

NEWSLETTER No. 233 - JANUARY 2003

MEETINGS

8 JANUARY 2003 - MEETING

The Society is very pleased to welcome the **REVEREND MALCOLM LORIMER** to this evening's meeting. He is a Methodist Minister in Sale and Chaplain to Lancashire County Cricket Club. He is one of cricket's greatest and most hardworking enthusiasts. He has edited the Lancashire Yearbook since 1987, and also presided over the Benefit Brochures for John Abrahams, Mike Watkinson and Graham Lloyd. For a number of years he was also Lancashire's Honorary Librarian. He has written books for the Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians on Lancashire Cricketers, Lancashire Cricket Grounds and Cyril Washbrook. He stepped down as Chairman of the ACS last year after a ten-year tenure, during which time its affairs were established on a more secure footing, and the range of its publications, and, importantly, its influence on the game in general, extended. He is also a collector of cricket memorabilia.

Latterly, he edited and compiled "Glory Lightly Worn – A Tribute to Brian Statham" (pub. The Parrs Wood Press), which was greeted with extremely positive reviews. The biographical notes in that book reveal that he was actually born in Yorkshire but attributes his love of Lancashire to "the power of conversion!"

He is interested in links between cricket and Christianity. His other pastimes include the theatre and crime novels.

As far as the editor can recall, the only other member of the clergy to address the Society was Andrew Wingfield-Digby (Sept. 1990). Mike Vockins, the former secretary and Chief Executive of Worcestershire CCC also spoke to the Society in November 1983, though at the time of his address he had still to be ordained.

13 NOVEMBER 2002 – REPORT

Gladstone Small entertained a very large audience with a number of penetrating insights on today's game and a fund of stories involving his contemporaries. Robin Smith was well to the fore! The unique motivational qualities of Ian Botham were also revealed. It was an evening of much humour and many felt they were in the presence of an individual who was likely to make a valuable contribution to the management of cricket in the coming years.

11 DECEMBER 2002 – REPORT

The large gathering attending the Society's Annual Buffet Supper at The Rose Bowl were treated to a wonderful evening of poetry, song and narrative from some of cricket's most famous, and lesser known, tracts. The imaginative evening, divided into two innings and with an interval for a well received Buffet Supper, contained works by literary giants (Conan Doyle and Wodehouse), cricketing goliaths (Grace and Bradman), a number of modern entertainers (Stilgoe, Cleese, Brooke-Taylor and Lesley Garrett) and many unlikely sources such as Sister Mary Doyle, a nun from New Zealand.

REMAINING MEETINGS

The remaining meetings in this winter's programme are:-

Wednesday 12 February – Alan Fordham (Northamptonshire and Cricket Operations Manager ECB) at Portsmouth Rugby Club – starting at 8pm.

Wednesday 12 March – Roy Cavanagh, author, at **BASINGSTOKE GOLF CLUB (not Rugby Club** as stated in the Membership Card). Mr. Cavanagh, who has written on Cyril Washbrook, will be preceded by the AGM which starts at 7.30pm.

Wednesday 9 April – Norman Giller, a biographer of Denis Compton, at The Rose Bowl starting at 8pm.

ADI AYMES – HAMPSHIRE'S BEST WICKETKEEPER/BATSMAN?

The line of Hampshire wicket-keepers is a short but distinguished one. Since admission to the modern County Championship in 1895 only nine men have worn the gloves regularly, viz. Charles Robson, Jimmy Stone, Walter Livsey, Neil McCorkell, Leo Harrison, Bryan Timms, Bob Stephenson, Bobby Parks and Adrian Aymes.

Among those to keep intermittently was that erratic genius George Brown. Almost entirely due to the influence of his country's, and Hampshire's captain, Lionel Tennyson, he played in three Tests against Australia in 1921 and four in South Africa in 1922-23. Ironically, Livsey was selected for the latter tour but broke his hand and had to return home without having played in a first-class match.

Of the County's regular wicket-keepers, McCorkell has scored the most runs (15,834) and Parks has claimed the most dismissals (700). The claim to being Hampshire's best regular wicket-keeper batsman must rest between McCorkell and Adi Aymes. It is devilishly difficult to compare players of different eras without devising complex mathematical models which take into account, for example, the impact of uncovered wickets and the quality of opposition bowlers.

Nevertheless, a detailed comparison of the careers of the two men are interesting. Neil McCorkell was good enough to open the innings though in generally weak batting sides. He scored a thousand runs in a season on nine occasions, completed 17 centuries and made Hampshire's five best scores by a wicketkeeper, including a double century – 203 at Gloucester's Wagon Works Ground in 1951. As if he wished

to emphasise his legacy for posterity it was his final first-class century, in his last season.

Aymes never passed one thousand runs in a season, but he only averaged 27 innings per season whereas his predecessor averaged 50. If, therefore, Aymes had as many visits to the crease he would undoubtedly have passed the landmark on at least seven occasions. Also, it could be argued that the progressive reduction in the number of matches played each season should mean an adjustment to the landmark figure of 1000 runs. Hampshire played an average of 27.7 matches a year during McCorkell's playing days; only 18.5 during Aymes'. This would argue for an adjusted figure of 650 runs a season, a total which Aymes passed on 6 occasions. Aymes would not have attained McCorkell's four best aggregates in a season. The latter's highest tally was 1871 runs in 1949, though he shared the duties with Leo Harrison and Dennis Blake in that year. The balance still therefore remains in favour of McCorkell.

However, Adi Aymes scored fifty or more on 6.82 visits to the crease; McCorkell did the same on 7.25 occasions. Interestingly, Brown's record was only marginally better than Aymes; he reached fifty or more on 6.76 visits.

Only 12 batsmen, all in the top-order, have attained a higher career average for Hampshire, over a similar number of games, than Aymes (31.22). McCorkell's average was 25.87.

These figures would appear to indicate that Neil McCorkell was capable (like George Brown) of reaching greater heights than Adi Aymes, but the latter was more consistent. Aymes' average was undoubtedly assisted by the number of "not-outs" in his career. He was undefeated on a phenomenal 25.15% of occasions, easily a record for a Hampshire player. The only front-line batsman within touching distance is Peter Sainsbury (20.70%). Tailenders Derek Shackleton (22.8%) and "Lofty" Herman (21.2%) also finish below the obstinate wicket-keeper.

This last statistic above exemplified the main virtue of Adi Aymes' batting. He had to be prized out. No batsman in England sold his wicket more dearly. He relished a fight. Whilst at the start of his career he came to the wicket behind the most formidable batting line-up in the County's history, he was increasingly required to shore up the batting as those excellent players of his early days gradually left the arena. He effectively became the beating heart of the team. If he took root and dug in then the County were generally assured of a competitive total. Virtually all of his largest scores, including his eight centuries, were made in adversity. It was not accidental that Hampshire struggled in their two spells in the new Division 1 of the Championship. They both coincided with long-term injuries to their wicket-keeper batsman, the first to his hand and the other to his increasingly worn knees.

Adi Aymes was passionately proud to have been a professional cricketer. Many more talented batsmen have played for the County but no man ever maximised his abilities to greater effect. After being turned down by Hampshire as a schoolboy he practised assiduously and made such a large number of runs in club cricket for his beloved Hursley Park that the County could not afford to ignore him again. He continued that work ethic when he joined the County staff.

He came late to first-class cricket. He joined the Hampshire staff when 21 years of age in 1986 but did not gain a regular place until he finally displaced Bob Parks some four years later.

He was a technically correct batsman who always showed the full face of the bat to the bowler and looked to play in the V. He became more streetwise with experience and broadened the range of his scoring options, and the speed of his scoring, in later years.

As a wicket-keeper he was, for years, the best in the County Championship. He could keep with equal facility standing back to the express pace and variations of the incomparable Malcolm Marshall and standing up to the infinite wiles of another great bowler, Shane Warne. He loved nothing better than to stand up to the wicket to let the batsman know he was there, ready to pounce upon any error. His taking of low, wide leg-side balls was consistently brilliant and fearless.

His decision to stand up to the wicket had a direct bearing on his gaining the only honour of his career. In the 1991 Nat. West Final, David Ward was threatening to take the game away from Hampshire. Aymes' decided to stand up to his medium-pacers and so inhibited the Surrey strokemaker that shortly afterwards he miscued to gully and thus the eventual winning target was kept to manageable proportions.

He should have toured Australia in 1998-99. He kept wicket and batted as well as any time in his career, but a dip in form towards the end of the season cost him his place.

It is remarkable that, given he kept to a generally weak bowling attack, he averaged 2.58 dismissals a match, a figure bettered only by his predecessor Bobby Parks (2.72), who enjoyed seeing batsmen being plagued by Marshall throughout the 80's. Edges were few and far between and his record suggests he missed very little.

When long-serving cricketers retire pundits and spectators alike normally say they will be missed. In Adi Aymes' case the statement could never be truer. Like his captain, Robin Smith, one imagined the Hampshire Rose and Crown firmly implanted on his chest and the back of his shirt. His assiduous hardwork made him a credit to the County and a model for aspiring young cricketers.

SIMON KATICH

Hampshire have signed the Australian left-handed batsman Simon Katich as their second overseas player for next season.

Editions of The Wisden Cricketers' Almanack Australia refer to his "impeccable pedigree". **SIMON MATTHEW KATICH** was born in the Perth wine growing area of Middle Swan on 21 August 1975. He was a star schoolboy cricketer who gave notice of his exceptional talent when he scored 207 for Trinity College in Perth's tough Darlot Cup competition. He then captained the Australian Institute of Sport Cricket Academy side in 1996.

He made his debut for Western Australia in the Mercantile Mutual Cup competition in 1995-96. His first-class baptism followed next season when he made 25 and a noteworthy 65 not out in four hours, helping his captain Tom Moody to save the match against Queensland at The Gabba. Interestingly, he was only selected for his match as the WA selectors were unable to contact Murray Goodwin who had gone crabbing!

He made steady progress the following year. He captained the ACB Chairman's XI against England on his home ground of Lilac Hill and twice went tantalisingly close to a maiden century. He was undefeated on 93 against Queensland and then put together 90 against Victoria.

By the end of the next season his name was on everybody's lips. He netted a century in each of Western Australia's first three matches, and after a lull in mid-season scored two more. The last was made in the Pura Cup final at The Gabba when he rescued his side from a perilous 13 for two to a match winning 425 for nine declared. Wisden Australia referred to his "mature soundness of technique and temperament" as he made 115 off 243 balls in 333 minutes. Earlier in the summer he had made a fluent 106 for Western Australia against England at the WACA. He eventually finished the season with 1039 runs (avge. 61.12) and was nominated by Wisden Australia as their Pura Milk Cricketer of the Year.

He was selected for his first representative tour, to Sri Lanka, prior to the start of the next Australian summer. He played only once but again took the eye with two attractive innings of 40 (run out) and 36 not out against a Sri Lankan Board XI at the Colombo Cricket Club.

Unfortunately, he contracted chicken pox shortly afterwards and its after effects stayed with him throughout the next season as he very often succumbed to exhaustion.

He had already signed, however, to play for Durham in 2000 and he prospered to the extent of 1089 runs (avge. 43.56), including three centuries.

Restored to full health he enjoyed another prolific season in Australia in 2000-01 when he scored 1282 runs (avge. 71.22). He illustrated his adaptability throughout the season. Against New South Wales at North Sydney he made a century before lunch as he moved from 6 to 109 not out on the second day. Conversely, he battled to a century in 460 minutes as he strove to keep the Queensland bowlers at bay in Perth. He also made his highest score to date - 228 not out against South Australia at the WACA.

His consistency and talent earned him a place in the Australian touring party to England in 2001. He played in only five matches but his glittering 168 not out off only 167 balls against MCC on a sun-baked day at Arundel, will always be remembered by those who saw it. One seasoned observer, steeped in Australian cricket, arrived late on the ground and thought it was Adam Gilchrist who was batting. There can be no higher testimony to the certainty of his strokeplay as he despatched the ball to all parts. The feature of his play was the simplicity of his technique, his faultless shot selection and the assurance of his footwork. He looked a very fine player. He had scored his runs in one of the few crises the Australians met

all season. He came to the wicket at 64 for four which became 126 for 5 after Steve Waugh played on to the first ball after lunch. Making 101 between lunch and tea he saw his side to a match-winning first innings total of 390.

Australia were in dire straits when they visited The Rose Bowl later in the summer. He gave Hampshire supporters a glimpse of his powers as he made 59, sharing a second wicket partnership of 126 with former favourite Matthew Hayden, as Australia sought to wipe off a considerable first innings deficit.

Due to an injury to Steve Waugh he played in his only Test to date at Headingley when he scored 15 and 0 not out.

On his return home he experienced only an average season and, at the start of the current Australian summer, transferred east across the continent to play for New South Wales where he has so far been relatively quiet.

In the intervening period he played one match for Yorkshire last summer as a replacement for Darren Lehmann when the latter returned early to Australia.

SIMON KATICH IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	M.	I.	N.O.	Runs	H.S.	Avge.	100	50	Ct.
1996-97	2	4	1	131	65*	43.66	-	1	2
1997-98	7	13	2	462	93*	42.00	-	4	8
1998-99	12	22	5	1039	154*	61.11	5	3	9
1999-00(SL)	1	2	1	76	40	76.00	-	-	2
1999-00	7	12	1	328	76	29.81	-	3	6
2000	16	28	3	1089	137*	43.56	3	5	21
2000-01	12	23	5	1282	228*	71.22	6	3	12
2001	5	7	3	288	168*	72.00	1	1	7
2001-02	11	18	0	651	131	36.16	1	4	8
2002	1	2	0	37	21	18.50	-	-	1
	74	131	21	5383	228*	48.93	16	24	76

Katich has also taken 20 wickets (avge. 54.25) with his slow left-arm chinaman bowling.