

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 285 - NOVEMBER 2008

Wednesday 12 November 2008 – Meeting

This year's beneficiary, **JOHN CRAWLEY**, makes a welcome return to the Society this evening. His first visit was in October 2005 when members enjoyed a most pleasant evening in his company.

John Crawley has endeared himself to Hampshire supporters during his seven years with the County. He has reinforced his penchant for making high scores by being the only batsman in the County's history to record two triple centuries, both at the expense of the Nottinghamshire bowlers. He made 301 not out at Trent Bridge in 2005 and then followed it up with an unbeaten 311 at The Rose Bowl a year later. Virtually all Hampshire supporters felt it was a great pity that Shane Warne declared when our speaker was tantalisingly close to Dick More's record 316 for the County. When he last spoke to us he felt that the former innings was the best crafted and that, in respect of the latter, the emphasis had to be on winning the match, which Hampshire duly did.

Moreover, he made 272 on his Hampshire debut at Canterbury in 2002; he has therefore recorded three of the six highest innings for the County. All three innings are the highest made for Hampshire in the last 70 years – a phenomenal achievement. He might even have made a triple century in the latter innings but was unluckily run out at the non-striker's end when a Shaun Udal drive was deflected on to the stumps by Min Patel.

He was also the Society's Player of the Year in 2006 when he amassed 1737 runs – easily the most runs in a season for the County since the introduction of 4 – day cricket in 1993 – at the remarkable average of 66.80.

However, it is not only the number of runs that John Crawley has scored that has made him popular. It has been the manner of their making. Tall (6 foot 1 inch) and broad shouldered, he has been indisputably the finest England player of spin bowling of his generation. He exemplified his powers to read spin and play with the softest of hands when he countered the wiles of Muttiah Muralitharan to make 156 not out at The Oval in 1998. In his great year for the County two years ago, he delivered a series of master classes as he stroked centuries against the off-breaks of Graeme Swann, Min Patel (slow left-arm) and Mark Lawson (leg-break), during a purple patch on sun-baked wickets which assisted spin bowlers.

He has also always taken a heavy toll of any bowler unwise enough to stray on to middle and leg stump. However, his classic, elegant and straight driving have also formed part of his armoury, and appealed to the senses.

He has not usually been well known for his performances in limited overs cricket but he helped the Hampshire innings off to a fine start in the County's C & G Final triumph at Lord's in 2005 and played a lone hand when making 68 in the defeat to Durham two years later.

(A full biography of John Crawley's career appeared in the October 2006 Newsletter)

Wednesday 17 September 2008 – Report

Brian Scovell kicked off our season with a preview of his forthcoming autobiography. Born on the Isle of Wight his name is derived from the Caen area of Normandy. He always wanted to be a sports writer, the genesis being reading the Daily Herald during a spell in hospital during the Second World War when one of his legs was severely injured during a bombing raid.

He saw Hampshire play for the first time in 1954 at the Saunders Roe ground on the Island. He was at that time a fledgling sports reporter. He later appeared against the County in goodwill matches and, in one appearance, bowled to Roy Marshall and later took the wickets of Alan Rayment and Derek Shackleton, both to boundary catches.

He then mentioned all the great players he had met. He was good friends with Denis Compton and Keith Miller and later with Jim Laker. He also spoke to Jack Hobbs in the great batsmen's Fleet Street sports shop. His colleagues in the press box included R.C. "Crusoe" Robertson-Glasgow, whose prose he admired above all others, Neville Cardus, John Arlott and E.W. Swanton. He revered John Woodcock whom he thought was the finest of all cricket reporters as our Patron's immense love of the game always shone through. He developed a particular friendship with another Hampshire man and Daily Mail colleague, Ian Wooldridge. Upon the latter's death, he organised a memorial cricket match at New Milton which proved from all aspects to be an immensely successful event. The match itself was decided only in the last over with New Milton scraping home by one wicket. He also flourished under the Daily Mail editorship of David English, who provided our speaker with unstinting support. He had also fought a lifelong campaign to improve press boxes.

He had written 24 books (which must make him the hardest working author on sport in recent years). His latest publication, on Brian Lara, seems to have been compiled in somewhat testing circumstances, on the basis of snatched interviews and mobile telephone conversations with his subject. However, he recognised that great players needed to be managed sensitively and he appreciated the pressures imposed on them. Lara's mother also proved to be helpful.

Throughout his talk he touched upon the best innings he had witnessed. Top of the list was Ted Dexter's magisterial 70 at Lord's in 1963 when, in poor light, he totally dominated the fearsome duo of Wesley Hall and Charlie Griffith. He also rated Graeme Pollock's 125 at Trent Bridge in 1965 very highly. When ghosting Lara's autobiography some years ago, he saw him go

out to bat against Curtly Ambrose, playing for Northants, without a helmet. The latter considered it an affront and he predictably unleashed a fusillade of short-pitched deliveries. Lara eventually had to resort to donning a helmet but batted throughout the day, making 197 before being caught on the boundary in the final over. It had been a titanic context between the two West Indian icons.

Of Hampshire players, he took pleasure in watching Roy Marshall and his namesake, Malcolm, and Barry Richards.

He then brought his talk right up to date with comments on Michael Atherton's writing, a recent article he had written on Tyrone Henderson for the forthcoming Sandford series and various aspects of Kevin Pietersen's play.

Wednesday 15 October 2008 – Report

Murray Hedgcock gave members a splendid evening as he delivered an address quite unlike any other that any members could recall in the Society's 33 year history. He spoke aptly on the cricket career of Pelham Grenville – P.G. – Wodehouse, as the date of the meeting coincided with his subject's birthday. Our speaker wrote and edited Wodehouse at the Wicket (pub. 1997) which has become a much sought after volume, and indeed rarity. He commented that a paperback edition may be published next year.

Wodehouse loved cricket, played the game and wrote about it. However, his output was not as prolific as he would have liked as, living for much of his life in America, cricket was of limited interest there and he was able to make more money by writing adult novels. Nevertheless, he left a valuable canon of work on the game as, indeed, he did on golf. Our speaker took his audience through Wodehouse's cricket career at Dulwich College, where he progressed from the 4th XI (making a "pair", as well as not bowling, on his debut) to the 1st XI for whom he played as a right-arm fast-medium bowler for two years. He took a lot of wickets in house and school cricket. In his second year for the 1st XI he opened the bowling with N.A. – Neville - Knox, later of Surrey, whom Jack Hobbs felt was the best fast bowler he ever saw.

After leaving Dulwich, Wodehouse worked in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank for two years – before beginning to earn a living as a journalist and story teller in 1903. He continued, though, to play cricket and in 1905 fulfilled an ambition to play at Lord's where he appeared for the Authors against the Actors. His colleagues included Arthur Conan Doyle and the author of the Raffles books, E.W. Hornung, who was, in fact, the brother-in-law of the author of Sherlock Holmes. The opposition included C. Aubrey Smith, of Sussex and England, and later a celebrated Hollywood actor. He played in five further Authors' matches at Lord's, in which he also appeared with A.A. Milne. It was Wodehouse who proposed the name for J.M. Barrie's famous Allahakberries, a word coined from the Arabic for God help us(!), for whom he also played. He played a few more games at Dulwich but that was the end of his competitive participation in the sport.

His one purely cricket book was Mike, which Wodehouse always regarded as his best. Murray Hedgcock felt that it captured the essence of the game perfectly. His most famous character was, of course, named after the Warwickshire all-rounder, Percy Jeeves, who died in the first World War.

Wodehouse never became an MCC member. He always alleged that he saw Jessop's great innings at The Oval in 1902 during his lunch break in his banking job, and he was a Surrey member from 1920 for four years. He later became a member of the Hollywood Cricket Club, founded by C.A. Smith in 1932. Wodehouse attended the matches, took the minutes of meetings and paid for some equipment. He saw his last game at Dulwich in 1939, on which occasion he was uncharacteristically critical of the slow play. One of the participants was the very young Trevor Bailey! His last recorded game was an impromptu affair in Upper Silesia, whilst he was interned by the Nazis in the Second World War, in 1941. Because of his naïve propaganda broadcasts on German radio during the war, he never returned to England and went to live in the USA, where he died in 1975. In his 90's he professed that baseball was now his first love. Our speaker therefore wondered whether he might have fallen for Twenty20.

Murray Hedgcock then mentioned that Wodehouse admirers had formed their own cricket team – “The Gold Bats”. They staged an annual match against the Sherlock Holmes Society (the Sherlockians) the Dulwich Dusters (masters at the school), and latterly they were restaging The Flower Match, created by Siegfried Sassoon, in his Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man.

It had been a wonderfully entertaining literary evening in the company of an erudite speaker with a permanent twinkle in his eye. One suspects that many Society members be at the head of the queue if Wodehouse at the Wicket finds its way into the bookshops again next year; the speaker will also have regenerated an interest in his subject's work generally.

HCS PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2008 JAMES TOMLINSON

James Tomlinson was the deserved runaway winner of the Society's Player of the Year in 2008. Statistically, he took more wickets than any other bowler in the country and his season's tally of 67 wickets was the best by a Hampshire bowler in the County Championship since Shane Warne (70) in the latter's first season with the County in 2000.

However, it is the fact he bowled uncomplainingly, and with such great heart, that endeared him to Hampshire followers. Only Charlie Shreck, Tim Murtagh, Steve Harmison, and Leicestershire's Nadeem Malik, among bowlers of comparable pace, bowled more overs. Perhaps aided by Hampshire's decision not to play him in one-day matches until the end of the season, he stayed fit throughout the Championship campaign. He thoroughly deserved the award of a much cherished county cap after reaching the 50 wicket landmark in mid-August.

The Winchester-born left-arm fast-medium bowler had given glimpses of a developing talent in the previous season. In the very first match of the summer against Surrey at The Oval, he clearly disconcerted the opposition top order with his pace. Even Mark Butcher, a seasoned Test player, looked uncomfortable when facing him. He then lost his place soon afterwards with the arrival of Stuart Clark and the return of Chris Tremlett, but when given another opportunity at Worcester towards the end of the season, he took five for 78, his victims incorporating both opening batsmen and, later, Graeme Hick, whom he also dismissed in the second innings.

Tall (6 feet 1 inch) and slimly built, he started last season quietly, bowling second change. He was entrusted with the new ball, in the absence of Shane Bond (injured), Chris Tremlett and Dimi Mascarenhas (England duty), when the County travelled to Taunton for their third Championship match of the season. "Wisden" commented on the lack of depth in the County's bowling attack in the previous season, but as the senior bowler, Tomlinson responded in quite sensational fashion. Somerset, put into bat on a damp wicket by stand-in captain James Adams, were reduced to 23 for 6. All six wickets had fallen to Tomlinson at a cost of 12 runs in 26 balls.

It was a devastating performance as he induced the ball to both swing and seam. The left-handed Justin Langer edged to slip first ball; the right handed Peter Trego was similarly dismissed leg-before off a similar delivery which ducked into him. He returned to mop up the tail to finish with career best figures of 8 for 26. Those present had witnessed a high-class bowling display. He was well supported by David Griffiths and the young Hamza Riazuddin. Though the Somerset batsmen gorged themselves in much easier conditions in the second innings, he finished with ten wickets in the match. The performance had engendered confidence in his own ability and he never looked back. By mid-season it became obvious that he had matured significantly and become a genuine county cricketer.

His performance at Arundel exemplified his growing stature. On a typically slow wicket, he plagued the early Sussex batsmen with his late in-swing and conventional left-arm seam bowling angled across them. His length and direction were impeccable. Chris Adams and Matt Prior both fell before to the in-swinger. He passed the outside of Murray Goodwin's bat time and again; the Zimbabwean also received the benefit of the doubt on a number of lbw appeals. He also had Carl Hopkinson dropped in the gulley after lunch. The Sussex pair eventually survived to provide the foundations of a match winning total but Tomlinson had given notice that he had arrived as he lead the attack with great heart – he bowled 27 overs on the first day and was running in with as much vigour at the end of play as he was at the start – and responsibility. He deserved his five wickets in the innings; with more luck and support from his fielders his figures could have been so much better. It was, nevertheless, a heroic performance.

In Hampshire's memorable run-in to the season he bowled impressively in tandem with Imran Tahir in three of the four wins. The pair dismantled the Yorkshire second innings at The Rose Bowl in an eventful pre-lunch session

on the third morning, as Hampshire romped to an emphatic ten wicket victory before tea later on that day. They then repeated the feat in Durham's second innings at Basingstoke to give the County a glimmer of chance to secure an unlikely win, which was duly achieved. Finally, they stopped the Nottinghamshire first innings in its tracks at Trent Bridge to ensure parity in the initial half of the match.

Their respective figures in each of these innings were:-

	Tomlinson	Tahir
v. Yorkshire (2 nd innings)	4 – 31	4 – 37
v. Durham (2 nd innings)	5 – 62	4 – 53
v. Notts. (1 st innings)	3 – 56	4 – 55

The reasons for their joint success are worth examining. Tahir's stock ball is the leg-break but he bowls a well disguised googly and flipper. Tomlinson's stock ball slants across the right-hander but he also bowls the inswinger by way of variation. On the occasions when the latter produces inswing (it does not always happen), the batsman receives no respite from intrigue at either end. He is never quite sure of the ball's path after pitching. They make a formidable pair. It will be interesting – and indeed fun – to see how their partnership develops over the next two years, the period of Tahir's contract.

If James Tomlinson is able to develop his in-swinger as a variation more consistently, he will continue to be a major force in the future. It is important, though, that the County ensures he gains access to the new ball when the shine is still upon it. He produced his best performances when opening the bowling.

Hampshire supporters will also take heart from the fact that he is a local man who has come through the system. South Wilts Cricket Club, for whom he played in the Southern League, will also have been proud of his performances in 2008.

Any essay on James Tomlinson's performances last season must also make mention of his increasingly feisty batting. He bats with "attitude", an increasing combination of intelligence about the state of the game, obduracy and strokemaking. His average for the season (14.50) was significantly above that for his career hitherto (6). He made a career best score of 35 against Lancashire when he shared a last wicket partnership of 84 with Tremlett (60). He then added 37 for that wicket with Michael Lumb in the second innings. He also ensured Hampshire achieved first innings parity with Yorkshire at The Rose Bowl in putting on 38 with David Balcombe.

Society members will have the opportunity to express their appreciation of James Tomlinson's wonderful achievements in 2008 at the Society's Annual Dinner when he will be presented with his Player of the Year award - a handsome cut glass bowl.