

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

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ISLE OF WIGHT CRICKET

These are exciting days for Isle of Wight cricket. During the summer of 2009, two Island born players, David Griffiths and Danny Briggs performed impressively for the County. A new cricket ground, Newclose, located just outside Newport, was opened for the purpose of staging all the Isle of Wight Cricket Board's representative matches. There are few better grounds anywhere. The playing area is to first-class standards in terms of quality of the wicket and extent of the boundaries. The pavilion (below) is superbly appointed and the scoreboard (overleaf) is state of the art. Finally, after years of waiting, Ventnor Cricket Club have been promoted to the Southern Premier League for 2010. Never has a promotion been more deserved. Unfortunately, for them, they will be required to relocate from their picturesque ground at Steephill to Newclose County Cricket Ground for their Premier League fixtures. Ventnor's own grand modern pavilion, which also houses the Island's Cricket Academy, means the Isle of Wight now possesses, indisputably, the two finest pavilions in the area (apart, of course, from The Rose Bowl).

It seems inconceivable, given all the references to early cricket matches in South Hampshire, that no cricket was played on the Isle of Wight until September 1788 when the Hampshire Chronicle reported "A weekly cricket match is established between the gentlemen of the Island. On the day of playing they dine together in the greatest harmony".

Four Hambledon patrons had Isle of Wight connections. Two appear to have been nominal. Jervoise Clark Jervoise and his son, Thomas Clarke Jervoise, were Members of Parliament for the "Pocket Borough" of Yarmouth for all but five years between 1768 and 1808. It is worth mentioning that the entire population of the Island was only 22,000 in 1801, very few of whom would have been entitled to vote.

The other two links were more substantial. Joseph Bettsworth purchased the Manor of Ashley in 1789. The most permanent connection with the Island was that of Sir Richard Worsley, who owned the great Palladian house at Appledurcombe (now in the ownership of English Heritage). Though he spent much time abroad after his infamous divorce case in 1782, it may have been through his instigation that the matches referred to above were played. Also, at this time, the social life of Newport was expanding rapidly, and the cricket matches would have been one way of the town's lawyers, merchant entrepreneurs, and country gentlemen developing their contacts and in the process enlarging their incomes.

There is a famous and evocative painting in the MCC collection “Cricket at Brading” which for many years was thought to date from the mid-18th century, but it is now regarded as having been painted in the 19th century.

The next references to the game do not appear until 1816, when Southampton twice defeated the Isle of Wight. The first match was played in the City; the second (on 7 October) was played on William Ward’s ground at West Cowes. Ward, who made 44 in each innings in the opening encounter, twice earned cricketing immortality when he made 278 for MCC against Norfolk at Lord’s in 1820 – by far the highest score ever recorded at the time – and when he purchased the lease of Lord’s from Thomas Lord in 1825, thus preventing the ground from being developed by builders. Cricket will forever be in his debt. Though Ward owned land on the Isle of Wight for a short while, he lived for much of his life in London.

The difficulties in travelling to the Island before 1823 cannot be overstated. Steamers were not introduced until that year. Any journey to the Island before then would have had to be undertaken by sail. When the poet John Keats visited the Island in 1817, the year after the Southampton-Isle of Wight fixtures, and again in 1819, the Solent crossing sometimes took up to four hours if the prevailing winds were unfavourable. However, the establishment of a regular ferry service between Portsmouth and Ryde in 1826, and the opening of Southampton’s Royal Pier in 1833 greatly facilitated passage across the Solent.

In 1846, there were home and away fixtures between the Isle of Wight and the South Hants Club, who played their matches on Daniel Day’s new ground at Woolston, with the Islanders winning both times.

It was not until the 1860’s that Island cricket reappeared in the limelight with two 3-day matches between the United England Eleven and sides from the Isle of Wight comprising 22 players. The first was at Newport in 1862. Though the 22 of the Isle of Wight included the professionals Henry Holmes (Hampshire), who made 55 in the first innings, and Henry Stubberfield (Sussex), the Island side was overwhelmed by an innings and ten runs.

The second match, played at Quarr Hill, Ryde, four years later, featuring 22 of Ryde, was a much more even affair. Play was only possible on the scheduled second day due to rain. Ryde gained a first innings lead of 25 (86-61), thanks to the bowling of imported professionals Sampson Tubb of Hampshire and James Southerton. The latter was the famed man of many counties – he played for Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire (once playing for all three in the same season) – and England’s oldest Test debutant through his appearance in the inaugural match in Australia in 1876-77. Ryde were then dismissed for 98 and the match finished intriguingly poised with the United England XI at 26 for one in the final innings.

The cricket world was agog with news of the first ever recorded triple century on 27 August 1874. It was made on the Island, at West Cowes, in a match between Northwood, the Island’s foremost club, and Freshwater, a genuine

village team. William Edmund Wood Collins scored 338 not out for Northwood in four hours out of his side's total of 535 for 8. Almost incredulously, four Northwood batsmen were dismissed for 0. Born in Glamorgan, Collins captained Radley School though failed to gain a Blue at Oxford. He went on to play in only seven first-class matches, three of which were for Hampshire (see below), confining himself mainly to Free Foresters and Country House cricket. Nevertheless, his hitting powers were respected by prominent figures in the game such as C.I. Thornton, and his fast left-arm bowling (he batted right-handed) was equally rated. He made his mark in the higher levels of the game when he took 6 for 35 for Oxford Past and Present against the Australians in 1888, only five days shy of his fortieth birthday.

Two years after Collins' prodigious run scoring feat, in 1876, the first Isle of Wight born cricketer made his debut for Hampshire. He was ex-Wykhamista, Sir Matthew Wood. He played in only one match, against Derbyshire at the home side's Race Course Ground. It would seem that he was only selected to make up the numbers. He was dismissed for a "pair", batting at 10 and 11 respectively, and did not bowl.

The Island born cricketers to appear for Hampshire are listed below. It can be seen that David Griffiths is already, by far, the most successful Island-born bowler for the County.

BATTING AND FIELDING

		M.	I.	N.O.	Runs	H.S.	Avge	Ct	
P.J.Bird	1900	1	2	0	37	28	18.50	-	
D.Briggs	2009	3	3	0	37	36	12.33	1	
D.A.Griffiths	2006-date	17	23	8	107	31*	7.13	1	
H.W.Phillips	1899-1902	5	9	0	53	40	5.88	1	
W.E.N.Scott	1927	5	7	2	102	35	20.40	-	
H.A.H.Smith	1909-1914	27	41	10	327	43*	10.54	9	
A.L.Watson	1885	1	2	0	22	22	11.00	-	
W.C.Wheeler	1878-1880	3	6	1	35	15	7.00	1	
Sir Matthew Wood	1876	1	2	0	0	0	-	-	

BOWLING

	Runs	Wkts	Avge	5wl	Best
D.Briggs	295	8	36.87	-	3/62
D.A.Griffiths	1657	46	36.02	-	4/46
H.W.Phillips	102	0	-	-	
W.E.N.Scott	131	4	32.75	-	2/66
H.A.H.Smith	574	14	41.00	-	3/95
W.C.Wheeler	186	6	31.00	1	6/133

Phillips later emigrated to South Africa, where he appeared for Border.

However, notwithstanding the appearance of Island players for Hampshire, the development of cricket on the Isle of Wight has, until recently, understandably been complicated by geography. The MCC played a match on the Island for the best part of a century and Lord Sheffield took a team to play at Ryde in 1889. The cricketing profile of the Island may have taken a different turn in 1903 when they wrote to Hampshire seeking permission to play in the Minor Counties Championship in the following year. The high-handed response was that they thought the Isle of Wight were not eligible "having regard to the fact that they are part of Hampshire County". The statement was patently incorrect and it was even doubtful that permission had to be sought. For local government purposes, the Isle of Wight County Council was created in 1890 and Hampshire CCC's constitution made no reference to the Island.

Whilst an Island Cricket League was established in 1898, it was not until Ventnor Cricket Club started to make their way through the Hampshire and Southern Leagues in the 1990s, that Island cricket found an identity. Even then, the Hampshire Cricketing Authorities and clubs were less than helpful in their support and encouragement.

Hampshire first took county cricket to the Island in 1938 when they played bottom-placed Northamptonshire at Newport. The County won by seven wickets, with five minutes to spare. Stuart Boyes enjoyed a fine all-round match, scoring 104 and taking 6 for 40 in the Northants' second innings. Hampshire returned again in 1939 where, on a sub-standard pitch, they were overwhelmed by Middlesex by an innings and 25 runs in less than two days play. Jack Robertson (97) and Bill Edrich (118) were the only men to score more than 40.

After the war, Hampshire played four second XI matches at Newport in the Minor Counties Championship between 1949 and 1951 and another at the picturesque Shanklin ground in 1952.

They returned to the Island to play first-class cricket in 1956 at J. Samuel White's Ground in West Cowes, virtually opposite Northwood's home. They then played at the same venue until 1962. Of the seven matches there, Hampshire won three (1957 Nottinghamshire), (1958 Leicestershire), and (1961 Essex), lost one (Gloucestershire in 1959) and drew three (Worcestershire in 1956 and 1962, and Glamorgan in 1960). Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie enjoyed himself with two centuries – a fluent 130 not out in 1956 and, more famously, a breathtaking 132 not out in 1961, which put Hampshire's Championship aspirations back on course. Other century makers were Roy Marshall (107) and Henry Horton (114 not out) in 1957. Marshall also made 99 against Worcestershire in the final match in 1962; that County remained the only one against which he never scored a century. Pace bowlers invariably dominated with the ball. Malcolm Heath enjoyed match figures of 10 for 86 versus Leicestershire in 1958 and the incomparable Derek Shackleton took five wickets in an innings on four occasions, his best figures being 7 for 81 against Notts. in 1957. The County then returned to the ground for benefit matches in the 1980's.

Whilst Lashings have taken a team to Ventnor in recent years – and were defeated in 2002, the only other representative match scheduled to be played on the Island was between the England Women's Development Squad and the Indian Women in Shanklin in 2002. Unfortunately it was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

And so to Newclose. The venue will be used for all the Isle of Wight Cricket Board's representative matches, with the eventual aim of the Isle of Wight to play in Minor Counties Cricket. Given the coaching set-up on the Island, which, in recent years, besides Briggs and Griffiths, has produced Mark Garaway and Stephen Snell (Gloucestershire), such aspirations do not look unrealistic. The cricket world will wish them well.

Wednesday 3 March 2010 - Meeting

This evening's speaker is Nigel Stockill. He is most well known in cricket circles for his role in the England cricket team between 1999 and 2007 as their full-time Physiologist and Sports Science Manager. He enjoyed a particularly high profile during the 2005 Ashes series. In his earlier life, he graduated with a First Class Honours Degree in Sports Science in 1990 before combining further study for a Masters with lecturing and coach education work. During a five year stint at Lilleshall Sports Injury and Human Performance Centre, he provided support to the national cricket, football, rugby league and hockey squads, as well as to leading stars from tennis, athletics and windsurfing. Latterly, he has become Performance Director for Optima-life. This will be only the second time the Society has hosted a speaker from this field of sport – the first was Hampshire's ex-physio David Newman (at Eastleigh's AC Delco complex) in 1992 – and it is therefore sure to be a most interesting evening.

The evening will start with the Society's AGM.

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