

# **THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY**

**Patrons:** John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

**NEWSLETTER No. 300 - SUMMER 2010**

## **SOCIETY MATTERS**

Enclosed with this Newsletter are:-

- the Society's Programme Card for 2010/11
- a pro forma for:-

subscriptions (please note revised rates agreed at AGM in March)

nomination for HCS Player of the Year

questionnaire re. venues

NB The whole form should be returned to the Society's new Treasurer-Mr. Brian Ravenhall, 2 Homewater House, Hulbert Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire PO7 7JY

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## **IN PRAISE OF DOMINIC CORK**

Dominic Cork's performances during this summer have been little short of astonishing. It is probably doubtful that he will think so. However, many outside of the boundary ropes will have been somewhat sceptical when he was recruited by Hampshire Cricket in 2009. His previous season with Lancashire had been blighted by injury. That County had released him because they wanted to give their young players more opportunity. He was approaching 37 years of age. His best days seemed to be behind him.

And yet, his performances both last year – when he headed Hampshire's first-class bowling averages and was man-of-the-match in the Friends Provident Trophy final at Lord's – and this summer have demonstrated just what a very fine cricketer he remains. So good, and dramatic, have been his accomplishments it is a mystery, which probably only he can unravel, that he was not a permanent fixture in the England side for well over a decade. Such is his natural ability and presence, it is arguable that he should have left his country's bowling records far behind. As Glenn McGrath, with his hypnotic, repeatable action became the equivalent of cricket's Holy Grail, coaches all over the world were looking for a similar sort of bowler. And yet Dominic Cork was always there under England's noses. He possessed the same well-grooved run up and simple action. Better man management should surely have enabled him to achieve even more. However, if it was a career unfulfilled before his coming to Hampshire, those who have watched him in the last two seasons will not question that they have seen a cricketer of considerable stature.

His interventions since he took over the captaincy of the side in June during the T20 campaign have been unrivalled, even by Shane Warne. However, he was making telling contributions before then. At the beginning of June, at the end of the first phase of the Championship, he stood top of the County's bowling averages once more. He arrived late because of his broadcasting commitments with the Indian Premier League but was into his stride quickly. His presence gave the bowling attack a cutting edge. The side moved with a new purpose.

He had a quiet time with the bat until the match with Essex at the Rose Bowl in early June. The Hampshire innings was a stop-go affair. Virtually all the batsmen made a start but were unable to capitalise, though it was a wicket that no batsman could take for granted. Hampshire's advantage of winning the toss and choosing to bat appeared to be ebbing away. The score stood at 190 for 6 when he strode to the wicket. Ignoring the wicket's vagaries, he tore into the Essex bowling and reached the 40's in the blink of an eye. By this time the new ball was due. He then brought all his experience to bear and changed his game completely. Defence became the watchword. It took another hour to grind his way to a well-deserved 50. He kept his end whilst Neil McKenzie expanded his stroke range. By the time the latter was dismissed (for 83) shortly before the close, the pair had added 100 runs exactly. He was 54 overnight and many envisaged him shepherding the tail next morning. However, Maurice Chambers, in an inspired spell, quickly brought an end to the Hampshire innings; Cork added only a run.

He did work the oracle a few weeks later against Lancashire when he guided his side to a healthy first innings lead from a difficult situation, finishing on 54 not out.

He was captain by the time Hampshire played their championship match against Kent, again at the Rose Bowl. On the first day, with tea approaching, he rolled back the years as he delivered a master-class in swing bowling, at pace. Bending it like Beckham, he bowled Hockley and Cook, both shouldering arms. Expecting away swing they were dislodged with the off-cutter. Bandara was caught behind in the same spell. He looked like taking a wicket with every ball, such was his control and mastery. He had earlier dismissed Rob Key with an athletic caught and bowled and after tea, removed last man, Amjad Khan. He had taken 5 for 50 in 22.2overs; he could rarely have bowled better in his pomp. For good measure he also caught Blake at mid-off. (He held 18 catches in 2009; the most by any Hampshire fielder). With the bat, he struck a quick undefeated 15, declared, skipped off the pitch, and returned to break Key's finger and induce Joe Denley to edge to the diving Liam Dawson at third slip. Shrewdly rotating his bowlers Kent subsided to an innings defeat in extra time on the third day. It had been a quite inspirational exhibition by the Hampshire captain.

In the T20 competition, he caught the dangerous Mark Cosgrove spectacularly against Glamorgan, milking the effort with an adrenalin fuelled war dance in front of the Sky TV cameras, and lead the side splendidly in the

must-win encounter against Sussex in which Hampshire qualified for the quarter-finals. As if he needed to emphasise he was still a force he bowled the reliable pinch hitter Neil Carter, who caused Hampshire so many problems in the C & G Final in 2005, in his first over and crucially ran out James Troughton – a good stealer of singles – in the quarter-finals against Warwickshire as his side qualified for finals day at the Rose Bowl.

Besides his inspirational presence he has used his experience to bring out the best in Hampshire's young bowlers, Chris Wood and Danny Briggs. They continued to prosper under his tutelage, support and shrewd field placings. The lessons they learned must surely benefit the County in the future. He kept the side together as Hampshire refused to play Kevin Pietersen (many must have been delighted with that decision) and Shahid Afridi, who seems to have tried to join the County he rejected earlier in the year.

For good measure, he also took three wickets in the narrow victory over Kent in the Clydesdale Bank 40-overs competition, and rolled over Shivnarine Chanderpaul and the Lancashire tail in the match referred to above.

Dominic Cork had therefore imposed his presence in three different competitions in the space of two months with his batting, bowling, fielding and captaincy. When he was at Derbyshire, his County were often called Corkshire. This is definitely not the case at Hampshire where the side is infinitely more capable, but Dominic Cork has taken his own game, and crucially, his side to a new level over that period. If only he could have joined Hampshire ten years earlier. We could have enjoyed him longer. Even so, in the space of one and a half seasons, he has become a Hampshire legend, whose fame will be remembered and recounted with misty eyes in the years to come. What cherished memories he has left – and he may still leave yet more.

### **SIR ALEC BEDSER**

By the time that members receive this Newsletter, some months will have passed since the death of Sir Alec Bedser. He died on 4 April, shortly after the final meeting of the Society's winter season. He was one of the game's indisputably great players and an equally distinguished servant as England selector.

He also addressed the Society in the former Squash and Social Club at Northlands Road in 1984. It was a perceptive and wide-ranging appreciation of the problems in selecting England players and in developing the talents of young players. He also revealed an often hidden humorous streak in his character. His biographical details were given in the various obituaries – there was an excellent and a very personal warm one by our Patron John Woodcock in Wisden Cricket Monthly – and so this piece is confined to his performances against Hampshire.

In 19 matches against the County, he took 85 wickets at the forbidding average of 15.48. Whilst his tallies against Nottinghamshire (106), Derbyshire

(101) and Essex (94) were higher, his average versus Hampshire was his best against any County.

He was a scourge of the Hampshire batting line-up in five matches in particular, all at Guildford, in the 1940's and 1950's. Hampshire first came across him there in 1946. They must have left the ground with a sense of foreboding. Bowling unchanged with the veteran Alf Gover, he took 5 for 21 as the County succumbed for 48 – their lowest ever total against Surrey. Whilst Charlie Knott (6 for 56) and Gerry Hill (106 in the second innings) did their best to make a game of it, Hampshire were comprehensively defeated by 9 wickets. Bedser's second innings figures were 3 for 76.

In 1952, the first of Surrey's seven consecutive Championship winning years he took 5 for 41 and 4 for 67. Vic Cannings (5 for 46 and 4 for 63) ensured the home team did not have things all their own way and it took a very fine innings by Dave Fletcher (123) to ease the Champions elect to a five wicket victory with 35 minutes to spare.

The next match in 1954 was an entirely different affair. Peter May, in his eloquent biography [A Game Enjoyed](#) wrote thus:-

Stuart Surridge missed several matches in June, including one against Hampshire at Guildford, in which things really fell into my lap. The pitch was damp but I won the toss and put them in. They were soon 13 for 5 against Alec Bedser and Loader. A sixth-wicket stand of 72 between Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie and Mike Barnard gave the score an incongruous look, for the total was only 97.

By then the pitch was harmless but on Sunday night it rained again. We were 206 for 2, I was 117 not out and it did not take me long to decide that I would rather watch Bedser, Loader, Lake and Lock bowling at them than try my hand against Shackleton and Cannings, who would be an awkward pair if the pitch again played as it had on Saturday morning. The match was over before lunch, no spectacle, I am afraid, but a faithfully carrying-out, so I thought, of the Surridge policy of swift dispatch.

Bedser's figures were 7 for 38 and 3 for 7.

Hampshire's return to the ground in 1956 was almost a reprise of the encounter four years earlier. It was a tightly fought contest. Surrey struggled against the exemplary seam and swing of Derek Shackleton (7 for 62). Only Fletcher with 88 in a marathon five hours resisted for long as Surrey were bowled out for 173. The Bedser twins (Alec 4 for 47 and Eric 4 for 43) restricted Hampshire's lead to just 12. With the pitch having eased, the emerging Micky Stewart (106) and Ken Barrington (103) enabled Surrey to declare at 250 for 4, setting Hampshire 239 at 78 an hour. Despite a brisk 58 from Roy Marshall, wickets fell steadily and Bedser (2 for 36) dismissed Derek Shackleton to secure victory with five minutes to spare.

Bedser was again present when Surrey won before lunch on the second day in the following year.

Again, May described the match in his autobiography:-

We had a very embarrassing match that season at Guildford when we played Hampshire. The city was celebrating the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of its charter by Henry III and on the second afternoon the match was to be watched by the Queen and Prince Philip. Almost everything went right for us and wrong for a royal visit.

Hampshire chose to bat on the first day and Loader and Alec Bedser bowled them out before lunch for 66. The ball swung a lot. It must have stopped swinging then, for Derek Shackleton, that model of medium-paced accuracy and movement, did not take a wicket, nor did Jimmy Gray, who could be a big in-swinging, and we had made 247 for 4 by the end of the day

Next morning I had to decide whether to declare, which I felt was the right cricketing decision, or to bat on in order to make sure that plenty was left for the royal visit. I decided that we were leading the Championship and it was a first-class match which should be treated as such. So I declared.

This time Hampshire were bowled out by Laker, and when Loader finished off the match soon after lunch there were still several hours before the Queen was due. An exhibition match was arranged, but our second-line bowlers were almost as effective as their predecessors – I remember that Eric Bedser looked like taking a wicket every ball – and we had the greatest difficulty in keeping the second contest going for long enough. We just succeeded but I am afraid that the royal party watched some pretty contrived cricket which we gratefully interrupted in order to be presented.

Bedser took 3 for 26 in the first innings; Loader's figures were 7 for 36. The former, now nearing the end of his prodigious career, did not take a wicket in the second. Nevertheless, in those four matches, he demonstrated his greatness by taking 36 wickets at just 10.27 runs apiece.

Bedser played on Hampshire grounds on eleven occasions and strangely found wickets more difficult to come by. He took 37 in all, though they only cost 21.97 apiece. His best bowling figures were 5 for 68 (9 – 107 match) in a memorable match at Portsmouth in 1956. Almost startlingly, given his figures, it was a rare Surrey defeat. Hampshire initially owed their 28 run victory to Jimmy Gray's well crafted 64 in the first innings and the spin bowling of Mervyn Burden (6 for 23) and Peter Sainsbury (4 for 38) who ensured a lead of 65 (191- 126). When Hampshire were bowled out for 71 in their second innings – Bedser bowled unchanged with Loader (5 for 32) as they were to do

at Guildford a year later – it looked as if Surrey would again triumph. However, aided by the metronomic accuracy of Shackleton (29-5-18-28-3) and some brilliant catching, Hampshire's unlikely match winner was Roy Marshall (34-16-36-6) with his off spin.

It is worth noting that all four of the County's victories against Surrey during his career – in 1947, 1949, 1955 and 1956 – were all achieved on Hampshire grounds. He played in all of those matches. Whilst this fact might resurrect the well worn arguments about whether Surrey doctored their wickets to suit their formidable bowling attack – almost certainly the best ever in the history of county cricket – the piece has demonstrated that two of their three most overwhelming victories at Guildford were due to rain making the pitches almost unplayable.

He only ever played twice against Hampshire at The Oval in 1949 (3 for 48 and 3 for 9) and 1953 (2 for 29 and 3 for 15).

### **ROBERT HUDSON**

The Society's next speaker following Alec Bedser was the broadcaster, Robert Hudson, on 27 September 1984. He too has died this summer, on 3 June, aged 90. An extract of the Newsletter report on his speech is given below:-

This was a most interesting start to the winter programme with Mr. Hudson recalling his experiences as a broadcaster on cricket and rugby, and the history of sporting broadcasts generally from the first "live" radio commentary on cricket in 1934, followed by the first TV coverage in 1937, to today's Test Match Special format. Mr. Hudson spoke from a lifetime's experience of broadcasting including his years as head of BBC Outside Broadcasts and it was clear that his whole approach to his work could be summed up in one word, "professional", used in its proper sense and not in its now sadly much abused way.

In his obituary in Wisden Cricket Monthly, Peter Baxter wrote that his place in cricket and broadcasting history should be assured by having had the idea of what became Test Match Special.

### **JOHN WOODCOCK**

The March edition of WCM included a marvellous piece on our Patron, John Woodcock. It is a delightful interview in which John describes his career. Happily he still writes the occasional priceless piece for The Times.

### **VIC CANNINGS AND JOHN RICE**

In the July edition of WCM, Stephen Chalke wrote a nostalgic piece on Eton coaches featuring Vic Cannings and John Rice. Most of the article was concerned with the former's life and career. Between them, the two former Hampshire players, have given fifty years' service to the College, Cannings joining Eton as cricket professional in April 1960.