

# Dick Tolkein – 500 wickets since his 60th birthday

JACK HOBBS made a hundred hundreds after he was 40. Now a distinction of a similar kind, if not in quite the same company, has been achieved by Warlingham veteran Dick Tolkein, who has retired in his 70th year *having taken over 500 wickets since his 60th birthday.*

Six-foot four-inches tall, and powerfully-built, Dick was a tearaway fast bowler in village cricket at Plympton, Devon, for eight years before joining the strong Yelverton club, where he learned a lot from Harry

Aston, the former Devon bowler, who was coach and groundsman.

Moving to London in 1939, Tolkein joined Ealing, then one of the most star-studded sides in club cricket. Names like Peter Judge, Len Thompson, Eddie Ingram, Bob Felton, and Charlie Poore come readily to mind.

With his natural break-back, at a lively pace, Dick was an automatic choice for the next two seasons before joining the National Fire Service for the war, getting no cricket.

Allocated to Napiers at Acton, he joined the Napier club after the war and played for them until 1973. Meanwhile he had joined Warlingham, for whom 501 of his 572 wickets after the age of 60 were taken. It was at Warlingham that his commanding figure and aquiline nose earned him the nickname of 'mon général'.

How did Dick achieve this formidable target? By variations of flight, he says, rather than by movement off the pitch, variations which increased in invention as his pace slackened and his arm lowered. Yet, to the end, he was able to make the occasional ball hurry through, while batsmen who went in search of his 24-yarder often failed to locate it.

His method was to look for a batsman's

weakness and bowl to it, and he preferred bowling to recognised batsmen rather than to tail-enders. Orthodox batsmen, he says, played him on his merits, whereas his subtleties were apt to be lost on tail-enders, against whom he sometimes found width a more useful ally than length. He claims to have taken twice as many wickets against the first six in the order as against the last five.

## Tall stories

Some of Dick's stories of how he thought out batsmen raised sceptical eyebrows but, whatever the rest of the side felt about his chances when asked to bowl (as he generally was) against batsmen well set, Dick's proper conceit in his own skill and cunning rarely went unrewarded.

His familiar figure patrolling the middle distances will be greatly missed at Warlingham, not least by the Wednesday XI and the Saturday 3rds, for whom his idiosyncracies, never mimicked unkindly, were a continual source of delight. But, like the canny slow bowler he had become, he took stick in good part, and generally had the last word.

RALPH BARKER

### MAIL ORDER PROTECTION SCHEME

Members of the Periodical Publishers Association have given to the Director General of Fair Trading an undertaking to refund monies sent by readers in response to mail order advertisements (except for classified advertisements) placed by mail order traders who fail to supply goods or refund the monies owing to liquidation or bankruptcy. This arrangement does not apply to any failure to supply goods advertised in a catalogue or in a direct mail solicitation. Publishers in membership of the Periodical Publishers Association are making these refunds voluntarily and readers' claims can only be entertained in cases where the mail order advertiser is the subject of liquidation or bankruptcy, where proof of payment can be established and if lodged within three months of the date on which the advertisement appeared. Any claims received after the three-month period will be considered at the discretion of the publisher. For the purpose of this scheme, mail order advertising is defined as 'direct response advertisement'.

117TH EDITION

# WISDEN

## CRICKETERS' ALMANACK

### 1980

EDITED BY NORMAN PRESTON



The 'bible' of the game makes its appearance once more. As usual its pages contain complete details of the 1979 season in England, coverage of overseas cricket and the five cricketers of the year. Among the special articles, Tony Lewis highlights the success of Essex CCC and Rowland Ryder pays tribute to E J "Tiger" Smith.

*Illustrated 1100pp £5.75 (paperback) £6.75 (hardcover)*

Available through your local bookseller, or in case of difficulty send order to Q A P Direct Sales, 9 Partridge Drive, Orpington, Kent, enclosing cheque/PO payable to Queen Anne Press. Please add 70p per copy p & p and allow 28 days for delivery.

**Queen Anne Press**