

THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal

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MEETINGS

Wednesday 2 March 2016

The Society is delighted to welcome this evening's speaker, **DAVID STEELE**. This is his second visit to the Society. Just over 20 years ago, on 6th December 1995, he addressed the Society at their 20th Anniversary Annual Buffet Supper at The Ringway Hotel, Basingstoke.

He will, of course, always be remembered for his great season of 1975 when he made one of the meritorious of all test debut series against Australia, at the age of 33. After losing the first test at Edgbaston comprehensively, the selectors replaced Mike Denness as captain. His successor was Tony Greig. He promptly canvassed the county captains for their comments on which batsmen could counter the fearsome fast bowling duo of Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson. One name that kept recurring was David Steele. Our speaker therefore made his test debut in the second test at Lord's. After getting lost on his way to the middle via the gents toilet (he had never been in the home dressing room before), and with England teetering on the brink once more, he calmly crafted 50, sharing a sixth wicket stand of 96 with his captain. With his grey hair and spectacles (no helmets in those days), the writer Clive Taylor memorably coined the phrase "bank clerk goes to war". He made an assured 45 in the second innings. In the next test at Headingley, he made 73 and 92, before finishing with 36 and 66 at The Oval. He therefore finished his first series with 365 runs at an average of 60.83.

It was a performance that captured the imagination of the nation. He became a folk hero in a matter of weeks. He was voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year - one of only four cricketers to win the award (the others are Jim Laker, Ian Botham and Andrew Flintoff). Inevitably, he was one of *Wisden's* Five Cricketers of the Year. Also memorably, he received a year's supply of meat from a local butcher.

He also enjoyed some success against the West Indies in the following year. He compiled his only test hundred (106) in the first test at Trent Bridge, scored 64 in the second innings at Lord's, and finished the series with 44 and 42 against Michael Holding in full cry at The Oval.

Astonishingly, those eight matches against the fastest bowlers in the world, against whom he scored 673 runs at an average of 42.06, represented the sum total of his test career. Those two memorable seasons were brought to a climax when his county, Northamptonshire, defeated Lancashire in the Gillette Cup Final.

DAVID STANLEY STEELE was born in Bradeley, Staffordshire on 29 September 1941. He was one of a cricketing dynasty. Uncle Stan Crump enjoyed a distinguished career with Staffordshire and in the Northern Leagues as an all-rounder. His cousin, Brian Crump was a contemporary at Northamptonshire and his brother John played for Leicestershire and Glamorgan. Our speaker played for Staffordshire from 1958 – 1962, before making his Northamptonshire debut in 1963. He was awarded his cap two years later. He enjoyed a long and most productive county career scoring 22346 runs (avge 32.48), including 30 centuries. He passed 1,000 runs in a season on ten occasions, his best year being his annus mirabilis of 1975, when he amassed 1756 runs (avge 48.77). His highest score was 140 not out at Worcester in 1971.

He left Northamptonshire to join Derbyshire as captain in 1979. He resigned part-way through that season but continued to play for the latter county until 1981. He returned to Northamptonshire for the remainder of his first-class career, which finished in 1984.

His ability as a slow left-arm bowler was often overlooked, yet he took 623 wickets at the impressive average of 24.89, and must therefore be regarded as a genuine all-rounder. In 1978, he enjoyed a splendid match at Northampton when he scored 130 and then returned match figures of 11 for 175 against Derbyshire. His best bowling figures were eight for 29 against Lancashire at Northampton in 1966. He also performed the hat-trick against Glamorgan at Derby in 1980.

As a close to the wicket fielder, he missed very little. He took seven catches in his eight test appearances and 546 in his career. His tally of 469 catches for Northamptonshire is a record for that county by some margin.

He was one of county cricket's most respected and consistent performers, a man who exemplified all that is positive in the professional county cricketer.

Wednesday 2 December 2015 – Report

Clive Radley recounted his life in cricket in a speech full of nostalgia and interesting snippets of information. Bill Edrich was on the Middlesex committee when he recommended him to Middlesex. He recalled his first morning in the county's dressing room when he met Denis Compton and Alan Moss, as well as Fred Titmus, from whom he learnt more about cricket, and life, than any other player. He recollected some of his most notable contemporaries. Fred Trueman and Brian Close were great characters. Graeme Pollock was a destroyer of any bowling on flat wickets, though Barry Richards was the most complete batsman on all wickets.

He described his brief test career in some detail. He was 12th man in the Old Trafford test against the West Indies in 1976, famous for the unequal contest between England openers, John Edrich and Brian Close, against Michael Holding and co. He was reserve for his first England tour in 1977/78, being paid a £50 retainer to keep himself fit. He flew to Sydney to coach and then received a phone call to go to Karachi. A fault with the undercarriage at Bangkok en route delayed his arrival. In the meantime, the England captain, Geoffrey Boycott, had asked Lord's to tell the Pakistan Cricket Board that England would not play if Pakistan selected their three World Series Cricket recruits, Javed Miandad, Imran Khan and Zaheer Abbas.

Pakistan blinked first. Radley's delay meant that Mike Gatting made his test debut, but he replaced his future Middlesex captain in New Zealand to appear in his initial test.

He then talked about his work with MCC Young Cricketers. About 33 per cent eventually received county contracts. One overseas player was always invited to join the English counterparts each year; two he remembered were Martin Crewe and Darren Sammy. In his career of 54 years, he was appreciative that the game had been good to him. He made many friends and chief among his other memories was meeting heads of state, including the Queen twice.

In the Q & A session, he was asked about the reverse sweep. He commented that Gatting perfected the shot but did not play it for some time after his famous dismissal in the World Cup final in 1987. He felt Mike Brierley was a brilliant captain. He was a good man manager with the gift of making players feel that they were involved. One of his most memorable matches was the Benson and Hedges Cup Final in 1983 when Essex, chasing Middlesex's total of 196, reached 127 for the loss of only one wicket. They then suffered a middle order wobble before losing their last five wickets for seven runs; Middlesex clung on to win by four runs.

After the vote of thanks by Garry Lane, members enjoyed their Annual Dinner among friends and other cricket lovers. Susanne ended the evening by thanking the Ageas Bowl catering staff who had helped to make the evening a happy occasion.

Wednesday 6 January 2016 – Report

Members enjoyed a splendid evening in the company of **TIM JONES**, Worcestershire CCC's Archivist. By way of a pictorial presentation with accompanying stories, he galloped entertainingly through the first 150 years of his County's history. Founded in 1865, their early cricket was played at Boughton Park, just up the road from their current ground, New Road. They moved to the latter in 1896, at the start of a period in which they won the Minor Counties championship for five successive years. He introduced his audience to the influential members of that period, particularly the Lyttelton family, the Marquis of Queensbury of boxing fame and Paul Foley, whose energy and enthusiasm drove Worcestershire to first-class status in 1899. There were also photographs of Fred Hunt, the first groundsman at New Road, who worked tirelessly for nearly half a century. Members heard of the early pioneers on the field: Ted Arnold, a maverick who walked around the town with a revolver in his pocket, as he consistently cleaned out the bookmaking fraternity; the seven Foster brethren from Malvern – RE "Tip" Foster was the first great batsman to play for Worcestershire, who scored 287 on test debut against Australia at Sydney in 1903-04. He and his brother WL Foster entered the record books by scoring a century in each innings against Hampshire at Worcester in 1899, but RM Poore, in his great season, ensured that the visitors escaped with a draw. There was George Simpson-Hayward, the last recognised lob bowler and an authority on botany; he once turned down an invitation to play for Gentlemen against the Players at Lord's to view a rare flower in Austria. Worcestershire lost ten players in the First World War; Frank Chester, a fine all-rounder prior to 1914 lost an arm. As a consequence, the county were unable to field a side in 1919. Chester of course, later became one of the most highly regarded of all umpires. The inter-war years were a struggle with Worcestershire often fielding amateurs at the last minute

due to a shortage of players. They were at the foot of the championship five times; in 1928 they failed to win a game. They still fielded some very fine bowlers, however, including Fred Root, Maurice Jewell, "Doc" Gibbons, Maurice Nichol (who died tragically early whilst playing in a match in 1934) and Reg Perks, who took 100 wickets in 19 consecutive seasons. There were photographs of Don Bradman on each of his four occasions at New Road when he gorged himself to three double centuries before WW2 and 107 in 1948. He got himself out purposely on the latter occasion as he was feeling the painful effects of a rib injury sustained in Australia some weeks before.

There were photographs of the floods at New Road. One depicted a yacht in full sail on the ground; another was of Reg Perks fishing there! Our speaker thought the County's greatest achievement was winning the Pro 40 in 2007 when all their home games had to be played away as New Road was under water. These "home" fixtures included appearances at Taunton, Derby, Edgbaston and Old Trafford.

The heroes of the more recent past received warm and affectionate testimony; Don Kenyon, who led the County to their first two Championships in 1964 and 1965, and the rest of that side which included Tom Graveney and, in 1965, Basil D'Oliveira; Glenn Turner's 1000 runs before the end of May in 1973 (it was he who triggered Tim Jones' interest in Worcestershire), the championship side of 1974, led by Norman Gifford (Tim actually glossed over that season quite quickly in appreciation of the sensitivities of his audience!), Phil Neale, Graeme Hick, their Lord's final successes, Ian Botham, who made a profound impact, and, finally, Daryl Mitchell. Tim mentioned that he had given the talk to Worcestershire playing staff, so that new players in particular were aware of the values, traditions and heritage of Worcestershire. Society members were riveted throughout and left the meeting with a warm glow. It was a wonderful evening for all those who love county cricket.

JAMES VINCE AND LIAM DAWSON IN ENGLAND'S T20 WORLD CUP SQUAD

After their consistent performances in the England Lions' ODI (50-overs) series against Pakistan A in Dubai at the end of January, James Vince and Liam Dawson were selected for England's T20 World Cup squad. Both men played in all five matches which the home side won 3-2. Vince, captaining the Lions, scored 236 runs (avge. 47.2), which included 102 in the third match. After his encouraging and mature performances for England in the t20 series against Pakistan in The Emirates, Vince's selection was perhaps not surprising, though it did not appear to be a foregone conclusion.

However, Dawson was a revelation. He was selected as the side's leading spin bowler; he took eight wickets (avge. 26.00) and conceded a very creditable 4.52 runs per over. His consistent batting also took the eye, as he scored 171 runs (avge. 34.20). Usually batting at five, his lowest score was 20 and his highest 48. His overall strike rate was a most commendable 84.24 runs per 100 balls. His selection represents, of course, a major turnaround in his fortunes, given that he went on loan to Essex for two weeks last summer.

Both players were overlooked for England's two subsequent warm-up matches against South Africa, which they lost.

REECE TOPLEY

Members will also be aware that Hampshire's new signing from Essex, Reece Topley, is in England's t20 squad. A very tall (at 6 feet 7 ½ inches) left-arm fast-medium bowler, he has been a part of the England limited-overs set up since the end of last season. Making his ODI debut against Australia at Old Trafford last September, he has now played in 10 such matches, taking 16 wickets (avge. 25.62). He appeared in four ODIs against Pakistan in The Emirates and in all five of the recently concluded rubber against South Africa. His best performance is 4-50 v South Africa at Port Elizabeth, though perhaps his most startling was when he reduced South Africa to 22 for 3 in the final ODI at Cape Town. However, AB de Villiers, with an unbeaten 101, then took South Africa to a comfortable five wicket victory.

Topley has also played in four international t20 matches (debut v Australia at Cardiff on 31/8/15), including the two warm-up matches against South Africa referred to earlier on this page. He has taken four wickets, with a best of 3-24 against Pakistan at Dubai last November.

FORTY YEARS ON (3)

The Hampshire cricketing scene has changed dramatically since 1976. The catalyst for those changes was the move to the then Rose (now Ageas) Bowl in 2001 and the establishment of a new commercial structure for the management of the club's affairs. Hampshire wished to move away from the former County Ground side in Northlands Road, Southampton to a new site which would give them more scope to host international cricket and hence generate additional income. Like many county cricket clubs, their financial situation had always been delicate; some years posting a small profit and others a loss. The club bumped along in that manner for about a hundred years. It was never awash with money. In fact, it was often the opposite. .

A site, owned by Queen's College, Oxford, was eventually found in West End, near to junction 7 of the M27. The site was obtained on a 999 year lease from the College in 1994. Eastleigh Borough Council granted outline planning permission for the main ground and adjacent nursery ground in 1996. It was intended to fund the development from the sale of the County Ground. However, a significant downturn in the property market at the time left a funding gap of some £7m. That shortfall was subsequently made good by an award from the National Lottery Sports Fund. However, the costs of the ground's development continued to escalate, the costs of which were often met by Rod Bransgrove. It was evident that the traditional management model for financing a county cricket club needed to change.

As a result, Hampshire County Cricket Club effectively ceased to exist on 19 December 2000, to be replaced by Hampshire Cricket, part of The Rose Bowl plc. The new enterprise came into being on 1 November 2001 with its business being managed by a board of directors. Rod Bransgrove became the new Chairman. He still presides over matters today. The new business model for managing cricket in the UK still remains revolutionary.

However, financial issues continued to haunt the cricket business, with losses being recorded until last year. It is now hoped that the situation has been stabilised following a ground naming rights partnership deal with Ageas, the insurance

company, and a sale/lease-back arrangement with Eastleigh Borough Council, which permitted the building of a hotel at the northern end of the ground. Even that development became fraught when the builder entered liquidation. Happily, the hotel was opened in the latter part of 2015. The Ageas Bowl is now the only ground in the country which fulfils all the criteria stipulated by the ECB for hosting test cricket. It has often felt, though, that Hampshire followers have been fortunate to have a club to support and profound thanks must be given to Rod Bransgrove.

Like many other counties, Hampshire now play all their home matches, including 2nd XI and Academy fixtures, at one ground. In 1976, the county played at four: Southampton, Bournemouth, Portsmouth and Basingstoke. Cricket ceased at Dean Park, Bournemouth at the end of the 1992 season, as agreement could not be reached with the owners of the site on renewal of the lease. The United Services Ground ceased to be used after 2000. As with Bournemouth, that ground had also hosted its first Hampshire fixture in 1897. The last match there will always be remembered for perhaps the most riveting spectacle in the county's history, when Shane Warne played out a day-long dual in the sun with Kent's Rahul Dravid. May's Bounty at Basingstoke originally hosted its last match in 2000, but with the Ageas Bowl staging a rock concert by the American rock band, REM, Hampshire returned there again in 2008, and then the next two years also.

On the field, Hampshire followers have never enjoyed such an intoxicating period in the last 40 years. Richard Gilliat's team, overcoming the loss of Barry Richards and Andy Roberts in the home stretch, won the John Player League in 1978. Mark Nicholas' team did so again in 1986. He then took Hampshire to the promised land of three Lord's finals, and victory, between 1988 to 1992. Prior to the former year, they had endured six defeats at the semi-final stage of cup competitions, and were the last county to appear in a Lord's final at the time. Owing to a hand injury, Nicholas had to watch the Nat West triumph in 1991 from the pavilion; David Gower skippered the side on that occasion.

Nick Pocock (captain 1980-84), oversaw the side through a transitional period as that fine team of the 1970s left the scene. His contribution can never be underestimated. He later, of course, became the club's President. Mark Nicholas (1985-1995) inherited the most potent batting line-up in the county's history in Gordon Greenidge (until 1987), the Smith brothers, Gower and Paul Terry (test cricketers all) and himself. Such was the strength, Kevan James could not always be guaranteed a place and Jon Hardy left to play elsewhere. Supported with the ball by the incomparable Malcolm Marshall, Cardigan Connor, Jon Ayling, Tim Tremlett, Nigel Cowley and Raj Maru, with Bob Parks behind the wicket, their average position in the county championship in the 1980s was 6.9, the best in Hampshire's history. The figure would have been even better had they not finished last in 1980, whilst Marshall was on tour duty. They scored their runs quickly and played the game with a smile on their faces. A championship eluded them. They were second in 1985, and third in 1982, 1983 and 1990. Jon Ayling's loss to injury at the age of 25 in 1992 was felt for a decade afterwards.

To be concluded next month.

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