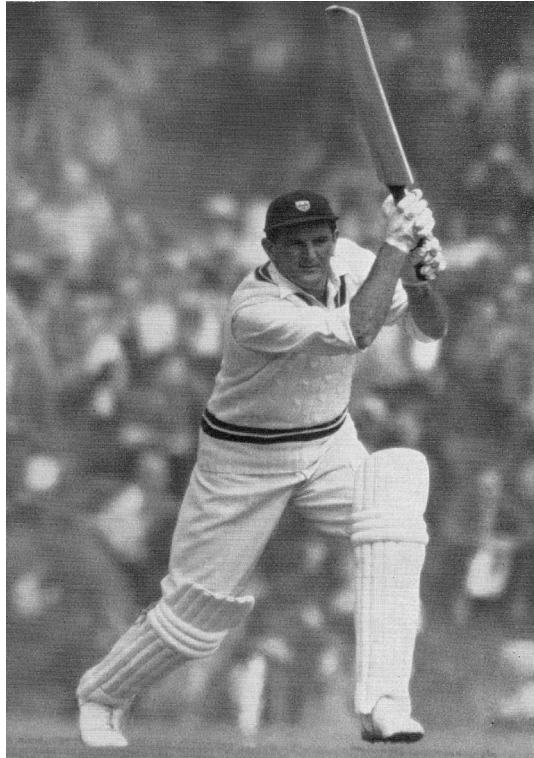

TRIBUTE – TOM GRAVENEY O.B.E.



Tom Graveney (1927-2015)

Gloucestershire, Worcestershire & England

Former England cricketer, Tom Graveney died on 3 November 2015 at the age of 88, after a long battle against Parkinson's disease. This was the family's second loss – as only a few days earlier – his elder brother, Ken, passed away in America.

Thomas William Graveney was a batsman of the highest calibre and, but for mild brushes with authority, should have played for England in more than the 79 Tests in which he did appear.

In view of his subsequent career, of which much has been written in praise, it is interesting to reflect that his initial ap-

pearances for various teams at first-class level gave little indication of the player that he was to become.

He marked his first-class debut for Gloucestershire in 1948 with a duck against Oxford University. He fared little better in his first Championship match, when he faced Worcestershire and was dismissed cheaply in each innings – lbw Howorth 4 and bowled Perks 4.

He appeared 17 times for the Players, but in his first encounter in 1949, he failed to reach double figures in either innings – ct Kardar b Brown 2 and bowled Bailey 5.

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◀ In 1962, Graveney appeared in the last-ever fixture between the 'Ams and Pros', scoring 21 and 41. In the latter innings, Tom again fell victim to the bowling of Trevor Bailey.

Ironically, four decades later, Graveney became the 200th person – and the first professional cricketer – to attain the hallowed post of President of the MCC. This must have caused Lord Hawke to become gravely restless.

He made his first Test appearance, in place of the injured Denis Compton, against South Africa at Old Trafford in 1951. He was only called upon to bat in the first innings when he was again out inexpensively, bowled Athol Rowan 15. Tom was the last survivor of both teams.

In the manner of WG Grace sixty-odd years earlier, Tom packed his bags and left Gloucestershire for pastures new. His first match for Worcestershire in 1962 was at Hove where he was twice dismissed cheaply – ct Langridge b Thompson 27 and stumped Parks b Bell 16. However, the change of county brought about a transformation in Graveney's achievements and career.

Notwithstanding the above observations, Tom Graveney was a hugely successful batsman. He batted with unhurried elegance and style, epitomised by his trademark graceful cover drive as shown in the picture. In the days, before helmets, he coped with the pace of Lindwall and Miller, the aggression of Adcock and Heine, plus the fearsome duo of Griffith and Hall. It was a mark of his class that seldom if ever was he hit. He scored 258, the highest innings of his career, against

West Indies in 1957, yet he could never be sure of his place in the Test team. He fell foul of Freddie Brown, Gubby Allen and Alec Bedser, in their respective tenures as Chairman of England Selectors, which conservatively cost Graveney at least 25 Test caps. His omission was warmly 'welcomed' by Richie Benaud, who said Tom would have been an automatic choice in any Australian Test side under Benaud's captaincy.

In 1964, Tom scored his hundredth hundred and in so doing became the first man to achieve the feat in a post-WW2 career. He added a further 22 centuries, the last of which was an unbeaten score of exactly 100 against Yorkshire in 1970. At New Road, he revelled in the team spirit which he craved and enjoyed. The upshot was his new county winning the Championship in 1964 for the first time in their history. They repeated the feat in the ensuing centenary year also.

After a brief and unsuccessful spell with Queensland, Tom Graveney returned to England and became a landlord of a pub in Cheltenham and took up a career as a BBC commentator. Fittingly, the newly-built Graeme Hick Pavilion at New Road features a bar named in honour of Tom Graveney. He was also Worcestershire President from 1994 to 1998. His services to cricket and the cricket society movement were recognised when Tom Graveney O.B.E. was made Hon. Life Vice-President of the Council of Cricket Societies.

'Long Tom' Graveney was an affable, well-liked and much-respected gentleman who, besides playing cricket, loved nothing better than talking cricket over a pint or three.