

SHEFFIELD SPORTING MEMORIES ZOOM MEETING

MARCH 16 TH 2021

THE 44 TH ANNIVERSARY OF

DEREK RANDALL'S 174

IN THE "CENTENARY TEST" FOR

ENGLAND V AUSTRALIA

AT THE MCG, 12 - 17 MARCH 1977

This week marks the 44th Anniversary of one of - if not the greatest - cricket Tests ever played between England and Australia - The "Centenary Test" staged at the MCG in March 1977. This was in fact the 800th Test match ever played and was four years in the planning from idea to event, brilliantly organised & co ordinated by the Australian cricket authorities.

Tomorrow (March 17th) 44 years ago was the final and 5th day of this epic encounter which was played out in front of packed crowds and every living former Australian and English Test match cricketer who could accept the hosts invitation to attend (218 in total).

This celebrity list included the greats of Test cricket from both Nations including Larwood & Voce, Bradman and Miller, Laker and Lock, Boycott & Benaud, the Chappell brothers, the Bedser Twins , Cowdrey, Percy Fender (oldest at 84), Compton & Trueman, Hutton & Lindwall, Pondsford & Edrich and May & Graveney . It was an incredible & unique event of cricket celebration, attended on the last day of the Test by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip during the Queen's Jubilee tour.

'Tomorrow', 17 March 1977, was also the culmination of an innings that won the hearts and admiration of both sets of fans and made his mark on the game and it's history - Derek Randall of Retford, Notts & England who completed his maiden Century for his Country

in the 225th Test between cricket's greatest rivals. He finally scored 174 in an innings spread over 2 days, stroking 21 fours and taking on the world's most feared fast bowler in Dennis Lillee.

I have previously mentioned how special this achievement was to members of my own family and in particular my late dad, Mike, who as Derek's first Captain, coach & mentor was instrumental in the development of Derek's' early cricket career.

I have also related how Mike listened in his car to the radio commentaries in the middle of this night when his protégé became a National hero and how I nearly missed my exams the following morning through staying up to late to listen as well!

So today, I would like to just concentrate on Derek's actual innings in the Centenary Test - so many books ,articles and features have been written about this match and Derek in particular ,that my comments are just personal reflections and memories of his truly amazing feat. (Helped by being able to see the highlights on a rare DVD or YouTube summaries!) .

I have over the years collected many items about this match and some of the pictures I can show you are from original press photos sent to Mike by his media contacts at that time - several of these have been used in publications about the game such as in " Innings of a Lifetime " and "Cricket's Greatest Battles ", but this is the first time I have used them in a presentation publicly. I trust you find the illustrations interesting!

England arrived for this one off Test direct from their successful Winter series against India under the inspiring leadership of Tony Greig. This was Derek's first overseas Tour and he arrived in Australia as a junior member of the squad. He was a complete 'unknown' as far as the Aussie press & cricket public were concerned.

DAY ONE - 12 March 1977

Changes to the Test side & alterations to the batting order meant that DWR would be number 3 in front of over 61,000 in the MCG . Australia batted first and were all out for a meagre 138, which

included opener McCosker having his jaw broken by Bob Willis (NO HELMETS!) but England were then themselves all out for just 95 in reply (Lillee 6 /26 - his personal best) with DWR out for 4 after being bounced by the legendary pace bowler.

Overnight, Senior officials had become deeply concerned that the game would not even reach the 4th day (with the Queen's visit planned for the 5th day) but by the start of Day 4, the Aussies had stretched their lead to 463, a near impossible task for England to chase and a target that had never been achieved in Test cricket. (A telling factor being that a heavily bandaged & brave Rick McCosker had returned late in the Australian second innings and in partnership with the brilliant Rod Marsh (110 no) put on 54 for the 9th wicket. McCosker scored 25 vital runs.

In the English second innings, Derek forged partnerships mainly with Brearley and then Amiss, hitting many memorable drives and hooks and finished the day on 87 no with England 191 /2 - needing ONLY 272 to win with 8 wickets left on the final day - 17 March.

DAY FIVE - 17 March 1977

Huge responsibility rested on DWR's shoulders at the start of the final day. After cutting Lillee for 4, DWR then went to his maiden Test Century after 233 minutes off 173 balls with 10 fours, evading bouncers or being hit by Lillee more than once (including a serious blow to the head). The cheers that accompanied his eventual century were terrific and he waved his bat and cap to the crowd - an exhilarating moment of his life.

When his partnership with Amiss reached 100, England were now 267 / 2 at lunch with DWR on 129 and he continued to counter attack, in one over hitting Lillee for 10 off 3 balls. After Amiss was dismissed for a fine 64 after a game changing partnership with Derek of 166 for the 3rd wicket, DWR found another bold counter attacker in his captain, Tony Greig (41).

DWR was given out on 161 but Rod Marsh indicated that he had not taken an edge cleanly off Greg Chappell who sportingly recalled the

batsman. The Australian captain received unstinting & deserved praise from Tony Greig for his sportsmanship.

Needing 117 more to win a few minutes prior to tea, and after 448 heroic minutes, DWR was eventually out to the leg spinner Kerry O'Keeffe for 174 (with 21 fours of "distinct character" - Frank Tyson quote). This was at the time, the second highest score by a debutant in an England & Australian Test *

DWR's innings had transformed the Centenary Test from a possible 'non event' after the events of Day One on the field into a tense clash of skill & character. Derek left the field unaware at first of the tumultuous applause from the whole ground - he had brought England to within sight of improbable victory and saved his Country's pride. Possibly confused by the emotion of it all, DWR exited through the wrong gate and found himself approaching the Royal Box - he recovered himself, gave a slight bow to the Queen and then clambered over some seats before vanishing to the dressing rooms.

AT THE TEA INTERVAL DAY FIVE - England required 109 in 27 x 8 ball overs in the final session.

The teams were duly presented to Her Majesty in her Jubilee Year and I have a picture of Derek shaking hands with the monarch and also one of the Queen greeting Rick McCosker, whose head is almost hidden by bandages to protect his broken jaw.

Eventually England were bowled out for 417 - the 4th highest innings total in any Test between the two Countries in 100 years - Defeat was, on this special day, a glorious one with England never giving up the run chase and incredibly losing by 45, the exact same margin of defeat as in the very first Test in 1877 at the same venue!

Derek was judged the "Man of the Match" for his unforgettable efforts - he attracted great praise as it is a remarkable performance to win such an award if you are on the losing side. The judges passed over Lillee and Rod Marsh, both very worthy candidates, to make this award to Derek.

Lillee finished with match winning figures of 11 for 165 - he had bowled 34 x 8 ball overs in England's second Innings and was chaired off exhausted at the end by his grateful Australian team mates.

His determination to win never flagged, using up reserves of energy on the final day some 44 years ago that placed him on a level with the greatest fast bowlers of Test match history. That DWR defied him and even earned the admiration of the Australians was a statement of class, bravery and even eccentricity by DWR.

At the end of match ceremony DWR, totally unprepared, accepted his award and "thanked the crowd for coming" and humorously Dennis (Lillee) "for the bump on my head. If it had hit me anywhere else it might have hurt!".

Dennis Amiss, DWR's partner for over 240 minutes said recently that "it was one of the finest knocks I have ever witnessed against Lillee at his best - it must go down as one of the greatest innings of all time".

Another commentator offered the opinion that the duel between Lillee & Derek was possibly the longest and most fierce in Test history.

The total match attendance was recorded as 247,873 over the 5 days of play

DWR returned to Retford later that month for a Civic Reception and was driven to the Town Hall through his hometown streets by my dad, Mike.

... And then came "Packer" and World Series Cricket , but that's perhaps for another day !

FOOTNOTES

DWR went on to play 47 Tests for England (1977 - 1984), scoring 27,470 runs at 33.37 with 7 Centuries - the most by any Nottinghamshire player before him.

He was a member of the "Ashes" winning England teams under Mike Brearley in 1977 and 1978/79

DWR also played for his Country in the World Cup final at Lord's in 1979 v WI

In his career for his County, DWR amassed 28,456 runs in all first class cricket and was a member of the Notts sides that won every domestic trophy between his debut in 1972 and his final game in 1993.

DWR is one of the games historic cricketers featured in the MCG Tapestry celebrating 150 years of sporting excellence at the ground and which is displayed in the Members stand at 7 metres long . DWR has personally seen this tribute which was unveiled in 2003 and he is illustration number 136

DWR is included in that section of the tapestry representing the period 1973 - 1982 along with Dennis Lillee, Majid Khan, Jeff Thomson, Max Walker, Rod Marsh, Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, David Gower, Imran Khan, Viv Richards, Richard Hadlee and Joel Garner.

***The Highest score by a debutant in an England v Australia Test was made by "Tip" Foster 287 at the SCG in 1903/04.**

Centenary Test Records

Rod Marsh became the first Australian wicket keeper to score a century in a Test against England with his 110 not out in the Australian second innings of the Centenary Test.

He also broke the record for Australian wicket keeping dismissals with his 188th dismissal in the Centenary Test

Alan Knott also broke the record for the most wicket keeping dismissals for England against Australia in Tests with his 85th dismissal in this Match

Derek Underwood recorded his 250th Test wicket when he removed Chappell in the Australian first innings

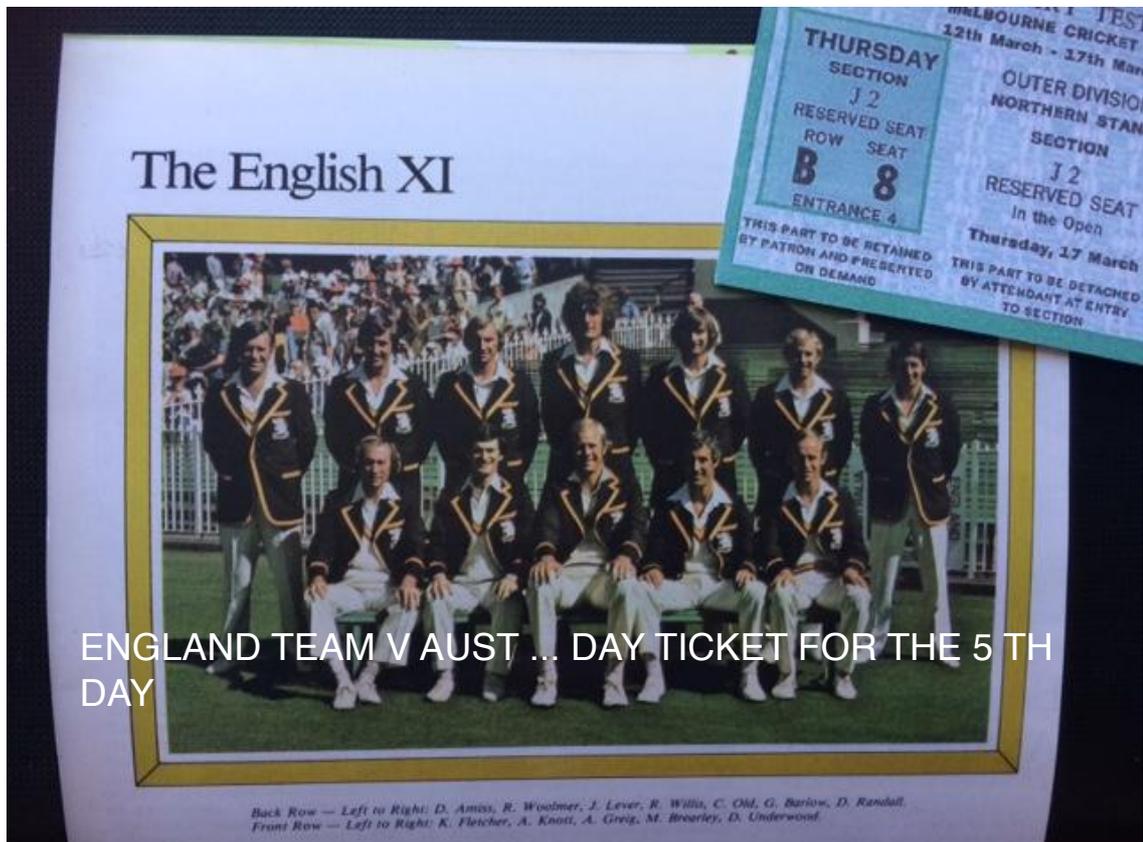
MY SOURCES Include

Innings of a Lifetime by Ralph Barker ; The Centenary Test by Frank Tyson The Tapestry Story by Keith Dunstan : Michael Hall's unpublished Autobiography :The Centenary Test match programme, Australian Cricket Board ; Crickets Greatest Characters by Geoff Tibballs and "Crickets Greatest Battles" , by Michael Brearley with Nasser Hussain and Peter Baxter.

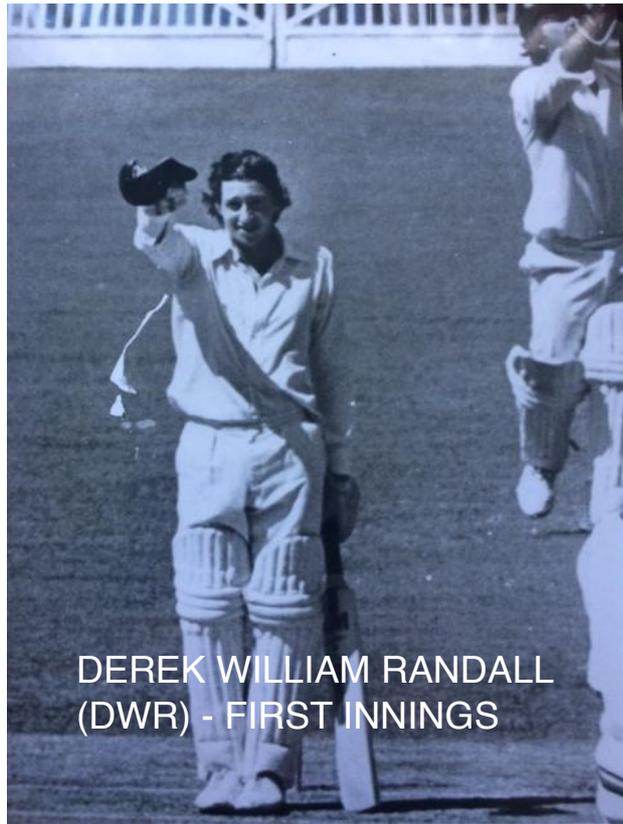




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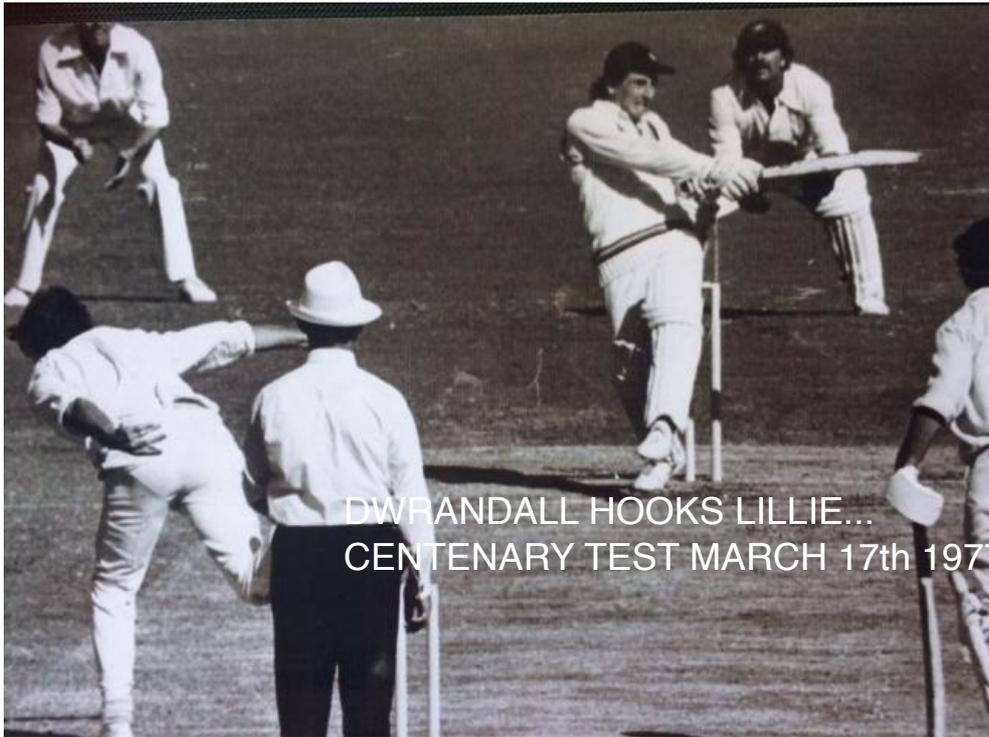
ENGLAND TEAM V AUST ... DAY TICKET FOR THE 5 TH
DAY



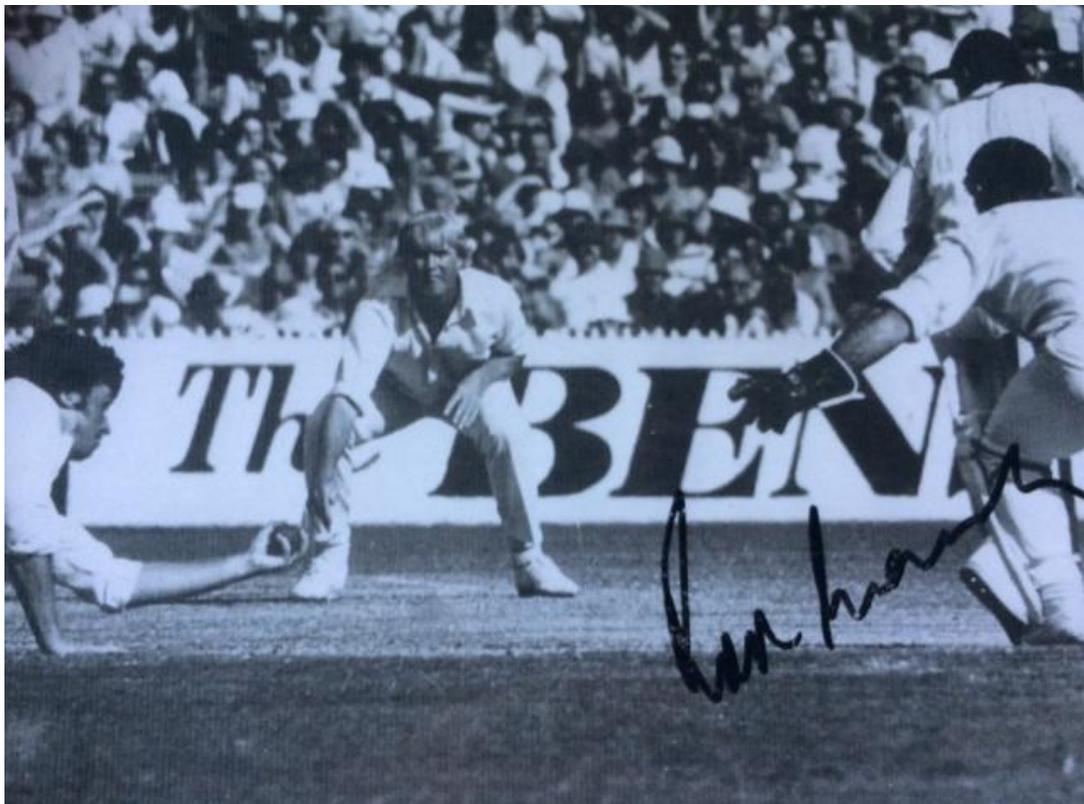
DEREK WILLIAM RANDALL
(DWR) - FIRST INNINGS



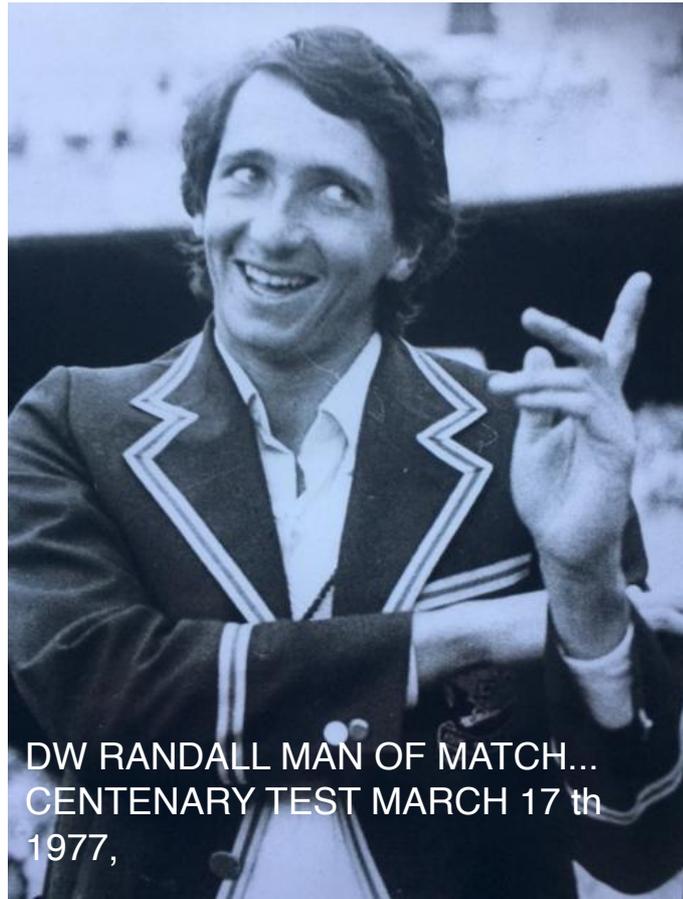
DWR AVOIDS A BOUNCER ...
CENTENARY TEST MARCH 1977



DWRANDALL HOOKS LILLIE...
CENTENARY TEST MARCH 17th 197



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DW RANDALL MAN OF MATCH...
CENTENARY TEST MARCH 17th
1977,



DWR ARRIVES AT HIS CIVIL
RECEPTION... DRIVEN BY MIKE
HALL MARCH 1977.