

## **The modest hero**

It must have been during our last days at Southend – an August day, sunny and pleasant to watch or play cricket. Marine Cricket Club, which I had the honour to captain, were playing at home, i.e. at Belfairs where some six games could take place at the same time. Wives and girlfriends of the players sat in their normal places – in deck chairs along the edge of the boundary line – and engaged in their normal task of knitting – and periodically sorting out their children who were playing with bats and balls behind the line of ladies. The sort of interruption that was common was when a child was half pole axed by the swinging bat of an older child. (Our Peter was one of those regular victims – and John the villain of the piece. Mind you, Peter only once had to be carted off to the hospital where he was already well-known to the Accident and Emergency staff because he was somewhat accident-prone.)

However I must not stray from the point. We had a match which pride demanded we should win – and I was the man upon whom much depended. Batting at my usual number 9 I found myself with only 10 minutes in which to accumulate a respectable score for my team. So I set about the bowling and whacked 45 runs before being dismissed with the last ball of our innings. My fellow tail-ender and I left the field to some polite applause from the embittered opposition and a few mighty cheers from my team mates. The ladies in their deckchairs watched impassively (those who were still awake) but I knew my Dorothy would have appreciated the finer points of my innings and would give me a hero's welcome.

I stood in front of her waiting for her acclaim. She noticed me standing before her, pads on, batting gloves on, bat in hand and said "Hello dear, are you in next?".