

-THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

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ANNUAL DINNER – Wednesday 4 December 2013

It is fitting that, at the conclusion of the 40th anniversary of Hampshire's second county championship in 1973, the Society should proudly welcome the captain of that side to our Annual Dinner. **RICHARD GILLIAT** has considerable claims to be the County's most successful captain. Between the years from 1973 to 1978, he led a team that created a golden age of Hampshire cricket. That 1973 success was, arguably, the most surprising in the history of the competition. Hampshire were quoted at 66-1 at the start of the season, yet went through the summer undefeated. With a modest bowling attack, though all had a point to prove, Hampshire won 10 of their 20 matches. In nine of those victories, they bowled out the opposition twice. In the match that decided the championship, against Gloucestershire at Bournemouth, they took 19 wickets. It was a side that possessed some strong personalities, and yet our speaker moulded them into a team, in every sense of word. Many of that side have since claimed that they would not have won the competition without his leadership and man management skills.

In 1974, with Andy Roberts in harness and terrorising batsmen all over the country (has any Hampshire bowler ever bowled as fast as did the Antiguan throughout that summer?), they were cruelly robbed of a second successive title by the weather. In three of the four matches leading to the end of season fixture against Yorkshire at Bournemouth, rain curtailed play to two days (plus 15 minutes in one case). In all those matches, a Hampshire victory was virtually assured. Even in the other match, against Glamorgan at Cardiff, which was lost, overnight rain at the end of the first day completely altered the pitch, and took the match away from Hampshire when they initially looked to be heading for a victory in two days. And, of course, in that last match, it rained...and rained...and rained. Hampshire could not even take the field. Worcestershire eventually pipped them by two points; it was the most blatant case of grand larceny in county championship history.

Though his team played less convincingly, they only just missed out again in 1975, finishing third. No other Hampshire captain can match this astonishing sequence of consecutive championship positions. The county's nemesis in 1975 was Leicestershire. The latter won their first championship, and disposed of Hampshire with five balls remaining in the semi-final of the Benson and Hedges Cup. However, the county gained compensation by winning their first limited-overs competition, the John Player (Sunday) League (JPSL).

He led the county to another success in the JPSL in 1978. That success was crafted out of considerable adversity that really tested the squad's mettle and resilience. Both Barry Richards and Andy Roberts turned their backs on the county within the space of four days at the end of July. The team responded magnificently, not least the captain, who, with typical unselfishness, promoted

himself to open the batting. He and Gordon Greenidge twice started the innings with century partnerships, and twice put on over 50.

RICHARD MICHAEL CHARLES GILLIAT was born in Ware, Hertfordshire on 20 May 1944. He learnt his cricket on the perfect wickets of Charterhouse School before going to Oxford University, where he gained blues for both cricket and soccer. He also played for Oxford City whilst he was there. He played in each of the four University matches at Lord's from 1964-67, and captained Oxford in the last two of those years. In 1966, he not only led his team to victory by an innings, but also chalked up a win against Lancashire. He was clearly a leader in the making.

He first played for Hampshire in 1966. When he came down from Oxford in the following season, he batted at three, the place occupied for a decade previously by the redoubtable Henry Horton. They were very large boots to fill. He was still finding his feet in 1968 but his batting blossomed in 1969. He enjoyed his best season (1386 runs) and made his career best score of 223 not out against Warwickshire at Northlands Road. It was also the highest score by any batsman during the season. He was now spoken of as a test candidate but, crucially, he missed all but three matches in 1970 due to injury.

He was captain when he returned for the 1971 season. He inherited a team in transition and had to establish his authority both as captain and batsman. He selflessly moved himself down to number four to accommodate David Turner. Two years later, he went in at five, to facilitate Trevor Jesty's rise. A left-hander, the keynotes to Richard Gilliat's batting were its elegance and that he always played in the interests of his side, even if it meant losing his wicket. He was capable of pushing the score along at headlong pace, and defending stubbornly if the situation so required.

He was seen at his best during Portsmouth Week at the start of August in that championship summer of 1973. He had not scored a century since 1969, but now made two in a week, both on difficult pitches. First, he (110) and Turner (98) dominated the innings against Essex. A feature of the partnership was their running between the wickets. Only one other batsman, Bob Stephenson (11), reached double figures in a total of 253. He then made 103 against Derbyshire three days later. He was a very fine fielder, first at gully and then at mid-off. His 23 catches in 1973, mostly in the latter station, made a significant contribution to the triumph.

When he left Hampshire after the challenges of the 1978 season, he had played in 220 matches, scored 9358 runs (avge. 30.09) including 16 centuries and held 181 catches. He went to work in the City and later returned to his old school.

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