

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No. 350 – JANUARY 2016

MEETINGS

Wednesday 6 January 2016 – Meeting

The Society is delighted to welcome **TIM JONES**, Worcestershire CCC's Archivist, to this evening's meeting. He has been an avid collector of that Club's memorabilia for some 30 years and became Chairman of their Heritage Group in 2008. He has a collection of autographs for all Worcestershire players. In the mid-70s, he possessed the autograph of every county cricketer who was playing at the time. In 2015, he achieved a long held ambition to write a book about Worcestershire cricket with the publication of a biography on Don Kenyon, Worcestershire's captain when they won their first two County championship titles in 1964 and 1965. Tim has Hampshire connections, having once lived in Chandler's Ford. He played for Paultons CC on the eastern edge of the New Forest during his time there.

FORTY YEARS ON

Though the Society was founded in 1975, this month marks the 40th anniversary of our first meeting. That inaugural event took place at Basingstoke Sports Centre on Thursday 29 January 1976, when the speaker was Hampshire's Secretary, **Desmond Eagar**. He brought along items from his vast collection of cricket memorabilia, which members, in the words of the following meeting's Newsletter, were able to "fondle lovingly and briefly".

The speaker at the next meeting was **Richard Gilliat**, Hampshire's much respected captain, who was to lead the team to three titles (a County Championship in 1973, and two John Player (Sunday) Leagues in 1975 and 1978), a feat which has still not been equalled by his successors. He was followed by **John Woodcock**, who with **John Arlott** and **Desmond Eagar** was one of our original Patrons. Happily, John still remains so and maintains his interest in the Society's activities. At his talk, on 25 March, he reported on the Australia – West Indies Test Series. He concluded that the decisive factor in a comprehensive Australian victory (4 – 1), was that their two fast bowlers, Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thompson, aided by Gary Gilmour, demoralised the West Indian batting. The Islands' captain, Clive Lloyd, took note and by the Summer series in England, his side had embarked on their now renowned - some would say notorious – policy of fielding four fast bowlers which enabled the West Indies to dominate cricket for the next twenty years.

There were five meetings in that Spring. The other two speakers were **Patrick Eagar**, son of Desmond and cricket's foremost photographer, and **Tony Pawson**. The latter was one of sport's great all-rounders; Kent county cricketer, an amateur international footballer who played in the football league for Charlton Athletic, world fly fishing champion and a fine writer for *The Observer*. This and subsequent Newsletters will attempt to capture the major events in the game in the forty years of the Society's existence.

It is a period in which there has been enormous and rapid changes, arguably more than in any other sport. In 1977, Kerry Packer launched **World Series Cricket (WSC)** which was probably, until 2008, the most significant event in the game's history. It spawned floodlight cricket, coloured clothing, white balls, black sight screens, helmets, technological revolution in the preparation of pitches, television coverage and razzamatazz. Players received far better salaries in its wake. A downside was that players became more overtly aggressive. Only in the last two or three years, given the loutish behaviour of the Australians, has this issue begun to be addressed.

The most profound development was the introduction of **t20** cricket, which was originally established in England in 2003. It was the brainchild of Stuart Robertson, then Marketing Manager of the ECB, and latterly Commercial Manager at the Ageas Bowl. Hampshire were at the forefront, hosting the first county match (v Sussex) and the launch of t20 international cricket in 2005 (between England and Australia). Both matches were televised.

It was the formation of the **Indian Premier League** and the introduction of franchise cricket in 2008 that promoted a whole range of concerns which have threatened the established order far more than WSC ever did. Some eight years later, the implications are still unravelling. A number of players now earn huge sums of money through their t20 contracts, only rivalled by the most elite sportsmen in tennis, golf and formula 1. The IPL has had significant implications for the scheduling of tours and test matches. It has affected domestic competitions across the world in that players have not always been available for their counties and other sides, with whom they have employment contracts. The success of the IPL has been extended to similar franchised t20 tournaments in all the major test playing countries, apart from England and Zimbabwe. The most successful exponents in the format have effectively become "hired guns" who play little or no domestic test or first-class cricket. The financial muscle of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) was already beginning to skew the game but the IPL has taken concern about its future to a different level completely.

T20 has also taken the expertise of cricketers to unforeseen planes. Batsmen now possess a new tool kit of strokes which enable them to score runs anywhere. One can only admire the skill levels where unconventional shots are now played with absolute certainty. Placing fields have become a captain's nightmare. Moreover, it has changed the batsmen's mindset for longer forms of the game. The totals in limited-overs matches are increasing. Fourth innings run chases in county cricket, given the bland nature of pitches, almost invariably favour the batting side. In county cricket, when chasing a largish total, sides saunter to the last 20 overs, and if wickets are in hand, move to t20 mode. Obtaining 150 runs, or thereabouts, from the last twenty overs is now on the radar screen. T20 cricket is not, however, always about batsmen thrashing to cow corner and hitting a mind-numbing number of sixes. When he was with Hampshire, Neil McKenzie demonstrated that there was room for artistry. His judgement of the pace of an innings was almost supernatural. It was no accident that Hampshire reached four finals days, winning two, during his time with the club.

Also, bowlers are not always cannon fodder. They have adopted a bewildering array of changes of pace in particular. Paradoxically, spin bowlers are now more successful in t20 cricket than in any other form.

However, the recent India – South Africa series, played on under-prepared pitches exposed the drawbacks of t20. The South African batsmen in particular, used to playing on small grounds and blameless pitches to maximise the six-hitting potential and entertainment value, were ill prepared to cope with the Indian spin bowlers on bowler friendly surfaces. The latter prospered and, in doing so, revealed significant shortcomings in the technique of their opponents' batsmen. Whilst the quality of pitches received stinging criticism from outside India, it made compulsive viewing and a refreshing change. In the wake of the series, in *The Cricket Paper*, the incomparable Barry Richards commented that many opening batsmen are not equipped to deal with the swinging ball. India's batsmen, many of whom have come to the fore via the t20 route, continue to struggle in England and Australia, where the ball either deviates more or has a higher bounce. The boundaries are also generally much further from the pitch.

Moreover, allegations of corruption and illegal gambling continue to haunt the IPL, but it is evident that it permeates all levels of the first-class game across the world. Drug-taking, both recreational and performance-enhancing, also seems to be increasing, despite random testing.

Test Cricket has grown exponentially. In 1976, there were only six teams: England, Australia, West Indies, New Zealand, India and Pakistan. They have now been joined by Sri Lanka (1982), South Africa (readmitted 1992), Zimbabwe (1992, though they were then excluded from test status between 2005 and 2011), and Bangladesh (2000). After terrorists attempted to assassinate the Sri Lanka team in Lahore in 2009, Pakistan have had to play all their "home" tests in the United Arab Emirates. The impact of the growth has been multi-faceted. Players now appear in far more tests, so much so that all countries have introduced central contracts to prevent burn-out of their leading players. In 1976, only Colin Cowdrey had appeared in over 100 tests. He has now been joined by 61 others, with Sachin Tendulkar reaching 200. Record aggregates have reached previously unforeseen levels. Gary Sobers' record of 8032 runs in 1976 has now been exceeded by 26 batsmen. 29 bowlers have taken more than 300 wickets, with Muttiah Muralitharan, who played in Sri Lanka's inaugural test, and Shane Warne, topping the list with a staggering total of 800 and 708 wickets respectively. The former was, of course, called for throwing and the laws were changed to accommodate the flex in his bowling arm. Unfortunately, it led to a number of bowlers imitating him, some of whom were banned and only allowed to bowl again after remodelling their actions. None was as effective as they were before. Warne's action was never questioned. A world championship in test cricket has been mooted but, at this stage, it looks very unlikely, such is the congestion, that it will ever come to pass. The situation is further complicated by India, England and Australia carving up the world game so that they enjoy most of the spoils. They will each play five tests series against each other whilst the other nations will have to make do with two or three against them. It is iniquitous to say the least. Those who watched the recent film *Death of a Gentleman* will have shuddered at the self-interested shenanigans of the three countries, though Australia's chief, Wally Edwards, was not interviewed. In reality,

the two ancient rivals attached themselves to India's coat tails. Unfortunately, the ECB's then Chairman Giles Clarke did his public image no good at all. India's Srinivasan had so many conflicts of interest that court rulings have subsequently resulted in his replacement as Chairman of the ICC and his involvement in the IPL. Will it lead to a rethink? Other significant developments have been neutral umpires, the third umpire, and technological innovations regarding decision-making such as super-slo-mo, hawk-eye, and snicko, culminating in the Decision Review System. (DRS). The latter, though, has still not been uniformly applied. Finally, the first day-night test with a pink ball was staged between Australia and New Zealand at Adelaide in December. More are bound to follow.

Besides the introduction of t20 cricket, the other great change in English domestic cricket has been the format of the **County Championship**. That competition has never undergone so much change. Stephen Chalke's magisterial *Summer's Crown* has captured all those reforms. In 1976, of course, all county matches were of three days' duration. From 1988 – 1992 each county played six four-day matches, as well as the traditional three-day affairs. Durham became a first-class county in the latter year. In 1993, the Championship became an exclusively four-day affair of seventeen matches, a maximum of 68 days cricket. Interestingly, in 1976, sides played twenty matches, a maximum of 60 days. It was increased to twenty-two matches in 1977 and then to twenty-four in 1983. It was reduced to twenty-two again in 1988 to accommodate the four-day matches.

Two divisions were introduced in 2000, with three teams being promoted and relegated; this was reduced to two in 2006.

As for the counties themselves, Essex (in 1979) Sussex (2003) and Durham (2008) all won their first championship. Only Somerset, Gloucestershire and Northamptonshire now remain to top the list. Democracy prevailed from 1976 – 2015, with thirteen counties winning the title. Besides the three latter counties above, the only others who weren't successful, were Derbyshire, and, of course, Hampshire. However, all counties have now won limited-overs competitions.

There were a number of other changes. The seasons are now five weeks longer. In 1976, Hampshire started their first match (a B & H Cup tie) on 24 April and finished their last on 10 September. In 2015, the two respective dates were 2 April and 25 September.

Due to EU rulings re freedom of contract players are now able to move elsewhere when their contracts expire, so setting up a de facto transfer system. The Kolpak decision, another EU product, means counties are able to sign overseas players who are either EU passport holders (eg Nic Pothas and Sean Irvine), or who came from countries with close economic ties with the Union (eg Fidel Edwards). If the UK leaves the EU, it is possible that these stipulations will have to be reviewed for any players, or existing ones when their contracts expire. Overseas players, because of the test programme, rarely play a whole summer or become associated with counties for long periods of time, though two exceptions in recent years, have been the Australians, Shane Warne and Michael Klinger (at Gloucestershire).

Points reductions were introduced for slow over rates, ball tampering and poor pitch preparation. For various contraventions of the spirit of cricket, the law regarding fair and unfair play has been amended and extended. In 2016 visiting sides will be able to choose whether they toss for innings or not. This seems partly an obsession with the quality of pitches. The reality of the situation is that whenever teams play in India, the Emirates, Bangladesh or the West Indies in test matches, pitches are never reliable. It also has to be said with the glorious exception of the Ageas Bowl in 2014, most test pitches in England in the last few years would have attracted the attention of the pitch inspectors had they been county games.

More changes to the championship now seem to be on the horizon with oft-quoted proposals for a further reduction in the number of matches played, and hence the creation of three divisions. Whether all counties survive this initiative must be highly debatable. A number of cricket followers may be disenfranchised. Cricket on out-grounds has diminished because of financial considerations, though a sprinkling of attractive venues, eg Arundel and Cheltenham, thankfully remain.

On the pitch, run rates are at an all-time high. On the other hand, the percentage of wickets taken by spin bowlers has never been lower. County cricket is now a fundamentally different game than it was in 1976.

SOCIETY NEWS

HCS PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Members have voted Gareth Berg, in his first season with the County, as their Player of the Year for 2015.

RAY FELTHAM

Members will be sorry to learn of the death of Ray Feltham. He must have been one of Hampshire's most travelled supporters, as he made his way from his home near Warminster to the Ageas Bowl. He missed very few days' play. Ray was also a keen supporter of both minor counties and league cricket in Wiltshire and Dorset. He kept an eye on Somerset too! He became a part of Hampshire's history when a swarm of bees held up play in Hampshire's opening fixture of the 2002 season at the Ageas Bowl, against Leicestershire. Players lay flat on the ground whilst the bees buzzed around them. Ray then came to the rescue. The iconic Rose Bowl Pavilion had been opened earlier on the day.

Ray was always extremely helpful at Society meetings as he handed the Newsletter to members on or shortly after their arrival. He was an original, full of country nous. The Editor and his wife will always remember meeting him at Dean Park last summer whilst we were watching a t20 friendly against Dorset. He was recovering from hospital treatment at the time but had absented himself from the nursing home at which he was convalescing, for the day, to drive to Bournemouth. Such was his enthusiasm and love of the game.

HAMPSHIRE NEWS

WILFRID WELD

All Hampshire supporters will be saddened by the death of Wilfrid Weld on 3 December in Tahiti. Whether as a committee member, President (from 1990-2001) and then as Patron (from 2002), he was hugely influential in the county's affairs. Hampshire Cricket Chairman, Rod Bransgrove, paid tribute to his "charming and statesman-like manner... and added "that his popularity extended well beyond the borders of Hampshire". He was also heavily involved with Dorset CCC, as well as successfully managing the Lulworth Castle estate, where he lived.

HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS IN THE EMIRATES

James Vince enjoyed a successful baptism for the England t20 side against Pakistan in the Emirates. In the three matches, he scored 125 runs. He was duly nominated as Man of the Series, as England achieved a clean sweep. He is the first Hampshire player to appear in a full t20 international in the UAE. His fortunes in the five ensuing England Lions matches against Pakistan A, in which he was captain, were at the other end of the spectrum. He scored only 29 runs, but gained some compensation by leading the Lions to a 3-2 series win. The final match was decided in the Super Over. After these efforts, he was recruited by Karachi Kings for Pakistan's domestic t20 tournament, to be played in the Emirates in February.

Liam Dawson, a late call-up to the Lions squad, acquitted himself extremely well in his second experience of his career in international t20 cricket. He had previously played one such match for the Lions against New Zealand at New Plymouth in 2009. Seven of that side went on to gain international honours either in test cricket or ODIs. In the Emirates, he played in all five matches, and maintained his form of the latter part of last summer by scoring 98 runs in four innings and taking four wickets. Interestingly, his presence meant that Danny Briggs was not selected for any of the matches. Dawson, however, definitely laid down a marker for the future.

Besides Vince and Dawson, **Michael Lumb**, who was with Hampshire at the time, appeared in three t20 matches for the Lions against Pakistan A in Sharjah (2) and Abu Dhabi in February 2010. He and **Michael Carberry** also played for the Lions against England in Abu Dhabi shortly afterwards; the occasion was a warm-up match for the England side prior to the t20 World Cup.

Three Hampshire players have appeared in **first-class cricket** in the Emirates, all in the pre-season opener between MCC and the Champion County. **Will Smith** played for Durham in 2010, and **Jimmy Adams** (2013) and **Michael Carberry** (2015) were selected for MCC. The venue for all three matches was Abu Dhabi.

As for one-day international cricket, **Malcolm Marshall** (1984- 1989) and **Gordon Greenidge** (1986-1986) played for the West Indies in Sharjah, whilst with Hampshire. The latter was particularly successful in 1986, scoring 74 and 67 against Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively. In 1988, after he had left the county, he scored 102 not out versus Pakistan. **Danny Briggs** made his only ODI appearance against Pakistan in 2012, at Dubai.

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