

The Stroller



'These mountains weren't here last year!' Alastair Macaulay reviews Peter's driving on the Continent *p.99*

STROLLON, PETER

The life and heart of the Fleet Street Strollers for 43 years

WAY back when, the *Evening News* played the *Evening Standard* - and Simon Brodbeck lined up against Peter Patston. Since then there have been 43 summers of Strolling.

Peter has been the life, the spark and the heart of it all since the first recorded Strollers team took the field against West India and Millwall Docks at Sidcup on 25 April, 1976. In those far-off days of hot metal and long Cheshire Cheese lunches Peter played the leading role and went on to be an ever-present - along with Maggie - on every roistering Strollers tour.

But it is not just a story of 641 games, 751 wickets and 3,901 runs. The figures and the stats (lovingly created by Maggie) are not half of the story, for it was Peter's Patstonness that made him the heartbeat of the club - a sharp wit to keep the changing room on its toes and a ringmaster of the après-match proceedings. He would laconically chair the inquest into yet another defeat and be first to the bar to lead the evening's entertainment with a bottle of Merlot, a song and an incisive comment.

Relentless enthusiasm, a kindly heart, good humour and a love for cricket have always been more important than winning for the Strollers - and Peter embodied those principles we founded the club on all those years ago. After a lifetime's spell from the top end, take a rest Peter - and thanks for the company, the laughter and the friendship.

Simon Brodbeck



A 'particularly generous bowler' writes: *Peter Patston* in his own words

I AM a particularly generous bowler and over the years have given opposition batsmen nigh on 14,000 runs. Maggie has uncomplainingly recorded practically every one.

It's a comforting thought that as I approach the twilight of my cricket career I still play in the team we set up nearly 40 years ago alongside the bright younger things that will keep it strolling on.

As they used to say in the team song (to the tune of *The Laughing Policeman*): "He really only keeps his place, 'cos his missus keeps the book!"

From *Gentlemen, Gypsies and Jesters: The Wonderful World of Wandering Cricket*

Mr Tambourine Man

And take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind
Down the foggy ruins of time
Far past the frozen leaves
The haunted frightened trees
Out to the windy beach
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow
Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky: With one hand waving free
Silhouetted by the sea
Circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate
Driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today
until tomorrow.
Hey! Mr Tambourine man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey! Mr Tambourine man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come following you.

Maggie's corner

644 Matches, 1976-2018	3,383.5 Overs
455 Innings	751 Wickets
3,901 Runs	19.73 Bowling average
10.19 Batting average	20 Five-fors
7 Half-centuries	7-18 Best figures, vs Fullerian All Stars on 22 August 1987
84* Highest score, vs Blackfordby on 2 June 1990	166 Catches

From Stanton-by-Dale to Saumur, the bard of Bath led us on a merry dance

Permed prince



Peter celebrates winning the 'most like a Bee Gee' award for 1978

Too late? There's no such thing when on tour

Peter, and the Patstons (large and small), have been part of my life - not just my cricket life - since 1990. He and Maggie were always part of what made the Strollers warm and welcoming and fun... and, let's be honest, occasionally dangerous. The thought of *Running Bear* is generally

enough to have me start awake out of a sound sleep. The nightmare will be linked to drinking by the Loire in Saumur, when there was no such thing as "too late" or "we have to play tomorrow". The 60th birthday celebrations in Bath were also a highlight. You will be missed, my friend.
Evan Samuel

Vintage



Another bar regrets consenting to a Strollers' lock-in

Partners in crime



Peter is shocked to see Maggie without her legendary coloured pencils

40 years on Wine, food, laughter - and family

Think of Peter and words spring to mind immediately: wine, food, laughter, family, hospitality, theatre, Dylan, friendship. None of the above was known when first meeting Peter on the cricket field, 40 or more years ago. Then, Peter, sporting a bouffant perm, bowled strict medium pace and caught with big hands

at first slip. Over the years the perm went, and off-breaks replaced the medium pace. Meanwhile the friendship with Peter and Maggie grew stronger: weekend breaks, Bath rugby, holidays and, of course, Strollers' tours. Tricia and I were privileged to have had Peter in our lives. We will miss him greatly.
Brian Taylor

Champagne super over



Peter and Sir Ivor celebrate yet another landmark

Master seducer Booze, little sleep and tour flu: Charles the night manager of Ashby-de-la-Zouch never stood a chance

When I joined the Strollers in 2003 Peter's best playing days were behind him. He had some impressive statistics, especially for bowling but I never really saw him do much more than the Bothamesque, which is to take wickets with ordinary deliveries. I suppose I pigeon-holed him as excellent drinking company, and

by that I mean exceptional, in spades, with the kind of anarchic single-mindedness that would keep Charles the night manager at The Royal in Ashby pouring drinks until gone 5 for two nights in a row. Year on year. And as for Saumur, Grasse, Cern? Guaranteed late booze, little sleep and tour flu. Breakfast? Never. What did we talk about? Everything and nothing. Bob

Dylan definitely. And then I remember bowling the first over at Windsor Great Park in 2011(?). I took the outside edge and

watched the ball head, maddeningly, for the vacant third slip area. But what's this? First and only slip throwing himself headlong makes a magnificent one-handed grab. Take a bow Peter Patston. Cricketer. I will miss you.
Tom Wood

Private Eyes Storyteller who had us in tears

One evening in Bath there was a crowd around the dining table listening to Peter reading a short *Private Eye* article about an asparamancer from Evesham.

The ludicrous subject tickled Peter as he kept dissolving into laughter. This was infectious and soon the whole table was in tears and the short article ended up taking

half an hour to complete. This was just one example of the fun, warm hospitality I have been lucky enough to share with Peter and Maggie.
Jim Hodgson

We band of brothers French campaign

French tours were magnificent, with Peter at the centre of festivities. Singing *Running Bear* on the banks of the Loire was a highlight, as was

him performing the St Crispin's Day speech on a table in St Vallier-de-Thy. The only response to the latter was Ka Mate, the Ngati-Toa Rangatira haka. The best

hangover cure? Travelling to the ground in the Previa with Bob Dylan: "one more cup of coffee before I go... to the valley belowwww..."
Hamish Macdougall