

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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

## NEWSLETTER No. 333 – FEBRUARY 2014

### Wednesday 5 February 2014 – Meeting

Members will have fond recollections of this evening's speaker, Andy Murtagh. They will remember his shoulder length hair, droopy moustache and a smile which was never far away. Whether batting, bowling or fielding he conveyed a sense of fun and enjoyment. There was not a more enthusiastic cricketer. His stay with Hampshire was brief but in those five years between 1973 and 1977, he played a part-time but crucial role in Hampshire winning the County Championship in 1973 and the John Player League two years later.

**ANDREW JOSEPH MURTAGH** was born in Dublin on 6 May 1949. He received his education at St. Joseph's College, Beulah Hill, London, before attending Southampton University to read English. Primarily a right-handed batsman, who later developed his right-arm medium-paced bowling, he first played for Surrey 2<sup>nd</sup> XI in 1967 and 1968, before making his Hampshire 2nd XI debut in 1969.

He became one of the 13 players to appear for the county in their championship year of 1973. He made a notable debut at Hove, in mid-January, top-scoring with 47 in the first innings and an undefeated 37 not out in the second. The latter was a backs-to-the-wall effort as he and Peter Sainsbury (18 not out) batted through the last ninety minutes to secure a draw against the pace of John Snow and the spin of Uday Joshi and Mike Buss. Hampshire had previously slumped from 99 for one to 109 for five. He and Sainsbury again performed a fourth innings rescue act a month later against Glamorgan at Portsmouth a month later. After Hampshire had slumped to 18 for four, the pair defended stoutly for the last 35 overs putting on an unbeaten 30. Our speaker's share was 21. Hampshire were without Barry Richards and Trevor Jesty for that match and when they returned at Southport a week later it marked the end of Andy Murtagh's six match championship endeavours for the season.

One feature of his 2<sup>nd</sup> XI cricket that year was a close hand view of Andy Roberts' devastation of batting sides.

He did not play for the first team in 1974 but returned again in 1975 when he made his highest score of 65 against Gloucestershire at Bournemouth. It was a fine lone hand as the county struggled against the medium-paced movement of Jack Davey, Julian Shackleton and Roger Knight. His efforts took Hampshire to 204. It seemed a relatively low total but after dismissing Gloucestershire for 196, Hampshire eventually ran out winners by 174 runs as the wicket took spin on the last two days. He also played in eight matches in Hampshire's John Player League title winning side that season.

He went on to make his highest score in limited-overs cricket of 65 not out against Derbyshire at Bournemouth in the JPL in the next season, as well as being a member of the Hampshire side that won the Tilcon Trophy at Harrogate and Fenner Trophy at Scarborough later in the season.

After his brief sojourn into county cricket he began his teaching career first at Stroud School, Romsey. He joined Malvern College in 1980 to teach English and to manage cricket. He remained in these posts for 30 years, and was a housemaster for eighteen. Now retired, he has embarked on a third career as a writer. In 2012, his biography of "*George Chesterton – A Remarkable Man*", the former Worcestershire cricketer and fellow teacher at Malvern was shortlisted for the MCC-Cricket Society Book of the Year. It is an excellent read.

This is Andy Murtagh's second appearance at the Society. He previously spoke at Basingstoke Sports Centre on 26 January 1978.

### **Wednesday 4 December 2013 – Report**

Members enjoyed a splendidly nostalgic evening in the company of Richard Gilliat. He began by saying that he was a Yorkshire supporter as a boy as he had an affinity with their left-handers. His Grandfather played for England at football; he scored a hat-trick but never played again as he was a vicar and matches in those far-off days were on a Sunday. He described his schooldays at Charterhouse under the tutelage of George Geary and Doug Wright before recounting the circumstances of his being accepted at Oxford University. The University had turned down a previous Carthusian, Peter May, and were anxious to ensure that there was not a repetition!

Whilst at Charterhouse he turned out for Surrey 2<sup>nd</sup> XI but never felt comfortable there and so when he was invited to join Hampshire by Desmond Eagar he accepted immediately. He then moved on to two of Hampshire's greats. He first saw Barry Richards when the latter played for South African Schools at Charterhouse. He recounted that when overseas players were allowed to play without a residential qualification in 1969, Hampshire thought they had signed Clive Lloyd. The county had agreed terms with him but he subsequently received a better offer from Lancashire. Richards had predicted he would score 2000 runs in his first season but his first innings at Hove resulted in him being lbw to John Snow for a duck. However, he made a half-century in the second and subsequently fulfilled his prediction. He later recalled the now legendary Richards/Bedi duel at Southampton in 1973 which was one of the most enjoyable moments of his career.

He first saw Gordon Greenidge play for Berkshire Barbours. With one pad and no gloves he battered a club and ground side at Northlands Road. Desmond Eagar signed him up virtually as he left the field. He then endured a wretched season in the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI and was only retained by a 7/6 vote by the Committee. He then bulked up by physical work in the ensuing winter, and such was his improvement, he made his Hampshire debut at the end of the following season.

Another of the great Hampshire players he recalled was Roy Marshall, who was a “fantastic” batsman but whose captaincy was the antithesis of his batting. However, a partnership with Marshall restored his confidence in 1969 after he was hit on the head by Keith Boyce. After retiring hurt, he returned to the crease with Marshall suggesting they go for quick runs. Everything flew off the middle of the bat as he raced to the season’s fastest century. It was also the prelude to his most successful season with the bat.

When asked about the 1973 Championship, he said the success was founded on confidence from an early run of wins. There were also no long-term injuries or test calls. The team scored their runs quickly and therefore had more time to bowl sides out. He also enjoyed the support of a good background team in Desmond Eagar, Charles Knott and Geoffrey Ford. In the Q&A session he answered a question on the Andy Roberts/David O’Sullivan issue. Hampshire’s priority was a fast bowler. The decision was partly influenced by doubts about the legitimacy of the New Zealand’s bowling action. He recounted that Hampshire had been offered two young players by the Antigua Cricket Association. Staggeringly, both Roberts and Viv Richards had been turned down by Surrey and Essex. Hampshire could take, of course, only one of them. He touched on the celebration dinner in the summer and commented on how good it was to see Tom Mottram again.

He gave up cricket because it became a job rather than a game. He doubted if he would have stayed as long if he had not been captain. (Editor’s note: Nick Pocock expressed similar sentiments at the Annual Dinner two years earlier)

On the current game, he thought players put too much pressure on umpires and that gamesmanship and sledging had gone too far. He thought that test cricketers were setting a bad example to youngsters. Over rates were slow and he wondered whether bowlers were being injured though being athletically fit, rather than bowling fit.

It was an hour of wisdom and reminiscence which was thoroughly appreciated by all those present. Members then enjoyed a further hour and a half with an excellent meal and good conversation.

### **JOHN ARLOTT CENTENARY**

The 25<sup>th</sup> of this month will mark the centenary of the birth of John Arlott. He was, of course, one of the Society’s original patrons and remained so until his death in January 1992. All members will have their own memories of his broadcasting and, thankfully, some of his most evocative commentaries are available on compact disc. Also, readers of the Hampshire Handbook in the 1950s and 1960s will remember his affectionate biographical character studies of Hampshire’s beneficiaries. Apart from *Fred: Portrait of a Fast Bowler* and a monograph of Maurice Tate, those articles were arguably his best cricket literary work.

As might be expected, he has been featured many times in the Newsletter. Newsletter No 15 remains one of the editor's favourites. Phil Bichard's splendid biography and a description of the old Basingstoke in which John grew up have been revisited time and again. The Newsletter was for his first appearance at Society on Tuesday 25 October 1977 at Basingstoke Sports Centre. He duly attracted the first audience of over a hundred.

His second and last visit was the most emotionally charged in the Society's history. It was at the Society's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Buffet Supper on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1985 in the Carnival Hall, Basingstoke, located behind Fairfield's School, which he attended some 60 years earlier. Before members, previous speakers and former and current Hampshire players, he gave a memorable fifteen minute address full of nostalgic memories of Philip Mead and George Brown and other great players in Hampshire cricket. It was his last public appearance.

In other Newsletters, Hampshire's poet Imogen Grosberg celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in the March 1984 edition, and wrote *John Arlott-A Memory* in January 1992. The following Newsletter included a marvellous account of his Memorial Service at New Alresford Church by our then chairman, John Young.

### **MORE THOUGHTS ON THE ASHES SERIES**

At the time of writing, no official in the England set-up has fallen on their sword. It seems extraordinary that no heads have rolled after such an inept performance. On the playing side, England may do well to look at events after the 4-0 thrashing on the 1958-59 tour. On that occasion, the selectors jettisoned virtually the whole squad and built a new team around May, Cowdrey, Trueman and Statham. An obvious quartet from which to adopt a similar approach now is Cook (but surely not as captain), Root, Stokes and Broad. England will need to look at players who can cope with Australia's "in the face" tactics. There are such players in England's limited-overs squads. One obvious candidate is Joss Butler. He will undoubtedly profit from a full season behind the stumps at Lancashire this summer and, indeed, could find himself in the test team early on. Eoin Morgan also staked his claims in the following ODIs.

A comment must be made about Michael Carberry. He scored more runs on the tour than any other player and most runs for England in the tests apart from Kevin Pieterse. It is a fact he got a start in many of his ten innings but failed to capitalise. However, it was his first test series and the quality of the bowling he faced was exceptional. He will surely learn from the experience. Much has been made of his age (33), but Chris Rogers (late of South Wilts CC in the Southern League) scored two centuries in the recent series at the age of 36. Also, given that he is the most punitive batsman in the domestic shortened forms of the game, it seemed obtuse not to play him in the ODIs