

# THE HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal

NEWSLETTER No 362 – APRIL 2017

## MEETINGS

### Wednesday 5th April 2017 - Meeting

The Society is privileged to welcome Darren Bicknell to this evening's meeting. Members will recall him as being one of county cricket's most prolific batsmen over a 20-year period - an astonishing timescale in the modern era. Tall (6 feet 4 inches), and left-handed, he usually opened the innings but was equally adept in the middle order. His consistency over such a long period was remarkable, as exemplified by his centuries against Hampshire. He made four in all. His first -105 at The Oval in 1987 - was his maiden hundred in first-class cricket. He compiled his fourth- 103 at Trent Bridge -17 years later, in 2004. Through his ability, and his demeanour, he was also one of the most respected of all county cricketers.

When he retired in 2006, Angus Fraser wrote in the following year's *Wisden* that "... (he) is a lovely lad – and the best non-Test batsman I ever bowled to. His height allowed him to get over and control the bouncing ball. But for Mike Atherton and Alec Stewart, he would have had plenty of chances".

**DARREN JOHN BICKNELL** was born in Guildford on 24 June 1967. He made his debut for Surrey in 1987 and was an integral part of the side until 1999. He was capped in 1990. In his early years, he was tipped as a test prospect and went on three England A tours. His first was to Zimbabwe in 1989-90, under the captaincy of Mark Nicholas. In the following two winters, he was also selected to go to Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and then the West Indies. He decided to leave the County, however, in 1999, after losing his place to Ian Ward. It must have been a difficult decision. *Wisden* described him as having "Surrey stamped through him in the manner of seaside rock". 1999 was his benefit year, in which Surrey had also won their first Championship for 27 years. They would go on to register two further Championship titles in the next three years.

Our speaker joined Nottinghamshire and went on to be an important member of the side that won the County Championship in 2005. He was only one of two men, the other was Jason Gallian, to appear in all sixteen Championship matches. He had, apparently, considered retirement in the previous year, but five late season centuries brought about a change of mind. However, at the end of 2006, he decided to call it a day.

In 324 matches, he had scored 19931 runs (avge. 38.55), including 46 centuries. He had shown his adaptability by recording centuries against all the first-class counties, apart from his beloved Surrey (his highest score against them was 91). He shared in two partnerships of over 400. In 1990, he and the ebullient David Ward put on 413 for the third wicket against Canterbury at Kent. In 2000, his first season with Nottinghamshire, he and Guy Welton shared an opening stand of 413 at the expense

of the toiling Warwickshire bowlers at Edgbaston. Both partnerships remain records for the respective wicket for each County.

He also scored the fastest century of the season in 1989 – in 69 balls (73 minutes) against Essex at The Oval, all before lunch on the third day. He passed 1000 runs in a season on nine occasions, his best year being in 1991 when he scored 1888 runs (avge. 47.20). There was some irony in the fact that his highest score was in a match between his two counties - 235 for Surrey against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge in 1994.

He claimed 29 wickets (avge. 35.00) with his slow left-arm bowling, and also held 107 catches.

Strangely, given the length of his career, he played in only one Lord's final. That was in the Nat West Trophy in 1991 when Surrey were beaten by Hampshire in the gloaming by four wickets. Our speaker was bowled by the talismanic Jon Ayling for 11 early on in the proceedings. He was, though, a member of the Surrey side that won the Sunday League in 1996. He performed the relatively rare feat and scoring 1000 runs in a season in List A matches on two occasions, once for each of his Counties - 1992 for Surrey and 2001 for Nottinghamshire. In all List a matches, he made 7522 runs, including 10 centuries.

Since his retirement Darren Bicknell has put much into the game that he graced for so long. He led an MCC side to Denmark in 2008, and has played for and against the club in many matches until the last year or so. He played club cricket for Belvoir in the South Nottinghamshire Cricket League in 2009 and 2010, as well as appearing in Minor Counties cricket for Cambridgeshire in 2012 and 2013. In the latter year, his team reached the Minor Counties Championship final, in which they lost to Cheshire.

He is cricket professional at Oakham School (with former Hampshire player Neil Johnson and ex Lancashire batsman Frank Hayes). He is also Chief Executive of the Belvoir Cricket and Countryside Trust, and a school governor.

No biography of our speaker would be complete without mention of his younger brother, Martin, who was one of the best of all county bowlers during their careers, which ran simultaneously. But for injury, he would have played in far more than his six test matches. The pair made a huge contribution to the county game.

### **Wednesday 1 March 2017-Report**

Tony Borrington's address was a splendid one, full of wry and whimsical humour and anecdote. His theme was a sideways look on how the game had changed since the end of his career.

He began with a look at scoring rates. Martin Guptill's record score in one-day internationals (ODIs) of 237, was as many as sides used to manage in a complete innings in limited overs matches. He also referred to Brendon McCullum's pyrotechnics in t20 cricket, in which his highest score was 158. Our speaker never played in a 20 overs match, but he did participate in a 10-over encounter in the

Sunday League after rain had shortened its duration from the normal 40 overs per innings. Derbyshire made 60 off their 10 overs; Glamorgan responded with 40!

He then moved on to training regimes and support available to players in his days. Pre-season training started a week before the first match. There were four days of fitness training, culminating in a two mile run on the fifth. Fred Trueman was askance. He said he would get fit by bowling. Nowadays, there are Strength and Conditioning Coaches and Sports Psychologists. He said that Derbyshire possessed their own psychologist. His name was Eddie Barlow, the captain. He was the most positive thinker our speaker ever came across. His influence remained for a few years after he left. He remembered a match against the West Indians at Chesterfield in 1980. Geoff Miller won the toss and decided to bat; he wanted to show that his team were not afraid of Andy Roberts, Malcolm Marshall and Joel Garner. The ploy worked in the first innings, but Derbyshire were bowled out for 68 in the second.

He reflected that he received the first ball ever bowled by Marshall in England, in a Benson and Hedges Cup match at Derby in 1979. He survived and went on to make 63, the highest score of the match, and receive the Man of the Match award from Trueman.

The modern teams have "plans". There is a whiteboard in every dressing room. He recounted how Derbyshire had formulated plans for Derek Randall and Ian Botham. The former thrived on banter whilst batting. So Derbyshire decided not to talk to him. Randall quickly cottoned on to their ruse. He informed them that if they did not speak to him, then he would talk to himself. And so he did. And drove them all potty. For Botham, they thought they'd greet him with a bouncer early on in the expectation that he would mistime the ball and be caught. The bouncer was duly delivered. Botham hooked, and the ball sailed out of the ground.

He also talked about the modern warm-up. He thought it had become a spectator sport in its own right. There was almost a competition between teams as to which of them would lay out the most cones. He also commented on teams playing football as part of their routine. He recalled a conversation with the football manager, Glenn Hoddle when their respective sons were involved in a youth game (Hoddle's son was a left-arm swing bowler). The ex-footballer remarked that when he was managing England, it never occurred to him to play cricket in the warm-up!

There was an entertaining discourse on ball tampering. Bottle tops, mixtures comprising Vaseline and other slimy substances, sand and sweets were common place. The old Nottinghamshire bowler, Arthur Jepson, spotted what was going on with the use of sweets in a match against Essex. Instead of admonishing the fielding side, he asked them, in his stentorian tones, why they just didn't use Brylcreem as they did in his day. He recalled a conversation with John Barclay on a claim made by Imran Khan in the latter's autobiography that, when taking eight wickets in a match against Hampshire, he used a bottle top to rough up the ball on one side. Barclay disarmingly commented that he thought Imran had used a screwdriver! True or not, it appears in bygone ages that both umpires and captains conspired in altering the condition of the ball. (Editor: In Hampshire's match at Hove in 1979, Imran scored 154 not out, before taking 6-37 in 21 overs and 2-44).

He was not afraid to tell stories against himself. He recalled two injuries incurred in 1978. First, on Bank Holiday Monday at Trent Bridge, he was hit on the head by a Clive Rice bouncer and left the field in an ambulance. A few weeks later, Graham Dilley broke his forearm in two places at Maidstone. He also recounted how he was totally unable to read Kerry O'Keefe's googly in a match against the Australians at Chesterfield in 1977. In one over, he played and missed to each ball. Doug Walters, fielding at slip, offered to help him out. Walters informed him that he would whistle when a googly was on its way. In the next over our speaker stroked his tormentor to the boundary to double his score. The inevitable denouement to the cameo was that he was dismissed caught at the wicket off the leg-break after Walters had whistled.

He had recently been to Australia to visit his son, Paul, who had also played for Derbyshire. He made an astute observation on the Big Bash. Australia is a country where the vast majority of the population live in the five major cities. City teams therefore already have an identity. It is not the same here. He queried whether cricket followers would travel to adjoining counties to watch franchises.

There was much else besides. He finished with talking about his education career as a headmaster and how he inveigled Mike Brearley to address parents at the School's Speech Day. With prompt notes on the back of his receipt from a motorway service station, the former England captain entranced his audience.

The Society has enjoyed a marvellous winter with a wonderful array of interesting and entertaining speakers. Tony Borrington was certainly no exception, and, it was difficult to remember an evening when members had laughed quite so much.

## **SOCIETY NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The current subscription rates were established five years ago. The Society has been able to absorb increased costs over this period but has found it necessary to increase subscriptions by £5 for the next winter. The principal contributory factors are: -

Increases in speakers' fees and expenses – now an average of £100 for each meeting; a pending charge for use of the rooms at The Ageas Bowl (no charge is currently made to the Society); a loss of approximately £300 for the 2016 calendar year.

The new subscription rates will not be reviewed again until the Society's 2019/20 season, unless there are very exceptional circumstances.

The new subscriptions are therefore £20; £17 for any other member of the same household; £17 for retired people and those under 18. Guests will be charged £5 per meeting.

## **COMMITTEE CHANGES**

At the AGM our Chairman, Susanne Marlow, was pleased to welcome **JOHN HOOPER** to the Committee. John was the only nomination received at the meeting. John is a regular attender of both Society meetings and cricket at the Ageas Bowl.

Richard Mallinson has resigned from the Committee. Susanne thanked Richard for his wise contributions at Committee meetings which were always much valued. Richard has recently moved house from Whitchurch to Berkshire, but still hopes to attend Society meetings.

## **DAY AT THE CRICKET 2017**

Members are reminded that application forms for the Society's Day at the Cricket on Saturday 3 June should be returned, with a cheque payable to the Hampshire Cricket Society, to Susanne Marlow by 30 April.

## **ON KOLPAKS**

Having signed Kyle Abbott and Rilee Roussow, Hampshire ought to benefit considerably in 2017. Both men are Kolpak signings. In the wake of Brexit, several counties have seemingly joined the headlong rush to sign Kolpaks on contracts to take them beyond the date that the UK leaves the EU. Virtually all of the implications of Brexit have yet to be played out. It is possible, or indeed likely, that new UK entrants under the current EU ruling established by Kolpak, will be barred if they hold EU passports and the UK leaves the Single Market, a pre-condition of which is freedom of labour. It is conceivable that exceptions may be made if they gain a Work Permit by virtue of having played a specific number of international appearances. The history of Hampshire cricket would have been very different if the County had been unable to sign Nic Pothas (Greek passport), indisputably the greatest wicket-keeper/batsman in their history, and Sean Irvine (Irish passport), who has played in more trophy winning sides than any other Hampshire player.

The success of Kolpak signings has been varied. Some, like Pothas and Irvine, were obviously beneficial. However, there is the obvious issue of whether Kolpaks have been in the long term interests of English cricket. It is often argued that they are beneficial in the sense that our youngsters learn from them. This may or may not be the case. The real issue is whether they deprive youngsters, in whom counties have invested considerable sums of money, of a place in the side. More often than not, they have done so. As with the current Kolpak activity, counties are signing experienced players rather than waiting for Academy players to mature. Comparison with the situation of Premier League soccer clubs is inevitable. Counties have undoubtedly embarked on a policy to attract Kolpak players in an effort to gain a place in Division 1 of the Championship by 2020, when the new t20 regional or city based franchises become established. They clearly perceive their future is at stake (probably correctly) if they remain in Division 2.

One of Hampshire's brightest young prospects, Joe Weatherley, who averaged over 80 and scored a double hundred and a century in Adelaide A Grade cricket this winter has been loaned to Kent in 2017. It is a shrewd move by Hampshire.

Weatherley has been predicted as Jimmy Adams' successor for some years now. After a brief period treading water, which sometimes happens as young players develop, he seems to have moved to another level. However, not all counties will have youngsters of sufficient calibre to loan them to their competitors. Some counties may also not wish to take unproven players on loan. The scope for talented youngsters being lost to the detriment of English cricket is considerable. The new City-based franchises will only increase that possibility. Moreover, why would good young players commit themselves to the game if they know their chances of playing county cricket become more miniscule than they are at the moment? A career in, say, football, or away from the sports field or business, will look to be a much more attractive proposition for most.

### HIGHEST SCORE BY HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS ON TEST DEBUT FOR ENGLAND

Liam Dawson's 66 not out on his test debut at Chennai in January was the highest score made by a Hampshire player in his first innings for England in test cricket. Other Hampshire players to score 50 in their first innings when making their test debut have been:-

Lionel Tennyson	52 v South Africa at Durban	1913/14
George Brown	57 v Australia at Headingley	1921
Kevin Pietersen	57 v Australia at Lord's (1 <sup>st</sup> inns)	2005
	64*v Australia at Lord's (2 <sup>nd</sup> inns)	

Gordon Greenidge scored 93 and 107 on his test debut for the West Indies against India at Bangalore in 1974/75.

### A DUCK ON ENGLAND DEBUT

Unfortunately, Liam Dawson failed to score in the second innings. In doing so, he joined a number of other Hampshire players. It can be seen that he is in some illustrious company. With the exception of Alec Kennedy, all the players below were dismissed without scoring in their first innings. (Kennedy had scored an unbeaten 41 - batting at 10 - earlier in the match).

Christopher Heseltine	v South Africa at Johannesburg	1895/96
Philip Mead	v Australia at Sydney	1911/12
Alec Kennedy	v South Africa at Johannesburg	1922/23
John Arnold	v New Zealand at Lord's	1931
David "Butch" White	v Pakistan at Lahore	1961/62
Chris Smith	v New Zealand at Lord's	1983
Shaun Udal	v Pakistan at Multan	2005/06
Chris Tremlett	v India at Lord's	2007

### MASON CRANE

In the wake of a highly successful season for Gordon (not Carlton as mentioned in a previous Newsletter) in Sydney Grade A cricket, Mason Crane was selected for New South Wales against South Australia in the Sheffield Shield on 7 March. He was handed his NSW cap by that very fine leg-spinner Stuart McGill. The latter had mentored him during the season. The young Hampshire leg spinner went on to enjoy

match figures of 5 - 116 (2-50 and 3-66). This tally included his 50<sup>th</sup> wicket in first-class cricket. His side ran out winners by eight wickets. He had been working hard on his batting during the season in Australia, and scored 15 not out in his only innings in the match. The progress made by Crane over the past months is illustrated by the fact that he became the first overseas player to appear for NSW for 32 years. His predecessor was the redoubtable Imran Khan.

He has become only the second Hampshire man to appear in the Sheffield Shield, though he remains the only Englishman. The other, of course, was Barry Richards in a record breaking season for South Australia in 1970/71.

Crane then enhanced his reputation in the North v South three-match one day tournament in the Emirates. He received a buffeting, especially from Tim Bresnan, in the first match in Dubai (two for 72 in 9.3 overs). He was then omitted from the second. However, he effectively settled the final fixture when he dismantled the North middle order in a spell of four for one in 12 balls. The North were coasting to victory beforehand, but eventually lost by 20 runs.

At the time of writing, he just played for MCC against the Champion County Middlesex in Dubai. He took four for 95 in the second innings as Middlesex claimed an exciting victory by one wicket. It will be more than interesting to see whether Hampshire select him for the opening four day match against Yorkshire at Headingley.

### **LIAM DAWSON**

The man of the North v South series, designated by Andrew Strauss, was Liam Dawson. He scored 83 off only 68 balls in the second match at Dubai and claimed five wickets for 110 off 28 overs over the three matches. The cricket correspondents covering the series all commented that he had cemented his place in England's one-day squad. The previous few weeks must have been frustrating for him as he was omitted for all but one of the white ball international matches in India. One report stated that the standard of play in the North-South series was more intense than the average Royal London Cup match.

### **JAMES VINCE**

**JAMES VINCE** captained the South side to a 3-0 victory. He was not required to bat in the first match as his side won by ten wickets, thanks to fine batting by Kent's Daniel Bell-Drummond (92 not out) and Middlesex's Dawid Malan (109 not out). In the remaining matches, he made 46 and 12.

He had begun the winter by playing for England in three ODIs in Bangladesh. He usually made a start but his best score was 32 in the final match at Chittagong. It was not sufficient to retain his place for the ensuing series in India.

Later, he played for Sydney Thunder in Australia's much vaunted Big Bash (20 overs) League. He had been drafted in for the final three matches upon the recommendation of Eoin Morgan, who left Australia to captain England's white ball side in India. Vince impressed with a total of 74 runs off 48 balls over the three matches. His highest score was 44 in his opening match.

He stands at a crossroads in his career in 2017. In all his seven tests last season, he gave tantalising glimpses of his considerable talent, though by the end he seemed an imposter of the man Hampshire supporters have viewed over the last few years. He looked distracted and his natural fluency had deserted him. He probably needed just one big innings to settle himself and then move forward, but it was not to be. Dropped catches will not have helped his confidence either. His highest score was 42 (v Pakistan at Lord's and Edgbaston). Unfortunately, he was unable to reach the half century mark in his various innings in the winter (apart from 125 in a friendly warm up match against the UAE prior to the North-South series). It must be hoped that he regains form to put him in the frame for a test recall.

Just a fortnight prior to the beginning of the season, Hampshire announced that he would still remain club captain and retain the captaincy in white ball cricket but that George Bailey would captain the side in the Championship. The Tasmanian will, however, be unavailable for the first three matches and may leave during the middle of the summer if selected for Australia in the Champions Trophy. Those first three matches are, incidentally, against Middlesex and Yorkshire (twice). Though Hampshire were luckily reprieved from relegation last season, they have not escaped scot free given their opening fixtures this summer. The results in those fixtures may well determine their season.

### **TOM ALSOP**

The other busy man during the winter has been Tom Alsop. The young left-hander was selected for the England Lions in Sri Lanka before Christmas. He generally got a start but was unable to go on. He made 171 runs in seven visits to the crease in all three formats of the game. His best innings was 96 in a List A match against Sri Lanka A at Colombo, in which he shared a second wicket partnership of 200 with Daniel Bell-Drummond. He was stumped attempting to hit to the leg side boundary. He played in two matches in the North/South series in the Emirates before appearing for MCC against the Champion County Middlesex in the season's opening first-class encounter in Dubai. Unfortunately he was dismissed without scoring in both innings. Last season demonstrated, though, that he is one for the future. As with Crane, Hampshire's selection approach regarding Alsop will be intriguing. The team is top heavy with batting and he will face some stiff competition.

### **CITY BASED FRANCHISES**

Society members will form their own view on the new City based franchises and the statements made by Tom Harrison after the decision was made. More than a few eyebrows will have been raised. There will undoubtedly be some lively comment in newspapers from county clubs and cricket followers over the coming months. The key issue is the impact on the County Championship. Successive initiatives have relegated the primacy of the competition. Writing in *The Cricketer*, the editor, Simon Hughes, commented that county cricket does not serve the England team well. Is it any wonder? Also, there have already been letters in *The Cricketer* from readers who will not be renewing their membership in 2018 because of the scheduling of the Championship. It might be start of an avalanche. County chairmen should factor in that issue on any assumptions regarding budgets in the wake of the City franchises.



