and Sutcliffe. He blames this for his not being chosen to report the tour.

For Swanton it was a bitter disappointment which still rankles. He says Harris was a 'very decent, conscientious fellow who knew nothing about cricket at all.... In Harris Jardine was shrewd enough to see a valuable ally. Harris, a stranger to cricket, looked for someone to help him; and who better than the captain?'

In a recent letter to me Mr Swanton said: 'I think your theory of his (Harris) having obtained the print from the Sun and made the wrong attribution is a plausible one...'

Harris figured in an incident in Brisbane in 1936-37 in which as Swanton recounts elsewhere, the former

England captain C. B. Fry threw 'the typewriter of poor, unoffending Bruce Harris off his desk and, reputedly, out of the Press box!'

This happened after Fry, scholar, cricketer, athlete and writer, was 'brusquely denied access to pavilion and stands and confined to the press-box As Swanton says, in those days Brisbane did strange things to journalists.

Interestingly enough, there is an account in Vic Richardson's The Vic Richardson Story of the 1930 Australians taking extraordinary steps to protect Alan Kippax against the fast men in the match against Notts. Richardson writes that by using Larwood and Voce as their spearhead, Nottinghamshire were carrying all before them in the county championship and 'leaving a trail of scarred and battered opposing batsmen behind them.'

So for the Notts game the Australians omitted top players Woodfull, Bradman, Grimmett and Oldfield.

'For protection, our batsmen used extra padding on legs and hips. Around Alan Kippax we wrapped pretty well everything we could find in the dressing-room. Instead of the elegant, slim figure he normally presented as he walked to the wicket, spectators saw something which resembled an advertisement for Michelin tyres. He was wrapped from head to foot in protective padding. The Nottinghamshire side could not believe its eyes when he took rap after rap on the ribs and then waddled to the other end for a single. "Waddled" was the word, for he could hardly run in all this clobber.'

More research is needed into the hoax picture, but regrettably three of the principals, Fingleton, Mailey and Harris, cannot be questioned because all three are dead.

Test players Fingleton, Bradman and O'Reilly and others have all stated that the picture and the protective gear it portrays are fabrications. Yet the steady building of a myth goes on: Jack Fingleton, watching all this from the cricketers' Valhalla, must be getting very annoyed indeed.

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# The Tea Interval

Police arrested two kids yesterday, one was drinking battery acid, the other was eating fireworks. They charged one - and let the other off.

"Doc, I can't stop singing The Green, Green Grass of Home. He said: 'That sounds like Tom Jones syndrome.' 'Is it common?' I asked. 'It's not unusual' he replied.

A man walks into a bar with a roll of Tarmac under his arm and says: "Pint please... and one for the road."

I went to the doctor the other day and said: "Have you got anything for wind?" So he gave me a kite.

My mother-in-law fell down a wishing well. I was amazed, I never knew they worked.

A woman has twins, and gives them up for adoption. One goes to a family in Egypt and is named "Amal". The other goes to a family in Spain, who name him "Juan". Years later Juan sends a picture of himself to his mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wished she also had a picture of Amal. Her husband responds: "They're twins. If you've seen Juan, you've seen Amal."

Two fish in a tank. One says: "How do you drive this thing?"

What is the best Christmas present in the world? A broken drum, you just can't beat it!

What did Adam say the day before Christmas?  
"It's Christmas, Eve!"

What's the difference between Cinderella and the England cricket team - Cinderella knew when to leave the ball.

My wife says she's leaving me due to my obsession with cricket. I'll be honest, it's knocked me for six.

Why are England batsmen and Lewis Hamilton so similar? If you blink, you'll miss them.



The other day, my wife asked me to pass her lipstick but I accidentally passed her a glue stick. She still isn't talking to me.

How did Darth Vader know what Luke got him for Christmas? He felt his presents!

Two pieces of fruit sat on a hill, suddenly another piece of fruit rolls past. One fruit turns to the other and says: 'Wow look at that man-go.'

Why was Santa's little helper depressed? Because he had very low elf esteem.



What happened to the thief who stole a Christmas calendar? He got 12 months.

What should you give your parents at Christmas? A list of what you want.

When would an English cricketer have 100 runs against his name? When he is bowling.

What did the Australian cricket fan miss when he went to the bar? The entire England innings.



What is the height of optimism? An English batsman putting on sunscreen

Nathan Lyon was in the middle of a spell during the last Test and an English fan shouts "Oi Garry, is that sandpaper trailing from your pocket." To which Lyon replied "Nah mate, just the Ashes."

Why did the English cricket team need a lighter? Because they'd lost all their matches.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in jokes throughout the year for this page - it has been really appreciated.

May we, the Furmedges, thank you all for your letters,  
your emails, your telephone calls, your support and your  
trust throughout 2021

and

We Wish You All

A Very Merry Christmas and the Best Possible 2022

Bill, Lorraine, Abbey and Libby



This is our actual tree, decorated lovingly by Lorraine and admired by the other three members of the family - in other words we didn't do a thing.