

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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

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## MEETING

### Wednesday 1 December 2010

Tonight's speaker at the Society's Annual Dinner is Peter Bowler, one of county cricket's most dependable opening batsmen of the modern era.

**PETER DAVID BOWLER** was born in Plymouth on 30 July 1963. Son of a Scots mother, and a father who was in the Australian navy, he was raised Down Under. Educated in Canberra, he first came to notice when he was selected for 3 Youth Tests and 2 one-day internationals for Australia against Pakistan in 1982. Among his team-mates was the fast bowler, Craig McDermott.

Whilst visiting relatives in the Midlands in 1985, he played some club cricket, and was invited for trials by Leicestershire, who subsequently signed him for the following season. He made his first-class debut for that County in July 1986. Due to a long injury list and international calls, he was selected to play against Hampshire at Grace Road. He grasped his opportunity by making 100 not out in his first innings, thus becoming the first Leicestershire batsman ever to do so, He shared an unbeaten third wicket partnership of 273 in 277 minutes with his captain, Peter Willey, and, for good measure, then top scored with 62 in the second.

He played two matches for Tasmania in the ensuing winter, but on his return found his way blocked by a very strong Leicestershire batting line-up at the time.

He therefore made his way to Derbyshire for the 1988 season. As he had done with his former County, he scored a century on debut – 155 not out at Fenner's, thereby becoming the first batsman to perform the feat for two Counties. He again engaged in a large stand with his captain, this time Kim Barnett, of 238 for the first wicket. The Barnett – Bowler axis formed the foundation of probably Derbyshire's strongest batting order in their entire history. They were followed by the talented John Morris and the Zimbabwean, Bruce Roberts. A Lord's final followed in their wake. They played, of course, Hampshire in the Benson and Hedges Cup in 1988 when our speaker was the first victim of Mark Nicholas' masterstroke to field at short-leg for Steve Jefferies' lethal late inswing on that morning. However, Derbyshire triumphantly secured their first – and so far only – Sunday League title in 1990.

He played in five Lord's Finals, finishing on the winning side in the Benson & Hedges Competition in 1993 – the famous "Cork Final" in which the current

Hampshire captain won the man of the match award with a brilliant 92 not out after his team were in the doldrums - and the C & G Final in 2001 when Somerset defeated his first County, Leicestershire. He also appeared at Lord's on two further occasions for Somerset, in 1999 and 2002. The Cider County lost both times, despite our speaker top scoring with 67 in the latter encounter, against Yorkshire in the C & G.

He enjoyed a memorable season for Derbyshire in 1992 when he was the country's top run scorer with 2044 runs at an average of 65.93. That tally included his career best 241 not out in a shade under 8 hours, against Hampshire at Portsmouth. He batted throughout his side's innings total of 475 for four declared. As at Grace Road a few years earlier, he had demonstrated his class by countering the great Malcolm Marshall. In another era he might have played Test cricket but his route to the highest level was barred by Graham Gooch, Alec Stewart and Michael Atherton.

In 1995 he moved to his final County, Somerset. He almost made yet another century on his first appearance but ran out of partners on 84 in the second innings. He captained his new County from mid-1996 to 1998. However, his tenure coincided with back problems which affected his cricket.

Right-handed and 6 feet 1 inches tall, our speaker he was an orthodox, sound, methodical, and workmanlike batsman. He personified the business cricketer, dedicated to the accumulation and making of runs with the minimum of risk. He was County Cricket's equivalent of "The Wall", the pseudonym awarded to Rahul Dravid for his "they shalt not pass" approach in Test cricket. He was never one for extravagances at the crease, but he earned the respect of all his opponents. Upon his retirement, Wisden referred to "his calm, correct demeanour at the top of the order" and also made mention that he was "generous with advice and dependable in a crisis".

He fashioned two further centuries against the long suffering Hampshire bowlers – 104 at Taunton in 1998 and 103 not out at Northlands Road the following season. He was the oldest man on the circuit – at 41 – when he played his final season in 2004. He was still productive, reaching 1034 runs (avge. 49.23). He made one thousand runs in a season on 10 occasions. He left county cricket with the impressive record of 19567 runs (avge. 40.51), including 45 centuries.

He retired to take up a career in corporate law and is now a legal consultant. The Society extends the warmest of welcomes this evening to Peter Bowler. He may though have some qualms about the venue. Just prior to his retirement he was disciplined by the ECB after an on-field spat with Shane Warne!