

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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

**NEWSLETTER No. 342 – FEBRUARY 2015**

## MEETINGS

### **WEDNESDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2015-Meeting**

The Society is very pleased to welcome **ANTHONY GIBSON** to this evening's meeting. He has been involved in cricket all his life, as player, scorer, commentator and award-winning author. His book *Of Dicot and the Demon*, which celebrated the life and cricketing works of his father, **Alan Gibson**, was adjudged the MCC/Cricket Society's Book of the Year in 2010. With Stephen Chalke, he co-authored *Gentlemen, Gypsies and Jesters*, a delightful journey through the sometimes eccentric world of wandering club cricket. He also wrote *With Magic In My Eyes*, a literary pilgrimage around the West Country, which explored the relationships between the region's authors and the landscapes that inspired them.

### **WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2014**

The Society's first afternoon meeting, at Test Valley Golf Club, proved a great success with the most number of attendees since October 2013. Derek Andrew's talk was full of entertaining stories as he gave a privileged first-hand account of life in the BBC Television commentary box, and recalling incidents from Hampshire's history in the 1970s and 80s. How many would be able to recall that, when Sunday play was piloted in championship cricket in 1967, entry was free? Counties were not allowed to charge. The John Player League also took the game to such outposts as Street in Somerset. Another snippet was an experiment with orange balls in the knockout stages of the Refuge Assurance League in 1989.

Derek Andrews came from a family of scorers. His father scored for the Hospital Broadcasting Association in Southampton. His own career started in local matches involving the International Cavaliers in the 1960's. His first official "engagement" was actually for Kent at Bournemouth so that the wife of their scorer, Claude Lewis, could take him home an hour before close of play. On the recommendation of Vic Isaacs, he then scored the Essex – Nottinghamshire match at Chelmsford in 1982 and World Cup matches in the following year. Whilst Vic Isaacs was scoring the Australia – Zimbabwe encounter at Northlands Road, he covered Hampshire's match at Uxbridge. He was in the BBC TV box from 1982 – 1989 and told many stories concerning the commentators of that era: Jack Bannister, Jim Laker, Peter Walker, Christopher Martin-Jenkins, Ralph Dellor, Richie Benaud, Tony Greig, Ray Illingworth and Peter West. The producer for Benson and Hedges matches is Mike Adley who has since produced the long running Question of Sport programme.

Throughout Derek's talk there were reminders just how much technology has developed. This was most vividly illustrated by the use of computers. When one was used for the first time some thirty years ago, the Honeywell computer was operated by a generator and a full-time engineer and three other men, plus a reserve to operate magnetic boards for captions in the event of breakdown. He had to update career records for all the players manually. There could also be a problem with the cameras. The BBC always took four to the ground. On one occasion, two were broken. Essex' Brian Hardie then smashed the lens of one of the others!

He derived great pleasure in scoring Hampshire's Sunday League title winning match at The Oval in 1986, and the County's first Lord's final success in 1988. He also scored a few matches for Yorkshire TV with Martin Tyler in the commentator's seat. It was an interesting experience as the expert summarisers, Geoffrey Boycott and David Bairstow, were not on speaking terms and he had to act as an intermediary. He was approached by Sky in 1990, but for family reasons and uncertainties of winter employment he turned down the offer. However, to this day, he is still unable to watch a match without scoring.

### **MARCH AND APRIL MEETINGS**

Members are reminded of the dates and speakers for the final two meetings of the Society's season. They both come under the category of "unmissable".

#### **WEDNESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015-RONALD ALLISON at TEST VALLEY GC**

He will be known to many members as a distinguished BBC Sports Broadcaster and Court Correspondent, and the Queen's Private Secretary. The evening will therefore cover a much wider subject matter than cricket and will be of interest to all family members and friends. The editor heard him speak at Dorset Cricket Society last winter; it was a marvellous afternoon full of witty, insightful and discreet comment. Ronald Allison's address will begin at the normal time of **8pm**, and will be preceded by the **Society's AGM**, which starts at **7pm**.

#### **WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015-REV. CANON TIM BILES at the AGEAS BOWL**

Our speaker lived his early life in a house adjacent to Southampton's County Ground and watched the players in the nets, as well as in the middle, in the post-War era. What sets him apart, however, is that he worked for Sir Donald Bradman in Adelaide and became a confidante of both his boss and his family. He has a fund of stories that will not be found in any book. The Society can promise a truly enthralling evening in Tim Biles' company. The meeting starts at **8pm**.

#### **1975 – THE YEAR OF HAMPSHIRE'S FIRST LIST A TITLE**

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hampshire's first List A title: the John Player League. They had possessed a good record in the competition, finishing second in the competition's inaugural season in 1969, only one point behind winners Lancashire. In the intervening years, only in 1970 did they finish outside of the top six. However, after 12 seasons of limited overs cricket-the Gillette Cup having been introduced in 1963-a one-day title still eluded them. In 1975, though, they finally claimed silverware.

## FINAL LEAGUE TABLE

	P	W	L	Pts
Hampshire	16	13	3	52
Worcestershire	16	12	3	50
Kent	16	12	4	48
Essex	16	10	6	40

It was a closely fought competition throughout. After losing to Worcestershire in the first match, Hampshire then recorded five successive victories to take them to the top of the table in mid-June. However, they then lost the lead to Essex after two defeats in the next three matches. Thereafter, they were unstoppable as they registered a record seven consecutive wins to the end of the season. All those matches included noteworthy highlights. First, Gloucestershire were despatched by four wickets with time to spare after Barry Richards and Gordon Greenidge had plundered 138 at indecent speed. A limping Greenidge then thumped 102 off only 67 balls (5 sixes and 5 fours) in 87 minutes at Weston-Super-Mare. Andy Roberts smashed a tremendous last over six as Hampshire scraped home by two wickets with one ball remaining at Bradford. The ensuing match against Northamptonshire at Southampton then threatened to thwart the County's ambitions. Rain had left a sodden outfield but the umpires eventually sanctioned a 10–overs–a side match. John Rice's hat-trick, the first for the county in the competition, effectively settled the issue. The final three matches were televised. Hampshire defeated Essex by 98 runs at Chelmsford before thrashing Leicestershire by six wickets. Richards treated the Bournemouth crowd to a virtuoso display as he toyed with the bowlers, stroking 112 (5 sixes and 12 fours), in 74 minutes, in just 25 overs. Even the canny Ray Illingworth was reduced to impotence. Hampshire chased down their target of 195 in only 29.2 overs. It was revenge of sorts for the semi-final defeat in the Benson & Hedges Cup (see below).

In the week leading up to the final match, Hampshire were invited to participate in the Fenner Trophy at Scarborough. It was a 50 over competition, which Hampshire won by beating Gloucestershire and Yorkshire. It was the County's first triumph in a one-day competition though the Fenner Trophy and the other one-day competitions in the Festival at the time are not recognised as List A matches.

And so Hampshire had been able to warm up for the final match of the John Player League campaign by playing limited-overs cricket. The final match was at the little village ground at Darley Dale in Derbyshire. The match posed a problem for the BBC. Great improvisation was required by the engineers to get a strong enough electrical signal out of the valley and then along the top of the Dales for twenty odd miles to the nearest booster mast. There was even talk of asking Derbyshire to change the venue to Chesterfield, but they rightly kept faith with the local village club who had spent all season preparing for this match.

Hampshire stormed to the title in style. Richards (52) and Greenidge (55) gave Hampshire an initial advantage which they never relinquished. Tom Mottram (5 – 21) and John Rice (4 – 14) ensured the landmark victory by 70 runs.

Richards dominated the season throughout with a then record 689 runs (avg 44.93). Six bowlers, led by Rice ( 27 wickets) took 11 wickets or more.

At the time many felt that winning the John Player League was a consolation prize as the county had come preciously close to winning the County Championship (with Roberts injured for the last two matches they finished third) and, with hopes high, had fallen to a semi-final defeat in the Benson and Hedges Cup at Leicester. Leicestershire went on to win both of these competitions, their championship title being a first for them. With the aid of hindsight, however, the season was arguably the finest in Hampshire's history until 2012 (when they won both the CB40 and T20 competitions). The season also effectively marked the end of a golden three year period for Hampshire cricket, the county having won the championship in 1973 and then famously finishing second in 1974, robbed by the rain.

### **AUSTRALIAN BEHAVIOUR**

At about the same time as the January Newsletter was printed, most observers, commentators (including Jonathan Agnew) and members of the Australian public expressed their disquiet about the continuing ultra-aggressive behaviour of the Australian test team. Cricket Australia subsequently threatened David Warner with a ban if he did not improve his conduct and he was subsequently omitted from the ODI against England in Hobart. The reason given was an injury concern, but most thought his absence was more of a diplomatic one. However, in an interview, the Australian coach, Darren Lehman, and some players, were unrepentant. The ICC said they would introduce measures to improve behaviour at the World Cup. It is likely their mettle will be tested.

### **MIKE ARNOLD makes a welcome return to the pages of the Newsletter with his interesting views on the Australian psyche.**

The paragraph in Newsletter 341 suggesting that Australian cricket is descending into thuggery unfortunately ignores the history of the country. Rough language and physical confrontations are almost daily occurrences here. This, and a culture that is totally obsessed with sport, means that behaviour that would be regarded as quite unacceptable almost anywhere else is regarded here as quintessentially Australian. As a consequence, the on-field behaviour of the Australian cricket team was little more than an extension, albeit perhaps an extreme one, of the local culture.

The country's parochial sporting priorities were on show again recently. The morning after the worldwide news of the massacre in Paris, the front page of the *Australian*, probably the most balanced of all daily newspapers here, carried great headlines about a test century made by an Australian batsman. The report on the grotesque attack on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* was relegated to an inside page.

Several years ago, a previous Prime Minister, Paul Keating, complained that the Australian language was becoming far too polite, and it had been the same man who a few years earlier had exploded at a Labour Party Conference, shouting at one of the more erudite members "*just because you swallowed a f\*\*\*\*\*g dictionary when you were 15 doesn't give you the right to pour a bucket of s\*\*t over the rest of us*", an outburst that passed without comment. In Parliament too, issues are not debated but often descend into an offensive bellowing match with MPs frequently being

suspended by the Speaker for exchanging shouted insults, something seen as an accolade rather than a reprimand; conduct that would see them permanently banned from Westminster. The rowdy behaviour in the New South Wales Parliament is such that it is known as The Bear Pit.

It might have been thought that Australian sledging would be quietly and tacitly accepted, but in 2005 an editorial in *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated with considerable pride “*in the gentlemen’s game a capacity that endless obscenity gives you the edge Australian’s domination of world cricket has been built, in part, on a fearsome capacity for saying rude things to opponents’ faces. People who don’t like sledging should turn a deaf ear. If you don’t like it, then don’t listen.*”

When a relatively unknown spinner, Michael Beer, was picked for a test match, *The Australian* commented that little was known about his bowling but he was reputed to be a *very effective sledger*, a crippling comment on a culture where the ability to be offensive was thought to be a sporting asset worth mentioning.

Taking all of this it can be seen that it’s not too great a step to the shrieking obscenities heralded at departing batsmen, being shoved by the likes of Warner or batsmen having balls thrown at them. An added problem is that many of the Channel 9 team do not act as commentators describing the game but as an excited cheer squad for the Australians, and who are likely to encourage and applaud anything that can add colour to the play. A recent assessment of that team stated that they missed the balance of the late Tony Greig.

It remains to be seen whether all this may abate a little under the leadership of Steve Smith if he continues, for the great orchestrator had been the Australian Captain Michael Clarke, who had said “*we are proud of the aggressive cricket we play*”. The coach Darren Lehman has often made similar comments. There is of course a less than subtle difference between an attacking style and a collection of cut-throat no holds barred protagonists. The one person here who has voiced his concerns has, perhaps surprisingly, been Ian Chappell, who has mellowed with age and grown more reflective.

These Australian antics are likely to be less over in England for the simple reason, although they would never admit it, that this sort of vicious confrontation would be unlikely to pass without comment there. We can only hope so.

### **THE RISING STAR OF JAMES VINCE**

It has been wonderful to learn of James Vince’s success on the Lions Tour in South Africa in two first-class matches against South Africa A. Beforehand, he struggled when playing for The Lions but atoned with scores of 78 in Paarl, and 31 and a perhaps career defining 152 not out in Bloemfontein. In the latter innings he came to the wicket with the Lions on 83 for three, still eighty runs in arrears. He survived an early chance when on four but batted with assurance thereafter. He was at the crease for six and a quarter hours and hit 22 fours and one six. As is usual, it was his resplendent cover driving that took the eye. Immediately afterwards, he was named as Captain of The Lions for the ensuing one-day matches.

In the November edition of *The Cricketer*, he was nominated as their County Cricketer of the Year for 2014.

## FROM THE MAGAZINES

**Barry Richards** has enjoyed much attention in the cricket magazines in the last few months. *Backspin* (Autumn 2014) featured his famous innings of 356 for South Australia against Western Australia in Perth in 1970-71. He scored 325 on the first day; he played and missed off the first ball from Graham McKenzie and took 12 minutes to open his account. Thereafter, only two maidens were bowled on that day.

Also, he was twice featured in *The Cricketer*. In the November 2014 edition, he provided batting advice under the banner of "Taking On The Bowlers" in their "Masterclass" series. The December edition included an extensive interview by Crispin Andrews. Perhaps the quote which exemplified his approach was that he "was never a good leaver of the ball as he liked to feel it on the bat". He said his best innings was his 189 for Hampshire against the MCC at Lord's in 1974, on the opening day of the season. Not mentioned in the piece was his complete domination - he made those runs in 210 minutes out of a total of 249 whilst he was at the wicket. To emphasise his omnipotence even further, he made 107 out of a stand of 132 for the sixth wicket with Trevor Jesty, who was, of course, certainly no slouch in the art of scoring runs quickly.

His great opening partner, **Gordon Greenidge**, has also been in the pages. The Winter edition of *Backspin* included a three page interview, which majored on his test career. In the February edition of *The Cricketer*, he gave a masterclass on the square cut. The latter stroke, of course, was also the trademark shot of Robin Smith; which of the pair hit the ball harder when playing it?

The Autumn edition of *Backspin* also included a wonderful interview with **Jimmy Gray** by Patrick Symes. The former is one of the county's unsung heroes, whose career has never really received the attention it deserves. The interview majored on his football career, particularly his days at Arsenal (Brian Close and Arthur Milton were on the staff at the same time), his partnership with Roy Marshall, and John Arlott. It was a nostalgic and heart-warming read. Symes also featured **Mike Taylor** in the Winter edition. The latter also included an interview on **John Manners**, Hampshire's centenarian, by Brian Scovell.

## MICHAEL CARBERRY AND THE BIG BASH LEAGUE

Michael Carberry has excelled in Australia's BBL. He hit three fifties during the competition and, with Hampshire's new T20 signing, **Yasir Arafat**, was at the wicket when their team, Perth Scorchers, claimed an exciting four wicket victory off the last ball in the final against Sydney Sixers at Canberra. Arafat was also a force in the tournament, especially when bowling in the final overs.

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