

## **The First Two Decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As it said goodbye to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and hello to the 21<sup>st</sup>, Abergavenny Cricket Club could reflect on around 140 years of mostly friendly fixtures before the advent of league cricket in the early 1970s. The year 1998 saw a dramatic restructuring of existing leagues throughout the country and the dawn of 'the brave new world' of Lord MacLaurin and pyramid leagues based around first-class counties. This meant that the Abergavenny club, having enjoyed much of its recent past in fixtures across the border, in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, would now be entirely rooted in south Wales.

Abergavenny CC, always being progressive in nature, embraced this brave new world and started the 21<sup>st</sup> century with Geraint Jones as club captain, a player who some 5 years later would be written into cricket folklore as a key member of the 2005 Ashes-winning England team.

The club was also thoroughly committed to the development of youth teams and to encouraging more young boys and girls to take up the game employed an overseas coach in Darren Holder, a member of the Queensland state coaching team.

The playing staff consisted of a mixture of youth and senior players and, as well as Geraint Jones, included two future Glamorgan CCC first-class cricketers, Mark Wallace and Jonathan Hughes.

If the playing members fluctuated over the 'noughties' the key four officers were pretty consistent as J.B. Shackleton was president throughout the decade and also treasurer for 5 of the years, with Ian Bailey in that post for the other 5 years. Mrs Tessa Pike was secretary for 9 of the 10 years, taking over from Chris Cotterill. The chairmanship was shared by Anthony Coles (6 years) and Paul Sussex (4 Years), ensuring administration was in competent hands.

Fortunately, local businesses bought into this philosophy and sponsorship greatly assisted the club in its goals, and this support was to continue to a greater or lesser degree throughout the "noughties."

2000 saw the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 finish 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 5<sup>th</sup> in their respective divisions. Geraint Jones figured in the league averages with 520 runs at 40.00 with a best of 97. Craig Barnsley [20 wkts] and Gareth Corfield [37 wkts] featured in the handbook

Ryland Wallace recorded the highest aggregate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in 2000 scoring [600] runs taking him to second in the averages with an average of 50.00 and a best of 97 Not Out. Gavin White was mentioned also with 261 runs at 43.50 with a best of 73 not out. Andy Timpson recorded the highest number of wickets with 37 and was second in the bowling averages with 11.48.

The wicket at Avenue Road had for many years been considered a good one, in no small part to the hard work of employed grounds men supported by volunteers, known as 'The Last of the Summer Wine Gang'. Sadly, in 2000, the club lost its employed incumbent with the sudden passing of Ken McKenzie.

The club's tradition of hosting 'big' games continued in 2000 with an ECB X1 playing against Sri Lanka Under 19 X1

Success is nice but never guaranteed and new young skipper Ben Powell (appointed in 2001) didn't enjoy the best of fortune in his two-year tenure. A dogged middle-order batsman and a brilliant fielder in any position, he was leading the side at a time when overseas players were not permitted and found the going tough in the Thomas Carroll South Wales Premier League. He was supported by further coaches from Australia in Brad Murphy and Alan Free. The team finished 6<sup>th</sup> of 10 in 2001 but unfortunately were relegated from the top flight in 2002. In 2001 the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 finished in 6<sup>th</sup> in their division. For the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 Mark Wallace topped the batting averages in the league, with 463 runs at 66.14 with a best of 145 against Cardiff. Greg Paulson who had joined from Ebbw Vale was 3<sup>rd</sup> with 542 runs at 54.20 with a best of 111 against Panteg. Andy Timpson [22 Wkts] and Craig Barnsley[24 Wkts] featured in the bowling. Andy also recorded the best figures in the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 division with 7-50 against Pentyrch.

The 1<sup>st</sup> X1 did reach the Final of the Macey Shield against Llanwern at Panteg CC sadly they lost quite easily. Avenue Road hosted the Final of the British Universities tournament, as well as a Glamorgan 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 game against Worcestershire 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 and Wales Minor Counties v Herefordshire- Ben did however welcome Andrew Jones into Abergavenny's ranks he joined from Llanarth, a signing which would prove to be an inspirational acquisition. It was not all gloom however, as the club reported a successful season for the youth section which continued to flourish. As did the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> X1's.

The 1st X1 finished second bottom and were relegated along with Miskin, the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 finished 5<sup>th</sup> in Division 2 Andrew Jones did top the batting in the league with 563 runs at 80.43, with a best of 121 against Usk. Greg Paulson also figured with 356 runs at 44.50. There was also a century [113\*] against St Fagans, Andrew Jones scored his second century [107\*] in the same fixture. In the bowling James Didcot featured with 20 wkts at 21.35. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 Mark Winstanley figures in the handbook with [216] runs at 30.85. In Division 2 Andy Timpson was second in the league bowling averages with 27 wkts at 12.00

The difficult decision to change leadership resulted in the engagement of recently-retired, first-class cricketer, Keith Newell, formerly of Sussex and Glamorgan, as coach and playing captain. This proved an astute move and the team bounced back immediately to the Premier League after winning the Division One Championship.

In 2004 the club managed to consolidate its premier status after winning promotion, in no small part to the form of Andrew Jones who rounded off the season with his seventh league century, bringing his aggregate runs to 983 at an average of 98.3 This incredible record is the best ever in the 172 year history of the club and this was despite the fact that he sacrificed his wicket on at least two occasions for the benefit of the team. His ability and technique and his virtue of patiently playing each ball on its merits has been an object lesson to the younger players, who all benefited from his presence and advice. Lee James [ 100] against Newport 2nds as well as Ioan Fury and Ross Lupton who also scored centuries and Paul Havard had a Hat Trick all clean bowled

Another first for the club in 2004 was on July 21st when the Welsh Ladies Cricket Team played at Avenue Road against Middlesex Ladies. This was the first time a ladies match of this importance had been played at Abergavenny and is a far cry from the 1920's when the Suffragettes attempted to set fire to the stables at the bottom end of the ground where the grounds man's horse was kept!

Ian Bailey decided after 17 years of being the Club Treasurer to hand over the keys to the safe. Ian who had served the club superbly over that time would not be completely lost to the club as he was elected to be Chairman of the Finance Committee. The Club were pleased that Geraint Jones and The Mayor of Abergavenny Chris Woodhouse both agreed to be the Guests of Honour at the Annual Presentation Dinner in October at The Manor Hotel Crickhowell

The 2005 season had barely begun when, in a shock move, Keith Newell stood down as captain-coach. Keith had joined the club in 2003 following their relegation from top flight regional cricket the previous year. His impact was immediate as Abergavenny took all before them and won the first division in dominating fashion, losing only one game all season. He was also instrumental in bringing his brother Jon to the club, who had an outstanding year, winning the Player of the Year accolade. This success was followed up in the Premiership in 2004 as Abergavenny proved that they were the outstanding club in Gwent. Interestingly they defeated all of the top three teams, with the victory over the seemingly invincible Sully the highlight of the season. Abergavenny Thirds and Fourths both finished the season top of their respective leagues and both therefore were promoted.

Keith's first-class career stretched from 1995 to 2001, during which period he scored just under 3,000 runs and took 24 wickets. In the one-day format he scored 2,500 plus runs and took 42 wickets, winning the gold award in 2000 in the Glamorgan versus Kent match in the Nat West competition.

During the 2005 season first-class cricket returned to Abergavenny, from the 26th-28th July, when Glamorgan played Bangladesh 'A'. The latter included several players who played against England and Australia, so a keen contest was anticipated. Fittingly, Mark Wallace (51 runs) and Michael Powell (111), both products of the club's junior system, made major contributions to the drawn game.

Despite the setback of the resignation of Keith Newell as captain, the club retained its premiership status in 2005 with Andrew Jones taking over the helm. A relegation dogfight followed in 2006, despite Glamorgan allocating Ryan Watkins to the club as professional. Alas, Abergavenny were relegated from the Premier and once again found themselves in division 1.

John Phillips, a quality batsman who had played most of his cricket at Ebbw Vale (and thought by Graham Burgess to be one of the best 15 year old on-sided player he had seen) took over the captaincy in 2007 when Abergavenny finished 6<sup>th</sup> of ten teams in Division One, whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI finished runners-up in the Premier Division for 2<sup>nd</sup> XI's. This season Abergavenny also took a unique decision to make an official merge with Crickhowell Cricket

Club. For many years they had enjoyed rivalry on the field, but friendship off the field, with many of Abergavenny's best players making the 6 mile journey down the A40 to play at Avenue Road. This year to mutual benefit Crickhowell in effect became another Abergavenny team, with players from both clubs eligible for all 4 teams.

Abergavenny's Avenue Road ground annually hosted county cricket from 1981 when Glamorgan visited the ground for their Sunday League match against Worcestershire. It ended with the development of Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, into an international stadium. But, in 2007, County Championship cricket was scheduled to return to Abergavenny, after a decade's absence, for the Glamorgan versus Leicestershire fixture from Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July. The last County Championship game to be played in Abergavenny had been in 1997 when a Glamorgan team, led by Matthew Maynard, beat Northamptonshire by 6 wickets, on its way to winning the title. Unfortunately, due to the persistent rain no play was possible on any of the 4 days in July 2007.

Sadly, in that same year, the club lost one of its longest serving and most loved members with the passing of Mel Pritchard. Mel had been connected with the club since the 1947 season and remained a stalwart for the next 60 years. A splendid bowler, Mel took many wickets over the years for both the first and second XIs. The *Abergavenny Chronicle* regularly featured Mel as the leading wicket taker and the club presented him with a blazer in his prime for his consistent success. After he finished playing he became a hard working member of the ground committee and was his commitment and sense of fun made him a hugely popular figure. In his memory Ray Hamer constructed several seats along the redbrick wall at the bottom of the ground, which he affectionately named 'the Mel Pritchard Stand'.

2008 saw yet another new club captain as Dr Steve Brown took over and by the end of June Abergavenny were at the top of the table, a position they managed to retain and were ultimately promoted as Division One Champions, in no small part due to Australian import Andrew Robinson who scored 908 runs at a the remarkable average of 129.71.

Again, on a sad note, the club said farewell to Stuart Lennox who passed away during the course of that season. Stuart made his debut for Abergavenny in 1975, when he joined from Worcester. He was a marvellous right arm seam and swing bowler and right hand belligerent batsman. His first season coincided with the club winning the Thee Counties League title, during which he took 63 wickets and scored 558 runs. Over the years he would continue to

perform to a high level and was always capable of bowling sides out and scoring heavily with the bat, his highest score being 104 and his best bowling 8-61. Stuart represented the Three Counties League XI, Gwent and Buckinghamshire in the Minor Counties Championship, as well as Worcester Cricket Association. He topped the club's bowling averages in 1977, the batting in 1975 and 1981 and took the most catches for an outfielder in 1977, 1981 and 1983.

2009 was a very significant year in the history of the club as it celebrated 175 years of existence. Publicity for this anniversary season ran thus:

'Formed in 1834, Abergavenny CC have a long and proud history, and during the course of the next few months the club are hosting a series of special events, including a match against Glamorgan at their picturesque ground in Avenue Road on July 26 – a game which is also in aid of Alex Wharf's Benefit Year.

Below are details of the other special events which Abergavenny CC is holding this year:

Saturday, April 18: Launch of Celebratory Book / Players' and Members' Evening

Saturday, June 13: Nostalgia Day – Players' and Members' Reunion

Sunday, July 5: President's XI versus Gwent Three Counties' League Invitation XI

Sunday, July 26: Abergavenny first XI versus Glamorgan (Alex Wharf Benefit)

Saturday, August 29: Celebratory Dinner Dance

Sunday, August 30: Youth Festival

Saturday, September 26: Awards Evening'

On the field and back in the Premier League, Abergavenny were allocated Will Owen by Glamorgan and brought in a young South African as their overseas player and coach, one Richard Levi. As well as this, the Club now boasted its largest and strongest-ever coaching team with no less than 20 qualified coaches focusing on youth development. There seemed plenty of grounds for optimism. However, after the season had only been going a short while, the First XI suffered a cruel blow when Levi was controversially banned by the league for being an alleged professional. Despite sterling work by Club Chairman Tony Coles, the original hearing and subsequent appeal found in favour of Tondur, the club who had filed the official complaint. This now meant Abergavenny and cricket watchers throughout south-east Wales would be deprived of one the best players ever to grace the League. Offering some consolation, there was success for the club's under 11 side who became joint league champions

The 'Twenty Tens' decade got off to a sad start with the passing of Peter Thomas, who played for the club at many levels from 1973, including some first team cricket in the great 1975 league winning side. His finest hour was his maiden century (101\*) for the club against Colwall in 1977. He was also honorary secretary from 1978 – 1982 and until the AGM of 2009 was a very popular and highly regarded '200 club' organiser, having served in that office for 25 years since 1985. Making his final draw in that role in 2009 was his final contribution to a club he had served for 37 years.

Further regional cricket restructuring took place in 2010, when the South Wales Premier Cricket League was established. The top five clubs in east Wales in the 2009 season, together with the top five clubs in the west, formed a new premier division. The original leagues then became feeders to it but was renamed initially as the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Cricket League and later (in 2016) the South East Wales Cricket League.

Abergavenny had finished 2009 outside the top five teams in the east and therefore started 2010 in Division One of the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Cricket League. James Schofield took over the Club Captaincy and Ryan Watkins, recently-retired Glamorgan all-rounder, joined the club as a player-coach for the 2010 season. After a very successful season, Abergavenny went into their final game of the season still entertaining hopes of a Bridgend slip up which would give them a chance of stealing the title. However, Bridgend's demolition of Chepstow ended their dreams and left them just behind in second. Greg Fury was voted the 'League Player of the Year'.

2011 was more of the same with a strong challenge all season for the title, only to fall just short for the second year running, James Schofield again led the side well and Jon Denning, who had an outstanding season, ensured an Abergavenny player won the League Player of the Year title for the second consecutive season

2012 again under the captaincy of James Schofield turned out to be a struggle in fact after 14 of the 22 fixtures in the League Abergavenny were embroiled in a relegation battle, before eventually surviving.

A new player-coach, Ali Bukhari, joined in 2013 and a new batsman Tamoor Zafar provided James Schofield (captain for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive season) with more ammunition to launch a title challenge. He also had Cameron Herring at his disposal and both he and Tamoor scored maiden centuries for the club.

In 2014 (still in the Division One of the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Cricket League) James Schofield handed the captaincy to another youngster Gavin Heritage who had worked his way through the junior ranks. Ali Bukhari was retained as player-coach and he signed a number of his Asian compatriots, including Akhtar Baloch, an experienced campaigner and opening batsman, Muhammad Salman, a quick bowler and all-rounder Asim Gillani. Tamoor Zafar was available for this season. It proved another relegation battle for the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 and survival was not guaranteed until the final 2 games of the campaign.

2015 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abergavenny 1<sup>st</sup> X1 winning the Three Counties League in 1975. The club hosted an anniversary reunion evening of that successful season during which it was also runners up in the Monmouthshire Knockout, and the Second X1 won the Gwent Premier League.

This was club's best season for more than 20 years and was an overwhelming success for both teams. The season also saw the return of Tamoor Zafar and a newcomer Andy Clarke. Gavin Heritage started the season as captain but Geraint Leach took over during the summer.

2016 saw the inaugural season of the South East Wales Cricket League (SEWCL), Wales' newest and largest cricket league. Its formation was the result of the merger of the two senior cricket leagues in south-east Wales: the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Cricket League, and the Welsh Club Cricket Conference.

The two leagues decided they would be stronger working as a united organisation, providing a more consistent approach in terms of improving playing standards, club progression, child welfare, grounds and facilities, discipline, and more -all of which was geared towards improving the experience for the player and the spectator on a Saturday afternoon at their local cricket club.

Geraint Leach retained the captaincy but sadly Abergavenny didn't perform well enough to continue in the new [SEWCL] Division One and found themselves second bottom and thus relegated to Division Two.

Geraint, an ECB Performance Coach, Abergavenny CC Head Coach, Community Cricket Coach for Cricket Wales & Gwent U12 &U13 Regional Coach. Geraint was on occasions grateful for the input of Glamorgan Legend Michael Powell who has attended and offered advice and coaching to the players, which has been of tremendous value.



There was sad news of the passing of Ken Williams. Ken came to Abergavenny Cricket Club as a player in 1968, He captained the First X1 in 1972 and 1973, skippering the Abergavenny First X1 in both Garfield Sobers and David Brown Benefit matches. He served on the Committee for years and was Chairman in 1996 and 1997. For many years he was Chairman of the Ground Committee. His services to the Club were honoured with a Life membership.

2017 saw Adam Harrison engaged as Club player/coach. There was also some input in pre season from Will Bragg.

Whilst Abergavenny Cricket Club are preparing for the 2017 Season, one of its greatest luminaries Mark Wallace announced his Immediate retirement from First Class Cricket. Very few precocious Sportsmen in any Field go on to fulfil that early promise as they grow older. Mark is an exception to that rule. Ever since he captained Powys Under 12 County Side he has continued to progress, very often playing in Older age groups. He has been synonymous with 'firsts' ever since he became the first player ever to score a century in the Final of the Welsh National Schools Under 13 Cricket Tournament. Glamorgan CCC recognised his ability early on and invited him for two winters running to specialist Nets with them In 1997 Mark was playing 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 County Championship Cricket whilst still eligible for Under 17 Competition Cricket for Glamorgan, which incidentally they won. International Honours at England Under 19 level soon followed even though he was only 17 years old and he remained involved with England from 1998-2001.

Yet another 'first' Mark became the county's youngest ever wicketkeeper in championship cricket when he made his first class debut in 1999 at the age of 17, against Somerset at Taunton in 1999, at the tender age of 17 years and 287 days.

He also topped the Glamorgan 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 averages with a highest score of 101\* and an average of 55.8

He also won the NBC Dennis Compton Award for the Most Promising Young Glamorgan Player in that same year.

In 2001 he was called into the First team whilst playing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 at Abergavenny, because Adrian Shaw was taken ill. It ended up a good game for Mark falling just one catch

short of the Colin Metson record with 8 catches. He also score 80\* which in his 7<sup>th</sup> first class match was his highest score.

He was chosen in the 'first' ever ECB National Academy intake 2001/02 spending the winter in Australia. Named Young Glamorgan Cricketer of the Year 2002. He was then invited back for a second stint at the ECB academy in 2002/03.

His Maiden First Class Century came in 2002 to be followed by 16 More Centuries in all forms of Cricket.

His career has flourished ever since establishing himself in the First X1, he was honoured with the Captaincy for 3 Seasons and awarded a Benefit Year for services to the County in 2013.

He has broken virtually every record in the book from the wicket-keeper batsman perspective, some of which may never be equalled let alone surpassed. He has been Chairman of the PCA which is a great honour and conducted himself in that role with the same level of professionalism and selflessness that he has shown for the past two decades.

Off the field Abergavenny invested in upgrading and improving the Bill

Macpherson Score Box. On the field Abergavenny 1<sup>st</sup> X1 had a really successful season and secured promotion back to Division One as League two Champions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 were relegated and the 3<sup>rd</sup> X1 finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in their League. The club were well represented in the Junior ranks as Tom Norton (U10/11) Anton Lodder, Ben Morris, Alex Holmes, Eoin Shackleton and Tom Pipe (all U13) played for the Gwent County Junior sides. The first year of the All Stars initiative providing cricket for 5-8 year olds was successful if hard work at times but gave some assurance of a 'conveyor belt' of talent. Young Morgan Bevans who represented Wales at two age levels as well as winning his Wales Minor Counties cap, also was selected for the SW Bunbury X1.

Once again there were a number of outside organisations opting to use Avenue Road throughout 2017 –An Australian touring team Melbourne Cavaliers played against the Club a game in which Will Glenn scored a magnificent century. Gwent Under 11s versus Cardiff & Vale Gwent Under 13s versus Devon. Wales Minor Counties team faced Berkshire in a three day match Gwent Under 13s played Wiltshire. Glamorgan County Cricket Club's second eleven played at Abergavenny a three day match against Worcestershire County Cricket

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Club's second eleven. The Wales Over 60s team were scheduled to play the Australia Over 60s but that was spoilt by the weather. Finally the club hosted Wales Under 17s against Northants and Gwent Under 15s played Devon .

2018 Steve Denning decided to step down as Chairman after completing 4 years in the role, one of his key legacies was the success of the junior section in no small part due to good work of Colin Knight and Dawn Kinman in providing a safe haven for children and young people. A new chairman was required and Andy Timpson who had joined the club in 1994 stepped up to the plate. One of his first challenges was the resignation of the Chair of Cricket, 3<sup>rd</sup> X1 Captain and Fixture Secretary on a point of principle. They later returned to the fold. Having secured promotion last year the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 competed in Division one in which they finished comfortably in Mid Table. Whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 enjoyed a much better season losing only twice and finishing runners-up in Division Two. The 3<sup>rd</sup> X1 won their Division comfortably. Tom Norton gained a place in the Glamorgan Junior Academy. David Clarke went to Australia to play grade cricket in Port Lincoln, South Australia.

2019- On September 30<sup>th</sup> 2018 just after the Season drew to an end we lost our superb President Brian Shackleton who died on his 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday. We also heard of the passing of two other ex Abergavenny CC players in Mike Farr and Robin Williams. The three key officers of the Club continued in post and a new President was elected in Dick Brown who has been associated with the Club since 1972 and has held several key roles during the 47 years he has been with the Club. Later in the Season on July 30<sup>th</sup> we heard of the death of Malcolm Nash probably the all time greatest product of Abergavenny Cricket Club. On the field the club boasted a number of promising youngsters under the captaincy of Will Glenn who himself led by example when opening the batting especially productive when Andrew Jones in his 18<sup>th</sup> season with the club, opened with him. Andrew completed his 23<sup>rd</sup> century for the Club when he scored 130 against Monmouth. The first X1 were challenging for promotion for most of the season, whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 and 3<sup>rd</sup> X1 managed to win enough fixtures to remain competitive in their respective Leagues. Three 1st X1 players passed 500 League runs with four players at 1<sup>st</sup> team level scoring centuries. One 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 player Luke Bowen completed two centuries one of which was 175 Not Out, there was also a century for Matthew Knight in the 3<sup>rd</sup> X1. Again a number of our youngsters gained representative honours at County and National level. Right at the backend of the season we heard of the

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passing of one of our Honorary Vice Presidents Neil Potheary, who some years ago regularly supported Ken Williams when he was Chairman of the Ground Committee, Neil's funeral was on Friday September 13<sup>th</sup>.

Hopefully 2020 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will bring more success and promotion back to the top tier of Welsh Cricket

Coronavirus –Covid 19 put a temporary end to club cricket and the 2020 season was not started on time and there were doubts as to whether it would start at all. Skyld Berry however writing in the Daily Telegraph reminded everyone about the merits of Avenue Road- “No, it has to be Abergavenny”. There I would like to see my first game of county cricket after our medical Armageddon. It is no longer on [Glamorgan](#)'s fixture list - whereas the out-grounds of Swansea, Colwyn Bay and Newport are - but it was a regular venue in the 1990s.

Abergavenny lies in Gwent, and Gwent combines the best of England and Wales: it does not have England's density of population, and pollution, or Wales's grim terraces and collieries where men were made to be moles. A Roman settlement, for its iron, it remains a market town, and if we are taking the train from Cardiff - which trundles on to Hereford, Leominster and Ludlow - it is not too long a walk from Abergavenny station to the prosaically named ground at Avenue Road.

Anything but prosaic are the surrounding sylvan hills: the Sugar Loaf, Great and Little Skirrid, and the Bloreng, all pushing 2000 feet, with the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons beckoning beyond. If I am not covering the game, only watching, I shall walk up the Sugar Loaf at lunchtime. If the connectivity is any good, I will play the *Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams on the way up, or if the sky is azure and the euphoria extreme - as it surely will be in these circumstances - then his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Is it the clarity of the unpolluted light, or the greenness of the trees after so much winter rain, or the fact that man has not exploited nature ruthlessly here? In the valley below, on their bucolic and oddly shaped ground, the cricketers in white do not detract from this landscape and sense of well-being; they add to it, being the community at play.

Its odd shape spelt the ground's end as a Glamorgan venue, when six-hitting became too easy, and dangerous. At one point, the boundary intrudes until you are standing almost at

backward point. Why didn't MCC act 30 years earlier to curb the thickness of bats?  
Professional cricket would fit into more out-grounds if their cricket committee had done their duty a generation ago.

In 1995 Andrew Symonds - the body-building blaster who went on to play for Australia - hit 254 off 205 balls for Gloucestershire at Abergavenny with 16 sixes, which set a world record. Again six-hitting was too easy when Graeme Hick hit 252, before Glamorgan reached 493 for six in their second innings, which was insufficient to win.

Back in town, at the Prior Church of St Mary, we should find a moment for the finest piece of art that survives from Celtic Christianity in England and Wales - the wooden carving of the Jesse Tree and its astonishing face. Abergavenny was too remote, at the head of a valley, for this to be destroyed in the Reformation”

Talking about Dannie Apse referring to a six by ‘Sloger Smart; Skyld concluded- The ball soars over the River Taff that flows alongside Sophis Gardens, upstream towards the Caerphilly Mountains. Perhaps it came to rest in Abergavenny, near the Sugar Loaf, except those green hills are now locked down, so nobody could fetch the ball back.