

ASHES REFLECTIONS

At the time of writing this piece Australia have just taken a 4–0 lead in the winter's Ashes series. The newspapers have analysed the reasons for England's demise and have correctly pointed to a shoal of issues, including the absence of three key personnel from the 2005 side (Marcus Trescothick, Michael Vaughan and Simon Jones), the self-inflicted wounds generated by faulty team selection, particularly the omission of Monty Panesar in the first two Tests (the wicketkeeping conundrum is much less clear cut as Chris Read's performance was below par in both departments of the game in the Champions' Trophy in India), and the almost incredulous lack of acclimatisation and match preparation before the Brisbane debacle. The most galling aspect of each defeat was that in all four games England enjoyed some periods of ascendancy, even at Brisbane.

Prior to the fourth Test at the MCG, Shane Warne's wickets were taken at a much greater cost than in the past and he once went wicketless during one whole day at Adelaide – an almost unique occurrence. The great leg-spinner is the most perceptive of cricketers and this factor must have contributed to his decision to retire from Test cricket at the end of the series. He was also strangely negative – a trait one would never associate with Shane Warne – on occasions. With a huge total to defend his decision to bowl around the wicket, with a packed leg-side field, to Kevin Pietersen at Brisbane was mystifying, even allowing for his Hampshire team mate's predilection for the leg side.

Glenn McGrath was also more expensive and, coupled with his lack of mobility in the field, it was no surprise that he announced he would follow his prolific wicket-taking partner off stage.

The absence of these very great bowlers will ostensibly give England a massive psychological boost in 2009. However, the timidity of England with both bat and ball, with the notable exception of Pietersen and Panesar, must be a cause for concern.

Alastair Cook, Ian Bell and Paul Collingwood are currently match savers, rather than match-winners, though the former is only 21 and still has time to display a more positive side to his game. Andrew Strauss suffered appalling luck with umpiring decisions but for England to prosper they must find a replacement for Trescothick. His future in both county and Test cricket must, sadly, be questionable. The decision to take him to Australia, given the medical expertise now on hand to the England side, was baffling and, in fact, showed a complete lack of knowledge in the area of mental health. England's pace attack also needs to take urgent – and honest – stock.

If England wish to compete successfully against Australia in the future they must find players of mental strength comparable to their counterparts. Kevin Pietersen's success is a triumph of positive thinking. It was also good to see Panesar's body language after Gilchrist's pyrotechnics at Perth. Unless their team mates follow their example then the Australian assertion that 2005 was a temporary aberration may well be an accurate one.

MEETINGS

10 January 2007 – Meeting

Our speaker this evening is the former Glamorgan and England all-rounder Peter Walker. His recently published autobiography, It's Not Just Cricket, (pub. Fairfield Books) reveals – as implied in the title – that he is a man of many parts and talents.

PETER MICHAEL WALKER was born in Clifton, Bristol on 17 February 1936. His family emigrated to South Africa two years later and he spent his formative years there. However, he was always a restless soul and he ran away to sea, when ostensibly taking a camping trip during the school holidays, at the age of 16. Boarding a ship with a friend at Lourenco Marques, now Maputu in Mozambique, he travelled the world for a year before pitching up to Cardiff, where he had family connections, and offered himself for a trial with Glamorgan. He was signed on after just one net session.

He made his County debut in 1956 and made such good progress that he found himself in the England team in three Tests against South Africa in 1960. He made 52 in his first innings before becoming the middle victim in probably the most infamous hat-trick in Test history, perpetrated by Geoff Griffin, who was no-balled out of the Test arena during the same match. It was, ironically, the first, and so far only, Test hat-trick at Lord's.

He then completely lost form and was even dropped by his County later in the season. He never played in Test match cricket again but recovered his form in the following season to such effect that he completed the double. He not only scored 1347 runs and took 101 wickets but also held a remarkable 73 catches, a tally only twice bettered in a season - by Wally Hammond and Micky Stewart. It remains arguably the best “treble” in the history of the game.

In 1962, as if to emphasise the startling peaks and troughs in his long career, he recorded his highest score – 152 not out – and best bowling analysis - 7 for 58 – in the same match, against Middlesex at Lord's. He also enjoyed the distinction of appearing in the last Players – Gentlemen match at Lord's during that season.

Six feet four inches tall, he was one of the greatest close fielders in cricket history. His boyhood hero was Allan Watkins, himself a fine fielder close to the wicket and he set out to emulate him. He succeeded spectacularly. First at short leg, and then at slip, he held a phenomenal 697 catches in 469 matches. As a batsman, he was well equipped, using his long reach to play forward and counter any danger, but was equally adept off the back foot from which he hit powerfully. The leverage created by his long arms enabled him to strike the ball long distances. In his brief Test career he twice lifted sixes off Trevor Goddard, one of the most restrictive of all bowlers.

Our speaker was a dual-purpose bowler, equally effective as an orthodox slow left-arm bowler from around the wicket, and a medium paced seam operator from over. An innate desire to experiment probably resulted in some inconsistency which meant that as both a batsman and bowler his true talents were never quite reflected in his

figures. He finished his career with 17650 runs (avge. 26.03) and 834 wickets (28.63). However, when fielding, his concentration was remorseless and never wavered.

He left Glamorgan temporarily at the start of the 1963 season as he sought an alternative lifestyle in South Africa but returned, reinvigorated by the game's challenges, part way through the season. He went on to score a thousand runs in seven of his final nine seasons (he achieved the feat eleven times overall) and also took sixty or more wickets in a summer on another three occasions (six in all). He also played an important part in Glamorgan's Championship title season of 1969, when he continually chipped in with useful runs and wickets. He returned a season's best average (23.73) with the ball; his batting average that year (33.03) was only marginally behind that of 1959, his most successful year in terms of both aggregate (1564) and average (34.00).

He retired in 1972 and went on to develop a career in broadcasting. Many HCS members will recall that, with John Arlott and Jim Laker, he was an integral member of the team that covered Sunday cricket for many years on BBC2. He later set up his own highly successful production company, Merlin Television. This highly gifted and multi-faceted man has also directed the development of junior cricket in Wales and hosted supporters on England tours abroad.

Peter Walker's life has been an exciting and diverse one; and his autobiography referred to above is highly recommended. It is full of incident and interesting stories. This evening is sure to be an entertaining one.

8 November 2006 – Report

David Rayvern-Allen, through his address and archival taped commentaries, gave a resume on the history of broadcasting. The first cricket commentary was given in 1927 by the former Essex cricketer, the Reverend Frank Gillingham. He was unfortunate in that the event was punctuated by rain breaks. At one stage, for want of something to say during these intervals, he commented on the advertising boards – he was, of course, broadcasting on BBC Radio, with their non-advertising policy!

Howard Marshall was the consummate broadcaster. He covered a number of sports, including the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, royal occasions, political events and social programmes. He commentated on the first Test match on radio, which was in 1934 at Lord's. It was the only occasion that England defeated Australia at the home of cricket in the 20th century.

Rex Alston, an ex-schoolteacher, began commentating on cricket in the Second World War. His was a difficult task as he had to avoid making reference to the venue in case it alerted the enemy.

Our speaker also spent much time on John Arlott. He is of course our late Patron's biographer. Arlott brought the regional voice to radio; he was followed by such men as Wilfred Pickles and Ralph Whiteman. He was a founder member of Any Questions who held strong political views. He was eventually dropped from the

programme by a reactionary BBC because of his strong views on Apartheid. Our speaker then played tapes of his classic commentaries on Freddie Trueman's 300th Test wicket at The Oval in 1964 and the Lord's staker in 1975.

He regarded Jim Swanton, on whom he also wrote a biography, as the prince of summarisers. On his own admission Swanton was pompous and portentous. These attributes also lead to a difficult relationship with Arlott. Nevertheless, as a counterbalance, his pseudo commentaries to troops suffering terrible deprivations at the hands of the Japanese on the Death Railway in Burma did much to lift their spirits.

He also played a tape on Brian Johnston's famous commentary with Jonathan Agnew at The Oval. Both men expected to be sacked next morning but were "saved" by the overwhelming public response to their hilarity.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

6 December 2006 – Report

Chairman Susanne Marlow correctly described Shaun Udal's address at the Society's Celebretary Dinner as a tour-de-force. With scarcely a pause, his articulate talk, laced with humour, was an informed history of Hampshire cricket over the past twenty years. Those present learnt much about his teammates, captains and memorable matches over that period.

He was privileged to have played with Malcolm Marshall and Shane Warne, indisputably two of the greatest bowlers ever to play the game. Like other speakers before him he referred to Warne's unique inspirational and positive leadership qualities. Such was his stature, Warne never had to raise his voice in the dressing room.

He also covered his international career at length. Ray Illingworth was instrumental in him gaining a place in England's one-day squad, but he regretted that injury prevented him from challenging for a Test place on the Ashes tour of Australia in 1994-95. That injury, to his side, reduced his effectiveness for over two years. It was only upon his appointment as Hampshire vice-captain that he refocused his efforts on getting fit and applying himself. He then talked about his memorable day in the sun at Mumbai earlier in the year.

He was immensely proud to have lead Hampshire to their C & G Final triumph. He would always remember the day vividly. It started with the difficult task of informing Jono MacLean that he was not to be in the starting XI. Our speaker paid fulsome tribute to the young South African, who had fielded brilliantly in the semi-final at the Rose Bowl, for making the task so easy; he hid any disappointment and gave the Hampshire captain his total support. The day ended with Shaun Udal being presented with the C & G Trophy by his first - and best - Hampshire captain, Mark Nicholas. It was a very emotional moment for him. He felt the turning point in the close match was Ian Bell's injury. He rallied his team whilst the England batsman was being treated and remembered in particular Andy Bichel's full-hearted response, urged on the baying Hampshire supporters at the Nursery End.

It was very evident that Shaun Udal has considerable potential as a much sought-after public speaker when he eventually retires from playing cricket.

After his address, members enjoyed a thoroughly sociable dinner whilst he rushed off to London to appear on Sky Television later that night.

MICHAEL LUMB

Michael Lumb has joined Hampshire from the start of next season. He has long been regarded as one of the most talented batsmen in the country though it has yet to be fully reflected in his record. He has, though, performed well against Hampshire having scored two centuries at the Rose Bowl, which must have influenced the County's decision to sign him. At the start of the 2003 season, in chilly weather and on an untrustworthy pitch, he rescued Yorkshire from a precarious 128 for 7 with concentration and application as he resisted Hampshire for nearly five and a half hours in scoring an unbeaten 115. He added 126 with Darren Gough, who scored 72 by typically more robust methods, for the eighth wicket. In the return match at Scarborough he enjoyed a fine double in making 64 and 59 .

The second hundred last summer, was in a different vein. Yorkshire were again in trouble, at 87 for 4, as they fought to avoid an innings defeat. On this occasion Lumb took the attack to the Hampshire bowlers. He swept Shane Warne repeatedly and safely as he reached fifty off 61 balls. He then accelerated, driving straight and through the covers as well as pulling with relish. He reached his century with a pick-up for six off Sean Ervine. He had batted for only 112 balls and struck eleven boundaries as well as that six along the way. He was eventually last out shortly afterwards, caught at the wicket off Warne, for an excellent 103. It was an innings which demonstrated his pedigree.

He also played a fine cameo of 43 in the C & G Trophy semi-final at the Rose Bowl in 2005. Hampshire followers have therefore had much time to appreciate his gifts at close quarters.

MICHAEL JAMES LUMB was born in Johannesburg on 12 February 1980. His father was, of course, the former Yorkshire opening batsman, Richard Lumb. After spending all his formative years in South Africa he joined Yorkshire in 2000 and he made his debut that year scoring 66 not out against the touring Zimbabweans in his only match. However, he had to qualify and wait a year before being eligible to play in the County Championship. He was then frustrated as a knee injury limited him to four matches.

Left-handed, like his father, and six feet tall, he became a regular in 2002. When he made his maiden century against Leicestershire that summer, he became part of only the fourth father and son pair to score centuries for Yorkshire. His most productive season to date was in 2003 when he scored 1038 runs (avge. 41.53), earning his county cap in the process. He was also rewarded with an England A tour to India the following winter. He then endured two mediocre seasons and was dropped during 2005, but returned to form last summer with a number of consistent performances. If

he maintains that form for Hampshire in the years ahead the County will have made a very shrewd investment.

MICHAEL LUMB IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET
BATTING AND FIELDING

	M	I	N.O.	Runs	H.S.	Avge.	100	50	Ct.
2000	1	2	1	68	66*	68.00	-	1	-
2001	4	7	1	218	122	36.33	1	1	-
2002	16	30	1	777	124	26.79	1	4	8
2003	17	27	2	1038	115*	41.52	2	7	7
2003-04	3	6	0	92	33	15.33	-	-	5
2004	13	23	1	546	83	24.81	-	4	8
2005	11	21	4	584	130	34.35	2	1	10
2006	16	25	2	963	144	41.86	2	7	8
	81	141	12	4286	144	33.22	8	25	46

CENTURIES IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET
(ALL FOR YORKSHIRE)

122	v.	Leicestershire	Headingley	2001
124	v.	Surrey	Guildford	2002
115*	v.	Hampshire	Rose Bowl	2003
105	v.	Durham	Headingley	2003
103*	v.	Bangladesh	Headingley	2005
130	v.	Somerset	Taunton	2005
144	v.	Middlesex	Southgate	2006
105	v.	Hampshire	Rose Bowl	2006

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