

## NEWSLETTER No. 272 - APRIL 2007

### **Wednesday 4 April 2007 – Meeting**

Tonight's speaker is HUGH GRIFFITHS who was Chief Executive of Sussex from 2003 until his retirement from the post in October last year. He therefore enjoyed the good fortune to have presided over the most successful period in that County's history. Sussex won their first ever County Championship title in his first year as Chief Executive, then performed the "double" of the Championship and C & G Trophy winners in his last. His comments on the reasons for their triumphs should therefore make for interesting listening.

He joined Sussex as Operations Manager in 1995. Following his recent retirement, he will be working in a new Executive position with the County on three days a week.

Given Robin Marlar's appearance last month, the Society's season will be finishing very much on a Sussex theme.

### **Wednesday 7 March 2007 – Report**

Hugh Griffiths also attended last month's meeting to listen to his illustrious colleague. Robin Marlar described an evocative boyhood. As his father was a schoolmaster, and then a Headteacher, he lived all his early life in the proximity of well-manicured cricket pitches. A gardener, Bill Plant, instilled in him a love of cricket which remains to this day. Plant acted as Marlar's de facto coach, and was rewarded when his charge took 8 for 0 as an eight-year-old. Our speaker commented that the performance gave him early, and important, confidence. Through his mentor, he also became a lifelong supporter of Aston Villa.

He went on to describe his encounters with Hampshire players, particularly Ernest Remnant, who was his coach at Harrow, and the eccentric Len Creese. The latter owned a service revolver, which had the habit of being triggered in the most confined spaces. He later became groundsman at Hastings.

Our speaker recalled his first appearance at Lord's as a 16 year old and commented on the poor condition of the outfield which was virtually devoid of all grass on the boundary's edge. He also then recounted how luck had played such a large part in his career, a theme echoing that of a contemporary, Peter Walker, earlier in the year.

He then told his audience the little known fact that he succeeded Eamonn Andrews as presenter of Sports Report. He anchored one programme which proved to be an unmitigated disaster. The show's producers decided to cover a very large number of football matches for the afternoon. However, by the time the programme started, half of the telephone lines had gone down.

He ended with the usual question and answer session during which he was asked about his year as President of MCC and whether he still retained any ambitions in the game. The questions elicited typically trenchant comments on throwing and Kolpak

registrations. His ambitions were to rewrite the throwing laws and introduce a two innings match between the USA and Europe. He also talked about the potential of China, who were steadfastly refusing to select expats, being intent on developing their indigenous population.

## **AGM REPORT**

The main points at the AGM were: -

- All officers were re-elected unopposed
- The subscriptions will remain unchanged
- The Society's membership numbers 328
- The Society has ordered a new Honours Board for the Player of the Year Award. The new board will be located next to the existing one in the Atrium at the Rose Bowl
- Due to the overwhelming support of members after the success of last year's event, a Christmas Meal at the Rose Bowl will now replace the Annual Buffet Supper

## **THE EARLIEST KNOWN MATCH IN HAMPSHIRE**

Researches by a member of the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians have unearthed the earliest reference to a cricket match in Hampshire. Hitherto, the first authenticated reference was a game between the residents of Portsmouth Common against Fareham and Titchfield in 1749.

However, Martin Wilson has now found an earlier match from the unlikely source of the American Weekly Mercury, published in Philadelphia and dated 20 –27 September 1733. The newspaper refers to a match at Stubbington on 22 May 1733 between the Bachelors and the Married Men. A week later on 29 May, it seems a further match, between the same teams, was played at Titchfield. The Married Men won both matches, which appeared to have caused some consternation to their opponents. The report of the first match describes how they were defeated “most shamefully to the surprise of everybody”. The second alleges that the result “made all the young men so angry.....”

These matches were played some four years after the first reference to a game of cricket involving men from “Hampshire”. Two matches were played by a combined Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire team against Kent at Penshurst Park on 5 September 1729.

H.T. Waghorn in “The Dawn of Cricket” states that the match was played for 100 guineas. Though Penshurst Park was the seat of the Earl of Leicester, the two sponsors of the respective sides were Sir William Gage, a Sussex landowner, and Mr.

Edward Stead, a noted patron of early 18<sup>th</sup> century cricket and a resident of Maidstone. The combined side emerged as winners. The match was watched by “some thousands”. Given the remote location of the venue the crowd size is almost certainly an overestimate. However, the hyperbole probably demonstrates the popularity of the game in Kent at the time. The matches between sides raised by Stead and Gage were commonplace in the 1720’s and they must have attracted a retinue of (wealthy) supporters.

Unfortunately, Hampshire’s earliest representatives will never be known, as no account of the match has ever included the names of the players taking part.

## STUART CLARK

Hampshire have signed the Australian Test fast-medium bowler, STUART CLARK, for two months during the forthcoming season. He is that rarity among Australians, a late developer. He was earmarked as a Test prospect in 2002, when he was already aged twenty-six, but due to injury, allied to a perceived lack of ‘devil’ in his bowling, he did not appear for his country until early last year. He made up for lost time in remarkable fashion. Selected for the Australian tour of South Africa in place of Glenn McGrath, who was caring for his sick wife, he enjoyed a sensational Test debut at Newlands. Only a marginal selection, he came on as second change, yet took 5 for 55 and 4 for 34. These were the third-best figures by any Australian bowler on debut after Clarrie Grimmett (11 – 82) and Bob Massie (16 – 137). He was nominated Man-of-the-Match and went on to take the Man of the Series award by virtue of taking 20 wickets at 15.75 in the three-match series.

Peter Roebuck, writing in Wisden Cricketer, described him, aptly, as “the discovery of the tour. After waiting years for his chance, the experienced seamer made an immediate impression. Blessed with a high arm and adept at cutting his fingers across the ball, he kept an unerring length and surprised batsmen with his speed”.

England batsmen became well acquainted with these attributes as Clark went on to demonstrate in the recent Ashes encounter that he was no one-series wonder. He claimed another 26 wickets (avge. 17.03) to finish top of the Australian bowling averages.

**STUART RUPERT CLARK** was born in Sutherland, Sydney, on 18 September 1975, the child of Indian-born parents who met in England. He made his debut for New South Wales in 1997/98, but due to form and a serious back injury, which necessitated him missing the entire first-class season in 1999/2000, he looked as if he would drift out of the game.

He shot to prominence, however, when he took 45 wickets (avge. 23.26) in 2001/02. He was rewarded with a central contract and was selected for an Australian A tour to South Africa that winter. The side played limited-overs matches only. It was one, though, picked with an eye for the future, his teammates including Nathan Bracken, Michael Clarke, Mike Hussey and Andrew Symonds. Also on the tour were Greg Blewett, Ian Harvey, Brad Hogg, Simon Katich and Justin Langer. The tourists therefore contained a formidable array of talent.

However, he damaged his rib towards the end of that tour and ensuing ankle and leg injuries, allied to hernia surgery, meant he quickly lost his central contract and was consigned to state cricket, as well as two brief seasons with Middlesex in 2004 and 2005, until that memorable Test debut at Cape Town. Whilst at Middlesex in the latter year he was twice drafted into the Australian Ashes squad as cover for injured bowlers but, of course, never played in a Test. His international debut was, in fact, against the World XI at Melbourne in October 2005. His first wicket was that of Kevin Pietersen.

Clark is a former real-estate agent in Sydney who is now studying for a commerce and law degree. His nickname is Sarfraz due to a vague resemblance in his bowling action to the former Pakistan fast bowler. However, it is evident that their respective temperaments are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

He has played much of his grade cricket with Glenn McGrath and it is obvious that he has learnt much from his illustrious colleague. Given his recent rich vein of form and tangible qualities, it was somewhat surprising that the Australian selectors left him out of their original World Cup squad. His reinstatement, in the wake of Brett Lee's enforced absence, could yet prove a propitious one.

Given the very wet winter, which is bound to leave moisture in the early season wickets, and subject to fitness, Stuart Clark could wreak havoc on opposition batsmen in his spell with Hampshire. The prospect of watching him bowl is a mouth-watering one.

The tall (6 feet 5 inches) right-arm fast-medium bowler has taken 270 first-class wickets to date, at an average of 27.12. His Test average is therefore over nine runs per wicket lower than his first-class one, thus emphasising the startling progress he has made in the last years or so. His best figures are 6 for 84 for New South Wales against Tasmania at Hobart in 2002/03.

He showed in the recent Ashes series that his batting prowess is far from negligible.

## **BOB WOOLMER**

At the time of writing this piece, the cricket world is still coming to terms with the announcement that Bob Woolmer was murdered in his hotel following Pakistan's unexpected demise against Ireland in the World Cup. Unlike other World Cups, the feats of Ireland and Bangladesh, who had earlier defeated India, had given the early round matches a welcome and unexpected edge. Just at the cricket world was celebrating those two famous victories the news was announced of Woolmer's death and then, subsequently, that he had been murdered. Rumours abound that his assailants were connected with the maniacal Asian betting industry. If this is the case, then it is clear that the game is still open to corruption. It also poses serious questions on the safety of coaches, captains and key players in matches involving Pakistan and India in particular.

There is still much conflicting speculation surrounding Bob Woolmer's death and one suspects that the investigation will take many twists and turns before it is completed, assuming it will be. The most chilling comment to date is that he seemed to know those who murdered him.

The media were universal in its praise for Bob Woolmer's qualities as a human being, and as a coach. Cricket has lost a very great servant. He was indeed a man of the world.

His abilities as a cricketer were largely glossed over in the media coverage. Many who watched county cricket in the 1970's will remember him as a high-class batsman. He started his career as a lower middle-order batsman who bowled, when he made his debut in 1970. Yet he always batted stylishly (his mentor was Colin Cowdrey), and with time to spare. It was no surprise that for the majority of his career he graduated to opening the innings.

His bowling was also a very potent weapon in one-day cricket. He was the first bowler to take 50 wickets in the John Player League. He also held the unique record of having bowled 8.1 overs in the 40-over game. The occasion was a match against Hampshire at Portsmouth in 1972. He commenced his ninth over before the umpire realised he had bowled more than the mandatory maximum allocation.

After making a century for England against Australia in his second Test in 1975, and two further hundreds against them in 1977, he seemed to have the cricket world at his feet. However, after signing for Kerry Packer in World Series Cricket in 1977-78 he was undoubtedly unnerved by the genuine fast bowling that dominated those matches and he, with others, was never quite the same player again. His participation in the first breakaway tour to South Africa in 1982 ended his Test career.

He made two centuries against Hampshire, both on the slow Dean Park wicket at Bournemouth. In 1979 he scored 105 in Kent's first innings, adding 204 with Chris Tavaré for the second wicket. After a first day wash out, Kent completed an innings victory in the remaining time.

A year later he made 102 not out as Kent won by ten wickets. He and Charles Rowe (57 not out) guided their team to victory with ease as they successfully chased 164.

Thereafter, Malcolm Marshall undoubtedly had his measure and in 1982 he was compelled to retire hurt after the Hampshire fast bowler fractured his cheekbone, at Maidstone. Bob Woolmer ended his playing days with a chronic back complaint two years later to start a wonderful, and hugely respected coaching career.

### **HAMPSHIRE'S PROSPECTS FOR 2007**

It is very easy to become excited about Hampshire's Championship chances this summer. The County have, at last, a settled opening partnership in Jimmy Adams and Michael Carberry, and Michael Lumb will add substance to the batting. Sean Ervine will also surely enjoy a better season than he did in 2006, when he was recovering from his serious knee injury.

Stuart Clark will give the pace attack a real cutting edge and, with Shane Warne and Dimi Mascarenhas to follow, opposition batsmen will not find runs easy to come by. If Chris Tremlett and James Bruce stay fit, then the County will have a bowling attack which will present a genuine challenge in the first part of the season.

The three variables are, of course, injury, the holding of catches and whether Hampshire will have claimed enough points prior to Clark's departure to give themselves some leeway in the second part of the season.

If they manage to avoid any of these pitfalls then a genuine Championship challenge looks a real prospect.

### **MICHAEL CARBERRY IN BANGLADESH**

Michael Carberry enjoyed a good tour with England A to Bangladesh. He retired on 100 against the Bangladesh Academy before making 70 in the first "Test" against Bangladesh A. He batted for 191 minutes and made his runs from 157 balls, hitting seven 4's and a six. He also excelled in the field in that match, effecting a run out and holding a catch in the Bangladesh A first inninngs. Wisden Cricketer commented that he "was vulnerable early in the innings, but remained the best ground fielder".

### **HAMPSHIRE MAY RETURN TO MAY'S BOUNTY**

Hampshire supporters in the north of the County, and indeed elsewhere, will be delighted with the news that county cricket may return to May's Bounty in 2008. Subject to improvements to the ground, including the pitch, Hampshire are proposing to play a week there next summer. The Basingstoke fixture was always a highlight in the calendar prior to the County transferring all matches to the Rose Bowl, and many will be looking forward to becoming reacquainted with that most picturesque of grounds. Second XI matches will be played there during this summer as part of the preparation for the potential return.

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