

Glynde and Beddingham Cricket Club v Streethouse
Npower Village Knockout Final
Lord's Cricket Ground, Monday 14 September 2009

The day starts with a walk to Glynde station to begin my journey to Lords but, of course, this particular journey started long before this day. It is difficult to know exactly where. Perhaps when George Tuppen, shepherd on the Home Farm at Glynde, and Bill 'Scrappy' Freeman, son of the village gamekeeper and later clerk to the parish council, clerk to the overseers of the poor and secretary of the Glynde Working Mens' Club, began the modern village cricket team when they were no more than boys nearly 125 years ago. Or perhaps for me, as a small boy, when I watched my father Bob play for Glynde as he had watched *his* father Tom when he was captain of the Glynde team that won the Cuckmere Valley League in 1927. Or, more likely and relevant to this day, the year that Roger Martin, son of the Glynde stationmaster, first joined the club as a teenager over half a century ago, progressed to be secretary, groundsman and chairman and carried the club tirelessly and selflessly until it arrived at this day of days. Or maybe it was all down to the rabbits.

Glynde now have two pitches, next to the small river that runs to the south of the ground and is the boundary between the ancient parishes of Glynde and Beddingham, but when most of the current team started playing as juniors there was still only the main ground and the nets stood next to the garage where the roller is housed. The village is rural and rabbits come out and graze on the cricket ground in the dark. Sometimes they would get caught in the cricket netting and would chew their way out. Every summer the nets would become holed and useless so the club decided to erect the sort of wire-meshed netting you see around tennis courts. This stopped the rabbit damage and it had the advantage of not having to be taken down in winter and stored away.

An unforeseen advantage was that the nets could be used throughout the winter. At weekends or during the school Christmas holidays I would pass the ground and there were Dominic Shephard, Dale Tranter, the Moulard brothers and their cousin Dominic Harris. Joe and Sam Adams would be with them if they had come over from Woodingdean to visit the Moulards, which was often, and they would bat and bowl in the nets and invent their own scoring and fielding rules. At mid-day the wonderful Mandy Moulard would sweep them all up, take them home and feed them dinner and then bring them back to the cricket ground where they would continue practicing until it was dark. I wondered if there was another cricket ground in England where schoolkids were practicing their skills outside on cold winter days. And it occurred to me back then in the winter gloom that if you had that much dedication and practised your skills so relentlessly there was a chance you could get to be very good at cricket.

I have planned to travel up to the match with my neighbours Jane Stevens and Chris Whitmore. The weather forecast for the day is for cloudy with possible light showers about mid-day. I pack my bag and, as always, have failed to organise things properly. I look for my W G Grace lapel badge that I made in the late 1970s when I played for the W G Gracefully Cricket Club. It is not where I thought it would be and there is no time to organise a search. I curse and get grumpy. In view of the forecast I decide against an umbrella but opt for a hat. I have my old straw hat, rather worn, or the new,

smart, Panama that my niece Ella gave me for my birthday. The new hat has a green and maroon hatband and not the amber and black of Glynde so I have a last minute burst of inspiration and rescue my father's Glynde cricket cap (battered and faded circa 1954) from a drawer and place it carefully in my backpack.

I walk across the Square to the village shop where I had first come to live in 1953 and buy a copy of the Guardian to read on the train or during slack moments in the day. The paper will remain folded and unread. Becoming restless I call round at my neighbours with plenty of time to spare before we walk to the station. Jane and Chris have only lived in the village three years but have become firmly established in village life. Jane is involved in almost every village society and Chris organised the first beating of the bounds of the parish since the eighteenth century and runs the www.Glynde.info website. They live in part of the old village school which I attended in the 1950s.

A final check that we've got everything and we amble off to the station, with talk of expectation of the day ahead, to catch the 8.38 direct to Victoria. We pass the village cricket pitch, lying between Mount Caburn and the river, where we had watched Glynde's comfortable win against Cresselly from Wales in the semi-final. I hope for a day as tension free as that and feel optimistic about Glynde's chances.

John and Margaret Wilson are on the station and going to the match but others are on their way to work or to college. The cricket club has organised a number of coaches that left from the village at 8 o'clock, and many supporters from the village and elsewhere have travelled up in them. The players, girlfriends and committee members had travelled up yesterday. We team up with John and Margaret who, like us, are already bracing themselves for the journey across London on the claustrophobic underground.

Richard Barber, who does not live in Glynde, is a surprise arrival on the station. He is a great-grandson of George Tuppen, the village shepherd, and a former Glynde player. He has left his kids with a babysitter and tells me that his father Barry, who I played alongside when I was a teenager and still umpires, is away on holiday in Lyme Regis and will not be at the match. I am astonished, perhaps this game is not such a big deal after all, or perhaps Barry, like me, is not a good watcher of cricket matches. Richard is meeting a group of Glynde players from Eastbourne and they are going up together. The train arrives and it is packed, standing room only. Richard spots his mates and joins them. Their group includes Tim Stirney, Paul Rolfe, Darren Howard, Gary Baker and his father Graham. Graham and I are contemporaries, and he joined the Glynde club from Selmeston as a schoolboy over forty years ago. Graham still plays, is captain of the fourth eleven and was a great batsman when he was younger. I say hello and we talk for a while before I return to my small group.

Fortunately many of the passengers are students heading for the first stop at Lewes where the train half empties and we find ourselves seats. We now have to find the conductor and purchase our tickets. Despite all our enquiries and claims from the Eastbourne lot that they have bought return tickets as a group for about fourteen pounds we buy our travelcards for £24.30 each. I sit opposite Kevin Burns, who lives in the other half of the old Glynde School and is off to work in London. He is hoping to get to the game later on but we don't see him again that day. Familiar faces can be

seen in various parts of the train and the first inklings of adrenalin and excitement start to move through my veins. I briefly talk to a few people and see John Marzetti, a former Glynde junior and still only eighteen or nineteen, who says he is travelling up with several of the lads he played with at the club. I enquire after his mum and dad but he says they are working and can not get to the game. This begins a process of news of old friends that will repeat itself throughout the day.

The journey passes quickly and we get off at Victoria. Suddenly I am in a river of cricket people that I know or recognise, all heading for the ticket barrier. A few half-smiles and nods of recognition as we hurry along the platform, everybody trying to stick with their groups and get out of the crowd as quickly as possible. I see Christopher Whittick, who I work with at East Sussex Record Office, and Pam Combes, a member of the Friends of the Record Office, who, knowing an historic occasion when they see one, have travelled up from Lewes and now fall in with our little group. And it is an occasion now as all these people from Sussex start to make their way to Lord's, all knowing that this is a historic day and we are all part of that history as it is being written.

Through the ticket barrier and on to the station concourse. A group of W G Gracefully cricketers are standing in front of me and I join them briefly. I embrace Tim Knight and shake the hands of Adam Frost and a few others. Janice Smith is there but her husband Meldrum is not and I do not get a chance to talk to her before she disappears in the mass of bodies. Sue Warren, whose son plays for Glynde's second eleven, is also with them and I give her a hug and a kiss on the cheek and tell them I will see them in the ground although I don't know if that will be possible.

We head for the underground. Victoria line to Green Park, Jubilee line to St John's Wood. How difficult can it be? I feel we are all dreading this part of the journey but our small group negotiate the escalator and a northbound train is waiting for us as we arrive on the platform. Checking we are all together we board the train and are under way. The train is heaving but it is only one stop and then we are walking through the tunnel at Green Park to pick up the Jubilee Line. We board it, it is not so crowded, and I see Francis Brand and his wife Caroline sitting ten feet away. Francis' father Anthony Brand, Viscount Hampden, lived at Glynde Place and was head of the Glynde Estate Company that owns most of the village.

It is this country estate connection that Alan Lee hit on in his fine and detailed article in The Times last week. Alan Lee is perhaps the only sports journalist on a national daily who gives a stuff for the village knockout. He started by conveying the contest as a meeting of south versus north and prosperity against poverty. He portrayed Streethouse as a down-at-heel former mining village with Glynde as the home of English opera and having trim, terraced cottages. The irony that Lee missed is that Glynde had also been a pit village and those rows of trim terraces had been built for the workers who laboured in the chalk pits and lime kilns around Glynde station for well over a century. In the classic pit workers' tradition Glynde had a brass band and working mens' club and the cricket club is still based in its working class tradition. Alan Lee acknowledged this in his article, noting that the Glynde players were roofers and plasterers, carpenters and window fitters. The Christies of Glyndebourne opera house fame prefer to play their cricket for Firle village to the south.

Anthony Brand had been president of Glynde and Beddingham Cricket Club for many years. Not a cricketer himself he always tried to get to important village matches and was especially delighted that so many boys in the village had played for the junior sides and then moved on to the club's first eleven. He died two years ago and was interred with his ancestors in the vault beneath Glynde church. His son Francis is the new Viscount Hampden and the new club president and is just starting to learn the ropes. How his father would have loved this day.

Francis and Caroline chat to us and join the group and we leave the station and head towards the cricket ground. The Brands turn off to look for a deli where they can buy food for the day and the rest of us carry on to the ground. We enter at the Nursery End and find the nearest toilets before looking for somewhere to sit. All spectators are directed to the Mound Stand and we move to where we think the Glynde supporters will be. The Gracefully group are already there, they took a bus from Victoria and beat us to the ground. I see that Dave Williams is with them.

Like myself and Tim Knight, Dave played in the first W G Gracefully match forty years ago. The club was founded one evening in the Kings Head pub in Lewes, the brainchild of Meldrum Smith. Mel had a summer job working at the Phoenix Iron Works in Lewes and played a match for their works team. They were short of fixtures so Mel said he would raise a team to play against the Phoenix side. Mel, myself and Alex Timlin sat down in the pub and came up with the names of eleven friends who may or may not have been cricketers but would probably turn out for a twenty over-a-side knockabout. Mel thought up the name of W G Gracefully and we played two matches against the Phoenix and a couple of matches against Rodmell and won them all. The club continues to play today, although it changed its name to Isfield when it finally entered league cricket a few years ago.

I have a quick chat with Dave before looking around to see who else I might know. I spot Paul 'Bertie' Halsey, another ex-Gracefully player and great friend of Meldrum's, and I walk over and we embrace. He is well, I am well, and we are looking forward to the day. However, as it is nearly quarter to eleven, I return to my seat and try to get comfortable and relax. I am sitting in a seat next to the aisle and across the aisle to my left and four empty seats away sits a man in his sixties I do not recognise. I get out my binoculars and look at the wicket.

The wicket is green, although green might not be an adequate colour to describe it. Despite the modest summer we have had no heavy rain in Glynde for weeks yet here, at the 'home of cricket', the covers have been taken off the wicket to reveal a strip that could be the greenest strip of grass in London or, perhaps, the northern hemisphere. It is bad enough playing a game in mid-September and even worse starting it at 11 o'clock, as the side batting first are always at a disadvantage from the moving ball, but to have to bat first on a wicket that is more green than the greenest green used in a Kandinsky painting will be a disaster.

'Wicket's a bit green', I say to Dave and he agrees with me. Never, never, never, ever bat first in September. The announcement comes over the tannoy that Streethouse have won the toss and asked Glynde to bat first. The adrenalin levels rise, the first chalk-hill blue butterflies start making an appearance in my stomach and I get my first

doubts about the outcome of the match. Later, I learn that Glynde would have batted first even if they had won the toss, so what do I know about anything.

Before I have too much time to think about other likely disasters that might occur the Streethouse players are out on the pitch, greeted by a round of applause from their supporters away to our left. They are followed down the steps by Joe Adams and Dominic Shephard whose photographs are displayed on the digital scoreboards in three corners of the ground. What a moment that must be for them. The coaches bringing many of the Glynde supporters have not arrived yet but I stand to my feet intending to applaud Joe and Dominic all the way to the wicket. I am not alone. There is a lot of support from East Sussex and the opening pair are given a thrilling ovation. Perhaps we are all gripped by adrenalin and nerves and this is a good way to get it out of our systems early. Or perhaps we are all becoming increasingly aware that this is a day that we shall all share together for the rest of our lives.

The batsmen look nervous. The field is set fairly orthodox with one slip and a gully and only two fielders back on the boundary. A couple of boundaries are struck and both batsmen have got off the mark with a four but there is a lot of playing and missing. The ball appears to be swinging and cutting about a lot and, worse still, their bowlers look like they know how to use these conditions. We only have ten on the board when Dominic Shephard is given out caught behind for four. Callum Smith comes out to bat and he looks really nervous. He is the son of Meldrum and Janice and he is the reason why so many of the Gracefully players have come to Lord's. They keep a look out for him and his mate Ollie Bailey and come to Glynde's village cup games. Meldrum was proud of his kids but he died four years ago and so is not here to see Callum walk down the pavilion steps at Lord's to the cheers of the Glynde supporters.

After the semi-final at Glynde, when we beat Cresselly, I talked to Paul Halsey about the tragedy of Meldrum not being at the final to see Callum. 'He will be there' said Bertie, 'because *we* will be there'. Those words pass through my brain and I know that Paul was right. Meldrum *is* here because we are here. My nervous tension goes skywards, my eyes moisten and the butterflies in my stomach evolve from chalk-hill blues to purple emperors. I can hardly stay in my seat and carry on watching.

Callum tries to walk calmly out to the middle but he breaks into a quick jog halfway to the wicket which fools nobody. He is nervous, I am nervous and Peter Dunk, second eleven captain, tells me that evening that he could not watch at this point and had to turn away from the game. Callum's first ball is straight and he plays a forward defensive shot that makes a comfortable sound on the middle of his bat. He plays forward to the next ball, misses, and the ball passes through to the wicketkeeper.

The coaches from Glynde have arrived and the supporters and other late arrivals trickle in and start filling up the seats around us. I see Ivy Sutton, whose grandfather's name is on the village war memorial. Ivy is the daughter of Harry Newham, who had been a labourer in the chalk-pits at Glynde, was once a huge-hitting Glynde batsman and umpired when I first played as a boy. Harry had the horrible habit of turning his head away when a bowler appealed as if to say not out and then just as you thought you weren't out he would slowly straighten his head and raise his index finger to send the batsman on his way. Ivy had been a great stoolball player for Glynde and she

married Mick Sutton, the Glynde wicketkeeper and treasurer and the man who started the first Glynde junior teams. Ivy is dressed from head to toe in amber and black, the Glynde and Beddingham club colours.

A few balls later the bowler drops short and Callum tries to pull the ball through mid-wicket. He mistimes the shot, the ball hitting near the bottom of the bat, but somehow the ball trickles over the midwicket boundary and he is away. We all start to breathe again.

Vigars, the Streethouse captain, takes himself off after two overs in what was obviously a pre-planned tactic. He is replaced by Scott Bland who proves to be the perfect bowler for these conditions. He bowls really well but slowly Joe and Callum start to build a partnership. The nerves start to calm, the butterflies in my stomach migrate and for the first time I start to enjoy the match. Someone asks me what a good score would be and I reply that somewhere between 170 and 180 should be enough on this wicket, although 280 would be better.

At one point Callum hits three fours in succession and, although the batsmen never really look like they might dominate, they add 70 runs for the second wicket. There is an occasional, tuneless, burst of *Sussex by the Sea* from the drinking section of the crowd above and to the right of us. With 80 on the board Callum drives a ball from Bland back to the bowler and he is gone, caught and bowled for 32. Fantastic. Callum did himself proud and he and Joe have put Glynde in a good position to win the match. I look for his mum, Janice, but can not see her. She is not a good spectator when Callum is batting but I hope she managed to sit and watch.

Robbie Mouland walks down the steps, there is more applause and he joins Joe out in the middle. Robbie is a contemporary of Joe Adams and Dominic Harris who played for Sussex Colts together and, with Callum, Ollie Bailey and Chris Blunt, was a member of the Glynde under-16 team that became the first village club to win the Sussex Cricket Festival final at Arundel Castle. Robbie was an all-rounder then who opened the bowling and took three wickets but now he only bats in the first eleven. These boys are used to big matches and have the welcome habit of winning them. Robbie's parents, Mandy and Pete, have become stalwarts of the club and, like all of the parents and grandparents, it must be a wonderful but almost unreal feeling, for them to see these boys playing here at Lord's today.

Robbie settles in and we reach the halfway mark in the innings with 96 on the board for just two wickets down. It looks like Glynde could make a big total, perhaps somewhere between 220 and 240.

The game stops for the mid-innings drinks break and I take the opportunity to get out of my seat and see who else is about. There are players from nearly every village club in East Sussex that Glynde have played against. I see Mick Tweed and Richard Gravett from Firle, John Harmer the postie from Alfriston, Jamie Russell, once a Glynde junior and now the Fletching captain, with his sister Charlotte, who plays cricket for Sussex and England, and their parents Richard and Julie from Laughton. I see Guy Coggar from Nutley, who now umpires, players from Barcombe, Lewes St Michael and Plumpton and I spot Paul Crees from Ringmer. I recognise here the faces of the people who have kept village cricket going in East Sussex for the last half a

century and these people are all cheering Glynde because they are Sussex people and because that is the way village cricket is in Sussex.

There are a lot of schoolkids in the crowd despite the match being played on a schoolday. I wonder if school secretaries around East Sussex are scratching their heads about the sudden outbreak of swine-flu that has mysteriously struck down all their boys who play for Glynde juniors.

‘Are you by any chance Andrew Lusted’ says a voice beside me, and I turn to see the man who sat across the aisle from me and who I did not recognise. ‘I’m Alan Wilkinson’ he says and now I remember his face, which I may not have seen for over 40 years, as if a trigger has gone off in my brain. ‘So you are’, I say. His father George worked at Glynde Dairy and Alan and I and the other lads in the village played football on Glynde Rec when we were small boys. He asks if I have seen Taffy (Davis) and I say I have and we go in search of him in the crowd. We find Taffy’s son Gavin but he says that Taffy is in the stand near the scoreboard where his wife Millie, the legendary Glynde scorer, will be keeping an immaculate record of ‘her’ boys’ achievements today. However, we see Roger Martin and Alan talks to him while I carry on looking for familiar faces. Graham Baker is sitting further up the stand talking to William Skidelsky, another former Glynde junior but now literary editor of The Observer. I join them and Will tells me he is there working and will be doing a piece for next Sunday’s Observer Review section. I then see Christine Muscato, an old friend from Lewes, and move on to talk to her. She and a friend were staying in London for the weekend after watching the Proms in the Park and had decided to stay another day to take in the cricket. I see Dave Turrell for the first time in twenty years and John Niblett who married Maureen Moorey who had worked for a while as shopgirl for my mum and dad and whose brother Pat bowled accurate medium-slows from the Working Men’s Club end into the wind for over thirty years but died several years ago. Pat was an electrician who worked tirelessly and did any wiring the club needed without charge. I see Willy Jones and, sitting together, are Terry Hill, Roger Clayton and Ken Head who I played with at various times, but the drinks break is over and I return to my seat ready for the cricket to continue.

Joe reaches his fifty in the twenty-second over, gets a standing ovation, and the next ball brings up the hundred. The Glynde supporters are now relaxed and the mood is optimistic. Bland, who has bowled brilliantly for his one wicket, has finished his spell and he is replaced at the Nursery End by Jonathan Hughes, Streethouse’s spinner. Hughes bowls with a pie-chucker’s action and his first ball is a long hop which the batsmen fail to punish. He looks as if he might be their weak link but it proves to be an illusion. Hughes soon finds his length and the game looks as if it will return to a war of attrition.

Vigars replaces the wicketless Rhodes and will bowl the remaining seven overs from the Pavilion End. Joe and Robbie have put on 49 runs when Vigars gets Robbie lbw for 10. Glynde are 129 for three and still in a good position as Ollie Bailey joins Joe. However, the innings has slowed and five runs later Joe, seeming to be destined to score a century, is bowled by Vigars trying to accelerate the run rate by forcing the ball through the leg-side. He has made a patient 79 at Lord’s, carried the innings to a point where Glynde could win and the spectators stand and applaud him all the way back to the pavilion. His father Dave has been unable to leave his seat for the entire

innings. It is now 134 for 4 but time has slipped by almost unnoticed since the half way mark and there are only ten overs left to post a winning total.

Dominic Harris is the next batsman. His is a small figure, exaggerated by the size of the stadium he is entering and dwarfed by the towering Lord's pavilion behind him. Christopher Whittick, who has not seen him play before, asks me to describe Dominic's abilities and what he will bring to the game. I say that he is an aggressive batsman and a brilliant fielder. I do not tell Christopher that I think this may be the critical point of the match. I fail to tell him that Harris is probably the only remaining Glynde batsman who could put the match out of the reach of Streethouse's batsmen in the time still left. I also fail to tell him that Harris is a loose-cannon. In fact he is more like an Armada's worth of loose-cannon after it has been chased up the English Channel by Francis Drake and is now rolling around in a violent storm in the North Sea.

This is the Dominic Harris who, in the Sussex Festival final at the Arundel Castle ground, danced down the wicket when Glynde had been thirty for four and flayed the bowling of the mighty Horsham team to all parts of West Sussex. This is the Dominic Harris who scored 125 in that final to earn the nickname of the Pocket Rocket while the majestic Joe Adams stroked 82 classical runs at the other end. If you are playing a Lord's final, the innings has become bogged down and you want a number six batsman who can turn matches on their head then Dominic Harris is the man you most want walking out to bat. Harris is unpredictable. Harris doesn't care what shade of green the wicket is. Harris wouldn't care if the wicket was purple with orange polka-dots. The next few minutes are not likely to be dull.

Harris plays a classic forward defensive to his first ball and the over is completed. Vigars and Hughes set more defensive fields and try to keep control of the game. Harris is having none of it. He and Ollie are Glynde's most aggressive players and start sprinting quick ones and twos as the whole tempo of the game changes from steady to frenetic and then veers sharp left towards mayhem. With just a few runs to his name Dominic smashes a ball in the air to the long-on or cow corner part of the ground. It is difficult to see this spot from where we are sitting, so many people stand to watch the path of the ball. We expect to see it cross the boundary but, instead, we see a fielder is standing right in the path of the ball's aerial descent. He does not even have to move as the ball plops into his cupped hands. Harris appears to be out but, astonishingly, the ball slips out of the fielder's hands and on to the turf.

For the first time I have a feeling of seeing the moment that may have been the defining incident in the game. The fielder may have cost Streethouse the match but there will be plenty more such moments before this drama is over and another of those moments, late on, will feature Dominic Harris.

A let off for Dominic and he escapes again when he has 19 after he dances down the wicket, misses, and is stumped. The square-leg umpire gives him out but nobody has heard a call of no-ball from the other umpire and Harris returns to the crease. As is the way with cricket the Pocket Rocket smashes the next ball into the crowd of Streethouse supporters for one of the three sixes he hits and the crowd are on their feet applauding. Amongst this carnage, and as if to display his contempt for normal batting, Dominic leans into a half-volley and plays a perfect cover drive that strokes

the ball to the boundary for four in what will be the best shot of the day. Ollie Bailey is bowled by the excellent Hughes but Harris, joined by skipper Adam Davies, races to 41. The fielders have retreated to the boundary ropes and the crowd are revelling in the electric atmosphere Harris has brought to the game. In the thirty-ninth over and with the total on 200 Dominic tries a reverse sweep into one of the few vacant areas on the ground, misses, and is lbw to Hughes. Dominic was a long way forward but he accepts the decision without hesitation and turns and heads for the pavilion.

The remaining few balls prove a disappointment for Glynde as Streethouse scramble their way back into the match. Chris Blunt comes out at number eight. Chris was described in the programme of Glynde's semi-final match as the quiet man of the dressing-room. This would be an exaggeration of how noisy Chris is. Like all the Glynde players he is a delightful lad but he is very quiet and self-effacing and can be a very nervous cricketer. He is a quality medium-fast bowler and if either Dominic Shepherd or Joe are unable to play Chris opens the Glynde batting in a classical style. But he is Mister Steady and not a slogger who can change a game with a few balls left. Chris is clean bowled first ball by Hughes.

Stuart Moulard, Robbie's brother, is caught behind for three and Dale Tranter is the next man in. It is his twenty-seventh birthday today and this fact is displayed alongside his photo on the scoreboard. The Glynde supporters sing *Happy Birthday* as he walks to the wicket. Like Chris Blunt, Dale is bowled first ball and the supporters get a second chance to sing *Happy Birthday* as he returns to the pavilion. Mark Beddis scores two off the remaining couple of deliveries and Glynde finish on 207 for 9 with Adam Davies not out on 12. There were 11 extras which can often be decisive if these games are close but Bland and Hughes bowled eighteen overs between them for only 55 runs and have kept Streethouse in the match.

There is now a forty minute break between the innings. Spectators head towards the snack bars only to find the caterers at the home of cricket have run out of food. I have brought sandwiches with me and my nerves are calm enough for me to start eating. Alan Wilkinson asks if I have seen Terry Hill and I take him to where Terry is sitting with Roger Clayton and others who played cricket with Alan before he left the village as a teenager.

I return to my sandwiches and see Taffy walking across the stand below me. I chase after him and tell him that Alan Wilkinson is here. We make our way to Alan, Terry and Roger, who is recalling a story of the late Keith Parris running out a Firlie batsman in the 1960s. They spend the rest of the interval reminiscing together. The five-minute bell sounds and I return to my seat and finally get to eat my lunch.

The atmosphere among the Sussex supporters is very relaxed with many thinking that Glynde have built a winning total. I think that Glynde's score of 207 is more than the 180 I thought they needed but it is some way below the 220 or more that it looked like they might make at the twenty over stage. The sun is now out and the wicket looks a lot less green than it did at the start of play.

The umpires walk out followed by the fielders and then the batsmen. There is applause from all supporters as we settle down for the final stretch.

Dominic Shepheard opens the bowling from in front of the pavilion and with his fifth ball Hughes, who bowled so well and has opened the batting, edges and Stuart Mouland, the wicketkeeper, takes a fine catch diving low to his right. The crowd are on their feet again and the innings looks like it might be a repeat of all the previous rounds where Glynde's opening bowlers have proved irresistible and broken the opposition batting line-ups in the first ten overs.

Next man in is Callum Geldart who looks confident and comfortable from the first ball. Mark Beddis opens from the Nursery End. He grew up in Hull and played for Yorkshire's Colts. Moving to Eastbourne to work he met Phil Harper, a Glynde cricketer, who persuaded him to come and play for Glynde where he acquired the simple nickname of 'Northern'. A left-arm quick, in the past he has never really convinced me as a bowler. Although economical, a habit of overstepping the bowling crease, a tendency to injury and a failure to take enough wickets has in the past left me unimpressed. However, this summer he has been like a new bowler. Fit and healthy, he has hardly bowled a no-ball and this has given him the confidence to bowl fast, aggressively and accurately as he and Shepheard have demolished the opposition in the earlier rounds of the village knock-out.

Beddis races in to chants of 'Northern' from the Glynde supporters and Langley, the other opening bat looks less than comfortable. However, Northern does not strike a good line and length immediately and, although Langley struggles, Geldart is making things look easy. Geldart is clearly a class bat and neither Shepheard or Beddis can get him under control and Beddis starts to overstep the front crease. After he has bowled four overs Mark Beddis is replaced by the birthday boy, Dale Tranter.

Dale may be the best bowler ever to play for Glynde. Probably as good as Willy Jones or the late Andy McBrown who opened the bowling together in the 1970s he is possibly even better than Tony Riley, the ruthless, bad-tempered but brilliant bowler who once took all ten wickets in a league match and died of cancer in his forties. Tranter was the main strike bowler as Glynde won three East Sussex League championships. Promoted to captain at a young age he stepped down as it put too much strain on an opening bowler. Glynde entered the Sussex County League last season and Dale was the leading wicket taker in the whole of the league. Like many of the players in this team he has turned down offers from other clubs who have been unable to produce cricketers like these from their junior teams.

However, Tranter was injured at the start of the season and missed the opening matches. He has never looked fully fit since, having put on a bit of weight, and his bowling has been below par. I watched him bowl in the last two league matches of this summer as he looked forlorn and out of form. He has not been the Dale Tranter who has proved such an inspirational figure as this team of boys have matured into young men on a mission.

I was working on the Saturday before the match at Lord's and by chance met Dale on Glynde station on his way to have his hair cut. I asked him if he knew that his bowling action had changed since he had been injured. We talked about it for a while and I told him what I thought was going wrong. As we parted at Lewes I asked him to think about the couple of suggestions I had made, but not to think too much about them. 'I never think too much - in case I get the yips' he joked. I don't know if he has

paid any attention to what I said, he knows far more about cricket than I ever did, but I do know that Dale can win this match. Dale Tranter is not the sort of cricketer who gets the 'yips'.

I hardly notice his first over as I look at the scoreboard. At this ground there is no need to grope around in your pocket to find a pencil stub and a scrap of paper to calculate the run rate required. The run rate scored and the run rate needed are shown on the scoreboard and updated every ball, along with the balls remaining. At the end of this tenth over the score is 54 for 1 but by his second over Dale is racing in and looks more fluent than he has all season. Geldart, though, looks even more fluent and cruises effortlessly to 34 as the required run rate drops ominously below 4.5 an over. The sky darkens over Will's mothers' as some grey clouds pass over the ground and there is a spot of light drizzle. I welcome the chance to get my father's battered cricket cap out of my bag and put it on my head, pretending it is keeping me dry.

Adam Frost is smoking his umpteenth fag of the day and a lady-steward politely asks him to put it out. A couple of the women sitting with the Gracefully gang have got their knitting out and are clicking away to ease their tension.

I was never much of a cricketer but I kept wicket on and off for thirty-five years until my reflexes deserted me. Stuart Moulant, the Glynde keeper, is Robbie's older brother and was best mates at Ringmer school with Joe Fingerneissel. Joe and his younger brother Jack both play in the club's second eleven and their father Kevin is one of the club's sponsors. Stuart's diving catch for the first wicket earned him deserved applause but it is not the diving catches that are the hardest for a wicketkeeper. The hardest catches, the ones they dread, the ones that can make you look stupid and foolish, are when the bowler digs the ball in short and the batsman, attempting to hook or pull, top edges the ball and it flies crazily upwards and backwards over his head, over the wicketkeepers head and lurches through the sky towards the boundary. The wicketkeeper runs back thirty or forty yards, trying to overtake the ball while keeping his eye on it as it swirls in the air. It is almost impossible to judge it as it drops from high in the sky over his shoulder as he races to get under the ball. Even in international matches you see the best wicketkeepers make a mess of these catches as they trip over their own feet as they turn and twist, slip on the turf as they lose their bearings, or misjudge the flight of the ball so badly as it blows around in the sky that it lands feet away from their desperately groping gloves.

Tranter bangs one in short to Geldart who hooks, top-edges, and the ball flies thirty or forty feet into the air and heads towards the fine leg area. Glynde have no fine leg and Stuart Moulant turns in pursuit. He looks as if he has no chance of making a catch. He chases after the ball and tries to line it up as it reaches its full height but as it drops he appears from my vantage point to be a long way away from it. The crowd holds its collective breath as he runs back further, slows, and then further still, trying to get to the place where the ball will land before the ball does. I think he can not possibly get to the ball but, after running the best part of thirty yards, Stuart casually catches the ball as it drops over his right shoulder as if it is the sort of thing he practices every day. The catch is taken in front of the hospitality box that the Fingerneissel family have booked for the day and they shout and scream with delight as Stuart waves to them. Geldart is out, the Glynde players mob their wicketkeeper and their supporters

roar with relief. The moment is captured for posterity by BBC South East Today cameras and is shown on the local television news at 6.50 that evening.

The next batsman is Rhodes. He is hit on the pad second ball by Tranter who appeals so confidently for lbw that he is already running to celebrate with the wicketkeeper. The batsman stands his ground waiting for the decision, the umpire finally raises his index finger, and Rhodes is out for a duck. A tentative looking Mark Robinson comes to the wicket and looks uncertain against the onslaught from the Glynde bowlers. Shepherd, who has been bowling consistently fast from one end, chips in with his second wicket by bowling the nervous Robinson for 5 and Streethouse are 72 for 4.

The light drizzle has stopped and I put my cap back in my bag. Glynde are now on top, thanks to Tranter and Shepherd, and the skipper decides to rest Tranter for the end-game and brings on Ollie Bailey to bowl his leg-spin. His first ball is too short but he, like Hughes for Streethouse, soon settles on a good length against the shocked Streethouse batsmen. Shepherd finishes his allocation of nine overs which have leaked only 34 runs and produced two wickets, a great effort. Greater still if you know he has been injured for the past three weeks having hit a ball into his left foot when batting. For a while it looked like he might not be fit to play today and his nine overs have come with pain and courage and he limps from the field for running repairs. Matt Hobden comes on as substitute. I could say he comes on as twelfth man but as he is only sixteen he is more like twelfth boy. Along with other teenagers in the second eleven he must pray Glynde get to Lord's again one day so they might have their chance to play in such a game as this.

Joe Adams, with his off-spin, replaces Shepherd and two overs later the drinks break is taken. More socialising and everybody from Sussex is now confident. The batsmen coming in look less than threatening and the top order has been removed apart from the unconvincing Langley, although he, at least, is still at the crease.

I see Chris Blunt's mum, the beautiful Alison, walk along the front of the stand. She and her husband run a business selling goat's cheese from their farm near Golden Cross. They have always found it difficult to get away from the farm for the big matches that Chris or his younger brother Matt have played in since they came to play for Glynde as primary school kids. Neither of them could get to the Sussex Festival final at Arundel when Chris played and Matt was twelfth man so it is great to see Alison here today. She disappears into the crowd to my right and I do not get a chance to talk to her.

I catch sight of Ian Mepham for the first time today. When captain of the first eleven he introduced many of these boys into the first eleven and had the good sense to later step down knowing they were better cricketers than him and he would not be able to hold down a place in the side. His father, Roger, was once a wicketkeeper but later spent hours driving the heavy roller backwards and forwards helping Roger Martin and Jim Backshell prepare Glynde's wickets. A highly-skilled craftsman, church organ restorer by trade, he collapsed in his workshop during the last winter and was found dead two days later.

Shepherd returns to field and the game resumes with Joe Adams and Ollie bowling in tandem. The two batsmen accumulate runs slowly until MacMullan is clean bowled

by Joe Adams after making just ten and the score is now 98 for five. In comes the captain Vigers and this must surely be Streethouse's last hope. I have read about Vigers' feats on the internet while trying to find out about Streethouse. He took five wickets in the semi-final and scored 30 runs to guide the tail to victory. Today, although he took four wickets, his nine overs cost sixty runs and he was their most expensive bowler. If he is such a good bat why has he come in after batsmen who were clearly struggling to survive?

At the end of the over Vigers and Langley discuss tactics and for the next few overs they content themselves with making sure no more wickets are lost. Feeling confident of victory I decide to go and find a toilet rather than have to go when the game nears its end. If any more wickets fall I shall know by the crowds' roar. Afterwards I return to the Mound Stand and pass Richard Barber and the Eastbourne bunch I had met on the train up to London. Adam McBrown is with them and suggests the game is over and Streethouse will be all out for 120.

Back in my seat I watch in a rather detached way for the first time. The knitting needles to my left have slowed down and the tension has slipped from the game as the batsmen appear to be strokeless against Glynde's two spinners. A few singles are run and the score ticks along but the run rate climbs above six an over, then seven an over and is rising with every delivery. Why don't the batsmen attack? Why are they leaving it so late? Surely they are not going to go out with a whimper.

In the thirty-first over we discover Vigers' simple game plan – don't lose a wicket before the end of the thirtieth over and then go for it. The previously moribund Langley steps down the wicket and hits Joe Adams for six into the pavilion. The next over, the thirty-second, the left-handed Vigers hauls three sixes over the short leg side boundary as nineteen come from Ollie Bailey's over. In the next over from Adams, another twelve runs are scored and Langley passes his fifty off eighty-one balls. The Sussex supporters are reduced to shocked silence and, for the first time for over an hour Streethouse's followers liven up and begin to believe they are going to win this match.

Everything has changed and Streethouse are now clear favourites. There are seven overs left and they need only thirty-five to win with five wickets in hand. They can get these in singles and if these two batsmen, well set and with their eye-in, can hit a couple of boundaries the game will be over in an instant.

Adam Davies, the Glynde captain, was born in East Grinstead. His mother, Irene Bell, had been born in Glynde and *her* mother in Beddingham. When Adam was three his parents emigrated to Australia and settled in Melbourne. Adam came back to stay with his gran, the late Freda Bell, for one summer when he was eleven. He practiced with Glynde juniors and played in one rained off match against Barcombe. Later his cousin, Ian Mephram, when he was Glynde captain, persuaded him to come to England for a summer and play for the club. He stayed, got married, and captained in a nonsense Aussie way.

Davies acts decisively and takes the wicketless Bailey from the firing-line, his immaculate bowling figures reduced to ashes by the assault on his last over. The ball is thrown to Dale Tranter who hits his length first ball and stops the flow of

boundaries. At the other end Mark Beddis returns to the attack and these two bowlers are entrusted to drag Glynde to the finishing line. Is the task beyond them? They must not give the batsmen any width to pull or cut the ball. They must bowl fast and straight on line and length and force the batsmen to drive straight or take risks by playing across the line. One loose ball, one boundary, and Streethouse will get home with ease.

Beddis starts with a fine over. Perhaps all the stuff you read about the slope of the ground at Lord's is true. The pavilion end seems to suit Northern and the required run rate edges up. The batsmen have returned to their shells and are having to adjust to the change of pace from teasing spin to punishing, demanding pace. The fielders have retreated towards the boundary and the batsmen are offered singles which they need to turn into scampered twos. This proves beyond them as both batsmen are comfortably built and asking them to sprint between the wickets after they have already added over 90 runs together is one demand too many. The sky darkens, there is a brief shower and I put my father's faded blue cap on my head. The knitting needles are click-clacking at an alarming speed and people start to sit forward on the edges of their seats.

The run rate continues to go northwards on the scoreboard and with three overs left Jane Stevens asks me who is going to win. Jane is not a cricket follower, she hardly knows the rules, but she has been absorbed in this match from the first ball to this moment when the tension is being stretched to a point almost beyond endurance. I reply that Glynde are going to lose and begin to steel myself for the coming defeat. After all, Streethouse only need one or two boundaries and some quickly run ones and twos and they must still win this match. Beddis and Tranter have bowled magnificently and without a mistake but can they possibly keep it going when Vigars and Langley launch their final attack to win this match.

Tranter is bowling the thirty-eighth over and finally he bowls a ball that gives Langley a tiny bit of room outside of the off-stump. This is the window that the batsmen have been waiting for and Langley swings his bat, strikes the ball sweetly in the middle and sends it speeding towards the short cover boundary in front of the Sussex support. This is surely going to be a four and the decisive moment in the match. The Pocket Rocket is fielding on the point boundary twenty or twenty five yards from the place the ball will cross the rope for four. Harris sprints along the boundary in a seemingly hopeless pursuit to head the ball off at the pass. No ordinary fielder in this or any other match would get to this ball but the Pocket Rocket does not do ordinary. He hurls himself along the turf at the ball and both he and the ball disappear from the view of the Sussex spectators, hidden in front of the advertising hoardings lining the boundary.

Most sports have moments when time appears to stand still and spectators are transfixed for an instant that seems to last for seconds or even minutes. A golf ball hovering on the edge of the hole or a Wilkinson drop-goal hanging in the wind in a rugby World Cup final before passing through the posts are such moments. This is another one. The silence is broken by shouts from those spectators at the front who can see this action unfold. The ball rolls back into view and a roar of relief swells up as we realise that Dominic Harris has saved the boundary. He has achieved what seemed impossible and at this instant the big-hearted David has become Goliath and

instead of four runs the batsmen have only made a single. The Glynde support rises to applaud Harris who acknowledges them by waving his arm in a matter of fact way as he trots back to his fielding position ready to do the next impossible thing that might be demanded of him. If this was Test Match Special this would be the Champagne Moment. Is *this* the moment when Glynde have won the game?

Now there are just two overs left and nineteen runs are needed to win. The onus has swung back to the batsmen to make something happen. They still only need two or maybe even one boundary but they are going to have to get them in the next twelve deliveries. There are some people who think cricket is a dull game.

Beddis sprints in for the first ball of the thirty-ninth over and the batsmen take a single and then another off the second ball. The batsmen are starting to look desperate and it is now or never for them but Northern has been inspired and faultless in this spell. He hurtles to the wicket to bowl the third delivery with confidence and style. His left arm swings over and he launches the ball at the left-handed Vigars. The batsman pushes his front foot forward, reaches for the ball, and attempts a drive but it is a vicious yorker that passes under his bat and leaves his leg stump swaying backwards. Vigars has been comprehensively bowled and Mark Beddis is triumphant. The crowd are on their feet. They are going mad and the tension in their bodies and their minds pours out into the Lord's air in a mighty roar. Suddenly Streethouse's task looks hopeless as Vigars, their rock and inspiration, walks slowly and disconsolately back to the pavilion. Mark Beddis turns to face the Mound Stand and pumps the air with his fist. The Glynde supporters stand to a man, woman and child and give Mark Beddis the first of the standing ovations he will receive during this most astonishing over.

Haselden is the new batsman and another single is scored although I can hardly remember any runs being scored now. This brings Langley to face the bowling. Langley the opening batsman who has been out here for nearly thirty-nine overs for his 68 runs and now must come to terms with having to win this match himself. But Beddis is no longer on the same planet as the Streethouse opener. The adrenalin, the occasion, the setting have taken possession of him as he glides to the wicket with irresistible force, swings his left arm over once more and fires another unplayable yorker at the helpless Langley. Like Vigars before him, Langley pushes his front foot forward but the ball is through his drive before he can play the shot. The ball hits the bottom of the off-stump near the base, splitting it in two with one half tumbling towards Stuart Moulard and the other half rocking backwards in the stump hole in the ground.

Northern is mobbed by the Glynde players and the Glynde supporters are gripped by the enormity of the moment. These two batsmen who seemed immovable, who had taken Streethouse to the edge of victory, have been swept away in the same over by Mark Beddis who has snatched a victory for Glynde. Everybody is on their feet shouting, applauding, cheering and giving every other form of expression they can think of to quantify the relief and joy they now feel. We are ecstatic and I now know that we are all here together at this most extraordinary moment for Glynde cricket. Not just the people in the ground but all those who ever batted and bowled and drunk pints together. Who have mown wickets, made teas, written in scorebooks, had arguments and disappointments, sold raffle tickets and run jumble sales, and driven kids backwards and forwards to matches. I know that Andy Mac and Pat Moorey,

Anthony Brand, Harry Newham, Scrappy Freeman and George Tuppen, my father and my grandfather and all of those who carried this club through a century and a quarter to this day are all with us now. At this moment of moments I am exhilarated. My head begins to swim and the next few minutes become hard to recall. Was that the last ball of the over or did Northern have to bowl one more ball? What is the score and who is left to bat?

A new stump appears from somewhere and one of the players hands Northern the two halves of the stump he split in half. He carries it towards his father who is sitting at the front of the Sussex supporters. For the third time in the over the Glynde supporters rise to their feet and they applaud Beddis all the way to the boundary. Has any bowler in the history of cricket at this ground been able to hand such a prize to his father as Northern does now? Beddis passes over the stump and returns to the middle. Does he bowl one more ball or has he already finished the over? In my euphoria I can not recall but I do know that he eventually walks to the umpire to collect his cap and his jumper with the amber and black trim and then strolls slowly to his place on the boundary in front of the Glynde supporters, his work for the day finished. For the fourth time this over he receives a standing ovation as the crowd greets the hero of this moment. Beddis can do nothing else in this match. Dale Tranter will bowl the one remaining over and Sreethouse still need sixteen runs to win.

Sixteen runs in an over is a lot. Vigars has already shown in this innings it is not impossible but he is now sitting in the pavilion, a spectator. Tranter is bowling as well as he ever has and all the fielders apart from him and the wicketkeeper are patrolling the boundary fence. Tranter runs in and bowls and the batsmen only manage to take six runs from his first four balls. Streethouse now need ten from two balls so they have to hit a four and a six to win. Tranter runs into bowl what should be the penultimate ball of the match unless he gets the yips and bowls a wide or a no-ball. Dale Tranter is not the sort of cricketer who gets the yips. He bowls straight and accurate and the batsman drives down the ground and the fielders let them run two.

One ball left and eight runs to win. Even those in the crowd who have never been to a cricket match before but had to be here today know that it is impossible to score eight from a single ball. Glynde have won and most people are already on their feet. The knitting can be put away now. Although I cannot see them I know that Mandy Moulard will be searching for a tissue and Diane Tranter's face will be going pink as her eyes start to well up. Goodness knows, mine are.

At twenty minutes past four on the fourteenth of September 1982 Diane Tranter gave birth to her only son. Twenty-seven years later, almost to the minute, Dale Tranter walks back to his mark in front of the media centre at Lords, turns, and runs in to bowl the last ball in this drama. It is again unnervingly straight and accurate, again the batsman drives down the ground and he sets off for what are now forlorn runs. The ball is fielded and returned slowly and deliberately and the batsmen complete their second run. The niceties now take place. Umpires are thanked, batsmen's hands are shaken and then the Glynde players gather together and wave to the frantically clapping crowd before heading for the pavilion and the presentation ceremony.

The spectators follow the players towards the pavilion and parents look for their sons to congratulate them. Grown men cry. I am cuddled and kissed by a deliriously happy

Di Tranter. The speeches and the presentations take place but the drama is over now. Joe Adams is man-of-the-match but it hardly matters. A village team from Sussex, *our* village team, are national champions.

Good old Glynde, good old Beddingham, good old Sussex by the Sea.

Andrew Lusted
September 2009



Langley's off-stump is split in two by Mark Beddis

Photo: copyright Alastair Cowe
www.gallery.me.com/photoscowe

10,668 words
Copyright Andrew Lusted 2009