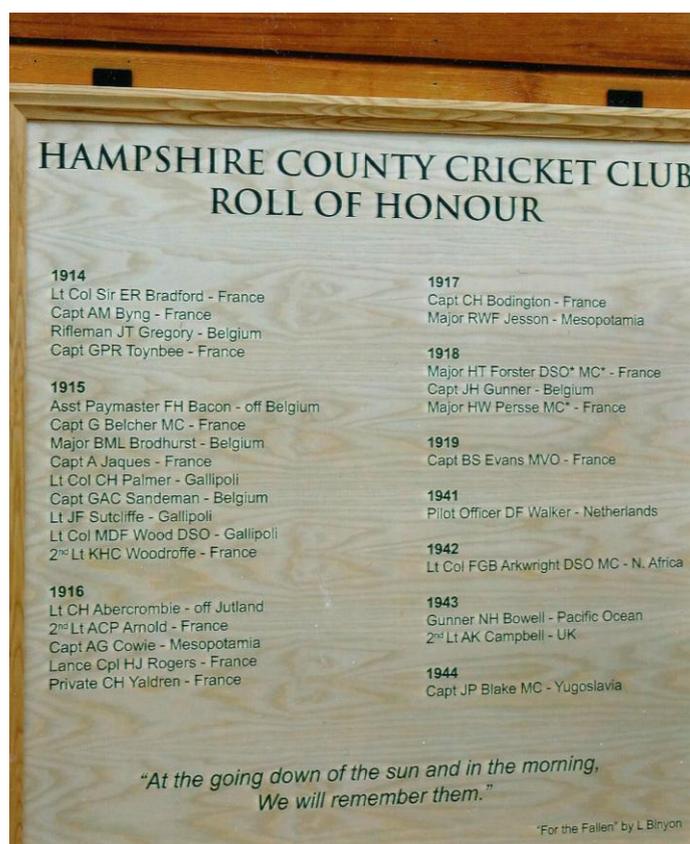


# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 339 - NOVEMBER 2014

## WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



On 27 September, a small ceremony was held in the Atrium at the Ageas Bowl to unveil both a new Honours Board for those 29 Hampshire cricketers who gave their lives in both World Wars, and a Board in tribute to John Arlott to mark the naming of the Arlott Atrium.

The Honours Board for the Fallen was unveiled by Richard Gay and his sister Josephine, who are descendants of Major RWF (Wilfred) Jesson who was killed near Basra in Iraq on 22 February 1917. Mr. Gay outlined his Grandfather's war career. He had previously been wounded at Gallipoli some 18 months earlier and was sent home, not only to recover from his wounds, but also shell shock.

One of the most poignant aspects of the ceremony was the presence of David Blake, whose older brother, Captain John Philip, a Royal Marine Commander, lost his life in a heroic action in Yugoslavia on 3 June 1944, aged 26. The latter had led his troops through a minefield to capture a German strongpoint but met his death when the Germans counter-attacked. He had earlier been awarded the Military Cross for his

outstanding gallantry and leadership in the attack which led to the capture of Mount Ortina in Italy a few months previously.

The Board celebrating John Arlott was opened by his sons, Robert and Timothy. Among the former Hampshire players present was JA's great friend Leo Harrison. In a marvellous double-act David Allen and Terry Crump recited John Arlott's brilliant evocation of the life of a professional cricketer "It ain't half a blooming game" The title emanated from an oft quoted remark by the former Hampshire wicket-keeper. David and Terry left the punchline to be quoted by Leo at the end of the recitation in rather more earthy wording!

### **COMMEMORATION AT THE TEST MATCH**

Before the second day's play of the Test match at the Ageas Bowl, a minute's silence was held to commemorate those who were killed in the First World War. It was a most moving occasion as the crowd stood in complete silence. Those who were still arriving at the ground stopped walking immediately upon discerning the event. Among those on the field in the official ECB party were the descendants of Colin Blythe, the great Kent slow left-arm spin bowler who lost his life at Passchendaele in Belgium on 8 November 1917. Blythe's bullet-dented cigarette case is in the museum at Canterbury. The famous War Memorial in honour of his memory on that ground is currently being refurbished. In a way, it was entirely apposite that Blythe should be commemorated on a Hampshire ground. He took wickets against the county virtually at will. His haul was 166 wickets (avge 16.62), including nine for 30 at Tonbridge in 1904. He also took six for 46 in the second innings. Earlier in the season, he had claimed thirteen for 91 at Southampton. He thus claimed 28 wickets against Hampshire in that season alone.

### **CAPTAIN EVELYN RIDLEY BRADFORD**

In one of the Appendices in his monumental book *Wisden on the Great War: The Lives of Cricket's Fallen 1914-1918*, Andrew Renshaw lists the order in which those men were killed. The earliest was the Hon. Archer Windsor-Clive, who played seven matches for Cambridge University between 1910-1912. He died on 25 August 1914. The first *county* cricketer who fell was Hampshire's Captain ER Bradford on 14 September 1914. In his first volume of autobiography *From Verse to Worse*, Lionel Tennyson described how he died:

After a lull in the fighting, I was astonished to see our Colonel, Biddulph, and Sir Evelyn Bradford, the old Hampshire cricketer, who commanded the Seaforth (Highlanders), come up in the open behind our trenches and call out Jimmy Brownlow, my captain. They all three stood looking at a map, and I heard the words "General Advance". At that moment, two shells burst in rapid succession right by them. Bradford was instantly killed and Brownlow desperately wounded, though he eventually recovered, but our Colonel only had his cap blown off.

Earlier in the day, Tennyson had been hit by a spent piece of shell but not injured. Bradford is commemorated on the War Memorial at Chawton and also on a plaque in the idyllically located village church which stands alongside Chawton House, fringed by a stream, and water meadows. He came from a soldiering family and was distantly related to Jane Austen by his first marriage. At the time of his death, he left

a two-year old son. The tragedy was compounded when that son disappeared whilst flying with the RAF in the eastern Mediterranean in the Second World War.

David Allen is intending to write a little booklet on those Hampshire men who were killed in both World Wars, for publication at the start of next season.

## **MEETINGS**

### **Wednesday 12 November 2014 - Meeting**

As mentioned in previous newsletters, this is the Society's first afternoon meeting. We are pleased to welcome **DEREK ANDREWS**, who is a lifelong Hampshire supporter and member for 45 years. Through Hampshire, Derek became the last BBC TV Cricket Scorer (before Sky), covering who covered 140 Sunday League matches, the 1983 World Cup and numerous other one-day matches. He pioneered computer graphics and worked with great commentators such as Richie Benaud, Christopher Martin-Jenkins, Jim Laker, Peter Walker and Geoffrey Boycott. Society members will therefore receive a privileged account of life in the commentary box at today's meeting.

### **MEETINGS 2015**

The first two meetings in 2015 are both at the Ageas Bowl starting at 8pm. On Wednesday 7 January the speakers will be Dennis Amiss' former captain MJK Smith and the latter's biographer Douglas Miller. On Wednesday 4 February the speaker is Anthony Gibson, broadcaster and author. He is the son of the famous broadcaster and writer Alan Gibson. He is an editor of his father's work and two other books on West Country authors and cricket's Wandering Eleven (co-authored with Stephen Chalke). He has appeared twice at Dorset Cricket Society and the Editor can vouch for the fact that members will enjoy an excellent evening in his company.

### **HCS PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2014**

#### **JAMES VINCE**

#### **A SEASON OF RECORDS**

For the past six years, one of the great pleasures of watching Hampshire play has been to watch James Vince at the crease. He is one of those batsmen who is easy on the eye. A few strokes from him, particularly the seemingly effortless and well-timed cover drive, is invariably the highlight of any day. That is not to say he cannot score elsewhere; he has shots all around the compass, invariably struck cleanly. He is happy against pace and spin alike. Such is his obvious class, those looking on are always disappointed when he is dismissed, especially when it seems it could have been avoided. Such occasions were much rarer in 2014. Hitherto, though, it has been easy to forget just how young he is. He made his championship debut, against Nottinghamshire at the Ageas Bowl, as an 18 year old and top-scored with 75 in the second innings. He was rarely in any trouble. He had already laid down a marker that he was an exceptional talent.

Apart from Gordon Greenidge, it is difficult to remember another young homegrown Hampshire batsman establishing his place so quickly. In the past 18 months he has undoubtedly batted with more concentration and more discerning shot selection, but without losing any fluency. He is still only 23 years old. Though the quality that

James Vince brings to his cricket can never be measured solely in statistics, it is figures that eventually define a cricketer's career. His portfolio is already most impressive. **He has scored more centuries – 14 – for Hampshire than any other batsman at the same age in the county's entire history**, even more than Mead, Richards, Greenidge and Robin Smith. Even if he does not score any centuries in 2015 (surely unlikely) he will still have scored more centuries than any 24 year old.

In 2014, he was the country's leading run scorer. Only three Hampshire batsmen have achieved the feat previously: Philip Mead (1911, 1913 and 1921), Barry Richards (1968) and Gordon Greenidge (1986).

Despite a first innings duck, he was also the first batsman to reach 1000 runs last season, thus joining Philip Mead (14 June 1923), Chris Smith (1983) and the unsung Tony Middleton (1992). Smith, Middleton and Vince all reached the landmark on 17 June.

Also, he attained 1000 runs in his 16<sup>th</sup> innings, a number exceeded only by RM Poore (11 in 1899), Richards (15 in 1975) and Greenidge (15 in 1983). Phil Mead also took 16 innings to achieve the landmark in 1928,

When he scored his 246 against Essex at the Ageas Bowl in June, he became Hampshire's second youngest double-centurion, behind the imperious Richards.

James Vince's achievements therefore already stand comparison with the greatest of all Hampshire's batsmen. It is strange that he has found runs so hard to come by in the England Lions side. When he does so, it can only be a matter of time before he finds his way into the England side.

Hampshire also blooded him as a potential future captain when he took the reins for the T20 competition. He looked less assured as the competition progressed, and apart from his splendid 92 not out against Nottinghamshire that took Hampshire to finals day, his batting form dipped. Nevertheless, he will have learnt much and will surely emerge stronger from the experience.

### **MICHAEL BATES**

Hampshire's decision not to renew the contract of Michael Bates represents, in effect, a litmus test for the future of the specialist wicket-keeper. Many feel that he is the best Hampshire wicket-keeper that they have seen in their lifetime. Statistically, his average dismissals per match of 3.1 is the most by *any* Hampshire wicket-keeper. It should be remembered that he generally kept to a weak bowling attack where chances were few and far between. When he spoke to the Society last winter, Bob Parks stated that he had only ever seen two superior wicket-keepers in Alan Knott and Jack Russell.

He watched the ball into soft hands. His glovework was always impeccable. He affected a number of quicksilver stumpings, especially down the legside. He stood up frequently to fast-medium bowlers in the limited-overs game and such was his prowess that many batsmen were deterred from leaving their crease. His presence meant that the opposition often posted lower totals than might otherwise have been the case.

He made his Hampshire debut in 2010 in the final T20 group match against Sussex at the Ageas Bowl, aged 19. He was so impressive that he retained his place for the rest of the competition and played in that riveting final under the Ageas Bowl lights against Somerset. He displaced Nic Pothas, Hampshire's finest ever wicket-keeper/batsman, in the following season.

In 2012, with the bat, he scored productively in championship matches in the early part of the season culminating in an accomplished maiden first-class century of 103, in 162 minutes, against Yorkshire at Headingley. He never batted whilst the ensuing T20 competition took place over the next month and never found the same form afterwards. He was, though, an ever-present in the trophy winning sides in the T20 and CB40 competitions. Those who saw it will always remember the stumping off a full toss off the last ball of the match from Kabir Ali to secure victory in the final of the latter competition, against Warwickshire at Lord's. In that summer, he also claimed 57 victims in first-class cricket, joint top with Geraint Jones amongst the wicketkeepers in Division 2. He claimed an average of 3.35 dismissals per match; a figure exceeded only by Pothas, in 2006 and 2007.

In the autumn of that year he was offered a new two-year contract. He seemed destined for a long career. However, the situation changed dramatically when Hampshire signed Adam Wheeler, who possessed a far better batting average, just before the start of the 2013 season. The die was cast.

There was a brief period in 2014 when, due to injuries and absences, Wheeler played as a specialist batsman whilst Bates kept wicket, but, such was the pressure on him, he never did himself justice with the bat. And so, with the advent of Tom Alsop, a wicketkeeper who scored prolifically for England under 19s against their South African counterparts during the summer, Hampshire decided not to offer him another contract.

Having only just attained the age of 24, it would be a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions if Michael Bates is now lost to county cricket. At the time of writing, no other county has offered him a contract. Will he be remembered as the last of his type? If so, it will be a sad day for the game of cricket as a whole.

Besides his three Cup Final winning medals, other career highlights were appearances for Hampshire in the Caribbean T20 competition in 2010/11 and the Champions League in South Africa at the end of the 2012 season.

### **DAVID BALCOMBE**

David Balcombe also played his last match for Hampshire in 2014. Happily, he has now joined former Kent coach, Graham Ford, under whom he played in 2012, at Surrey on a two year contract.

Tall and strongly built, David Balcombe was a whole-hearted trier who perhaps never quite fulfilled his undoubted talent with the ball at Hampshire. This was partly due to a succession of injuries, but also because he was often unable to control the swing.

His best season was in 2012 when he took 64 wickets (avge. 26.11). This tally included a return of eight for 71 against Gloucestershire at the Ageas Bowl, a ground record. It also remains his career best analysis. He enjoyed a most successful year or so from the latter part of the 2011 season until the end of the following summer. In the former year, he was unable to gain a place in the Hampshire side and went on loan to Kent, for whom he claimed 33 wickets (avge. 17.81) in only five matches. In that year, the second division ball had a prouder seam and he made full use of it.

Notwithstanding his record bowling figures for the Ageas Bowl, David Balcombe is likely to remain in posterity for his penchant for sharing in large tenth wicket partnerships. In 2012 he shared a stand of 168 in just 22 overs with Chris Wood against Leicestershire at Grace Road. Hampshire were well beaten, but his efforts (a career best 73) and his partner's 105 not out brought some respectability. Last summer he (65 not out), and James Tomlinson (51) put on 115 against Gloucestershire at the Ageas Bowl. Both partnerships were created from a position where there had been an almost total failure by the previous batsmen. With Walter Livsey, he is the only Hampshire player ever to take part in two century partnerships for the tenth wicket. For good measure he also shared in a last wicket partnership of 85 with Sean Ervine against Glamorgan at the Ageas Bowl in 2012.

David Balcombe played in 52 matches for Hampshire, scored 701 runs (avge 15.57) and took 141 wickets avge (33.27).

**RUEL BRATHWAITE** was also not offered a new contract at the end of the season. He played for Hampshire in three matches at the end of the 2013 season whilst on loan from Durham, claiming six wickets.

### **2015 BENEFICIARY**

Most members will be aware that **Jimmy Adams** has been awarded a much deserved benefit in 2015. An Appreciation will appear in a future Newsletter.

### **FUTURE OF DEAN PARK, BOURNEMOUTH**

The continuation of cricket of Dean Park, Bournemouth, has been under threat for some years. The ground's future as a cricket venue has now been thrown into further doubt by the sale of the ground to Park School. Hampshire played at Dean Park from 1897 until 1992, and the ground retains iconic status for cricket lovers. It will always have a romantic place in the hearts of the county's followers as they sealed their first Championship title there in 1961, and claimed their second in 1973. Hampshire also picked up their second Sunday League title there in 1978. Dorset have played most of their home Minor Counties Championship games at the ground in recent years. The School have stated they are willing to work with sporting agencies regarding use of the ground. Let us hope that cricket can continue to be played there.

© Copyright Alan Edwards 2014 ([NewsletterEditor@HantsCricSoc.org.uk](mailto:NewsletterEditor@HantsCricSoc.org.uk))