

STUART RAYNER



# Five Trophies

and a  
Funeral



The Building and Rebuilding of  
**Durham County Cricket Club**



FOREWORD BY PAUL COLLINGWOOD

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## 1.

# Upgrading to First Class

LOCAL sports writers Jeff Brown and Ian Murtagh were at Feethams to cover football on 4 March 1989, but Darlington's overdue first home win of the season was not at the front of either's mind. The previous day, Durham County Cricket Club's committee decided to write to the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB) requesting a meeting to discuss a possible application for first-class status.

'It was something you knew was bubbling under the surface,' recalls Brown, a sports writer on *The Journal* since 1986. 'It was the biggest story I ever broke but it was one I did jointly with Ian Murtagh, who was with the *Northern Echo*. We'd been asked to keep it quiet until the whole bid was ready. We were covering a Darlington football match and there was a freelancer from *The Independent* there who said, "What's this about Durham bidding to become a first-class club?" We both feigned ignorance and then said to each other, "We've got to run this story because it's going to get out and if we're scooped on our own doorstep with a big story like this it won't look good," so we both broke it the following Monday.'

One of English cricket's most remarkable tales was about to unfold and the way Durham joined the first-class ranks shaped their successes and failures for more than a quarter of a century.

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The impetus came from neighbouring Northumberland, when Newcastle City Council approached cricket-loving brothers Roy and Ian Caller to ask if they could organise a match as part of celebrations for the city's 900th anniversary. Their company, Callers Pegasus Travel, sponsored a sold-out Minor Counties versus the West Indies game in 1980 at Jesmond – a suburb of Newcastle – and from it came the 1981 Callers Pegasus Festival: back-to-back, one-day games between a combined Northumberland and Durham side and an International XI. The 6 August match was abandoned due to rain, but the following day saw a home win. The festival became an annual event, running until 1990 and attracting players of the calibre of Geoffrey Boycott, Mike Gatting, Graham Gooch, David Gower, Nasser Hussain, Allan Border, Dennis Lillee, Steve Waugh, Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Imran Khan, Mike Procter, Clive Rice, Michael Holding, Clive Lloyd, Malcolm Marshall, Courtney Walsh, Dean Jones and Ian Botham.

Andy Fothergill kept wicket for Northumberland/Durham in 1983 and 1984. 'It was massive for north-east cricket because you'd have the best players in the world there,' he says. 'I played against Barry Richards and Graeme Pollock, which for a 21, 22-year-old was amazing. They were past their best by a long way but it was a fantastic experience. We stopped in a hotel the night before and you mingled with those people. It was a bit of a piss-up but you tried to keep yourself right because you wanted to experience the whole thing the next day.'

The festivals raised more than £170,000 for cricket, £65,000 of which went to Durham – 'absolutely critical to our existence', says Tom Moffat, who became treasurer in 1985 – and they showed their gratitude by making Ian Caller president in 1985. Northumberland did likewise with Roy in 1988.

Norman Graham, the Hexham-born former Kent bowler who was Northumberland's commercial manager, suggested Northumberland and Durham jointly bid for first-class status and move from amateur to professional county cricket. Nobody had joined British cricket's

County Championship since Glamorgan in 1921, so Durham chairman Arthur Austin and Northumberland secretary Ron Wood visited Lord's to take soundings. Austin had been one of Durham's finest wicketkeepers, playing in the 1936 victory over All India at Ashbrooke during the first season of a 60-game career which ran until 1954. By then he had been on the committee three years, becoming honorary secretary from 1969–75, then chairman. 'It didn't take us long to find out it was an impossible task,' he said.

'It was set up to fail because Northumberland just didn't want it but that would have been interesting because one of the problems with Durham was building a stadium,' says Bob Jackson, then Durham's joint-secretary. 'Jesmond's a very difficult parking area but there could have perhaps been some avenues there.' Moffat 'was told there was this antipathy between the two [clubs], and there were people at Northumberland you couldn't work with'.

A joint-committee set up to look into the possibility reported back in 1985: 'At least £500,000 would be needed to launch a side, and a guaranteed income of at least £300,000 per year would be required to maintain it. There is no possibility of this type of money being raised from spectator payments, and large and continuing sponsorship would be needed.' It warned 'some clubs might have to voluntarily go out of existence' to ensure grounds to play on, and there was resistance to leaving the Minor Counties Championship, the level below the first-class version. With even the climate cited as a reason, the report advised against a bid but said the counties would not stand in anyone else's way.

Some refused to take no for an answer. Mattie Roseberry and Mike Weston were Durham businessmen whose sons had been travelling to Lord's from the age of 12 for coaching. As well as captaining England's rugby union team and chairing its selection panel, leg-spinner Weston made 30 appearances for Durham from 1956–73. Roseberry's son Michael made his Minor Counties Championship debut for Durham in the 1984 final against Cheshire aged 17 but joined Middlesex the following year. Brown explains: 'Mattie Roseberry and Mike Weston

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said, “This is crazy, we should be providing first-class cricket up here for young lads to not have to leave the area.” At Marylebone Cricket Club head coach Don Wilson’s suggestion, they built an indoor cricket school, the McEwans Centre, at Rainton Bridge near Houghton-le-Spring. It opened in 1986 with Wilson’s former Yorkshire and England team-mate John Hampshire as head coach. Roseberry and Weston began floating the idea of Durham going first class alone.

Durham County Cricket Club had been formed at Durham City’s Three Tuns Hotel on 23 May 1882, beating Northumberland by four wickets less than three weeks later. In 1895 they became founder members of the Minor Counties Cricket Association (MCCA), the body they would leave if Roseberry and Weston’s dream came true. They won its Championship that year, jointly with Norfolk, and eight more times, equalling Buckinghamshire’s record. Durham went unbeaten in 65 Championship games from August 1975 to August 1982 and in 1973 became the first minor county to defeat a first-class team, beating Yorkshire by five wickets at Harrogate in the Gillette Cup. Twelve years later they also became the first to do it twice, passing Derbyshire’s 171 all out with seven wickets and 4.2 overs to spare in the 60-over NatWest Trophy at Derby.

‘I went down not expecting to play but Richard Mercer had a back injury,’ says Fothergill. ‘Because Darlington was my club and [Durham skipper] Neil Riddell was captain there, for things like that I would go down and just be 12th man because I just loved being around it. When we were fielding we felt like a first-class side, but when Michael Holding was charging in he hit David Jackson on the helmet and David came off. When he went back on, he was out first ball. Holding slowed down after that and started to pitch the ball up. If he’d have bowled to his full potential we wouldn’t have got anywhere near it. I was due to be the next-but-one in, but I was thinking, “Oh my God, if I have to bat, I’m going to be killed!” Merce was fit for the game against Kent in the next round so they picked their strongest side, which was fine. They got absolutely hammered [by 79 runs].’

Fothergill had caught Derbyshire's eye and was invited to a trial second-team game against Lancashire, but his attitude showed why Roseberry and Weston were so determined to establish a first-class north-east side. 'I was almost press-ganged into going by Neil Riddell, who was my mentor,' he admits. 'I didn't really want to but he told me to go down for the experience. I'd borrowed Neil's bat, and stuff from everybody else, but I didn't have a helmet. Playing at Darlington on such a slow, low wicket, I didn't need one. John Stanworth, the Lancashire captain, saw me walking out to bat and knew I was a trialist. He asked me, "What are you doing? Where's your helmet?" When I said I didn't have one, he stopped the game and lent me his, which was amazing. I didn't keep in the second innings because Derbyshire's first-team wicketkeeper [Bernard Maher] had broken a finger, so Chris Marples wanted a game. I fielded second slip and gully, and got two catches off Devon Malcolm, which was another surreal experience not having gloves on.'

Fothergill was not bothered when the trial came to nothing. 'I was playing football for Bishop Auckland, cricket for Durham as a minor county, and I had a decent job, so life was quite nice,' he explains. 'With Bishop Auckland I was playing to a good standard, and FA Cup football. I loved that time. When Durham went first class it was my home county, all your mates were playing – you knew everybody, you knew the area and it was a lot more comfortable. I knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity so I was really pleased to grasp it. The money wasn't any good but it wasn't for the money.'

Burnopfield had produced Colin Milburn, the explosive 18-stone batsman whose Test career was cut short when he lost his left eye in a 1969 car crash, as well as Glamorgan off-spinner Jim McConnon, capped twice by England in 1954. Stockton's Richard Spooner, Norton's David Townsend and Eaglescliffe's Cecil Parkin also wore the Three Lions, but 19th-century England cricket and rugby union captain Andrew Stoddart, Peter Willey and Bob Willis were the only Durham-born players with more than ten caps – and claiming Willis was a stretch. He lived there for six weeks before his dad left the



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*Sunderland Echo* and moved to Manchester. Considering the Durham Cricket Association Arthur Austin chaired and Bob Jackson had been secretary of since it was revived in 1970 had 114 affiliated clubs – twice as many as Northamptonshire or Leicestershire – there was a lot of untapped talent.

In the autumn of 1988, Roseberry spoke to committee member Riddell – Durham’s captain since 1980 – about his idea. The left-hander from Staindrop made his debut in 1972, a week after turning 15, and his List A (professional-level one-day) debut at Harrogate in 1973, taking the team to within 15 runs of their historic victory. When he retired in 1990 it was as Durham’s leading appearance- and run-maker. Riddell, who ran his family’s roofing company, saw minor-counties cricket as a platform for those who could not play full time. ‘We would be closing a door to all the good amateurs, many of whom could have played first-class cricket but were precluded from doing so because they had jobs, responsibilities, families, aspiration,’ admits Tom Moffat. ‘They couldn’t afford the time, the commitment and the money to take on a tenuous link into first-class cricket. Had I ever got the chance I would never have been able to take the risk because I was a chief colliery engineer with three children at 27, which would have been the peak of a first-class career.’ Riddell, assistant secretary Sam Stoker and president Ian Caller told Roseberry they could not support him.

His plan was to stage games at Sunderland’s Ashbrooke, which attracted 18,000 spectators for Durham versus Australia in 1948. Durham would use it for around 30 days a year, staging five first-class matches and three or four Sunday League games, while ‘compatible’ clubs hosted the rest. They would meet the expense, and Sunderland Cricket Club could make money from refreshments. Sunderland’s committee approved this in principle in November 1988 but, while wishing him well, leader Don Robson – also a Durham committee member – said the county council would be unable to help develop Ashbrooke. Chester-le-Street Council’s Labour Group secretary Malcolm Pratt told Roseberry it was out of their jurisdiction, and a

meeting with South Shields Council officials also drew a blank. When Roseberry, Weston and Hampshire met John Hall at his Wynyard Hall estate, the Metrocentre developer would only support them if games were played there. Lord Lambton's agent discussed Lambton Castle, but shooting rights made that unworkable. Roseberry also asked Pratt about a Chester-le-Street ground.

In October 1988, Roseberry approached Austin, who showed him the 1985 Northumberland/Durham report and suggested he speak to Moffat. 'Mattie was always trying to do it as a business thing because he was a businessman,' Moffat says. 'I said, "It cannot work like that, Mattie. You've got to go through Durham."' He was so intense, and I do give him and Jack Hampshire credit. It's sad he gets so little recognition, because he did spark us off again, but he was going down the wrong road.'

Moffat supported the principle though, and spoke up for it when he, Austin, Stoker and secretary Jack Iley met Roseberry, Weston and Hampshire at the Rainton Lodge Hotel on 15 November 1988. Durham's committee was told about the meeting on 5 December, when Austin asked Moffat to pick up Roseberry's groundwork and produce a report.

A working party of Austin, Iley, Moffat, Stoker, Robson and Jackson would liaise with Roseberry and his supporters. Iley shared Riddell's concerns about abandoning minor-counties cricket, but Moffat saw his job as convincing the doubters. Like Iley and Austin, he was a former Durham wicketkeeper, making 52 in the first of seven appearances between 1966 and 1968. Now 58, he ran his own publishing company and had formed the Durham Small Businesses Club.

'When Glamorgan went first-class in 1921, all they had to do was put a fixture list up!' he says. 'There were 28 real doubting Thomases on our committee, people including the treasurer, who said it was impossible. They didn't want to be little fish in a big pond. I've always been a real positive Jonny. As a wicketkeeper, it was my role to make things happen. When I walked on to the field with my gloves on, I

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would say to myself, “I’m the best wicketkeeper here today,” and 90-odd times out of 100 I was.

‘A lot of people were very important to it, but I always believe that without my drive and vision Durham wouldn’t have been a first-class county. Some people might think I’m being too arrogant but you cannot do what I’ve done without having an ego. When I was chairman of the business club, I had a chief exec who used to say, “My biggest problem with you is picking up your ideas and putting them into practice because you’re such an ideas man they cannot always be right.” I said, “Yeah, but a lot of them are.” I’d done so many outlandish things that worked. I believed there was no reason why we couldn’t [go first-class].’

Two days after Brown and Murtagh broke their story, Moffat posted a letter to TCCB secretary Alan Smith asking for ‘an early indication of your positive support for an application – provided we meet the criteria necessary.’ Smith replied: ‘I could not give a direct answer.’

Moffat’s report, presented to Durham’s committee at the McEwans Centre on 21 March 1989, looked at the 1987 balance sheets of non-Test-match counties Derbyshire, Glamorgan and Somerset – all of whom made losses – with expenditure ranging from the former’s £456,187 to the latter’s £637,454. Durham were one of the wealthiest minor counties with more than £28,000 in the bank in late 1988, but Moffat reckoned running a first-class county would cost £750,000 annually. Durham would receive around £200,000 a year from the TCCB and anticipated taking £50,000 at the gate, leaving £500,000 to be raised for each of the first three years, plus the cost of a new ground, which would become self-financing. Floating as a public limited company was suggested.

An application should include cricket structures at school, under-13, under-15, under-19, under-25, second XI and minor counties levels, as Moffat over-optimistically advocated minor counties and first-class teams in parallel. Durham had no offices, ground, paid staff or full-time professional players, and a secretary, financial director and commercial director were essential. There were

formidable hurdles, but Moffat wrote, 'we owe it to the people of the north east to try our very best to do this'. The meeting was so secretive that copies of his report were collected in afterwards.

The ambitious plans chimed with the zeitgeist of north-east sport. The 1990s would see Sunderland and Middlesbrough build new football stadia, which had to be quickly extended to 48,000 and 35,000 all-seater capacities respectively to meet demand. Even with Newcastle United's St James' Park expanding towards a capacity of 52,000 by the end of the millennium, it became difficult to get a seat to watch the region's star-studded Premier League teams. Newcastle and the now Sir John Hall started the boom by appointing former England captain Kevin Keegan as manager in 1992 and in 1996 made Alan Shearer world football's most expensive player. Hall's ambitions for the Magpies were not limited to football. He bought Durham Wasps ice hockey side and Newcastle Comets basketball team to join a continental-style sporting club. Newcastle Gosforth were acquired too and became the Falcons, winning rugby union's Premiership under ex-England fly-half Rob Andrew in 1998.

That can-do attitude prevailed at Durham's committee meeting, Riddell having been won over, if not Iley. The day after Moffat presented his report, Durham produced a press release revealing the committee had agreed to request a meeting with the TCCB and set up a feasibility study to examine when they could expect to join first-class cricket, the cost and support available, and to look at potential sites for a 'super stadium'. 'The sad part has been the demise of Northumberland,' Jackson reflects. 'It would have been better if they'd got on board, but once they decided it wasn't to be it just made us more enthusiastic.' Moffat, Robson and Ian Caller formed a working party to operate on the board's behalf, reporting back when necessary. 'We had carte blanche but there were tensions with the board,' admits Moffat. Durham asked Smith if the TCCB could set up their own to assist them.

'The way TCCB board meetings worked back then was that the executive committee would meet in the morning, the rest of us would

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join in the afternoon, we'd have dinner in the evening and the rest of the meeting would take place the next morning,' explains then-Derbyshire chairman Chris Middleton. 'I went to the dinner at the MCC banqueting suite, and at about half 12 or one o'clock I came out to catch a taxi back to my hotel. On the way out, AC Smith said there had been a request from Durham to become a first-class county. That was fairly amazing news.

'I couldn't quite work out why he was telling me this at that time of night, and then he told me they were forming a working party, so I said I thought that was a good idea. Then he asked me to chair it, which fairly floored me! AC told me he thought I was the ideal man for the job – he was very good at using the old oil. He said he couldn't talk to me about it there and then, and we'd speak tomorrow. So the next day we all gathered in the Long Room at Lord's before the meeting. I went up to Alan and said I had a hazy recollection that he'd told me Durham were applying for first-class status and that he'd asked me to chair a working party. He said that was right – and I'd agreed. I was pretty sure I hadn't, but that was how AC did things!

'He said I'd better have [Lancashire chairman] Bob Bennett on the committee because that was who Don Robson had gone to initially, and I realised it was Bob who'd dropped me in it. [TCCB assistant secretary] Tony Brown was the secretary and he was very useful. I wanted someone young and fairly clued-up so I suggested [Northamptonshire chief executive] Steve Coverdale. It was important to get the southern counties on board because some of them probably weren't too precise about where Durham was! I thought you can't get much further south than Kent so I asked [chief executive] Jim Woodhouse and he said it sounded very interesting. There was also [TCCB finance officer] Cliff Baker. The first meeting was at Old Trafford [in September 1989] because Derbyshire were playing [against Lancashire] and Bob Bennett would be there. Over the next year and a half we had various meetings around the country and we really couldn't see anything against it.'

The working party's brief was to make a recommendation to the TCCB but, like Moffat, they were not coming at it from a neutral perspective. 'I think it's fair to say Chris's attitude was, "We're going to get these guys in," although he never said it to me in so many words,' Coverdale concedes. 'He liked rubbing people up the wrong way, so when some of the southern counties objected it probably made him more determined. The Callers entertained us wonderfully at a couple of lovely stays at Linden Hall [which they owned]. If we'd been put up in a pokey hotel we may not have been so inclined to support them. We were probably not as totally objective from the very start as we perhaps could have been.

'All sorts of promises were made in terms of sponsors and so on. We were led to believe quite fervently that the support had already been granted. There was a feeling the playing strength of the squad was such that the team would be fairly competitive from the start. There was a lot of naivety, a starry-eyed innocence. They didn't realise how big an exercise it was to run a first-class county. We did talk in detail about what was involved in setting up and staging matches and the expectations of various stakeholders and asked if they were sure about the revenue streams. They talked about how, within 90 minutes of Chester-le-Street, they had I think it was six million people to draw on. We wondered how strong the support base really was.'

Naïve is a word Moffat often uses. 'They had no practical experience,' reasons Middleton, 'and we were there partly to try and guide them. We pulled people in from other bits of the game or directed them to people they needed to talk to. They were naïve, but I can't imagine a situation where they would not be. They thought they could do it and they could. We couldn't look 25 years into the future and they couldn't either.'

In Robson, Durham had a dynamic and determined force. In 1973, aged 39, he became Durham County Council's youngest leader. A former Doncaster Rovers and Gateshead footballer, cricket was his big passion and he was chairman of Greenside Cricket Club, the Tyneside Senior League (TSL), and the National Cricket Association,

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in charge of the recreational game. ‘This was Don Robson’s crusade and it would wither without him,’ insists Coverdale. ‘He knew everybody and opened every door. He was a huge political animal and people didn’t want to let him down because they knew that as well as being able to open doors for them he could also close them. He was an amazing, amazing man and the power he wielded in County Durham was remarkable.’

Jackson says: ‘The working party of Robson, Caller and Moffat did a bloody fantastic job and, when the reports were coming back, it just inspired you to be part of it. Don could be brusque and there was always the element of who thought of it first, but I looked forward to their report each time when it was very delicate awaiting their decision. It couldn’t have happened without Don – his drive, his enthusiasm, his knowledge and his connections.’

Jackson had first-hand experience of Robson’s arm-twisting when he stayed on as secretary of the North West Durham League after his club Lintz joined the TSL. Robson wanted Jackson as its secretary. ‘I said no at first,’ smiles Jackson, ‘then the next day there was a sentence in the [*Newcastle Evening*] *Chronicle*’s local cricket section saying Bob Jackson was expected to become the secretary of the TSL. That’s how he worked.’

Moffat says: ‘There were times when we had every department in County Hall working for us. Having said that, [future cricket club director] Ken Frankish was the director of economic development at Durham County Council then, and he always said the money put into developing first-class cricket in Durham was the most productive money they’d ever used.’

Told by Smith they ‘would be entirely free to decide whether to concentrate your efforts on a purpose-built headquarters ground or whether you would “wander!” around the county’, Durham were convinced that to be financially viable they needed their own home and aimed to have it built by their second or third first-class season. ‘We were very, very lucky,’ Robson told me in 2012. ‘We were talking about the university ground in Durham. Durham City planners did

not want it there because it was a built-up area and a conservation area, which was fair enough. Newton Aycliffe offered us a site near the Yorkshire border but we wanted somewhere more central in the county. We were offered a site in Houghton-le-Spring for £1. When we got there the contamination was incredible. It would have taken us three or four years to level it and build the ground.

‘Then we were approached by a farmer in Chester-le-Street who said he wanted to stop his lease because it was too wet for him. Whoever is up there was looking after us. We had a huge piece of land and we could feed into it and protect the castle. I was quite convinced [nearby] Lumley Castle would be the focal point.’ Its location just off the A1(M) was a riposte to those complaining about Durham’s remoteness.

On their first visit, the TCCB working party toured the various club grounds Durham hoped to play on initially. They returned in November 1990. ‘After watching Sunderland draw with Manchester City, we were shown around various possible venues for the headquarters,’ Coverdale recalls. ‘We had a long walk by the side of the River Wear in Chester-le-Street. We’d been to Lumley Castle on the first trip and seen the view and got the history. It was absolutely freezing and grey and it took an eternity to walk the two and a half/ three miles. I don’t think any of us had the vision of what it would become – certainly I didn’t. It was just a vast, bleak expanse. By the time we had walked around you were frozen to every crevice of your body!’

Coverdale was not the only one struggling to get his head around Durham’s plans. ‘The only thing on this big open field was the caravan they were working out of,’ Middleton explains. ‘We said we thought it could be a decent county ground and they said, “Oh no, we want a Test match.” That was the first time I’d heard that and it came as quite a shock. We were sceptical.’

It is an important statement. When the Riverside became a financial millstone it was widely reported the TCCB insisted on an international-standard ground as a condition of first-class status, but



they only asked for a 'showpiece stadium'. 'We weren't really told we had to build an international stadium but we had to build a quality stadium,' Moffat confirms. 'Our intention – Don, Ian Caller and I – was to build the best stadium we could. There were things we did which were obviously designed to welcome top-class games over and above county games. All we had done lent itself to the idea [of hosting Tests].' Jackson says: 'As far as I was concerned, a "showpiece stadium" meant a top, top ground. What I had in mind was a ground to seat 14,000 or 15,000.'

David Harker, who became financial controller in 1991, admits: 'There was a view at the time that the criteria the TCCB had set in terms of money in the bank and developing a "showpiece stadium" was done to dissuade Durham almost, but the guys involved took that challenge on. If they took that as something over and above what was intended, no one really appreciated the longer-term implications. With the benefit of hindsight, was it overly ambitious? I'm loath to criticise anyone with ambition, particularly in this part of the world, because they were certainly honourably motivated.' Durham's initial plan, which included 100 executive homes, a hotel, business park, all-weather nursery ground, football pitches and parking for 3,000 cars, plus a 10,000-seater ground, was approved the day before the TCCB working party's first meeting. It would be the first purpose-built cricket stadium since World War Two.

The 107-acre site was council-owned and, according to the county's structure plan, not supposed to be developed. It was home to rare fauna and flora, and nature-lover Stan Hornsby told the *Northern Echo* 44 species of bird could be lost. Durham had the county and district councils – with Robson staying out of negotiations – battling for them, arguing this was a project of regional significance. The business park was dropped and a conservation area and river walkway incorporated.

Retired civil servant John Minto, who lived opposite Moffat in Chester-le-Street, went to a public meeting to support the plan but, after hearing it, ended up becoming chairman of 'Save Our Riverside'.

They enlisted David Bellamy and gathered 18,000 signatures on a petition, with claims some signed ten times. There was a counter-petition too. 'I had to take it around the school,' Paul Collingwood recalls. 'Mrs Hodges, my French teacher, wouldn't sign it because she walked her dogs around the park. I was really hurt!'

It was an emotive issue, as shown by the June 1990 resignation of Labour councillor Maureen Pattison, yet when the plans went on display at Chester-le-Street's civic centre, the *Sunderland Echo* reported fewer than 600 people saw them and only 206 commented – 57 for, 116 against. 'Malcolm Pratt [chairman of Chester-le-Street District Council's environment and parks committee] had the courage, with his chief exec, to deal with his objectors, and one of the reasons he became president [of the club in 2002] was because of the work he did for us,' Moffat explains. Environment secretary Michael Heseltine decided a public enquiry was unnecessary.

When Glamorgan turned first class, Sir Sidney Byass pledged £1,000 over ten years, but Durham's application alone cost £21,216.30 – and for it to succeed the TCCB wanted them to have £1m in the bank. Whilst Price Waterhouse spent 18 months writing a 70-page business plan, Durham's working group set the ball rolling. 'I knocked on so many doors and wrote so many letters,' says Moffat. Robson told me: 'I used to go every Saturday morning to get my fruit at a shop in Ludgate. A rag-and-bone man used to go around with a wheelbarrow collecting. I was in the shop and I spoke to this fella. He said, "Are you Don Robson?" I said I was. "Are you going to bring the cricket to Chester-le-Street?" I said I hoped so. He disappeared and two minutes later he came back and gave me a ten-pound note, two fivers and some coins. Tommy Young, who owned the shop, said, "That bugger, he owes me £82.50!" It was a reaction to a vacuum.'

Brendan Foster's Nova International public relations firm was commissioned to produce a 12-minute video – narrated by Northumberland-born England batsman-turned-BBC commentator Tom Graveney and featuring Riddell – to attract sponsors. Newcastle Building Society, Co-Operative Bank and British Gas responded.

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‘I wasn’t surprised Durham were able to raise so much money so quickly because Don was one of those people who could do things, and it was very much his pet project,’ says Middleton. ‘As far as he was concerned, there was no way it was going to fail. He knew every lever to pull and every arm to twist.’ Durham raised £1,218,750 in sponsorship. ‘Our biggest problem was stopping companies giving us the bulk because we wanted it phased over a period for tax reasons,’ Moffat reveals. ‘A box [at the Riverside] for ten years was £100,000 but we didn’t want that up front.’

Nevertheless, the road was not without bumps. Told by Smith they would be unable to join until 1991 at the earliest, that was still talked of as the target in autumn 1989 – until Durham were persuaded to slow down and aim for 1992. The idea to join the 1992 Second XI Championship, then the first-team competition 12 months later, was rejected for fears the delay might deter sponsors. The day after outline plans for the Riverside were approved, in September 1989, the *Northern Echo* reported Durham had the support of ten counties but they needed a two-thirds majority from the 17 first-class counties, MCC and MCCA.

‘There was a fair degree of antipathy from a number of counties, particularly in the south,’ Coverdale acknowledges. ‘Their attitude was that Durham was nearly the North Pole and it would take a three-day expedition to get up there, as well as diluting the distribution of TCCB money. When we first started, the vibes I was picking up from my colleagues around the country was that this wasn’t a goer, we would just pay it lip service. My concern as chief executive of Northamptonshire was that Durham was a very fertile source of players for us. My sense was that it was very nice being shown around but that they did not know what was involved in running a first-class county club.’

As secretary of the Professional Cricketers’ Association, Geoff Cook felt the mood in dressing rooms change. He says: ‘A lot of people were warming to Durham over a two- or three-year period and, although there was still a lot of opposition from various quarters

through all sorts of emotions – a bit of jealousy, a bit of protecting the game as it was – it was gaining momentum and the people within Durham were becoming more and more bullish in their approach, which they had to be.’

‘One or two players understandably thought there wasn’t room for an 18th county. Even at that stage a lot of the players thought there was too much cricket, and an 18th county would just mean more. Even within Durham there was a lot of resentment from the older minor-county players who were quite rightly massively proud of their achievements and history, and slightly resented dispensing with the minor-county team; these big lads were coming in and showing off and trying to be a first-class county.’

Coverdale remembers a moment of doubt in June 1990. ‘We were at The Oval where Derbyshire were playing Surrey,’ he says. ‘We went along to see the business plan. We were told Price Waterhouse had done some quite detailed work on it and the meeting started with a bit of a presentation from them. I’m not sure why, but it came to a bit of a halt and Don and Chris had a chat, while the rest of the working party were asked if we would withdraw. While we took the opportunity to see Waqar Younis bowl at the speed of light, we speculated what was going on and our view was they were going to pull [out of the bid]. We were maybe away for an hour, an hour and a half.’

Robson died in 2016 so the only person to ask is Middleton. He has no recollection but insists: ‘If that had been the case I would have told them.’ Moffat is unequivocal: ‘There was never one degree of doubt that we would go ahead [at that stage].’

By the time Durham officials and the media gathered at Callers Pegasus’s Newcastle office to await the decision on 6 December, the doubts had gone. Austin and Robson were at Lord’s, and the phone call came at around 4pm. Durham would receive first-class status on 1 January 1992 (and be invited to all relevant TCCB meetings in 1991), provided ‘all planning permissions and financial detail with regard to your new ground is delivered unequivocally by 1 February 1991’, when a chief executive or professional secretary, plus a central head

### *Five Trophies and a Funeral*

groundsman, should be in place. Durham were to give a full progress report at the 5/6 March 1991 TCCB board meeting. Moffat wrote back to formally accept on 20 December. 'We are keener than anyone to have these three posts [Durham also wanted a director of cricket] filled as early as we can,' he wrote, but warned 1 February might be too soon to advertise, interview and install candidates.

There had been no votes against, and TCCB cricket secretary Tim Lamb said: 'One of the most exciting things about Durham's arrival on the first-class scene is it gives cricket access to 4.2 million people.' Durham, though, were already thinking bigger. Ian Caller in Newcastle echoed Robson's sentiments in London when he told the media: 'My dream now is to see a boy from Burnopfield, Blackhall or Billingham play for Durham, and then England, as Colin Milburn did.'