

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

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CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN WOODCOCK

Members will be pleased to learn that our patron, John Woodcock, has received a lifetime achievement award for his sports writing. In doing so, he has joined such distinguished journalists and writers as Brian Glanville, Hugh McLlvanney, Sir Michael Parkinson and the late Christopher Martin-Jenkins, one of his successors as *The Times* cricket correspondent. The recognition was announced at the 16th Sports Book Awards held at Lord's in June. John, who is now 92, was *The Times* cricket correspondent from 1954 to 1988 and editor of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* for six editions from 1981 until 1986. He has attended more than 400 Test matches and, remarkably, his work has been published in the sports pages of *The Times* every year for 63 years. As recently as 28 July, as part of a celebration of England's 1000th test match, he contributed an article recalling their unlikely victory, by 38 runs, at Sydney in December 1954. He concluded his short piece on the match with "Every moment chimes still".

There was also a delightful report by Ivo Tennant in the June edition of *The Cricketer*, on a fund raising event for Macular Degeneration at Longparish, at which John spoke with Henry Blofeld. Such was the demand for tickets that the venue had to be moved from the village hall to the church. John's family have been associated with the Hampshire village for over 250 years.

Peter Hayter, editor of *The Cricket Paper*, and two fellow journalists -the brilliantly humorous Martin Johnson, and David Norrie- celebrated John's recent birthday with "lunch, wine and cake" at his home. In his fulsome tribute in the CP edition on 10 August, Hayter described the afternoon as "enriching as well as great fun with a valued colleague and friend to countless numbers of us who...have enjoyed his company, experience, words of encouragement and, on occasions, polite and constructive approach".

ONWARD FROM HOVE HAMPSHIRE'S ROYAL LONDON CUP TRIUMPH

Many who were present at Hove for Hampshire's first Royal London Cup against Sussex at Hove on 19 May, which coincided with the Royal Wedding, had never seen an ending to a match quite like it. In a game where the advantage shifted from one side to the other throughout, Sussex finally seemed to have wrested the initiative after the dismissal of Hashim Amla (63) with Hampshire still requiring 117 off 95 balls, and only four wickets remaining. The two new batsmen at the wicket, Lewis McManus and Gareth Berg conferred. What then transpired eventually rendered the home crowd into stunned silence and the Hampshire supporters chuckling with wondrous delight. In a fearless batting display, the pair added 61 runs off 37 balls. Berg drove mightily and McManus, displaying a hitherto unsuspecting talent for hitting sixes, peppered the leg side boundary. When the latter fell to a brilliant catch by Danny Briggs at backward point, having scored 41 off 38 balls, the target had

been reduced to 56 off 57 balls. In partnership with Mason Crane, Berg carried on his merry way until he fell for a blistering 65 off only 37 balls. It had been a masterful display of calculated hitting. Fifteen runs were now required off 20 balls. Crane had needed time to settle in, but with Reece Topley at the other end, he now took over Berg's mantle. He eventually finished unbeaten on 21, as Hampshire won with four balls to spare.

It was a team performance that indicated that perhaps a memorable Cup run might be in store. And so it proved. Surrey, Essex (both at home), Middlesex and Glamorgan (both away) were swept aside as Hampshire topped their group to gain an automatic place in the semi-final. The only glitches were last ball defeats to Kent and Somerset, both at home. The former was a strange affair as Hampshire failed to score six off the last two overs with six wickets in hand. Hampshire also had themselves to blame for losing to Somerset, having dropped five catches and missed a stumping. (The match at Bristol was rained off without a ball bowled).

Nevertheless, in all the group matches, the County batted with a certainty and panache that was so enjoyable to watch. All the squad played their part. Amla, playing uncannily late with the softest of hands, batted memorably at Hove. Rilee Rossouw found redemption after a horrid first season in 2017, and a duck at Hove, by playing two match winning innings (90 and 111) against Surrey and Essex; he was of course to find ultimate fulfilment with his century (117) in the final at Lord's. After looking understandably distracted at Hove on his being dropped by England despite scoring a double century at Taunton on the eve of the announcement, James Vince batted with increasing assurance, culminating in that splendidly commanding 171 off only 126 balls against Yorkshire in the semi-final. He was at his omnipotent best, batting at a level which few batsmen in the world are capable of matching. Returning after injury Tom Alsop batted confidently whenever he walked to the crease, and made an eye catching 95 against Somerset before dominating the opening partnership with Rossouw at Lord's (he scored 75). Jimmy Adams and Liam Dawson (the latter absent because of injury and England Lions calls) both had their moments. At the age of 37, Adams is, with Vince, still Hampshire's best fielder in the ring. Sam Northeast returned from a prolonged finger injury to register half centuries against Yorkshire and crucially, in the final at Lord's when he nursed Hampshire through a difficult end to their innings.

The bowlers all performed well. On generally perfect wickets (some would say much too benign), they displayed the cardinal virtues of bowling straight with just enough variations of length, pace and spin to keep the opposition batsmen on their guard. Mason Crane claimed most wickets but the man who really took the eye was young off-spinner Brad Taylor. He matured perceptibly as the competition progressed. He never gave the batsmen any respite as he made them play at virtually every ball. He also batted well, and fielded outstandingly at backward point. The editor feels he has the potential to become Hampshire's most influential all-rounder since Peter Sainsbury. There can be no higher praise. His career to date has been plagued by injuries and a recurrence of the jinx meant that he was unable to play in the final. Reece Topley also gave tantalising glimpses of his prowess before he, too, missed the final through yet another back injury incurred whilst playing for England Lions against India A. Crane was only able to appear in the final after receiving a pain-killing injection and understandably looked well below his best; he will now miss the rest of the season (as will Topley). Crane and Taylor have the scope to become a

formidable pair of spin bowlers in the future. Let us hope that they can overcome their injuries.

Special mention must also be made of the contribution of Berg, to whom Vince often threw the ball if Hampshire looked like slipping into trouble. Also, Chris Wood often bowled well at the end of the innings, never more so than in the final.

In addition to the flair with which they played each match, perhaps the most pleasing aspect of the Cup success, was the number of home grown players in the side. Last winter, as so many of the squad were playing abroad (mainly in t20 tournaments), Hampshire had little alternative but to give some of the younger players, particularly Joe Weatherley and Taylor, an extended run in the Caribbean 50-over competition. Both did well. Wood also enjoyed a renaissance. Both Weatherley and Taylor deserved selection for that match at Hove. They were joined there by Vince, Crane, McManus and, in later matches, the evergreen Adams, Alsop, Dawson and Wood.. Consequently, there was a real depth of warmth towards the side as supporters were able to identify with them.

The tournament coincided with statements by the discredited ECB about the new franchised t20 competition, scheduled to start in 2020. There was often speculation that 50-Overs cricket would be placed at risk in the English calendar. Through their approach this summer, Hampshire, and indeed, their Cup Final opponents, Kent, demonstrated that there ought to be a future for the format.

A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

The least said about Hampshire's t20 campaign in 2018, the better. It was at the opposite end of the spectrum to their performances in the Royal London Cup. The County were seriously handicapped by the absences of Topley, Crane and Taylor throughout, but compared to the previous seven successful years, there was obviously so much that was wrong, particularly the recruitment of overseas players, the batting order and team selection. That they finished the tournament with their worst record since its inception in 2003 highlighted a number of deep underlying problems. The players must have been disappointed after the Royal London success,, but the supporters have come to expect so much better. The predecessors to the 2018 version of the t20 side have set the bar very high indeed.

HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS IN CLUB CRICKET

With Hampshire being without a first-class fixture between 27 June and 19 August, and playing only their Royal London Cup Final matches and 14 days of t20 cricket (each lasting two and half hours) in that 52-day period, even the players might have joined supporters in wondering if there was a cricket season in 2018. The scheduling has never been so gormless.

It was therefore heartening to see at least two Hampshire players returning to their former clubs to assist them on Saturdays. Throughout his long career, **Jimmy Adams** has never wasted an opportunity to play for his club side, St. Cross Symondians, in the Southern League when not required by Hampshire. He was not

selected, of course, for Hampshire's t20 squad. On successive Saturdays from 20 July, he scored 121 not out, 148 not out, 82 and 144 against Burr ridge, Bashley, Havant and Alton, respectively. These efforts were instrumental in St. Cross winning all four matches and entering the season's final stages by leading the league table for the first time in their history.

Liam Dawson returned to Goatacre in Wiltshire for a relegation clash with Taunton St. Andrew in the West of England League on 4 August. Batting at five, he scored 83, adding 111 for the fifth wicket with his brother, Bradley. Goatacre went on to win by two wickets. On the following weekend, he took five for 21, but finished on the losing side.

MEMORIES OF MALAHIDE

By Keith Walmsley

It is not often you get the chance to be in at the birth of a new Test nation, but by a remarkable coincidence (or perhaps not) my wife and I were in Dublin for a few days in May, at the same time as Ireland were making their Test match debut against Pakistan.

Sadly, there was no direct Hampshire involvement, but there was still plenty to enjoy about our experience at Malahide. For reasons that I still can't fathom, I had bought tickets in advance for the scheduled second day rather than the first. That turned out to be a very good move as Day One was washed out, and so we managed to be present for the first ball of Ireland's Test history. And a very eventful first ball it turned out to be, with debutant Imam-ul-Haq almost kicked out of the game before he had even taken strike, thanks to an entirely inadvertent collision with two Irish players as he scrambled to make his ground when his opening partner Azhar Ali took an unexpected quick single.

That wasn't the first memory of that first ball though. I was expecting a mighty roar from the 5,000 or so in the ground as Tim Murtagh ran in to bowl; and yet there was complete rapt, silence. Clearly, Irish cricket-followers love the game far too much to treat that first ball disrespectfully, and good on them for that.

And even that ball wasn't the first memory of the day. First and foremost was the attractiveness of the ground – a beautifully maintained arena in a lovely rural setting just outside the small town of Malahide, about ten miles north of Dublin. Then there was the question of the pre-match anthems. The Irish side was, of course, an all-island XI, with five of its members born in the Republic and five in Northern Ireland (and one in Lambeth). So would we get The Soldier's Song *and* God Save the Queen? No we wouldn't; as for the all-Ireland rugby XV, we got only the rousing, all-inclusive, "Ireland's Call", to upset nobody and no doubt please everybody.

Other memories: As far as the play was concerned, Pakistan batted first and had the better of that first day, but not by a great margin. Ireland suffered by replicating the pattern of too many Test teams these days, by rarely if ever positioning a third man. I lost count of the number of boundaries conceded unnecessarily in that area. They suffered, too, by missing several opportunities for run-outs as Pakistan, following the example of that first ball, were constantly on the lookout for sharp

singles. The accuracy of the Irish fielders in throwing at the stumps from close range on these occasions was, I'm sorry to say, not good. Probably it was just first-day nerves. But despite these niggles, the quality of their cricket meant that overall they deserved to be entirely satisfied with their first day at this level. Above all, their bowlers maintained much greater accuracy and threat through the day than might have been expected from an attack that, Murtagh and Boyd Rankin apart, had fewer than 100 first-class wickets between them.

One disappointment was that DRS was not in operation. Another was that the scoreboards were not the ground's greatest assets. There were just two small scoreboards, no different from those you might expect to see at the ground of any decent club, together with the imported "big screen" which sadly was far busier showing adverts rather than replays or the scorecard (so who was the fielder who took that catch? We didn't find out till much later). The big screen's constant naming of one of the Irish bowlers as "Tryone Kane" caused some mirth; try as he might though, Tyrone Kane wasn't able to get his name in the wickets column.

Away from the ground, we were constantly surprised at how little interest in, or even awareness of, the forthcoming Test match there was amongst Dubliners we spoke to. Even the newspapers weren't making much of it in the immediate run-up to the game. But they'll learn!

Any negative memories of the day were just teething troubles, easily enough overcome. Don't let them give you the impression that we had anything less than a really great day at the match, or that the Irish cricketers looked in some way less than a "proper" Test team. As the first playing day of the match showed us, and as was made increasingly clear over the following three days, the standard of their cricket confirmed that Ireland fully deserved their place among the elite. And of course they got a lot closer to beating Pakistan than England did at Lord's a couple of weeks later! They deserve many more chances at this level than they seem to be being offered at the moment.

(Keith is a long standing Society member and was recently appointed Chairman of the prestigious and influential Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians)

THE HAMPSHIRE LIBRARY

Three valuable books have been written this summer which enrich Hampshire's cricketing history. All of them are highly recommended.

Hampshire County Cricketers by Dave Allen (pub Mayhill, price £9.95)

Dave Allen has already written three books in recent years, two on Hampshire's history and another outlining all the changes in the game since he first watched the County play in 1959. Hampshire inevitably figure prominently in the latter. He now caps them all with a magisterial A-Z of every man who has played first team cricket in all formats for the Club since 1864, the year of their inaugural first-class match. The biographies are authoritative, comprehensive, informative and always interesting. Dave wrote the book in a very short space of time, which makes the scope and accuracy an astounding feat. It is bound to be referred to by all those with an interest in Hampshire cricket time and again.

The gazetteer of players is preceded by a splendidly diverting Foreword by Alan Rayment, which is partly autobiographical and part history with an appreciative reference to attributes of players in the current era. Alan celebrated his 90th birthday this summer and, still young at heart, challenged friends at one gathering to a game of table tennis!

George Brown by Michael Stimpson (Dorch Publications, price £12)

One of the major gaps in Hampshire's literature has been a full length biography of George Brown. Michael Stimpson has filled that void superbly. Every facet of George Brown's life has been researched extensively. Thus much is learnt of his early life and his first years in the game, prior to his arrival on the first-class scene. His private life, his fractious relationship with the family of one of his in-laws and his years after his departure from the game are also covered. There are arguably more stories about George Brown than any other cricketer and, through assiduous research, the author has managed to separate fact from fiction. The book is in effect also partly a character study of a complex man. Besides his personal characteristics, the other major feature that emerges is the respect in which he was held by his fellow professionals. It seems he was intolerant of any amateur – and there were many – who were not worth their place in the side. The book is sub-titled 'England's Most Complete All-Rounder'. Towards the end of the book, Michael Stimpson substantiates the claim though he concludes whilst "George Brown mastered all of the skills, but nevertheless, he cannot be considered as being one of the masters of the game". Given his subject's frustrating inconsistency, it is fair assessment but it is an unescapable fact that no player in the history of the game has matched his all-round figures in all four facets of the game. The book is extremely well written, entertaining, well presented and bowls along. Once started, it is difficult to put down. Family photographs also add to its value.

(Both the above books are available from the Hampshire Club Shop)

Arlott, Swanton and The Soul of English Cricket by Stephen Fay and David Kynaston (pub. Bloomsbury, price £20)

This book has been well reviewed in the journals and newspapers and it is difficult to add to what has already been written. However, for Society members who listened to, and read the works, of John Arlott and EW Swanton, the book is an evocation of their formative years and, indeed, their life beyond that. It is worth reading for that fact alone. As for "The Soul" issue, the concluding paragraph is somewhat pessimistic. If the comments of their contemporaries such as John Woodcock or Martin Johnson are any guide, they would almost certainly have concluded that the game that they loved, and did so much to maintain, is of the past. It is certain, though, that those responsible for cricket's current discredited developmental proposals would have been made to shift on their seats most uncomfortably had the pair been still with us today.

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