

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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

**NEWSLETTER No. 337 – September 2014**

## MEETINGS

### **Wednesday 10 September 2014 – Meeting**

Tonight's speaker, **GRAHAME LLOYD**, originally spoke to the Society at their meeting in February 2010 when his subject was Gary Sobers' six 6's at Swansea in 1968, on which he had written the book *Six of the Best: Cricket's Most Famous Over*. For this evening's meeting, he will be telling members about the "six sixes ball". It is a saga which is full of intrigue and, indeed, notoriety.

He has also written *A Hundred Years of the Bluebirds*, a history of Cardiff City, biographies of the footballers Jan Molby and Terry Yorath, and an official celebration of Glamorgan's 1997 County Championship triumph.

Our speaker went to school in Lincolnshire before joining the Western Mail in Cardiff in 1972. He gained an English and politics degree at Sheffield University in 1978 and then became a BBC Wales staff news producer. After turning freelance in 1981, he has accumulated a wealth of varied media experience, ranging from covering news, current affairs and sport for BBC Wales, as well as making TV and radio commentaries. He has also presented conferences, and interviewed authors at the world renowned Hay Literary Festival.

### **Wednesday 26 March 2014 – Report**

The three representatives of Southampton's Hospital Broadcasting Team treated their audience to a most interesting and enlightening evening. Alan Lambourn, Station Director and also the voice of Sky TV's football results, opened the innings with an account of the history of HBA and its sports coverage. It was a situation that progressed from an improvised Heath Robinson affair in 1952 to state of the art sophistication sixty or so years later. Funding was also an initial issue – it was partially financed originally from receipts from collection and selling of wastepaper.

John Young then covered the history of the HBA's association with the County Ground at Northlands Road. The original broadcasting in July 1956 was a garden shed perched on top of the flat roofed office box. Access was via a ladder. Norman Olden, a long term supporter of HBA and a man who had viewed thousands of films, then financed a new commentary box at the Northlands Road end, which those who watched Hampshire in the last 40 years there will remember fondly as a feature of the ground. It was on a brick plinth high above the bowler's end with proper step access. John recounted the great storm of 1987 which destroyed the sightcreens. Their replacements were built too high with the result that on the morning of the first match in the following season, John discovered he and his colleagues encountered an obstructed view. Tom Flintoff then came to the rescue by providing milk crates to elevate the commentators' seats. However, that solution created another hazard;

the headroom had been reduced and John gashed his head. A more long-term solution was later provided by an additional six layers of bricks. After further reminiscences, John ended his slot by outlining the qualities required of a commentator: to describe action and non-action; to have a knowledge of cricket; to be able to recognise players.

Cricket Co-ordinator Ken Maxted then provided a few anecdotes on visitors to the commentary box before describing the many developments regarding coverage from the Ageas Bowl. He recalled an unexpected visit from Barry Richards who then accepted the invitation to commentate on a few overs. He thought he was actually in the Radio Solent box, where he was scheduled to talk at the time he arrived with HBA! A further interesting snippet from his visit was that he said that the only bowler whom he felt had his measure was Derbyshire's Mike Hendrick. Showbiz visitors included Roy Castle and Robert Powell. He mentioned that the HBA set up the first scorecard of a 2<sup>nd</sup> XI match. The fixture concerned was the last played at Dean Park in 1992, between the second XIs of Hampshire and Leicestershire.

There had been three commentary positions at the Ageas Bowl. The original was a portacabin which he and his colleagues liked as it was warm and snug. The next was literally the polar opposite – out in the open on top of the pavilion, when early season temperatures were below 10 degrees. They then moved to the East (Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie) Stand which was fitted out with very modern facilities. A big lounge was behind it in which coffee/tea/biscuits and a good meal were available on big match days. He also described how he and his team had helped Radio Solent on a couple of occasions at the start of the football season when Alan Mullally was struggling on his own. He ended by describing new technological developments. Through Ben Grant's on line radio station Beat Port FM, listeners were able to tune into HBA's broadcasts in their own homes via computer, i pads, tablets and smartphones. There were listeners in the Houses of Parliament(!) as well as from overseas as far as Hong Kong. The latest development was for listeners to be able to call the commentator on a link via the Hampshire Cricket Website. Ken touched upon the proposed new Media Centre which will be part of the new Hotel complex. At this stage it was not known if HBA will be broadcasting from there.

### **HCS SPONSORSHIP IN THE ATRIUM**

Members who have travelled to the Ageas Bowl this season will be aware of Dave Allen's initiative to cover the ironwork in the Atrium with quotes from the works of John Arlott on Hampshire players, in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JA's birth. The Society has sponsored quotes on five players: Lionel Tennyson, Charles Knott, Mike Barnard, Richard Gilliat and Mike Taylor.

## IMOGEN GROSBERG: HAMPSHIRE'S BARD

Longstanding supporters of Hampshire cricket will be sad to learn that Imogen Grosberg died on 20 June. Genny was wonderfully supportive of the Society, producing 58 different poems for the Newsletter between 1982 and 2013. She was the first female speaker to address the Society – in December 1991, and was later made an honorary member in acknowledgement of her contribution to the Society.

Apart from a spell in the 1960s when she was bringing up her sons (who also became Hampshire supporters), she celebrated the achievements of the team and its players in verse in the Hampshire Handbook from 1955 until 2008. Andrew Renshaw, David Allen's predecessor as editor of the Handbook, comments: "No Handbook was complete without a poem by Imogen Grosberg. The process would start with a phone call as Genny inquired who was to be the next beneficiary, and in due course her poem would arrive". She also contributed to Benefit Brochures and Hampshire Exiles. Her work was also published in *The Cricketer* and other magazines/booklets on the game. Perhaps most famously, her poem to mark John Arlott's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday appeared in David Rayvern Allen's compilation of his work.

Genny never lived in Hampshire, spending all her early life in Derby and then Crewe. However, when she first saw Hampshire play – at Chesterfield in 1952 – she perceived them to be a happy and cheerful team and decided to adopt them. She maintained that allegiance until her death.

Her earliest mentor was Desmond Eagar. He was a keen admirer of her work and, when they first met, at Burton on Trent in 1954, he encouraged the young Imogen Gibson, as she then was, to contribute to the following year's edition of the Hampshire Handbook. Prompted by the dreadfully wet summer of 1954, she composed two works with a weather theme for the 1955 Handbook.

Her verse became an integral part of the county's rich literary heritage. Andrew confirms that "she had a marvellous ability to conjure up pictures in the mind's eyes of the players, using just a few well-chosen words". Gordon Greenidge was "The Ringmaster" and Trevor Jesty was "Majesty". David Turner was "compact, neat and calm, piercing the covers with a well-timed four". Andrew also writes that "her range and versatility was astonishing. Hampshire supporters were fortunate that she captured in verse the essence of her adopted county and its players for so many years". She brought her pen to bear on such diverse topics such as history, technique, players, all formats of the game, equipment, coaching and travelling to the game. There was much else besides.

In the Hampshire Handbook of 1956 Imogen began her poem "A letter to the Editor" :

Dear Sir, I am trying very hard  
To fill the post of Hampshire's Bard

She succeeded spectacularly.

## **JOHN MANNERS**

John Manners is due to celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 25 September. The career of Lieutenant Commander John Errol Manners is an interesting one. He made his Hampshire debut in 1936 but, having graduated from Dartmouth Royal Naval College, he was a career RN officer. He served with considerable distinction in WW2 and did not play for Hampshire again until 1947. Astonishingly, in his only appearance in that summer, he made 121 out of 192 in 160 minutes against Kent at Canterbury. He played in seven matches for the county between 1936 and 1948 scoring 355 runs (avge 32.27). John Arlott described him thus: "*No player in Hampshire's history was more intriguing....not only was he potentially prolific, but his stroke play was brilliant*". This quote, which Dave Allen found in the Hampshire Handbook 1990, is part of the Arlott collection in the Atrium at the Ageas Bowl.

He went on to score three further centuries for Combined Services, including a career best 147 against Gloucestershire at the Wagon Work Ground in Gloucester in 1948.

He still attends the annual reunion of Hampshire players. Dave Allen comments "*he is a charming man who enjoys his chats, especially with Vic Cannings*".

He will be Hampshire's third Championship centurion, the others being EA English (Hampshire career 1898-1901) and Neil McCorkell (1932-1951). At the time of writing, Vic Cannings is 95 years old, and Leo Harrison is aged 92.

The Society extends the warmest birthday wishes to John Manners.

## **MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL**

Hampshire were present at the christening of a new venue for county cricket when they played Middlesex at Merchant Taylors' School in a T20 match on Sunday 25 May. Those HCS members who watched the game commented on the school's impressively vast estate which included many cricket and rugby pitches, as well as a lake for water sports. Hampshire, of course, went on to win the game by eight wickets.

## **HAMPSHIRE IN THE NAT WEST BLAST T20**

Hampshire supporters were treated to another memorable summer in the newly sponsored T20 competition as they reached finals day for the fifth consecutive year, a record unmatched by any other County. However, their Edgbaston hoodoo continued as they lost their rain truncated semi-final to Lancashire by 41 runs (Duckworth-Lewis). It was their third defeat at the semi-final stage in three appearances at the ground.

It was also disappointing that they should be defeated in what was their worst performance of the season in the competition by far. The afternoon started well as they reduced Lancashire to three for two in the second over. Rain then took the players off the field for nearly an hour after only 14 balls. The interruption should

arguably have favoured Hampshire but the two Lancashire batsmen, Ashwell Prince and Karl Brown, took control as they feasted on a diet of full tosses and a surfeit of short-pitched bowling. Matt Coles endured a match he would wish to forget; not only did the Lancashire batsmen have no trouble in spotting his many variations, he also bowled four wides and dropped two catches. Will Smith, who was Hampshire's third spin bowler at the start of the competition, was the only honourable exception to the profligacy. He finished with three for 15. Prince (72 not out) and Steven Croft (22 not out) pounded 32 off what turned out to be the last two overs. Rain brought Lancashire's innings to a halt at 160 for five after 19 overs.

Under Duckworth-Lewis, Hampshire were required to score 143 off 16 overs. After losing James Vince in the second over and Michael Carberry in the third, their batting simply imploded. Only Jimmy Adams, with a fine 52, provided any resistance as his team were hustled out for 102 in 14.1 overs.

Hampshire's performances in the group stages were a strange mixture of authority and tentativeness. The first match at home, to Glamorgan, was lost. Glen Maxwell had still to arrive from the IPL. The Hampshire management reacted immediately by signing Owais Shah, who was without a club. The county then won five matches on the trot, playing with certainty and confidence. With Maxwell now on the scene, qualification to the quarter-final seemed inevitable. And yet with the Australian misfiring badly (he scored only 127 runs in 11 innings), Hampshire lost three of their last six matches. They therefore qualified in third place. Their victory in the penultimate match against Sussex at home was achieved despite an extraordinary innings of 116 not out by Luke Wright.

They were drawn against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge and when the home side raced to 197 for two, off their 20 overs, any aspirations of a further finals day seemed a pipedream. However, James Vince then played the innings of the season in the competition for Hampshire by making 93 not out, and with splendid support by Carberry (31) and Sean Ervine (39) Hampshire romped home by five wickets with an over to spare.

It was an extraordinary victory. And yet Nottinghamshire had laid bare the frailties of the Hampshire bowling attack. The weaknesses were again exposed in the final. No one could have foreseen, however, that the Hampshire batting would implode so disastrously. It must be said, though, that the county went into finals day without an overseas player.

## **THE HAMPSHIRE LIBRARY**

### **Touched by Greatness: The Story of Tom Graveney, England's Much-Loved Cricketer by Andrew Murtagh (pub Pitch Publishing £18.99)**

Members will recall former Hampshire player Andy Murtagh's address to the Society in February of this year. His talk mirrored his writing style – breezy and conversational which is like a breath of fresh air. He covers the life of Tom Graveney, based on numerous interviews with both his subject, and those who knew him, with much warmth and affection. It is clear that Andy Murtagh is a new vibrant force in the world of cricket biography. This book is highly recommended. It has certainly left the Editor eagerly awaiting his forthcoming book on Barry Richards.

### **A Torch in Flame by Peter Jones (pub Natula Publications £6)**

This book is an outstanding gem. It is subtitled: The story of a county cricket club at war: following five Hampshire cricketers during the First World War. The five concerned were Cecil Abercrombie and Arthur Jaques, who were both killed, Alec Johnston who finished the war with one leg four inches shorter than the other, Hesketh Vernon Hesketh-Prichard who survived the war but died, arguably because his malaria condition was exacerbated by inhaling gas, and Lionel Tennyson, whose war-time experiences undoubtedly influenced his frenetic and chaotic lifestyle afterwards. The three survivors therefore carried the scars of war with them. The participation of the two who died was startlingly brief. The book describes the cricketing lives of all five men as well as their service careers. All of the stories about their war are harrowing, perhaps none more so than Johnston's. The author highlights the bruising experience of his involvement in the court martial and execution of six soldiers for desertion and cowardice. It is obvious from the narrative that he cared deeply for his men and it is impossible to imagine his emotions during and indeed, after, that episode.

There are many other stories about all five men which really bring to life vividly exactly what it was like to go into battle. It is one thing to read names on a War Memorial. To know how they died and were involved adds another dimension together. Peter Jones' book is recommended reading for all those interested in Hampshire cricketers and/or military history.

### **ON BEARDS**

One of the most diverting aspects of the season has been James Tomlinson's luxurious beard. We have become used to designer stubble but a fully fledged beard is a rarity in Hampshire, and indeed, on the county cricket circuit generally. Dave Allen has managed to uncover a photograph of the Hampshire team in 1966 which shows Alan Castell sporting a beard. However, he was asked smartly by Desmond Eagar to shave it off! Given the influence that the latter wielded in the county's affairs, it is almost certain that, before Castell's venture, no other Hampshire player had grown a beard since 1945. If any members know of other instances of bearded Hampshire players, the Editor would be pleased to hear from them.

### **ERRATA**

The Summer mailshot include a number of typos, which a number of members have drawn to the Editor's attention:

-Fixture card-the last four references to 2014 should, of course, be amended to 2015; more embarrassingly, please amend Richard Allison to Ronald Allison (Mr Allison is shown by his correct name on the Speakers' Biographies sheet);

-Newsletter-John Grapes became Acting Treasurer in September 2013, and not 2014.

All the typos are the responsibility of the Editor and he apologises for any confusion caused.

© Copyright Alan Edwards 2014 (NewsletterEditor@HantsCricSoc.org.uk)