ROBERT STEWART McLAREN (1919 - 2006)

Stewart McLaren was a wicketkeeper and life-long cricket obsessive. Born in Perth, he had only recently begun playing for Perthshire, then dominant among the Scottish counties, when war was declared. He immediately volunteered for the Black Watch, leading to a rather lively few years As a member of the BEF, he was still fighting on in retreat weeks after Dunkirk, desperate to avoid capture, being dive-bombed by Stukas, until the Royal Navy brought very welcome salvation. Later he took part in the bitter fighting following the invasion of Sicily, and returned to France on D-Day + 3, before being wounded at Caen. That episode is one of four mentions he receives in Victoria Schofield's authorised Black Watch history.

"Among those wounded in the 7th Black Watch was Captain Stewart McLaren, whose knee and leg were penetrated by shrapnel. Evacuated to Scotland, he was advised that amputation of his leg was necessary, but the doctor treating him recognised his as a well-known Perthshire cricketer and contrived to administer the relatively new medicine, penicillin, thereby saving his leg."

He made a full recovery and, after hostilities were over, he resumed playing for Perthshire, which soon led to his selection for Scotland. He played for them throughout the late 1940s, against some international touring sides - including New Zealand and South Africa - and several English counties including Yorkshire and Warwickshire. One highlight was catching Len Hutton in July 1948, and fighting a successful rearguard action with the bat to deny Yorkshire a victory. He was approached by both Somerset and Northamptonshire to join them as a professional, but decided against this.

Not many years later, he and his family moved to England, but he carried on playing club cricket past sixty. At least until his forties, the standard of his keeping remained well above normal club level, and great was the surprise of the many batsmen who found themselves stumped when Stewart stood up to even the speediest opening bowlers.