

Arthur Nears

Arthur was one of my boyhood heroes. In the 1950s my dad captained the Sudbury CC 1st XI, his dad umpired and I acted either as scorer or enthusiastic spectator. There were plenty of good players at that time, but it was Arthur who captured my imagination. With his swarthy good looks and slicked-back black hair, he could bat, bowl, field, throw and tell entertaining tales in the pavilion.

I was ten years old when we left Sudbury in 1962 but when I returned to Suffolk nearly thirty years later I re-established contact with Arthur, by chance. Whilst playing against Gestingthorpe, I noticed a familiar figure sitting watching from a boundary bench. It was definitely Arthur but his hair, although still plentiful, was now white! We chatted for a while and he reminisced about his Sudbury playing days and his fond memories of my dad. A few years later I visited Gestingthorpe again, and this time I took my dad. I listened, enthralled, as Arthur and dad swapped stories from their playing days together. What a time they had!

To celebrate my dad's 80th birthday, in the year 2000 we took a table of ten at the Forty Club Cricket Dinner at the Park Lane Hilton in London. Arthur was happy to accept the invitation to join us and a wonderful evening was enjoyed by all.

My dad's last visit to Sudbury CC was for Vice Presidents' Day in 2003, where we mingled with several of his old friends and acquaintances – including Arthur, of course.

In 2007 I arranged to meet Arthur at his cottage in Gestingthorpe, and Mike Prior was due to be there. Arthur's wife Joy baked a cake, poured the tea then set off to deliver plums to friends in the village. Once again I enjoyed listening to long-standing pals sharing memories. My dad was frail by this time, and living in Devon, so I wrote an account of the Gestingthorpe meeting and sent it to him. My dad died in 2009.

I last saw Arthur more recently during my annual visit to Sudbury CC. He was sitting on the 'Old Gits' bench opposite the pavilion, passing on his astute observations of the play and players. He still had his white hair and that sparkle in his eye.

Now he's gone, but his memory and his tales of sporting contests will stay with me for the rest of my days. He was a marvellous cricketer and a true gentleman.

Rick Shepperson – June 2019