

# Introduction

*The first ball I ever kept wicket to in first-class cricket flew past me before I could move and went for four byes! Not the best of starts, but fortunately I managed to hang on to enough deliveries in the subsequent years to help make this book possible. If I had kept missing balls, who knows, I might not have become a painter, as it was through cricket on wet summer days when rain stopped play that prompted this angry young cricketer to storm out of the Gloucestershire dressing room and declare that he was going to learn to paint!*

And so my career as an artist began to run alongside that of my cricketing career and did so right until my retirement from catching cricket balls in 2004. Some of you may have evidence to disagree but for me the pencil and brush have kept me sane.

I had always been interested in the Old Masters such as Rembrandt, Constable, Sargeant, Whistler, etc. And in more recent times David Shepherd (the landscape and wildlife artist not the Reverend or Umpire!), Cuneo, Seago and Trevor Chamberlain. But it was the torture of doing nothing and wasting life away sat in the pavilion watching rain drops fall that ignited the passion in my stomach to try and emulate the Masters. For this reason the painting has been the greatest therapy. Now I had something to focus on both on and off the field, to quash the frustration of wasting time. Obviously the two careers would combine and from time to time overlap.

I am essentially a landscape painter but more often than not a cricketer or two has found a place on the canvas. As you take this journey with me you will see I have a love for sky and my favourite colour is green. Cricket grounds are a perfect combination! The criteria for a Cricket Grounds inclusion in this book is that they must be grounds that I have played on at least once for Gloucestershire in either first-class cricket or list 'A' cricket (which is equivalent of 'first-class' one day cricket). All grounds, save for one, which is where I played for an 'Invitation XI' against the Tourists. Admittedly there is a slight 'bending' of the rules here, but this particular ground's beauty is worthy of a little 'artistic licence'.

Each ground and their character bring back a mixture of emotions and atmosphere for me. Visiting them again after so many years since I retired was wonderful. To be in so many familiar places and see many familiar faces was delightful; many of whom were sat in the same places where I saw them for the first time all those years ago! My enjoyment hopefully comes across in the following pages, but it was a real roller coaster and emotional journey. Some grounds have changed

more than others. Many of them are becoming more like stadiums rather than the traditional quintessential English cricketing landscape that I was brought up in. Things have to move on, of course, but I am very happy and grateful to have passed through their history during the era that I did.

Some grounds I have painted 'up to date' as they are now, whilst others, where possible and where emotions have taken me, I have tried to recreate the view and atmosphere as I remember it. Some of the great players and characters are no longer with us. Many, of course, still are and it's been great fun catching up with them to either get a good likeness, or just chat over old times.

The colours have changed too. And I don't just mean the landscape, but also the clothing worn by the players; no longer just the traditional whites but now all colours of the rainbow. With many matches in the 'Pyjama Game' being played under floodlights the richness of colour can be stunning.

Having grown up watching Australia's Channel 9 highlights during our long winter nights in the 1970's and early 1980's it has been exciting to have been part of that colourful revolution in our game. A kaleidoscope of colours to mix on an artist's palette! So I have included a few examples of the effect and atmosphere it has brought to the game.

Here and there on the following pages you'll see the odd portrait sketch; some of the people I know well, but others are those I have observed in the crowd. The crowd, I might add, that help keep our wonderful game alive.

There are so many people who have played a part in this story. I wish I could write a line or two about you all, but to do this would mean ending up with more volumes of this book than there are editions of the Wisden Almanack! So I hope you will forgive me? You know who you are and I thank you all in advance for making my life more colourful.

My journey through first-class cricket has been an amazing one. I am so grateful to have been in it for close on 24 years. It has recently been pointed out to me that I have now been painting cricket grounds longer than I was a professional playing on them. I am very happy for the painting to continue indefinitely! But in the meantime I hope you enjoy each turn of the pages to come.





**The Cricket Match**

*(45cm x 64cm)*





that messing the exam up was a blessing in disguise for me, because it meant I didn't get into Bath University. I ended up at Bristol Polytechnic instead, where to this day I still haven't worked out that having failed maths, how the hell did they let me in to study accountancy? I didn't fit in to student life anyway so after three months I walked out, telling them that I was off to play cricket instead. The blessing came in the fact that my cricket could now develop much quicker. Four years quicker to be exact.

My first professional contract wasn't offered to me by Gloucestershire. If I had taken it, I would have been playing my cricket at New Road in Worcester. For sometime Worcestershire had been watching me play club and second eleven cricket and had noted my exploits against Sri Lanka.

**Night Watch, Bristol**

*(61cm x 91cm)*

## Middlesex

To walk through the Long Room and out onto that emerald green turf at Lord's is one of the greatest experiences in a cricketer's life. Even when the ground is empty there is still a magical feel about the place. When it's full to the rafters there is no better cricketing stage on the planet. Just thinking about it makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand to attention. Even today, I love the place! My first visit to Lord's cricket ground was as a schoolboy on a scholarship to a December coaching course with the MCC in the 1970's. It was a four-day affair held in the old indoor cricket centre at the Nursery End of the ground. It was a very intensive four days so I never got a chance to have a good look around the ground, but before heading back to the West Country I did manage to sneak a quick look at the playing surface from the Nursery End. Wouldn't it be amazing I thought if I could play out there one day? During the course we were treated to a piece of magic from the legendary wicketkeeper Godfrey Evans. He would have been at least 50 years old at the time, but he gave a demonstration of keeping up and around the stumps that was simply electrifying. It's something that's stayed with me ever since. If only I'd known at the time, that many years later he would always knock on the dressing room door at Lord's the first day of a Test match, come in, shake my hand and wish me and the team the best of luck. Being up in London for the first time was a daunting experience for this country bumpkin. Fortunately I had good company in the guise of another young Gloucestershire hopeful, Phil Dicks. He came from near Cheltenham and was a little older than me, so we decided that he would be 'in charge' for the trip. On the last day of the course he nearly got us arrested. We were staying in a hotel just across the road from Lord's, in Lodge Road. We left the hotel carrying all of our overnight bags. Innocent though we were, it must have looked suspicious to a passing London policeman who was on his beat. He was too young to be 'Dixon of Dock Green' but it didn't stop him wanting to know what we were up to rushing out of a hotel with so much stuff? I think he thought we had

raided a few rooms and were off with the loot. It took a while, but after explaining that everything belonged to us, and that we were going to Lord's for some cricket practice, he eventually let us go. Providing that is, that we weren't telling lies and that we went straight to Lord's to prove it. We agreed, so he sent us on our way.

Even though we were late by now, Phil then remembered that he had promised to send his parents a telegram with the time he would be arriving back home on the train. (We didn't have mobile phones in those days!) So, after checking that the policeman had gone, we both rushed up the Finchley Road, passed Lord's to the nearest Post Office. Unknown to us the policeman had been watching us from around the corner. Suddenly, he was on our tail. He stopped us again and seeing that he was not best pleased, I went as white as a sheet. That's it I thought. Borstal, prison, interrogation, you name it, but whatever was going to happen, I had visions of not being home for Christmas. Also I thought, Gloucestershire County Cricket Club would never sign me with a criminal record! Phil explained the situation. After giving it a considerable amount of thought, our names went into his notebook for future reference, then, reluctantly, he let us go. Even to this day I can't walk around London without thinking that at some point I'm going to get a tap on the shoulder and some policeman will want to know what I am up to. It might even be the same policeman! If it was, by now he would be old enough to be 'Dixon of Dock Green'.

The first match I ever saw at Lord's in the flesh was the 1977 Benson and Hedges Cup Final, when Gloucestershire played the mighty Kent. In fact it was the first time I had ever seen Gloucestershire play live. Two of my sport mad aunties had managed to get tickets so, together with my brother David, the four of us had a day to remember, getting sunburnt sat up in the Compton Stand. It was the era of banging tin cans and regular friendly pitch invasions. We saw Gloucestershire win and I promised myself I would go back to Lord's one day and win a cup final with them.



**Pete Lowe**





Welcome to Lord's

*(30cm x 40cm)*





**Lt. Colonel John Stephenson CBE**

**Favourite Corner**

*(30cm x 40cm)*

meetings took a little longer than the scheduled lunch break. During my first matches at Lord's the kitchen was run by Nancy Doyle who eventually received an MBE for her services to cricket. Her standard of cooking was so high she should have had an award for 'services to cricketers becoming overweight!' It must have been a constant battle for Middlesex players to keep their weight down. They probably could have done with some counselling to help. You could even get breakfast! This was good news for Phil Tufnell, who often sought refuge at night-time by sleeping in the dressing rooms. The pavilion was very handy for avoiding his many ex-wives who were chasing him for their maintenance money.

Some mornings he looked so rough he made Quasimodo look handsome. With ladies not being allowed to enter the pavilion at that time to him it must have seemed like 'sanctuary'!

One of my early encounters with "Tuffers", "The Cat", included a rollicking for me and some of my team-mates. We were deep in the basement level dressing rooms at Southgate during a stoppage for rain. As players do, we were larking around to help pass the time, the noise from which echoed relentlessly around the depths of





**Nick 'The Beast' Cook**



**Supporter Jill**

to block plenty of deliveries without scoring, before part-time bowler Barry Dudlestone (left-arm spin) spun a delivery past his long lunging defence into my gloves. I didn't move at first, then as I waited, David, like a giant tree, slowly toppled over and fell in a heap causing the largest dust cloud you have ever seen. I could barely see him or the stumps for that matter, but I knew he was out of his ground, so I whipped the bails off. He eventually picked himself up and seeing the umpire's raised finger, begrudgingly stomped back to the pavilion.

David is a wonderful character with some great stories. He tells a lovely one about making his Lord's Test debut and when missing the door to the Long Room on his way to bat, he descended numerous flights of stairs, only to find himself stuck in the basement. Eventually he made it to the wicket with only seconds left before being 'timed out'.





The Ratcliffe Road End

*(30cm x 40cm)*



## Nottingham

I always parked myself in the same corner of the away dressing room at Trent Bridge. No surprise here then, but I'm quite sure I sat in the same place for more than twenty years. The ground's pavilion has a tremendous feeling of nostalgia, which has somehow remained, despite the major ground development over the last couple of decades. A lot of improvements have been made to a lot of grounds around the country and not always with a sympathetic eye, but at Trent Bridge most of the improvements blend in well.

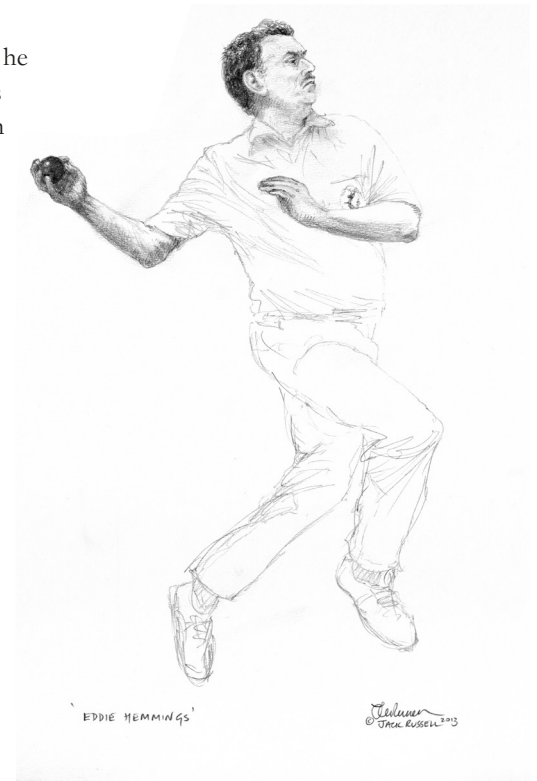
At least the old scoreboard still remains. It's a scoreboard we used to love as kids, because there were always players names displayed on it; that was a novelty to us. So it became an ambition to see your own name up there, especially so if you could put a good score against it. I do remember being not out overnight in one match, and wishing not to seem complacent in the middle of my innings, I tried to get the score alongside my name lowered to zero ready for the next day's play. My reason being that at times as a batsman, I tried to keep my concentration by imagining myself being sat back in the dressing room, having been dismissed for the score that was appearing at that time. It was just my attempt to ward off that devil known as 'complacency'. The umpires and scorers thought I was mad, and wouldn't allow me to do it.

It all came about because one day I saw that I was 80 not out on the Trent Bridge scoreboard and thinking I was doing quite well, lapsed in concentration, played a poor shot and gave my wicket away. In the second innings I was so angry I didn't make the same mistake and went on to complete a 100. I'm still kicking myself because it's the closest I ever came to scoring a 100 in both innings of a match. So I've never trusted having a good score not out overnight!

The first original painting on canvas I ever sold was to a Notts player, Eddie Hemmings. I always found him to be an entertaining character. Although he did like to 'rabbit on' a little. So much so in fact that Bill Athey nicknamed him 'Yakka' when they played together for

Sussex. The oil painting concerned also has a Sussex connection because it's of a landscape near Battle Abbey. I roomed with Eddie a few times on England trips and what a great room-mate he was; largely due to the fact that he would always make the tea in the mornings!

The Aussie spectators gave him a rough time during one Ashes tour 'down under' when they released onto the outfield a pig with Eddie's name splattered over it. A bit harsh, but that's the Aussie humour for you. He did get his own back in one match though, making his best ever Test score of 95. Despite his 'roundness' he was a brilliant off-spinner. Whether or not he would have survived the intensive training regime of the modern era I'm not sure, but I'll tell you what, he was a superb orienteering partner at England pre-tour training camps. I couldn't keep up with him! Once batting for England together, I ran him out for nought. And it was at Trent Bridge and he hadn't faced a ball! Although it wasn't quite in the epic proportions of Geoffrey Boycott running out local hero Derek Randall there in 1977, it felt the same to me as I stood red-faced and condemned to the gallows by the local fans as he trudged wearily back to the pavilion. I'm still not sure if those fans have forgiven me yet. As for Eddie, I don't know either, because I haven't asked him!



**Eddie Hemmings**



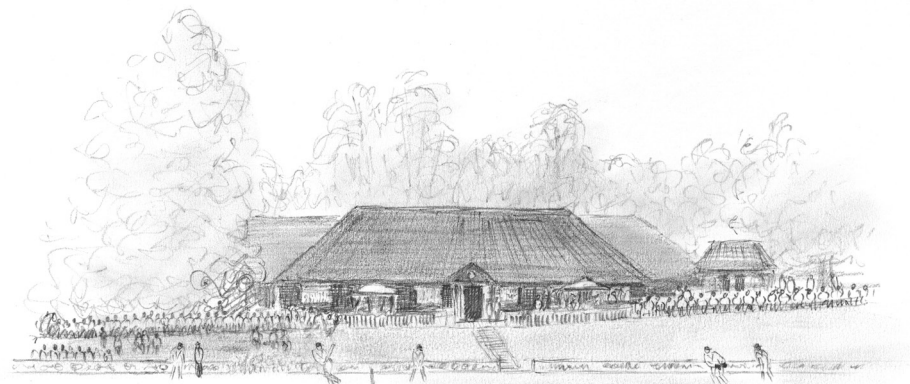
At Hove, at certain times of the year, the sea mist would roll in over the coast and blanket parts of the ground. 'Syd' Lawrence's run-up was so long, that on these occasions sometimes he would walk back to his mark and disappear into the mist. If the mist had rolled up to just the other side of the umpire, the only way the batsman knew 'Syd' was coming in to bowl was to listen to his big thighs rubbing together and the sound of his lungs gasping for air. He sounded like a steam train powering through a tunnel. It was very spooky. As for the batsmen it was scary enough dealing with his fast bouncers in perfect sunlight let alone having to wait in blind trepidation. It was terrifying enough for us and we were just the fielders! 'Syd' would suddenly appear leaping through the mist flying close to the umpire's shoulder before unleashing his fastest ball at the 'enemy'.

After play one night 'Syd' lost us our meal money. He thought he was a fast runner, and so did we. Several of us were duped by the Sussex lads into a wager as to seeing who could run the quickest hundred yards between both teams. 'Syd' was our Usain Bolt (or so we thought). Sussex's challenger was the lumbering Colin 'Bomber' Wells, who appeared on a day-to-day basis to run like a tied down cart horse. Surely our man had to be a cert? Wrong! None of us had studied the form closely enough, and we were turned over, with 'Syd' losing by a dozen yards. 'Bomber' had hidden pace and apparently the Sussex lads were stitching up every team that played at Hove that season!



Les Lenham

One of my favourite characters on the south coast is ex-Sussex batsman Les Lenham. Not only is he Sussex through and through, but he still has a wonderful passion for cricket. I was lucky enough



'THE PAVILION, ARUNDEL'

*Sullivan* 2013  
THANK YOU USELESS!

### The Pavilion, Arundel

during the early 1980's to play in several national youth teams that he coached. His son, Neil, also went on to play for Sussex. His nickname was 'Pin' because he kept getting broken fingers and had to have them pinned back into place by the surgeons. Les always told me that he was one of my hero's first ever victim. The start of Bob Taylor's world record for wicketkeeping dismissals. I know it's one of your after dinner stories Les but I am afraid to tell you that after a little research, you were actually Bob's second dismissal, not the first! But after 1,649 dismissals later for Bob, to say you were the first Les is close enough!

One useless statistic that sticks in my mind, which has no relevance to anything or anyone else on the planet, but tickles me, is that during one Sunday League match at Hove, I never had one delivery come through to me during the entire 40 overs when I was keeping at the bottom end. You always wanted to know that, didn't you?!

And just to put the record straight for all you statisticians, I didn't actually play at Arundel for Gloucestershire, but I did so for the 'Duchess of Norfolk's XI' against the West Indies.





**Horsham CC**

*(30cm x 40cm)*