

## **Brian Stockhill**

The membership of the Somerset Cricket League was saddened recently to learn of the sudden death in early February of its President, Brian Stockhill at the age of 75. Brian became the League's third President when he took over the honorary role from John Bail in 1991. He was one of the founder members of the League back in 1972 and many would argue that it was his vision that inspired those around him to press ahead with the first fixtures between the founding clubs in the Season of 1973.

In his book 'The First 21 Years - a Portrait of the Somerset Cricket League', Terry Mockridge the author said, "The original idea was the brainchild of Brian Stockhill, Captain of Frome who called the inaugural meeting at the Moorlands Club, Glastonbury in November 1972. The meeting was attended by 12 clubs and Brian was elected as the League's first Honorary Secretary". In the same publication, Brian Stockhill himself wrote the Foreword for Terry's book in 1993 and said, "During the winter of 1972/73, "I was a speaker at a cricket club dinner at Beckington in North Somerset. League cricket was about to commence in the county for the first time in the forthcoming season. I fantasised somewhat, talking of big name professionals and who knows-perhaps Richards batting at Weston against a side spearheaded by Garner"! Did I really believe that in 1993 we would see that same Joel Garner bowl and bat Glastonbury to the Championship for a princely sum? Brian's thoughts in the seventies came vividly to life in later years as the League grew beyond his wildest dreams and established itself as a major player in the development of many local cricketers and clubs.

The Somerset Cricket League clearly has a debt to Brian Stockhill and this has become quite apparent over the last 40 years of the League's existence. He had been an integral figure in its development, the backbone of its stability over changing times and a well-respected ambassador throughout the last four decades.

In recent years, Brian had been a very active member of the League's Umpires Panel and as well as playing the game in the early days of the League he found time to officiate in excess of 150 matches after his retirement from the crease. He regularly demonstrated his many skills of the game acquired over many years with his unflustered approach to decision making, his efficient manner in carrying out umpiring duties and his friendly demeanour throughout a match. It is a remarkable fact and testament to the man's qualities, that in recent years Brian continued his weekly trips in the cricket season to officiate in the Shrubbery Hotel Somerset Cricket League from his home in Oxford. He was also a regular attendee at the main league meetings and Presentation Dinner where he often officiated as League President.

Some years ago the Management Committee named its Division 2 cup, 'The Brian Stockhill Trophy', and this will be a lasting memorial to a founder member of the League. However, the more relevant memory will be the vision, creativity, dedication and good humour that Brian brought to every aspect of local cricket in Somerset through his involvement in the League for more than half his lifetime.

The membership of the Somerset Cricket League has lost a true supporter of local cricket, a man to whom it owes a considerable debt and a highly respected person who will be sorely missed.

Ray Hancock  
Hon. Secretary  
Somerset Cricket League  
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