

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 306 – FEBRUARY 2011

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please accept formal notice of the 34th Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held on **WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH at Test Valley Golf Club at 7.00pm.**
(not 7.30pm as printed in the Programme Card)

Any resolutions and nominations for office on the Committee, duly proposed and seconded, should be received by the Hon. Secretary, David Fish, at 1 Abbot Close, Basingstoke. RG22 6LA by 19 FEBRUARY 2011.

Wednesday 9 February 2011 – Meeting

The Society is delighted to welcome **DEREK BREWER**, who has been Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club since June 2005. During his tenure, Notts. have been very successful, winning the Championship in his inaugural months and in 2010. A feature of their cricket has been a judicious mixture of local players and reliable and committed overseas players.

Our speaker was a very talented cricketer playing for Berkshire Under 13s, British Universities and Warwickshire 2nd XI. He has also contributed to the game at grass roots level by managing Grantham's Under-13 team.

In the business world, he was formerly Regional Director of Royal Bank of Scotland Commercial Banking in the East Midlands.

Wednesday 12 January 2011 – Report

Peter Parfitt provided his audience with a rare treat. In his vote of thanks Derek Coulson perceptively commented that, in little more than an hour and with no notes, he had taken his audience through cricket's history over the past 50 years. Our speaker's address was full of insight, wisdom and humour, and delivered by a man who clearly cherished cricket's heritage, history and its traditional values.

He began by describing how Norfolk monitored the progress of their young talent from an early age. Among his contemporaries were John Edrich, Henry Blofeld and Andrew Corran (later of Nottinghamshire). Norfolk were also inextricably linked with Middlesex, through a long-standing relationship between Sir Pelham Warner and one of the finest of all amateur cricketers, Michael Falcon. The latter eschewed Middlesex's continued approaches and yet performed with distinction in his rare forays on to the first-class stage. The two Counties were entwined through Bill Edrich, the Mann family whose hops for their brewery were grown in Norfolk, Peter Parfitt and, later, Clive Radley.

The first men he saw in the Middlesex dressing room were Edrich and the Compton brothers. Denis advised him to always enjoy the game; Edrich

reinforced the game's traditional values after our speaker stayed at the crease after he had gloved to the wicket-keeper in one of his early games against Gloucestershire at Lord's. He was told in no uncertain terms that he would never play for Middlesex again if he repeated the act. He was a "walker" thereafter. He commented that Tom Graveney was another who always walked for edges to the wicket-keeper.

His nemesis was Derek Shackleton. Our speaker described him as "magnificent" – the greatest medium-paced bowler he ever faced. The seam was always upright through the ball's trajectory and would always therefore move off the pitch. Interestingly, the bowler that Denis Compton most feared was Shack's opening partner, Vic Cannings. (Editor's Note: Cannings dismissed Compton nine times – more than any other bowler in county cricket except Alec Bedser (13) and Tony Lock (10). However, he played against Surrey almost twice as many times as Hampshire (37 – 19)).

Prior to National Service, Middlesex ensured through their influence with the RAF that Peter Parfitt would be available to play county cricket as often as possible. He was stationed for most of his service in Bedfordshire, from where he was able to travel to Middlesex's indoor school at Finchley and, of course, Lord's. However, on his return to a full season of county cricket in 1959, he struggled more than he thought he would against wise old County pros and Test cricketers. However, he was awarded his county cap in 1960 and his County's new captain in 1961, Ian Bedford, gave him confidence and security by telling him that he would bat at number three throughout the season, with the expectation that he would score 2000 runs. Peter Parfitt duly obliged.

He then described his Test career in some detail (see previous Newsletter). His assessment was brutally honest. He never made runs against Australia, which defined a cricketer's career. Though Alec Bedser told him that he would be selected for the MCC tour of India in 1972-73, he had already decided to retire, a decision prompted by Dennis Lillee dismissing him 4 times in 3 Tests in the 1972 series. He was also in advanced negotiations to manage a pub on the North Yorkshire Moors. He regarded Lillee and Fred Trueman as the finest opening bowlers of his generation, though Charlie Griffith, who clearly threw the ball, was by far the most frightening. He was in awe of Gary Sobers – he found it difficult to believe that there was ever a better all-round cricketer. He felt Alan Davidson matched him as a left-arm swing bowler but as a batsman, he felt that Sobers' tally of Test centuries (29), made usually when batting at six, was extraordinary. In his view, the best off-spin bowler in the last 50 years was his Middlesex colleague, Fred Titmus, who despite his lack of inches was always able to obtain bounce. His record in Australia was exceptional. He also held Bob Appleyard in the highest regard. Primary among left-arm spin bowlers was Derek Underwood. Though the rotations he imparted were never as great as might have been expected, he always landed the ball, like Shackleton, on the seam. Tony Lock and Bishan Bedi were also in the mix.

The best batsmen he saw were Sobers, Greg Chappell, Viv Richards and Sachin Tendulkar, with Ricky Ponting just behind. Earlier, however, he commented that on the basis of remarks made by Sir Leonard Hutton, Compton and Edrich, he was in little doubt that Wally Hammond was the greatest of all batsmen. His early contemporaries said that he could bat brilliantly on all surfaces, unlike his Australian rival Sir Donald Bradman, who on tours of England, tended to pick the wickets on which he played as much as possible. For example, after a poor match at Bristol in 1930, he never played there again on subsequent tours.

He also commented shrewdly on Mike Brearley's initial years of captaincy. After he succeeded our speaker in 1971, he spent the next six years learning the art and it was not until 1976 that Middlesex won a Championship. That was, of course, the prelude to a sustained run of success but he had served a long apprenticeship. Also, Middlesex's upturn success coincided with the arrival of some very good bowlers, some of whom, Mike Selvey, John Emburey and Allan Jones, came from other Counties. Peter Parfitt ended his tour de force with astute comments on the England team and the Ashes series.

In the Q and A session, he was full of praise for Shaun Udal's contribution to Middlesex cricket. He had given the team a sense of direction, which had previously been lacking. Peter Parfitt had provided a truly memorable evening for those present.

THE SUMMER OF 1961 - MERVYN BURDEN

For the remainder of the winter, the Editor will be recalling some of the less publicised aspects of Hampshire's first Championship summer of 1961, fifty years ago.

Probably the unluckiest man in that tumultuous success, which still remains fresh in the memory, was the fair-haired, toothy grinned off-spin bowler, Mervyn Burden. He played in only 12 of the 32 Championship matches during the season, yet took 45 wickets at 21.51 to finish second behind Derek Shackleton in the County's bowling averages. Apart from the tourist match against the Australians at the end of August, he did not appear in first-class cricket after the encounter with Glamorgan at Dean Park, Bournemouth in mid-July. And yet, until that date, he had bowled his team to victory in two crucial matches, both against Somerset.

The first was the second fixture of the season at the Agricultural Showgrounds at Frome. The pitch was a slow turner and unreliable from the start. Roy Marshall described it as "dreadful" and Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie remarked that "the ball came through at varying heights". On the first day, a Saturday, the Hampshire captain won the toss and decided to bat. On a day truncated by rain showers, Hampshire were only able to reach 57 for the loss of two wickets. There was one compensation in that the players were able to watch a great Tottenham Hotspur side complete the double by defeating Leicester City in the F.A. Cup Final by two goals to nil. The second day belonged almost entirely to Mervyn Burden. After Hampshire had struggled to 157 at

2.17 per over, Somerset were bowled out for 102, with Burden taking a career best 8 for 38. At one stage, he took five wickets for one run in a remarkable spell of 31 balls – Ingleby-Mackenzie averred that his figures would have been even better “if my large posterior had not prevented me from bending quickly enough to accept an easy catch at mid-wicket”. Burden’s figures remained unsurpassed by any bowler in the Championship that year. The war of attrition continued with Hampshire being dismissed for only 116, Henry Horton contributing 49 – by far the highest score of the match. Ken Palmer, fast-medium, did most to restrict the Hampshire batting with figures of 5 for 19 in 17.5 parsimonious overs.

Somerset therefore required 172 to win. Hampshire looked set for victory when the ninth wicket fell at 113 but they were then held up by a stand of 40 between Brian Langford and Michael Latham, making his County debut. Just as the nail biting commenced, “Butch” White, in his first major intervention of the summer, bowled Langford for 39 to give Hampshire a narrow 14 run win. Burden had taken 4 for 70 in 30 overs to give him match figures of 12 for 108 – another career best. He was assisted by Peter Sainsbury (3 for 58 in 31 overs) and two run outs from mid-on by his captain, not always the most reliable fielder. The charismatic Ingleby-Mackenzie first threw out opener Lawrence before repeating the feat to run out his opposite number, Harold Stephenson. Whilst the latter was half way down the pitch he shouted “You’ll never do it again”; he left muttering “miracles will never cease”. Nevertheless, the match winner was Mervyn Burden.

The match was the last first-class fixture to be staged at Frome, and Burden’s innings and match figures remain etched in posterity as ground records.

Hampshire played Somerset again at Dean Park three weeks later. In the intervening period they had beaten Surrey in a famous match at The Oval, and Lancashire at Portsmouth, drawn with Northamptonshire and Yorkshire, and lost to Kent and Lancashire at Old Trafford. They had not obtained any points from their previous three matches. A win was therefore vital if the County were to mount a realistic Championship challenge.

The portents were ominous halfway through the second day. The spinners held sway from the start and Hampshire were dismissed for only 137 in three hours; Langford taking 6 for 54. Somerset were five runs in the lead with six wickets remaining by close of play. Against the spin of Burden (3 for 126 in 43.3 overs) and Sainsbury (6 for 57 in 31 overs) they eked out a lead of 102 on the second morning.

The wicket was now wearing badly. Roy Marshall certainly did not fancy his side’s chances. And yet the incomparable West Indian then embarked on what was probably the finest innings of his career. He had suffered a recent dip in form and was far from confident as he began his innings. Early on, he groped at a delivery, from Palmer, which took the inside edge and shaved the leg stump en route to the boundary. Thereafter, however, “everything clicked”. He simply took the Somerset bowling apart as he and Jimmy Gray wiped off the arrears and put on 155 in 142 minutes for the first wicket. The

latter was the first to depart; he had been a virtual bystander in making 38. Despite Horton's early dismissal, Marshall continued to make hay as he and Danny Livingstone then plundered 112 in 84 minutes.

His innings of 212 – a new career best at the time – occupied only 260 minutes and included no fewer than 142 in boundaries (seven 6's and twenty-five 4's). It was an innings that exemplified his rare genius. The next highest individual score by a Hampshire player in the match was Livingstone's second innings 49. Ingleby-Mackenzie declared the Hampshire innings at 363 for six, setting Somerset 262 to win, in 222 minutes.

The scene was set for an exciting finish. Mervyn Burden responded to the challenge magnificently. After an opening stand of 73 between Graham Atkinson and Geoff Lomax, which ended with the latter's run out, he performed the role of executioner by running through the Somerset batting finishing with 7 for 72 in 25 overs. Victory was achieved by 63 runs with 40 minutes to spare. In the two matches against the cider county, Burden had taken 22 wickets.

The victory at Dean Park was the start of a sequence of six consecutive wins. Hampshire were now very genuine contenders. As for Mervyn Burden, his form tailed off and he was replaced by Alan Wassell as the second spinner (behind Sainsbury) for the match against Surrey at Bournemouth starting on 19 July. The young slow left-artermer from Gosport grabbed his opportunity with relish, emerging as the match winner (Hampshire triumphed by 58 runs) with figures of 5 for 76 and 7 for 87. Though Burden outbowled his rival in the tourist match against Australia at Southampton, Wassell took the field in the defining following game against Derbyshire, when Hampshire clinched the title. He was made twelfth man for that historic match.

Though he played more in 1962, when he took 65 wickets, he retired in 1963. He could look back, though, with a warm glow on his early season form in 1961, when John Arlott averred that he probably bowled better than anytime in his career, which did so much to bring that much cherished first Championship to Hampshire. Mervyn Burden died at Whitchurch on 9 November 1987, the first of the 1961 Championship side to pass away.

HAMPSHIRE IN THE CARIBBEAN T20 COMPETITION

Hampshire boosted their reputation in the shortest form of the game by reaching the final of the Caribbean T20 competition in January. Shorn by long term injuries, and some of last year's title winning side being engaged elsewhere, it was a gritty performance by Hampshire's young squad. Seven of those who played in the final few matches were aged 22 and under.

On slow wickets favourable to spin, it was a low scoring competition with an innings total of 150 proving to be a winning one. After a ring rusty performance and defeat against Canada in the opening match, the County then beat Barbados in a thriller, via the Super Over, in the following encounter at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua. It was a match in which Hampshire twice looked to be in a comfortable position yet squandered the

advantage and it took a shrewd final over from Simon Jones to secure a tie (136 for 3; 136 all out). In the eliminator, Barbados failed to score, Jones dismissing Dwayne Smith and Carlo Morris in the first 3 balls (the innings ceases once two batsmen lose their wickets in the Super Over). A Hampshire victory therefore looked a formality. However, Sean Ervine, who had earlier made a typically forthright 32 off 19 balls, made a fearful hash of a reverse sweep off Suleiman Benn's first ball, and then James Vince nervously played and missed at the next two, before despatching a full toss backward of point for the winning run.

Hampshire were more assured in their next fixture against the Leeward Islands winning by 46 runs. Their chances of reaching the semi-final were then placed on a knife edge after rain ruined their final group match against Trinidad and Tobago. However, the latter hammered Barbados by 51 runs to allow the County to progress further.

Hampshire defeated the Windward Islands in the semis more comfortably than the margin of 4 runs suggests. They were always ahead of the game. In the Final, though, they fell short to Trinidad and Tobago, the best team in the Competition, by 36 runs. The star of the match was the emerging Darren Bravo, who is undoubtedly one of the finest young batsmen in the world. Tall and elegant, with a Lara – like back lift, he is a clean striker of the ball, emanating from wondrous timing.

The County's success was founded on a prolific opening partnership between captain Jimmy Adams and Johann Myburgh. The South African excelled with a six laden 76 against the Leewards before following up with an even more aerial 88 – the tournament's joint top score – in the semi-final against the Windward Islands. The importance of the opening axis was demonstrated by their both being shackled and dismissed early on in the Final. Sean Ervine and James Vince, the latter increasingly as the tournament went on, also batted well. Benny Howell also batted aggressively at the end of the innings particularly in the Final.

The other prime factor in the County's fortunes were Simon Jones and Hamza Riazzudin. Jones invariably made early inroads into the opposition batting and brought his experience to bear at the death. He bowled with genuine pace at times, particularly against Barbados. He was simply too fast for their top order. Riazzudin bowled with intelligence and accuracy. The youngster swung the semi-final decisively in Hampshire's favour with his 4 for 15. Both men took 12 wickets, more than any other bowler in the tournament. Jimmy Adams captained more assertively with each match. He positively grew into the role. The team also held their catches.

Other impressions of the tournament were that it was played before pitifully small crowds. The generous waistlines of a number of the West Indians were also very surprising!