

The SABR(UK) Examiner

Number 7a



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THE JOURNAL OF THE BOBBY THOMSON CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH (UK)

1996 SABR AGM Issue

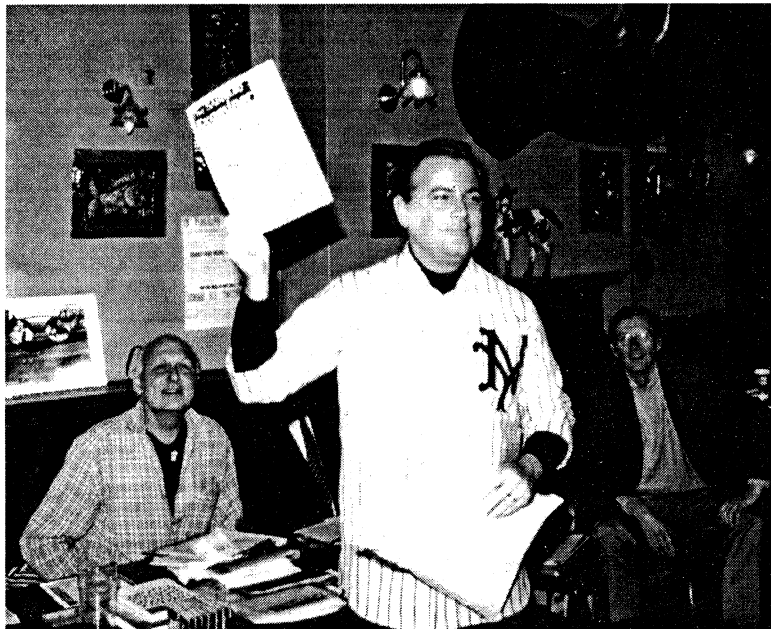
SABR(UK)'s 1996 Annual General Meeting, held on May 18, was attended by baseball fans and friends from all over the known baseball world. It was another unqualified success.

What a different a year makes! Last year's AGM was held during the 50th anniversary of V-E day, and the weather was oppressively hot. This year the sun was not to be seen, and a gray drizzle hung over London. But not at the Kings of Clerkenwell pub, where the subject of baseball kept the clouds away.

A goodly crowd was there. The North was, as usual, well-represented. Jan Bagin was in from Prague as the ambassador for Czech baseball. Laurens De Jong, late of the Netherlands, flew in from his current job in upstate New York. Clive Russell represented Major League Baseball, the first time we have been so honoured. He also brought his wife and new-

born daughter, whose record as Youngest Attendee will probably hold for years.

The meeting started. Chairman Mike Ross bade all welcome. He noted another successful year of existence, and thanked the SABR mem-



bers for their recent contributions to the Chapter. Then Andy Parkes gave his treasury report, with the good news that all your contributions have kept us from penury.

Then the SABR(UK) Examiner editor, Martin Hoerchner, talked about the journal, and then released issue No. 7 to the meeting.

This was essentially this issue without the meeting report. Martin Dodd took the photo and Mike Ross made me put it on the cover.

Afterward Barry Winetrobe talked about the need for individual members to keep in touch, and to that end, announced the launch of a publication that he wants to make a success. He calls it "Number 23", and he envisions it as an instrument for communication between members. The idea is, in international terms, for Number 23 to act like the "SABR Newsletter" (while the Examiner would be more like

"The National Pastime" or "Baseball Research Journal") and hopefully coming out as often. He stressed that the SABR family and friends will be the ones to make this newsletter succeed. To give Number 23 a start, the first issue is enclosed with this Examiner, and it goes out with best luck wishes from the Chapter.

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR *by Mike Ross*

In reverse order as to the way events often transpire, let me recount the fortuitous events of recent history. In 1982, I became the first-ever member of SABR in England. Ten years later, like going home, I was elected as the 'founding' chairman of the first European SABR Chapter of 'Big' SABR, based in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. As a baseball-starved alien American, an ocean away from the source, it is fair to assume that - in Lou Gehrig's words - I was "the luckiest man alive". Or maybe like a Moses being fished out of the Nile, now that I think about how it all transpired... What a strange trip it has been.

While taking a pre-game drink in a bar opposite Busch Stadium in St. Louis, prior to crossing the street for Game One of the 1982 World Series. I got to talking to some fans at the adjoining table. Soon, one of them approached me and asked me if I wished to join SABR. He told me about it, and, in a word, forked over three 'ones' in change, and for \$22 I became SABR Member Number 1250, that is as Cliff Kachline opined the day he inducted me - and we shook on it, too. Cliff, a former staff member of the *Sporting News* and Hall of Fame officer, was a founder of SABR, one of 12 recently honoured as such for their 25th Anniversary

celebrations. Now that's as close to blue blood as I get: I shook the hand of the man who shook the hand of the creator. And since then the blessings of baseball have since been heaped upon me. Over the years I've stayed in touch with Kachline. He has assisted in some of my research needs and we've met at subsequent World Series'. Cliff is blue blood in the truest sense of the SABR ethos. I probably would not be writing this item for SABR(UK) were it not for the pioneering spirit of a founding father.

So I would like to add his name to the list of foreign angels who have made their presence felt in the formation and growth of SABR(UK); this list includes Norman Macht, Bobby Thomson, his teammate on the great Giants team of 1951, Monte Irvin; and Cliff Kachline in recognition of his caring efforts for baseball.

As for SABR(UK)'s progress, I fell we've made it. We're over the hump. We now have a nucleus of 50-60 associates in Britain, as well as a handful of faithfuls in Europe. We came together with ease. Several of us have had research items published in SABR annuals. It is, after all this, still very important to keep in touch, one with another. Guys should try to get together as often as whims suggest, by telephoning, exchanges, letters, e-mail. There is nothing to stop four of you getting together which would officially construe an official regional meeting. I realize this is often difficult, being spread out

over an estimated 250,000 square miles (and that's not counting the water.) It is always good to hear from you when I do hear from you.

Don't forget our search for the Spalding Trophy (our elusive Holy Grail). The John Moore Trophy is also missing. We are still on a sticky wicket with our reticent friend in Middlesborough, who has what he claims is a regional Spalding Trophy but will not let anyone of us see it.

Finally, to reiterate what I spoke of at our AGM in May: This is a British Chapter, and its 'Britishness' is what matters most. The way the game of baseball is perceived amongst them determines whether the game can flourish here. So how can we help? One wonders why Britain lags behind the rests of Europe in its baseball interest. The current game of baseball started in Britain as a childrens' game. But it stayed that way. Innovation was stifled - that is, the innovation that could transform baseball into an organized sport for adults. Now we can finally conceive of roots returning to roots. The full circle would be returning this children's game back to its homeland as a fully-fledged professional sport.

We had another super AGM meeting about which you'll read here-in. We are aiming for a gathering in Manchester, hopefully after the World Series. Hope to see you there, and remember, think baseball!

OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN

Chairman: Mike Ross, 2(B) Maida Avenue, Little Venice, London W2 1TF (Tel: 0171 723 9848; Fax: 0171 266 3166)
Treasurer: Andy Parkes, 84 Hillingdon Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8PJ (Tel and Fax: 0161 865 2952) **Procedural Advisor:** Hugh Robinson, 567 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8JQ (Tel: 0161 286 7012) **Chairman of British Baseball Historical Committee:** Patrick Carroll, 10 Court Barton, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7HP (Tel: 01460 74183)
Publications Editor: Martin Hoerchner, 3 Sheridan Crescent, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5RZ (Tel: 0181 467 2828; E-Mail: Martin@mhoerch.demon.co.uk) **Membership Co-ordinator:** Barry Winetrobe, 53 Woodside Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3AW (Tel: 0181 949 1035) **European Co-ordinator:** Laurens De Jong, Carnisseweg 61, 2993 Ad Barendrecht, Netherlands

THIS SABR'D ISLE

by Martin Hoerchner

I write this on the last weekend for Major League Baseball in 1996, and it's looking positively autumnal outdoors. As we put another baseball season into the history books, the trees are rapidly shedding their greenery, and the world is carpeted with dead leaves. Baseball is over, and so is summer. Baseball is again the perfect sport, because it begins during the height of spring, when Nature begins its symphony of color, of hope, of rebirth. And the flip side, of course, is that baseball finishes its season just as the leaves are turning brown, as hope is extinguished for all but one, and a long winter sets in, like the perfect setup man, waiting for the Easter resurrection. Wait 'till next year.

Baseball on TV in Britain is as usual a mixed bag. The addition of another Sky Sports channel (no. 3) has meant that there is more time for baseball, and we're not getting only the 3 a.m. slots anymore. A plus. The editing is done well, so the fact we're not getting a full game isn't too bothersome. Another plus. Also I've been told that the lag time between the game and its first U.K. showing has decreased - it used to be a week. Still another plus. But the ultimate plus would be see the games live. Sky is going to show a lot of the playoffs and all of the World Series live - and how that keeps us alive! At the beginning of the year I read that NBC Superchannel was playing live baseball again early on Saturday mornings - what a delicious treat, like profiteroles. So I forsake sleep, eagerly stay up, and get the CNBC Business News all night. Zzzzzzz! I phone up NBC, and they say they're moving all their programming to Eutelsat - a wise move, because then they don't have to worry about anyone watching them. It's also available on cable. But not on Astra, the single most popular extraterrestrial programming source in Europe. So I've got to check into how to hook up Eutelsat, along with its wide variety of Turkish and Romanian programming. The people at the satellite advice center said I could either buy a motorized dish or a get a dish with two things sticking out of it, one for each satellite.

This June was what in America we would call "Baseball's

Sesquicentennial" - it's 150th Anniversary. More specifically, it was the anniversary of the first contest played between two teams under the first codified rules of Baseball. It was played at Elysian Fields, Hoboken, New Jersey, and the event was commemorated with a parade including our baseball patron, Bobby Thomson. The 1846 game was between the Knickerbockers - baseball's first real team, and the New York Nine, on June 19, 1846. The rules were very close to what we follow today, except for the pitching distance, and the fact that the first team to score 21 runs would win, with equal innings. Alexander Cartwright, the closest thing baseball has to an Abner Doubleday, was the umpire. The New York Nine won a decisive victory, with two extra runs in their pocket, 23-1. The Knickerbockers had been playing only intramural games before, and with this setback, they only played among themselves until about 1850. But they couldn't keep it to themselves. The most fascinating thing I comprehend by reading about the early days of the game is its incredible spread. I think it was 1858 when it was first described as "our national game". That's the year after the first baseball convention, and the founding of the National Association of Base Ball Players. And it only went uphill from there. Two years later Jim Creighton, the man who invented pitching, became baseball's first professional.

Have you ever had baseball dreams? I have. I remember seeing an article about the Giants and Dodgers in the teens, the dead-ball era. There were pictures of John McGraw and Wilbert Robinson, the two ex-old-Orioles who split New York National League baseball between them. I was fascinated. At that time Polo Grounds was the palace of baseball, with by far the largest capacity. That night I had a dream of a huge ballpark, filled with people, with huge soaring arches connecting both sides of the bleachers, with Muggsy and Uncle Robbie battling it out on the field. I had another dream once; I don't remember what brought it on. I was at Wrigley Field in the 30's. I knew I was a time traveller, and it was a cherished moment. I don't remember the game, but the milling crowd, the ballpark experience, the individuals from the depression era - I can vividly recall. One more - I can remember dreaming about the Polo Grounds being discovered in Golden Gate Park, in San Francisco.

This is weird - it's like no one knew it was there before, and someone just stumbled upon it. I remember viewing it with awe, its bathtub-shaped hull, its green interior. Then a few days later I was at a ball game there - I was in a corner of the ballpark, watching the crowd as much as the game. Only Freud could explain this - and he's dead. But so is Polo Grounds.

I may be nuts. But I'm not clinically insane. It's easy to wax lyrical about the ballpark experience. There's something wonderful about a ballpark, something that the narrow view of television just can't capture. Maybe because it's full of the rituals of humanity, of challenge and teamwork, win and loss. Maybe because it's a bridge for generations, really like nothing else. So is it a metaphor for life? That might be going a bit too far, unless you've always got eight guys on your side. On a good day I'm lucky to have one.

All ballparks, however, are not home to baseball. Elsewhere in this issue, I write about a Henry Chadwick article I discovered in a wonderful University of Nebraska Press book entitled *Early Innings*. Another article dealt with Albert Spalding's Round-the-World Baseball Tour, with his Chicago White Stockings playing an All-Star team picked from the rest of U.S. baseball. On March 12, 1889 they played at the Oval in Kennington, a cricket ground that still exists. The book reprints a *Times* article that mentions Spalding's previous 1874 Baseball mission - they remembered! - and then mentions the illustrious company that viewed the game, listed, of course, in strict order according to class: first two Princes, then a Viscount, two Lords, a Sir, Dr. W.G. Grace, then a few nondescript Mr's. It's important to get these things correct. This cast my mind back to the time I'd seen baseball played at the Oval - no, it wasn't in 1888. It wasn't even in 1924. Don't be cheeky! In fact, it was in 1993, when two AAA teams masquerading as the New York Mets and the Boston Red Sox played there. It was a sunny day in October - in fact, it was the last day of the U.S. baseball regular season. The last games hadn't been played yet, so, as you recall, the Giants and the Braves were tied with 103 wins. I saw someone with a Braves hat and I berated him, and he said "Yeah, and they're going to win today" and I said "Yeah,

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Chadwick Explains Baseball's Roots

by Martin Hoerchner

I wish I could tell you that I discovered this article in the dusty basement of some obscure library, after pouring for hours over wizened tomes. It sounds good, but I cannot tell a lie. I found this article in a recent compilation of baseball articles that I purchased at Sportspages. It is entitled *Early Innings*, and it is published by the University of Nebraska Press. It includes first-hand source material from baseball's early days, from 1825-1908. The article that really caught my eye was entitled "The Ancient History of Base Ball", written by Henry Chadwick in 1867. For those of you not acquainted with Henry Chadwick, he is the closest person we have to the Father of Baseball Writing, the Father of Baseball History, and the Father of Baseball Scoring. He was born in England, emigrated to America, and started out as a cricket devotee. But he very soon embraced the new American sport of baseball, and became its biggest supporter in the press during the second half of the nineteenth century. Being British, he was aware of the true origins of the sport, and tried to refute the Al Spalding-inspired jingoistic "Abner Doubleday" myth. To no avail, at least at the time. The young country was just asserting itself, and it didn't want to acknowledge any foreign influence. Well, we're older and wiser now, and we finally can acknowledge it. The roots of baseball are old, probably older than any other sport played today, and we can't pretend it started in Cooperstown.

What really impressed me about this article was that Chadwick confirms a lot of the findings that the British Baseball History Committee has made in the last few years. Not only the research, but even some of the hypotheses. Seeing that, I will quote extensively from Chadwick. Frankly, I would take him as the final authority on baseball's roots. He was close enough to the formal game's birth chronologically, and was also familiar with the game's roots, geographically. He often wrote of the "ancient game of base ball", and in this article, he explains just how ancient it is.

In the old days of the gallant Edward the Third, in the first half of the fourteenth century, there came into fashion, among the youths and children of England, a game called barres, or bars, which consisted in running from one bar or barrier to another. It grew to be so popular

that it at last became a nuisance, so that the barons of England, as they went to the Parliament House, were annoyed by the bands of children engaged in playing it. They were at last obliged to pass an act of Parliament which declared, in the quaint Norman French of the period, that "nul enfaunt ne autres ne jue a barres" in the avenues which led to Westminster Palace.

This medieval history was covered by us in Examiner No. 5, in Mike Ross's article "1847 Sporting Life Articles Shed Light" and subsequently enlarged upon by Barry Winetrobe in his article in No. 6, "Starting from Home". Chadwick continues:



The name of this game was subsequently corrupted to "base;" and two hundred years after Edward's day, Spenser, in his "Faerie Queen," alluded to it as follows:

*"So ran they all as they had been at bace,
They being chased that did others chace."*

Now this was new to me, but the next reference I was familiar with, thanks to Ross's article in No. 5:

*And Shakespeare, in his "Cymbeline," shows that he was familiar with its character, for he makes one of his characters say:
"He with two stripling lads more like to run -*

The country base, than to omit such slaughter."

Even now men frequently indulge in this pastime, and so late as 1770 there was a celebrated game of "bars" or "base" played in London,

in the field behind Montague House, which has since been transformed into the British Museum. It was played between a select party of persons from Derbyshire and another from Cheshire, and was witnessed by all London. Derbyshire won, and a great quantity of money changed hands on the occasion. In the process of time, from a peculiarity in the method of playing it, and to distinguish it from other games which had sprung out of it, it was called "prisoner's base", and as such still affords amusement to the children of England and America.

This game was mentioned in Winetrobe's article in No. 6, where he quoted Joseph Strutt's book "The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England". The games mentioned were primarily running games, without a ball. As for baseball as "prisoner's base", Mike Ross has a theory - as yet unsupported - that an early name for base ball, goal ball, is a corruption of *gaol ball*. He also had a theory that the game of base ball came about when the game of *base* met the game of *ball*. Chadwick continues:

The skill in this game consisted simply in running with agility and swiftness, in such a way as not to be caught by the opposing party, from one "bar" or "base" to another. After a while somebody thought of uniting with it the game of ball, and thus formed the game of rounders, "round ball," or "base ball." "Rounders" took its name from the fact that the players were obliged to run round a sort of circle of bases. [He then goes on to a detailed explanation of the rules of rounders].

This game of rounders first began to be played in England in the seventeenth century, and was the favorite ball game in the provinces until it was generally superseded by cricket at the close of the last century. It is still, however, occasionally practiced in remote localities. It was brought to our country by the early emigrants, and was called here "base ball" or "round ball." Sometimes the name of "town ball" was given to it, because matches were often played by parties representing different towns. But, so far as we know, the old English title of "rounders" was never used in America. The reason of this is that so many of our old New England settlers came from the eastern counties of England, where the term "rounders" appears never to

Chadwick, con't

have been used. In Moor's "Suffolk Words" he mentions among the ball games "base ball;" while in the dialect glossaries of the northern and western counties no such word is to be found. English "base ball" or "rounders," was a mild and simple amusement compared with the American sport which has grown out of it. Even the hardy girls and women of England sometimes played it. Blaine, an English writer, says, "There are few of us, of either sex, but have engaged in base ball since our majority." Think of American ladies playing base ball! Yet the English "rounders" contained all the elements of our National game. All that it needed was systematizing and an authoritative code of rules. This it did not obtain until after 1840-and not completely until 1845. Previous to that date base ball was played with great differences in various parts of the country. Sometimes as many as six or seven bases were used; and very frequently lengthy disputes arose among the players as to the right method of conducting the game. It is a little noticeable that in laying down rules for base ball there is not one technical term that has been borrowed from cricket - a game long since reduced to a science. Of course the two sports, being both games of ball, necessarily have many terms in common, but there is not a base ball phrase which can be recognized as originating among cricketers. On the other hand, it is quite probable that cricket owed many of its peculiar words, such as "field," "fieldsman," "run," and "bat," to the older "rounders." In relation to the word "base," we may say that, in addition to the origin which we have given-namely, that it comes from a corruption of "bars" in the game styled "prison bars," or "prisoner's bar" - there is another somewhat plausible derivation. It has been suggested that as the object of each side in the game of "bars" was to keep the other party at bay, the places where they were so kept, that is the "bases," were styled "bays," of which "base" is a corruption.

The idea of baseball being as at least as old as rounders and both developing side-by-side was covered, with great wit, by Patrick Carroll, in his article in No. 5 entitled "The Chicken or the Egg".

Thus in his article, Henry Chadwick sheds more light on the

origins of baseball, while letting the British Baseball History Committee know that they are on the right track. But the job is by no means finished, and his last line sounds like a clarion call for more research:

But this whole subject needs elucidation, and a careful study of the rural sports of the mother country would undoubtedly throw much light upon the history of base ball.

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no chance". All in good fun, of course. I think it was my last day of happiness ever. The event was sponsored by French's mustard, ostensibly to promote the winning combination of hot dogs and non-toxic mustard. But this aim was spoiled by the fact that they didn't have real hot dogs - it's almost impossible to get them in this country. I was feeling my taste buds salivating at the smell of open fire cooking, and then I overheard an American tell a friend disappointedly, "They're sausages!" Here they put "American hot dogs" in tin cans packed in brine, and they can't tell the difference.

But as for the Grounds, I was fascinated - I don't know when it was built (obviously before 1888), but it had a multitude of character. No U.S. ballpark even approaches it in age. The Giants have played in six different parks since then. I got the feeling

that it had been built in stages, a section here and a section there, over the years. It never gave the impression of being very big or seating many people. It reminded me of the pictures I'd seen of the original Polo Grounds, not the Harlem ballpark, but the one at Columbus Circle that was torn down after the 1888 season, the year that baseball visited the Oval. Being late arrivals, we sat in the outfield. The game was enjoyable, and the culture clash of American cognicenti and the British curious was amusing at times. We were regaled by a frantic green parrot mascot - was this the Pirate mascot? Once, toward the end of the game, I felt the pangs of hunger and went off in search of a sausage dog. While I was queuing up in front of a huge French's mustard bottle replica, a home run was hit over the fence right where I had been sitting. Oh well. You can't always be at the right place at the right time.

EDITOR'S NOTE, or , "A Difficult Birth"

First of all, I must apologise for the lateness of this issue of the Examiner. I was already behind schedule when my computer broke down, and stayed broken for two months! If you want to understand your dependence on technology, have this happen. Anyway, it's finally been restored to (still only partial) health, at least enough for me to finish the paper. To make up for the delay, we're making this issue a special issue and include a photographic spread on the meeting. Some day we'll try colour printing.

In this issue we also include the maiden issue of Barry Winetrobe's newsletter, "Number 23", which he hopes will be a vehicle of communication between SABR members, especially between meetings and issues of the Examiner. Shall we wish him luck? Barry also stresses that Number 23 can only succeed if we all get involved.

Once last thing: the Executive Editor made me put that picture on the cover. Anyway, I hope you enjoy this issue, and I hope your team had a better year than mine.

Then Clive Russell spoke. He is the representative of Major League Baseball in the U.K. He spoke about the state of baseball in the United Kingdom, including a report on TV coverage we're likely to see soon, on Sky Sports and the NBC Superchannel. He also talked about opening a baseball field in Brighton the previous weekend. He then informed us of the success of a schools program sponsored by MLB, going into a school for eight weeks and teaching children the game and its basic skills - batting, catching, throwing, running. Then he mentioned the upcoming baseball Festival of Baseball (otherwise known as the FanFest), and talked about baseball resources available on the Internet. His enthusiasm was infectious.

Then the Chairman of the British and European Baseball History Committee, Patrick Carroll, spoke. He talked about his involvement with the British Baseball Federation, and their efforts to produce a BBF Hall of Fame. He stressed the need for communication between members.



Then Patrick read a report of Committee activities, achievements, and goals - both collective and individual. He then gave the Committee credit for producing a Registry of all U.S. Major League baseball players who were born in Europe, while noting on the side that he had done all the work.

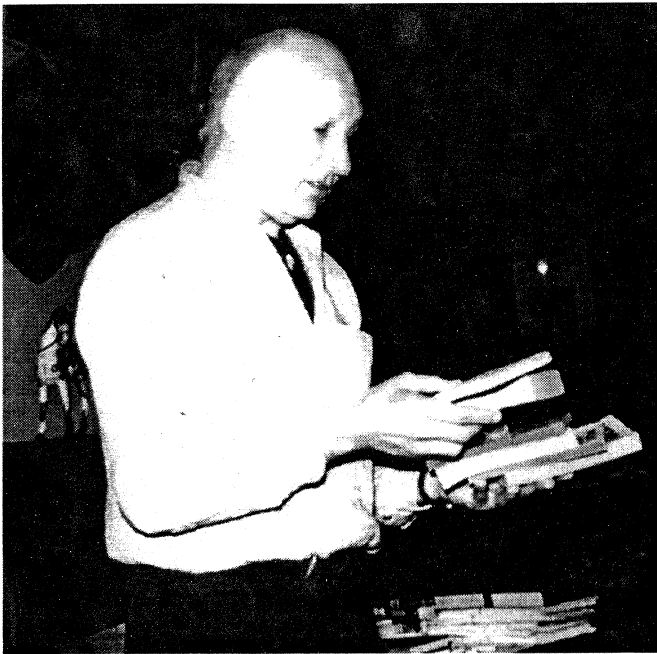
Then Jan Bagin, who had

travelled in from Prague, spoke. He has been involved with baseball for 25 years, and is very active in Czech baseball. He talked about how baseball got started in Czechoslovakia in the early 60's, and has grown to have 5000 players in 60 clubs, and that's not counting school programs. Jan told about the European Baseball Championships due to take place in

Hull the second week in August, and invited all to come. He would be there with his Czech team. Jan said he was the first full-time employee of Czech baseball.



Top: Most of the group posed outside the Kings of Clerkenwell pub. Bottom: Most of the group unposed inside the pub.



Then he told of a new baseball complex with four diamonds, currently being built in Prague. He told of the popularity of the Czech Baseball League, and how an action photograph from one of their games won Sports Picture of the Year last year. And to top it off, he passed out these wonderful Czech baseball pins and stickers. Very stylish.

Then John Gausted, the owner of SportsPages, held the floor. SportsPages has always been a haunt of anyone in London who likes to read about baseball, and is a long-time VIP (very important place) for SABR members in or near London. To show his appreciation for our business (if not reverence), he donated £100 to the Chapter, a contribution which was certainly appreciated and probably will hold the record for Highest Individual Donation for years to come.



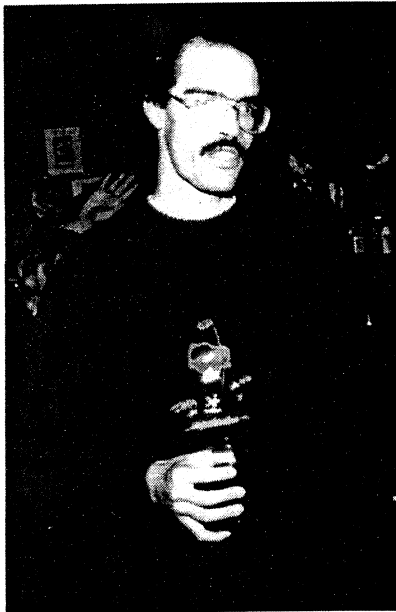
Top left: Mike Ross auctions priceless tomes. Top right: Hugh Robinson greets Clive Russell. Centre right: Clive Russell speaks to the group. Bottom: Members of the winning trivia team celebrate after the victory.



Then Robert Bruce, our residential cricket expert and quintessential Scot, spoke. He had been put on the spot to support or refute the statement that cricket is to baseball as chess is to draughts (checkers in the U.S.). He compared both sports, and said that baseball has more symmetry while cricket has more complexity. He also talked about trends in cricket edging it more towards baseball, e.g. more one-day test matches instead of five-day matches, and the changes that brings in the way the game is played. In the end, he refused to make a final judgement.

Then a general discussion about the comparisons between baseball and cricket broke out, including an analysis of the different skills involved, e.g. the importance of throwing over catching in each sport. It was generally felt that cricket was being pushed into one-day matches because of commercial reasons, bringing about a change in the focus of the game.

Appetites whetted by such intellectual discussions, we broke for lunch. It was Mrs. Eichler's legendary lasagne and chili dishes, which makes me hungry just to think of it.



Top right: Patrick Carroll, Tim McNicholl, and Harvey Sahker discuss baseball past and present.

Centre left: Laurens De Jong again wins the "Most Traveled" award, having come from upstate New York for this meeting.

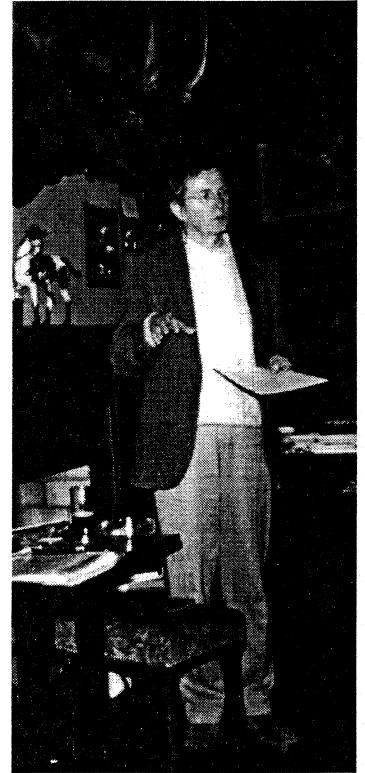
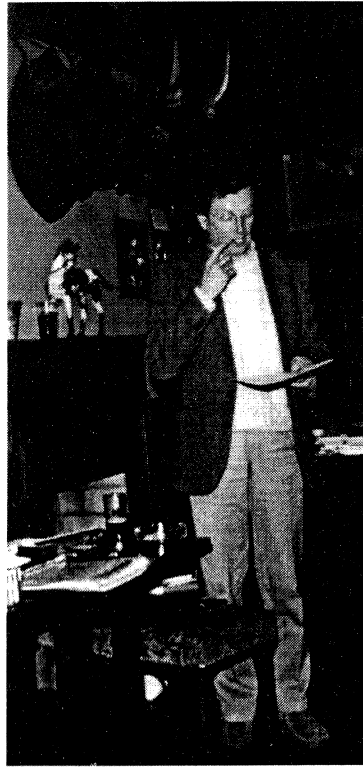
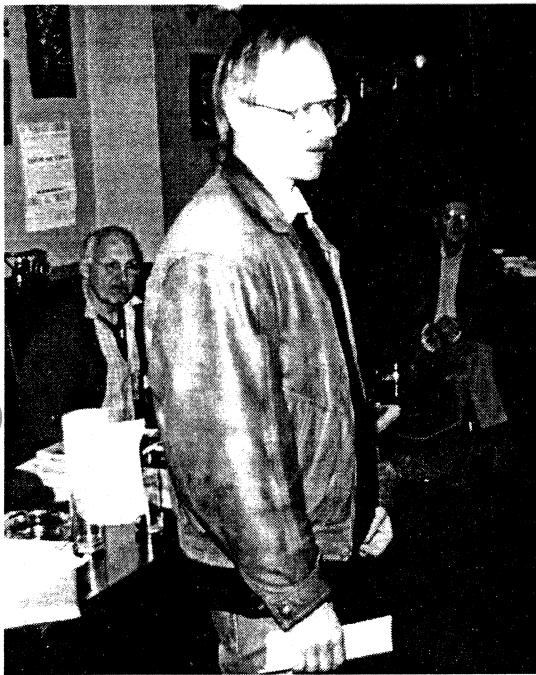
Centre right: Andy Parkes mulls over the Treasurer's Report.

Bottom left: Jan Bagin shows the plans for the Czech Baseball Centre in Prague, while Barry Winetrobe takes notes.

Bottom right: Tony Darkin and Jan Bagin talk over Czech statistics.



After business, speakers, and food, we usually have a spot reserved for watching videos, especially those from the States that most members don't get to see. Unfortunately, we had a slight mechanical hitch - the Guvnor's flash new Sony TV had a misunderstanding with my multi-standard VCR. We couldn't play U.S. standard tapes without getting psychedelic visual effects, so Ken Burns had to cool his heels in the box. But we did get to see a short video about Martin Sawyer, a British pitcher who thinks he's got major-league stuff.



Afterward Mike Ross held his auction. Bidding was hot and wild, as old and valuable baseball books were bid for. I personally ended up with an old hardback edition of Ring Lardner, complete with dust cover. Proceeds went to SABR(UK).

Finally, Tony Darkin held the Trivia Contest. 27 questions representing 27 outs, three to an inning. Martin Hoerchner's team avenged their controversial loss last year and won by a point. There was some murmuring about the preponderance of Giants questions in the contest, but I didn't have anything to do with that. Just don't ask Tony about his new diamond stickpin.

- Martin Hoerchner

Top right: Patrick Carroll in action. Centre left: John Gausted opens his heart and wallet to SABR. Bottom right: The faces of some of the names on the masthead. Back row: Patrick Carroll, John Eichler, Hugh Robinson, Mike Ross. Front row: Andy Parkes, Martin Hoerchner, Barry Winetrobe. Photo credits: Cover photo: Martin Dodd. Other AGM photos: Martin Hoerchner



Annual History Report

*1996 Annual Report of The UK/
Europe History Committee*

The Committee's second year has seen encouraging progress both in its overall pursuits, and in those of individual members. Although our opportunities for meeting en masse have been limited in the past twelve months (a situation to be rectified at our SABR (UK) AGM on the 18th May next which will be the occasion for both Bobby

Thomson Chapter and UK/Europe History Committee meetings) members have been continuing their researches and keeping in touch by phone and correspondence. In regard to our Committee's

main collective aim, which is the production of a comprehensive history of baseball in Britain and Ireland, we are at a stage making it possible for us to produce an outline/proposal for the book, laying out its structure and contents, and giving profiles of its contributors. This document is intended to serve the dual functions of editorial guide and prospectus for possible publishers. A draft will be available for discussion at the AGM.

Committee members have also been active on other fronts. We have for the few past months been busy with the compilation of a register of all European-born major league players and managers from 1871 to the

present. In making this register as complete and accurate as possible we have had welcome assistance from Bill Carle, Chair of the Biographical Committee, and Frederick Ivor-Campbell, Chair of the Nineteenth Century Committee. It is hoped that the register and an accompanying paper will in time be produced as a pamphlet. The paper is scheduled to be delivered as a presentation at both our AGM, and at the Annual Convention of the Association of Sports Historians at Leicester in June. Copies of both paper and register will be lodged with the SABR Research Library. In no particular order some current activities of Committee members in-



clude: Daniel Bloyce - newly appointed as lecturer in the sociology of sport at Chester College of Higher Education - continuing his research into the development (or otherwise) of baseball in Britain in particular relation to the early tours of American professionals. Ian Smyth continues work on the post-WWII period and the evolution of the British Baseball Federation - of which he is Coaching Officer. Ian's account of the 1938 US vs England "Test Series" appeared in the last issue of *The Baseball Research Journal*. Bobby Thomson Chapter Chairman Mike Ross had a piece in the same number of the *Journal*. Mike, along with Martin Hoerchner, Barry Winetrobe and others, is also busy in the 'Black Hole' or pre-1874 department. Gary Bedingfield - former Great Britain catcher and a relative newcomer to SABR - has produced (and found a publisher for) a study of baseball as played in Britain by American Armed Forces personnel. An excerpt

from this work appears on page eight. Patrick Morley has unearthed fascinating material regarding baseball in Derby, particularly concerning Sir Francis Ley and the formation of the Derby Baseball Club in 1890.

Along with our research concerns the UK/Europe History Committee has had to address certain administrative and (especially) financial questions during the past year. Our somewhat unusual position in the overall SABR context of being, in essence, simultaneously a regional Chapter and a research Committee has created problems, particularly in relation to the SABR (UK) Examiner.

The Examiner, which acts as both Chapter and Committee newsletter, does not produce itself out of thin air at no cost. Up until the present production of the Examiner has depended to a disproportionate and iniquitous degree on the patronage of its Editor. This cannot continue and at the AGM members of both the Bobby Thomson Chapter and our Committee will be

asked to consider ways and means of spreading the load.

In conclusion I would like to welcome the new members of our Committee who have joined in the past year, including those in America who have not allowed the intervening ocean to dampen their interest in our objects and activities, and to express the hope that the coming year will be even more productive than the one just past. We will continue to take as our watchword and starting inspiration the closing words of Henry Chadwick's 1867 article, *The Ancient History of Base Ball*: "...But this whole subject needs elucidation, and a careful study of the rural sports of the mother country would undoubtedly throw much light upon the history of base ball."

- Patrick Carroll, Chairman,
UK/Europe History
Committee

THE TRANSATLANTIC POLITICAL ALL-STAR GAME

by Barry K Winetrobe

There are many joys in browsing through a Baseball Encyclopedia. In addition to looking at the records of your favourites and of the all-time greats, there are the perhaps greater pleasures in coming across the fantastic nicknames (Chicken Wolf, Oyster Burns, Doug 'Eyechart' Gwosdz) or real names (Urban Shocker and Vida Blue are pretty hard to beat) of major leaguers of the past, or the extremely abbreviated careers of some (other than Moonlight Graham of 'Field of Dreams' fame, I like Ted Tumer's managerial record with the Braves, 0-1), and so on.

One obvious trivia game is to create teams composed of those with the same surnames of film stars, authors, artists or whatever. Working in Parliament, and having recently assisted in the production of a factbook on British Prime Ministers, I started casually to look up major leaguers with the same surnames as the 50 Prime Ministers. From there it was a simple matter to create a team, and then to match it with a parallel team of US Presidents. Yes, I know that teams of Presidents have probably been created (and published) many times in the USA, but have they ever played a team of British Prime Ministers?

The following teams are based on the 6th edition (1985) of the Encyclopedia, updated where necessary by more recent books like the Sporting News Baseball Register. Teams are selected by a number of rules, to which I don't always adhere, such as using a surname only once, and choosing where possible players for their interest (name, history etc) rather than - with one or two obvious exceptions - their record. In other words, my picks are rarely the best choice (if there is such a thing as best in objective terms) for each position (no DH!), but suggested alternatives are welcomed. After each name a very brief note of the player

is given, sufficient (I hope) to identify them, and a reference to the relevant Prime Minister or President, with their term of office.

THE UK PRIME MINISTERS ('The Premiers')

1B Mickey Heath (1930s Red; Edward Heath, Conservative, 1970-74)

2B Mike Eden (1970s Brave/White Sox; Anthony Eden, Conservative, 1955-57)

SS Bill Russell (1970s/80s Dodger; Lord John Russell, Liberal, 1846-52, 65-66)

3B Buster Chatham (2 year Brave 1930-31, Earl of Chatham (William Pitt the Elder), Whig, 1766-68)

OF Reddy Grey (2 games for Pirates in 1903; Earl Grey, Whig, 1830-34)

OF Billy North (In A's 1974 and LA 1978 World Series teams; Lord North, Tory, 1770-82)

OF Homer Peel (1920s/30s NL journeyman; Robert Peel, Conservative, 1834-35, 41-46)

C Gene Derby (Baltimore 1885 in AA; Earl of Derby, Conservative, 1852, 58-59, 66-68)

RHP Icebox Chamberlain (157-120 in 1880s/90s; Neville Chamberlain, Conservative, 1937-40)

LHP Lady Baldwin (73-41 in 1880s/90s; Stanley Baldwin, Conservative, 1923-24, 24-29, 35-37)

MANAGER: Jimmie Wilson (493-735 for 1930s/40s Phillies/Cubs; Harold Wilson, Labour, 1964-70, 74-76)

THE US PRESIDENTS ('The Chiefs')

1B Jack Pierce (1970s Brave/Tiger; Franklin Pierce, Democrat, 1853-57)

2B Tony Taylor (19 years 1958-76, mainly Phillies; Zachary Taylor, Whig, 1849-50)

SS Joe Hoover (1940s Tiger; Herbert Hoover, Republican, 1929-33)

3B Eddie Grant (10 years early 20th century; Ulysses S Grant, Republican, 1869-77)

OF Joe Jackson ('Shoeless Joe', .356 lifetime BA; Andrew Jackson, Democrat - Republican, 1829-37)

OF Deacon Van Buren (13 games in NL 1904; Martin Van Buren, Democrat - Republican, 1837-41)

OF Hack Wilson (12 years NL, 190 RBIs in 1930; Woodrow Wilson, Democrat, 1913-21)

C Gary Carter (future Hall-of-Famer Expo/Met; Jimmy Carter, Democrat, 1977-81)

RHP Walter Johnson ('The Big Train', 416 wins; Andrew Johnson, Democrat (nominated as VP on Republican ticket), 1865-69)

LHP Whitey Ford (1950s/60s Yankee; Gerald Ford, Republican, 1974-77)

MANAGER Donie Bush (497-539 in 1920s/30s; George Bush, Republican, 1989-93)

The game would be played, of course at (Grover) Cleveland. The Chiefs should easily beat the Premiers, especially with Wilson, Carter and Jackson (with Otis Nixon as pinch-hitter), and an unbeatable pitching duo (I resisted the temptation of choosing Grover Cleveland Alexander!). I would have played Hack Wilson on the Premiers, if I didn't need a Wilson as manager. No closing pitchers, because I couldn't find a specialist closer for the Chiefs, so no place for Jeff Russell to bolster the Premiers' pitching.

One Last Pitch Before I Die

by Gary Bedingfield

The Tragic Story of Forrest Brewer, Minor League Pitcher and World War II Hero

SABR(UK) is proud to present an excerpt from a soon-to-be-published book, Somewhere Over England, a study of baseball in Britain as played by American personnel in World War II:

Forrest "Lefty" Brewer was a naturally gifted athlete who should have enjoyed a long and successful career as a major league pitcher. Instead, the United States' entry into World War II thrust him into military service, robbed him of vital professional seasons and, after pitching his final game at a soccer ground in England shortly before D-Day, claimed his life.

The story of Brewer, the pitcher, begins in Florida in the mid-1930s as the United States clawed its way from the depth of the depression. He was a standout pitcher with the Robert E. Lee High School team and later became somewhat of a local celebrity with the semi-pro Jacksonville Tars.

In the Spring of 1938, the confident 19-year-old asked for a tryout with the St Augustine Saints of the Florida State League. His deceptive yet smooth delivery immediately earned him a contract and his rookie season was little short of sensational. Leading the Class D circuit with 25 wins and 234 strikeouts, Brewer completed 28 of the 34 games he started, and his 1.88 earned run average was the league's third best. His four shutouts for the year included a June 6 no-hitter against Orlando, and league secretary Peter Schaal proclaimed him as "the greatest young prospect to come out of the Florida State League."

Impressed with the scouting reports on the youngster, Washington Senators' owner Clark Griffith was prompted to purchase Brewer's contract, inviting him to the capital city for the final weeks of the season.

1939 was spent in the Senators' organization between Charlotte of the Piedmont League (Class B), Orlando of the Florida State League (Class D),

and Shelby of the Tar Heel League (Class D). He won 12 games between them and recorded 171 strike outs in 231 innings. The following year, Brewer was again with the Charlotte Hornets, finishing the season with an 11-9 record, a 3.68 earned run average, and a further September recall to the Washington bench.

At the age of 22, and with 113 minor league games under his belt, Brewer was due to report to the Senators' spring training camp in 1941, with a serious chance of making the team. But military service beckoned and he left, instead, for Camp Blanding, Florida, in March.

Following basic training, Brewer volunteered for paratrooper service. He was assigned to the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd "All American" Airborne Division, and in January 1944, in preparation for the Allied invasion of Europe, was sent overseas.

The 508th spent a brief time in Northern Ireland, at Castledawson, 30 miles northwest of Belfast, before moving, in March, to Wollaton Park, Nottingham, England. It was to be their home for three months, and the gregarious young paratroopers made a favourable impression with the local community, prompting the immediate organization of the Nottingham Anglo-American Committee.

It was this committee, led by chairman Frederick W. Gray, that first suggested a baseball game, staged by the Americans, for the entertainment of the Nottingham public. As a result, and with the full support of 82nd Airborne Division commander Major-General Matthew B. Ridgway, the 508th Red Devils faced the 505th Panthers at Notts County soccer ground, Meadow Lane, on Sunday, May 28.

Fatigues and jump boots were the uniform for the day, and an enthusiastic crowd of 7,000 turned out in glorious weather to watch the event. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress (Councillor and Mrs F. Mitchell) were among the spectators, the former

throwing out the first ball, and, as an aid to the British spectators more accustomed to soccer and cricket, an entertaining, wise-cracking commentary was supplied by Sergeant West of California.

The Red Devils proved far too strong for the Panthers and the result, with Brewer pitching, was an 18-0 rout. The Nottingham Guardian described how the teams "played with extraordinary vigour," and noted there was "spectacular hitting, some magnificent catches and many exciting incidents."

Nine days later, as part of the D-Day invasion, men of the 508th were among 13,400 American paratroopers that ascended on the Cherbourg peninsula in occupied France.

Reaching the French coast in planes that were flying too fast, too low, and often miles from their intended drop zones, the paratroopers plunged into the early morning darkness and almost instantly struck the ground. Many suffered broken limbs while others, weighed down by vast amounts of equipment, drowned in the treacherous swamplands that covered much of the area.

Nevertheless, many did engage the enemy valiantly and Brewer was among 70 paratroopers that brought about the swift surrender of a German stronghold at La Fier Manoir. Later that morning the same group of paratroopers were attacked by a far stronger enemy force and trapped in a hail of bullets and explosions from machine guns, rifles, mortars and tanks. They could offer little resistance and ran for their lives towards the nearby Merderet River. As Brewer reached the water's edge, a tank machine gun opened fire and in an instant his lifeless body lay face down in the water.

Private Forrest Vernon "Lefty" Brewer was 25 years old. It was four months before his wife, Mary, received confirmation that her husband had been killed on June 6, ironically, the sixth anniversary of his Florida State League no-hitter.

BREWER, FORREST VERNON (LEFTY)

Born, December 9, 1918, at Sequatchie, Tennessee.

Home address in 1944, 3551 Rayford Street, Jacksonville, Florida

Killed in action, June 6, 1944.

Batted left. Threw left. Height, 6.01-1/2. Weight, 165

Year	Club	League	G	CG	IP	W	L	PCT	H	BB	SO	R	ER	ERA
1938	St Augustine	Florida State	41	28	297	25	11	.694	224	123	234	107	62	1.88
1939	Charlotte	Piedmont	3	0	7	0	2	.000	5	8	3	13		
	Orlando	Florida State	22	14	152	7	11	.389	145	103	107	106	65	3.85
	Shelby	Tar Heel	19	7	72	5	4	.556	85	30	61	56	42	5.25
1940	Charlotte	Piedmont	28	11	176	11	9	.550	54	104	95	96	72	3.68