

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 340 – DECEMBER 2014

Thursday 4 December 2014 – Meeting

The speaker at the Society's Annual Dinner will be **DENNIS AMISS**. He has spent a lifetime in the game with Warwickshire CCC, first as one of the most prolific of all run scorers and then as an administrator. He is currently President of the Council of Cricket Societies. This is his second visit to the Society, his previous one being on 28 February 1996.

Dennis Leslie Amiss was born in Birmingham on 7 April 1943. One of his school friends was former Hampshire fast bowler, "Butch" White. He was taken on the Warwickshire staff as an all-rounder, when aged only 15. In those days he bowled left-arm medium but a subsequent football injury – a slipped disc – restricted full movement in his bowling action.

He made his Warwickshire debut in 1960 at the age of 17. He developed slowly at first and did not win his cap until 1965. However, he then made such swift progress that he was picked for England the following year. He struggled initially to impose himself in the test arena, but during 1973 he blossomed into an outstanding opening batsman.

He will always be remembered for a series of long, exceptional test innings against the West Indies. In February 1974, he scored 262 not out at Sabina Park, batting for nine and a half hours in guiding England to a draw. Facing a first innings deficit of 230, England were 217 for five towards the end of the fourth day. He defied the West Indies bowling virtually single-handedly for the remainder of the match. The next highest score in a total of 432 for nine was extras – 41. Of the other batsmen, only his Warwickshire team mate, John Jameson (38), and his captain, Mike Denness (28), exceeded twenty. Our Patron, John Woodcock, wrote in *The Cricketer* "His driving was imposing, his play off his legs resounding, his stamina excellent, his judgement of what shot to play unfailing." It was a truly heroic innings and was to remain, fittingly, the highest score of his career. Our speaker enjoyed a memorable series by also making 174 in the first test at Port of Spain and 118 in the fourth test at Georgetown. His gargantuan efforts, allied to the equally titanic all-round contributions of Tony Greig, ensured that England's precarious toehold became something more substantial as the series progressed and, thanks to two fine innings by his opening partner, Geoffrey Boycott, they eventually won the fluctuating fifth test by 26 runs to level the series. He finished the rubber with 663 runs (avge 82.88) and 1,120 runs (avge 74.67) on the tour.

In the ensuing summer he went on to hit 188 against India at Lord's and 183 against Pakistan at The Oval. In the 1974 calendar year, he scored 1379 runs (avge 68.95) in test matches.

Towards the end of his test career he played another long innings of character against the West Indies. In 1976, on his recall to the side, after being omitted for the whole series hitherto, he made 203 on the sun-parched Oval against a rampant Michael Holding, who produced one of the greatest sustained fast-bowling displays in the history of test cricket. Going back and across very early, he understandably played well off his legs but he was also able to adjust to play a number of glorious front-foot drives through extra cover.

His test career ended when he signed for Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket and he received a further test ban when he played for the SAB England XI in South Africa in 1981/82. Nevertheless, in his 50 tests for England he scored 3612 runs at the impressive average of 46.30. Even more striking, however, was that his eleven test centuries included eight in excess of 150.

Our speaker was, of course, a formidable performer in county cricket. Strangely, he did not score his first Championship century until 1967, a year after his test debut. Bowlers paid dearly thereafter. He went on to score a century against every other first-class county. He passed a 1000 runs in an English summer on 25 occasions, going on to 2,000 three times. His best year was towards the end of his career when he helped himself to 2,239 runs (avge. 55.97) in 1984. His final aggregate in a career spanning 658 matches was 43,423 runs (avge. 42.86) – the 12th highest aggregate in cricket's all-time list. He is also one of the select few to compile a hundred centuries; his final tally was 102. His 35,146 runs (avge. 41.64) and 78 centuries are both Warwickshire records.

He was also a prolific runmaker in limited-overs cricket. He scored 11961 runs, including 13 centuries, four of which were for England. He thus made over 55000 runs in his career.

He was also in Warwickshire title winning sides on four occasions - the County Championship in 1972, the Gillette Cup in 1966 and 1968 and the Sunday League in 1980.

He retired in 1987, whereupon he was awarded the MBE. After becoming Chairman of his county's Cricket Committee in 1992, and then Chief Executive until 2005, he presided over Warwickshire's outstanding Championship and title successes in the period from 1993-2004. In that golden epoch of Warwickshire cricket, the County won nine competitions - the Championship three times, four Lord's finals and two Sunday Leagues. His influence on Warwickshire and English cricket therefore pervaded long after he had put away his bat.

The Society is very privileged to welcome Dennis Amiss to this year's Annual Dinner.

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