

# The heart of Oxfordshire

*Oxfordshire's greatest captain who inspired all who came under his charge*

PHIL GARNER was, as his team-mate Alan Crossley said at the memorial service, the Mike Brearley of Oxfordshire cricket.

He was the county's most successful captain, under whom Oxfordshire won the Minor Counties Championship in 1982 and 1989 and the Western Division on three other occasions. He was at the helm for 12 of the 23 years he spent with the county and never missed a game. More recent success came in the Village Cup in 2002 and 2003, when Garner was part of the Shipton-under-Wychwood side which won the competition in successive seasons.

"A true general, planning his strategy with a ruthless and clear-headed agenda," says Crossley. "His rapid reaction to altered circumstances, the timing of his bowling changes, the precision of

his field placing, won us game after game."

Garner graduated from Oxford and eventually went on to become head of the Department of Student Services at the Oxford College of Further Education as well as serving



Force of personality: Phil Garner

on the Thames Valley Police Authority.

After making his county debut in 1971 he scored 9,482 runs in more than 200 games, as well as taking crucial wickets with his part-time offspin. He was an intelligent if unorthodox batsman who relied on eye rather than technique and was renowned for getting the most out of his players. "If he believed in your ability, he would back you 100% whatever your age," says Keith Arnold, Oxfordshire's all-time leading wicket-taker who came into Garner's side as a 20-year-old in 1980. Rupert Evans, who succeeded Garner as captain, adds: "He made me feel like the best spin bowler in the country."

Players not only respected his leadership, they liked him. Pre-match preparations were dominated by Garner, standing in the dressing room amid the chaos of his kit, covering up the latest niggles with bandages,

liniment and his trusted copper wristband to which he attributed magical powers. He would graphically recount some incident from the previous day's league game, always with an eye and ear for farce or punctured pomposity. "All of us will remember his set-piece performances of Ebony Eyes as our team bus plunged westwards through darkest Devon," says Crossley.

"Phil was a one-off in every way and made it hilarious fun to play for Oxfordshire. By sheer force of personality he created a team of close friends; happy in success, united in adversity."

**Phillip John Garner was born on March 26, 1946 and died on September 2, 2009, aged 63.**

Crispin Andrews is a freelance writer based in Buckinghamshire

CAREER RECORD 1975-1994	M	R	HS	AVGE	100s	50s	W	BEST	AVGE	5W	CT
One-day	16	188	53	13.42	0	1	2	1-37	65.00	0	4

Sandy Ross 1948-2009 by David Gibbs

# Prince among Martlets

*Four decades as a Sussex Martlet is only a glimpse of a jovial life dedicated to the game*



FOR MORE than 40 years Sandy Ross was one of the most known and loved figures in Sussex club and MCC cricket. An accomplished medium-paced inswing bowler with a devastating leg-cutter, he took over 3,000 wickets in the Sussex League and for a variety of wandering sides, notably the Sussex Martlets and MCC. His exceptional figures of 16.4-6-27-10 for East Grinstead against Bognor Regis in 1981 have never been surpassed in the League.

He died, as many of us would choose to go, instantly of a heart attack while playing for the Sussex Martlets

on the beautiful ground of St James's Montefiore CC, Ditchling, in the lee of the South Downs, having spent the previous five days at the Lord's Ashes Test watching every ball of England's momentous victory. For us, though, it was far too early.

A wonderfully warm and outgoing personality, with an enduring smile and a zest for sporting society, meant an overflowing address book and diary incomprehensible to all but himself. Sandy was much in demand as a match manager and his qualities were recognised by MCC, for whom he managed tours to Greece, Malta, California, South America and, last year, its Under-19 team to India. He was cheerful, ordered and unflappable, and very particular, and cricket under his stewardship was played competitively and in absolutely the right spirit.

He was on the Membership Committee at Lord's and a long-standing pillar and chairman of the Martlets, for whom he brilliantly orchestrated its Centenary Year in 2005. His deep understanding and knowledge of the game and its world was put unconditionally to the use of others, and especially the young. Thus he was chairman of the Sussex Youth Cricket Board and member of the Chance to shine committee.

Following retirement as bursar at Caterham School, he became its highly successful cricket master for which he was posthumously commended at the *Daily Telegraph* School Sport Matters Awards in 2009.

Sandy was blessed, too, with a happy and secure home life and, with the hospitality of his wife, Diana, many young Antipodeans and Indians

playing in the Sussex League found a supportive base far from their own homes. Several, Tim May and David Hussey among them, went on to play Test cricket. He also housed a remarkable sporting library, one of the great treasure troves of the nation, a place in which to be shipwrecked.

He leaves Diana, his wife of 37 years, daughters Emma and Lucy, son William (a well-established Martlet allrounder) and grandson, Dylan.

**Sandy Ross was born on February 23, 1948 and died on July 22, 2009, aged 61.**

David Gibbs was a team-mate of Sandy Ross for the Sussex Martlets over more than 40 years. He is the author of *Summers by the Sea – the Centenary History of the Sussex Martlets*