

Northern hospitality greets Green

(courtesy of Andy Lamb and The Malvern Gazette)

Barnards Green were not disappointed by the much-heralded northern hospitality when the 28-strong party visited to Lancashire on their annual cricket tour.

Dark clouds gathered over Wigan where the first fixture against Hindley St Peter's was scheduled. However the showers missed the ground completely and the opposition were fulsome in their welcome and highly competitive in their desire to play despite the conditions.

Skipper Rich Brown elected to bat on a damp slow wicket and the contrasting pair of Freeman and Golder provided a solid start to the innings before the former was trapped in front by a low one.

Mark Hooper went for a duck and the Green stuttered somewhat against some legspin of dubious quality but great effect. Cameos from Jez Clarke, Dave White, Andy Lamb and a late spurt from Graham Spiers saw the Green reach 178 from their 40 overs.

Hindley came out determined to make light work of the target and made excellent progress before a run out slowed them down. Spiers displayed a good length throughout but lacked support from bowlers and fielders alike until Lamb trapped Jones lbw.

The game now turned on dropped catches as Lamb had both Storey and Birch shelled and these two went on to guide the home side to victory by six wickets.

Tuesday's fixture on the excellent Towncroft ground at Middleton, where Basil D'Oliveira played his early cricket and where the likes of Frank Tyson and Roy Gilchrist plied their trade, again saw the Green under the cosh as a 35-over total of 174, including an excellent 42 from Andy Middleton proved too little to trouble an aggressive home batting line up who romped to a six-wicket victory.

Wednesday saw the Green take on Heywood on the Lancashire League's biggest ground on a hot day. Not surprisingly skipper Andy Lamb elected to bat and despite the early loss of guest player Simon Keyte the Green batted solidly throughout with sound contributions from Hooper, Steve Metcalfe (46) and Tim Williams (63) before a late flurry from White pushed the score up to 228-8 from the 45 overs.

An inspired spell from Graham Spiers saw the top order struggle for runs as he claimed three excellent wickets in his nine-over spell.

Heywood were always behind the rate and a canny spell from Spencer removed the remaining danger man Purser, inevitably well pouched by Spiers at long off. The home side finished on 130-8 to give the Green a comfortable victory.

A village green of compact dimensions awaited the Green at Grimsargh on Thursday.

Again on winning the toss the Green batted first, only to find themselves two wickets down without a run on the board as Metcalfe and Mayo failed to score.

Robin Longmore decided that the long handle was called for and smote an entertaining 40 before missing a straight one, leaving Jez Clarke to survive as a succession of batters tried to emulate Longmore with little effect and the Green found themselves at 120-6.

Clarke departed for a hard-earned 43 and it was only then that a sensible innings from Chris Hill and a penultimate over thrash from Tim Williams that yielded five boundaries (four of which hit the tree on the ground at mid wicket) enabled the Green to post a score of 202-8 off their 40 overs.

Grimsargh's reply was spirited and it soon became evident that they felt the way to victory was to attack the Green's tired bowlers.

Captain Chris Smedley, keeping wicket for once, entered into the spirit by bowling a series of occasional spinners and inviting Grimsargh to take on the boundaries. This they did with considerable effect, notably in the case of Bell who scored a first rate 76.

Wickets fell at the other end but when skipper Mallory arrived at the crease, Bell found a partner of similar ilk. These two took the score to 168 when Bell eventually mishit but this still left the home side with 35 required off nine overs with three wickets left.

Mallory soon followed but Adam batted sensibly for his side until Chris Hill polished off the tail and leave the Green victors by 24 runs.

Thanks go to Robin Longmore and Jez Clarke for their efforts and to Brookhire for their minibus.