

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Frank Bailey Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 341 – JANUARY 2015

Wednesday 7 January 2015 – Meeting

The Society is honoured to welcome the former Warwickshire and England Captain **MJK-MIKE-SMITH** to this evening's meeting when he will be accompanied by his biographer, **DOUGLAS MILLER**. Both men have visited the Society before, in November 1993 and March 2005 respectively. Members will be aware that the editor normally includes a biography of our speakers in the Newsletter but as Douglas Miller will be talking to Mike Smith about his life and career, the editor has confined his introduction to an extract from a pen picture by John Arlott in his magisterial *Rothman's Jubilee History of Cricket 1890-1965*:

“One of the leading figures in English county cricket of the sixties, Mike Smith, of Oxford University, Leicestershire and now Warwickshire, is a heavy-scoring batsman of outstanding ability in on-side play; a superb fielder at short-leg; and a captain who thinks deeply about the game and runs his side in a manner at once friendly, perceptive, compelling of loyalty, and efficient”.

Douglas Miller is a lifelong cricket enthusiast who continued playing for his village team until the age of 69. He has written five biographies: on Allan Watkins, Jack Bond and MJK Smith (all published by the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians), and Don Shepherd and Charles Palmer (both published by Stephen Chalke's Fairfield Books). He has also written a book on *The Cricket Grounds of Gloucestershire* and a *History of Bucks County Cricket Club* (also published by the ACSH). He has spent most of his working life in market research. He later became a panel umpire in the Thames Valley League. He has an association with Hampshire through being President of the Hambledon Club, which meets twice a year at The Bat and Ball Inn, opposite Broadhalfpenny Down.

Wednesday 10 September 2014 – Report

Grahame Lloyd took his attentive audience on a riveting detective trail concerning the authenticity of the ball which Gary Sobers famously despatched for six sixes, in an over bowled by Malcolm Nash at St. Helen's, Swansea in 1968. When a Duke's Ball, purporting to be *the* ball was auctioned at Christie's in 2006, it fetched the sum of £26,400. It was stated that there were three balls used in the last over, the auctioned ball being the last one. And yet it was patently *not* the ball concerned. First, Glamorgan only used Stuart SurrIDGE balls at the time. Second, film footage of the BBC coverage of the over, clearly demonstrated that only *one* ball was used. Also, Malcolm Nash and several Glamorgan players confirmed that only one ball was used. So did Sobers. In determining provenance, it appears that Christie's did not contact either Nash or the two umpires. Whilst Sobers signed a note to say that it was the ball he hit for six sixes, would he have been able to tell? Six experts were also consulted by Christies, but they were obviously wrong in their validation.

In 2012 the ball came up for sale at Bonhams in Chester but Grahame Lloyd's evidence caused the item to be withdrawn. The seller was from India. Our speaker had been unable to trace the whereabouts of the original ball. He has concluded that it will be very doubtful if it will ever be found and, indeed, may no longer exist.

Graham Lloyd's investigations are contained in his book *Howzat? The Six Sixes Ball Mystery*.

Wednesday 8 October 2014 – Report

The evening in the company of Lawrence Prittupaul was a fascinating and enlightening one. His father emigrated from Guyana to Portsmouth and found a job in the NHS. Given his West Indian background, his heroes were Carl Hooper (from Guyana) and Malcolm Marshall. He was born in Portsmouth and grateful to fellow Portsmouthian, Jon Ayling, for giving him his opportunity. Other early experiences were being part of very successful Hampshire under-age sides and club cricket in South Africa, which helped him in his understanding of the game and of people. Shane Warne later took him under his wing and instilled a professional approach. In 2000, he made the first century (132) at the Ageas Bowl in a 2nd XI match v Glamorgan and then later in the season scored the final century (v Derbyshire-see October Newsletter) at Northlands Road. However, the transfer to the Ageas Bowl on bowler-friendly wickets as the square bedded in was difficult. With Will Kendall, Derek Kenway and Giles White, he fell by the wayside. He enjoyed, though, working under Jimmy Cook, whom he felt was a good batting coach on a 1-1 basis. The highlights of his career were his only first-class century referred to above and being a member of the side that defeated the Australians in 2001. After being released by Hampshire, he received offers from Gloucestershire and Leicestershire but chose not to take them up.

He has since become *the* key figure in the development of Cage Cricket. It is a game which can be played in a confined space. There are six players, all of whom bat and bowl. They are also actively engaged in fielding, moving one place in a clockwise direction upon the change of batsman and bowler. Batsmen score runs by hitting targets in the cage. If dismissed, they continue to bat for their allotted span, but lose runs at the fall of their wicket. Each session lasts 50 minutes. It is a game that is open to all children. One particular benefit is that it has aided children with autism. He has travelled around the world marketing the concept. Sachin Tendulkar and Greg Chappell have both taken part in their respective countries. There is a proper management structure; Ian Botham is President, Shane Wane is Leader and Rod Bransgrove is Chairman. 1800 children played in the cage at last summer's test match at the Ageas Bowl. He is now attempting to get the game into the bloodstream of communities. Boris Johnson was sufficiently impressed to order fifty kits for London. Eastleigh Borough Council have been very supportive in Hampshire. Technology is helping to spread the word. Those taking part like to tell their friends about their efforts and they can do so via twitter and facebook. A show is planned for London's O2 arena with twelve notable cricketers already having been signed up to display their skills in the cage.

As Lawrence Prittupaul spoke it was very easy to be enthused by Cage Cricket. Its community building capacity is vast and it provides a unique opportunity for children living in areas with little or no recreational space to play the game.

PREVIOUS WARWICKSHIRE SPEAKERS

Warwickshire speakers to have addressed the Society are: Michael Mence (October 1980), AC – Alan – Smith (February 1986), Bryan Timms (March 1991), Norman Gifford (November 1991), John Jameson (April 1993), MJK Smith (November 1993), Dennis Amiss (March 1996 and December 2014), Gladstone Small (November 2002), and Tim Munton (February 2008). Bryan Timms, of course, spent the majority of his career with Hampshire and Norman Gifford was a multi-title winner with Worcestershire. Alan Oakman, who became Warwickshire coach after his playing days with Sussex, spoke to the Society in February 1998 and October 2011.

SOCIETY NEWS

THE SOCIETY HAS JOINED TWITTER

You can now follow Hampshire Cricket Society on Twitter. The purpose of our Twitter page is to encourage friendly discussion about current cricketing topics along with keeping everyone updated on forthcoming meetings and events. Our Twitter address is [twitter@HantsCricSoc](https://twitter.com/HantsCricSoc) so why not “follow” us and join in the fun.

It is not to be used to make personal comments about individuals, antagonistic comments about organisations or critical comments that can affect the Society’s excellent relationship with Hampshire Cricket.

MICHAEL HENDERSON ON JOHN WOODCOCK

The November 2014 edition of *The Cricketer* included a wonderful appreciation by Michael Henderson on our Patron, John Woodcock. He stated “(he) was, for many of us, the first writer on cricket there was or ever will be”. John will have undoubtedly blushed at the assessment, but it shows just how much he was appreciated by his colleagues and the avid readers of his reports, and latterly, reflective pieces in *The Times*.

PHILLIP HUGHES

It is difficult to recall a death which caused so much grief and united the worldwide cricket community as much as that upon the news that Phillip Hughes had died. Cricketers are not supposed to die as a result of an incident on the field of play. In the entire history of cricket such deaths have been extremely rare. Moreover, there have allegedly been only a hundred deaths ever recorded from the type of injury from which Hughes died.

Cricket Australia has rightly instigated a health and safety review. It will be surprising, though, if any fundamental changes to helmet design accrue. It must be doubted whether any further protection of the neck can be implemented without affecting the batsman’s neck movements.

Some will point justifiably to the greater use of the bouncer compared with the past. However, it must be said that short-pitched bowling is a rarity in county cricket. It has been quite striking in recent years that the majority of bowling has been in accordance with the traditional English tradition of line and length. Only in Ashes tests does the bouncer seem overdone these days. Contemporary batsmen can have little idea about what it is like to face four West Indian fast bowlers as was the case between c1975 – c1995. Today only Mitchell Johnson is feared because of his capacity to cause damage to head and anatomy. Dale Steyn pitches the ball much further up. There are no other fast bowlers whose pace approaches that of Holding, Roberts and Marshall of the above era.

Johnson will, of course, spawn imitators but, Sean Abbott, the bowler who struck Hughes, is, according to the Editor's Australian contact, fast-medium. This is confirmed by the fact that Hughes was struck *after* he completed his shot. On the field, Abbott seems to have made a startlingly quick recovery after the tragedy as he took a career best six for 14 to help New South Wales defeat Queensland in his first Sheffield Shield match a few days later. The psychological scars must be a wholly different matter.

Sadly, those who thought that Hughes' death would put cricket into perspective and produce a less aggressive approach from the Australians were quickly disabused during the test series against India. Predictably, Warner and Johnson were both involved in unseemly physical exchanges with the feisty Virat Kohli. The new Indian captain is unarguably one who can get under the skin of opposition players, but being pushed (by Warner) and then having a ball thrown at him (by Johnson) is totally unacceptable. Neither received any sanction. Regrettably, Australian cricket's descent into thugery shows no sign of abatement.

Phillip Hughes will be remembered as an unconventional left-handed batsman who, through eye rather than technique, was capable of scoring his runs very rapidly, even at the highest level. His ploy of tending to stay legside of the line of the ball meant, though, that there were troughs between the peaks. He was never quite sure of his place in the Australian side, though seemed on the verge of a recall. He played, of course, for Hampshire at the end of the 2010 season; in his three first-class matches he scored 85 runs (avge 14.16). He enjoyed considerably more successful spells with Middlesex and Worcestershire. He returned to the Ageas Bowl to play for Australia against England in an ODI on a bitterly cold September night in 2013. Opening the innings he was dismissed for only two, caught by Michael Carberry off the bowling of Chris Jordan.

It is fitting to conclude this piece with a further mention of Michael Clarke. His statesmanlike demeanour in hugely torrid circumstances, particularly in support of Phillip Hughes' family, earned the admiration and respect of the whole cricket fraternity and beyond.

DEREK SHACKLETON MOST ACCURATE OF ALL BOWLERS

It's official! An article in the Autumn edition of *The Cricket Statistician* (The Journal of The Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians) indicates that Derek Shackleton was the most accurate bowler of all time in English first-class cricket. He conceded *fewer than two runs per over* in twelve seasons: 1954-1958, 1960-61, 1963, 1965-68. In 1963, of course, he played four tests against Frank Worrell's great West Indian side. He was then 39 years of age. The fact that he went on to accomplish the feat in his last four full seasons when he was over 40 years of age almost suspends belief. He sent down over 1,000 overs in all the seasons concerned; his most miserly season was in 1966 when he conceded 1.60 runs per over.

The next two bowlers on the list conceded less than two runs an over on nine occasions; they were Maurice Tate and Gloucestershire's slow left-arm bowler, Cec Cook.

Other Hampshire bowlers to concede fewer than two runs per over are:-

5	-	Peter Sainsbury	1967-69, 1973-74
3	-	Alec Kennedy	1931-33
1	-	Jim Bailey	1948
		Victor Barton	1901
		Stuart Boyes	1937
		David O'Sullivan	1973
		Keith Wheatley	1966

In the case of Sainsbury (on the last two occasions), Kennedy, Bailey and Boyes, they were in the autumn of their careers. Sainsbury, Bailey and Boyes were all spin bowlers, thereby perhaps giving credence to the oft-quoted assumption that such bowlers become better as they age.

The name of Keith Wheatley is quite surprising but in the year concerned he bowled 449.1 overs and conceded only 893 runs. He was Hampshire's leading spin bowler that season, taking 31 wickets (avge 28.80). Whilst Alan Castell claimed 36 wickets, he was bowling medium-pacers, rather than the leg-breaks with which he started his career. Indeed, the Hampshire Handbook, in describing the match against Derbyshire at Southampton (in which he took six for 49 in the first innings) commented he "again seized his chance as a deputy for Cottam". In the year concerned, Wheatley bowled more overs than Peter Sainsbury. The latter had the worst year of his career, taking only 21 wickets at an average of 42.14.

In all of the above instances, the bowlers enjoyed uncovered wickets. The only men to have performed the feat since wickets were covered in 1981, have been Mike Hendrick (1982), Peter Martin, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh (all in 2000). Ambrose and Walsh were touring with the West Indies in that year.

HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS IN THE WINTER

One Hampshire player who enjoyed the pre-Christmas period was **LIAM DAWSON**. After his injury marred summer in 2014, he went to Bangladesh to play for the Sheikh Jamal Dhamondi Club in the Dhaka Premier Division. He struck his maiden List A century when he scored 113 not out against Kala Bagan Krira Chakra at Savar on 11 November. It must have been an exciting innings to watch; he made his runs off only 83 balls, hitting no fewer than eight sixes, as well as five fours. He then cleared the boundary ropes on three more occasions in his next innings of 64 (off 55 balls) against Abahari Limited at Fatullah. He then found runs rather harder to come by, though, in taking nine wickets, he bowled economically in all eight matches. The experience can only have stood him in good stead for the future. He then moved on to Perth in Western Australia to play grade cricket, and where he shares a house with **SEAN TERRY and ADAM WHEATER**.

SEAN ERVINE also played two matches for Partex Sporting Club in the Dhaka Premier League. Other English professionals to feature there were Durham's Phil Mustard and Kent's Joe Denly. The latter has rejoined his former county after a spell at Middlesex.

MICHAEL CARBERRY has been playing for Perth Scorchers in Australia's Big Bash (T20) League. From what he has seen to date on television, the editor concludes the league is of a far higher standard than the IPL. The fielding is infinitely better and as the grounds in Australia are much larger, batsmen need a wider range of strokes. The IPL is a mind-numbing slogathon where even mishit shots often go for six on India's mainly small arenas. Carberry also appeared on Sky TV as a pundit in the Autumn.

JAMES VINCE has been selected for the England Lions' four day and List A squads on their forthcoming tour of South Africa.

JIMMY ADAMS addressed Dorset Cricket Society on 30 October. It was an absorbing session, as he talked about last season, looked forward to 2015 and fielded a number of questions on some of the more contentious issues on Hampshire cricket.

NIGEL GRAY was selected as Groundsman of the Year for the third occasion. It was justified recognition for his labours, particularly in preparing the best test match wicket, by far, in the summer. It is not inconceivable that the test wickets at Lord's, Old Trafford and The Oval would have attracted the attention of the pitch inspectors had the matches been in the county championship. The pitch at Trent Bridge was flat and produced a boring game of cricket. Coupled with the praise heaped on the Ageas Bowl as a test venue by players and *TMS* alike, and the scheduled completion of the hotel complex in 2015, Hampshire can consider themselves extremely unfortunate not to have been awarded an Ashes test in 2019.

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