

It was the summer of 1967 and both the cricket and tennis seasons were in full swing. Mike Kendrick continued to score the runs which would see him score a total 22,462 before he eventually decided to put his bat into his kit bag for the very last time, and no Old Wilsonian, so far, has scored more

Anne Kendrick, who had dominated the ladies singles since joining the Club - marrying Mike had slowed her down a bit but she was still the queen of the courts - looked thoughtful as the news of her pregnancy became common knowledge.

“You won’t be playing much tennis this year, then”, observed another member of the tennis club, perhaps thinking at the back of her mind that this was perhaps the year when she could win the ladies singles title herself

“No”, replied Anne, with that nervous laugh of hers that we all know and love

Wind forward five months or so and Anne gave birth to a son, and we all shared in the joy of the new young parents and the next edition of the OW Chronicle, the predecessor of ‘NOW’ magazine, mused on the thought of Mike pushing a pram around the boundary during the cricket season

Their son, of course, was Neil, and we congratulate him on becoming our President and wish him well during his two year term of office. He becomes the third son of a former OW President to hold this office, following that of Alex and Doug Forbes, and whilst it is such a shame that Mike is not in the best of health at the moment, there is no doubt that he is immensely proud of his son and heir

Incidentally I can still remember - and picture it as I type this article - the immense look of pride on Mike’s own face as he accepted the position of our President himself at the AGM all those years ago. and it was such a shame that he was not able to share Neil’s similar moment last December, and our new President’s emotional words after his election were undoubtedly primarily due to his thoughts of his father

Anne has continued to be a stalwart of the Club and with the arrival a few years later of Maria, a sister for Neil, the family was complete and we owe all four of them a great debt of gratitude

Neil’s early life could perhaps have been better - the description of him by Alex Forbes as “a real live toy to play with ” is a bit disturbing, particularly as Alex himself could not have been more than about five at the time and certainly not responsible enough to look after a baby, with three year old Doug also in toe. Still, they all seemed to have survived and all three went on to become our President

Neil acquired a good telephone manner at an early age and in 1972, when he was under five, I had occasion to ‘phone the Kendrick residence only for him to answer.

On asking to speak to his Dad he relayed the message by saying

“I think it’s the one who broke his leg”, which I had done towards the end of the preceding football season

Mike was not playing on that day - probably serving one of his suspensions - but was watching the game and was not immediately sympathetic to my injury

“It didn’t make much noise; I’ve heard a lot louder”, was his initial response

Some football team selection meetings were held at Mike and Anne’s house in those days and we were always requested to “keep the noise down” as Neil and Maria, who would both have been very young at the time, were sleeping upstairs

It was perhaps inevitable that Neil would go to Wilson’s and that he would inherit Mike and Anne’s athletic prowess and, as we now all know, he played county cricket for both Surrey and Glamorgan

I remember scoring a Sunday game away at, I think, Nat West Bank when Neil, who was about 13 at the time, impressed the opposition with his bowling

“One of the best for his age”, an opponent confided

A number of years later, when he was playing for Surrey, he came to the Club on a Sunday afternoon to watch a game only to discover that we were one short and was persuaded by the skipper at the time to don his whites

“I’ll bowl but not bat, so put me down the order”, Neil requested, and came in at number 9 only to plant the first ball he received straight down square-leg’s throat

The bowler involved did not know Neil’s identity at the time but, on discovering that he was a County player during the tea interval, gloried in his achievement. However Neil had the last laugh and took five or six wickets, for very little, to win us the game

Neil also upset Downham & Bellingham by playing for us in the North Kent League days and they wrote a letter of complaint at our use of a ‘professional’ and I had to go in front of their committee to defend him, arguing that he had more right to play for us than many others in the side as he was actually an Old Wilsonian

I also remember having a conversation with Mike at a Football Club Dinner in which he claimed “I was a much better footballer than Neil” and, after a short pause added “But he was/is a better cricketer”

And he was undoubtedly right – not that Neil was a bad footballer and spent most of his OW career in the 1<sup>st</sup> XI, including a spell as skipper – but it was on the cricket field that he really shone

As well as his county career he also played for England under 19 in the same side as Mike Atherton who, allegedly, had the initials FEC scrawled on his kit bag. It was claimed that these stood for ‘Future England Captain’, but the truth was far earthier, as the ‘e’ stood for ‘educated’ and the rest of the quote cannot be posted on a family friendly website

And then there was the occasion when, at a Test match at the Oval, one of the England team had to leave the field and was replaced by “one of the Surrey youngsters,” as the commentator put it, and Neil fielded with energy and enthusiasm to the extent that he collided with one of the advertising boards and, for a period of time after, this clip was used as part of the introduction to the nightly ‘Today at the Test’ highlights programme

Last season Neil kindly got together a side of ‘Surrey legends’, including himself, to play in our cricket week and we hope they will return again this year. Neil plays little or no cricket nowadays but there is no doubt that he could offer a lot to the OWCC and he only has to give me the nod and I will register him to do so

Congratulations Neil on becoming our President, an honour that is thoroughly deserved, and I look forward to working with you over the next two years – and beyond – and seeing you play cricket for the OWs again!