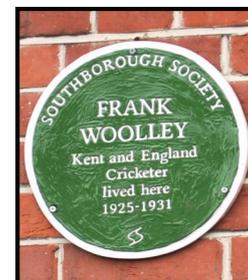


FRANK WOOLLEY - By Maxwell Macfarlane



Frank Edward Woolley was born on 27 May 1887 at Tonbridge, the youngest of four sons of Charles William Woolley, a motor engineer, and his wife Louise Lewis. Educated at Tonbridge, he learned to play cricket under coaches at a “nursery” on the Angel ground. His first season with Kent Cricket Club was in 1906, coincidentally alongside Kenneth L. Hutchings of Southborough, when they won the County Championship for the first time, a success they achieved again in 1909, 1910 and 1913. He played for Kent until 1938, aged 51.

He was a tall, slim left-hander and a powerful stroke player, full of confidence in attack and defence, a useful spin bowler and an excellent fielder. Before the First World War disturbed the lives of all, he was considered to be the best all-rounder in England.

He began his Test career in South Africa in 1909. In 1911-12 he went on the tour to Australia, which England won 4-1, during which he scored 305 not out against Tasmania, scored 781 runs at an average of 55.78 and took 17 wickets for an average of 29.58.



Woolley married Sybil Fordham from Ashford in 1915, a union which lasted nearly 50 years, and they had a son and two daughters. When War broke out, he failed his first medical (faulty eyesight and teeth) but tried again and passed for the Royal Navy. He served on HMS *King George V* and in the motor-boat section of the Royal Naval Air Service. His three brothers also survived the War, although two were badly wounded.

First class cricket re-started shortly after the War ended, though England’s results were not so good. However Woolley, after a slow start, was soon making runs again. His first class statistics make astonishing reading. He scored over 60,000 runs, including 156 centuries, took over 2,500 wickets and made 1,007 catches. He scored over 2,000 runs and took 100 wickets in four successive seasons. On eight occasions he scored a century and took ten wickets in the same match. He made more than 1,000 in each of 28 seasons, in twelve of those seasons he actually made over 2,000 runs and in 1928 his total was

3,352. In 1923 he scored 270 runs in 260 minutes for Kent against Middlesex and in the 1934 season, when he was 47, he scored ten centuries for Kent.

He played for England in 67 Test matches over 32 years (98 innings, including five centuries), was not out seven times for a total of 3,283 runs, and made 64 catches. He took 83 wickets for 2,815 runs, his best performance being 7 for 76.

On his retirement in 1938, he coached King’s College, Canterbury. After the start of the Second World War, he and his wife moved to Cliftonville, Kent, and he joined the Home Guard. Sadly, his only son, Richard, was killed in action on convoy duty in 1940. To add salt to the wound, his home was destroyed shortly afterwards by a stray bomb from a German aircraft.

His first wife died in 1962 and he married again in 1971 to an Army widow, Mary Morse (nee Wilson) of Akron, Ohio. They were living in Chester, Nova Scotia, Canada, when Woolley died on 18 October 1978, aged 91. A memorial service was held at Canterbury Cathedral.

Frank Woolley and his wife lived in Yew Tree Cottage (No. 38) Yew Tree Road, Southborough, from 1925-31.

Frank Woolley's plaque at 38 Yew Tree Road was unveiled by former Kent & England cricketer, Derek Underwood in September 2013. A crowd which included many cricketers from both Southborough & Tunbridge Wells attended.

Principal Sources:

McCooley, C. 2002. *Kent Characters – Wacky, Weird and Wonderful*.

Swanton, E.W. 2004. *Woolley, Frank Edward*. In Oxford DNB.

Who Was Who. 1971-80.



Derek Underwood, former Kent & England cricketer with Ron Scott and his daughter at the unveiling of the Frank Woolley plaque in September 2013.

Frank Woolley Quotes.

I was not depressed when they got me out. I have always taken my dismissals as part of the game.

Lots of times I was out through forcing the game.

We always had to play the game and play for the team, it is a Kent tradition.

It was never the policy of the Kent team that the pitch must be occupied all day after winning the toss.