

OFFICIATING MATTERS

#YESITDOES

JANUARY 2026 EDITION

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hi everyone and a Happy New Year to one and all.

I hope that you all had a peaceful, relaxing and merry Christmas period and are starting to look forward to the 2026 cricket season.

There is lots currently going on in the background, both within our own area and across the country as a whole. Nationally, the ECB is endeavouring to find £6 million pounds of savings and cutbacks have extended to recreational officiating, with a number of roles unfortunately becoming redundant. Sadly, amongst those moving on from their posts is Mike Grossett, our Regional Officiating Development Officer, though it's good to hear that Mike has been given another role within the Officiating department.

On a positive front, and this will be expanded upon further within this bumper, New Year edition of our bi-monthly magazine, is that thanks to the hard work of Sue Drinkwater and others, the new Scorers Pathway is officially up and running with similar opportunities now being available to scorers in regard to education, mentoring & development as the umpiring fraternity already enjoys. This has led to a division of roles within the scoring set-up in GACO - more details on Page 5.

While recreational cricket won't be at the forefront of most people's minds at this time of year, committee work is ongoing throughout the close season and as such this edition of OM contains articles from the association Treasurer and Appointments Officer which will hopefully be of interest.

It is sad to report the loss of two friends and colleagues prior to Christmas in Deric Burns, who was a key figure in BACUS and co-chair of GACO alongside our current President, Clive Poulton, and Jill, wife of former WEPL umpire Martyn Keen, after a long illness bravely fought - our condolences, thoughts, prayers and best wishes have been relayed to the families concerned.

A couple of early, pre-season reminders - the GACO AGM and bi-annual GACO Conference are both on the horizon - details within, with more info to follow via the usual sources.

Finally, our new, upgraded, GACO website is now up and running thanks to Rishi's hard work and expertise – please check it out when you have a minute.

Phil



PRESIDENT'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE 2026

As a new year begins, as ever it's a time to look back and, of course, look forward. Looking back, what a summer 2025 turned out to be. Endless sunshine, warm temperatures and precious few cancellations in the cricket fixture lists! A truly memorable season that was a far cry from the climate we face in January, February and sometimes beyond, although on the bright side, the daylight is already increasing with every passing day.

It's the promise of Spring that heralds the forthcoming cricket season; something that we can all now start to look forward to.

Once again, the members of our committee have each made substantial contributions over the past year, ensuring that our association continues to run smoothly. Their commitment covers publicity, recruitment, umpire and scorer training & development, appointments, financial management, social activities and seminars. Other members have also provided valuable support in helping manage appointments, finance, mentoring and development. We continue to have an excellent relationship with the Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation and are very grateful for their continuing support. We look forward to working closely with them going into 2026 and beyond.

During the past year, the ECBACO has pursued various change strategies for the recreational game and as we all know well, change can be challenging. With GACO continuing to be recognised as a leading regional ACO, I hope that with further changes planned for the coming year, the ECB and County Boards will continue to consult and liaise with not only ourselves, but with all the County ACOs across the country. Run entirely by volunteers, the ACOs have vast experience and knowledge in organising, providing and developing officials for the recreational game - a truly valuable resource that needs to continue to be utilised to the full.

In GACO, we strive to publicise our activities to maximum effect and our new website will improve our ability to get our message out across our region. A huge thank-you to Rishi for all his work on creating this impressive resource. Recruitment, training, development and support must remain key priorities for the year ahead if we are to attract and retain new umpires and scorers, whilst including and supporting our existing members – thank you in advance to everyone who will contribute to these facets of GACO in the year ahead.

With our association currently in a healthy position, we can look forward to 2026 with confidence. May I take this opportunity to wish you all, your families and friends a Happy and Healthy New Year and may the summer of 2026 mirror that of 2025.

Clive Poulton

MONEY MATTERS by John Lindley



Basically, the GACO Finance Department is similar to that of any household or company business – it's about keeping an eye on balancing income and expenditure.

Each entity has customers and suppliers - in a household, there are more suppliers than customers, and in a business, there are often more customers than suppliers. The GACO situation is somewhere in between the two but nearer the former, so it's really just a matter of 'housekeeping and keeping a close eye on cashflow'. However, that's where the similarity ends.

As a brief overview, GACO has around 20 customers and 130 suppliers (active officials) with the number of each changing from one year to the next.

In regard to timescales, despite popular belief, the cricket season isn't just a matter of 18 summertime weeks. In 2025, outdoor fixtures commenced at the beginning of April and continued until the middle of September, whilst in 2024, the outdoor season concluded at the end of September. But as soon as ropes go up around squares and players begin to contemplate their end-of-season stats, the indoor competitions get underway and run through to March, by which time the next outdoor season is about to get start!

Winter brings its own tasks on the 'housekeeping' front: Getting the accounts in order for audit ahead of the AGM, ensuring all 'supplier' payments are supported by valid claims, and invoices for appointments are backed up by the necessary fixture & appointment details. In addition, we need to ensure expenses for overheads are appropriate to the activities which are necessary in the running of the association. Once all that's done, the financial plan for the year ahead needs to be put together by the appropriate officers, agreed with GCF and submitted to ECB.

Throughout the year, the issue of officials being appointed to cover a wide range of matches introduces its own set of challenges:

- Spread across the customers, there are around 100 different competitions and fixture formats to which GACO currently makes appointments, many of them with different expense allowances.
- Each year the demand for officials grows as new competitions are introduced and in 2025 there were over 2000 individual appointments for us to deal with.

Along with their internal checking routines, each customer has their own invoice requirements, some wanting a purchase order reference and others separation of competition groups to mention just two.

In producing an invoice, the question of 'what actually happened on the day' must be answered for each fixture where officials are appointed. That's not an issue until missing data and discrepancies between the WTU and Play Cricket sites beg yet more questions.

When it comes to paying bills, our customers all have their own systems and timings. Not all are conducive to helping GACO pass payment on to the suppliers, particularly so for 'non-league' appointments, a complication which leads to what might sometimes appear to be random payments of expense claims.

So, in summary, it's all quite straightforward, just a small matter of 'housekeeping' and keeping a close eye on cashflow!

SCORING MATTERS #YesItDoes with Sue Drinkwater

ECB ACO Scorer Pathway 2025

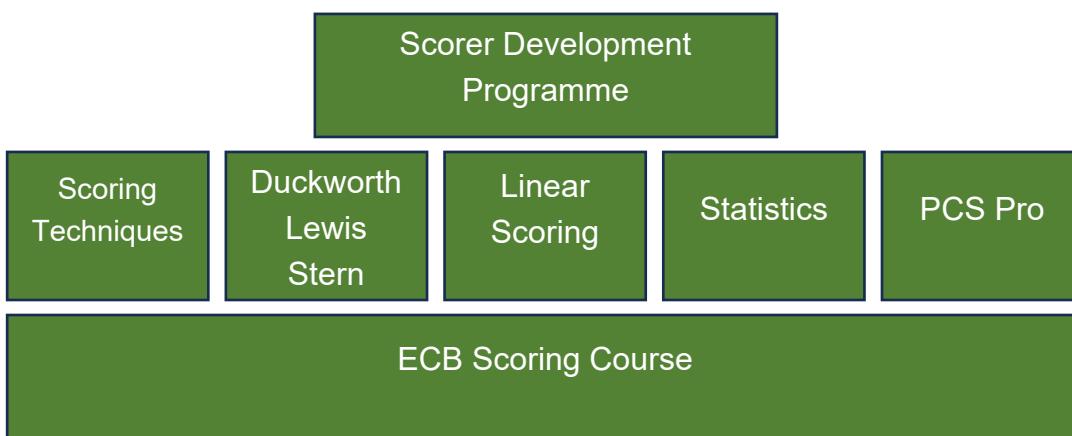
On November 26th, the long-awaited new scorer education and development pathway launched and ACO scorer members were advised of their grades in the new system, based on their formal accreditation in the previous system. The scorer pathway is now similar to the two pathways used in umpiring and is represented by the ladder below.



The main difference between the scoring and umpiring pathways lies in the Recreational Game Scorer (S4) level, which represents scoring in all league or competitive recreational cricket. Unlike umpires, who get promoted to a higher level of recreational cricket as their skill level increases, scorers tend to stay with their chosen clubs. This means they tend not to be appointed to other (higher level) clubs, even

when their expertise and skill levels change.

For scorers, appointments start to happen at the Representative Game Scorer Recreational (S3) level and to support scorers who want to progress up the pathway, there are a set of Continuing Progression Development (CPD) training modules to help them obtain the relevant competencies.



For new ACO scorer members, entry onto the pathway will be via a new online ECB Scoring Course soon to be launched, so the focus for face-to-face training locally within the county will be on the middle row of CPD courses. The top-level Scorer Development

Programme is designed to prepare a scorer for operating in the professional game and will hopefully commence in autumn 2026.

To support and nurture the bulk of our scorers in the Recreational Game Scorer (S4) level, we will need to build a community of scorers in Gloucestershire, who can help and support each other and identify what ad hoc training and development needs people at all levels have.

Gloucestershire ACO Lead Scorer Structure

To support and develop ACO scorer members in Gloucestershire, we need to do the following:

- Grow the GACO scorer membership to build a community of scorers across the county.
- Identify GACO scorer members who are currently at a lower grade than their actual skill level and help them to quickly move to a more accurate level, should they so wish.
- Support and develop all GACO scorer members at each level of the pathway.
- Identify the needs and wants of the GACO scorer members and facilitate as many of these as possible.
- Provide scoring opportunities for those who wish to progress on the scorer pathway, where possible.

There is a large emphasis on scorer development in the above list and so to help achieve some of these points, GACO has split its scorer representatives into three distinct roles, like those servicing GACO umpiring members.

Instead of one County Scoring Officer, GACO now has:

- County Lead Scorer Education: position currently held by Sue Drinkwater
- County Lead Scorer Appointments: position currently held by Mike Turner
- County Lead Scorer Development: position currently held by Malcolm Doody

It is hoped that we can build a team of people to assist the County Lead Scorer Development by taking on smaller local tasks, such as representing scorers in a particular league or type of cricket.

If you are able to help with any of these tasks in 2026, please let either the GACO Chairman or County Lead Scorer Education know and together help us shape the future of scoring in Gloucestershire.

Scoring for the Rest of the World XI - Mon 17 Nov – Tue 2 Dec by Penny Taylor

The taxi picked me up from friends in Steyning at 06:30 to take me to Gatwick for my 10½ hour Emirates' flight, via Dubai, to Karachi, Pakistan, arriving at 01:10 Karachi time on Tuesday 18th November, ready to score in the IMC Over-40s T20 World Cup. Having taken a tumble down the stairs two weeks before leaving, I booked airport assistance, which largely worked well. My arrival at Karachi airport appeared to cause something of a stir, with people staring, smiling and pointing and for the rest of the trip I was constantly approached by complete strangers asking to have their picture taken with me. It made me feel like quite a celebrity!

It soon became clear that we were not going to be able to leave the Marriott hotel without our dedicated (hunky!) policeman, Saddam Hussein and liaison officer, Muhammad Muzammil Atif, with an armed police escort at front and rear of our convoy of bullet-proofed buses and cars – not sure if we felt like royalty or criminals! Every trip, to practice grounds, matches and social events was the same and the high security also meant there were no spectators at the matches. With 12 teams of visitors, the Pakistani authorities were determined to ensure we were all safe.

The Rest of the World team included 2 players from Wales, 1 from Nepal, 1 from St Helena, 5 from New Zealand (of different nationalities) and 6 Pakistanis who live in Oman or Singapore. They were all great fun and took great care of their ancient scorer! Our 'National Anthem' was 'Status Quo's Rocking All Over the World' (changing 'Rocking' to 'Cricket'), which went down well with all the teams – once our guys learned the words!



Within three days of arriving, there were signs that people were starting to fall ill and the captain, Harry Ghodke and I ended up being taken to the South City Hospital on 21st November, for infusions to help stop our horrendous D&V. Sadly, I ended up missing the Opening Ceremony and three of the games before I could safely travel again and to

cap it all I arrived back in the UK with a chest infection, overnighting at Gatwick before driving home! All but one of the team were affected, but they all soldiered on and managed to finish all their games and come 4th in Group B, with the captain, Harry, 4th in the Batting and voted Best Fielder of the tournament and Asif Muhammad 2nd in the Bowling awards. All the cricketing details are available at:

<https://cricheroes.com/tournament/1688710/IMC-Over-40s-Cricket-World-Cup-2025> via CricHeroes App <https://crichero.es/apps>

We were superbly hosted by the Pakistan Veterans Cricket Association, who spared no expense, taking us to outdoor restaurants, a beach club, amusingly named The Escape, which offered water sports and camel rides and after much persuasion, a huge shopping mall one evening, to shop for gifts and souvenirs.

It was a very long way to go to not see much of Pakistan, but true to form, the family of cricket stepped up to make it a truly memorable trip – in spite of all the sickness! It was certainly an amazing experience and one which I shall never forget.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CRICKET FOUNDATION NEWS

with Nicky Clarke



Our initial spring courses are now confirmed and open for bookings.

The next ECB Umpiring Course will be held at Archway School, Stroud, on Saturday 31 January, with our very own Bob Hampshire delivering, alongside Kris Boulton (Wiltshire and WEPL).

We'll be following up with an Umpire Development Course aimed at people who are interested in umpiring league and other competition games on Sunday 8th March at Frocester CC (<https://booking.ecb.co.uk/yEMD5I>).

'Get Into Cricket' might look slightly different for officiating in 2026, utilising the online scoring and umpire courses, and with an increased focus on real-game experience through our zonal programme fixtures during May half-term. Watch this space!

GCF will be working with WEPL to ensure all clubs have a qualified DLS manager and it would be great to see some of our umpiring fraternity at the DLS training course. Dates & venues will be confirmed in the new year.

Finally, I am hoping to interview some of our umpires and scorers post-Xmas so we can promote the opportunities and benefits of being a GACO official.

INDOOR CRICKET with Jim Hyland

Indoor cricket is well underway with 120+ matches already completed across the Cheltenham & Gloucester competitions - a round-up of the various leagues/divisions will follow in the next edition of OM once schedules are completed.

The current Cheltenham League leaders are:

- Div One – Cheltenham CC
- Div Two – Dumbleton CC
- Div Three - St Phillips North CC
- Div Four - Asian Sports CC

The three Gloucester League divisions are currently headed by Tewkesbury, Newent & Whitminster respectively.

Cheltenham KO Cup - Teams playing in Divisions 1 & 2

University of Glos, Cheltenham, Hatherley & Reddings & Cheltenham Civil Service contested the semi-finals.

Civil Service and Cheltenham are regular semi-finalists and both won through to the 2025 final. In this game, the Civis reversed the current league standings by restricting Cheltenham to 48ao (Rich Robinson 3/21 & Callum Wilson 2/10) and then reached their target for the loss of just one wicket with plenty of overs to spare.



Cheltenham Civil Service & Cheltenham CC before the Indoor Cup Final with umpires Jim Hyland and Ian Coote

Cheltenham Plate KO - Teams playing in Divisions 3 & 4

12 teams entered the Plate KO and a brilliant final was contested between long-standing indoor specialists Birdlip CC and the league new boys Asian Sports CC, who are playing in this competition for the first time.

Batting first, Birdlip posted 108/5 from their 12 overs, Nitin Shetty 44 not out was well supported by Kevin Blackburn 10 & Muhammad Sharjeel Mushtaq 13 in the face of tight



bowling with some excellent fielding - Milesh Sukhadhai was the pick of the bowlers with 2 wickets for 15 runs. Asian Sports' reply ebbed and flowed, always just about up with the rate but never ahead, Rahul Sharma 41 & Amit Patel 41no being the mainstays.

While Birdlip showed their experience and indoor nous in the field – Sports required 9 runs off the final over and this was achieved from the last ball with 1 just one wicket in hand!

Indoor Plate KO winners, Asian Sports

BUCS – Western Regional Qualifiers

For the first time, these matches were hosted at Hartpury and GACO provided the umpires.

9 x University teams competed, with standards varying - Bristol, U.W.E & Gloucestershire Universities in particular boasted plenty of experience, others less so. A reflection on the growing interest in this format though, has resulted in more universities giving it a go, which is great news.

Hartpury were making their Indoor debut and having been bowled out by Bristol for 20, set a very unusual indoor field with 4 slips from the outset!



The OM cameraman was so shocked at seeing the employment of 4 slips in Indoor Cricket that his hands shook so violently while capturing the moment, it caused his picture to blur.

U.W.E. were undefeated and eventually finished top with Bristol in 2nd place. Both sides will progress to the Southern Super 8s stage of the competition which will also take place at Hartpury later this month.

OFF-SEASON DIARY of ADRIAN MOLE (GACO Appointments Officer) Aged 67^{3/4}



September

With the final few appointments for various Finals sorted, it's time for a review of the 2025 season and a look forward to 2026 - meetings held with existing team members and my opposite number in Somerset, who we have been assisting by covering matches in the north of their territory to establish how this partnership can be developed in the future.

October

Having reviewed all the captains' match reports and scores, the various Appointments Officers attend the end-of-season WEPL Panel Committee meeting in Bristol at which the 2026 Panel compositions are finalised.

November

2026 Divisional structures and WEPL Umpiring "pods" are released internally, enabling WTU and my personal appointments spreadsheets to be updated as necessary. Research and discussions, in partnership with the GACO Treasurer, are held with GCCC Head of Pathway to assist in regard to their 2026 Umpires' & Scorers' budget allocations. Attend a meeting with newly-appointed GCF team members in Bristol to help with planning of County Cup & Trophy Competitions and multiple outstanding GYCL Finals which were washed out in Aug/Sept to try and avoid the fixture congestion experienced in 2025.

December

WEPL fixtures for 2026 advised and ready to be loaded onto WTU, with Regional Appointments Officer, Les Clemenson, taking the lead.

January

WTU training session planned for "new" team members, Ian Purchase and Mark Forge. Feeder League fixtures received - 360 to be loaded onto WTU by the team.

February

Time for the first email requesting umpires update their availability for the first 8 weeks of the upcoming season on WTU - early responders enable me to start "pencilling in" feeder league appointments to my spreadsheets. Advance notification of 100+ Boys' & Girls' County Age Group matches received, all of which need adding to WTU.

March

WEPL Tier 3 appointments made & released and feeder league appointments finalised, ready for publication.

April

Appointments for the early regional rounds of ECB Competitions begin, together with re-arranged GYCL Finals, and if the weather is good, a raft of requests for umpires to officiate in pre-season games is received. Each and every month in conjunction with the Treasurer, we monitor DBS renewals and I update WTU to facilitate future appointments. Another season is starting and the team will complete another 2,000+ umpire appointments....

As ever, I am indebted to the team of volunteers who assist me and the umpire and scoring colleagues who respond to our call - without Ian McHardie-Jones & Kevin Carden covering County Age Group appointments, Len Attard and Ian Wright who manage the ever-growing Seniors appointments' list and Jim Hyland who looks after the winter Cheltenham Indoor League, together with Ian Purchase and Mark Forge who are shortly to join the team, it would not be possible to try and fill nearly 3000 individual appointments across the next, or any other, season.

Steve Johnson

GACO COMMITTEE CONTACTS 2025/26

Post	Name	E-Mail	Post	Name	E-Mail
Chairman	Phil Mattingley	chair@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Development	Bob Owen	development@gaco.org.uk
Secretary	Andrew Davis	Davchu08@outlook.com	Web Development	Rishi Maktedar	secretary@gaco.org.uk
Treasurer	John Lindley	treasurer@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Recruitment	Darren Turl	recruitment@gaco.org.uk
Umpire Appointments	Steve Johnson	appointments@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Education	Bob Hampshire	education@gaco.org.uk
County Lead Scorer (Education)	Sue Drinkwater	scorers@gaco.org.uk	County Lead Scorer (Development)	Malcolm Doody	TBC
County Lead Scorer (Appointments)	Mike Turner	TBC	GCF	Nicky Clarke	Nicky.clarke@gloucestershirecricketfoundation.org
Welfare Officer	Robin Scott	welfare@gaco.org.uk	Publicity	Craig Blakeway	webmaster@gaco.org.uk

FESTIVE QUIZ

Who are the Christmas cricketers in pictures 1-3 and who are the three Australian test players sharing a cracker beneath the tree (Picture 4)?



1.



2.



3.



4.

5. Which year saw Test cricket played on Christmas Day for the first time?

- a. 1934
- b. 1963
- c. 1951
- d. 1982

6. Which England batsman – born on Christmas Day – once scored 127 runs in the final session of a day's play in a Test Match?

7. Which Christmas Day-born wicketkeeper, despite being only five feet tall, completed more than 1000 first-class dismissals, including 342 stumpings?

- a. Bert Strudwick
- b. Alan Knott
- c. Les Ames
- d. Titch Cornford

8. Why was the 1997 Christmas Day one-day international at Indore, between India and Sri Lanka, called off after just 3 overs?

- a. The pitch was unsafe
- b. The crowd rioted
- c. A swarm of bees invaded the outfield
- d. Sri Lanka protested after Murali had been no-balled for throwing

CRICKETING ODDITIES

The Truly Remarkable Story of Billy Midwinter retold by Eric Woodmason



I'm sure there's one theme common to all umpires: we love cricket! The degree and origins will be different, but why else would we do it? Mine came from my grandparents: from a very early age I was packed off for 2 weeks in mid-August to stay with them in Bishops Cleeve. Every day, I was taken to The Cheltenham Festival: vivid memories include Mike Proctor taking a stunning one-handed caught and bowled, leaping high above his head. Another was Clive Lloyd hitting the ball out of the ground over the roof of the pavilion.

My grandfather didn't play, but he was a historian of the game, particularly Gloucestershire cricket at Cheltenham. So, I was regaled with stories of Wally Hammond taking 9-23 before lunch and catching the 10th batsman at slip against Worcestershire in 1928*. Sam Cook, "The Tetbury Twirler", leaving the field early to catch the last bus back to Tetbury!?

But my favourite story concerns the life of Billy Midwinter, the Gloucestershire all-rounder, the only man ever to play for England v Australia and for Australia v England.

Billy's father, also William, was a gamekeeper in Chedworth, but moved to St Briavels where he married (in Parkend) and had 3 children; Billy, the eldest, was born in 1851. Ten years later, the family sailed to Melbourne to join the Australian goldrush, settling in Bendigo, around 100 miles north-west of Melbourne.

As a child, Billy played cricket with his father and quickly established himself as a schoolboy prodigy, playing for Bendigo United CC by the age of 13 and is reputed to have scored 256 in one innings. By the age of 22, Billy had joined the prestigious Melbourne CC. On Boxing Day 1873, at the MCG, Billy played for a Victoria XVIII against an England X1, not surprisingly captained by WG, with GF in the team, too. WG took 10-58 and GF 4-35. Billy had no success with the bat but took 3-29 including the prize wickets of both WG and GF.

In March 1877, Billy Midwinter was selected to play for Australia in the first-ever test match between the two countries. Whilst Australian opener, Charles Bannerman, scored the first-ever century in test cricket in England's first innings, Billy took 5-78, the first 5-wicket haul in test cricket. England were bowled out for 108 in their second innings to lose by 45 runs.

Although WG did not play in this test series, there is little doubt that he knew of Midwinter's Gloucestershire roots and invited him to play as the county's first professional cricketer. Billy set sail from Melbourne in April 1877, the journey taking two months. Indeed, this was the first of many such journeys for Midwinter as he spent the next six years (1877-1882) playing cricket continuously in Australia and England.

In his first match for Gloucestershire in July 1877, against The Rest of England at The Oval, Midwinter took 7-35 and 4-46 as the county won by 5 wickets. In his next match against Yorkshire at Clifton College he scored a patient 68 to show his abilities as a genuine all-rounder.

In 1878, Australia toured England for the second time, the first such trip having taken place ten years earlier. Midwinter played eight matches for the tourists, including a game against MCC at Lord's in May. The 2-innings match was all over in one day, the scores as follows:

MCC 33 all out. Australia 41 all out (Midwinter the only batter to reach double figures). England 19 all out. Australia 12-1. Midwinter 4*. The "Demon" Spofforth was the chief destroyer of the MCC batting.

Punch followed up by publishing a satirical poem, based on a Lord Byron ditty:

"The Australians came down like a wolf on the fold.

The Marybone Cracks for a trifle were bowled;

Our Grace before dinner was very soon done,

And Grace after dinner did not get a run."

Next follows a classic episode of the Midwinter story. On 20th June 1878, Midwinter was at Lord's, listed to play for the Australians against Middlesex. Gloucestershire, meanwhile, were at The Oval, due to play Surrey. For whatever reason, Gloucestershire only had 10 players, so WG grabbed a Hansom Cab, a lightweight, speedy horse and carriage, and with GF and "Frizzy" Bush hurtled over to Lord's. There, they stormed the Australian dressing room and "persuaded" Midwinter to leave and play for Gloucestershire. They sped back to The Oval, chased by 3 Aussies in another Hansom Cab, resulting in a serious scuffle outside The Oval gates, but WG, once again, won the day.

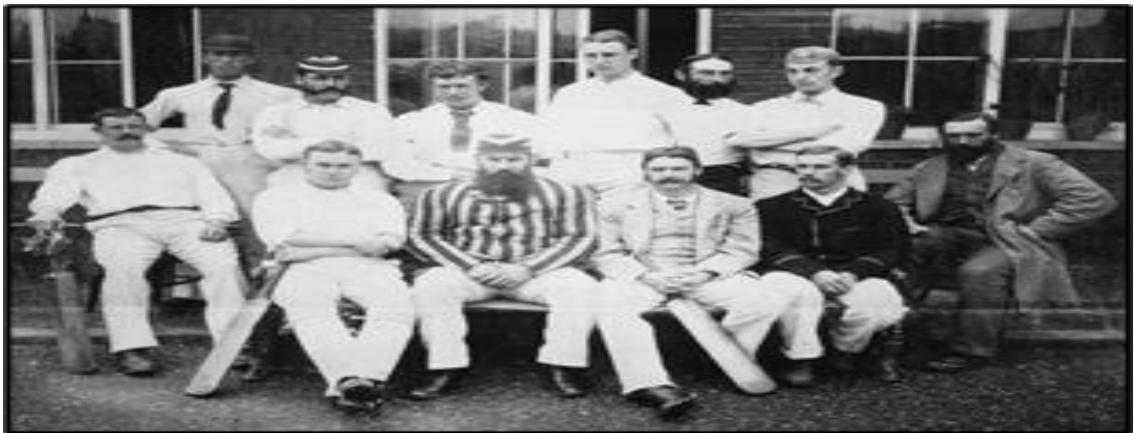
The Australian party demanded a written apology, but WG refused, so the tourists decided to cancel the fixture against Gloucestershire at Clifton College in September. Because of the potential loss of revenue, Grace backed down and wrote a suitable, accepted apology.

Some stellar performances with bat and ball for Gloucestershire saw Midwinter selected for the MCC tour to Australia in 1881/2. He played in four tests, moderately successfully: top score 36, best bowling 4-81.

Quite incredibly, he played for Victoria in 1882/3 and was selected for the one-off test against England in 1883 (4-71 in the match) and was then selected for the tour of England in 1884, playing three tests at Old Trafford (37 in the 1st innings), Lord's and The Oval. He played his final test against England in February 1887.

By 1889, Midwinter's wife and two of his children had died and his businesses failed. He suffered serious mental health problems and was confined to Bendigo Hospital in 1890, before transferring to the Kew Asylum in Melbourne, where he died later that year, aged just 39. His body is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

Gloucestershire CCC in 1880. Billy Midwinter is directly behind WG. Next left, in hooped cap, is Fred Grace, shortly before his untimely death. EM Grace, bearded, is two to Billy Midwinter's right.



In 2024, during the England v Australia ODI at Bristol, GCCC were presented with Billy's original bat. He had given it to a friend in Bendigo, William Pearce, and it had been passed down to his great great grandson, Neil, who presented it to the county. Quite rightly, it is now firmly established in their museum, though which country's colours should adorn the display case may well be the subject of a fair bit of debate.

NEW GACO WEBSITE

A new year, a new season ahead and a new GACO website. Rishi has spent countless hours indulging his expertise in creating a site that reflects the times in which we live, includes all the info required for both current and potential members alike and is hopefully easy to navigate, particularly for people who are not necessarily overflowing with technological expertise.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the third incarnation of the GACO website, with each of the previous versions proving to be hugely important in providing a central source of information while promoting the association at the same time. The current site is very 2026, but so quickly does the world move that it will no doubt need refreshing in the next 5 years or so to keep it up in these ever-more-demanding technological times.

The new site includes a comprehensive competition rules & regs section, links to the GCF website to highlight upcoming scorer & umpire courses, information on the ECB umpiring pathway, contact details for committee members, the laws of cricket and the all-important online umpire expenses claim form.

So, when you have a few minutes, log on to gaco.org.uk and take a look. If there is anything that you think needs adding that isn't already on there or anything that is but needs amending (it's been 'proof read' several times, if that's what you do with websites, but that doesn't mean everything is picked up), or if you have any general feedback whatsoever, please drop Rishi a line.

2026 GACO CONFERENCE

It's a fair way ahead, but please add this date to your diary: Sunday 15th March at Eastwood Park Conference Centre near Thornbury. An interesting line-up of speakers has been arranged, while the catering at this event is always of an impressively high standard. The @GACOFoodCorrespondent always speaks very highly of the culinary offerings at Eastwood Park, while he usually enjoys the conference, too....



GACO ONLINE SHOP



Gloucestershire Association
of Cricket Officials

The GACO shop, which can be accessed via gaco.org.uk (or use the link below) is up and running ready to do business prior to the new season. Order any item from the shop, which comes complete with GACO logo and have your item(s) delivered directly to your door. Everything from match clothing to leisurewear – check it out now:

[Clothing and merchandise – GACO](#)

CRICKET AT CHRISTMAS

The true story of Douglas Collins, a British army man who, around 80 years ago, while the rest of the world found itself in the icy grip of war, tried to spread the gospel of the game in north-east Africa.

About 80 years ago, as war raged around the world, a British army man tried to spread the gospel of the game in north-east Africa

In the summer of 1941, Lieutenant Douglas Tatham Collins arrived in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, from his humble origins in the village of Aslockton in Nottinghamshire. He was 21 and had been posted south from Ireland, where his South Staffordshire battalion had been recovering from the horrors of Dunkirk.

Despite the crucial events occurring in the European, North African and Pacific wars at the time, Collins found it hard to take his mind off cricket during his imperial posting. He describes a major, hardened by years of service in Britain's African colonies, who interviewed him in Mombasa, as having a face "the colour of an old, well-worn cricket ball". The major was inducting Collins into the Somali Gendarmerie, which was tasked with replacing the Italian Fascist administration of Somalia, Eritrea and the Ogaden, a huge area measuring about 720,000 square miles.

Collins had been given no training for the job confronting him, but his first posting was a relatively cushy one in Afgoi, up the Scebelli valley, west of the capital on one of the few paved roads in Somalia.

In 1942 though, Collins was given a much more taxing role. He was informed by Colonel Patrick Mundy, first commander of the Somali Gendarmerie, that up north in Alula, European control had collapsed and he was being relocated there to 'sort things out.' Amongst the items he took with him was a large supply of liquor and an outsize

leather cricket bag carrying all his personal gear for a match, and even his elegant club blazer. He added a strip of 22-by-five-foot coconut matting and "two extra pudding balls" - apparently hard rubber ones.



An engraving of a scene in Alula in the north-east of Somalia in 1890

Collins was driven slowly towards Hafun. He was escorted by an Italian driver, "Rino" and after months of service in Hafun, site of a salt factory that was the largest in the world in the 1930s, Collins pressed further north by camel and foot, alone except for his *ascari* escort, reaching Alula in mid-December 1942. He did not know, but in the greater wars, the Germans were being surrounded in Stalingrad, the Japanese driven back from Guadalcanal and Field Marshal Rommel was admitting that he could not keep Tunisia. In stark contrast to the situation when Collins first reached Somalia, World War II was passing into Allied hands.

According to his memoir, Collins was innocently thinking not of war, but of Christmas. He had brought tinned turkey and Xmas pudding in his stores. When he returned to Alula, Collins did so in the company of Carlo, an Italian lighthouse keeper who, he had decided, could cook his Christmas lunch, sing from *Aida* and *Rigoletto*, and perhaps captain the opposition side in a cricket match Collins was planning. Before leaving Alula, Collins had given his sergeant, Haji Dif - a British Somali, who had been to the UK and recognised the names Bradman and Hobbs - clear instructions: "I want you to prepare a cricket pitch, for on Christmas Day, I want a game of cricket, and I intend to teach all the askaris, the Illalos, [irregular local troops] and the tribesmen the game. It will be very good for them."

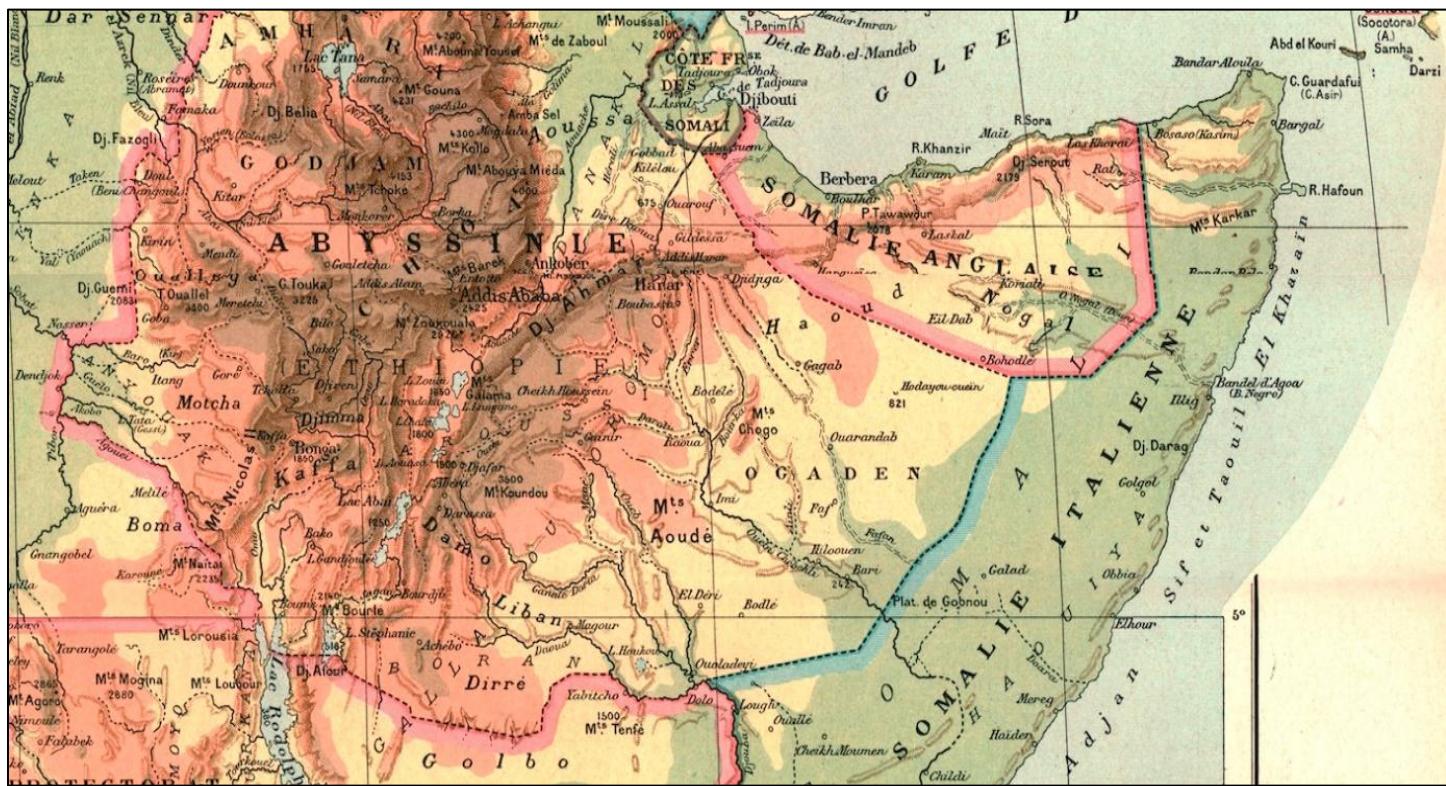
At 3pm that Christmas afternoon, all was ready. Haji Dif had marked out an oval in the sand outside Collins' elegant, two-storey *residenza*. At the centre of the field, Haji unrolled the coconut matting to be the pitch. He was to umpire at both ends. Collins emerged dressed for the toss "in a cream shirt, club tie, cricket flannels and blazer". He led a team of *ascari*. But he decided at the last minute that Carlo the lighthouse keeper was not man enough for cricket captaincy and replaced him as leader with the Illalo corporal. Villagers, arranged in importance up to the local sultan, crowded the edge of the field as eager observers.

Collins opened the bowling and removed three Illalos with his first six balls. At the other end, an *ascaro* raced in, paused at the stumps - they had been quickly made by a local artisan on Haji's instruction - halted, and then threw with all his might, using the familiar action for spearing an enemy. "Shades of Harold Larwood and body-line," Collins wrote in his diary. The no-ball rule was not applied but each of his first three balls earned the Illalos four byes as they sped past the astonished and rather cowed wicketkeeper.

Then came a problem. A delivery was somehow hit towards cover. The batters ran and ran and ran, but no fielder moved to gather the ball. The opposition captain conferred with Collins and Haji, explaining that local tribal custom decreed that Somali males did no physical work. Such activity was restricted to Midgans, another tribe kept locally as virtual slaves. What should Collins do?

His answer was to replace the *ascari* fielders with men from the local gaol, many pent up with anger and subdued energy. They were watched from the boundary by their Illalo warders and told they must field, which they did under protest. The game resumed. Collins wrote of one of the freshly recruited fielders that at one point: "The alleged murderer [made] little effort to stop the ball as it whizzed past him, which was very disappointing."

Now another event. Collins bowled to Carlo, who came in at 25 for 4. Sixteen byes - yet another delivery, legal or otherwise, must have rocketed past the keeper at some point - and nine for the unfielded hit. Collins delivered a "fastish ball, which by some freak of physics ran up the splice of Carlo's bat, striking him on the nose". Blood flowed. Carlo fled, crying out: "Berdio, cattivo, molto cattivo" (Oh god, bad, very bad) and was not seen again for "a month". The onlookers were delighted. Bloodied "cricket" might, after all, be as much fun as their own battles, they thought.

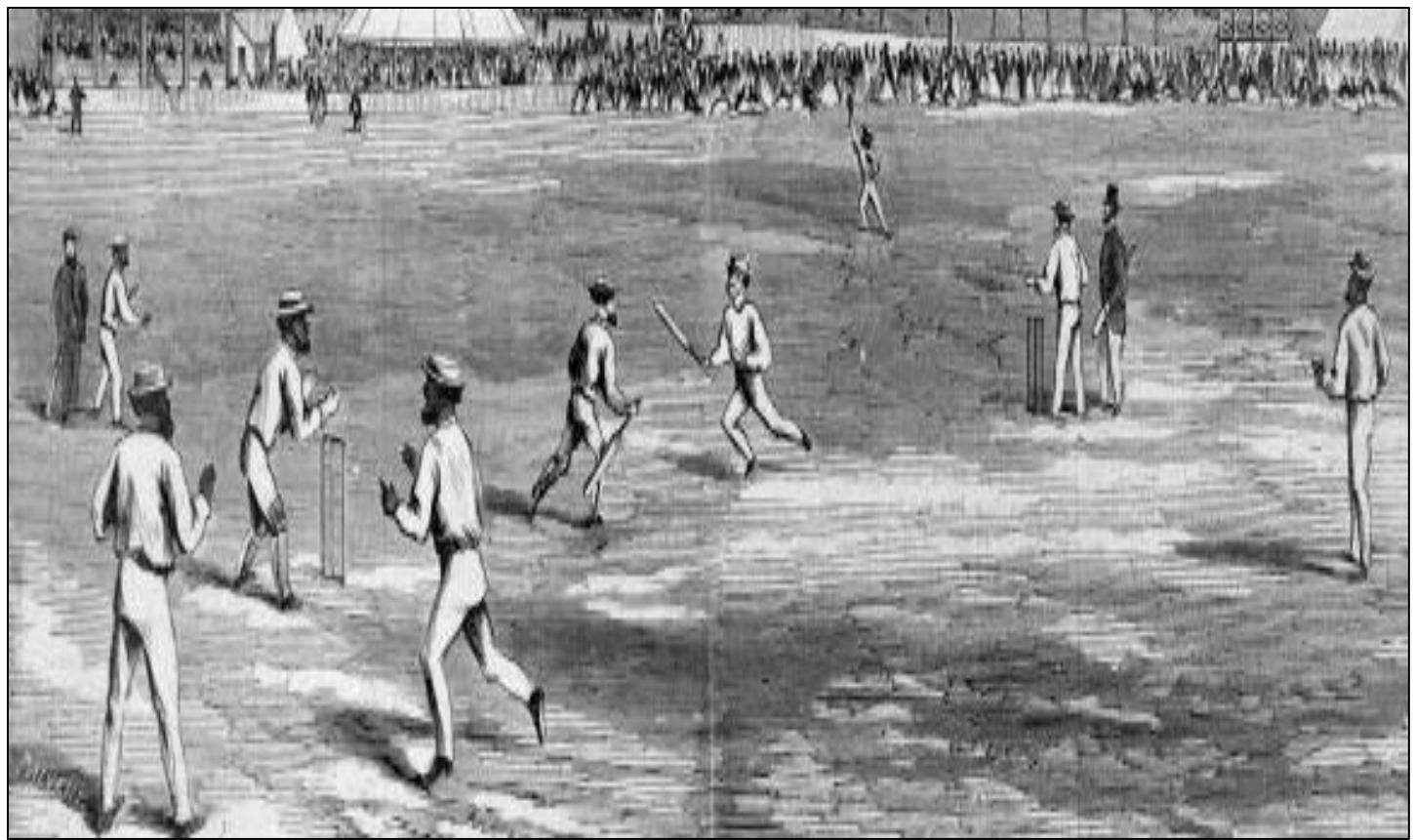


The match moved towards its conclusion, the *ascari* totalling 57. Following a tea interval, Collins commenced the Illalo innings with 14 in four balls. Then he was caught and bowled after whacking a ball back to the bowler, who in desperation, clutched it to his stomach. Successive batters did not manage too well, but the Illalos also managed 57. A tie, deserving almost to be as famous as the one between Australia and West Indies in Brisbane in December 1960. Almost. Celebration followed. Collins had bought the fattest camel in Alula and, after the game, joined the locals in feasting on it.

More came later. As Collins recalled, the tied match was the forerunner to a game played every Saturday for over a year, except when he was called out to settle tribal warfare or went to Guardafui to see that the lighthouse operated under Carlo's care and that the local tradition of piracy had not resumed.

Eventually, a superior officer in the Gendarmerie arrived. Collins was to be replaced. Surely, he would like to transfer south? Collins and his visitor drank deep and as the night went on, it emerged that Haji had reported a problem. The locals were complaining about "a torture called 'kricket', Colonel Sahib. They say this Tenente far worse than Italian officers. All say they tortured by cricket every Saturday. They request you remove him and replace him with an officer full of the milk of human kindness."

Collins rebutted this charge. "It will take time, sir," he stated, "but I really believe that through the medium of cricket, I can break down the caste barriers between the tribes and so end this constant tribal *fitina* [battle]. Give me another year here and a bit of extra kit and I know I can accomplish it." But the colonel refused and Collins was sent away for a month's furlough in Kenya.



Collins worked for the Gendarmerie until it was dismissed in 1950 when, to his disgust, its rule was replaced by a United Nations trusteeship granted to Italy. Before he was shipped off elsewhere, Collins received a visit from an Irishman called Gerald Hanley (another Gendarmerie memoirist). "The Irish are splendid drinkers but poor cricketers," Collins remembered. However, he did "cajole" Hanley into bowling at him using a large headless statue of Mussolini as back stop. Collins noted dolefully elsewhere: "My Somali troops were enthusiastic over football, but cricket they did not like quite as much."

In an unexplained detail, he adds that he did play once in Mogadishu where, on 48, he was bowled by a grubber. But for that sad fate, he may have pressed on to an international century, this ground being in nowhere near his 'home' club which lurked in the shadow of a Nottinghamshire stately home. Could, if all had gone to plan, his passion for the game have been transferred to Somalis in their capital, thereby ensuring that their country took a path that might have led them today to be worthy opponents of India, Pakistan or Bangladesh?

Later in life, when he was trying to escape a wounded but attacking water buffalo, Collins had to cope with accidentally shooting dead his younger brother, Edmund. "An unfortunate occurrence," he wrote, using much the same language as when brooding over a key dismissal.

Drinking, which had been a central part of Gendarmerie life, did not lessen. Collins wrote, but few read him. He died alone at a Kenyan outpost in 1999, seemingly a useless relic of a lost imperial world. Yet he was a man deserving a niche in the history of cricket across the nations. During a parlous wartime, RC Robertson-Glasgow suggested optimistically in the 1942 *Wisden*: "Cricketers of every age and every degree of ability or ineptitude, [still] seize the fleeting hour to bat and bowl."

In lonely Somalia, DT Collins had followed that counsel to the n^{th} degree.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GACO umpire **Matt Jackson** falls under this month's *Officiating Matters* spotlight.

Position in GACO	Jobbing journeyman finger-pointer
Profession – now or previously	Barrister
For how long have you umpired/scored?	Umpired since 2020; scored since 2007
Main cricket team played for / associated with	Brooksbottom CC in Lancashire
Role in that team (eg opening bat)	Specialist fine leg fielder
Favourite ever cricketer	Mal Loye



What is your favourite sporting moment?	Beating the queues at Old Trafford in 2005 to watch the Aussies celebrate a draw in person.
If you could learn a skill instantly, what would it be?	Organisation
Saturday night: Go home or go out?	Go home
Name three things other than cricket that you enjoy doing.	Pubs, travel & family
Name three things you really don't like.	Work, Yorkshire CCC & Yorkshire CCC
What were your best & worst subjects at school?	Best: Science. Worst: PE
Describe your favourite meal	Anything that finishes with a tarte tatin
Create a 3-item meal that you really wouldn't like	Sprouts, cabbage & broccoli
If you were to write a book, what would it be about?	Why I should not be allowed to write books
Three words to describe yourself.	Far. Too. Difficult. I'll let you decide whether that's a description of me or the question.
What is your favourite saying/quote/mantra?	Best said at work: 'It depends...'
What is your 'nightmare' scenario?	Having to play cricket rather than umpire
If you were stranded on a desert island, which three things would you like to have with you?	A satellite connected phone, something to charge it with and Amazon Prime
Greatest sportsperson ever	Jackie Robinson
Greatest invention ever	The World Wide Web
Greatest band ever	Oasis
Greatest ever film or musical	Avenue Q
If you could meet one person in the world, who would it be and why?	Buzz Aldrin. He walked on the moon!
What are your hopes for the 2026 cricket season?	Not ruining the blacksmith's weekend

UMPIRE KIT

If anyone has any good quality umpire kit or equipment that is surplus to requirements for any reason and you'd like it to find a good home, please email development@gaco.org.uk and we'll advertise it in the March edition of *Officiating Matters*. New umpires in particular may be interested in acquiring some good quality kit/equipment as they begin their officiating journey.

AND FINALLYWHAT'S YOUR EXPLANATION?

In a GCL 45-over match, the opening bowler fires the first ball of the game two yards down the leg side, past the startled wicketkeeper, who watches forlornly as it crosses the boundary rope with no fielder anywhere quick enough to intervene. The keeper immediately decides to stand back to the second delivery and as such, removes his helmet and places it on the ground behind him. The second ball is also fired two yards down the leg side and before the umpire can raise his arms to signal the second 'wide' of the day, the wicketkeeper inadvertently deflects the ball on to the stationary helmet. The frenzied scorers make a note in the margins of their scorebooks, stating runs, wickets & overs bowled. What do they write?



November's Conundrum



Needing one-wicket to win an U19, 2-day game, the fielding side deploys three slips and a ring of close fielders around the No 11 batter. None of the fielders are standing on or leaning over the cut strip, yet the bowler's end umpire calls 'No Ball' as the first delivery is bowled. 'Encroaching on the pitch,' he offers, by way of explanation. 'How come?' queries the grammatically-challenged fielding captain.

'How come?' indeed.

The pitch is 10 feet wide, whatever the width of the cut bit. While they may not have been standing on or leaning over the beautifully manicured strip itself, the fielders must have been closer than 5 feet from an imaginary line joining the two middle stumps.

FESTIVE QUIZ Answers

1. Darren Gough
2. MS Dhoni
3. Harbhajan Singh
4. Greg Blewitt, Ricky Ponting & Adam Gilchrist
5. (d) 1951
6. Marcus Trescothick
7. (d) Titch Cornford
8. (a) The pitch was unsafe.

GACO CALENDAR

Saturday 31 st January	ECB Umpire Course	Archway School, Stroud
Thursday 26 th February	GACO AGM	TBC
Sunday 8 th March	Umpire Development Course	Frocester CC
Sunday 15 th March	GACO Conference	Eastwood Park, Thornbury
Sunday 29 th March	WEPL Pre-Season Seminar	BAWA Club, Filton

OM (January 2026) Contributors

Phil Mattingley, Clive Poulton, John Lindley, Sue Drinkwater, Penny Taylor, Nicky Clarke, Jim Hyland, Steve Johnson, Phil Smith, Craig Blakeway, Rishi Maktedar, Eric Woodmason, Matt Jackson & Bob Owen.

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of 'Officiating Matters' and thank-you to all our contributors. If you have anything that you think might be of interest to our ever-growing readership, please email development@gaco.org.uk with your offering. The next edition is due out in two months' time at the beginning of March.



Gloucestershire Association
of Cricket Officials