

NEWSLETTER No. 265 - SEPTEMBER 2006

27 September 2006 – Meeting

In time honoured fashion, the Society extends a very warm welcome to the Hampshire Beneficiary at their September meeting. **TONY MIDDLETON** has been with the County for some 20 years, first as a player and then in various coaching roles. He is now the County's Academy Director.

His well produced Benefit Brochure gives an informed account of his career and his contribution to Hampshire cricket since his retirement as a player. The publication gives a reminder that he is Hampshire-born, in Winchester on 1 February 1964, and that he progressed through the Hampshire schools and colts system, before making his debut in 1984. However, it was not until Chris Smith's sudden departure in 1991, that he forged a regular first-team place. Such was the strength of Hampshire's batting at the time – perhaps the best in their history – that in the previous year, he scored a century on four occasions, as well as a 90, only to be left out when one of Hampshire's stellar cast returned to the side. He did, though, record a thousand runs.

However, Tony Middleton cemented his place by dampening the fires of Waqar Younis in the Nat. West Trophy triumph at Lord's with a well constructed 75, keeping Hampshire in touch with the run rate as they chased Surrey's total. In the following year, in bowler-friendly conditions in the Benson and Hedges Final, he and Paul Terry stole runs from under the noses of Kent's fielders to establish a momentum which was then enhanced by the later stroke players.

Our speaker is not generally remembered as a one-day specialist but he made a fifty on every third visit to the crease and averaged just under 40, far superior stats to many so-called limited-overs experts.

He was a right-handed batsman though in his rare forays to the crease he bowled left arm. Of medium height, curly haired and trimly build, he scored prolifically square of the wicket and was the fastest of movers up and down the pitch.

1992 was his annus mirabilis. He scored 1780 runs (avge. 49.44); his six centuries included a mammoth seven-hour career-best 221 against Surrey at Northlands Road. He was the first man in the country to a thousand runs that year and was rewarded with an England A tour to Australia the following winter.

Unfortunately, like several others, he struggled on that tour, and was not alone in never being quite the same player again. He made his final appearance for Hampshire in 1995. Those last three seasons were not without highlights though. He and Paul

Terry were within a few overs of putting Hampshire in an unassailable position as they boldly chased a victory target against the 1993 Australians. However, they were

both dismissed in quick succession after having put on 167. Our speaker had constructed 78, following his 53 in the first innings – an excellent match double. The Australians swept through the breach and it was they who were in the ascendancy at the end of a high-quality drawn match.

He and Paul Terry formed a most effective and productive opening partnership. They established, in fact, two ground records for Northlands Road and Dean Park which can never be erased. There were few big shots but their stands will be remembered for quick running between the wickets, allied to studied concentration, good shot selection, determination and tenacity. They were thoroughly professional and never surrendered their wickets irresponsibly. It has only been in the last year or so, first with Jimmy Adams and Sean Ervine and then Adams and Michael Carberry that the County appeared to have found their successors and re-established that wonderful, and now nostalgic, inheritance of prolific opening partnerships that started with Marshall and Gray, and then continued via Richards and Greenidge, Chris Smith and Terry and finally, Terry and Tony Middleton. Our speaker, therefore, in those 4 seasons from 1990 to 1993, stood in the highest company in the pantheon of Hampshire opening partnerships.

He ended his career having played in 105 matches for Hampshire, scoring 5,657 runs (avge. 34.71), including 13 centuries. He also held 78 catches. In 61 limited-overs matches, he accumulated 2,139 runs (avge. 39.61).

Throughout his benefit brochure, his contemporaries continually refer to his professionalism, discipline, passion, commitment, constructive criticism, man-management skills, hard work ethic, enthusiasm, dedication, his ability to command respect through honesty, and not being afraid to speak his mind when necessary. These words and phrases occur time and again, both in relation to his playing days and as a coach. We also learn that John Crawley and Nic Pothas have turned to him to fine tune their game. Both, of course, have enjoyed excellent seasons in 2006.

It seems that Tony Middleton has still much to contribute to the development of Hampshire cricketers.

TONY MIDDLETON CENTURY OPENING PARTNERSHIPS

Tony Middleton featured in a number of large opening partnerships during his playing career:-

WITH PAUL TERRY

183	v.	Kent	Canterbury	1990
292	v.	Northamptonshire	Bournemouth	1990*
118	v.	Glamorgan	Southampton	1991
246	v.	Sussex	Southampton	1992

267	v.	Surrey	Southampton	1992+
166	v.	Oxford University	The Parks	1993
134	v.	Durham	Stockton-on-Tees	1993
167	v.	AUSTRALIANS	Southampton	1993

WITH CHRIS SMITH

106	v.	Surrey	Southampton	1990
137	v.	Kent	Bournemouth	1990
114	v.	Somerset	Bath	1991

WITH SEAN MORRIS

102	v.	Gloucestershire	Cheltenham	1992
108	v.	Worcestershire	Worcester	1992

WITH RICHARD SCOTT

104	v.	Middlesex	Bournemouth	1990
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WITH KEVAN JAMES

164	v.	Lancashire	Old Trafford	1992
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+ Ground Record at Dean Park

* Ground Record at Northlands Road

5 April 2006 – Report

At the start of the meeting, members stood in silence in memory of Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, Gerry Hill and Bernard Harrison, who, collectively, had contributed 38 years of service to Hampshire cricket.

Mike Taylor, making a reappearance at the Society after 21 years (he previously spoke in April 1985), then entertained a large and attentive audience. He gave a very full, interesting and nostalgic account of his own career, interspersed with shrewd observations on the contemporary game.

With his twin brother, Derek, he never played a competitive match at school. He developed his enthusiasm at his local club, Amersham, the town of his birth, though facilities were very rudimentary. At the age of 15 he moved to Chesham Cricket Club where he was coached by the former Derbyshire pace bowler, Alf Pope.

He recalled his first-class debut for Nottinghamshire against Warwickshire at Trent Bridge in 1964. On an overcast day and on an uncovered wicket, he walked to the wicket with his side's score at 12 for 5. Tom Cartwright and David Brown were responsible for the damage. They eventually bowled out Notts. for only 49 and yet the latter nearly won a gripping drawn match. (Editor's Note: Notts. 49 and 291. Warwicks. 159 and 131-9) He felt that conditions favoured bowlers too much in his early years but he now thought the pendulum had swung far too much the other way in favour of batsmen.

Strangely, he never played at Northlands Road prior to joining Hampshire in 1973. That year was, of course, when Hampshire won their second County Championship. He recalled the unbalanced fixture list that season when the County had completed all their away matches by the end of July. He paid tribute to Richard Gilliat's captaincy; he had to manage a team containing some very strong characters. He recalled the closing sequence throughout August as Hampshire defeated Derbyshire at Portsmouth, Northamptonshire in the key match at Southampton before moving to Bournemouth where David O'Sullivan's left arm spin wrought havoc against his former County. They had already clinched the Championship during the ensuing match against Gloucestershire at Dean Park before embarking on a run chase in the fourth innings. Gloucestershire made it known that Mike Procter and Tony Brown would not bowl as they were crucial to their County's cause in the Gillette Cup Final the following day. Hampshire were not expected to go for the runs but the team were anxious to secure their win bonus. The cumulative financial bonus each member of the team received for the season was £300 – less than Mick Channon was earning for neighbouring Southampton Football Club in a week. He remembered that Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie was the first member of the 1961 Championship team to congratulate the 1973 team upon repeating the feat.

He was privileged to play alongside two of the greatest cricketers the sport has ever known and he was able to give unique insights on the respective talents. Gary Sobers was a great left-arm new ball bowler. He was least effective as a slow left-arm spin bowler, in which capacity he first came into the game. He was a good bowler of chinamen. As a batsman he played mainly off the back foot to quick bowlers. Indeed, he only really played forward to the spinners. He never wore a thigh pad and used a light bat. Our speaker recalled Sobers' six 6's at Swansea when he took his score from 40 to 76 in a single over, after which he promptly declared. He also made 72 not out in the second innings, in which he did not clear the boundary. Ironically, this cost him the award for the most number of sixes during the season. He was beaten by Essex's Lee Irvine who hit one more.

Sobers was not one for intensive pre-match exercises. He normally merely stretched his hamstrings half a dozen times before going on to the pitch.

He particularly remembered Barry Richards scoring a wonderful early season hundred (189) at Lord's in 1974; and his 225 not out at Trent Bridge, when he carried his bat, in the same year. He also recalled Richards' 240 at Cortaulds in the County's Championship season a year earlier. He also recalled a stunning Sunday League century (112) against Leicestershire at Bournemouth in 1975, when Hampshire were en route to title winners of the competition. He commented that Richards was very adept at scoring runs when few people were present. However, Mike Taylor also remembered his great innings on a turning wicket in the crucial Championship match against Northamptonshire before a packed County Ground in 1973. He was a tremendous slip catcher. He used to keep his hands in his pocket until the last possible moment. The Hampshire slip fielders were better than those at our speaker's previous County and his bowling benefitted accordingly.

Throughout his talk he had made "then and now" comparisons. When he arrived at Hampshire, Geoff Keith and Peter Sainsbury were coaches, but for the summer only.

He was intrigued how Kevin Shine and Mark Garaway would fare in the England coaching set up.

He also commented on the medical support now available. Neither Notts. or Hampshire employed their own physios. His first County used the Nottingham Forest physio. Jim Ratchford, employed by Southampton F.C., and available for Hampshire, only possessed massage qualifications.

Other major changes were in the more business-like management of the game, Boards of Directors rather than Committees, floodlit cricket and helmets. He partially attributed introduction of helmets to the influence of Andy Roberts. He recounted the well known incident at Basingstoke when he felled Colin Cowdrey with a blow under the chin. What was less well known was that Roberts was bowling when Cowdrey made his reappearance at the crease, following recovery from that injury, at Tunbridge Wells shortly afterwards.

He finished the evening by affectionately recalling the remarkable David Halfyard. He was a man who was born to bowl, and who could bowl everything. He had a fixation about getting to grounds early. He was seriously and cruelly injured in a head-on collision en route to a Kent match at Weston-Super-Mare. It was thought he would never play again. However, he played league cricket and then became an umpire. He was on invalidity benefit when he astonishingly went to Notts. for a trial, who immediately offered him a 3 year contract. He played every match in 1968 and our speaker recalled him conceding just 18 runs in 12 overs in a Gillette Cup match against Worcestershire when he could barely walk.

THE OVAL - UNRESOLVED ISSUES

For much of this summer, the cricket press were more concerned about the inordinate number, and long-lasting, of injuries suffered by England's successful Ashes team of last season. At one stage during the summer, no fewer than five of that team – Michael Vaughan, Andrew Flintoff, Ashley Giles, Simon Jones and Stephen Harmison – were unavailable. With the loss of batting form of Geraint Jones (ironically his wicket-keeping improved significantly) and Marcus Trescothick's travails, the only survivors from the previous summer by the season's end, if one ignores Paul Collingwood's sole appearance at The Oval – were Andrew Strauss, Ian Bell, Kevin Pietersen and Matthew Hoggard. Even the latter then missed the end of the County season with a strained muscle in his side.

England therefore did extremely well to draw with Sri Lanka – though they should have won at Lord's – and defeat Pakistan 2 – nil. Alistair Cook, Collingwood and Monty Panesar stepped up to the plate supremely well. In Cook and Panesar England have unearthed a couple of gems and they will surely be regulars for the next decade. The latter, with his variations of spin, flight and pace possesses the great ability of being able to dismiss the very best batsmen. He consistently removed Pakistan's awesomely talented top and middle-order.

For Sri Lanka, Mahela Jayawardene confirmed his class in the one-day internationals. Younis Khan and Mohammad Yousuf dominated the Pakistan batting. Rarely since Compton and Edrich in 1947 have two batsmen seemed so omnipresent at the crease. It was ironic that they should have finished on the losing side.

Initially, at the commencement of the one-day internationals at the end of the season, there was speculation that Shoaib Akhtar and Asif Mohammed – absent from the Test series because of injury – might have changed the course of the latter had they been available. However, they then failed to last the course in the final two 1 –dayers and, therefore, the argument remains conjectural.

The summer, though, will always be remembered for Pakistan forfeiting the final Test at The Oval in the wake of the ball-tampering incident on the fourth afternoon. The Pakistan team and management had clearly lost all sense of perspective. They had only been deducted five runs and they were still favourites to win the match. Enough has been written in the newspapers and cricket magazines on the matter but some key questions and issues remain unanswered. Where was match referee Mike Proctor as the events unfolded? Darrell Hair's email offering to resign with the accompanying financial recompense, was clearly sent after a discussion with Doug Cowie, the ICC umpires manager. Whether the ball had been tampered with or not – and one must always be mindful that Hair is an umpire with 75 Tests experience – Pakistan's refusal to take the field must be addressed. Did Inzamam take the decision himself? This was after all the eleventh occasion he had found himself in the dock. If not, what action will ICC take against the Pakistan management? Pakistan, the most vociferous proponents for neutral umpires, are now trying to influence the ICC on the appointment of umpires. What is Hair's future?

The ICC's record on managing difficult issues created by the Asian bloc is a poor one. They will be on trial – yet again – in the ensuing weeks. Darrell Hair has already created cricket history after he called Muttiah Muralitharan for throwing. The ICC then changed the laws to legitimatise his action, and in the process, have made a complete mockery of the record book. The issues following The Oval debacle could mean that Umpire Hair will shape the future of world cricket on a second occasion.

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